

THE ENVIRONMENT: AN ADMINISTRATOR'S VIEWPOINT

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This issue of Farm Research presents a series of articles each related to a facet of the complex current topic, the "environment." Because the role of the University is primarily to inform people, it seemed appropriate to this administrative office to solicit from within the University articles, pertinent to the subject of the "environment," from as many disciplines as possible.

Fortunately, people from the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Engineering, and Pharmacy as well as Agriculture volunteered papers for publication. All papers that were volunteered were accepted by the editor. Unfortunately, a few potential authors from whom contributions were solicited did not respond. Consequently, certain areas that some readers may believe to be important to the topic may not appear.

While Farm Research usually emphasizes agricultural production and marketing topics which are prepared primarily by staff members in the Agricultural Experiment Station, the contributors in this issue represent a broader spectrum of interests.

Three "E" terms, Earth Science, Ecology and Environment, have been used by biologists, agriculturalists and teachers for many years. Within the past year these terms have become household words, primarily because the popular press and news media have reacted to "popular movements". In certain areas, people have become polarized for or against these types of environmental activities. Some of the proponents of environmental activities, the "Instant Ecologists," have made irresponsible statements which upon examination clearly indicate a lack of comprehension of the inter-related chemical, physical, social and moral aspects which in their totality contribute to and indeed govern the "environment" on this spaceship Earth.

On this matter, polarization of groups of people into categories of polluters against non-polluters, consumers against producers, conservationists against farmers, laymen against scientists, etc., will serve little useful long-range purpose. However, improved dissemination of knowledge with ultimate understanding and application of knowledge by people will be helpful and must serve an ultimate useful purpose. Those who advocate challenging virtually every form of technological advance, particularly as they pertain to the use in food production, obviously have not considered that it is not technological advance itself but the manner in which man applies technological advances that significantly contributes to the environmental benefits and problems.

Of particular interest to North Dakota, an agricultural state deriving about 85 per cent of its annual new wealth from farming and agri-business activities, is recognition of the fact that the environment is affected by all living things. However, of all living things, man has the unique capabilities of planning, utilizing, and generally exhibiting a degree of control over the resources which affect his life and that of the plants, animals and microorganisms which he utilizes to enhance his life. Consequently, it is essential for man to pick and choose and wisely employ those resources which will affect his life not only for today but for the short term and long term effect as well.

Within the pages of this journal, some of these issues are enumerated. Hopefully, as you peruse this copy, the concept that we are but "stewards of the land" will appear to have greater meaning to all of us. Concern about our environment is not only a matter for popular discussion for some people, it is a matter of significance for each one of us. As individuals we must consider the degree with which we make our independent contribution to the quality of our environment.

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