

# Vote No On Survival

**“...a popular emotional issue like pollution, if properly handled, can be used to control people to make them move the way [Nixon] wants them to move.”**

Thomas Haroldson

1970

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ECOLOGY SUCKS! It sucks the life out of social reform. It sucks the energy out of campus movements. It sucks the irritants out of capitalism. It sucks change out of politics. It sucks reason out of thought.

Ecology has become the monster of our age. Unless revolutionaries, radicals, and liberal reformers soon recognize this, they, and humanism itself, will eventually be consumed.

Nixon came out “very strong” for ecology in his State of the Union address, but as a newsman said afterwards, “Ecology has become the modern equivalent of motherhood and the flag—he can’t lose a vote on that one.”

Actually, he probably picked up a few votes merely by mentioning the subject, despite the fact that his pathetic offer to spend \$10 billion over the next five years on pollution control is an obvious shuck. \$10 billion on today’s market is scarcely enough to clean up Lake Erie. (In five years the war in Vietnam cost \$130 billion.)

But Nixon’s sudden interest in ecology goes far beyond hustling a few votes. He knows that a popular emotional issue like pollution, if properly handled, can be used to control people—to make them move the way he wants them to move.

White House spokesmen recently announced that the President encouraged students and young people to demonstrate vigorously for fresh air and clean water. This is the same man who watched a football game while 500,000 demonstrators marched down Pennsylvania Avenue.

However, if interest in pollution control continues to grow in schools and on college campuses, Nixon will see his kind of demonstrations materialize. The cry of STOP THE WAR—NOW! will give way to SEIZE THE TIME—OFF THE SLIME! (And people will mean “slime” quite literally.)

The changing campus mood has not gone unnoticed. Last week a radio station polled a group of Wayne State University students. The question asked was: “What do you think is more important, ending the war in Vietnam or ending pollution?” Exactly half the students said that solving our pollution problem was more important than ending the war.

The movement to save spaceship Earth from extinction is so infinitely reasonable that it’s difficult to find any opposition to it. The planet that Milton called “This pendant world, in bigness as a star” has become such an obnoxious open sewer that every sane person, regardless of age or political persuasion, is convinced a remedy must be found before it’s too late.

But the issue is so blinding that no one is asking the questions that must be asked. No one is taking the time to understand fully what it is they are lending their support to.

For example, the pollution control movement helps conceal the fact that corporations owe the public more than they can ever repay. Most have operated in such a criminally irresponsible way that it will take a quarter of a century to repair even a portion of the damage they have created.

But few anti-pollutionists are asking them to pick up the tab. On the contrary, everything imaginable is being done to exonerate industrial capitalism.

And if we are all guilty (as corporations and their friends are quick to point out), then what will be the results of pouring billions and billions of tax dollars into ecological restoration? If we remain in the space race, if the Vietnam war continues, if the anti-ballistic missile program expands annually, if huge defense contracts go on, where will the money come from?

As things stand now, any money for environmental improvement must come from social programs, education, welfare, urban renewal, public housing, food-distribution, social security, workmen's compensation and medicare. If the military-industrial complex gets its way, the people who have received the least benefits from the industrial age will be forced to pay for its destructive fecal matter.

If the possibility of an environmental apocalypse is as imminent as ecologists claim, then those who play games with the issue should be exposed for the dangerous hypocrites that they are.

For example, Nixon called the automobile "our worst polluter of air," yet the government will not impose maximum exhaust standards until 1980. Even current regulations calling for a yearly reduction of exhaust emission will not be enforced until 1975.

This kind of stalling, dodging and empty promises by government and corrupt economic system will or can save the earth. Just as it is madness to participate in a popular ecology movement that is endorsed by the very people who make the movement necessary.

It's important to remember that the anti-pollution drive was, and still is, the most successful conservative movement since Prohibition. It was started by sportsmen and gun club members that wanted to make the outdoors a fit place to hunt in. Even today, despite the influx of eager-beaver liberals and shortsighted radicals, the movement remains firmly in conservative hands.

It should be no surprise that the groups working hardest to eliminate pollution completely reject the proposal that costly retribution be exacted from industry. Just as they recoil from any suggestion that necessary funds be obtained from the so-called defense budget.

They fail to realize that the restoration of our ravaged environment will not, in itself, improve the quality of American life. If every speck of pollution were removed from this country tomorrow, it would still be the dirtiest place on earth.

Crystal clear air amounts to nothing if it merely means a cop can get off a better shot at a fleeing suspect, or vice versa. Limpid water in our lakes and rivers will not help the worker who doesn't have a job—water, even clean water, is no substitute for food.

Noise abatement in our cities will matter little to the soldier who is losing his hearing, if not his life, on a foreign battlefield.

The present movement is unacceptable no matter how you look at it. A government that fakes concern over pollution while using the issue to manipulate the people, is worse than a government that does nothing at all—the appearance of action may lull the country into the fatal error of thinking the environment is being saved.

On the other hand, if the government cleans up on our industrial wasteland with funds from present and future social programs, the country won't be worth cleaning up.

Perhaps the only answer is to resist, block, even stop pollution control until certain important social and human needs are recognized and dealt with. Ultimately a truly democratic government will have to be formed and the military-industrial complex will have to be taken apart dollar by dollar.

But, in the meantime, VOTE NO ON SURVIVAL.

# fifth Estate

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