

Canadian environment is the biggest challenge we face in the 1970's. It is a bigger challenge than unemployment. It is a bigger challenge than inflation. It is a bigger issue than pensions or skyjacking or the FLQ. To many Canadians it is a bigger challenge than all of our financial and social problems put together.

There is real urgency here. We have to act on the environmental front quickly and with determination. We have to move ahead of events, rather than from crisis to crisis. Our critical path, in other words, must be laid out ahead of time. We must have a plan to preserve the quality of our environment. We must preserve our wildlife and our fish and our trees. We must renew our renewable resources as quickly and as effectively as we know how.

Economic growth is essential. Social progress must also continue in the 1970's. But their spin-offs must not result in a deterioration of our surroundings. Economic growth and social progress, in other words, must be paced in relation to our environment. They must be managed in such a way as to improve the quality of life in this country.

From now on our emphasis must be on the wise management of our living resources and the elements that support them. Renewability of our living resources—fish, forests, birds, wildlife—and the renewed quality of our water, our soil and our air are the keys to a better future.

Industry, therefore, must keep its poisons to itself. Canada's cities and towns must do likewise. By recycling their wastes and renewing their inventories they can help us to progress on all fronts—social, economic and ecological in the 70's.

Industry's hard-nosed scientific approach has served us well in the past. But it has never been able to solve all our problems. It has had to bend to economic imperatives. Now it will have to bend, increasingly, to environmental considerations. Life in all its forms is too precious and our Canadian ecology is too fragile for us to ignore these environmental considerations any longer.

I do not want to give the wrong impression, Mr. Speaker. I am not talking about a change in direction; merely a change in emphasis. I am not turning my back on economic growth. But I am saying that industry must be more respectful of its surroundings. I am saying that our city planners must be concerned about renewability when they uproot trees and divert streams to make way for streets and modern buildings.

We must be careful for, if we break the chain of living things, entire structures come tumbling down. Wipe out a single species and you undermine an entire life pyramid. You undermine a system which would have gone on reproducing and renewing itself forever.

This is why our modern technologists have to tread carefully in the future. This is why our engineers must insulate many of our new processes from Canada's living environment. This is why we in government must make many of our human activities as neutral as possible—neutral in the biological sense of the word—and antiseptic

in so far as our fish, our wildlife and our trees are concerned.

Some people, of course, would set the clock back. They would have us go back to the Middle Ages. They would even have us go back to "monkey hill" because they are afraid of modern science, they are afraid of modern technology, they are afraid of the side effects of industrial growth. Progress, in the materialistic sense of the word, is suspect. Apprehension, and occasionally fear, has taken its place in the hearts of many Canadians.

I disagree with those people who fearfully take what I regard as a static approach to these things. I disagree with those who look on our earthly biosphere as a timeless realm in which animals and plants jostle each other in humble harmony. They say that man must fit in, accept nature's limits, reduce his consumption, limit his reproduction, join the Society for Zero Population Growth.

On the contrary, I believe that man can better his lot, improve his standard of living, and still make the most of his environment. I believe that man can improve on nature. I believe that he can renew and replenish our living resources.

I believe that Canadians can build up their fisheries and increase the cut which they take from our forest lands. We can expand our resource base and operate on a sustained yield basis. In other words, we can use our human intelligence to plan and, with intelligent planning, we can have economic growth and a healthy environment as well.

Still, a word of caution as we enter the 1970's. Let us not lose sight of our ecological time scale. Let us not think that ecological changes can be made overnight. Often they take generations. Centuries may pass before a new life species will develop to its full potential.

This is why sudden changes in our environment are to be deplored. This is why industry must recycle its effluents and whole communities find other uses for their wastes. This is why the effects of modern physics and modern chemistry must be cushioned in various ways. This is why we must turn thumbs down on those who would tax the "assimilative capacity" of our local waters and our air. No lake, however large, and no atmosphere however vast is capable of absorbing man's harmful effluents forever.

Take the liquid metal mercury, for example. In its elemental form it is unknown in nature. But man has stripped it of its sulphur. He has released the metallic mercury and shipped it out to industry to use as it wishes.

Industry in turn, has used elemental mercury in an indiscriminate manner. It has been using mercury as if it were going out of style. It has been using it up as if it were a modern raw material. It has been letting metallic mercury loose on our environment without thinking about its effects on our forest on our wildlife, fish and worse still—at the top end of nature's food chain—man himself.