



Bulletin

Vol. 25, No. 48

December 2, 1970

PUTTING POLLUTION IN ITS PLACE

The following excerpts are from a recent address by Mr. Jack Davis, the Minister of Fisheries, to the Twelfth Annual Seminar on Canadian-United States Relations at Columbia University:

...Here on earth, we have our own thin envelope of soil and water and air. We have our planets and our animals. We have an environment that is being forever reshaped and renewed by living organisms of every kind.

Following endless cycles of birth and growth and death and decay, our earthly community is "motoring over". It is renewing itself. Its carbon atoms, its oxygen, its nitrogen and its phosphorous compounds are going around and around. They are going around in cycles and there is no such thing as waste, self-cleansing being a feature of our natural earthly scheme of things.

Man is caught up in this process. But his numbers are growing and his impact on our earthly biosphere is growing. His "spin-offs" are growing and his power to destroy our environment is growing by leaps and bounds.

We are scattering our man-made substances around. They are breaking up life cycles and cutting food chains off at their source. Thoughtlessly, we

are sowing the seeds of our own destruction. We are defiling the very world we live in....

LIMITS OF ADAPTABILITY

Man may not be the master of all he surveys. But he can be masterful. He can try to understand the life systems which he sees around him. He can influence them. He can shape them. He can improve them in a hundred different ways.

Perhaps we shall never understand nature completely. We shall never know the meaning of life itself. But we can describe its workings and obey its imperatives. Through careful study and better management, we can add to the quality of our environment, we can stop downgrading our resources and we can put the accent on renewability instead.

The scientific approach has served us well in the past and it can serve us well in the future. But specialization by itself is a curse. It has already got us into trouble. We must take a much broader approach to industrial development, town planning and the use of leisure time.

ECOLOGY A TOUGH TASKMASTER

Our forward planning will have to bend to new imperatives. It has had to bend to physical and economic imperatives in the past. It will have to bend, increasingly, to ecological imperatives in the future.

"Eco-systems", like economic systems, are circular. They are complete in themselves. They are self-compensating and self-adjusting. They respond to outside pressures and they can be destroyed by too much tinkering. Bankruptcy may not be as bad as chemical warfare, but it can be an awful experience nevertheless!

Eco-systems, like economic systems, have their rewards and their penalties. They reward the perceptive and they penalize the slothful. They reward those who try to understand the system and they penalize those who try to bend it to suit themselves.

For instance, I know some industrialists who

CONTENTS

Putting Pollution in its Place	1
Truth and Justice Brought to Light	3
Arctic Exploration Expands	4
Time to Digest	4
Nelson River Development	5
Railway Problems Probed	5
Technical Aid to Latin America	5
Safe Driving Week	6
Mental Health in 1969	6