

We must change our environmental thinking

As we enter the 1990s it is becoming apparent that we can no longer be complacent about our world and our way of life; thoughtless man has done enormous damage to the environment and the effects are being seen and felt around the world.

There are worries about damage to the ozone layer and the results of what is known as the greenhouse effect; we hear that water tables are too low and domestic water supplies are polluted. If we want our planet to

Words' Worth

with ERIC BALKIND



with nature, and much we take for granted may have to change. It all sounds very threatening, but we can adapt. In fact, we've got very little choice and so the real question is, where do we start?

If it has been suggested that in the western world we may one day drown in our own garbage; and indeed many of us are already anxious about the possible location of a major dump here in Milton. For a start, we might do well to consider how to

minimize our own extravagant amounts of garbage.

There seems little doubt that the days of overpackaging of all kinds of products must shortly come to an end. Will we miss having to unwrap things which come packaged inside a pouch, which is inside a box, which is itself sealed inside some more elaborate wrapping? When we finally do away with this abundance of eye-catching wrapping surely life will go on — and without any pain-

ful consequences.

Disposable diapers are another concern. They are certainly convenient for parents but they have proven to be a huge environmental hazard. It is now estimated that Canadian babies use about 1.7 billion disposables per year and the great majority of these 'end products' go straight into landfill sites.

The possibilities for contamination of our precious water supply are obvious. Does it make sense to use our precious trees up at the rate of nearly 2.5 million a year? Disposable diapers alone make up between two and five per cent of municipal garbage by volume. The continued use of such convenience products is surely questionable.

We ought also to be concerned at the incredible rates at which we use our fresh water supplies. According to the *Green Consumer Guide* the average Canadian uses more than six times as much water daily as does someone living in England and more than 15 times as much as a Swiss citizen.

It may be tempting to think we're a cleaner lot but that's not really the issue. What the figures really tell us is that, quite simply, we use a lot of water and, at the very least, we need to take a look at our consumption. If you are interested, the average toilet uses about 20 litres with every flush, so you can easily begin to figure out how much water is used in your home.

Some conservation-conscious folk place a brick in the tank and they manage to save a bit, but the big news is that there are now toilets available which operate with much less water. By using them we might easily cut down on water usage by 30 per cent or more.

Surely this is where imagination and political will must should come to the fore. Couldn't incentives help us all to move in the right direction?

How about abolishing the provincial sales taxes on products which attain appropriate conservation standards? For example, toilets which flush properly using 12 or less litres. And what about an additional federal tax rebate for the same purchases?

We owe it to ourselves and our children to begin healing our badly damaged and depleted world; and we could use more of the sense of reverence for this living planet that is so much a part of the way of life for our aboriginal peoples.

"Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the Earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the Earth befalls the sons of Earth. If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves."

Those words were spoken by Chief Seattle in 1854.

Used hearing aids needed for the poor

Used hearing aids are desperately needed for international distribution among the poor, says a Halton member of the Association of Hearing Instrument Practitioners of Ontario (AHIP).

The association has started a campaign which members hope will result in the collection of thousands of used hearing aids to be exported to less fortunate countries, says Patricia Iannuzzi, an Oakville hearing aid specialist.

"This is an opportunity to help hundreds of poor and needy hearing impaired persons," she added.

Through Canadian International Hearing Services, all collected hearing aids will be evaluated, repaired if necessary, or sold for replacement parts.

AHIP is a non-profit organization which represents more than 90 per cent of all hearing aid dispensers in Ontario.

Send hearing aids of any make, model or condition, to: AHIP, 55 Mary St., Lindsay, Ont., K9V 5Z6.

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