

OUR CHILDREN'S WORLD

STEELWORKERS AND THE ENVIRONMENT



*Report of the USWA Task Force on Environment
with
The Environmental Keynote Address
at the 25th Constitutional Convention*

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In the Spring of 1990, the United Steelworkers of America created a task force to examine environmental issues and their impact on union families. The task force was charged with considering the following questions: How serious are the environmental problems we face? How will those problems affect our children, and our children's children? Does environmental protection cost jobs? How is environment linked to other critical issues, like economic justice? What impact can North American workers have on global environmental problems? Is there a particular role for unions to play in protecting the environment? Should the USWA expand its work on environmental issues?

Over the next few months, the members of the task force met with local union officers and members from throughout North America. The task force examined and debated environmental issues at length. The resulting report was presented to the union's Twenty-Fifth

Constitutional Convention in Toronto on August 30, 1990 by George F. Becker, International Vice-President/Administration, who chaired the task force. The report was accompanied by panel discussions and open debate from the floor. In the end, the report, and the environmental policy it recommends, were overwhelmingly adopted by the convention's 2,163 delegates.

The task force report is reprinted here in its entirety. Set apart from the text are the words of union members who helped with a video version of the report. The video is available from the USWA Health, Safety and Environment Department.

Also presented in this publication is the environmental keynote speech to the convention by the Honorable Stephen Lewis, chairman of the first International Conference on Climate Change in 1988 and former Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations. Ambassador Lewis describes the linkage between worker solidarity, economic justice and the global environment.

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OUR CHILDREN'S WORLD

REPORT OF THE USWA TASK FORCE
ON ENVIRONMENT

*Adopted at the USWA Twenty-Fifth Constitutional Convention
Toronto, Canada*

August 1990

OUR CHILDREN'S WORLD

REPORT OF THE USWA TASK FORCE ON ENVIRONMENT

STEELWORKERS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

In the old days, we thought that smoke meant jobs. That pollution was a byproduct of prosperity. And that if the air smelled funny, and the mill killed all the fish in the river, such was the price of progress. Besides, you could always get away on the weekend to a place where the air was pure, the lake was clean and the fishing was good.

Today we know better. "Smoke" has become "air pollution," with a host of noxious ingredients like sulfur dioxide, which corrodes our lungs, and benzene, which menaces our children with leukemia. Millions of tons of toxic chemicals get dumped into our water every day, from heavy metals to organic solvents. They threaten not only fish, but every person downstream.

Decades ago, nobody worried much about hazardous waste. Today we are spending billions of dollars in what can only be a partial clean-up of thousands of sites that threaten public health. Entire communities, such as Times Beach in Missouri, have been abandoned because of contamination by hazardous waste.

Pollution issues used to be local. The smoke from a factory affected the town, but not the world beyond. No longer. Acid rain, generated by pollutants from power plants, factories and automobiles, threatens forests and lakes half way across the continent and may contribute to thousands of deaths every year.

Nor do the problems stop at national borders. Some are truly global. Chlorofluorocarbons like Freon are slowly destroying the protective layer of ozone in the Earth's upper atmosphere. The ozone layer shields us from harmful ultraviolet radiation; if it is lost, the result will be serious damage to human and animal life, and to crops.

The burning of fossil fuels like petroleum and coal generates billions of tons of carbon dioxide every year. This gas and others trap heat in the atmosphere. The resulting global warming could melt the ice caps, flood our coastal cities and turn huge agricultural areas into deserts. The problem is made worse by the widespread destruction of our forests, which help absorb excess carbon dioxide.

The loss of forests and other habitats threatens many species of plants and animals

with extinction. Even our oceans are at risk from toxic runoff, oil spills and waste dumping at sea.

Added together, these problems may threaten the ultimate

capability of our resources to sustain civilization.

Can the destruction of our environment be stopped? If so, who will pay the price? Some would have us believe that these problems are not as serious as we think, or that they can be left for the next generation to solve. Others maintain that pollution is still the price of progress, and that attempting to end it would cause massive economic dislocation, putting millions out of work.

The argument can get personal. Some companies, faced with new regulations, have threatened to shut down, pitting workers against environmentalists. Additional controls would be just too expensive, these companies say, and workers who want to save their jobs had better line up behind their employers.

**WE CANNOT
PROTECT
STEELWORKER
JOBS BY
IGNORING
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROBLEMS.**

I want a world for my children where they can have clean air to breathe and clean water to drink; I really don't think that's asking too much.

TOM WYNN
Local Union 480
Trail, BC



Are they right? Do we really have to choose between our jobs and the environment? Is our economy threatened by efforts to stop environmental damage? Or is a damaged environment the real threat to our economic well-being? Can we afford to wait? What kind of world do we want to leave our children?

The USWA Environmental Task Force was chartered to examine these questions. We met four times. Task force members talked to union staff and local union members about environmental issues. We heard from prominent

environmentalists. We examined previous USWA statements and policies. Particularly helpful was the 1989 Canadian Policy Conference Paper on the Environment.

We believe the greatest threat to our children's future may lie in the destruction of their environment. For that reason alone, environment must be an issue for our union. In addition, we cannot protect Steelworker jobs by ignoring environmental problems. This report summarizes our findings and recommendations, beginning with a basic review of the threat to our environment.

WHAT WE FACE

Over the last century, the relationship between human beings and the planet that sustains us has undergone a profound change. When the century began, our population and our technology did not have the power to alter our environment irreversibly. Now they do. Yet that power seems out of control, creating enormous

IN 1989, 119 URBAN AREAS IN THE UNITED STATES, HOME TO HALF THE COUNTRY'S POPULATION, VIOLATED ANNUAL AIR POLLUTION LIMITS.

conflicts between human activities and the natural world. Some of the problems are local and familiar; others are global, and seem difficult to comprehend. All of them are critical to our survival.

Air Pollution

Steelworkers know about air pollution. In October of 1948 a temperature inversion trapped the smoke and dust from zinc smelters and railroad locomotives in Donora, Pennsylvania. By the time it was over, 20 people had died from breathing polluted air. More than six thousand suffered lung problems. Shortly afterward, the Donora smelters shut down forever.

Today the air is cleaner, but is it clean enough? Union members must contend with dirty air in many of the plants where they work. And what children breathe outside the plant is similar to what their parents breathe inside the plant. A great deal of pollution is also caused by non-industrial sources, like automobiles, power plants, and waste incineration.

Some pollutants are especially common:

Sulfur dioxide, emitted by power plants, nonferrous smelters and coke batteries,

causes severe respiratory problems and contributes to acid rain.

Oxides of nitrogen, from auto exhaust and industrial plants, cause lung irritation, increase susceptibility to viral infections, and are a secondary cause of acid rain.

Particulates, tiny particles of dust from many industrial sources, also cause lung damage.

Carbon monoxide, mostly from automobiles, affects the blood's ability to carry oxygen, thereby leading to heart disease.

Hydrocarbons, from automobiles, chemical plants, spray painting and many other sources, react with other chemicals and sunlight to produce urban smog and cause breathing problems.

Ozone is formed in the atmosphere by reactions between hydrocarbons and oxides of nitrogen. Thirty miles above the Earth, naturally occurring ozone helps protect us from harmful solar radiation. But at ground level, ozone formed from pollutants is a corrosive poison, irritating the respiratory system and aggravating heart and lung disease.

Air toxics are thousands of especially dangerous chemicals such as benzene and lead, mostly emitted from industrial plants. They cause a variety of diseases, including cancer.

New laws in both countries have led to somewhat cleaner air. Automobiles produced in 1990, for example, emit much less pollution than their 1970 counterparts.



But our air is still harmful. In 1989, for example, 119 urban areas in the United States, home to half the country's population, violated annual air pollution limits. Canada has fewer air pollution problems, due to its lower population density and cooler climate,



but many Canadian cities also exceed air pollution limits.

And the improvements have slowed. With one exception, emissions of the most serious air pollutants in the United States have diminished only slightly or not at all since 1975. (The exception is lead, which dropped by 93% when it was phased out of gasoline.) Millions of North Americans are still threatened by polluted air.

Water Pollution

North America is blessed with abundant water. Canada alone has 20 percent of the world's fresh water. But there are regional shortages, especially in the American Southwest.

Today, our two countries' water quality is threatened as never before. New regulations have cut the amount of pollutants flowing directly from municipal sewage treatment and industrial plants. But it is possible to detect pesticides, toxic metals and industrial chemicals in many of the lakes and rivers we depend on for our water. The pesticides

come from agricultural runoff and aerial spraying of forests and residential areas; toxic metals and chemicals come from industrial sources, and from consumer products dumped down the drain.

Lake Erie, which washes the shores of both countries, provides an example of what we can do to clean our waters, and what remains to be done. By 1960, the lake was considered "dead" because of the accumulated effects of municipal sewage, fertilizer runoff and industrial waste. Thick green mats of algae floated on its surface; beaches were littered with dead fish. But through a joint program between the U.S. and Canada, more than \$9 billion was spent on new sewage treatment plants and other measures. Phosphates, which pollute the lake, were banned from laundry detergents; industrial discharges were restricted. As a result, the lake lives again. It is used for recreation; fishing is coming back. But hundreds of dangerous chemicals can still be found in its waters. Some comes from industrial discharges; some, from municipal and agricultural runoff. Some comes from overhead; much of the contamination in all the Great Lakes comes from air pollutants drifting down from the sky. It will be much harder to control these sources.

Water is growing scarcer in some areas. Intensive irrigation aids agriculture, but much of the water is lost to evaporation. Groundwater supplies are diminishing, and some have been contaminated by hazardous chemicals.

Dirty water affects more than the fish. Most water treatment plants kill bacteria, but do nothing about chemicals. A hundred years ago, villages would dump their waste downstream, while taking drinking water from upstream. Today, we all live downstream.

Toxic Chemicals

More than 75,000 chemicals, metals and minerals are currently used in industry.

*I want a world
where my
grandchildren can
go to Lake Michigan
and catch a fish,
take it home and not
be afraid to eat it.*

DENNIS ADAMS
Local Union 1011
East Chicago, IN

Modern civilization depends on them. Almost everything we eat, drink, wear, walk on, use or even touch was produced using one or more of these materials.

Many are hazardous, even when the final products of the plants using them are safe. Vinyl plastic, for example, poses few risks. But the vinyl chloride gas used to make it causes liver cancer. Chromium is essential to

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RESPECT
NATIONAL
BOUNDARIES . . .
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SOURCE.

stainless steel. But chromium compounds leaching out of hazardous waste sites are suspected carcinogens.

We once saw toxic chemicals only as a threat to the workers using them.

But it is essential to look at the entire life cycle of a chemical, from its manufacture, to storage, use and ultimate disposal. Every year, billions of pounds of toxic chemicals are released into U.S. and Canadian air and water. Working class communities are hit especially hard, with industrial workers exposed both inside and outside the plant.

Most of these releases take place slowly, as a normal and routine part of a company's operation. But the potential for a sudden catastrophic accident also exists. The 1984 tragedy in Bhopal, India, which took more than 2,500 lives, occurred when a single tank released 30 tons of methyl isocyanate into the air. In 1988, an explosion at the PEPCON rocket oxidizer plant in Nevada killed two, injured 350, and caused millions of dollars of damage to the surrounding community. The jobs of the 64 members of USWA Local Union 4856 working in the plant also vanished in the explosion. Even more terrible accidents occurred in 1989 and 1990, when explosions in two petrochemical plants outside Houston killed 40 workers.

Many toxic materials are dumped on land. While disposal practices are safer now than in the past, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 29,000 chemical waste sites in the United States alone pose a potential threat to their neighbors. As many as a million underground storage tanks in North America may be leaking gasoline and other chemicals into the soil and groundwater. And many chemicals are virtually indestructible; putting them in landfills only relocates the problem. Despite all our recent laws and regulations, toxic chemicals are increasing in our environment.

Acid Precipitation

It's called acid rain, but the problem is bigger than that. Acid can fall to earth as rain or snow, fog or mist, or on fine particles of dust.

The source of the acid is sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, which react with oxygen and water in the atmosphere to form sulfuric and nitric acids. The oxides, in turn, come from industry and automobiles, especially coal-burning power plants not equipped with the proper controls.

The acid does not respect national boundaries. Copper smelters in Mexico drop acid rain on the Rockies. Power plants in Indiana and Ohio send millions of tons into Canada. Sulfur dioxide from Ontario poisons lakes in Vermont.

Acid rain kills forests and lakes. It corrodes buildings. Acid rain is damaging the tourist, hardwood forest and sugar economies of rural Quebec and the New England states. Recent evidence indicates that it may be a leading cause of lung disease, contributing to 50,000 premature deaths in the United States and Canada every year.

Acid rain has caused significant tension between our two countries. The U.S. government points to the Inco nickel smelter in Sudbury, Ontario, as the largest single source of sulfur dioxide in North America.

Canadians counter that Inco's emissions are dwarfed by those from coal-fired power plants in the U.S. Midwest. In addition, Inco has made major efforts to fit pollution controls on its equipment, in part through the pressure of USWA Local Union 6500. But many American power plants have been exempt from similar requirements, although that will change with the new Clean Air Act.

Ironically, the widespread nature of acid rain results from an earlier misguided attempt at pollution control — the smokestack. A hundred years ago, smokestacks were mostly used to create greater draft for furnaces. Air pollution made the areas around smelters and steel mills into smoky infernos, but the problem remained local. Forty years ago, however, companies began to build very tall stacks in order to inject the pollutants high in the air, so as to dilute them to "acceptable" levels. In Sudbury, Inco built the tallest smokestack in the world as its solution to an air pollution problem that had turned the surrounding area into a virtual moonscape. It worked — locally. But it is those same pollutants that turn to acid, eventually damaging forests and lakes throughout the Northeast. Acid rain teaches an important lesson — that the only real solution is controlling pollution at its source.

Global Warming

It may be the single greatest problem we face. Some have compared its possible consequences to the aftermath of nuclear war. And some form of it may be inevitable.

The problem is global warming, a gradual rise in the temperature of the Earth itself, caused by gases we are pumping into the atmosphere. A temperature rise of just 4 degrees Centigrade could melt the polar ice caps, flooding huge areas. Changing weather patterns could turn forests to grasslands, grasslands to deserts. Coastal cities would be submerged, major agricultural regions would be devastated, the weather would turn more violent.

No one can say for certain whether these changes will actually occur, or how severe they will be. Global climate is extremely difficult to predict. But the scientific theory is simple.

Our atmosphere contains a number of "trace" gases, present in very low concentrations. The most important is

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carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide has a special property: it traps heat that otherwise would radiate out into space, much like the glass in a greenhouse. Hence the name "greenhouse effect." Without

some carbon dioxide in our air, the Earth would cool to well below freezing.

The problem is having too much. Carbon dioxide results from the burning of fuels containing carbon, like petroleum, coal, natural gas or wood. One mile of driving a car, or one-half kilowatt-hour of coal-generated power, releases about a pound of carbon dioxide. Altogether, 18 billion tons are released every year. Most of the Earth's population contributes three tons per person to this total; North Americans contribute twenty tons each.

Over the last century, the carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere has risen by 25%. At the present rate, it could double in the next century, triggering massive changes in the global climate.

In fact, carbon dioxide could increase even faster. This past century's rapid industrialization in the United States, Canada and Europe was fueled by the massive burning of coal and petroleum. If developing countries take the same route, huge amounts of carbon dioxide will be pumped into the atmosphere. China alone has 800 billion tons of coal reserves. But what other route to development can we

This planet is a beautiful planet. I don't want to see it destroyed for my kids or future generations.

BONNIE GRITZMACHER
Local Union 8823
Buffalo, NY



life that kept carbon dioxide levels balanced before humans began burning huge amounts of fossil fuels and wood.

Forests are, therefore, the lungs of the Earth. But our forests are being destroyed at an unprecedented rate. More than 27 million acres of tropical rain forests — an area the size of Pennsylvania — disappear every year. For the most part, they are burned, adding still more carbon dioxide to the air.

Deforestation has another consequence. The rain forest is home to millions of species of plants and animals, many as yet undiscovered. Many of these species may be extremely valuable to human welfare. Important new medicines have been derived from rain forest plants, including the most effective treatment for childhood leukemia. But these species are disappearing with their rain forest habitat.

offer, especially when North America continues to be the world's largest producer of carbon dioxide?

Carbon dioxide is not the only "greenhouse" gas. About 20% of the global warming problem comes from methane, released by decaying organic matter and leaky natural gas systems. Other industrial chemicals or pollutants are responsible for 25% of the problem. The levels of all these gases are increasing in the atmosphere, mostly as a result of human activities.

Deforestation

Green plants remove carbon dioxide from the air and put oxygen back in. It was plant

Much of the cleared land is used for agriculture, in some cases for huge ranches exporting beef to richer countries, in other cases for subsistence farming by those driven to the countryside by urban poverty. But rain forest soil is low in nutrients, so the farmers and ranchers usually have to clear another stretch in a few years. Sometimes the land is logged, often to gain foreign exchange to repay the enormous foreign debts owed by many developing countries.

Saving the rain forests of the Amazon basin has become a major issue for the people of that region, often at great cost to their own safety. One example was Chico Mendes, the leader of a union of Brazilian rubber tappers who depend on the forest for their livelihoods. Mendes gained worldwide



attention through his fight to stop the unrestricted clearing of rain forest land by wealthy ranchers. But in 1988 he was gunned down, joining thousands of workers, peasants and Indians who were murdered when they got in the way of the developers.

The problem of deforestation is not confined to the tropics. The old growth forests of North America are even more efficient recyclers of carbon dioxide. They too are being destroyed by massive logging.

The logging has become a difficult issue in the Pacific Northwest, British Columbia, Northern Ontario and Alaska. Lumber companies and their workers understandably

want the right to continue to log.

Environmentalists point out that, at current rates, the old-growth forests will only last another decade or so, and that the industry has lost far more jobs through productivity improvements than it will by restricting logging to younger trees, at a rate no faster than they can be replaced by new growth. In addition, environmentalists ask how we can expect developing countries to protect their ancient forests, when we will not protect our own.

Ozone Depletion

Carbon dioxide is not the only trace gas threatening the planet. Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) are a group of chemicals including Freon and Halon. They are widely used as refrigerants, solvents, fire suppression agents, aerosol propellants, and in the manufacture of plastic foams.

CFCs, and certain chlorinated solvents, can float to the upper levels of the atmosphere, where they react with naturally occurring ozone gas. Ozone is a poison at ground level, but 30 miles up it shields the Earth from damaging ultraviolet radiation. If we lose the ozone layer, the result will be widespread skin cancer, crop failure and the extinction of many species of animals and plants.

CFCs are extremely stable. They can last for 75 years or more in the upper atmosphere. One molecule of Freon can destroy a hundred thousand molecules of ozone. Holes in the ozone layer have already begun to appear around the north and south poles, where frigid temperatures accelerate the process. CFCs also contribute to the greenhouse effect and global warming, through an entirely different mechanism.

Fortunately, we have begun to control this problem. New international treaties will lead to the eventual phase-out of CFCs and other ozone-damaging chemicals. Many companies are working on substitutes. Allied Signal, for example, was once a major producer of CFCs. At its Buffalo Research

Lab, whose 70 workers are represented by USWA Local Union 8823, the company is researching HCFCs (hydrochlorofluorocarbons), compounds similar to CFCs, but far less destructive to the ozone layer. HCFCs may provide a transition to substitutes that will not damage the atmosphere at all; Allied Signal is working to develop those substitutes as well.

The Oceans

On March 24, 1989, the oil tanker Exxon Valdez spilled 11 million gallons of oil into Alaskan waters. The accident could have been much worse; the spilled oil represented only 6% of the ship's cargo. Even so, the shoreline more than 100 miles away remains polluted with oil, despite billions of dollars of "clean-up." The ultimate damage to the environment will not be known for years.

Oil spills are not the only threat to the oceans. About one quarter of North American waste water is dumped directly into the sea, including millions of pounds of toxic chemicals. Some solid waste also is dumped at sea, out of sight of the shore. The hypodermic needles and other medical waste washing up on our beaches are only the most visible signs.

Much of the life of the sea is nurtured by natural bays and marshes along the coastline. But many of these natural areas have been destroyed by unrestrained development.

The pollution of the seas already threatens shellfish in many areas. In the future, it could seriously diminish the supply of fish needed to feed the world's population. Plankton — microscopic marine plants — help remove carbon dioxide from the air, and provide the ultimate food source for most creatures in the ocean's food chain. If they are lost by oceanic pollution, the result will be global catastrophe.

Population

In 1800, at the start of the industrial revolution, the Earth's population stood at about 500 million. Today, it is ten times greater — 5.2 billion. At current rates it will double in less than 40 years. Most of this growth will take place in developing countries.

Some environmentalists believe that overpopulation is a fundamental cause of environmental degradation, and that famine in Ethiopia and other countries is a natural result. Some have even suggested that such famines are a regrettable, but natural, means of bringing population into "balance." However, the world produces more than enough food to feed its current population.

ABOUT ONE QUARTER OF
NORTH AMERICAN WASTE
WATER IS DUMPED DIRECTLY
INTO THE SEA.

For example, enough grain is produced to give everyone on Earth two loaves of bread a day. Even more could be produced through more efficient use of our agricultural resources.

The real problem is one of distribution — of poverty and wealth. Most poor countries, Ethiopia included, could feed their own populations through agricultural and economic development. Done right, that development could occur in ways that do not cause environmental damage.

In fact, development also is linked to population. It is no accident that rich countries are approaching stable populations, while poor countries must deal with rapidly increasing numbers. Persons in impoverished societies tend to have more children, because children, and what they can earn, are essential to survival. Population growth cannot be limited without a worldwide attack on poverty.

A UNION ISSUE?

The problems of acid rain, global warming, ozone depletion, oceanic pollution and world poverty remind us that we can no longer think of ourselves solely as citizens of the U.S or Canada, or even as North Americans. The potential catastrophe is global. Environment must be a global issue.

But is it a union issue? Should we work to protect the environment merely as good citizens, or is there a special role for our union to play?

We believe the answers are clear. Environment is an essential union issue. Environmental work must be part of our mission at every level of the union. The reasons are several.

■ ***First, we must protect our children's world.***

Steelworkers have always fought for a better life for their children. Most of us are the descendants of immigrants who came to the United States or Canada seeking a better future, not just for themselves, but for later generations as well. They sacrificed enormously to build a finer tomorrow for their offspring. They created this union as a force to ensure that their sons and daughters would have a better life.

Today, the greatest threat to our children's future may be the destruction of their environment. Some of the worst consequences of environmental damage, such as global warming and the death of the oceans, will not occur in our lifetime. But they could devastate the world of our children.

Some people believe that we can leave the problem to future generations. That is a delusion. Like a bad debt, the cost increases every day. CFCs were first developed in the 1930's. By the early 1970's several scientists warned about their capacity for damaging the ozone. However CFC manufacturers, led by DuPont, argued for delay. CFCs were

banned from aerosol sprays in the U.S. and Canada in 1978, but other uses quickly filled the gap. It took almost ten more years to achieve an agreement cutting the use of CFCs, during which time 15 billion pounds were produced. The ultimate damage will be much greater as a result.

The longer we wait, the worse it will get. It will cost billions to clean up toxic waste problems that could have been avoided for far less money, and with far fewer cases of death and disease. It will cost our children

THE GREATEST THREAT TO OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE MAY BE THE DESTRUCTION OF THEIR ENVIRONMENT.

much more to tackle these problems than it will cost us. Leaving it all to them is the worst sort of irresponsibility.

■ ***Second, protecting the environment ultimately protects our jobs.***

At first glance, this seems to run counter to everything we have heard about environmental issues. The common assumption seems to be that protecting the environment will destroy the jobs of thousands — maybe millions — of workers in our basic, smokestack industries. Which view is correct?

In a technological sense, the solutions to environmental problems are within our grasp. Some may require continued research while we take the first steps, but none are beyond our technical capacity.

Air and water pollution can be virtually eliminated by redesigning manufacturing processes, switching to cleaner products, installing good control technology, and recycling more of what we currently throw away.

Many toxic chemicals can be replaced by safer ones. Those that cannot, can be confined to closed manufacturing systems and recycled

I would like a cleaner environment because I have a daughter with two lovely grandchildren, and I owe it to those grandchildren, and I've had a great life and I'd love them to have a better life.

DOUG SWANSON
Local Union 480
Trail, BC

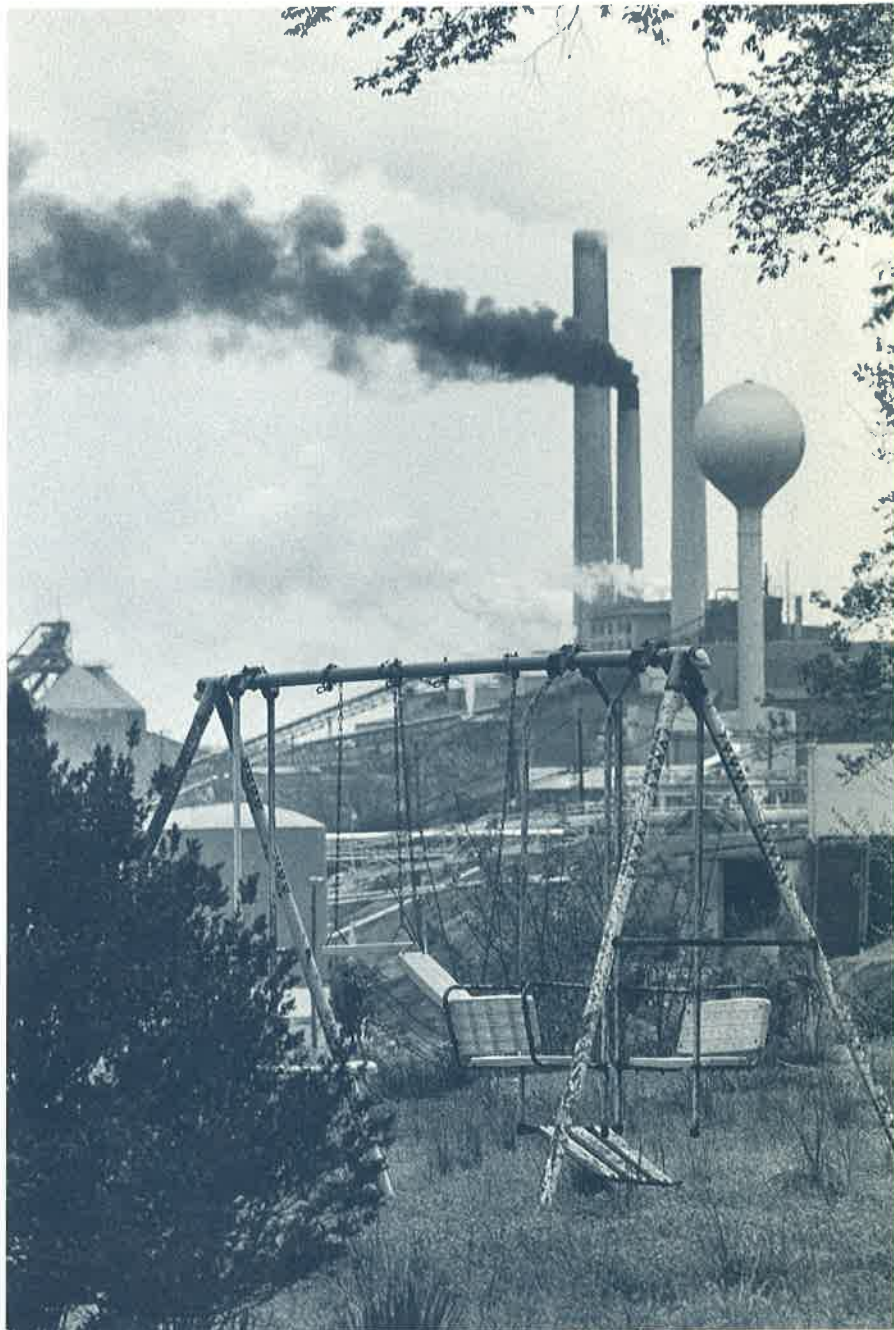
after use. Abandoned waste dumps will be with us for a long time, but they too can be cleaned up through a concerted program.

Acid rain is caused by a particular form of air pollution — oxides of sulfur and nitrogen. Acid rain can be controlled by capturing those pollutants through the use of scrubbers and other devices installed on power plants, certain industrial sources, and automobiles.

The ozone layer can be preserved by phasing out the chlorofluorocarbons and other chemicals that destroy it. The new international agreements on ozone depletion, and the current research on substitutes, show that even worldwide problems can be solved.

Solutions to global warming will be more difficult. Cutting carbon dioxide emissions will take a massive worldwide effort. But it can be done. Immediate gains can be made by more efficient use of energy, such as better building insulation, greater automotive fuel efficiency, new mass transit systems and improved energy recovery in industrial plants. West Germany and Japan, for example, are almost twice as energy efficient as North America, as measured by the amount of energy it takes to produce an equivalent amount of gross national product. In the long run, alternate non-polluting sources of energy like solar power can largely replace fossil fuels. Coal and petroleum could then be used as feedstocks for the chemical industry, creating new products instead of being wastefully burned.

None of this, however, will be easy or cheap. The real problems are not technical — they are economic and political. Our society will change enormously, either through our efforts to save our environment, or because environmental destruction finally overwhelms us. As a union, we cannot stand aside from these issues. Difficult choices will have to be made. The only question is who will make those choices, and how? Will working people be the victims of change, or will we help control



that change to the benefit of ourselves and our children?

Steelworkers have heard the jobs argument before. For many years companies have tried to use economic and environmental blackmail on the union and its members. In every fight for a new health and safety regulation, or better wages, or improved pensions, there is a corporate economist to tell us that if we persist, the company or the industry will fold, with

hundreds or thousands of lost jobs. It rarely turns out to be true, and for good reason. Someone has to design the cleaner process or equipment. Someone has to build it. Someone has to install it. Someone has to operate it. Someone has to maintain it.

In the long run, the real choice is not jobs or environment. It's both or neither. What kind of jobs will be possible in a world of depleted resources, poisoned water and foul air, a world where ozone depletion and greenhouse warming make it difficult even to survive?

Even in the short run, companies that exist only by destroying their resource base, or pushing their environmental costs off onto others, will not be in business very long. Some plants have shut down, not because they acted responsibly toward their neighbors, but because they did not. For example, the Johns Manville Corporation declared bankruptcy in 1982 after projecting billions of dollars of potential liability for diseases caused by the company's failure to warn users about the risks of asbestos. Thousands of workers lost their jobs in the resulting shakeup.

Jobs can be lost in any time of change — and the changes ahead are enormous. Sometimes the cause is short-term greed, the desire to make a fast buck and get out, abandoning workers and the community. Sometimes the cause is management's unwillingness or inability to adapt to changing conditions. The Ethyl plant in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was a major producer of lead additives for gasoline. When the government banned leaded gas in 1985, management shut the plant down, putting more than a thousand members of USWA Local Union 12900 out of work. Yet the plant could have adapted to the manufacture of other products, as Allied Signal is doing in the example cited earlier.

Some corporate managers try to pass the cost of their own misdeeds off onto their workers. For example, at Uniroyal

Chemical, near Guelph, Ontario, 230 members of USWA Local Union 13691 went on strike in May 1990, when the company demanded concessions in order to pay the cost of cleaning up a leaky, poorly designed waste site.

Some companies understand that their own survival depends on their environmental record. But many do not. We cannot expect the company or the government, or for that matter the environmental community, to defend our interests for us. Protecting our children's future and our own jobs requires collective bargaining and political action. We must push our own companies to improve, not

WE MUST PUSH OUR OWN COMPANIES TO IMPROVE, NOT ONLY AS A WAY OF PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT, BUT AS A WAY OF PRESERVING JOBS AS WELL.

only as a way of protecting the environment, but as a way of preserving jobs as well.

At the same time, we must recognize that some plants will close no matter what we do. It does not help these workers to argue that other jobs will be created somewhere else, in some other industry. Protecting the environment may create jobs on the average, but displaced workers need jobs themselves, not the knowledge that some other worker is benefiting from their sacrifice. It is, after all, the worker, not the government or corporate stockholder, who has the most to lose when a plant closes.

It is fundamentally unfair to require working people to absorb the cost of environmental controls that benefit society as a whole. Nor is it politically workable, since it inevitably creates opposition to environmental reform, and pits workers against environmentalists.

The only answer is to link environmental

We have had an increase of approximately 60 people. These 60 jobs are a direct result of protecting the environment.

DICK RUZEKOWICZ
Local Union 7474
Cicero, NY

issues with economic justice. In particular, income protection and job retraining should be automatic for workers who are displaced because of new environmental regulations, or the failure of their employers to adapt. For example, the USWA and other unions are lobbying intensively to add an Environmental



Adjustment Assistance provision to environmental legislation in the U.S. Congress, and to make similar improvements to the unemployment compensation systems in Canada.

In addition, companies that curtail operations temporarily in order to install new equipment, or to comply with pollution regulations, should be required to continue the earnings of affected workers. In fact, such a provision was written into the 1977

Clean Air Act Amendments in the United States, for workers in copper smelters that shut down temporarily in order to reduce their average emissions to allowable levels. At the Rocky Flats nuclear plant in Golden, Colorado, USWA Local Union 8031 won an order from the U.S. Department of Energy requiring full earnings protection while

production was suspended for a thorough cleanup.

Ultimately, protecting the environment will require cleaner products, methods of production and sources of energy. That, in turn, will take research. For example, the U.S. Department of Energy has joined with several major steel companies to develop a direct steelmaking system that bypasses coke ovens and blast furnaces. The new method could greatly cut steel plant pollution, and increase the competitiveness of North American companies. But without proper planning, it could affect thousands of jobs and further impoverish steel communities. Technological improvements are essential to a cleaner environment. However, new technology — especially that funded

by the government — must be subject to democratic planning, and introduced in a way that protects the economic interests of workers and communities, as well as companies.

We cannot serve our members by ignoring environmental issues. We cannot protect them by pretending to resist change. Our mission is to adapt to change and to channel it for the long-term benefit of our members and all working people.

It's possible to have environmental control and keep jobs. It has been done here. What happens is new jobs are created, and old jobs working in the dirt or fumes are canceled, so it's a better way of living.

YVES MEUNIER
USWA Staff
Montreal, PQ

■ *Third, environmental issues are linked to all the other issues confronting us.*

Economic forces are the key to almost every union issue. Environmental issues are no different.

Companies usually try to "externalize" their costs — to make someone else pay part of the real cost of production, for example when workers are asked to pick up part of the cost of their health insurance.

Sometimes those costs are hidden. Bad

improved pensions, adequate insurance and safe working conditions are efforts to stop the company from dumping its costs onto us.

Environmental economics work the same. Some companies try to maximize their profits by ignoring the cost to the environment. Pollution is pumped into the air and water, toxic chemicals are allowed to escape, greenhouse and ozone-depleting gases are generated because the cost to the environment never appears in the



working conditions lead to an increase in occupational accidents and illness. Some of that cost is paid by the workers' compensation system; most of it, however, is absorbed by the victims themselves in disability and lost income, and by all the rest of us, in higher overall medical and insurance bills.

Often these externalized costs are much larger than the costs the company avoided by refusing to improve conditions in the first place. But the company's concern is its own bottom line, not the overall cost to society.

As Steelworkers, we understand this process well. Our efforts to win higher wages,

company's balance sheet.

But the cost is real. And while the cost of environmental damage may be external to the company, the Earth itself is a closed system. Considering the Earth as a whole, there is no such thing as an external cost.

A healthy economy is essential to a healthy environment. Protecting the environment ultimately means more efficient production, with less drain on the Earth's resources, and less waste. But it will cost money to research, design and implement new controls; it will cost money to substitute new products for old.

Economic justice is critical. In a full-employment economy, workers displaced

because their companies failed to adapt will find new jobs. Union rights are important also, to ensure that the jobs provide decent wages and benefits.

In fact, the environment impacts almost every union issue. Our health care system, for example, is stressed by the burden of environmental disease. The problems of poor people and minorities are made worse by the fact that they are often forced to live in the most polluted areas.

On a global scale, it is useless to work for a clean environment without also working for economic justice and human rights. It is no accident that the countries of Eastern Europe, where free speech was suppressed for so long, where free trade unions were outlawed,

ON A GLOBAL SCALE, IT IS USELESS TO WORK FOR A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT WITHOUT ALSO WORKING FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS.

where all the decisions were made by a small and privileged elite, are among the most polluted on Earth. It is no accident that the residents of the Black townships of South Africa suffer high rates of respiratory disease brought on by ferocious levels of air pollution.

Some companies may try to avoid strong environmental regulations by moving overseas. But the answer is not to repeal our own laws, any more than the answer to global competition is to cut our own wages to poverty levels. Instead, we should work with unions and governments in developing countries to improve conditions there.

A good first step would be to stop making the problems of developing countries worse than they already are. Some industrialized countries have tried to use poorer nations as a dumping ground for toxic waste. That practice should be

prohibited by international law. In addition, we should forbid the export of products and processes prohibited in the exporting country because they damage health or the environment, and work to ensure that all other exports can be used safely.

Correspondingly, we should restrict the import of products made in ways that damage the environment. It does not help the world environment to export pollution — and jobs — to countries unwilling to meet fair standards.

Near Sao Paulo in Brazil is a 1.6 million ton steel plant owned by the Brazilian steel company COPISA. The smoke and dust from that plant help give the Cubatao area the nickname "Death Valley." There are reports that hundreds of workers and nearby residents suffer blood diseases due to uncontrolled benzene emissions. Thousands are afflicted by respiratory diseases. Brazil needs steel for trucks, bridges, housing and consumer goods. But the production of the COPISA plant is exported to North America to earn hard currency to pay off Brazil's enormous debt. We need to deal with the problem of Third World debt if we are to control pollution from that plant, or stop the destruction of the rain forests, or solve the other problems of our common global environment.

The World Commission on Environment and Development, set up in 1983 by the United Nations, has defined the goal as "sustainable development," finding a way to meet our present needs without destroying the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In the words of the commission: "Sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to fulfill their aspirations for a better life. A world in which poverty is endemic will always be prone to ecological and other catastrophes."

If you have a modern facility that produces less pollution, you certainly have a more secure job and you have a cleaner community to live in.

LARRY DAVIS
Local Union 6787
Burns Harbor, IN

TAKING ACTION

"Your role as a consumer of air can be crucial for the community because you may well be the bridge between the community and the plant, in the sense that you actually work in the plant. The community may well be influenced in the type of standards it recommends by your attitude about and desire for safe air.

We refuse to be the buffer between positive pollution control activity by the community and resistance by the industry. While the security of our jobs is not the price which will be paid for aggressive abatement activity, the ruination of our health may well be the risk which will be taken for the lack of action."

I.W. ABEL

USWA Air Pollution Conference, 1969

Unions have always led the fight for economic justice and human rights. We have sought to increase the income of all workers, organized and unorganized. We have struggled for better working conditions and fair treatment on the job. We have worked to ensure better pensions for our parents, and a

THE
ENVIRONMENT
OUTSIDE THE
WORKPLACE IS
ONLY AN
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THE
ENVIRONMENT
INSIDE.

better education for our children.

Frequently, we have fought for safer working conditions — in other words, for a cleaner environment inside our plants.

Workers have a gut understanding of environmental issues — 100,000 North Americans die each year from workplace diseases caused by the same chemicals that later find their way into our air and water. The environment outside the workplace is only an extension of the environment inside.

Today, the greatest threat to our children's world may be the destruction of their environment. Our own jobs are also threatened by corporations that pollute their neighborhoods and walk away. Protecting the environment is more than good citizenship, it is an essential program for unions and their members.

In some ways, the USWA has had an environmental program for more than 20

years. We held our first conference on air pollution in 1969, more than a year before the first "Earth Day." A conference in Denver examined pollution from smelters in the western United States in 1973. District 6 held air pollution conferences as early as 1966. A 1980 USWA Convention resolution warned of the dangers of global warming, years before it became a matter of widespread public concern. And in 1989, the Canadian Policy Conference adopted a strong policy paper on the environment.

But for the most part, the USWA has seen environmental protection as a legislative issue. We provided strong lobbying support for nearly every major environmental bill in the U.S. Congress, the Canadian Parliament, state legislatures, and provincial assemblies. In the United States, the USWA is an active member of the National Clean Air Coalition, and was instrumental in the passage of the 1990 Clean Air Act and earlier legislation. In Canada, the USWA participates in the Canadian Coalition on Acid Rain. In turn, environmental groups helped us achieve many of the right-to-know laws in the United States, and effective chemical testing regulations in Canada.

Some USWA locals are working hard on environmental issues. Local Union 6500, at the Inco nickel smelter in Sudbury, Ontario, has been fighting sulfur dioxide pollution since the local was chartered in 1961. The local helped force the Ontario government to begin measuring pollution levels in the

town. In coalition with neighboring environmental and community groups, Inco steelworkers have won dramatic improvements in pollution control.

Environmental committees have been established by Local Union 1010, District 31, at Inland Steel in Indiana, and Local Union 480, District 3, at the Cominco Lead/Zinc smelter in Trail, British Columbia. The committees work with environmentalists from the community to protect both jobs and the environment. Other local unions have added environmental issues to the regular duties of their safety and health committees.

These locals point the way. The environment is not just a legislative issue. Protecting our children's future and our own jobs from the threat of environmental destruction is a job for all levels of the union.

Some say the task is too big for any one local, or union, or country. Certainly it is. But that has never stopped us from fighting for economic justice or human rights in the past. The biologist Rene Dubos coined a phrase that sums it up: "Think globally; act locally." We should not forget the global nature of the problem, but we must not be paralyzed. In this issue, as in any other, an



active union can have an impact.

In fact, workers are in a key position in the fight for environmental quality. Violations of pollution regulations can be difficult for the public to spot. Nor is it possible for the government to monitor

continuously every potential polluter. It is much harder to hide illegal behavior from plant workers. And through collective bargaining and the power of the union, organized workers have an especially effective tool for forcing a cleanup.

Some maintain that environmental problems can be solved through individual actions, like turning off lights, reusing

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN'S
WORLD AND OUR OWN JOBS WILL
REQUIRE A COORDINATED
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OF THE UNION.

plastic bags and car pooling to work. Individual efforts are valuable and they should be promoted. They can help cut pollution and decrease the waste of our resources. More important, they can help establish a personal commitment to protecting the environment.

But individual efforts are not enough. Car pooling will not force Detroit to build vehicles that do not pump carbon dioxide into the air; cutting our use of plastic bags will not lead to the development of safer manufacturing processes for plastics; turning off the lights will not get scrubbers built on coal-fired utility plants. In fact, individual energy use accounts for only about 30% of total consumption.

As union members, we have learned the value of collective action. We do not tell oppressed workers to handle it themselves, individually. We

attack the problem with the strength that comes from organization. We do promote individual efforts — consumer boycotts are a good example. But we focus our efforts on organizing, collective bargaining and political action. Protecting our children's world and our

We can decide our future and that of our children.

However, none of it will be easy. The time for environmental action is now.

GEORGE BECKER

International
Vice President/
Administration
Environment Task Force
Chairman

own jobs will require a coordinated program, involving all levels of the union.

At the level of the International Union, we must continue to work for progressive legislation. This includes laws —

- Improving air and water quality.
- Requiring reductions in toxic waste, and restricting the use of toxic chemicals.
- Promoting recycling, in ways that protect union jobs.
- Protecting “whistleblowers” who report suspected environmental violations, and workers who refuse to carry out an order that violates environmental laws or endangers the public.
- Guaranteeing income protection and job retraining for workers displaced because of environmental problems.
- Ensuring that new technology is introduced in a way that is subject to democratic planning, and protects the interests of working people and their communities.
- Banning or defining as an unfair trade practice the import of products made abroad under conditions that do not meet environmental standards.
- Prohibiting the dumping of toxic waste from North America in developing countries, and the export of products or processes that are banned in the exporting country for environmental reasons. Working to ensure the safe use of all other exports.
- Supporting strong international agreements on greenhouse warming, ozone depletion, and other global issues.
- Giving financial aid and debt relief to developing countries, in order to help them achieve sustainable development.

As always, the most important actions must take place at the local union level. First, local unions should establish a structure for dealing with environmental issues. In a large industrial local, an environmental committee could be formed. In a smaller local, the issue could be handled by the safety and health committee. Whatever the structure, the committee should

have the support and interest of the local union officers and the staff representative.

The environment or safety and health committee should undertake the task of researching the company's environmental record. Are their sources of raw materials threatened? Where does their waste go? What are they dumping into the air and water? Are their products harmful? Are they in violation of any environmental laws or regulations? Much of this information is a matter of public record. All of it should be legally disclosable to the union as information needed for collective bargaining. Any of it could be critical to devising a long-term program for protecting jobs.

Armed with information, the local union could, where necessary, work to negotiate a clean-up, or a switch to safer products, before the company is forced out of business. In 1982, for example, Local Union 6887, at the Noranda

**LOCAL UNIONS
CAN JOIN WITH
ENVIRONMENTAL
GROUPS ON
COMMON ISSUES.**

copper refinery in Montreal, helped the company negotiate a temporary variance from new water pollution regulations, in

return for a commitment to install state-of-the-art controls assuring the plant's long-term compliance. In 1989 Local Union 1066, at the USX Gary Works, used its political power to force a waste handling company on the plant site to reduce its inventory of dangerous chlorine gas, and to begin working with USX on an emergency response plan.

Most U.S.W.A. contracts give workers the right to refuse abnormally hazardous work. This provision should be extended to orders that threaten public health, or violate environmental regulations. “Whistleblower” language should be negotiated, protecting workers who report suspected environmental problems to the union or outside authorities.

Local unions can also join with environmental groups on common issues. We need them to support and understand the

One of the most effective tactics has been contract language, environmental committees, and things of that nature that we pushed through joint bargaining to get into our collective agreement. Committees work, and they forced the company to clean up these plants.

RON SCHMIDT
USWA Staff
Trail, BC



concerns of working people. They, in turn, can benefit from our organizational strength and knowledge of the workplace.

One such coalition was built in 1983 by the members of USWA Local Union 25 and environmentalists in Tacoma, Washington. Earlier that year, the Reagan-appointed officials of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency had proposed a new regulation for arsenic that would apply only to the Asarco Tacoma copper smelter. The regulation was designed to close the plant; it had the potential for driving a wedge between unions and environmental groups. But that never occurred. Environmentalists opposed closing the plant; the union listed ways arsenic could be reduced using engineering controls. Together, they distributed thousands of buttons with the single word "Both" in answer to the Reagan Administration's jobs-vs.-environment blackmail. The coalition was successful; EPA began work on a revised regulation specifying additional controls rather than a plant shutdown. However, the story has a sad ending. Two years later, Asarco itself closed the plant in the wake of declining copper prices. Asarco is now spending millions to clean up the site.

In Canada, the USWA also is working with

environmentalists to preserve both jobs and the environment. For example, USWA Districts 3 and 6, along with a number of environmental groups, have opposed the development of new surface mines for high-grade uranium ore in northern Saskatchewan. The mines would seriously damage the fragile environment of that region, create severe radiation risks to miners, and throw thousands of workers in existing operations out of work.

Finally, local unions can educate their members and their families on local, national and global environmental problems. In addition, locals can help educate our environmental allies on the needs of working people for decent, continued employment.

In these efforts, local unions will have the support of the International Safety and Health Department, which will be renamed "the Department of Health, Safety, and Environment" in recognition of the importance of environmental issues. Support will also be available from the Canadian National Office. The union is producing educational materials on the environment, available for local union use. The department and the National Office will be available to work with local unions on environmental issues.

*We're talking of a
superfund for the
people that might be
displaced by the
environmental
impact of changing
federal law...to
guarantee them an
income.*

BOB McCANTS

Local Union 1010
Indiana Harbor, IN

I would like my children to have a goal to reach for. To see an end to pollution. To know that they have a fighting chance to beat this in their generation.

MARSHA ORTIZ
Local Union 1011
East Chicago, IN



CONCLUSION

None of this will be easy. Environmental issues involve difficult technical and economic questions. They are politically contentious, with workers often caught between their employers and environmentalists. We do not claim that it will be a simple matter to add the environment to the long list of issues with which the USWA must contend. We do, however, believe it is essential to our survival as a union.

More important, it is an essential part of our moral responsibility as union leaders, charged with defending the interests of working people. It has been said that we inherit the Earth from our parents. But in reality, we borrow it from our children. It is our children's world. We must not fail to protect it.

USWA TASK FORCE ON ENVIRONMENT

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George F. Becker

International Vice President/Administration

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The following USWA staff members assisted the Task Force on Environment in developing this report:

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GLOBAL STAKES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SOLIDARITY

ENVIRONMENTAL KEYNOTE ADDRESS
BY THE HONORABLE STEPHEN LEWIS

*USWA Twenty-Fifth Constitutional Convention
Toronto, Canada*

August 1990

INTRODUCTION OF STEPHEN LEWIS

BY LYNN R. WILLIAMS

International President, USWA

Guest speakers with something truly important to say are few and far between. Today we have with us just such a speaker.

Stephen Lewis is a special representative for UNICEF — the United Nations International Children's Education and Relief Fund. He is an international spokesperson and advocate of the rights and needs of children, especially children of the developing world.

Stephen Lewis has come to this role after many years in public life. He was the leader of the New Democratic Party in Ontario between 1970 and 1978, and served as Canada's ambassador to the United Nations from 1984 to 1988.

In 1988, Stephen chaired the first International Conference on Climate Change, attended by scientists and policy-makers from around the world. At that conference was drafted the first comprehensive policy on global warming.



Since 1979, Stephen has received a dozen

honorary degrees from Canadian universities. He has been a noted radio and television commentator on public issues, and has been a prominent labor arbitrator in this province.

Stephen Lewis has the capacity to clearly and concisely link the events and conditions



in the Third World to the way we conduct our own lives in this society. He has a passion, a commitment, and the ability to communicate exactly how the anomalies of environment and economics can be corrected to benefit the globe we all share. As Stephen will tell you, all that's missing is the political will to do what needs to be done.

It is a great privilege to introduce Stephen Lewis to all of you, as a national and international leader, a person of great renown across the world, and as one of the greatest friends the workers and the people of America have ever had.

ENVIRONMENTAL KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY THE HONORABLE STEPHEN LEWIS

*Chairman, 1988 International Conference on Climate Change
Former Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations*

This is for me an emotional moment. Nostalgically there runs through my mind the recollections of my father and Lynn Williams standing side by side at the barricades fighting for the kind of collaboration between the union movement and the New Democratic Party which resulted in profound social and economic transformations in this province, this country and beyond. That collaboration, that solidarity, is something I have treasured all my adult life.

It's possible, if I may say, to maintain the collaboration between the party and the union, because the Steelworkers are such a remarkably progressive union, a union that has always embraced issues which go far beyond collective bargaining. I see it again today. I see it in your union's inspired environmental video presentation, and in the report of the USWA Environmental Task Force which sets out the environmental policy the union is about to debate. I have rarely read so lucid, intelligent and compelling a document as that report. As a matter of fact, I don't think there is an environmental organization in North America that wouldn't want to lend its support for the kind of substance which is so powerfully presented, so forcefully, intelligently, and persuasively presented in the task force report.

All the issues are laid out. Nothing is missing. It leaves me merely the opportunity to embellish to some extent and perhaps to provide a context which will be of use to the subsequent debate.

I was a representative for Canada at the United Nations between 1984 and 1988. I think it's fair to say that the single most memorable day I experienced there was the day in October of 1987 when the former Social Democratic Prime Minister of Norway,

Madam Bruntland, took the platform of the United Nations and tabled her world commission report on environment and development, which is now called "Our Common Future." I wish everyone could have been there along with the delegates from 159 countries, to experience that galvanic moment. There was, coursing through the veins of all the delegates, the sense that the environmental issues had finally been joined as one government after another paraded to the platform and expressed an almost religious fidelity to the substance of this profound environmental document. Governments all over the world

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
SIMPLY PUT MEANS THAT NO
ECONOMIC UNDERTAKING TODAY
SHOULD PREJUDICE THE
ENVIRONMENTAL FUTURE OF
TOMORROW.

embraced the proposition of the Bruntland report as a basis for public policy. It is now the centerpiece for public policy on every single aspect of pollution and the environment from the steel mills of Ontario to the forests of the Amazon.

In the body of that report there was contained the phrase "sustainable development," the sine qua non of environmental debate. Sustainable development simply put means that no economic undertaking today should prejudice the environmental future of tomorrow.

Therefore, when one attempts to change the economic relationships or institutions in society, one keeps in mind the kind of

environmental future this world desires.

But something astonishing has happened in the aftermath of the Bruntland commission report. Since 1987 there has emerged an issue which at the time was only dimly defined. The issue is of course "climate change," or "global warming," which has become the centerpiece of public debate on this continent and abroad.

In your own video and document you refer to global warming as the single greatest problem. Indeed, you go on to say that it must be solved by all people in all countries, or civilization may not survive.

Those aren't extravagant and hyperbolic words. The phenomenon of global warming, climate change and the constant temperature rise across the world year by year has been likened to the consequences of a nuclear war. The Steelworkers talk about civilization not surviving unless there is change and I see not the slightest hint of exaggeration in those words.

The position you articulate in your paper is a position which is increasingly agreed upon by the scientific community around the



world. As a matter of fact, the scientific community has come to three riveting conclusions, each of them spelling catastrophe.

The first conclusion is this: if global warming continues as we now see it with temperatures rising several degrees in the 21st century, there will be catastrophic consequences for low-lying coastal regions worldwide, as a result of the thermal action of the oceans and the melting of the polar

caps. For countries like Egypt, Bangladesh, the Maldives, Indonesia, Holland and Australia it can mean a cataclysmic consequence. Do you know that a country like Holland is now spending several percent of its budget every year to rebuild its dikes and to shore up its sand dunes because of the enormous anxiety over the possible consequences of a sea level rise?

There have been meetings around the world of the Intergovernment Panel on Climate Change, made up of scientists from 70 to 80 countries. I want to quote one paragraph from their report, a report voicing the unanimous position of the most thoughtful scientists dealing with the issue of climate change: "A one meter sea level rise would eliminate several sovereign states."

Everyone knows that a one meter rise in sea level, as a result of climate change and tempestuous storm activity, is likely in the next century.

The scientists talk about the elimination of several sovereign states if global warming ensues. Quite simply, whole countries disappearing under the sea – mostly, small island states around the world – but a sense of catastrophe rarely envisaged by humankind.

"It will displace populations, destroy low-lying urban infrastructure, inundate productive lands, contaminate freshwater supplies and alter coast lines. These effects could not be prevented except at enormous cost."

Up and down the coast of the United States, from Miami to Charleston to New York, there is great apprehension about the consequences of a sea level rise because of what it means for fresh water supplies and for coastal protection over the course of the 21st century.

The second area of scientific agreement is that if global warming continues there will be catastrophic consequences for the agricultural heartland of Canada, the United States, the Soviet Union and China. 1988 was



the first year the United States was not able to grow sufficient grain to feed its own population, and it had to draw down on the reserves that were available in the world. Now in the case of a horrible famine, like that in Ethiopia in 1984, there are only 53 days of stocks remaining.

The implication for the United States, and the devastation of the agricultural heartland that may occur by the year 2050, is increasingly documented by universities in the United States.

I recently saw a study from the University of Utah which said there is a likelihood that the cropping areas in the Great Plains region of the United States would decline by a third by the middle of the 21st century. There is an extraordinary study out of Stanford University by Paul Ehrlich which says if the decrease in agriculture production in the United States that occurred in 1988 were to occur three times in the 1990's, not at all an implausible proposition, it would result in 50 to 400 million people starving in the developing world.

What we have in the context of global warming is the potential for catastrophe, the likes of which none of us has begun intellectually or programmatically to appreciate.

And the third area on which they're all agreed is what happens to the part of the world where there are deserts, and the process of the encroachment of the desert on fertile land and on existing populations.

Now, we all know the cause of global warming, it's the discharge of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. We all know what has to be done. There needs to be a dramatic reduction in the combustion of fossil fuels, oil, natural gas and particularly coal, as well as a massive reforestation of the earth. But I think it is important to note that there is not a single major government in the industrial world that is prepared to implement the policies to forestall the looming catastrophe. My country, Canada, spends most of its time in empty rhetorical affirmations of good intentions, and nothing more.

The United States, dare I say it, is worse. In the United States there is even a resistance to recognizing the force and weight of the problem. And that's why it seems to me that this union, knowledgeable in things environmental, working from what one knows at the local level, has such a role to play internationally.

Because it is impossible in a situation like global warming to go it alone. It has to be

IF GLOBAL WARMING CONTINUES THERE WILL BE CATASTROPHIC CONSEQUENCES FOR THE AGRICULTURAL HEARTLAND OF CANADA, THE UNITED STATES, THE SOVIET UNION AND CHINA.

done on the basis of international cooperation. It has to involve every single country.

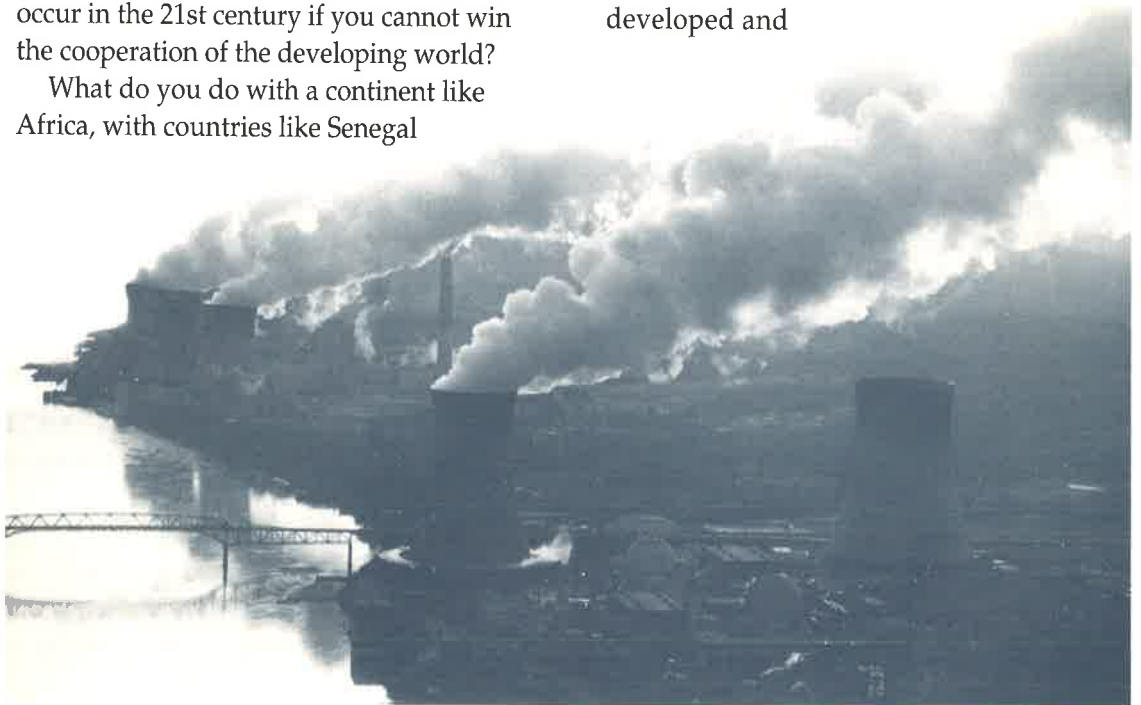
For example, China has a billion people. If China decides to build its economic future using coal — and Chinese coal incidentally, discharges the greatest amount of carbon dioxide per unit of energy of any coal in the world — what happens to the rest of the world? How do you change what is going to occur in the 21st century if you cannot win the cooperation of the developing world?

What do you do with a continent like Africa, with countries like Senegal

and Ghana, or the continent of Asia with countries like Malaysia, whose entire economic base is built on the burning of wood, which also discharges carbon dioxide?

I remember a famous conference in Toronto in June of 1988 when the Minister of the Environment from Indonesia looked out at the audience. His name is Emil Saleem, a gentle, thoughtful, decent man. He looked at the audience and he said, "Don't misunderstand me, but if you people in the Western world think that we are going to deal with the environmental problems you've created without receiving some resources, you're crazy. The government of Indonesia is not going to give up the future of its people just to compensate for the depredations of the Western world."

And that, of course, is the great conundrum. How do you involve the developing world, overrun by the phenomenon of poverty, in a worldwide collaboration to save the planet? How do you build that kind of coalition? Because of course, as people here surely recognize, there has never been a greater divide between north and south, never a greater divide between the developed and





developing countries. And if we are not prepared to transfer resources to them, the world will not survive.

It is worth noting two simple figures. Ten years ago the developed world transferred to the developing world a net \$40 billion a year. That is to say, over and above everything they paid us by way of interest on their debts and capital payments, we transferred to them \$40 billion a year so that they could build their economies. In 1990, ten years later, the developing world's net transfer to the developed world was \$50 billion. That is to say, over and above everything we convey to them by way of grants and loans and investments and trade, they pay to us in interest on their debt and capital repayment \$50 billion more.

You can't build an international community on that kind of grotesque disparity. We are creating a fourth world of permanent impoverishment, and we are inviting an extraordinary environmental collision down the road from which the industrial world and the developing world alike will find it hard to recover.

Our countries, Canada and the United States, believe it or not, are the only major countries in the Western world where foreign aid is actually declining. That brings another dimension of struggle into the union's environmental work: to enlighten and raise consciousness as well as demand the changes that would civilize the international community.

I was struck by your video. I want to remind you something about that video. Every single trade unionist who was interviewed in that video talked about his or her children and grandchildren, every single person. And, that's why your environmental paper is called "Our Children's World". We all want to allow children to inherit a viable international community in the 21st Century.

Children and the environment are inseparable. And for the children of the developing world, the environment is not only hostile, it is absolutely implacable. During the five days of this convention, 7,000 children under the age of five will die in the developing world from whooping



cough, 20,000 will die from measles, 11,000 from tetanus, 14,000 from malaria, 55,000 from dehydration induced by diarrhea, 30,000 from pneumonia. And every single day of this convention, a thousand children in the developing world will go blind because they don't have a vitamin A supplement.

Let me tell you something about this grotesque, inhumane, egregious and repugnant system we have created in our international economic order. To save the life of a child from measles or diphtheria or tetanus or whooping cough costs \$1 for a course of vaccination shots. To save the life of a child from dehydration or diarrhea costs 7 cents for a little packet of salt and sugar solution called oral rehydration salts. To save the life of a child from pneumonia costs \$1 for the antibiotic treatment. To save a child from blindness costs 10 cents for a vitamin A supplement.

Now, you tell me what kind of international community we have constructed that it is possible annually to lose the lives of 14 million children under the age 5, overwhelmingly for diseases that are entirely preventable. That's what I mean when I talk about the inseparable nature of all these environmental issues.

When one pulls together the pressures on the environment, the global warming and the realities for children in the developing world, it makes an issue which is magnificent for a union to pursue.

I think this union has tied it all together in its statement and its video. It is profoundly important to work for change globally. It is equally important to work for change locally. How I remember the days in politics in Ontario during the 1960's and 1970's. Whenever the New Democratic Party talked about environmental protection, we were clutched with panic because we were always told that it was the environment or jobs, that you protect the environment and you lose the jobs. How inaccurate. Those threats are always given.

You want to raise the minimum wage, the employer's argument is, "You'll lose jobs." You want to bring in protection for occupational health and safety, the employer's argument is, "You'll lose jobs." You want pay equity programs for disadvantaged and discriminated-against groups from women to the disabled to minorities, and the employer says, "We're



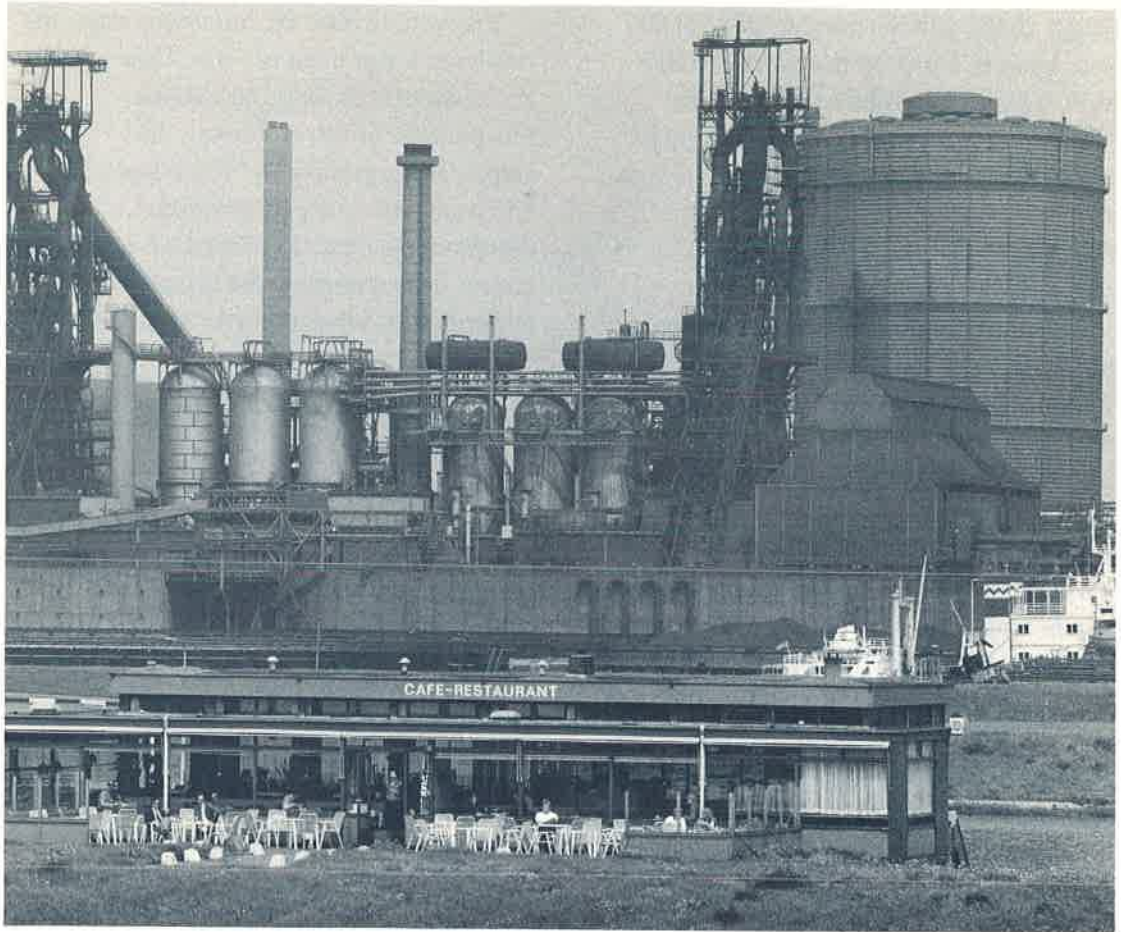
going to lose jobs." But you almost never lose jobs.

Those kinds of propositions are designed exclusively to shore up governments that don't give a tinker's damn and employers whose cynicism is almost supernatural. It is

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worth pointing out that far more jobs have been lost through corporate economic mismanagement and the recent free trade agreement, than by protecting the environment.

The truth is that maintaining a decent environment secures jobs. Because if you build a decent environment and make it a centerpiece of civilized public debate and urgent public policy, you don't get gratuitous and irresponsible employers polluting the environs and closing down industries when government action finally proceeds.



The truth is that maintaining a decent environment creates jobs, because there are endless numbers of new technologies, plant conversions and adaptations which make it possible for working people to have alternative prospects.

The truth is, the most elemental program of income support and compensation to workers in rare instances where jobs are threatened, will mean that it's never jobs or the environment. It is always jobs AND the environment. That's what this union so neatly puts in its environmental manifesto.

God knows this union knows about pollution. I can remember over the years working with my colleague steelworkers in Hamilton, Sudbury and Elliot Lake on environmental problems which were then existent and have continued to proliferate.

This union knows what it is to fight corporate malice and indifference. And this union understands what it is to do battle with obdurate, callus, Neanderthal governments that make life difficult for working people.

And if somehow we can fashion the political will through a tenacious, resourceful, indefatigable campaign waged on behalf of the environment and working people simultaneously it can transform society. You've gone to the barricades a hundred times. Most of the time you win. I'm saying it's time to go to the barricades once again for your children, for your jobs, for your community and ultimately, for the world.

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