

*Environmental Teach-In**

BY DENIS HAYES

A NEW MOVEMENT is building in this country—a movement concerned with life. Its goal is a healthy environment. Its next major target date is April 22.

In organizing for April 22, we have run into some widespread myths which should be dispelled: One is that environmental concerns will be a quieting force—stilling troubled campuses and healing the wounds of a divided nation. That is wishful thinking. There are fundamental value conflicts between those who seek a better world and those who care only for size,

speed and profit. And an even greater division will occur in this country if those now piously calling for environmental change later try to short-change the necessary programs.

Another myth is that the environment movement will co-opt people from other pressing social concerns to march on pollution. It won't. For ecology is concerned with the total system—not just the way it disposes of its garbage. Our goal is not to clean the air while leaving slums and ghettos, nor is it to provide a healthy world for racial oppression and war. We wish to make the probability of life greater, and the quality of life higher. Those who share these goals cannot be “co-opted”; they are our allies—not our competitors.

* Complete text of a statement by the 25-year-old director of The Environmental Teach-In, Inc., at a press conference on January 20, 1970.



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Another myth is that the environmental issue will defuse the anti-war movement. It won't. What happens to the anti-war movement depends on events in Washington, Vietnam and Paris. Students and other Americans are fully able to be concerned about more than one issue at the same time.

The environmental movement is building, but environmental concerns are not something new. Henry Thoreau and Teddy Roosevelt were, in a very real sense, "ecology freaks," and a number of conservation organizations have been quietly fighting vital battles over the last half century. But by and large, they've been losing.

They've been losing because decision-makers have traditionally tended to view environmental destruction as a public relations problem—assigning it to the desks of advertising men. When environmental issues come up, the public is deluged with full-page ads about the battle for a quality environment.

There have been a record number of such ads these last few months, but the people of Gary and Detroit and Birmingham are still coughing. The people of America are coughing, and our eyes are running and our roofs are corroding and our lungs are blackening and our reproductive organs are accumulating dangerous levels of heavy metals. And we're getting angry.

We find ourselves in the prologue to unanticipated disaster. It is already too late to avoid mass starvation, widespread internal diseases, exhaustion of valuable resources, and the senseless deaths of trees and lakes and people. All that we can now avoid is the ultimate compounding of our mistakes—the death of our planet—and time is running out.

The next stage in the environmental movement in this country must concern itself with widening the base of educated support. The small conservation organizations have done their best, but the time has come to involve the whole society. As one vehicle toward this end, we are encouraging a national campaign of environmental education—culminating on April 22 in a nation-wide teach-in.

The environmental teach-in is being planned and organized at the local level, with local people deciding for themselves the issues upon which to focus and the activities which are most appropriate to their particular situations. We hope to involve an entire society in a rethinking of many of its basic assumptions.

The response to date has been encouraging. We have already begun building a network which extends to all fifty states. Three hundred and fifty college cam-

pus and two hundred high schools, as well as a variety of clubs and organizations, have begun to plan. Most of the plans are tentative at this stage, but here are a few examples which give an idea of what's happening around the country.

- Northwestern University is having an all-night teach-in this Friday (January 23). Speakers will include Adlai Stevenson III, conservationist Attorney General Scott, Professor Barry Commoner, and Paul Ehrlich.
- In early February the students at San Jose State College plan a full week of activity, including the burial of an entire 1970 automobile.
- In early March the University of Michigan will spur Ann Arbor to three days of education, community canvassing, and various action projects.
- Mayor Carl Stokes of Cleveland has stated that he will declare April 22 an official day of environmental concern.
- And young people of northern California plan a 30-day spring march to Los Angeles, arriving April 22.

The tasks ahead are enormous; our accomplishments to date have been trifling. But there's little survival value in pessimism—and we are beginning to dare to hope.



Courtesy Federal Water Pollution Control Administration.

Littered and polluted Rock Creek, Washington, D.C.