

## OUR ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

In 1970 concern for the health of our environment became so great that action groups formed all across Canada. They declared October 14 Survival Day in Canada and in most major cities they presented anti-pollution briefs to different levels of government.

The group in Regina known as Regina Pollution Probe presented its brief to the Provincial Government on October 14. In addition it organized a four-day teach-in, October 21-24, called Our Environmental Crisis. Concerned members of the general public met with professional biologists, chemists and social scientists to discuss various aspects of environmental deterioration. The teach-in was officially opened by John A. Livingston who emphasized, as did C. F. Bentley in the September *Blue Jay*, that pollution is related directly to population and to our current policies which expect and encourage continuing growth and expansion especially in industry.

During the second day various problems of pollution in Saskatchewan were discussed. Roy Cullimore reviewed what is known about the long term effects of pesticides on soil fertility. Pat Tones talked about pollution in the North Saskatchewan River below the pulp mill at Prince Albert (see September *Blue Jay*). Maureen Rever noted the effect of the Prince Albert pulp mill on our forests and Gary Wobeser discussed the problem of mercury pollution in Saskatchewan waters. During the evening Andrew Hamilton of the Fisheries Research Institute in Winnipeg gave a paper on phosphates and water pollution. This was followed by a panel discussion of the problems of pollution in our Qu'Appelle waterways.

During the third day attention focused on the population problem and resource exploitation. The consensus was that too frequently decisions are made with immediate economic gain in mind. As a result, effects on the environment are disregarded and long-term economic or conservation results ignored. One speaker from the audience spoke of the environment damage being done in the Arctic and of the polluting effect of thousands of abandoned oil drums; another volunteer spoke of the "cesspool of oil-coated waters" (*Leader-Post*, October 16, 1970) in the Moose Mountain Provincial Park. The analysis of local situations led to a statement concerning the world-wide implication of modern trends: the frightening prospect of a planet of concrete highways and parking lots and dead waterways and oceans.

During the teach-in participants viewed various films, some delightfully imaginative and beautiful, and some (like the film on strip-mining in West Virginia) explicit concerning the deplorable results of human greed. All made clear that man must decide whether convenience, pleasure and profit are worth the price which will inevitably be paid for them.

The teach-in ended with various committees preparing position papers and resolutions. (One titled "Government, Industry and Water Pollution," prepared by the Society for Environmental Action in the Qu'Appelle, is available from Regina Pollution Probe, 2363 McIntyre, Regina. It cites the Moose Jaw River as one of the most heavily polluted waterways in Saskatchewan but in spite of the Water Resources Commission report of June 1969 nothing has been done to improve the situation. The contribution of industry to water pollution in the Moose Jaw River is well documented.) During the evening a panel of three politicians discussed the resolutions and answered various questions from the floor. It is evident that elected political figures are reluctant to commit themselves concerning definite anti-pollution and conservation programs. While it is true that the entire problem is a complex one and requires expert planning, it is nevertheless essential that elected representatives of the people show a willingness to be independent and courageous. Unfortunately, that part of the teach-in designed to present the viewpoints of the various political parties in the country and of individual politicians was a disappointment. It appears that we must expend more time in convincing politicians of the importance of our concern.

The teach-in was a success because people from all segments of the community joined in voicing concern about the health and future of the environment. You can help by becoming better informed. You can write to companies which pollute. You can write to governments and politicians in support of our SNHS resolutions all of which will be printed in full in our next newsletter.