

Northeast Pennsylvania pollution critical

(Editor's Note: Fourth in a six-part series on the environment, pollution control and suggested changes, written by C. Wayne Smyth, a Troy attorney.)

The nation which brought the Heath Hen and the Passenger Pigeon to extinction and reduced the buffalo by slaughter from a vast herd of 60 million to a herd of 15 thousand (thereby making starving paupers of 100,000 Indians and maintaining them that way to the present day) may not be ready to listen to anything except threats to its very life.

But respect for the environment is a whole attitude summed up in the American Indian philosophy of the renunciation of greed and the inviolability of the Earth Mother. If we can commit the desecration of damming the Grand Canyon as proposed (once again) by the Army Engineers; if we can rape Alaska, killing its fishing and wildlife and pauperizing its natives as we surely will do if we either permit the taking out of oil by any of the known methods of transportation or permit the building Rampart Dam (another Army Engineer dam project); if we fail to protect the Redwoods by acquiring a large enough tract to prevent nearby cutting in the same ecosystem from eroding the small public holdings; if we do not adopt a plan for our Public Lands which take ecology fully into account if we permit mining in legally declared wilderness areas un-

der an existing loop-hole in the law; if we fail to protect Blue Lake and Pyramid Lake for their rightful Indian owners to mention only a few of our minor ecological crises, then our attitude toward the balance of nature will be so wrong that that we will be inherently incapable of the understanding necessary to saving ourselves from the major serious threats to our very existence and we will not be worth saving.

Without a fundamental reverence toward nature which precludes greed, we will be unable to steel ourselves to the radical and extremely difficult but absolutely essential deprivations we face. They will shock even those who are convinced of the presence of environmental deterioration but think wishfully that we can get by with less than an all-out effort.

We cannot. "It's now or never." The urgency is here, our very breath of life must not be left to chance and a fond hope that we can have our cake and eat it too.

Bradford County residents will be hard to convince. It is not that our people are any less responsible than other citizens. On the contrary, Bradford Countians are usually more patriotic, civic-minded, and public spirited than the average of other Americans.

The difficulty is that we live in an area where the impact of former ecological madness has already been absorbed and the effects of the newer dangers

have not yet become obvious.

Ours is a pleasant, still beautiful, relatively unlitigated and apparently unspoiled rural county. We still have a few cold clear trout streams, plenty of deer, large areas of woodlands small game including turkey and grouse, no major food problems, and apparently clean air. How can environmental decay assume such importance in our thinking? The way we live, surrounded by the results of former assaults upon our "quality of life," we tend to assume that these results are naturally the way things are; we do not miss what we personally never had.

But if one of our Bradford County ancestors were today to return to his old haunts, while he might be impressed by modernity, he would be appalled at many of the changes in environment. The majority of our streams, all of which were originally cold water trout streams, now run with warm water, and mud after every rain.

Careless imports from abroad brought disease to two of our important trees, wiping out the chestnuts and threatening to kill all the elms.

The mere presence of people has made grouse relatively scarce. Hedgerows have been clean cut, the birds are not only fewer but entirely different—exotic imports have filled our woods, towns, and fields with starlings, European pigeons, and English sparrows.

How long has it been since

you have seen a Bluebird or heard the call "bobwhite, bobwhite?"

No one seems to know why Quail will no longer survive here but undoubtedly the answer has some connection with man's disruption of the balance of nature.

Fortunately, there are not many areas in the county scarred by coal mining, but such areas do exist.

Old timers probably could add further examples of change in the environment, much of it classifiable as decay. The loss of the Chestnut tree was a staggering blow but our younger people, having never known chestnuts, do not miss them. Even old timers do not miss a benefit of which we were deprived in many years ago—the shad run in the Susquehanna River.

Conowingo Dam was built a long time ago. Ever since, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has wrangled about fish ladders and means to restore the run to a river better suited by relative purity to a run of anadromous fish than the still undamed Delaware, yet nothing has been done.

The present dangers, although more subtle in appearance in Bradford County than in our cities can be discerned by the observant eye.

Fly in an airplane on the clearest day you can find, a day apparently without haze—"clear as a bell." When you get above three thousand feet, look around, and you will see a thin line of haze over the entire countryside.

It was not here six years ago. Fish in Sugar Creek between Troy and Burlington: the bass have worms in their flesh. Observe the vegetation along highways maintained by the state and some townships,—it and the wildlife in it have been killed by herbicides.

Note the vast increase in the number of bird-egg eating skunks and opossums. Before 1930 opossums were unknown in Northern Pennsylvania; some upset in the balance of nature has increased their range and numbers.

Do you remember several days in the fall about ten years ago when the sky took on an eerie greenish appearance and the air smelled like smoke?

That was a thermal inversion and the stench in your nostrils was smog.

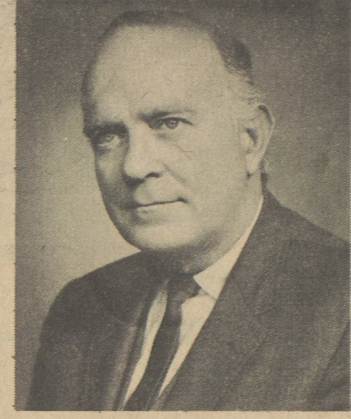
Such an inversion killed 4,000 Londoners in 1952, inducing London to adopt a "green Belt"

five miles wide around the city, thus improving greatly the atmosphere over London.

If this year we should have another thermal inversion in Bradford County, the air will not merely smell of smoke, it will cause active discomfort and sickness; over one of our large cities it would kill many thousands of people.

Must we suffer from such horrible examples, perhaps the loss of our own friends and relatives, in order to become aware?

(Next week: Mr. Smyth will present some solutions to the problems he has discussed.)



DR. MURRAY DOLPHIN

Cancer society bridge benefit

A charity bridge party for the benefit of the American Cancer Society will be held April 26 at the Treadway Inn, Wilkes-Barre. Chairman of the event is Dr. Murray Dolphin, 831 Nandy Drive, Kingston.

The bridge party will begin at 5 p.m. and continue until 9 p.m. Tables will be available for rubber and party bridge, as well as a duplicate bridge session under the direction of Warren Seiple.

Reservations may be made with area chairmen. Back Mountain chairmen are Mrs. Joseph H. Beckman and Mrs. James L. Bolger. Persons in the Mountaintop area can contact Mrs. Charles Barry or Mrs. Charles Triplett. Those in the Abington area can make reservations by calling Mrs. Jack Small.

The Empty Pew

The leader of the Protestant violence in North Ireland admitted that he intended to suppress the "equal rights" of the Catholics. He read into them all of the fears and hang-ups of his own psyche, and came out with a hateful of hate. He could foresee only the most terrible consequences of having "one law for both". This he expounded in his pulpit and his politics. Of course, Catholics do the same for

Protestant minorities in Spain. Whether political or religious or nationalistic, the same problem builds the bastions of war between men: the tendency to create others according to one's own concept of them.

And the hope of peace is still dependent upon the one absolute Law: Remember that men are created in God's image, not in each other's. Make the world safe for differences!

by W. JENE MILLER

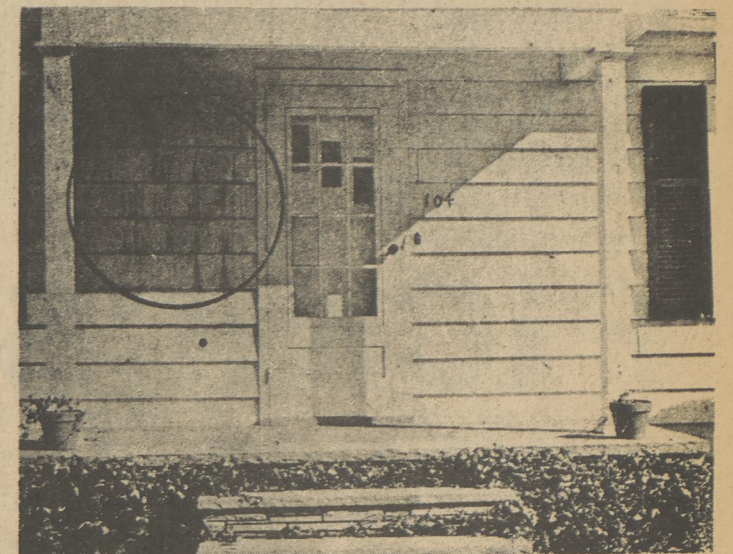
A recent religious writer pointed out that too many churchmen are worried about being "un-American" than "un-Christian."

The trouble is that the divine nature which man was given as the "image of God" included the tendency to create others in its own image. Even as man was made "in the image of God", as the Biblical witness says, so man also tends to reduce men to his own image of them.

The Black Panthers tend to create all white men as hostile to blacks, ready to rape a black woman, and willing to lynch a black man. They see their own fears and hates in those people who have caused those fears and hates. But, they have real difficulty seeing white people as individuals, some good, some bad, some rotten, some noble.

The KKK and other bigots, likewise tend to see every black man as ready to rape or kill any white person. The fear and hatred in the bigots cause them to interpret anyone who is different, as being the cause of their fear and hatred. They do not see individuals, either.

The communists see the capitalists as possessed only of greed, lust and hate. They interpret any action by a capitalist as a war-like gesture. They project their own sense of inadequacy into a feeling of omnipotence for their enemy. The fascists see the communists as utterly possessed by greed, lust and hate. Anything a communist does is interpreted as a gesture of war and take-over. They project all their sense of inadequacy into a feeling that eventually the communists will win. (This is why both the extreme right and the extreme left believe the communists will inevitably win!)

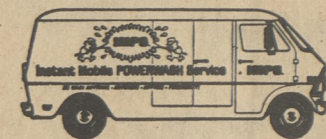


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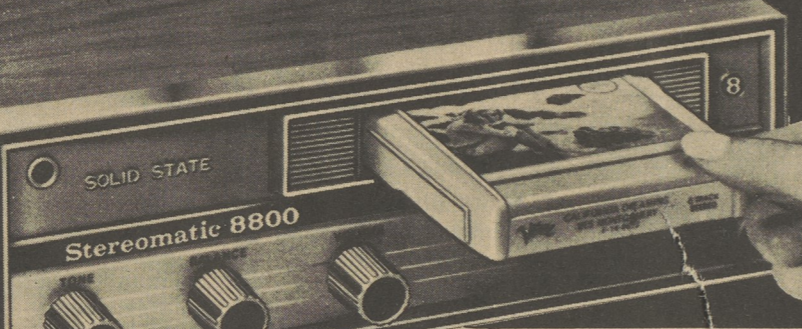
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