

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR POLLUTION?

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“ . . . the leaving of untidy camps . . . and all those acts which mark the intruder who does not understand the quietude and awesomeness of unspoilt creation”.—R. D. Symons, 1970. *The Broken Snare*, p. 218.

Many of us are today frightened about pollution. And we talk — endlessly.

We talk about the big industrial companies and their practices. We ask for laws to punish Big Business. We ask for protection for our environment. All this is good, but it does not go far enough in a practical way.

We forget that our own desire to possess all the new things which industry offers us is the one and only reason which induces these companies to carry on their operations.

The responsibility, moreover, rests directly on every *small* industry, every city, town and village, and finally on our own selves as individuals. Every person who demands *more* of everything than he actually requires contributes to pollution. Every child who throws away his candy-wrapper, every woman who discards a facial tissue on the street, every man who throws a bottle on the roadside is equally guilty, and surely in justice should be as liable to correction as any industry which we decry as “irresponsible”. That such small acts, taken individually, might not feasibly be corrected by law does not in the least alter the fact that an act of pollution has been committed.

Surely, if we feel so strongly, we could at least discipline ourselves (never mind our neighbours) to break these habits. Such a regard for cleanliness and good manners would, I am sure, be catching, and others would follow suit.

If we can today go to the moon, surely . . . ?

Take a look around for a change, after reading in the papers about the shortcomings of the industrialists. Watch the farmers baling hay on the verges of No. 1 Highway. Talk to them. They will tell you of the bottles which wreck machinery and cut the mouths of cattle.

Look at the sidewalk opposite the Grey Nuns' Hospital. Look at the

street and sidewalk in front of any small grocery store. Look at the shrubbery bordering your lawn as the snow melts and see the rubbish that has gathered there. Look at the mess in the school yards.

Watch a group of intelligent business or professional people at a convention in a lovely garden setting. See them taking polaroid photographs and watch what they do with the wrappers. One would think that pockets and bags had never been invented.

And having looked at these things, let us promise ourselves that we shall never again discard a bottle, a paper, a facial tissue, or a wrapper or box of any kind, in a public place, nor allow our children to do so.

And then, friends, let us shout and scream, march with banners, storm the legislatures and *demand* — with a clear conscience — that pollution shall be punished.

Editor's Note: The following quotation from another author deeply concerned about today's ecology reads as follows:

“Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed; if we permit the last virgin forests to be turned into comic books and plastic cigarette cases; if we drive the few remaining members of the wild species into zoos or to extinction; if we pollute the last clean air and dirty the last clean streams and push our paved roads through the last of the silence, so that never again will Canadians be free in their own country from the noise, the exhausts, the stinks of human and automotive waste, and so that never again can we have the chance to see ourselves single, separate, vertical and individual in the world, part of the environment of trees and rocks and soil, brother to the other animals, part of the natural world and competent to belong in it”.—*Wallace Stegner*.