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THE KNOXVILLE WORLD'S FAIR--
WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

BY

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ABSTRACT

This is a summary of previous presentations with a focus on future implications. He emphasizes the importance of cooperation in the development of special events.

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INTRODUCTION

I have two tasks to perform today, one which is relatively easy and which I enjoy doing, and the other which is perhaps not quite so easy, but I will give it a try.

The first task is to bring you greetings as the President of TTRA International. As Jan Nichols mentioned to you this morning, one of the major things I would like to do this year as president is to improve the relationships and the communications between the chapters of TTRA and the Board of Directors of the parent organization. The chapters may not be aware, but in the last four or five years they have become increasingly important, and the growth of your new chapter in the Southeast is only one of several examples: San Diego is forming a chapter, the Rocky Mountain area is forming a chapter, and we see a real growth in the existing chapters of TTRA. Now we are seeing a shift, and that in itself is causing some problems--but we will deal with them. In any case, I am glad to be here. I am trying to get to all of the chapters where possible, and it is delightful to meet with you and see firsthand the kind of local concerns that you have.

The second task which Jan asked me to formally address is recapping the discussions which took place this morning. Initially, I said this was going to be a difficult task. The one saving grace is that the topic has been incredibly relevant to my own personal activities these days and I have learned much. Therefore, I hope that you find what I have extracted to be as useful as I do in relation to my research.

In 1988, the XVth Winter Olympics will be held in Calgary. We are just beginning to gear up for that, and as a first step in the process, we are starting to look at all the problems one finds in holding major, short period, and one-time events. Also we are trying to anticipate how we can design the kind of research required to help in solving the concerns we will face. Today I have gathered an immense amount of information in this regard, and I thank all the speakers for their relevant information.

First of all, let us discuss Carroll Logan's speech on Knoxville. To some of you who live in the far northwest of this continent, you are aware that Knoxville was never a high profile city--as surely as Calgary is not a high profile city for the people who live here. Now, as a result of the World's Fair, Knoxville has become much more notable. It is hoped that Calgary will become a more well-known city in the next few years. You will know more about us, just as we have come to know much more about Knoxville.

What struck me is the incredible degree of enthusiasm that you have generated, both in terms of local community spirit and in the pride which has developed in Knoxville as a city. It tends to make the magnitude of the difficulties which you faced throughout the year seem much more minor. I am sure that as the years go by--certainly if you are able to maintain some of those cultural events--you will look back upon the Fair as a very major turning point in the city's history. That is one of our goals (in Calgary) and I would certainly like to talk with you about your long term expectations.

In a sense the first talk was the easy one to review because there was so much obvious material which was directly relevant to my interests. Of the other points that I tried to pull out, none really summarizes the total discussion.

First, on the Great Smoky Mountains National Park by Jerry Eubanks--we happen to be located (in Calgary) against the Rocky Mountains and we have a very large national park there. Many of the problems and concerns you have raised about congestion are due to the great popularity of tourism. We have also been concerned with these, but we will be more and more concerned as the skiing areas related to the Olympics are developed. In the longer term we will have to deal with the great influxes of skiers as we are now becoming a major tourism ski destination similar to Colorado. So we have many of the same problems of capacity and overcrowding.

On the Asheville Chamber of Commerce--I was struck by the total discussion. I think you had a very honest and open discussion. I think that if you do not bring up some of the skeletons it is not very realistic. I was surprised to learn that Asheville, which I also hope to visit tomorrow, really did not benefit that much. I shall take that warning and try to alert people that everyone has to pay close attention to such possibilities. It would be interesting to think about it more. Why did it happen? I suspect that some of the reasons, which really are not apparent right now, will come out as time goes by. The remarks certainly sensitized me to that concern.

Fred Brinkman's comments on the South Carolina Division of Tourism were more in the sense of what I anticipated. We are looking for the Winter Olympics to be tied in with the neighboring provinces of British Columbia and Saskatchewan. We are also looking to tie in with the state

of Montana. Thus, in relation to this major event, I think, to some extent, you confirmed the concerns and interests that we had already.

I listened to the next two speakers with particular interest. Caroline Pierce's comments on the operators' problems dealt with the nuts and bolts of all the activities needed to make a major event a success. We have not even begun to think about this problem, and I know it always tends to get lost in the shuffle. We tend to be great promotional planners but somehow we do not work out the practical aspects. So I take that away as one of the major points we must address.

The second thought that she raised, and which I have been trying to emphasize to people (without much support) is the need to look at the longer term impact of an event. What will be the focal point of Knoxville in the years to come? It is not going to be merely that the World's Fair was held here. Rather, it is going to be the fact that Knoxville is now a legitimate destination; a legitimate site which has achieved world recognition. I think that this fact, as difficult as it is to measure, will have a tremendous long term impact, probably more than you realize.

The issue of greed was also raised. Again we are aware of this problem but do not know how to control it. It's a perpetual concern where there is a short term, high volume event. Again, I will be sensitized to it. It certainly cannot be ignored.

The other issue that was mentioned was the need to carry out marketing efforts early and promptly, as well as the need to alert the industry. Again, in a manner somewhat similar to the earlier comments of Caroline, we will try to learn from that.

SUMMARY

Probably the most important idea I retained was the general comment about the need to prepare for, and to adapt to, the inevitable problems. There are going to be problems; we all know we have to build into our systems an effective way to react to them. If we do not, we can be certain we are going to be disappointed.

I found this tremendously interesting and I want to thank you for all the input. I somewhat sympathize with our next speaker, Bob LeBlanc, because he has been given all the advice now, and has no reason at all to make any mistakes in 1984. These activities of the chapters really make my job pleasant and are what make TTRA work.
