



EARTH DAY - Monday, April 22

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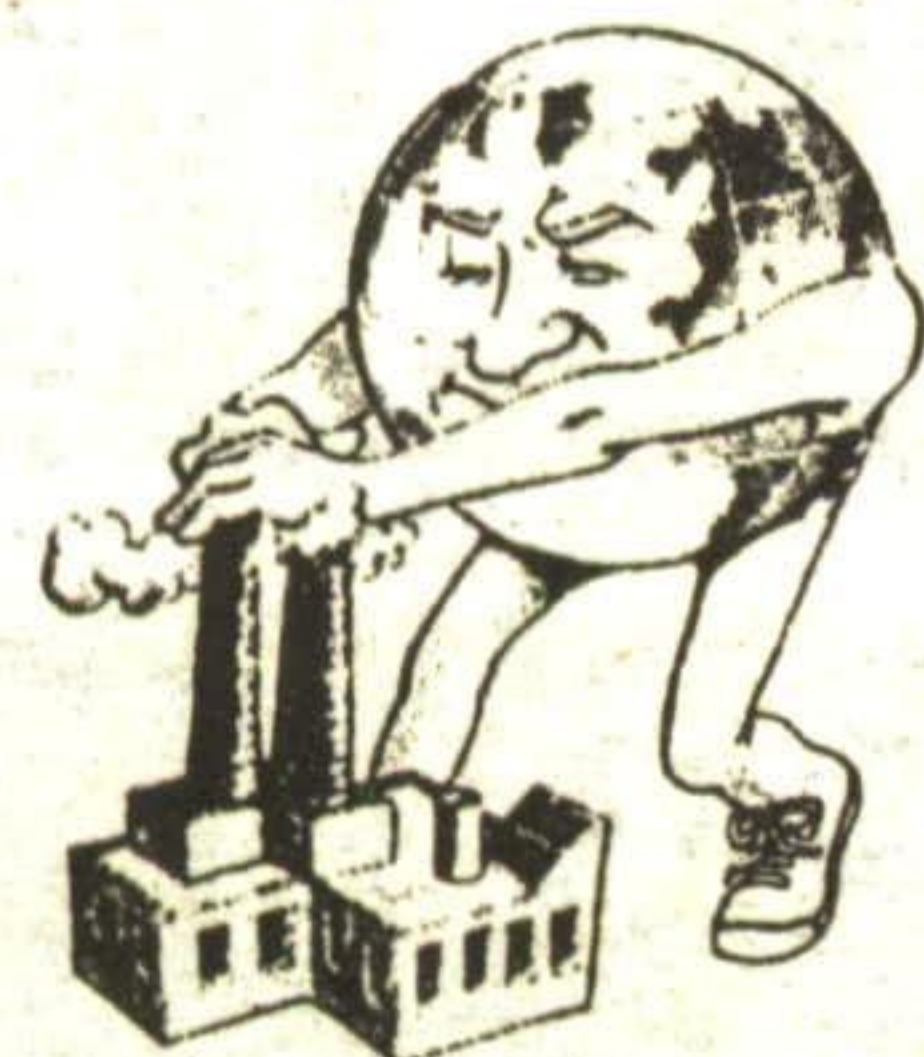
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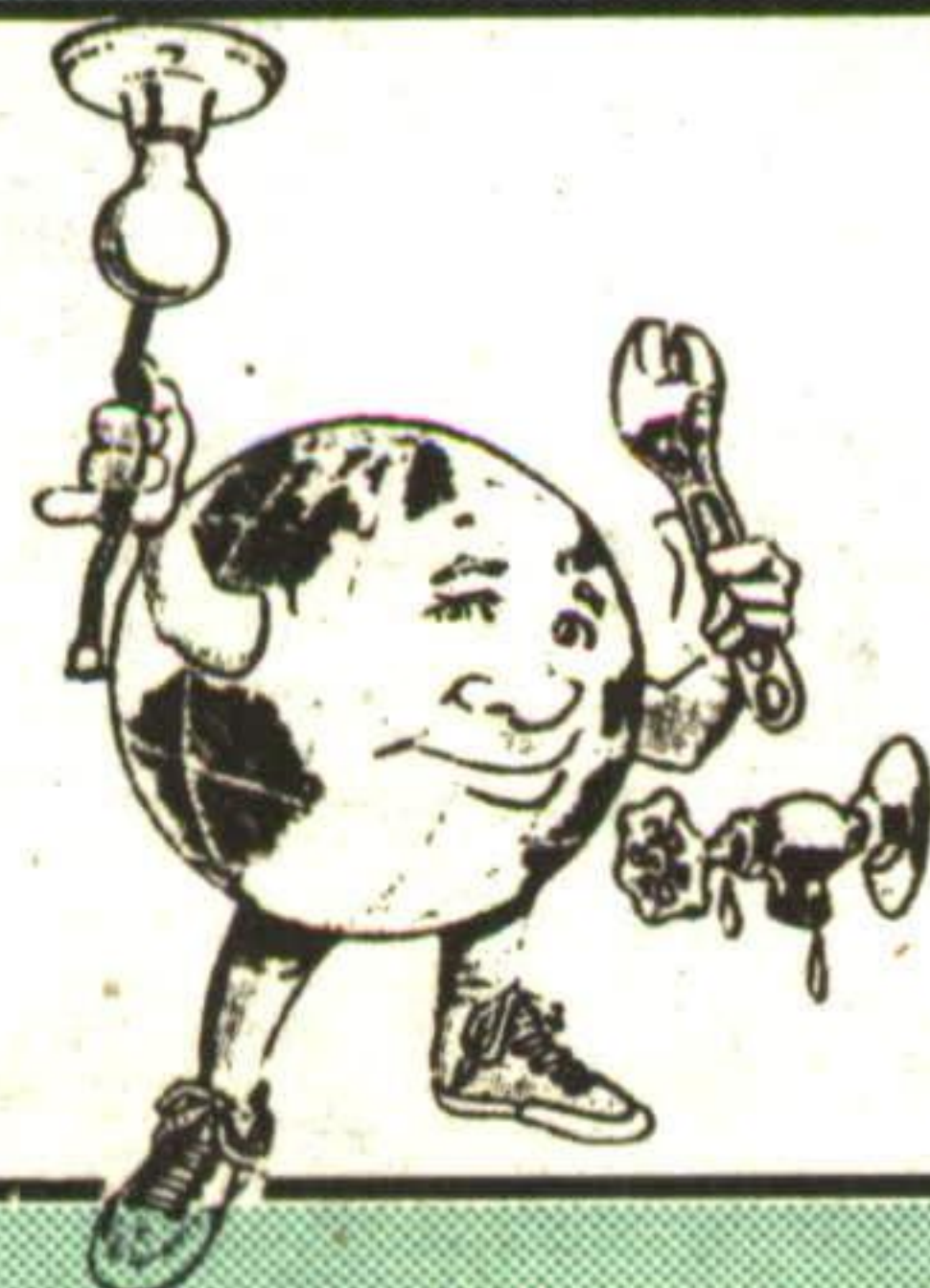
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Breast cancer concern in Halton

Expert blames toxic living

By **JANET DUVAL**

Special to The Independent/Free Press

Why is the incidence of breast cancer so high in Halton?

It's presently above the Canadian average of one case in every nine women — and that itself is more than double the frequency seen in the 1960s.

"I'd be looking at the water," says an environmental consultant for the World Wildlife Fund and Greenpeace. "What's in it? Among other things, I'd check for atrazine," a pesticide widely used by corn growers.

Beverly Thorpe addressed a large audience at an event sponsored by the Tri-S women's group of St. John's United Church, Georgetown recently. She's been studying the effects of synthetic chemicals in the environment that, as well as causing cancer, seem to disrupt human hormones affecting reproduction, fertility, sexual development, and behavior.

For years, our government has regulated chemicals based on their carcinogenic effect. But the scientists now surmise that common pesticides and other toxins may also be the cause of falling sperm counts, undescended male testes, high estrogen levels, and assorted sexual abnormalities in both humans and animals. It's because, she says, we all live in a permanent toxic environment.

Suspected to be at fault are pesticides such as atrazine, lindane and 2-4-D, heavy metals including cadmium, lead and mercury, common in batteries, plasticizers such as styrene,

used to make soft plastics and pliable and surfactants found in detergents.

"It's unbelievable that we still use lindane here," says Thorpe. "People put it on their children's heads for lice, and on their pets." Lindane and chemicals like it have already been banned in several European countries.

It's possible that toxins migrate from the plastic containers in which we microwave our food, from snack product packaging, from PVC pipes that deliver our water, and even from toys and teething rings. "I wouldn't give a baby a plastic toy that could go in the mouth. And I'd put the onus on the plastics industry to prove that it's safe," she says.

Researchers theorize that synthetic chemicals mimic natural hormones in humans and wildlife, "fooling" body cells by either sending the wrong message at critical stages of fetal development, or blocking the messages all together. These hormone disruptors don't change our genes, but do wreak with the timing or amount of cell activity.

That's probably why scientists are observing unusual symptoms in wildlife in areas such as the Great Lakes, where contaminants from land and air seem to be affecting fish and birds in particular.

"What we do to animals, we do to ourselves," says Thorpe. "People aren't informed how dangerous it really is to eat Great Lakes fish."

Synthetic chemicals first hit the market on a broad scale in

the 1940s. Children born in the 1950s were the first generation exposed to toxins in the womb. By the 1970s, they reached reproductive age. We're just beginning to see the effects. Animals, with faster turnarounds in generations, seem to be indicating what's ahead for humans.

Dioxin, a natural product of incineration, can live in body fat for years, then produce deadly effects when reproduction occurs, even at minute levels. It's a problem because meat, fish, and dairy products are so important in the Canadian diet.

"Dioxin levels in Canadians are 10 times the U.S. acceptable daily intake," says Thorpe. "We can't keep justifying the state we're in."

In the audience, a provincial sportfish biologist said that he'd investigated high PCB levels in the women of Big Trout Lake in northern Ontario. It wasn't local fish causing the problem, but herring gull eggs the community collected every spring, after the birds wintered in the Caribbean. "Our loons would have PCBs too," he commented.

Thorpe admits there's been strong response from chemical industry to charges of hormonal disruption. "But we say every chemical should be tested now for reproductive effects, before its registration is renewed."

She advises gardeners to stop using pesticides, and to try natural landscaping. Golfers, she says, should look for organically treated golf courses, and "don't ever chew on the tees!"

**NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
GEORGETOWN AND DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL**

The Annual Meeting of the Georgetown & District Memorial Hospital will be held at the Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital in the Activity Room at 7:30 p.m. on June 27, 1996.

**ALL WELCOME!
AGENDA**

1. Opening Remarks
 2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on June 22, 1995
 3. Report of the Chair
 4. Report of the Chief Executive Officer
 5. Report of the Chief of Staff
 6. Report of the President of the Hospital Volunteers Association
 7. Report of the Foundation
 8. Auditor's Report
 9. Report of the Treasurer
 10. Appointment of Auditors for 1996-97
 11. By-Law #1 Amendments (if any)
 12. Report of Nominating Committee
 13. Guest Speaker - Topic to be announced
 14. Election of Directors
 15. New Business
 16. Closure
- D. Lawson
Chair of the Board



**Tooth
Chatter**

by
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TRENTON
DENTURIST**

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