

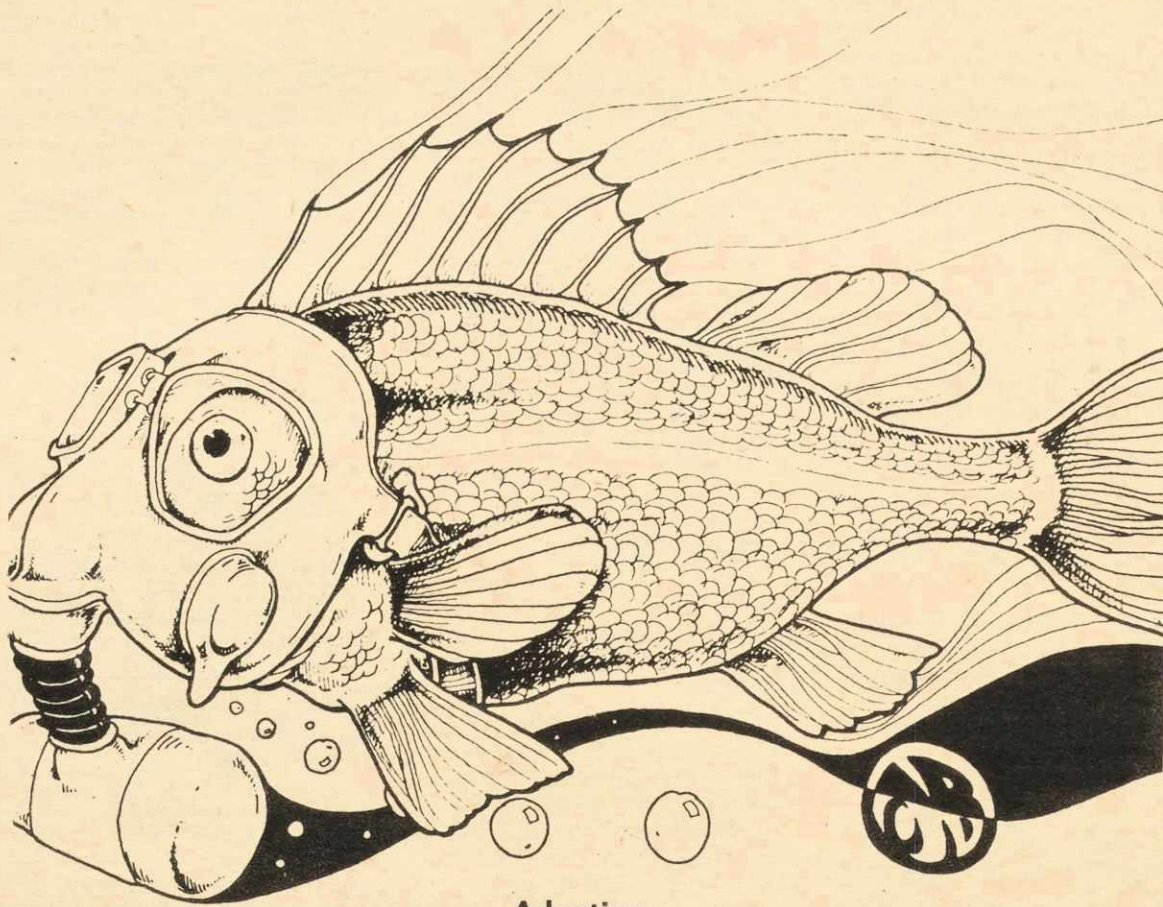
Acid rain is real threat

by Glenn Walton

Three Mile Island, Land's End, the Gulf of Mexico: to this list of ill-starred places, all the scene of actual or near ecological disasters of one kind or another, may soon be added a new name: that of Nova Scotia. Yes, environment freaks, if scientists are to be believed, we will be getting our very own ecological disaster right here in Atlantic Canada.

The scenario could do for Copolla: *Apocalypse Now*, or the *Acidic Precipitation Plot*, as performed by the combined industrial complexes of the American Eastern Seaboard and Upper Canada, under the direction of the prevailing winds and the wet climate of the Maritime region. See the sulfuric dioxide expelled from a thousand smokestacks and spread across the heavens! Diabolically oxidizing, it is blown on its fateful course toward the continent's corner, where it is captured in the falling raindrops that fill silent lakes and falling rivers that are the spawning grounds for Atlantic trout and salmon. Acid levels will rise. Soon, in that inhospitable environment, the fish will no longer be able to reproduce. Man will attempt, to no avail, to restore the waters. And not only that! The eco-system will be disrupted, with alteration of the chemical balance in forest and soil.

Fantastic? Hardly. For while there is pleasure in contemplation of the gentle rain that falls upon that place, our green peninsula, there is, in this equivocal age, a real, accompanying threat to our environment: the presence of sulfur dioxide in the atmosphere above us, that is washed, with every rainfall, into our lakes and rivers. Warnings from the scientific community about the change in their acid levels are attracting increasing attention. At a conference last week at Dalhousie entitled **Water and**



Adapting

Environmental Law, a panel of scientists and government officials presented impressive statistics about the choices that we must face if we are to save our fish and our lakes. It is as serious as that.

What is acid rain (or acidic precipitation) and where does it come from? The main source of sulfuric dioxide (in the atmosphere) is coal and oil combustion, i.e. power plants using fossil fuels. The smelting complex in Sudbury, for instance, is a major producer of sulfuric acid in rain. A study of lakes in the Halifax area has revealed that their acid levels are directly proportional on their distance from the Nova Scotia Power Station. In one scientist's words, we have our own 'home brew'. It is estimated that about 1/3 of the acid that falls on the province is produced in Nova Scotia, with the remaining 2/3 coming

from oceanic areas, the Boston-Washington belt, the St. Lawrence Valley, and even northern Canada. Tests made in Saskatchewan, Quebec, and Nova Scotia show that the level of acidity increases

towards the East. Nova Scotia, therefore, is the main recipient of acid rain.

The effect of all this on our trout and salmon rivers varies according to a region's geology. Certain areas with

sandstone (calcite) in the soil are capable of neutralizing acid rain, as are limestone areas. The Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia, for example, has a relatively narrow band of metamorphic sediment (without calcite) which, however, is backed up by limestone and sandstone. Thus, only the shorter rivers are affected. The Southern Shore, on the other hand, has a wider band of metamorphic rock, and the acid level is consequently higher. It has risen steadily in the past 20 years, leading to speculation that the lakes and rivers will someday be 'lost'. This is already the case with the hundreds of lakes in Ontario, and with the seven Nova Scotian rivers, in which the acid level has reached lethal levels.

There is also the question of international law. Nova Scotia, or Canada, would have to take the main offender, i.e. the United States, to court, and prove definitely cause and effect. Under International 'Nuisance Laws', a country is not allowed to do anything that damages another country's ecology. It is the old garbage dumping problem. The location of "point sources" (originators of pollution) would, in any case, be difficult. Even granted that, it is

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have dealings with such countries. As more and more people get to know of this, its activities may very well get restricted to the first digit of the 'advertisement'.

I appreciate that his bank's policies are based on 'sound commercial and economic criteria'. Adverse social and political conditions always fetch a higher rate of interest and lending to a strong oppressive government diminishes the risks which usually accompany such lendings. But the extra money that its shareholders get is at the cost of the reputation of Canada as a nation of people. The policy of the bank's board of directors will be misconstrued as being the attitude of the people of Canada, which will be a pity, for there is great human hospitality here. But the oppressed people do not know this. A democratic people permitting a bank to effect such transactions will be (if

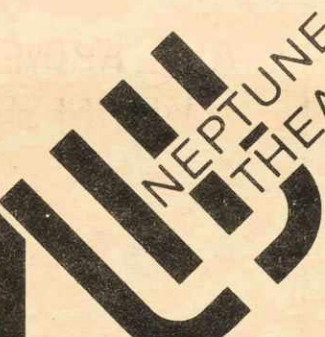
not is) misunderstood as tacitly approving such oppression.

The statement 'all foreign loans and investments are financed from foreign deposits' and not from deposits in Canada is no excuse at all. In the eighteenth century slavery was abolished in England, but England continued to practice it abroad. It is like sinning overseas and still being a Christian at home.

Therefore, while I appreciate that he 'condemns apartheid as an unjust and oppressive system', I'm sure that people like me will appreciate his bank more if it stops supplying the fuel that makes such a system run.

I feel that the international community, which includes Canadians, should close their accounts in such banks and switch over to banks like the Halifax Credit Union which do not deal with blood money.

Yours sincerely,
Bikash Roychoudhury
President, I.S.A.



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