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Editorial – Guess Whose Universe?

In 1967 Canada and Canadians spent lavishly to tell man that the world was his (Expo 67, Montreal – *Man and His World;* Quaest. ent. 4:33 *Man and whose world*?). Last year the United Nations, perhaps inspired by this example, conducted its Conference on the Human Environment - with a Canadian secretary general - in Stockholm. Any hopes we might have entertained that no possessive relationship between "Human" and "Environment" was intended in this title were early dispelled in the undated Canadian "Draft Declaration on the Human Environment" distributed in March 1972; nor were they subsequently restored by the responses to comments on this declaration, by the final Canadian submission to or report on the conference, nor by any of the meagre press comments on the conference either in Canada or in Australia.

The myth that man has his own environment, his own "fundamental right to adequate conditions of life" - accepted as part of Principle 1 at Stockholm, his own set of rules by which to live and survive, dies hard. It has been blamed on Christianity, but clearly dates back further than this and was perhaps a part of the dogma of most early religions. Noah was instructed to: "Be fruitful, and multiply ... and the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air; with all wherewith the ground teemeth, and all the fishes of the sea, into your hand are they delivered."; his successors still act on this advice. Noah, however, was a propagule; survivor of a catastrophe. It was sound advice for him. His successors, if they follow the same advice, may generate one. Every ecologist knows that to accept a "fundamental right to adequate conditions of life" for man is to accept it for every other organism with which he interacts. Nobody, it seems, got up and said so at Stockholm.

In Principles 2 through 5 the Stockholm Conference averred that the natural resources of the earth must be safeguarded for the benefit of present and future generations. The capacity of the earth to produce vital renewable resources must, it agreed, be maintained and, *whenever practicable,* (italics ours) restored or improved. The non-renewable resources of the earth must be employed in such a way as to guard against the danger of their future exhaustion and to ensure that benefits from such employment are shared by all mankind. Yet all this is jettisoned in Principle 21 which declares that: "States have ... the sovereign right to *exploit* (italics ours) their own resources". Most overdeveloped countries endorsed these principles; all continue to condone, for example in the field of urban transportation, the use of 200 h.p. to transport one man when 1 h.p. can do this at the legal speed limit. N. American oil companies, directly and through their governments, are currently determined to get the fossil fuels out of the arctic for this generation; they are aided and abetted by each and every one of us when we say "fill 'er up." Our representatives endorsed these principles. There can rarely have been, outside the hard core of politics, so many forked tongues producing such a magnificent collection of double talk.

This conference has been acclaimed; but it bodes ill for the future, displaying as it does the same pompously inflated idea of the importance of man and especially N. American man as has led him to his present impasse with the rest of nature. It seems likely to lead to an international repetition of Man and his World. Then what? - Guess whose universe?

Brian Hocking