

Awake!

"It is already the hour for you to awake."
—Romans 13:11

It is now reasonably certain (since the discovery of significant amounts of DDT in the penguins of Antarctica) that *all* the fish-eating birds as well as the land-going carnivorous birds and those which formerly ate insect pests are doomed. It is probable that all the carnivorous fish will soon contain too much DDT for human consumption and may themselves become extinct. It is possible that the earthworms, at least in forests and other sprayed areas, will vanish—with what effect upon the forests is anybody's guess. The plankton of the high seas (upon which the entire planetary ecology depends) is believed to be still unaffected.

... *all* of the many current threats to man's survival are traceable to three root causes:

- a) technological progress
- b) population increase
- c) certain errors in the thinking and attitudes of occidental culture. (Our "values" are wrong!)

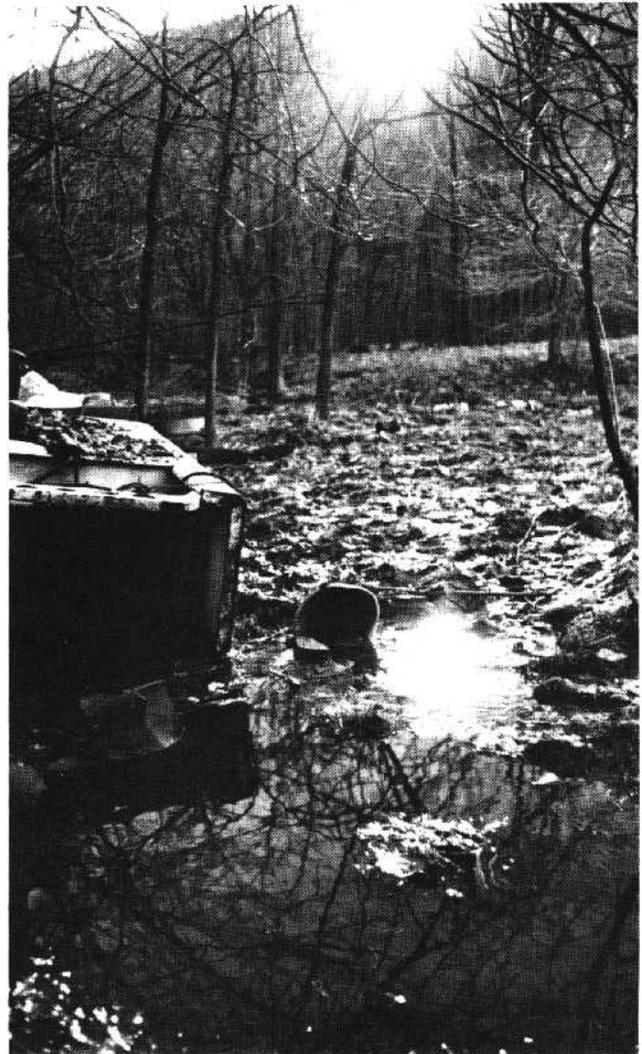
We believe that all three of these fundamental factors are necessary conditions for the destruction of our world. In other words, we *optimistically* believe that the correction of any *one* of them would save us...

It appears, at present, that the only possible entry point for reversal of the process is the conventional attitudes toward the environment...

That the very first requirement for ecological stability is a balance between the rates of birth and death. For better or for worse, we have tampered with the deathrate, especially by controlling the major epidemic diseases and the death of infants. Always, in any living (i.e., ecological) system, ever increasing imbalance will generate its own limiting factors as side effects of the increasing imbalance. In the present instance, we begin to know some of Nature's ways of correcting the imbalance—smog, pollution, DDT poisoning, industrial wastes, famine, atomic fallout, and war. *But the imbalance has gone so far that we cannot trust Nature not to over-correct.*

That the ideas which dominate our civilization at the present time date in their most virulent form from the Industrial Revolution.

- a) It's us *against* the environment.
- b) It's us *against* other men.
- c) It's the individual (or the individual company, or the individual nation) that matters.
- d) We *can* have unilateral control over the environment and must strive for that control.
- e) We live within an infinitely expanding "frontier."
- f) Economic determinism is common sense.
- g) Technology will do it for us.



We submit that these ideas are simply proved *false* by the great but ultimately destructive achievement of our technology in the last 150 years. Likewise they appear to be false under modern ecological theory. *The creature that wins against its environment destroys itself...*

That change in our thinking has already begun—among scientists and philosophers, and among young people. But it is not only long-haired professors and long-haired youth who are changing their ways of thought. There are also many thousands of businessmen and even legislators who *wish* they could change but feel that it would be unsafe or not "common sense" to do so. The changes will continue as inevitably as technological progress.

That these changes in thought will impact upon our government, economic structure, educational philosophy, and military stance because the old premises are deeply built into all these sides of our society.

That nobody can predict what new patterns will emerge from these drastic changes. We hope that the period of change may be characterized by wisdom, rather than by either violence or the fear of violence...

By Gregory Bateson