

Supply

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Governments, like this Government, are notoriously slow at recognizing and adapting to that kind of change. We continue to trade off our environmental quality, our quality of life, for political expediency, managing under the myopic viewpoint of a four-year mandate rather than considering the longer-range implications of our actions and our stubborn refusal to recognize and attempt to resolve environmental concerns.

The Chernobyl nuclear holocaust, the Bhopal disaster, trans-mountain boundary disputes on acid rain, increasing levels of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, the greenhouse effect, the escalating destruction of our rain forests, accelerating elimination of entire species from our biosphere, dangerous toxic spills, like the *Valdez* disaster, all of these events point to man's inability to come to terms with the immutable laws of nature. I want to add that mother nature is now telling us loud and clear that she has limited patience and it is rapidly wearing thin.

To date, our response has been to view each environmental crisis we have come up against as a single issue. We continue to treat it as a symptom rather than recognizing the underlying cause. As long as environmental crises continue to be viewed as these isolated issues which can be managed by reactive bureaucratic measures, then this global trend toward environmental degradation and ultimately environmental catastrophe will persist.

As long as governments continue to view the solutions to environmental problems as a means of restoring confidence in the status quo, rather than as a means of learning from our past mistakes and adapting to future problems, then we will continue to walk straight toward the precipice of environmental catastrophe.

As long as our economic systems continue to embrace this mistaken necessity for continued economic expansion and the consumption of a limited resource base, then we are going to continue to flirt with self-annihilation. There is simply no way around it.

In light of the Brundtland Commission which has been discussed continually in the House, it is now time to take decisive action and to commit ourselves to a policy of sustainable development, where economic growth is

inextricably linked to the ability of our environment to support it. This is, without a doubt, the most critical challenge that we face as a country.

In the middle of the 20th century we saw our planet from space for the first time. That vision of a fragile globe alone in the vast infinite void of space may in fact have had a greater influence on human thought than did the Copernican revolution of the 16th century.

Recently a Saudi astronaut, who flew three years ago on a NASA shuttle mission, related his experience of seeing for the first time from space his mother earth. He said:

The first day or so we all pointed to our countries; the third or fourth day we were pointing to our continents; by the fifth day we were aware of only one earth.

As a NASA payload specialist explained:

Once you have seen planet Earth as a huge community, it is hard ever again to relate to the walls we routinely build to keep each other out.

This is a paradigm shift of perception that has been experienced by our astronauts and may indeed be critically important in ensuring our very survival as a species. We have come to view this earth not as an endless warehouse of resources that we can continue to exploit, but rather as a fragile and delicately balanced biophysical system that is both finite and exhaustible.

When this century began, neither human numbers nor technology had the power to radically alter our planetary systems. But as this century closes, we find that the impact of our human and our technological growth has produced major and unintended changes in our atmosphere, in our soils, in our water, in fact in the entire complex web of life that makes up our physical world.

Mankind's inability to fit things into the pattern of nature is in fact initiating widespread changes to our world. Many of these changes are accompanied by life-threatening hazards and propelling us as a nation and as a planet toward a new reality from which there is no escape.

This new reality has to be recognized and it has to be managed. We have the ability to reconcile our relations with the natural laws and in fact to thrive in the process. There does exist the possibility of a new era of economic growth but it must be based on policies that sustain and policies that expand our environmental resource base.