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## Can Stockholm Succeed?

With the opening of the Stockholm Conference only days away, it has become obvious that what is most needed now is a severe cutback in our expectations—else the affair will go down as a failure.

How have we got into this bind? Quite logically. Early misgivings that the conference could come to be regarded as the "rich men's club," laying down to the rest of the world the rules of appropriate environmental behavior, led to a decision to define human environment in very broad terms. While toxic emissions and mine tailings degraded the quality of life in the rich countries, the formula went, lack of drinkable water and the ravages of pathogens imperiled life itself in the rest of the world. All of these problems qualified as conference material.

The strategy accomplished its primary purpose: the initial hostility of the less-developed countries abated, and "environmental concern" was proclaimed to be a necessary dimension of development, not a competitor for funds and attention. Conflicts caused by the impact of environmental policies on trade, investment, and aid were recognized early, and this led to intelligent discussion and some guidelines to remedial action and acquisition of necessary knowledge.

Unhappily, the structure has proved to be shaky. Once development had become a dimension of the environmental problem, it quickly attained prominence. The ensuing argument began to focus on obstacles to development and who was to blame for them, increasingly so as the technicians active in the preparations for the conference gave place to their political superiors. Varying with who is discussing it, the conference is expected to do something about poverty, hunger, discrimination, disease, and inequalities of income, education, and opportunity—in sum, the human condition. New demands are still surfacing; for example, several African countries announced in mid-April their intention to have the conference condemn apartheid and endorse their demand for reparations from the colonial powers responsible for damage done in the past to their natural and human resources. All this comes on top of systems of worldwide monitoring, agreements on avoiding such damaging activities as dumping waste in oceans, preservation of areas or elements of value to mankind as a species, and a declaration of principles on the human environment to be pungent, inspiring, comprehensive, and agreeable to all. Nor is the level of expectations reduced by the expected influx of interested observers—on the contrary. Apart from the forum set up with the cooperation of the conference to accommodate the various environmental, conservationist, and scientific organizations that cannot operate in an intergovernmental meeting, one or more counter-forums will be set up by and for those who view the official forum as dominated by the "establishment." These counter-forums can be expected to highlight whatever they judge to be the shortcomings of the conference. The rumor mill has it that 10,000 to 50,000 people, mostly young, will be converging on Stockholm to engage in this task. Whether this is reason to rejoice or despair we shall not know until the conference is over.

Can the environmental donkey carry the load that is now accumulating on its back? Stockholm is an important way station. It was not designed to solve the problems of mankind. In what sense, then, can Stockholm "succeed"? It will be a success if it can tread water from 5 to 16 June and keep from sinking under the weight of highly motivated, ill-addressed, and altogether exaggerated expectations.—HANS H. LANDSBERG, *Director, Appraisals Program, Resources for the Future, Inc., Washington, D.C. 20036.*