

Vote 'Yes' for survival

EDITOR'S NOTE: The author, a Tucsonian, is president of the Institute for Tomorrow, a non-profit organization which is concerned about the environment and which seeks to educate the public about ways to "bring about and maintain the quality of life which we all desire."

By Jack Ryan

Once a year, sometimes twice, rarely more, those of us who are over 18 cast our ballots, deciding who shall represent us in the government and deciding the fate of certain other issues before us. For those under 18, and for the remainder of the year for the rest, we can only sit back and hope for the best. Right? Wrong!

Survival, is the most important issue facing us. Although Man has nearly conquered disease, starvation and natural enemies, he is in the position of placing himself on the list of endangered species. Our environmental problems — overpopulation, pollution, limited natural resources — are all great threats to our way of life, even our existence. To remedy these ills in a rapidly changing world, we can hardly rely on voting once a year. Ballots and voting age considerations notwithstanding, each one of us can vote every day on the issues which concern us!

There are two ways.

You must be willing to study both the problems and their solutions. You must be willing to find out what is going wrong, what can be done to make things right, and then commit yourself to action. But the action required is fairly simple.

To vote you can:

—Buy wisely. — Write letters.

A combination of these two voting techniques is more effective. Letters make your decisions and thoughts known to others. Buying wisely — dollar voting — makes your decisions and thoughts noticed.

Few, if any, individuals or corporations pollute with deliberate malice. Ignorance bordering on neglect is some-

times involved, but economic reasons are more prevalent. Our economic systems, which developed in an era when space and resources appeared to be unlimited, have found more profit in dumping wastes into our air and water, for instance, than in reclaiming the resources which are represented by these wastes.

Today, if you find that you must repaint your house as a result of air pollution, you are paying so that some other person will get a few cents more on his stock dividend instead of using the money to prevent that air pollution. The same is true if you fall victim to cancer or emphysema. Other manufacturers find it profitable to make disposable products or shoddy merchandise, usually because you — the consumer — demand them, as a result of having been led to believe that your sole purpose in life is to consume not to enjoy life.

We have been led to believe that to enjoy life we MUST consume. As a result, our air and water are unfit for consumption, our recreational areas become overcrowded or disappear, we find ourselves elbow to elbow with standing room only wherever we go. When you commit yourself to live, as well as think, environmentally, you will be voting so that people will take notice. Words sometimes fall on deafened ears, but money talks to everyone!

Redefine your personal goals and ideals. Make them your goals and ideals, not those of Madison Avenue! A new 500 horsepower Belchfire Super Sport automobile will not make you more successful. But the money you save on the purchase price, insurance, and upkeep of a small car can go a long way towards making life a lot more enjoyable. And you will be doing something to preserve our environmental quality and natural resources. Buying a used car does even more. When Detroit finds that their new Super Polluters are not selling, they will bring out something that will sell — a car that does not pollute. They'll make a profit even if it does mean a cleaner environment.

Avoid disposable items and non-returnable containers. Buying returnable containers (and return them) as well as merchandise which will last longer, will probably save you money in the long run, will be a vote for the "good guys", and will demonstrate that planned obsolescence is obsolete.

Use products which are environmentally oriented. Even in areas where water pollution is not a problem (yet) your purchase of a phosphate-free detergent and other home-care products is a vote encouraging manufacturers to produce ecologically safe products for use everywhere.

Find out about recycling your waste metal, glass and paper in your community. You may help some worthwhile organization by donating your refuse to them to sell for recycling. And remember places like Goodwill Industries when you think you are ready to throw out old clothes or other unwanted items.

Be conservative in your use of our natural resources. Ride a bicycle instead of a car for short distances. In the city, support your local public transit system and efforts to improve it. Use elbow-grease instead of electrical gadgets. Turn off your lights when not in use.

One of the most important things you can do is to limit your own family size to not more than two natural children. This will relieve you of many of the financial problems of a large family which arise from the high cost of medical care, food, clothing, housing, entertainment and education. You will be much more capable of giving love and security to a small family. With less consumption by your family, our population-related environmental problems may more readily be attacked. The two-child family is a step in the direction of a stable population size.

Elected representatives and officials of government agencies are both suitable targets for letters. Elected representatives in particular are

apt to be poorly versed in environmental facts. You would hardly expect a lawyer to be an expert in ecology, for example. And his many duties may keep him from becoming one. You can take the time to become informed in some particular facet of environmental interest, and then perform a valuable service by advising your representatives of the environmental facts of life. In addition, urge him to vote in a manner reflecting these facts. After all, he is representing you and he wants to know how you feel about these issues as they come before him. The demise of the SST has shown how effective letters from concerned citizens can be.

Agency officials may be harder to reach. Often it may seem to be in their own self-interest to believe only the "facts" presented by the industry which they should be regulating — some hope to eventually receive a high-paying job with that industry. However, no industry will sell products when environmental deterioration has eliminated the market. Nor will they then hire former government employees. So it is in the officials own self-interest to know all the facts and to act appropriately. And when he is already attempting responsible action, your support can help him more effectively resist pressures from industry and from other governmental officials.

Another target is those who espouse and distribute what has become known as "ecopornography" — advertising or other statements which are ecologically unsound. Advertisers are often the guilty parties. Sometimes the guilt may be unintentional, as when an "ideal" family of three or more children is shown. To halt the population explosion and the related deterioration of our environment, the ideal today should be not more than two children per family. Let the advertiser know that his advertising is out of date.

Other ecopornography is deliberate, as when an electric company urges us to use more power — power which can not

be supplied unless we accept further destruction of our environment. Still other ads imply that certain products are beneficial to the environment, when in reality they are harmful or are completely unrelated to environmental considerations. For example, a paper bag is imprinted with "We are ecology minded. This bag will self-destruct in Mother Earth." Waste, not recycling, is urged. Boycott these products, and let the manufacturers know why.

The Federal Trade Commission is interested in learning about advertisers who attempt to mislead the public and to take advantage of our concern for the environment. Let the FTC know when you find a flagrant example of ecopornography.

When you see ecopornography write to the magazine, newspaper or other medium which is carrying the ecopornography.

Praise can be as effective as criticism, but to the opposite side of the coin. Any person who tries to improve our environment needs to know that his activities are appreciated and supported, be he a governmental official, manufacturer or private citizen. In fact, people will respond more favorably to praise than to criticism when considering their future actions.

Encouraging manufacturers to eliminate pollution and waste may result in an apparent increase in prices. This is a common excuse used in attempts to frighten us into avoiding stringent pollution control measures. The increases will be real on certain items, as the cost of producing that item is paid by the person consuming it, and not subsidized by society as a whole. But you are saving elsewhere. For example, would you object to slightly higher prices for copper or steel products if you knew that you might not have to buy an air purifier, might not have to pay higher taxes for water purification plants.

You can bring about this sort of change. Get out and vote — every day!