



THE GAYLORD NELSON NEWSLETTER

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Earth Day - 1970

Mass Movement Begins

In New York City, thousands of persons thronged in the warm Spring sunshine, and the world-famous Fifth Avenue belonged to the people.

For a few hours, a small portion of the great city banned motor vehicles, and people promenaded on a proud boulevard usually congested with buses, taxis and cars. It was April 22--Earth Day in New York--and it was a holiday. Assistant Chief Inspector Arthur Morgan, who was in charge of the police on the scene, observed:

"Everyone's Beautiful"

"Everyone's beautiful. Just look at them. We're actually enjoying it."

In Madison, Wis., Earth Day was observed at sunrise over Lake Mendota with a Sanskrit invocation and a reading of the last chapter of the Book of Genesis with an apology to God for man's assaults on the

landscape.

Earth Day observers in Milwaukee nominated the toad, the praying mantis and the ladybug as substitutes for DDT.

Thousands Marched

In Greensboro, N.C., in Atlanta, Ga., and in Miami, Fla., thousands marched in demonstrations for a clean environment. The Governor of Maine called for the Earth Day commitment to be "a truly lasting one," and the mighty Chicago Tribune observed incredulously that, after demonstrations on the city's broad new Civic Center Plaza, "there was no post-rally litter remaining to be cleaned up."

A new movement had begun, and uncounted millions--students, laborers, farmers, housewives, politicians, professional people, liberals and conservatives--who might have

found it difficult to find common agreement on any other subject, were gathering together in a massive educational effort to talk about survival and the quality of survival in a world they all share.

In the little more than seven months after Sen. Gaylord Nelson suggested the idea of national teach-ins to discuss the crisis of the environment, the movement grew rapidly through March and April. On Earth Day, it was estimated that 2,000 college campuses, 2,000 community groups and 10,000 elementary and secondary schools were holding events.

In some places it was as the poet exclaimed while watching a rally of 30,000 in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park, an "educational picnic;" in others it was the serious business of government.

Special Legislation

During April, the state legislature of Massachusetts and the House of Representatives in Pennsylvania set aside time for important addresses on the environment and the introduction and passage of legislation aimed at protecting, preserving and restoring the environment.

Scientists, ecologists, environmentalists, educators and political leaders warned darkly before massive gatherings and small meetings that time was running out for the world and that all men had a responsibility to themselves and to leave a legacy of life for their children.

500 Invitations

Senator Nelson, who received nearly 500 invitations to speak at Earth Day observances, described the national teach-ins as "dramatic and successful" in their educational value, but warned that Earth Day must become the beginning of a "hard-fought political movement at all levels of government to insure that the spirit of the day is carried forth into actions to save, preserve and restore the environment for all living things."

The former Wisconsin governor's 18-stop speaking tour took him from coast to coast during April. He spoke in 10 states and the District of Columbia.



Nelson speaks at a multi-university teach-in on the eve of Earth Day at Milwaukee Area Technical College.

Question Of Man's Survival Raised

By Gaylord Nelson

Earth Day, an outpouring of concern for what we are doing to the world in which we live, marks the beginning of a commitment to the question of man's survival on the only known planet capable of supporting life in the hostile, dead void of space.

But the question of mere survival is not enough. How man survives is the critical question. That question is the concern of the science of ecology, a massive science concerned with all the ramifications of all the relationships of all living creatures to each other and their environment.

Wide Concern

It is concerned with not just how we dispose of tin cans, bottles and sewage. It is concerned with the habitat of marine creatures, animals, birds and man. The goal is not just an environment of clean air, water and scenic beauty, while forgetting about the Appalachians and the city ghettos where trapped people live in America's worst environment.

The goal that millions of Americans were discussing during Earth Day, Earth Week, Earth Month, was an environment of decency, quality and mutual respect for all living creatures--without hunger, without poverty and without war.

A Decent Environment

There should be no illusions about how difficult and how expensive it will be to restore and preserve the environment. But while the quest for a quality of life for all men in their physical, social, economic, and political environments will open the way to the toughest challenge man has ever faced, the task is not impossible.

The question is: Are we willing to make the

commitment, ethically, financially and politically, that is necessary? The spirit of Earth Day seems to indicate that we are.

Just in terms of resources alone, the challenge of saving the environment can only be successful if we make a national commitment to a decent environment in its broadest aspects. It must be as big as the commitment we made in the exploration of space and in the building of the most massive weapons system the world has ever seen.

Creative Society

We live in a creative society, capable of sending men to the moon, building complex computers that do our thinking for us and manufacturing products with a success never achieved in history.

But, unfortunately, we have used our creativity improperly. We have wasted and damaged our resources, directed our money and energies to war and escapist trips into space. We must now be prepared to deal with matters important to the human enterprise.

Organized Effort

In spite of all that, Earth Day showed that the people in this country are prepared to organize effective, non-partisan environmental political organizations across the land from the local level to the state and to the national level.

The environmental activists may be surprised at the kind of response they can get in a representative democracy. They have the power to make candidates and officials respond to their demands. Then the real beginning, symbolized by the spirit of Earth Day, will have marked a beginning of a quest for a quality of life.

Editorials Review Earth Day Activities

In Des Moines, Iowa, the Register looked at Earth Day and observed:

"... Granted that ideas and institutions long established are not easily changed; yet today is the first day of the rest of our life on this planet. We will begin anew."

All across the nation--from the deep South to the far North, to the West Coast and up and down the Eastern seaboard to the Midwest--the media covered Earth Day. It was front page news and prime time on radio and television. Most of the networks took advantage of the Earth Week observations to run pollution specials, and newspapers editorialized their support and called for the environmental concern to continue.

Finite Resources

The San Jose, Calif., Mercury warned that earth's resources are finite. "When they are finally depleted, they cannot be regenerated.... To be aware of the earth, its resources and man's relation to them is, or should be, the one that engages the interest and the activity of everyone, not just the professional environmentalists. They can't do it alone; the job is simply too big."

The Stevens Point Daily Journal advised that "what we need to do is to resolve to understand all we can about the problems of pollution and to do whatever we reasonably can to help to eliminate it."

The Dallas Morning News advised that "... good motives won't accomplish much unless they are accompanied by effective methods."

The Capital Times in Madison said Earth Day was creating a sense of urgency and called for the need

for dollars, "billions of dollars--dollars that are now going down the drain in the war in Vietnam and up to the moon. We can't save our earth at bargain rates."

The reaction of the careful Christian Science Monitor was that "... pollution is the biggest material challenge confronting mankind today. We are beginning to learn its massive dimensions, its costs, its urgency. On with the learning--and the remedying!"

Missile Gone Berserk?

Tuesday: Atlantic City at 9 a.m. Boston at 2:15 p.m. Madison at 7:15. Milwaukee at 10.

Wednesday: Bloomington at 9:30 a.m. Denver at 2. Berkeley at 8:15. On to Los Angeles. Back to Washington.

A missile gone berserk? No, it's our Sen. Nelson, crisscrossing the country as he evangelizes for the environment. "We feel we're mission control," says his secretary.

If anyone knows about widespread pollution, Nelson should. This week, he has seen it.

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