

Prediction is gloom and doom

by Susan Edgett

Unless the developed countries of the world voluntarily agree to lower their standard of living by transferring masses of wealth to the underdeveloped countries, the world is headed for a catastrophe, Dalhousie biology professor Dr. K. Mann told a group of people last Friday.

In a lecture entitled "Global Environmental Problems—Is it all gloom and doom?" held at the Public Library, Mann stressed the need for a slowdown of economic growth in developed countries.

"The gap is widening between the have and have not countries."

Mann based his lecture on the findings and predictions of the Club of Rome. This group of about 100 international thinkers, scientists and economists convenes once a year to discuss the problems of the world on a voluntary basis.

"The gap is widening between the have and have-not countries," said Mann. The underdeveloped countries will not "take it sitting down" he said. They are fed up with being exploited by industrialized countries and as a result, political alliances are forming in the Third World.

According to the Club of Rome's predictions, in order to balance the difference in growth, the developed countries will have to provide \$300 billion in aid to bridge the gap by the year 2000. "If we wait until the year 2000 to start, it will cost at least \$900 billion," Mann said.

Politicians in the developed countries, and many citizens know the problems but cannot bring themselves to do anything, he said. Politicians do not plan long term policies for the simple reason they are only elected for no more than five years, he said.

Using graphs drawn up at one of the annual conferences of the Club of Rome, Mann said the world has reached its limit of growth.

If the population continues to increase at the present rate, the world population will total more than five billion people by the year 2000, he said.

Population growth is not even throughout the world. High income countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden, France and Canada have very low birth rates compared to Kenya, India, Ecuador and Morocco, which are low income countries with high birth rates.

The reason for high birth rates in Third World countries can stem from the low standard of living, Mann said. Parents do not have money and must rely on their children to support them when they become old. There is also the fact that the rate of child death is very high due to malnutrition and disease, he said. As a result, parents have as many children as possible for fear that several may die later on, he said.

In industrialized countries, people depend on social

schemes such as pension plans and medicare, along with high incomes, to look after them later on in life. By raising the standard of living in the underdeveloped countries, the birth rate would be reduced, he said.

Two-thirds of the world's population is not receiving the adequate food intake of 2,800 calories a day. While people in Asia, Central America and Africa are suffering from malnutrition, Australians may be eating meat three times a day, he said. Australia has the highest protein intake in the



very serious environmental problems, said Mann.

First of all, denuding the land will result in soil erosion. Fresh water is not available for irrigating desert regions. If salt water was used, the large amounts of salt residue would

produce an alkali soil. Fertilizers and pesticides cause water pollution and harm to humans as well as wildlife, said Mann.

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Industry is also producing two very serious environmental problems; a reduction of the world's fresh water supply and an increase of the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, he said.

According to the Club of Rome's calculations, it takes 1.32 litres of water to manufacture one ton of plastic and 2,200 litres for one ton of bricks. More and more of the world's fresh water reserves are being used for the manufacturing industry. The layer of carbon dioxide surrounding the earth tends to retain the sun's radiation. As a result, the temperature of the earth is rising. There is a possibility that plants may increase their intake of carbon dioxide but

moment, he said.

By the year 2000, the world will have used up all the present known energy reserves, said Mann. Underdeveloped countries need energy to industrialize and increase their standard of living. This is not the case as developed countries consume 10 times more energy than the underdeveloped countries, he said. The United States, alone, with only six per cent of the world's population, consumes 62 per cent of the natural gas, 33 per cent of the petroleum and 16 per cent of the coal produced in the world, he said. The United States must abandon its "fortress" attitude of ignoring world problems and face up to the problems of runaway population and economic growth, starvation and energy depletion before it's too late, Mann said.

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