

of information supports license to proceed immediately with a project and sanctions postponement or cancellation of investigation. In this particular case the contention has been that any delay in the program would let the fire ants get out of control, an unconvincing claim since the fire ants have been out of control from the time they first appeared in the United States.

Discouraging as these examples of headstrong administrative decisions are, nevertheless a growing number of people are becoming increasingly vocal in the defense of wildlife and the natural scene against stupid destruction and exploitation. Whether their numbers are multiplying faster than the rate of population growth is uncertain. If they are not, then their cause may be lost by submersion in the population explosion. So the battle for conservation becomes at the same time a battle for technology and population control. Two kinds of points of view prevail among the proponents of conservation which are about as far apart as the points of view of either group is from <sup>the shipwreck</sup> that of the falder of forest resources [during the nineteenth century]. The dominant group of conservationists believe that the only valid justification for preserving or protecting any feature of nature rests in the economic advantage to be derived therefrom. This attitude is deeply imbedded in our Judeo-Christian background, and was all very well at a time before man had over-run the whole earth; at a time when there was still room to move about; at a time when if men were dissatisfied with one place they could pack up and move to another less populated place. The question is, can the most successful animal that has ever come down the evolutionary path afford to take the chance of creating a world in which he reigns supreme over all the forms of life which he, in his arrogance, has decided may continue to exist; a world in which he, in his assumed superiority but limited wisdom, grants life only to those living things that he regards as useful. Will he in the end create a world

in which he himself will be unable to live because he has failed to learn that variety is an essential ingredient of a healthy biological system. Too late he may discover that his machines, his artificial pleasures, his synthetic foods, have ceased to nourish his spirit though they may still nourish his body. And so [the vital essence for survival withers and he loses his fierce will to live.

The second group of conservationists hold to the belief that conservation for non-use is the only reasonable, the only viable kind of conservation. They believe that the fact of the existence of an organism bestows on it a valid claim to life, provided it can survive the normal competition un-manipulated by man. They believe in the greatest possible non-interference with the processes of nature. This is, of course, an ideal to which there are many exceptions: they acknowledge the necessity, in the interest of human welfare, of stamping out disease and of controlling to a limited degree the numbers of certain animal and plant species. But they assert that the dominant position of people on earth demands of them a greater responsibility towards their fellow creatures than their fellow creatures exhibit towards one another. And they especially believe that men through knowledge and understanding have acquired a practical as well as moral responsibility to control and limit their own numbers to the extent that all other animals will be able to continue to share the planet with them. And finally in diametric opposition to Biblical philosophy they say that it is not to our greatest interest to pre-empt the whole world for our exclusive use.

This is the peril we are bringing upon ourselves with our rampant technology. According to those admirers of man's ingenuity, who support conservation for use, progress must be given free reign, and if, as technology advances, large pieces of the environment are destroyed, whole areas of wilderness wiped out, and life endangered, this is merely the cost we should accept for the improvements and



comforts that innovations bring us. These progress-at-any-cost people give little thought to the possible adverse effects of technological achievements or that comforts may finally turn out to be unimaginable discomforts. Their acceptance without question of man's ability to order nature for his own use and advantage -- endlessly -- is not a thesis supported by past experience with exploitation. Men have produced deserts and dust bowls before; we could well be on the road to creating a wasteland on a worldwide scale today.

The greatest good which could come from the U.S. space program is not man's setting foot on the moon or Mars; it is rather the perspective he may gain on his small, vulnerable, lonely home planet. The appearance of our mottled blue-and-white sphere from thousands of miles out should make us conscious of the exceptional conditions under which the phenomenon we call life -- the only life of which we have any knowledge -- originated. We should be impressed by the beauty and fragility of the dynamic balance that has been preserved for so many hundreds of millions of years during which life has persisted on earth. And we should especially appreciate the shortness of our tenure on earth and use the powers we have so recently assumed to perpetuate not destroy the balance.

The direction which seems to promise the greatest rewards, the surest fulfillment of the hopes and aspirations of man's troubled and inquiring spirit, and of a distant and ultimate happiness, is a course of least arrogance towards his living companions -- a course even less negative than the absence of superiority -- a course of humble respect for life, a sympathy which sustains a recognition of the essential interdependence of all living things.

Admiration for nature is a trait of rather recent origin. The pioneer thought of nature as an enemy to be fought and conquered and tamed and if not tameable to be excluded. With the development of technology and the freeing of people

from the constant drudgery of making a living and the compulsion, originating in necessity, to use or destroy all things, they can afford the time and leisure to look at the earth around them with less predatory and less acquisitive eyes. Not many generations ago men began to look at nature with a new awareness and a new kind of awe. Its mysteries were not always taken for granted as men's minds began to recognize the greatest mystery of all, the existence of multitudinous, infinitely diverse forms in which living nature exhibits its face. And with the recognition of this mystery, with the overwhelming awe of sudden understanding, and paradoxically simultaneous incomprehension, of the unending complexity and unity of nature, grew a sense of the incredible beauty of it all. Thoreau devoted most of his short life, one hundred years ago, to admiring nature. And since his time it has become at least fashionable to profess appreciation of the natural world, and at most a matter of inner satisfaction and spiritual fulfillment to commune with nature.