

RICOH

Concern for the environment tends to have a dual focus—conservation, on the one hand, and pollution control, on the other. In light of the delicate interrelationships binding all of nature together, however, the two should perhaps be viewed as inseparable.

The battle to avoid the greenhouse effect is a case in point. Pollution control is essential. Scientists estimate that CO₂ emissions will have to be reduced by up to 80 percent in the coming years if we are to succeed.

One major stumbling block to progress is economic. Many of the technologies necessary to cut pollution are already available. The U.S. has used technology to keep its CO₂ emissions at the same level for several years, despite considerable growth in production. Japan has imposed even stricter standards, as a result of which the air in heavily industrialized cities is far cleaner than during the developing years of the 1960s and early 1970s.

It is significant that these improvements came after. Japan had passed the development stage, since the developing countries—the ones least able to afford the new, cleaner technologies—have the most pressing need for them. Nevertheless, there are encouraging signs. Mexico City, for example, until recently enveloped constantly in smog, now enjoys an occasional day with clear skies.

The other principal aspect of battling the greenhouse effect concerns conservation. One of the main focuses here is on saving the tropical rain forests with their tremendous ability to absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere and, consequently, to limit the greenhouse effect. Efforts by corporations to save trees by using recycled paper whenever possible can make a real contribution to the battle against global warming.

Since pollution—reducing technologies are often more efficient, they can also conserve another important resource, energy. If consumption continues at present levels, the world's oil reserves will most likely be depleted by about the middle of the coming century. It is important that industries everywhere be supplied with the most efficient possible technologies to help conservation.

Meanwhile, conservation efforts will focus partly on developing alternative energy sources. Ideally, these will be energies, such as solar, wind and geothermal energy, which can tap the world's resources without depleting them—and without polluting the atmosphere.

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