

## Toward a worldview of the human environment

Except for those who had unrealistically high hopes, progress made at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, which ended last week in Stockholm, was encouraging.

A statement of environmental principles approved by the conference (see below) takes full cognizance of the needs of the underdeveloped nations but at the same time omits the harsh political condemnations of Western nations which the Peoples Republic of China tried to get incorporated. On the other hand, the statement recognizes the need for industrialized nations to increase financial assistance to developing nations, a provision the United States opposed, at least in the sense of being inflexibly against increasing its own contributions.

Delegates approved the establishment of a new U.N. environmental agency which appears to have considerable potential for effective action. The agency must now be approved by the General Assembly. It would not only coordinate the environmental activities of other U.N. agencies (such as the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization) but also operate its own programs. These programs would include one for coordinating scientific studies of the environment and another for establishing

an environmental monitoring system. A possible third one would entail the arbitration of international environmental disputes.

A possible fly in the ointment could be the relatively low level of funding for the agency. Funding was set at \$20 million a year for five years, considerably less than requested by the conference secretariat. Maurice F. Strong of Canada, organizer of the Stockholm Conference, would presumably be director of the new agency.

A relatively neglected area at Stockholm was population control, reflected in the fairly pallid statement on population included in the final version of the environmental principles. Underdeveloped nations tended to see population control as a racist or neocolonial device. China, particularly, was adamant in its claim that with a fair distribution of goods within and between nations, overpopulation does not loom as nearly so large a problem as when there are vast deprived groups coexisting with more affluent classes.

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Whether or not DDT is a worldwide pollutant and thus needs to be regulated by the kind of international action discussed at Stockholm is still argued. But the evidence grows that even if it is not a worldwide contaminant, DDT certain-

ly is disseminated over large portions of the globe, for instance, over most of the North Atlantic Ocean (SN: 1/8/72, p. 30).

Use of DDT in the developed countries has steadily declined in the past few years. In the United States, its use on cotton was the last remaining large one (about 85 percent of the total, or 10 million tons used annually). Smaller amounts were applied to soybean and peanut crops. For the past three years there has been court and regulatory agency activity aimed at halting these uses.

Last week, William D. Ruckelshaus, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, ordered a near total ban on DDT use in the United States, effective Dec. 31, 1972. Ruckelshaus' decision reversed one earlier this year by a Federal hearing examiner.

The Ruckelshaus action amounted to a choice between two evils. He concluded that organophosphate pesticides, although more toxic than DDT, pose less of a total threat, because they are far less persistent. They thus do not menace ecosystems over long periods and are not likely to become worldwide pollutants. He noted that his decision was an outgrowth of the furor over pesticides that began with the publication of Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* in 1962. □

## An international declaration of environmental principles

Following are excerpts from the statement of principles from the Declaration on the Human Environment adopted last week by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment:

[1]

Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality which permits a life of dignity and well-being, and bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations. In this respect, policies promoting or perpetuating apartheid, racial segregation, discrimination, colonial and other forms of oppression and foreign domination stand condemned and must be eliminated.

[2]

The natural resources of the earth including the air, water, land, flora and fauna and especially representative samples of natural ecosystems must be safeguarded for the benefit of present and future generations through careful planning or management as appropriate.

[3]

The capacity of the earth to produce vital renewable resources must be maintained and wherever practicable restored or improved.

[4]

Man has a special responsibility to safeguard and wisely manage the heritage of wild-

life and its habitat which are now gravely imperiled by a combination of adverse factors. Nature conservation including wildlife must therefore receive importance in planning for economic developments.

[5]

The nonrenewable resources of the earth must be employed in such a way as to guard against the danger of their future exhaustion and to insure that benefits from such employment are shared by all mankind.

[6]

The discharge of toxic substances or of other substances and the release of heat, in such quantities or concentrations as to exceed the capacity of the environment to render them harmless, must be halted in order to insure that serious or irreversible damage is not inflicted upon ecosystems. The just struggle of the peoples of all countries against pollution should be supported.

[7]

States shall take all possible steps to prevent pollution of the seas by substances that are liable to create hazards to human health, to harm living resources and marine life, to damage amenities or to interfere with other legitimate uses of the sea.

[8]

Economic and social development is essential for insuring a favorable living and

working environment for man and for creating conditions on earth that are necessary for the improvement of the quality of life. . . .

[15]

Planning must be applied to human settlements and urbanization with a view to avoiding adverse effects on the environment and obtaining maximum social, economic and environmental benefits for all. In this respect projects which are designed for colonial and racist domination must be abandoned. . . .

[24]

International matters concerning the protection and improvement of the environment should be handled in a cooperative spirit by all countries, big or small, on an equal footing. Cooperation through multilateral or bilateral arrangements or other appropriate means is essential to prevent, eliminate or reduce and effectively control adverse environmental effects resulting from activities conducted in all spheres, in such a way that due account is taken of the sovereignty and interests of all states. . . .

[26]

Man and his environment must be spared the effects of nuclear weapons and all other means of mass destruction. States must strive to reach prompt agreement, in the relevant international organs, on the elimination and complete destruction of such weapons.