

Put in a global context, we in this blessed corner of the world are very fortunate. We still have our forests. By contrast, the amount of wood harvested per person world-wide has been dropping since 1964; and some of the world's major forests, especially in the tropics, will at current rates of harvesting be virtually destroyed by the end of this century. We still have productive lakes and streams with healthy fish populations. By contrast, world-wide overfishing and poor conservation have caused declining *per capita* fish catches since 1970. We still have fertile lands that produce far more food than we can consume. But world-wide *per capita* availability of beef and grain have been dropping for several years.

These statistics reflect only part of the sobering trend. A regional war is allowing a damaged well to spill oil into the Persian Gulf; in parts of the Mediterranean the seafood should be eaten only infrequently because its flesh is laced with man-made chemicals; and some of the forests of central Europe can no longer grow because air pollution is damaging the soil. It is not just overuse that is threatening parts of the biosphere on which ultimately all life depends; some of it is also being poisoned by man-made pollution. That is one problem the Mayans did not have; they didn't know how to make polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

I say this not to make apocalyptic predictions about our imminent collapse as a civilization; quite the contrary. I do it to illustrate my belief that we in North America have made great strides in learning to live in harmony with our natural surroundings. Canada and the United States are not, to misquote Churchill, divided by a common environment.

Our two countries have shown world leadership in attacking some of these problems. We have done this by supporting international efforts of various kinds, through the United Nations and other multilateral bodies. But mostly, we have done it by developing and pursuing responsible environmental and resource management policies at home. We have restricted the use of chemicals which would harm the environment. Perhaps, as in the case of DDT, we did it mainly on the grounds of human health, but then protecting human health means protecting the environment too. Reducing air pollution in our urban areas so people could breathe also reduced the amount of pollution available to damage nearby crops. Controlling discharge of sewage into our lakes and streams so people could drink the water also made the water more hospitable for fish.

We are taking a number of steps to begin to deal with such problems as soil erosion, destruction of prime farmland, excessive harvesting of forests, over-fishing and over-hunting. In myriad ways we are showing that, as societies, we have grown sensitive to the need to stop acting as frontiersmen out to tame a wild land but as thoughtful and responsible custodians of the natural resources that comprise our main legacy to our children. We know that we cannot for long go on eroding the base of civilization as did the Mayans. We must preserve and not exceed the sustainable yield of our resource base. We must no longer engage in the biological equivalent of deficit financing.

The US-Canada border has been a crucible where international co-operation in rational and fair management of scarce natural resources has been tested. It is fair to say that no other two countries on earth have dealt more responsibly with shared resources. We owe this in part to the foresight of those who in