

THIS GOOD GOOD EARTH: OUR FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL. By Ralph O. Brinkhurst and Donald A. Chant. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada. 1971. Pp. X, 174. \$6.95.

I enthusiastically accepted the invitation extended to me to review this recently published book, co-authored by Ralph O. Brinkhurst and Donald A. Chant. No doubt there are many who question the right and perhaps even the competence of a person whose discipline is law to critically review a book written by persons whose discipline is zoology, but I do not presume to challenge the undeniable scientific competence of these two authors and therefore consider such criticism without foundation.

The conglomerate of problems which together constitute the environmental problem are fascinating, frustrating and extremely complex. In this book the authors have identified many of the relevant issues and it is because these issues have been identified that I would recommend this book to all those persons with an interest in, but little knowledge of, the kind of fight which survival will demand of us. Nevertheless, the book invites substantial criticism.

In the raising of problems and the identification of issues the book is often rambling and repetitious, apparently more a compilation of classroom lectures than the reflection of a conscious decision to write a book. Further, certain of the issues that are fundamental to an understanding of environmental problems are identified in different chapters of the book with neither the implications of these issues nor their inter-relationship being adequately developed. Particular reference can be made to the issues of population, the growth ethic, and the depletion of non-renewable resources. In at least three places in this book those very astounding facts and figures relative to global population growth are quoted. The implications of such growth are also suggested in various places in the book. Had the authors first presented the facts and then suggested the implications of them, the impact on the reader would have been considerably more effective. I am not saying that the authors failed to direct the reader to the implications of global population growth. What I am saying is that the implications, like the facts, appear at several different places in the form of relatively disturbing scenarios which depict increasing psychic, social, physical and economic crises in our burgeoning urban centres with the at least equally disturbing possibility of witnessing in our lifetime the devastation of part, if not all, of the human race.

The whole issue of population growth is very closely related to that of the ethic of growth — an ethic which appears to have permeated all of industrial mankind, and apparently exists independent of political ideologies and economic systems. At different places in the book the authors comment upon this phenomenon but fail to fully develop the relationship between the growth ethic and certain other environmental problems and the implications to be drawn from that relationship. Clearly the authors recognize and accept that growth, as reflected in the Gross National Product, is fundamentally related to other environmental problems. But in recognizing this the

authors have made minimal comment upon the existing human attitudes that are reflected in the growth ethic and the implications that must be considered when suggestions are made for changing human attitudes. Finally, the relationship between population growth, the growth ethic, and the rapid disappearance of both our non-renewable and renewable resources was only briefly mentioned, even though the importance of this relationship was acknowledged.

I have one other major criticism. At different times in the book the reader has described to him the metamorphosis of the ecologist from the ivory tower recluse into the battlefield aggressor. The new involvement of the ecologist is absolutely necessary and his timely arrival on the scene is welcomed. But to suggest either overtly or covertly that it is the ecologist who will see us through to victory reflects an optimism which belies the authors' obvious appreciation of the multi-faceted character of the environmental problem. The environmental problem or problems identified in this book are at least as much social, moral, legal, technical, engineering, managerial, economic, institutional, political and bureaucratic, as they are scientific. This being so, the zoologist is no more capable of solving or recommending solutions to these problems than is any other individual. What the ecologist can do is assist each of us in developing an awareness of the ecological system of which man is only a part and then identifying for us how certain activities, either alone or in concert with others, are likely to affect both specific eco-systems and the global environment. As the authors rightly point out, man has been too long indifferent to his surroundings and the biologist not only can but must teach us the consequences of this indifference. That the difficulties are numerous and the challenge a great one I do not doubt, but it is here that the ecologist is both our greatest need and our greatest hope and the authors assure us that they are ready and able to meet the challenge.

In this book all of the following issues and problems are identified and some are developed and commented upon: the declining reserves of non-renewable resources, the increasing demands for energy, the increasing discharge of carbon dioxide and other gaseous and particulate matter into the atmosphere, the discharge of an increasingly complex range of liquid and solid wastes into our water systems, the invariably unintended destructive consequences of pesticide use, the inadequacy and the irrationality of our sewage collection, treatment and disposal practices, the existence and effects of cumulative poisons, the eradication of many animal and bird species and the endangering of many more, the dependence of man both for food and for oxygen upon the continued fertility of our oceans, the need for new and better pollution abatement technology, the eutrophication of our water systems, the conflicts in the scientific community over minimum tolerable levels of a variety of pollutants, the conservatism of bureaucracies, the frequent unwillingness of politicians to make decisions until all the facts are in — even though all the facts will never be in, the need for and the frustration of the public activist, the inability of the public at large and the individual in particular to have guaranteed access to governmental information relevant

to environmental problems, the global nature of the pollution problem and certain other problems which need not be mentioned here.

There are characteristics in all of these environmental problems which require the involvement of lawyers if these problems are to be resolved. But this involvement must be much more than the traditional lawyer's role of counseling a client as to what he can or cannot do within the existing laws or advocating the interests of his clients when those interests have come in conflict with the interests of another. First, and as a member of the body politic with some freedoms but, more importantly, with responsibilities which are correlatives of those freedoms, he must decide for himself what kind of social, economic and political system he wants. He must then decide whether that is the kind of system which we have. If he concludes that all things are the best in the best of all possible worlds, then he will continue to counsel his client and advocate his client's interests. But if he perceives that both as a society and as a world we are confronted with existing and potential conflicts of rights, interests and privileges, then the lawyer perhaps more than any other professional, is in a position to identify those weaknesses in our laws, our institutions and our legal system which made it possible for the existing problems to materialize and which render emerging problems as possible if not inevitable. Can a lawyer help us to decide how it is that air and water, both common property resources, have deteriorated to their present condition? How is it that municipalities can continue to dump untreated or only partially treated sewage into our water systems when it is acknowledged that to do so can have only negative effects? How is it that industries can continue to produce things that are frequently not needed, from resources that are becoming scarce, for distribution to a very small percentage of the world's population, using already seriously taxed energy resources in the process and discharging a whole array of wastes, many of them poisonous, as a consequence of this activity? How is it that urban centres can continue to grow when they are apparently incapable of coping with their existing problems? Why is it that new technology is too often developed independent of an understanding of its effects on the environment? How can we control population concentration and growth? How can we change human attitudes? Does the present generation have any responsibility to protect or conserve the environment for future generations? What kinds of environmental controls should be exacted before permits are given for the exploration for and the exploitation of Canadian resources? How and what kinds of environmental safeguards can be imposed on those people who transport and consume these resources? How is it that the fishermen of Placentia Bay, Nova Scotia, Lake Winnipeg, and Lake St. Claire can be deprived of their traditional livelihood without any apparent right to be compensated? How can individuals protect themselves from the involuntary and frequently unsuspected ingestion of heavy metals, persistent organic chemicals, pesticides, when their source is unnatural and their effects identifiable only after years or generations?

There are many other questions which this book raises and which offer a direct and heady challenge to the lawyer. Briefly stated, the challenge is to change our lifestyles and to preserve the human species. The problem is

as big and complex as the human race. Other people and other disciplines are rising to this challenge. The lawyer should not, indeed cannot, fail to do the same.

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