

The word "Ecology" first appeared in the English language in 1873. Today less than a century later the impact of our race upon the environment has so increased in force that the world has changed in essence.

Today we have been looking at one aspect of our house-keeping, the effect of the house dust which previous generations have tried to sweep into the corners and under the carpet. With the population explosion, the carcinoma of planless urbanism, the new geological deposits of sewage and garbage, surely no creature other than man has managed to foul his nest in such a short time.

From Dr Martin we had considerable evidence that air, when polluted grossly, causes disease mortality and morbidity. On an equal analogy the contamination of water so tellingly demonstrated by Mr Reed produces mortality and morbidity as yet unknown.

As Professor Warren has said, our soil contamination produces death and disease in other animals. It is reasonable to suppose it does so also in human beings.

How are we to link cause and effect? Only by a careful ongoing and continuous study of morbidity, in the areas where contamination can definitely be proven, and by comparison of its pattern with the pattern of morbidity of the rest of the country and the world. What conditions appear to be involved? Surely respiratory diseases, psychiatric and neurotic and neurological disease, cardiovascular diseases, congenital disorders and the whole realm of oncology.

The next step must be to complement causational research with careful studies into the effect on morbidity. For this finance and governmental help is required. "Play for more than you can afford to lose, and you will learn the Game" said Winston Spencer Churchill. "And as we lengthen and elaborate the chain of technology that intervenes between us and the natural world, we forget that we become steadily more vulnerable to even the slightest failure in that chain."

PAUL B. SEARS

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## *Correspondence*

### ASH

Sir,

I am writing not only as President of the Royal College of General Practitioners but as a Council member of ASH (Action on Smoking and Health Ltd.) to tell you of the progress made by this charitable organization.

You will remember that ASH was established in January 1971 on the initiative of the Royal College of Physicians, following the publication of their second Report on Smoking and Health, with the objects of uniting all bodies interested in preventing or reducing the smoking of cigarettes, of spreading information about the dangers of smoking and of carrying out research on how to help people to stop smoking.

ASH is now well established and has received initial support from the Department of Health and Social Security. It has set up a number of working committees, has held a conference and has plans for a number of important projects. It needs further support, however, both in the forms of members and of financial aid.

If your readers are sympathetic to the aims of ASH, I hope they will consider becoming members

of this association and possibly also sending a contribution to its funds. I feel it is most important to get ASH firmly established. Correspondence should be addressed to The Director General, Action on Smoking and Health Ltd., 11 St. Andrew's Place, Regent's Park, London, NW1 4LB.

G. I. WATSON.

Peaslake,  
Guildford.

### Oral contraception study

Sir,

Doctors who are taking part in the Oral Contraception Study of the Royal College of General Practitioners have received a news letter from the recorder, Dr Kay.

He says: "The analyses of morbidity while confirming most of the expected differences between Takers and Controls have also shown that the magnitude of these differences is less than anticipated. It is even more encouraging that no new important side effect of the Pill has emerged, although 25,000 women-years experience of the oral contraceptives is now available for analysis.