

ALTERNATIVE

Things don't have to be this way.

Suppose America was really run for the benefit of everyone. That would make it possible to plan very carefully how to use our land, resources and technology without ripping up our environment.

We could use things over instead of using them up. People would decide for themselves what their needs are and what should be produced.

Things would be built to last: there's no reason why lightbulbs can't shine for years, and refrigerators run for a lifetime. The know-how exists right now, but most companies know that durable goods compete with fast profits.

We could get a lot of energy from cleaner power sources like solar power or "super-battery" fuel cells. These things aren't used now because they can't deliver the kind of power needed for enormous cities packed with people, or industries which crank out endless heaps of goods. But they would be perfect for smaller, spread-out cities that could be planned and built.

Even if some of the goods we need must be made by dirty methods and with dirty power, making only as much as we really need and not

overloading any one area with factories would minimize the damage. Nature has tremendous ability to clean up human messes if she isn't pushed too hard.

The rewards of technology need not be abandoned if technology is used selectively, and carefully. We don't have to go back to the horse and plow to escape death from the smokestack and culvert.

But this sounds like a wild dream. Not because these things are impossible—they could be started immediately. It sounds unreal because the men and the corporations that run the present system, and profit by it, insist that no other way of doing things is as good as what we have now. And they back up these claims with force when people try to change their system.

And yet, these same men, who are now being attacked from so many directions—by people against the war, by people suffering from inflation, by black and brown and poor people—are now leading the parade and carrying the banners for America's new Ecology Crusade. Politicians talk tough and make promises; government officials slip money and supplies to "responsible" students who demonstrate for ecology; businessmen give financial support to the college professors and conservation clubs that are spreading

the Word.

But the Word they spread is a lie. And if lies work better than force to keep people confused and keep them from attacking their system, then lie they will. If encouraging people to rally for Ecology discourages others from rallying for decent working conditions, an end to the war in Asia, equal opportunity, and real control over their own lives, then they will make Ecology the watchword of the day. The wolves will pose as shepherds.

The pollution of America is not an accident. It is not a technical oversight, nor is it the fault of the people, or caused by too many people. It will not be cured by a few fancy gadgets or inventions.

Pollution comes from waste: producing too much, producing too sloppily, and wasting what has been produced. There will be pollution as long as things are made for profit, not because people actually need them. There will be pollution until we consider all the costs of making something—including the cost to the environment.

There will be pollution and hunger as long as the land and resources of a nation are run for the profit of a few, and at the expense of the many.

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VICTIM

America is a have-not nation.

After years of waste and misuse corporations have used up many of our vital raw materials. Since the 1940's American companies have grabbed large holdings in more and more Third World countries to get these resources, the fuel for their runaway production.

And the outcome?

American corporations and the powerful men who own and control them have reaped staggering profits.

Many Americans have lots of stuff but it's hard to say whether their lives are any easier or happier. Many others are still poor and hungry. And we've all been left with the mess.

So far, most of the people demonstrating against the mess and talking about ecology have been college students, suburban housewives, doctors, engineers, lawyers—by and large, middle class people.

Their complaints are legitimate. But there are many people in America and the rest of the world who suffer much more from pollution and the system which causes it.

In America, they are black, brown and white working people, who are squeezed into cities and crowded together. They are the people with the worst jobs, the ones that leave men deaf. They are exposed to the most concentrated poisons, the kind that rot away lungs.

They are the ones who have to live around industrial "parks." You don't find factories in nice suburban neighborhoods.

They are less likely to have cars or the money to take long trips. A few extra National Parks don't mean much to them.

They are the people that population control advocates were talking about at the American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting of December 1968. These scientists recommended that urban planners build future cities more compact and narrow, so that the sheer psychological pressure of overcrowding would force people to have fewer kids.

It's the same story in rural areas. The poorest people, the ones that do the real labor, are the ones who have to stoop over fields covered with poisonous chemical dust. In California, growers have been known to spray fields while people were working in them!

It doesn't end here. The ecological piracy which has exhausted America extends beyond our borders. All over the world, people in underdeveloped countries are seeing their own natural resources dug up, cut down, and pumped away. The signs on the plant gates carry names like Standard Oil, Anaconda, or United Fruit. The

seas and paying dirt-cheap wages to desperate workers who have no other choice.

What big American companies do dirty at home, they do much dirtier in Brazil, or Indonesia, or Ghana. In these places, no officials will bug them about sooty smokestacks, oil slicks, dangerous pesticides, or unhealthy working conditions.

In Peru, American mining corporations pay Indians up to one dollar a day to mine copper in the Andes mountains. Here is one description of those mines:



people know that they will never see a penny of the profits from these mines and plantations and factories. The big American companies divide their take with the rich overlords who control the land.

This is called imperialism. Imperialism lets American companies get cheaply from other countries what they have used up and need at home; it lets them convert these countries into captive markets for over-priced American goods; it lets them get away with moving factories over-

There are about 100,000 Indians employed in the big sierra mines . . . where conditions (minerals lie at up to 17,000 feet above sea level) and poisonous fumes make a man of thirty-five look sixty—if he has survived that long in the first place. Many companies . . . distribute coca (which produces cocaine when chewed) to the Indians before they enter the pits so as to render them semi-unconscious of dangers, hardships, and the internal pains the fumes create. (J. Gerassi, *The Great Fear in Latin America*, p. 129)

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