

# 2nd ecological revolution?

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Prepare for the second ecological revolution.

The first ecological revolution was based on popular recognition of links among different aspects of the micro-environment: that you cannot poison bugs without also killing birds. That realization spawned a popular movement involving millions of people. The result has been an array of environmental legislation in dozens of countries.

The second ecological revolution will arise from recognition of links within the macro-environment: that cutting rain forests in Costa Rica or burning coal in Gdansk may contribute to crop failures in Iowa and tree death in the Black Forest. This realization promises to bring about a second wave of environmentalism, notable for its commitment to international solutions.

Recent environmental disasters are teaching us that the world's air and water cut across national boundaries as surely as DDT cuts across species boundaries. The radioactive cloud that rose above Chernobyl did not stop at the Soviet border but circles the globe. The acid rain that rises from U.S. smokestacks kills Canadian forests. The "greenhouse effect" resulting from burning too much fuel worldwide causes droughts in many parts of the world.

Why aren't governments and politicians racing to meet threats to the basic conditions on which life depends? The disturbing answer is that the measures needed to protect the global ecosphere will reduce the power of the world's most powerful institutions. National governments and corporations will have to accept international controls. Corporations will have to forego opportunities to make money at the expense of the environment. Military establishments will have to abandon programs that threaten air and water. Beyond that, virtually everyone will have to adjust to substantial change — though not necessarily deterioration — in lifestyle.

The first ecological revolution began as a popular movement. It

didn't wait for leadership from politicians. It imposed its own agenda on governments and economies, an agenda that ultimately limited the ability of politicians and corporations to pursue their interests at the expense of the environment.

The second ecological revolution will similarly have to impose its agenda on governments and businesses. It will have to say that preserving the conditions for human life is more important than increasing national power or private wealth. And it will have to act globally — with international petition drives, worldwide demonstrations and boycotts and direct action campaigns against polluting countries and corporations.

A baby step toward international responsibility was taken last year when, in the face of mounting popular concern, more than 40 nations agreed to protect the ozone layer by limiting the use of chlorofluorocarbons. The next logical step would be a binding international agreement to protect the atmosphere by limiting the production of the "greenhouse gases" that raise the Earth's temperature.

The prime ministers of Canada and Norway recently called for such an agreement. But William A. Nitze, United States Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Environment, Health and Natural Resources, responded that it would be "premature at the current moment to contemplate an international agreement that sets targets for greenhouse gases."

Premature? How many crop failures, heat waves and environmental disasters from now will an agreement become timely?

And in the meantime, how does Nitze propose to protect us from the clear and present danger that degradation of the global environment poses to our security? Does he believe it is something that the free market or greater military strength can solve? How long does he think people will ignore something as close as the air they breathe and as insistent as the weather?

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