

# A.I.Ch.E. JOURNAL

## *Welcome to the Antipollution Fight*

It seems appropriate to say a few words of welcome to many new-found enemies of air and water pollution.

First, welcome to radical students (I specifically exclude here the truly idealistic students, of which there are many) who have recently discovered this important matter. They are subscribers to the "Demon Theory," which portrays all polluters as conspiratorial monsters of greed. We are all guilty in this matter through our high living standards and our overpopulation, and it does no good to deny it. As Pogo says, "We have met the enemy and he is us." Another group which deserves particular welcome is some of the law students. Until very recently, at least, there has been practically no such thing as illegal pollution. These law students might better examine their own profession in government which has led in the development of such a permissive legal climate. Unfortunately, both these law students and the radical students alienate by their tactics many people who might otherwise be genuine allies in the anti-pollution fight.

The most irritating addition to the crowd is the one who sees the problem as extremely simple and one which can be easily solved by someone else. It is rare that this kind of "expert" gives himself away so completely as the editorial writer of the following gem from a local Connecticut newspaper:

First there is the issue of pollution. We are as concerned as anyone about pollution, but let's be realistic. The way to cure pollution is not to keep automobiles out. If you follow that logic, we could cut pollution by at least 25 percent if all of us with two-car families went back to one car. That is not the answer. America is too great a nation to sit back and watch itself be strangled in its own smog. The new-found urgency of response to the perils of pollution will, in reasonable time, direct itself to the heart of the problem. This is not to eliminate the number of cars, but rather eliminate the source of pollution: combustible (sic) engines.

It will be difficult to solve the acute problems of pollution. It will not be quickly done, and it will not be cheaply done. Great technical skill, great expense, and sympathetic cooperation among many people will be required. The problems are only exacerbated by portraying them as arising only from corporate greed and as solvable by the passing of a few laws.

To continue in a serious vein, a sincere welcome is owed to the editor of *National Wildlife* who said in a recent most reasonable editorial:

Have I blamed the "other guy" when to that other guy I am the other guy—the fellow who tossed the beer can out of the window, who stood by idly while someone shot a mallard out of season, or sprayed trees with DDT just because it was legal and expedient?

Have I forgotten that no human life can survive without drinkable water and breathable air? Do I believe an ever expanding GNP (Gross National Product) always takes priority over Environment Quality? If not, am I willing to pay the increased taxes it will take to clean up and safeguard the EQ?

Or, have I been so conditioned to letting-George-do-it that I have become apathetic? Do I rely on government to regulate and punish, rather than do my utmost to bring about an attitude change in people?

Have I been a faithful steward?

The editor of *National Wildlife* may be surprised at our welcoming him and feel that he should be welcoming us, but it is a matter of record in our Institute publications that many chemical engineers were working to reduce air and water pollution over forty years ago.

We engineers can and should work closely with the conservationists and ecologists to make this a better world. We have the technical skills, and they have the knowledge to show us the constraints within which these problems must be solved. Let us get on with the job and rise above the noisy distractions of the unqualified "experts."

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