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V A S NEWSLETTER

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LETTER TO THE MEMBERSHIP

As the Vermont Archaeological Society embarks on its seventh year it is appropriate to take a hard look at where the Society has gone and, more important, where it should be several years from now. This attitude was clearly evident at the Annual Meeting in Burlington on March 30, 1974, and to a large extent this Newsletter reflects that sentiment.

In six fast-moving years the Society has accomplished a number of important things not the least of which is the firm establishment of its institutional mandate. Gradually it has been recognized by State agencies, amateur and professional archaeologists, and groups outside the State as that instrument primarily responsible for archaeological preservation and education in Vermont. This is not to suggest that the V.A.S. has or should monopolize archaeological work in Vermont, there are many individuals and institutions with clear and appropriate functions in this area. But it is instead to reaffirm that as the state Society we have important responsibilities for the coordination of archaeological matters in Vermont and are a spokesman for them.

In the first six years the Society has initiated and maintained a modest (if irregular) publications program, held annual and spring meetings that were both of high quality and just plain fun, consulted on the pending legislation to establish a State Archaeologist, carried out site surveys, and sponsored or helped administer significant field work. With the efforts of a great many enthusiastic people volunteering their time and service the V.A.S. has made significant steps toward achieving the rather lofty goals that its charter established in the warm innocence of the summer of 1968.

All of its achievements notwithstanding, there is a growing feeling that first phase of the Society's life is drawing to an end, and that it is time to embark on the second phase and chart a course for the years ahead. Much of the field work involving the Society - the I-91 and East Creek surveys or the excavations at Pine Island and Highgate for example - have been in the reactive mode, a response from the Society to events begun outside of its purview. It is time for the Society to plan archaeological study in Vermont in a more coherent manner, to add the preactive mode to our capabilities to react to more or less capricious events. The Society must plan, support and carry out a program in archaeological

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field-work, and at the same time continue and improve the execution of its other functions. A sound field program should reinforce publications, meetings, and the total impact of the Society.

There are many models for planning, but for an institution that depends on the energy of volunteers, it makes sense to mobilize those individuals who have demonstrated the motivation and willingness to work. Therefore at the Annual Meeting in Burlington the membership present unanimously supported the creation of a special Task Force to spearhead planning for the Society's future. Under the direction of Ms. Louise Basa, the Task Force was to include all members who would commit their energies. Those members who were not able to attend the Annual Meeting are urged to complete the enclosed questionnaire and are also invited to join the Task Force. The Task Force is to make its recommendations to the Board of Trustees, who have the responsibility for their implementation. To lend the Society maximum ability to adapt itself quickly to persuasive new directions, as President, I have deliberately caused the four places on the Board of Trustees that normally would have been filled at the Annual Meeting to remain unchanged. When the Task Force has reported, the membership will be given the opportunity to elect Trustees in whom it has confidence and with a specific mandate for the directions in which the Society should be lead. It might be well to think now about those directions and those people who might as Trustees best help the Society achieve them.

In many ways this Newsletter is unlike our previous issues. Largely written by enthusiastic members of the Task Force rather than a few of the Trustees, it seeks the support, and more importantly the counsel of the membership. I urge you to respond! The V.A.S. is a state Society with state-wide and diverse responsibilities, and it cannot flourish on the friendship or even mutual interest of a few people. It must be a vehicle for the appropriate aspirations for all archaeology in Vermont.

H. N. Muller
President

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VERMONT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
P. O. BOX 663
BURLINGTON, VERMONT 05401

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