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RODERICK HAIG-BROWN

The following article is from the keynote address which B.C.'s distinguished author-conservationist delivered to the 1970 annual convention of the Alberta Fish and Game Association.

THE SPORTSMANS PLACE IN A

It is a strange thing to be with you today. I wouldn't have found it nearly so strange a year or so ago, 2 years ago, and not strange at all 5 years ago. But today conservation, anti-pollution, all those sort of things are suddenly a popular cause and instead of speaking to a group of enthusiasts who all know each other we are talking to a large world. All of a sudden everybody has become a conservationist and it is almost easy to believe that great things are going to be done. Now you will forgive me, I am sure, if I take a slightly twisted look at it all and say "I wonder?" I wonder just how long this acute public interest is going to hold up. We have had other fads and fancies.

Certainly pollution can be readily controlled and kept under control if we really want to do it. Certainly we can achieve sound use of soil, air and water if we really want to. Certainly we can protect wildlife populations, preserve ecologies, provide unspoiled space, keep a beautiful world for ourselves and our children, if we really want to and if we can keep on wanting to.

Now perhaps this deathbed repentance has come in time and all will be well but it is going to take a lot of good nursing still and plenty of psychology





Richard Wright

DEVELOPING WORLD

and psycho-therapy to keep it going. Even then we are going to have to keep a close watch to make sure that the patient doesn't go off on another wild drunk and reduce himself to a worse state than before. It's an interesting thought that anyone over 50 today can probably look forward to living out his life without major dislocation. Anyone under 50 cannot, unless we undertake immediately much more drastic action than any we are now talking about. I am putting this to you as a background to the more limited conservation field that we knew before.

Distinguished scientists—very distinguished scientists, let's face it—have seriously postulated at least half a dozen theories of global pollution, any one of which unchecked could mean the end of the human species. I am going to

run over those theories just to keep them in your minds. There is the theory of oxygen depletion or carbon dioxide exchange, mainly through the burning of the fossil fuels but aided by the destruction of plant life in all forms from photo-synthetic algae to grass and trees. Then there is the greenhouse theory in which air pollution affecting sunlight will produce drastic climatic changes. There is stratospheric pollution from rockets and supersonic planes which would form an accumulative belt of interference around the biosphere. There is a very real risk of nuclear contamination either from war or from peaceful uses. Many distinguished people believe that the latter hazard is the worst of all.

There is the highly disturbing and very real possibility of oceanic pollution

from many causes, chief of which are oil and pesticides. We have oil in the Sargasso Sea and we have oil spills in many estuaries, which are critical to life. We believed, until recent work was done in the Eastern U.S., that oil lost most of its toxics rather rapidly. Apparently this is not so. The Sargasso Sea is full of lumps of oil, very small, broken up. Those lumps are taken by fish and they are conveyed to other fish in an unending chain which carries toxins and many other evil things. This presumably is going to go on. Ships have been pumping their bunkers legitimately for years 50 miles off shore and that stuff is not going away. It is sticking around.

There is some inclination to write these broad theories off as fantasy or alarmist exaggeration. That may be, but

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we do not know enough to write any one of them off. It is a grim truth that all of them are progressing in some degree. Nearly all of them are closely interrelated and the sum of the theories, even if no one of them comes out on top, could be a whole lot quicker and more drastic than any one of them alone. We blundered into this situation by forcing ahead with industrial, technological and community developments without bothering to question their true effects.

DDT and chlorinated hydro-carbons are one excellent example of our blundering and I am happy to see that you are very much aware of this fact. Many of us understood the threat in the 1960's and said so. You can, for instance, find it in the transactions of the B.C. Natural Resources Conference. You can find it in my own book *The Living Land*. Rachel Carson did it with very much better dramatic effect in 1962. But only now are we beginning to do something about it and we are doing it still against very substantial resistance. Yet the evil effects of these poisonous compounds will long outlast the lifetime of any one of us. We have done this to ourselves. We are in the process of checking it but this is all we can say for ourselves.

It would be easy to go on with the list of these hazards. One I would like to mention is the innocent herbicides and defoliants 2,4-D, 2,4,5-T and others. Ecologically to me they have always looked pretty horrible. I have always thought that defoliation in Viet Nam was a more vicious and brutal and inconsiderate thing than even the use of napalm. But it did seem that they were not directly harmful to human beings. Both are now quite strongly suspect. 2,4,5-T has been shown to cause serious prenatal defects in rats and mice. Human abnormalities have been showing up in Viet Nam. Furthermore, these products have an interesting by-product called dioxin. In some types of 2,4,5-T dioxin is right there all the time in a substantial quantity. Both of these products, and so far as I know, all the herbicides when burned at certain temperatures, produce dioxin. Dioxin has been calculated, though not yet shown by direct experiment, to be 10,000 times more damaging to unborn creatures than thalidomide. You will remember what happened with thalidomide. Now why haven't we known about this until quite recently? I will tell you exactly why. Because the United States Military didn't want us to know, because the chemical companies didn't want us to know, and the United States Government didn't want us to know. That's the

kind of suppression of knowledge we cannot possibly afford. How can a democracy act if it hasn't got knowledge to work with? How can it act wisely if information is deliberately suppressed? It shakes one a little bit, doesn't it? It does me.

I am something of an optimist. I believe that mankind is going through a bad time and can reason its way out, just as it has half-reasoned its way into the trouble. I believe the 1970's can be a new age of discovery leading to drastically new ways of thinking about ourselves and our civilization; that it can lead to a new standard of economic values and a resolution of some of the conflicts between man and his environment that have been caused by exploiting development and technological ruthlessness. Those two things together are usually called progress and that, as you know, is the thing you can't stand in the way of. Well, someone is going to stand in the way of it and that someone, if they know what is good for them, is going to be the people under 50. Even

NEXT ISSUE:

The ATVs, or All Terrain Vehicles, are with us whether we like it or not. A Canadian authority on recreational vehicles examines these new machines.

more, the people under 40. They have already started on that job and they will do it, I hope, by revolutionary thinking and revolutionary performance within the framework we now know, because that's where it can best be done.

Massive changes are needed in the whole structure and concept of our society, without the delay, which would be fatal, of physical revolution. If the under 40's fail in this or if they are prevented from doing it, then there will be physical revolution within the next two or three decades because people will get scared enough that they will no longer stand still to die.

If that happens I believe it will be the ball game for the human species. I don't think we can stand the disruption of gross physical revolution and come out on top of the problems we now face.

I have emphasized the foregoing statement because I believe it is essential background to anything about conservation, land management, water management, wildlife preservation or the preservation of ourselves. We are

not going to achieve very much so long as we believe in the sacred cows of growth and progress or in the present economic values that we put on things. We have to find a new way of measuring what we want. The old way is not enough. It simply measures profit and loss, dollars and cents and that isn't what life is all about. We have got to have something newer and better. We are not going to achieve very much by acting 20 to 50 years behind our knowledge on the inconvenient things or by acting without knowledge on things that simply look good. We are going to have to challenge a lot more theories than we have in the past and ask a lot more questions. We are going to have to insist on the answers. It is going to be important to look to the young people, listen to the young people and, above all, understand what it is they are trying to tell us. They are trying to tell us that we may live out our normal life span but they can't see it that way for themselves.

I am often asked what is the function of local or special interest clubs in the face of this massive general pollution. The answer is very simple. Keep aware of the big problems. Put your support and some of your money where it will do the most good—in the big organizations designed to fight for the big issues. In Canada this would have to be, at the present time, the Canadian Wildlife Federation, or it may be such organizations as Pollution Probe in Toronto when the anti-pollution people really get organized. You will notice they are stepping up by degrees from little organizations to Provincial organizations and it won't be long before there is one

clear-cut, Federal Canadian organization on anti-pollution. I suggest you watch this. I suggest you put money individually and collectively into the big clubs because \$2 spent for you there will do more than \$5 or \$10 that you can spend in your own way.

But continue your local and special interests with always increased intensity and awareness. Big pollutions are made up of a lot of little pollutions and each one must be detected and fought individually on its home ground. No one is better equipped to do this than the hunter and fisherman. The hunter and fisherman get out at all times of year into all parts of the country. The important thing is to develop the seeing eye. If you see a stream running silt, report it and ask questions. Ask questions all the time. If wet land is being drained, ask why. If you see signs of over-browsing and over-grazing, ask questions. If you see some effluent draining into a stream or a lake, have it checked on. Maybe it isn't harmful, maybe it isn't what you think it is, but if you see it have it checked on. Don't walk by and forget about it. Never let up. Work through your local organizations and through that to the Provincial organization. The Provincial organization needs information, strong local support and money. It should be able to go into any conservation fight knowing more about the issue than either Government or industry, and that takes money.

Conservatively, I would say your Provincial organization should have an annual budget of at least \$100,000. Even on that level of efficiency you will lose quite a few battles but you will always



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get a piece of the other guy's hide. In addition, you will always look good for the next one, which is important because if you take a setback on something you don't know enough about, you look silly. People start to lose faith in you. But if you have the information, even though the money beats you, you look good and they will come back to you next time and make sure you have the money.

You are concerned, I understand, about the loss of wilderness areas. Now a "wilderness area" is hard to define. Are you looking for ecological samples, nature conservancies? Are you looking for wilderness areas two sweeps wide? Are you looking for primitive areas? What is it exactly that you are proposing to do? I think you have to define these terms closely and then you have to go after whatever it is.

But remember this, if you set up parks or wilderness areas that are subject to control by Order-in-Council you will never have one that is safe beyond tomorrow. I know. We have them in B.C. and we lose them right and left, day in and day out, because we have Cabinet Ministers who are not dedicated to any of the kind of ideas under which these things were originally conceived. They

look on them now as easy ways into timber, mineral resources, or whatever else is handy. If you are governed by Order-in-Council as to the disposition of your parks, wilderness areas, nature conservancies or anything else, then you need a new Parks Act, one that insists that all park changes are forced onto the floor of the legislature. Here they can be examined in the full light of publicity, which is just what the politicians don't like.

By the same token you probably need a new Mining Act. Mining priorities and privileges in nearly all the Provinces, as far as I know, are at least 50 years out of date. They probably made sense at the time when the country was underdeveloped. Today they merely stimulate where stimulation is not needed. Study the mining laws. Learn the weak points that no longer make sense and go on the attack. Mining firms have a big country to explore outside the parks and wilderness areas. See that they stay there, under firm control.

For that matter study closely all the laws that affect land use and land management. You may even find in the 1970's that some causes can be defended by well planned lawsuits. You may be able, for instance, to take a Minister

to Court on the grounds that he is improperly exercising discretionary powers permitted to him under a certain Act.

Ecology, habitat, these are now the all-powerful words in fish and wildlife management. Protect your wet lands and grazing areas. Protect your headwater timbers, your streams and lakes and potholes. Then fish and wildlife will survive everything, perhaps except ourselves.

Not so long ago one might have said that the gasoline motor was the friend of the outdoorsman. Today unless it is rigidly controlled it's his worst enemy and the time to control is well in advance of extensive popular use. Once you let extensive popular use in it gets tough. The outboard motor, for instance. We have it all through B.C. on dozens of little lakes where it shouldn't be. It is a total evil on waters where it is not needed and it is constantly used on waters where it should not be used. Control has been far too little and too late. Jet boats, keep them off your rivers and streams if you can. They are a curse, an absolute curse, and if you get enough of them you will realize it. You go to the Dean River in British Columbia today and that's pretty well like stand-



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ing out on the main streets with the traffic going up and down. Wherever you let them in, you will have fishermen running up and down from pool to pool in jet boats when if they just stayed in one place and fished they would do a lot better—and so would everyone else.

The airplane and the helicopter have no place in either hunting or spotting game. Tie them down as tightly as you can to transportation—and only transportation. The tote-goat, the various crawlers, I don't know what they are called, and, above all, the snowmobile are not outdoorsman's tools. If you use them today you will regret it in a few years. Keep guns and rifles out of them absolutely. Confine them closely to specific roads and trails. The snowmobile even at its most innocent can do untold damage by disturbing game on winter ranges and subjecting weakened animals to fatal stresses. The time to control it firmly and absolutely is now. It should have been sooner. Controlling these creatures shouldn't be all that hard. They are expensive machines, all of them, and I suggest that the right form of control is confiscation for breach.

In this context I think it is important to ask ourselves just what is the sports-

man's place in the developing world. Many others now share the outdoors with the sportsman. Observers, naturalists, hikers, climbers, campers, swimmers, skiers, people who want to watch wild animals, perhaps photograph them, certainly not kill them or disturb them unduly. This is a growing multitude whose opinions and votes will be critical to the kind of country we can preserve.

If the sportsman goes out into the woods and fields and along the streams as a meat hunter, a competitor dragging along with him the complexities and gadgets of civilization, he is an intruder and an anomaly detrimental to himself and to others. If this is the way he chooses to go about it he will not last, the other people will put him out of business. If he goes out to escape the gadgets and complexities; if he goes in search of identity, to become a sensitive part of the natural world, concerned with the place and the wholeness of the place, in all its features, rather than his kill, then I believe he has a valid part in it all and will last.

It's a new world that calls for new and radically different ways of thinking. We have crossed a continent, we have opened it up by ruthless, destructive,

competitive ways. Perhaps they were necessary, they are needed no longer. In fact we can no longer afford them. The problem today is to learn to live in harmony with a land that has been opened up. To use it, but not abuse it. This calls for a new and different type of individual than our old ideal. A more thoughtful, more sensitive, far more generous and understanding man than our early concepts.

Look to the young people, I say again, and listen to them. They have got the message long since intuitively and emotionally, but that isn't quite enough. We have to understand them and we have to teach them as well as learn from them. We have to teach them appreciation instead of competition, obligations rather than rights, consideration for life rather than concern for death. Teach them above all what we ourselves have had to learn that the earth is a whole and the earth is finite; that wildlife is dependent on the earth and part of the earth. When the sod is plowed the soil blows. When the trees are cut the streams dry up. When the streams are muddied then fish are dead. When the swamp is drained the geese are gone. We know these things. See that the young know them, too. ■



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