

While the problem of water pollution will require specific technical measures for abatement, I doubt we can ever really solve it, unless we are willing to recognize it for what it actually is,- one of the by-products of some of the spurious values of this society which are now threatening to destroy the total environment for life on this planet. Therefore, as with a serious disease, the disease itself must be treated. Merely relieving or abateing the pain with aspirin could be fatal. Most serious enviornmental problems have their origin in the same lack of ethical concern for the enviornment from which our water pollution problems arise,- we cannot fight one without automatically fighting them all.

In the Green Bay area we have, for many years been conscious of the effects of water pollution on clean water resources. However, we generally ignored the roll population growth plays in the total enviornmental problem.

But, we have been unable to ignore the dramatic effect of the impact of inadequately treated industrial and municipal wastes upon the Fox River, whose water volume is unable to carry the waste load. Equally dramatic is the impact of the waste load upon the receiving body-the Bay. We are conscious of these impacts because they are discernable thru our physical senses. However, the most serious effects, such as the ecological and enviornmental deterioration which inevitably accompanys water pollution, are more difficult for the senses to perceive and therefore more intangible.

It is only within the past decade that the gravity of the water pollution problem has been widely recognized. In the decade of the fifties, when the handwriting was already appearing quite clearly on the wall, we approached the pollution problem with incredible myopia, blinded perhaps, by the glitter of "fool's gold". Whatever the reason for our short-sightedness, we feverishly promoted growth and expansion, even as we do now, without giving due consideration to the effect the resulting population explosion would have upon water resources and the total enviornment. When efforts were made to obtain more effective pollution legislation, the battle cry of the polluters was, "fish or factories," weapons obviously designed to oversimplify the problem and to instill fear.

The effect of the "go easy" strategy was to, literally, limit the attack on water pollution to a rear guard action which merely delayed but could not stop the steady advance of an enemy growing more formidable

with each passing day. True, the State did begin to make comprehensive river surveys, hold hearings and issue orders. The orders would specify dates for compliance. Unfortunately, in many cases, compliance with the orders was not made in the specified time, so extensions for fulfillment were granted year after year after year. From time to time, at great public expense, new surveys were made, new hearings held and new orders issued. The surveys always revealed what was already known, viz., that the waters were polluted; the hearings identified the polluters, generally the same ones, while orders were issued setting new dates for compliance. So, another "round robin" cycle was started in water pollution control—more surveys, more hearings, more orders, more extensions, more expense and more pollution. The river and bay stand as vivid proof of the inadequacy of past pollution abatement efforts.

I do not wish to dwell on the mistakes we made in our past pollution abatement policies, since it would serve no constructive purpose. However, we cannot ignore them because we no longer have the time nor the money to delay, so, we can't afford to repeat them.

We must open our eyes to the fact that all of the massive environmental problems facing us today, have been caused by an industrial society of 200 million people and its gross national product. We measure this gross national production only in terms of material affluence and wealth, while we refuse to calculate the price we have ^{PAID} for it in waste, effluents and total environmental deterioration and its cost in natural resource destruction. It is predicted that in a relatively short span of time our population will increase to 300 and 400 million people, while the gross national product will be calculated in the trillions. Surely, in view of what has already happened to the environment, we must ask ourselves the question, "can this planet withstand the impact of so many people producing wastes at the presently increasing levels and still maintain an environment suitable for life? The answer is probably "No" unless we find the ways and means of reducing pollution

of all types to tolerable levels, and at the same time changing the values which did so much to cause the pollution problems in the first place. In trying to describe the basic problem we face in the total environmental picture, nothing is more apt than the simple old saying, "we can't have our cake and eat it too." We are in trouble because we want to eat it all now.

I wish I could offer some quick sure fire remedies to cure the environmental sickness of this planet. I have none. But I would like to offer a few suggestions which I hope might in some way help to solve the problem.

(1). Man's brain must be credited for the development of the fantastic scientific, mechanical and technical achievements of the industrial age. It is his brain which provided him with the knowledge and skills to conquer disease and to promote and enhance his health. His brain formulated and implemented the fundamental laws under which he can live as an organized free society. Too often, unfortunately, he appears content to transfer the control, proper use and destiny of his inventions from his brain to his belly, -and, therein lies the chief cause for most of his environmental problems. His brain will never push the hydrogen bomb button, but his belly could.

His brain recognizes that the right to use environmental resources for his personal well being and affluence, also imposes a duty upon him to protect that environment, so far as is possible, from destruction, so that it will be here for future use. His belly tells him to "get what you can today and to hell with tomorrow." It boils down to a question of values and ethics. Let us hope there is time to eliminate some of the belly oriented ones or man could well be classified as a "warm blooded two legged lamprey eel" who preyed so greedily on his planetary host he destroyed it. Aldo Leopold already has pointed the way with his philosophy of the development of an "ethical conscience toward our environment." We already have the vehicles to reach that goal in our schools, our churches and our political freedoms.

(2) The policy of classifying waterways to permit fixed degrees of pollution should be changed. It is wrong to condemn a river to the status of a waste carrier. A wiser policy would direct every polluter to achieve

the maximum degree of abatement it is possible to achieve with the latest technical knowledge. We need effluent control, not river condemnation.

(3) Since the fight to save our environment is, literally, a war, the attack and battle plan should be organized on the order of a military campaign, with well defined responsibilities, objectives and unity of purpose.

(4) In a recent article in the Green Bay Press Gazette, Dr. Leo Marx of Amherst College was quoted as saying, "The American business system has placed a high premium upon ingenious ways of overcoming the environment, and has minimized any constraints that might follow from an awareness of the long term ecological welfare of the society as a whole.....The conservation movement has been characterized by a certain innocence, above all an excessive trust in rational persuasion as a political method..... If environmental problems are going to yield to any solutions, it will be necessary for the leaders to know where the power lies and how to confront it..... Whether they like it or not, ecologists are going to find themselves involved in politics."

These quotes from the article would seem to mean that politicians must be persuaded to do what ought to be done thru political pressures, and this is a sad commentary.

(5) Every industrial and real estate project should be planned to prevent environmental deterioration of any nature, and rejected if it can't.

(6) So far as possible, highways, power lines and all land consuming projects should be constructed to prevent needless elimination of productive acreage.

(7) It will take billions of dollars to fight a successful war against pollution. It has always been difficult to find the necessary funds. But funds are always available for sports arenas, questionable government pork barrel expenditures, dams, military projects, flights to the moon and personal self indulgence. So the funds are really there. All we need to do is to make up our minds to make a few sacrifices in less important areas, and they will be available.

(8) Since time is of the essence, we need a thoroughly informed and

and dedicated citizenry to play it's part in saving the environment. This is the task for the news media, which, incidently, has lately been doing a good job.

Someone once suggested that man was a planetary disease. If we fail to reverse the process of environmental deterioration, he could well have been right. In that case it would be necessary to add the word "terminal" to the phrase.

V. J. Muench.

Jan. 9, 1970.