

Northumberland Strait

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A CADRE SUPPLEMENT: POLLUTION/CONSERVATION

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WATER POLLUTION IS THE PROBLEM

To get an idea of how bad pollution is in Prince Edward Island we spoke to Dr. Ian MacQuarrie of the Biology Department.

He informed us that water pollution is the greatest cause for concern on the Island, as compared to soil and air pollution which are not pressing. More than half of Island streams are presently unfit for shellfish collection because of pollution or siltation, he noted.

According to MacQuarrie, the reason that people are not pressing for an improvement in the quality of life on the Island, is not because they are not concerned but because they are not aware, because background information is not readily available.

In criticizing the PEI news media, he suggested that only sensational news is reported (such as the Nova Scotia "Arrow" incident) and people don't know how it all affects them and what they can do about it. However, he said that not a lot of background information is necessary — "You need an expert to design a sewage facility but you don't need an expert to tell you if you need one or not".

He mentioned a proposal of roughly a million dollars by an engineering firm to clean up Charlottetown harbour, and that "experts" are going to have to make a government decision on what will be done because the community representatives on the Water Authority are not well enough informed to make a competent decision. MacQuarrie felt that the people of the area should decide what use they want made of the harbor, as just eliminating the smell would be much easier and much less costly than making it safe for swimming, for instance.

He also felt that a general information program as well as a school program in ecology would prevent such mistakes as the method of construction of the North River and Hillsborough bridges (which, although apparently economical at the times have proved detrimental to the ecology of their rivers) through ignorance.

NICE WORK

ONTARIO (CUP) — Domtar Limited, a chemical company recently fined \$1,000 for pollution of Lake Superior by dumping effluents into streams and rivers, has been awarded a \$484,000 "forgivable loan" by the Ontario Development Corporation.

The ODC awards the loans periodically in amounts of more than \$50,000 to deserving large industries, as part of a campaign to encourage private enterprise and foreign investment in the province.

Companies are not required to repay the loans if they can prove they made no profit from the money.

The loan to Domtar will go toward the construction of another chemical plant at Cornwall, Ontario.

Domtar is affiliated through its director with the Argus Corporation, Standard Broadcasting, Massey-Ferguson and subsidiaries, Avco Corporation, Hollinger Mines, Canada Cement, Wabasso Towels, W.I. Molasses Co., Prudential Life Insurance, Sun Life Assurance, United Aircraft, Hawker-Sidely, Dominion Stores, Simpson's Sears, Claude Neon, Gillette, Noranda Mines, Canada Permanent Trust, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, Royal Bank of Canada, Bank of Montreal, Toronto Dominion Bank and other firms.



PHOSPHATES

By MARK BONOKOSKI

Pollution is one of the dirtiest words around. A major cause is, ironically enough, a cleaning compound—phosphate. Maybe that will take a little cheer out of washing and force people to take a little action.

The gurgle people hear as their dirty wash-water runs down their drains is being drowned out by an even greater rumble in Parliament. Joe Greene, who's leading the battle against pollution, has a war going with what he terms the "strange female species" who buy the highest phosphate detergent because it gets the "old man's clothes whiter."

Basically, the phosphate problem arises from "old age" or, in more scientific terms, the eutrophication of the Great Lakes. Our natural waters are growing old. Ingredients such as phosphates and nitrogen are flowing into the waters and are serving as fertilizer for the aquatic plants called algae. This aging process occurs naturally, but over vast periods of time; Canada's unpolluted northern lakes are still infants in the process.

But, man-made additions of nutrients to waters can speed up the aging process by thousands of years. This is what happened to the already dead Lake Erie and the other dying Great Lakes.

Unnatural additions of phosphorus to the lakes result in giant population explosions of algae. When this algae dies, its decaying process robs the lake of oxygen, killing fish and the other animal life the lake supports. When it will no longer support animal life the lake is dead.

Washed ashore, the decaying algae also fouls beaches in unsightly, stinking masses, making the lake unfit for swimming or recreation.

The phosphate problem is nothing new. Twelve years ago, the internationally known ecologist Lamong Cole had already recognized the difficulty in cycling phosphorus through nature. In the Scientific American he wrote the following. "Phosphorus is an element essential to all life, but it is quite rare on the earth (about 0.1 per cent of the mass of earth). Unfortunately, it is not cycled by nature and is most likely the critical limiting resource for the functioning of the ecosphere (earth's total en-

vironment system.)

"We must learn to reclaim and recycle it, not to use it once and dump it."

Phosphates, however, have a number of actions that are invaluable. They hold dirt in suspension and make the water wetter and thus able to penetrate fabrics easier. They boost the cleaning power of other ingredients and emulsify the greasy fats.

Able to see the effect of detergents on the family wash and home cleaning, and being constantly bombarded by television commercials extolling their value, it is easy to see why most homemakers are sold on them. This is the crux of the matter. Detergents take the hard work out of cleaning. Few people, however, are aware that the phosphate percentage varies with almost every detergent. Some cleaners with a soap base contain just a little, and probably, safe amount, yet do an excellent job.

The clean image of detergent commercials took a serious knock on February 5th when radio and TV personality Arthur Godfrey announced he would do no more commercials for Axion, a laundry product, unless its manufacturer, Colgate-Palmolive Ltd., allowed him to say on the air that it pollutes the water. He stated that the company told him that it was an enzyme and that enzymes do not pollute. He then discovered it contained more phosphates than any other detergent.

"How can I preach ecology and sell this stuff?" Godfrey asked.

Lever Brothers Ltd. sells Lux, a laundry soap product almost free of phosphates — certainly low enough to be harmless. The same company sells seven detergents containing certainly an almost significant percentage of phosphate; these include All, Omo, Surf, and Breeze.

Proctor and Gamble Ltd. sells Ivory Snow, again a safe soap-based laundry product and the laundry detergents Cheer, Tide, Oxydol, Duz, and Bold, which are phosphate based.

There is lots of choice. Choose a phosphate and you are literally hanging yourself. The Tide has turned. Washing can still be a Breeze. If people continue to be true to phosphate detergents they will soon find themselves with no water to wash in.