

Stockholm Conference

In his report on the Stockholm conference on the human environment (News and Comment, 23 June, p. 1308), Nigel Hawkes specifies population and diminishing natural resources as "two crucial issues" that were dodged. Everyone who attended the conference left it with a private catalog of most serious omissions. I would like to add two.

The first is the Indochinese war, which, from an exclusively environmental point of view, merited more consideration by the conference than Olof Palme's stern remonstrance and Tang Ke's furious attack. Thousands of visitors to Stockholm, in addition to the Swedish people themselves, viewed it as bald-faced hypocrisy that the United States could profess concern for the human environment during the very days and weeks that we were (and are) ravaging a subcontinent and rendering it unfit for human habitation.

A second omission was the problem of power generation and consumption. A thorough exploration of alternative technologies for power generation was indicated, appropriately, in the subject areas on "Planning and management of human settlements for environmental quality" and "Identification and control of pollutants of broad international significance." Even more important would have been the launching of a critical evaluation of the misuses and wanton waste of power. Despite widespread worry about where the next watt is coming from and how cleanly it can be generated, neither the United States nor the United Nations has begun to define a rational policy on the use of power.

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Some misinformation was included in the few sentences in Hawkes's report about the meetings of nongovernment organizations which took place at Stockholm concurrently with the First United Nations Conference on the Human Environment.

The Environment Forum was not a "conference fringe" for U.N. delegates and bored reporters, but a true forum—a place for public meetings and open discussion. Three auditoriums and many conference rooms and offices

were made available at the Stockholm School of Art, together with outstanding technical support, which included simultaneous translation in four languages for four meetings a day, a daily newsletter, a multilingual reference library (operated by University of Washington students), a continuous film program, exhibit-making facilities, and secretarial and technical services. Dozens of educational displays were set up by such diverse organizations as the Jishu-Koza Society of Japan, the Friends of the Earth, and the Greater Stockholm Environmental Council. An estimated 20,000 visitors came to Stockholm for the period from 5 through 16 June. Most of them were not accredited to take part in the official proceedings of the U.N. conference, but they could and did come to the forum at any time of day or evening for scientific discussion or political debate on environmental issues.

Visitors were free to stage their own programs, except in the main auditorium, where the forum management produced 23 meetings on environmental topics, featuring panels of experts and open discussion by the audience. Hawkes mentions only one of these meetings, in which a dramatic confrontation with Paul Ehrlich (and the International Planned Parenthood Federation) was staged by the Ote Iwapo, a Third World organization. Contrary to Hawkes's report, Ehrlich did get his views across, in a way that enhanced his stature as a theoretician of the environmental movement. The young members of Ote Iwapo were not "Commoner's supporters," did not claim to be "representatives" of their countries, and did not draft a declaration for the Environment Forum (the forum took no sides and issued no position papers). Commoner, and the Scientist's Institute for Public Information (SIPI) group, of which he and I were a part, took care to stay away from political debates, hoping to be spared the silly tag of political masterminds.

In fact, the SIPI group of 16 U.S. scientists had its hands full helping our Swedish hosts produce the scientific part of the program at the Environment Forum. We were supported in this task by a grant from the Johnson Foundation. A substantive, and often fascinating, program of environmental science was in fact put together in Stockholm for all comers. The Swedish government succeeded in providing an

instructive, as well as constructive, focus of activity for a mass of visitors to a convention for which it was the host. This novel use of science deserves to be commended.

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Unspoken Conspiracy?

I disagree with a sentence in Jean Mayer's article "Toward a national nutrition policy" (21 April, p. 237). Mayer writes, "As they became unneeded in agriculture, and at the same time, eligible to vote, an unspoken conspiracy of reactionary Southern officials created conditions such that the poor blacks would be driven to the North." The distinguishing feature of a scientific paper is that conclusions are supported by data or evidence. No evidence is given to support this statement; it is stated as if it were a universally known fact. The author should have justified the statement or else modified it with some such phrase as, "It has been said that . . ." or "I believe that an unspoken conspiracy . . ." (By the way, what is the difference between an unspoken conspiracy and a plain conspiracy?)

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Retreat

In response to Goodman's call to the suffering legions (Letters, 21 July, p. 210), I first became allergic to guinea pigs. The allergy then spread to mice, rabbits, and finally to rats. This all occurred over a period of 9 years, in four different laboratories, on two continents. I gave up before any other furry creatures were involved and retreated to books, journals, and computer printouts. My only advice is "Try it. You'll like it."

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Erratum: In "Lunar studies" by F. B. Waranius (Letters, 25 Aug., p. 653), the first sentence should read "The Lunar Science Institute, Houston, Texas, is building a data information bank of lunar studies since 1950" and not "The Lunar Science . . . straighten out lunar studies. . . ."