

Minimata diseases, caused by high mercury levels in fish, led the Japanese Government to adopt the position that, when in doubt, it is important to take positive action even before available scientific evidence was one hundred percent conclusive. As a result, Japan has managed to avoid the burden of an adversarial approach to environmental policy-making which requires indisputable evidence as a prerequisite to regulatory activity.

Cooperation between research institutions and government has permitted the latter to set environmental standards that are stringent enough to require substantial initiative on the part of industry. At the same time, financing methods and collaboration between industry and research institutions has made it possible for industry to meet, and often surpass, government standards.

Lifestyles

Unfortunately, the macro-level success of environmental policy-making in Japan has not been entirely matched at the level of the individual. Rapid washout to surrounding oceans reduces incentives to protect water supplies zealously by creating a picture of a Japan that is relatively unpolluted. Further, some of the gains made in the area of improving

fuel efficiency are being offset by a shift in consumer preference to larger luxury cars in which mileage is not a primary consideration. An overall increase in the number of cars on the road is also contributing to this problem.

It is, therefore, necessary to instill in young people, through education, the attitude that an environmentally friendly way of life is desirable. Naturally, this applies to the youth of both Canada and Japan.

Recent polls in Japan reveal that attempts to do this have met with some success. Sixty per cent of those interviewed said that global environmental issues should be among those receiving priority attention from government. Fifty-eight percent felt that environmental measures, where warranted, should be taken even in the absence of indisputable scientific evidence. Thirty-six percent felt that in the face of competing environmental and economic interests, the environment should have priority, while twenty-three per cent felt that priorities should be determined on a case by case basis, and twenty percent felt that environmental and economic concerns could be compatible. Of those aged 20-50, who are at the core of the Japanese economy, sixty-three percent felt that environmental issues are the most important faced by government today.