

Dirty Places

Man has been polluting the air since at least the fourteenth century, when coal was first used as a source of heat. In recent decades he has done so with increased intensity. A number of Canadian laws are designed to deal directly with this problem.

Motor vehicles are responsible for about 60 per cent of urban air pollution. The 1971 Motor Vehicle Safety Act sets emission standards for motor vehicles. An auto manufacturer violating them may be fined as much as \$200,000.

The 1971 Clean Air Act attacked the broader problem and set up a network of 150 stations to measure five major pollutants in forty-eight cities across Canada. The lowest levels are rated "desirable." Levels that represent presently attainable degrees of purity are rated "acceptable," and those which indicate a need for prompt abatement are termed "maximum tolerable." (Tolerable levels have been proposed but not yet formally approved.) Acceptable levels are usually far below tolerable ones. For example the maximum tolerable level for particulates suspended in air is four

hundred micrograms per cubic metre over a twenty-four-hour period, but the "maximum annual acceptable level" is only seventy micrograms.

The 1975 survey showed a number of testing places with particulate averages disconcertingly high. The station at Duncan and Décarie in Montreal had the highest (136 micrograms). Calgary's 7th Avenue and 2nd Street, S.E., station scored 125. Lethbridge, Alberta, had the lowest score, 37 micrograms, and the police station in Victoria had 44.

Sulphur dioxide pollution is caused by the burning of fossil fuels or industrial processes. Its twenty-four-hour maximum acceptable average level is eleven parts per hundred million compared with a maximum one-time-only US level of fourteen.* Its maximum annual acceptable level is two parts. The maximum tolerable level, at which the pollution would be critically dangerous, is thirty-

*The US maximum levels are legally enforceable; the Canadian federal levels are not — they are goals to be pursued. Provinces may, however, set them, or others, as legal levels.

THE ARCTIC FOX is usually abundant. It has short legs, a round head, a blunt nose and a forward manner. Its valuable winter pelt, most frequently white, can also be blue; and some scientists believe the blues and the whites are really separate races. Arctic foxes, among the most hunted of animals, are also great hunters. (They can smell the nests of lemmings under the snows.) They are great thieves as well and will steal anything, edible or not, which they can carry away from a camp. Their numbers change dramatically, peaking every three to five years and reflecting the rise and fall of the lemming population. They live in the same dens — in sandy soils in river banks or hillocks or occasionally among rocks — for generations. In 1971-1972 the pelts of 33,655 white foxes were sold at an average price of \$11.33 each.

L. Rhodes, *Animals Animals*

