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CHILDREN ARE OUR FUTURE

Excerpts from Dr. Rashmi Mayur's Address to a Meeting
on the Environment 6 October, 1990

The theme of Environment Day this year was "The Child and the Environment". For the 1.7 billion children below the age of 15, the fundamental question is what kind of earth have we inherited and what sort of world are we going to leave. This may be the last generation of children to inherit the earth. The UNE declares, "The degradation of the environment is killing children".

Eighty-two per cent of children in the world live in developing nations, 200 million of them (excluding China) are environmental victims. Fourteen million children under age five die annually of preventable diseases and malnutrition. A school in Bombay reports that 15% of children suffer from asthma or emphysema. Most of the children in Manila suffer from gastric diseases. Almost 70% of the children in Cairo are victims of several types of parasites. All these children are prey to environmental pollution.

The 1990s will see the largest number of children to be born in a single decade, 1.5 billion. Their survival will depend on making the earth healthy and nurturing.

The situation is grim in all Third World Countries. Of the 11 million hectares of tropical forest lost every year, 1.5 million are in India. Almost 35 per cent of the urban population in these countries lives in environmentally wretched conditions. The world seems

to be heading inexorably toward disorder. Many rainforests have gone. Some rare species of animals, birds and other biota have become extinct. 25 billion tons of rich top soil are washed away every year. Desertification advances at the rate of six million hectares yearly.

Cities are becoming unlivable. Air pollution has reached dangerous levels in cities like Bombay, Bangkok, Manila, Sao Paulo, Moscow and Calcutta.

GREENHOUSE EFFECT

A matter of serious concern is the greenhouse effect and resulting climate change. The cause is the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, resulting in an increase in the earth's temperature of 1°C during the last 100 years. It is projected that the temperature will rise by 1°C to 3°C within the next 40 to 50 years.

Environment phenomena such as greenhouse effect, climate change, ozone depletion and acid rain are intricately interconnected. We live on an integrated plane with continuous feedback systems in which everything is inter-related. Developments in technology and communication have led to homogenisation of cultures and lifestyles, resulting in universal uniformity and standardised living.

The ultimate results of these developments have been high energy and resource consumption and a decline of non-renewable resources and genera-

tion of enormous waste, which overburdens the ecosystem and fouls the environment.

Apart from abandoning wasteful lifestyles, steps have to be taken to restore the Earth's environment. First, there has to be a global plan of action concerning the greenhouse effect and climate change. At the same time developing countries must move towards alternative sources of energy.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

An international Environment Agency should be set up for a global plan of action. It should include:

MORNING CLASSES in BASIC ECONOMICS

led by Mr. George Charles
will commence

TUESDAY MARCH 4.

Contact office 670 2754 for details.

INSIDE:

- History of Land Tax in Victoria
- Soviet Leaders ready to hear about George
- Dates for your Diaries (See Back Page)

- Protecting the rainforest while at the same time planning to plant 25 billion trees by the turn of the century.
- Reducing emissions of sulphur dioxides and nitrogen dioxide to mitigate the problems of acid rain.
- Protecting ecological treasures of the world. It should have plans for preserving other species which share the Earth with human beings.
- Saving the mountains, oceans, poles and atmosphere from human encroachment.

The Agency should set up a taxation system along the lines of the Henry George philosophy.

The Agency should help set up International Legal Machineries like the Montreal Protocol, which can provide a legal framework for international cooperation in dealing with global environmental problems.

Environment can be protected only by the people at the local level through their education, vigilance and participation. The aim should be to eliminate technologies which cause environmental degradation and identify and develop technologies which are environmentally clean, resource-conserving and healthy.

SEARCH FOR HOPE

At a time when the world's ecology is ruthlessly plundered and its environment mindlessly destroyed, our search for hope must be rooted in reverence for nature, which is an important principle of Indian philosophy. The Australian Aborigines have expressed it wisely "You can never take from nature more than you give it".

Dr. Brundtland, presenting the final report of the World Commission on Environment and Development to the planet's young people in 1987 said "Securing our common future will require new energy and openness, fresh insights and an ability to look beyond the narrow bounds of national frontiers and separate scientific disciplines".

The young are better at such visions than we, who are often constrained by the traditions of a former more fragmented world. We must tap their energy, their openness, their ability to see the interdependence of issues.

- Dr. Rashmi Mayur, Ph.D is an advisor to the UN, US Congress, Govt. Costa Rica on the environment and population. President Global Futures Network. Vice-President World Health Foundation.