

# *Pollution Explained*

*Speech by: Mr. Everett Biggs, Deputy Minister  
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First I want to express my sincere thanks for inviting me here today. It is a pleasure to speak to a group that has done so much to help homemakers improve the quality of life in homes throughout rural Ontario.

While considering the material for my talk this morning, I thought about the basic objectives of the work carried out by the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario. As noted in one of your pamphlets, the basic aim of the F.W.I.O. is to help develop a more abundant life for the rural people of Ontario by working to achieve four objectives, which include: encouraging better homemaking practices; helping develop happier and more useful citizens; discovering and stimulating leadership; and encouraging appreciation of the things near at hand.

After thinking about these objectives, I felt it was appropriate that your organization wants to know more about pollution. For, if pollution goes unchecked, our life style, our standard of living, the things we have done to improve the health and welfare of our families will be seriously affected.

Basically pollution is the addition of foreign matter to our natural environment to a degree that is insupportable by nature. Soil, water and air are all equipped to handle a certain amount of organic and inorganic waste. But, if the amount of foreign material exceeds this acceptable amount, it becomes pollution.

In considering pollution it is essential to look at man in relation to the other components that make up our natural environment in this planet. "We are simply one component, albeit the dominant one, of the present terrestrial environment. As such, there are no constraints — moral, philosophical or otherwise — nothing except purely physical ones, on our freedom to manage our environment for our own ends. But this freedom to progress is also a freedom to regress, for we now have the opportunity and ability to achieve unparalleled quality of environment and human life, or to destroy both utterly." These comments emerged from the Pollution and Our Environment conference sponsored and organized by the Canadian Council of Resource Ministers late in 1966.

More recently President Nixon, in his State of the Union Message, spoke of our environment this way: "The truly significant environmental problem for each of us is that in which we spend 80% of our time — that is, our homes, our places of work and the streets over which we pass."

The fight against pollution is gaining momentum throughout both Canada and the United States. Last week, the United States declared Wednesday, April 22nd, as Earth Day. The purpose of Earth Day was to promote public awareness of the problems which, according to many noted scientists, must be checked in the very near future or this planet will be unfit for us to live in.

The newspapers, radio and television reported widespread public support of Earth Day. In New York City more than 100,000 persons strolled along sections of Fifth Avenue and 14th Street which were closed to traffic in commemoration of Earth Day. Peaceful rallies involving up to 25,000 persons were held in major cities throughout the United States. And, in Montreal, as part of that city's Earth Day events, they held a fashion show of clothes for the polluted future.

To me, one of the most outstanding things about Earth Day was that it combined the efforts of people who care — men and women who are concerned about the environment their families will live in, in the future.

This morning I am going to mention some of the sources of pollution that are contributing to increased soil, air and water pollution.

Soil pollution is most frequently associated with the use of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides by the agricultural industry, and the disposal of solid wastes by both urban and rural communities.

In the last couple years, studies by the Ontario Government indicated that DDT adversely affects predatory fish, and fish-eating birds, but that the present level of DDT in the environment presents no hazard to human health. These were the factors that prompted the Ontario Government to restrict the use of DDT and initiate strict rules for the collection and disposal of existing supplies of DDT.