



## Environmental Information

March 1975

The environmentalists are the true conservatives of this world, while those who would render the land unfit for posterity are the real radicals, according to EPA Administrator Russell E. Train.

Speaking before the National Wildlife Federation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on March 15, Mr. Train declared that:

- We are led into a paradox in our labels for people, for the ecologist, often portrayed as a "romantic, distracted by fantasies of bluebirds and daisies," is far more realistic than those who would exploit the earth for short-term profit, since the ecologist is concerned about long-term effects of pollution on all life.

- People who abuse the land with bulldozers or chemicals or bad planning of cities actually fit Webster's definition of radicals as those who make "extreme changes in existing views, habits, conditions or institutions."

- EPA is taking affirmative action based on conservative principles to protect public health and welfare. The Federal government will have committed \$18 billion for municipal sewage treatment plant construction by the end of fiscal 1977, and now has 95 percent of the major industrial wastewater dischargers under clean-up schedules. By mid-1975, 90 million tons of particulate matter and 25 million tons of sulfur dioxide will be removed per year from the air.

Mr. Train made his remarks in accepting the "Conservationist of the Year" award from the Federation.

The speech is attached for your information and use.

The Office of Public Affairs

REMARKS BY THE HONORABLE RUSSELL E. TRAIN  
ADMINISTRATOR, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BEFORE THE  
NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION  
PITTSBURGH HILTON HOTEL  
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THE TRUE CONSERVATIVES

It is a privilege to be with the largest non-governmental conservation organization in the United States, and to observe with you the beginning of National Wildlife Week. The Environmental Protection Agency does not have a constituency in the accepted sense of a special interest group, but we share common goals with you, and in that sense I always feel among friends at your meetings.

I especially want to congratulate the Wildlife Federation for its successful campaign this past year to secure in South Dakota and Nebraska the first permanent sanctuary for the bald eagle. This noble creature, which has been our national emblem since 1782, continues to be threatened by man's destructive technology, and it is heartening that your dedication and commitment is bringing positive action in protecting a conspicuous living symbol of our country.

It was Gifford Pinchot, chief of the U.S. Forest Service in the early years of this century, who popularized the word "conservation," and today I would like to talk about the nature of the true conservative because some of its older meanings need to be rehabilitated and applied to our problems. Like so many labels, the word has drifted far from its original context. Often it is now used politically in contrast to the word radical, which means, according to Webster, tending to make "extreme changes in existing views, habits, conditions or institutions." To conserve, on the other hand, comes from a Latin word for keeping guard over something; to protect and preserve.

In a thoughtful editorial recently, the Wall Street Journal took note of a poll showing that more than half the American people now consider themselves conservatives, double the figure of a decade ago. The Journal said that much of this conservatism is neither

political nor economic so much as a return to traditional values. "The ecology movement," it declared, "which many political liberals support, is conservative in a very real sense." And so it is, for we ecologists seek to protect and preserve the air and water and land for posterity, and to prevent the despoilation of these things.

That leads us to a paradox in our labels for people. We must ask ourselves who are the true conservatives, a term often linked with industry and business. Are they those members of industry who would foul the air so that asthmatics choke and plants wither, or those business executives who would accept and encourage controls on air pollution? Should those who advocate a "no-holds-barred" approach to economic progress, who would increase the Gross National Product regardless of the penalty to public health and welfare be regarded as conservatives? Is a conservative a corporate manager who would strip the land for coal with such reckless abandon that it is left to posterity as an ugly, useless moonscape? Or would the term apply more fittingly to managers who accept safeguards in strip mining legislation to restore the land after it has been overturned?

It seems to me that persons who would abuse our land, either through bulldozers or chemicals or sheer bad planning of cities, so that the land is unfit for posterity, really come under the heading of radicals, defined by Webster as those who make "extreme changes in existing views, habits, conditions or institutions."

Your organization has chosen for its conference theme this coming week the habitat of wildlife. My Agency shares your concern for this subject for obvious reasons. We are interested in wildlife for its beauty and wonder and the diverse ways it enriches our lives. We also worry about the threats by man to its future for more selfish reasons. Wildlife serves as a continuous early-warning system for environmental problems that ultimately can affect humans. Because various species are sensitive to pollutants,

their illness or a decline in their numbers is of immense potential significance to man, for such phenomena can signal undetected environmental dangers to all of us. The reverse side of this warning system is that the increase and flourishing of certain species also can alert us to environmental problems. In recent years, for example, we have seen in the western United States a surprising proliferation of starlings. Since these birds are an important indicator species for garbage, crop damage, and urban degradation, we are aware that their population explosion is a commentary on what Americans have been doing to their land and cities.

The truth is that everything in nature is connected, and we are going to need all the early-warning systems we can find to protect ourselves in the years ahead from our own insults to the environment. As Dr. Lewis Thomas has observed in his book "The Lives of a Cell," "We are not the masters of nature that we thought ourselves; we are as dependent on the rest of life as are the leaves or midges or fish. We are part of the system. Who knows, we might even acknowledge the fragility and vulnerability that always accompany high specialization in biology, and movements might start up for the protection of ourselves as a valuable, endangered species." Man is indeed an endangered species, and does need protection from himself.

Six years ago the politically conservative journalist, James J. Kilpatrick, made these observations:

One of the most serious problems in American society goes to the quality of life in the world around us. Our rivers and lakes are dying of pollution. Our greatest cities stifle in smog. Our littered streets insult the eye. Concern mounts at the residual damage done to man's environment by such pesticides as DDT. Year by year, our loveliest countrysides are yielded up.

The problem essentially is a problem of conservation -- of conserving some of the greatest values of America; and conservatives, of all people, ought to be in the vanguard of the fight.

Mr. Kilpatrick went on to urge an affirmative conservatism,

to translate broad conservative principles more frequently into specific affirmative action.

Since its creation in 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency has been doing just that. Under the basic environmental laws we have been taking specific affirmative action based on broad conservative principles to protect public health and welfare -- in particular, under the Clean Air and Water Acts. It is, of course, significant that billions of dollars are being spent by public and private institutions to comply with these new laws and to control pollution. It is estimated that clean water under the new 1972 Act, for example, will mean a total estimated outlay of \$18 billion by the Federal government for municipal sewage treatment plants by the end of Fiscal 1977. But equally important are the pollutants that are being removed from air and water. An EPA analysis shows that by the statutory deadline of mid-1975, 90 million tons of particulate matter will be removed per year from the air, plus 25 million tons of sulfur dioxide. In addition, nearly two dozen of our nation's important rivers either have shown improvement or will do so as the result of the discharge permits that have been issued. Under this program, 95 percent of the major industrial wastewater dischargers are now under definite water clean-up schedules.

Without going into further detail, I would only add that over the past year EPA has put together most of the basic regulatory machinery in air, water, pesticides and solid waste. We are moving forward, despite a few setbacks, in carrying out the mission entrusted to us by Congress, to protect and preserve and enhance the environment. The authority provided in six of these environmental laws will have to be renewed by Congress this year. We will need new authority in all or part of the laws dealing with water, air, solid waste, noise control, pesticides and ocean dumping, authority which would otherwise expire June 30. Formal requests for these changes will be

submitted to Congress soon, and I assume they will be approved without major difficulty. As you may know, the environment was an important issue in a number of States in last year's elections. Both in Congress and among the public generally environmental interest is strong.

I spoke a moment ago of the paradoxes in how we use labels such as conservative and radical. There is another paradox in the public image of the environmentalist that is often projected. He is portrayed by his critics as a romantic, distracted by fantasies of bluebirds and daisies, a birdwatcher oblivious to the practical needs of making a living. In short, he is not a realist.

But I submit to you that he is far more realistic than those who would exploit this earth for short-term profit. He is worried about protecting the birds and the flowers because man is linked to them, sharing the same air and water, the same pollutants, the same hazards. He is concerned about the lesser creatures and plants because he is concerned about the survival of man. By contrast, it is the wanton polluter, the thoughtless and quick-profit land developer, the promoter of urban sprawl who are the romantics of this world, out of touch with the realities of how today's careless lack of planning can waste energy and space and promise only ugliness and pollution to posterity.

Consider for a moment some of the beautiful cities of the world-- cities like Florence, Athens, Berne, Copenhagen, and Venice. They are by common consent humane and attractive places to live because they put people first. They have been thoughtfully assembled, not overnight in a burst of technological dazzle, but over centuries. They have taken available land and carefully shaped plazas, pedestrian malls, vistas, waterside, parks and boulevards. They have sheltered their citizens from the elements with shade trees and arcades. They have brought nature into the marketplace with fountains and flowers. Curiously, all these cities also are busy centers of commerce. Somehow their industries and merchants manage to flourish without

dehumanizing their surroundings. They work in harmony with their neighbors.

So we have to ask ourselves, who is the realist in these cases? Who sees things with greater vision and with more enlightened self-interest?

The cities of America are making steady progress in cleaning up their air and water, but there still is much we do not know about pollutants and their effect on the biosphere. Sometimes the best efforts turn out to be trading one set of problems for another. EPA has devoted years to enforcing and implementing the law to clean up auto exhausts, only to find that the chief device proposed for meeting air standards required by Congress, the catalytic converter, does reduce some pollutants but creates another, sulfuric acid mist.

Failure to control pollution also can result in international problems. Some time ago the Norwegians began noticing a build-up in the southern part of their country of sulfuric acid from the air. Fishing in the area has suffered severe setbacks in recent years due to acidification of the water, which especially affects salmon and trout. The sulfuric acid precipitation also attacked plant life.

Since it was known that air pollutants can be transported over long distances, and that Great Britain, West Germany, and other Western European countries have been burning increasing amounts of fossil fuel which spew sulfur oxides into the air, the Norwegians called for international action. The result was a conference by 17 countries in Oslo last December to help set up a network for monitoring air pollutants over Europe. Such cooperative arrangements will be increasingly necessary in the years ahead as the world community continues to learn more about the ways in which such pollutants are created and distributed, and the damage they can do in remote locations. The lack of communication not only between nations but between various branches of science contributes to the problem. One of those with a reputation for breaking down barriers between

scientific disciplines is the British scientist, James Lovelock. He was the first to measure the amounts of fluorocarbons in the air, which led to the investigation now underway by several Federal agencies, including EPA, of whether this constitutes a danger to the ozone layer surrounding the earth.)

Dr. Lovelock has evolved a theory that living things help control the environment in a way that ensures their survival. As an example, he has demonstrated that the production of methane gas in the earth by certain bugs helps in a round-a-about way to maintain the proper concentration of oxygen in the atmosphere. Such thinking has led him to a view of life which he calls the Gaia hypothesis, after the earth goddess of the ancient Greeks. This interdependence of the environment and living things, he warns us, should not be tampered with. "We disturb and eliminate at our peril," Dr. Lovelock has written. "Let us make peace with Gaia on her terms and return to peaceful co-existence with our fellow creatures."

Let us indeed seek a detente in our often hostile and destructive relations with other members of the animal and plant kingdom, and recognize that we are dependent on them in the long run for our own existence. In short, let us practice conservatism that we may survive.

Your organization is a conservative one in the original sense of the word, and has done much to alert America to the dangers of environmental abuses. EPA welcomes your support, and we will need your help in the years ahead.

On a final personal note, I would only add that I am very deeply honored, more than I can express in words, for your invitation to be here today. On behalf of the more than nine thousand men and women of the Environmental Protection Agency, without whose work America's efforts to enhance the quality of life could not succeed, I want to say simply -- thank you.