

village view

by Andrea Leonard

Sometimes it seems there's more wrong than right with the world, doesn't it? You're one of many who feel the same way.

There's little consolation in realizing that ever since mankind has viewed the world and judged it, he's always suffered from a pervasive feeling of dissatisfaction with the status quo.

Never has man succeeded in eliminating poverty, crime, nor unemployment. Never has every child born on earth been wanted, nurtured and cherished. Never has happiness been assured.

Always there've been those who prey upon the helpless, take advantage of the naive, build their own fortunes upon the weaknesses and ignorance of their fellow-men.

In these waning days of the nation's two-hundredth birthday year, we're concerned with rising crime rates, decaying moral standards, public violence, economic pressures and, worst of all, a disinterested populace shrugging its shoulders.

We're threatened with environmental disaster. Proliferating power plants; impurities in our water, air and soil; chemical and mechanical changes all throwing our world out of balance.

It took millions of years of evolution to produce the balanced ebb and flow of life that existed before mankind developed an industrial society during the last century. It's taken about a hundred years to bring that balance to the edge of collapse.

As individuals we contribute to the imbalance daily. We contribute to rising crime rates, to erosion of morality, and to acceptance of violence as "reality".

We contribute to the growing feeling of helplessness and impotence, and to the eventual acceptance of things we know are wrong.

You don't? Would you like to place a wager?

Most obviously, if you drive a car, or heat and light your house, you contribute to air pollution.

Oil or gas-fired furnaces add pollutants. The source of power for electrically-heated homes is coal, oil or gas. If you burn wood, smoke goes up your chimney. You can't help it. True.

Hasn't man always burned combustible materials since fire was harnessed for heating and cooking. Certainly.

Keep in mind what's happened to the earth's population in the last century. Remember, it took all the years man existed on earth to produce a population of a billion people - a count reached in the middle of the last century. Before the middle of this century, world population grew to two billion; now there are more than three billion of us.

Before 2000, if birth and death rates are maintained, we will be six billion.

When fewer than a billion burned fuel for heat, air pollution threatened no one. With three billion of us doing it, many of us are endangered. When six billion must be warmed and lighted and transported, unless we change to a non-polluting energy source, we could find ourselves choking in our own smokes and smogs.

Our waters, too, are threatened by our increasing numbers. Coliform count in drinking water supplies is a

problem in many places; it's not one limited to Barnstable village.

Each of us helps to create these problems; if we will, we can help to solve them. What small things each individual does can make a difference, is important.

We can grow accustomed to living at lower temperatures and wearing more clothes; we can turn on fewer lights, drive shorter distances in smaller cars.

We can cut down on chemicals. Our gardens and lawns are fertilized with chemicals; we spray more chemicals on bugs, on our bodies as deodorants, on our hair to hold it up or down, on pans so food won't stick, on furniture to make it shine.

Chemicals come in aerosol spray cans that release a propellant that may - no one is positive yet - but may have an effect on the atmosphere's protective layer that shields us from cancer-producing rays and radiation.

We use these spray cans instead of the simple pump-bottles like those window-washing liquids once came in. Saving wear and tear on our index finger is hardly worth taking a chance on cancer.

How, you ask, do I figure you contribute to rising crime rates? Okay, you're not a thief; I believe you. You don't cheat on your income tax, not even a little bit; I believe you.

Are you contributing, in passive ways, to crimes someone else commits? Do you leave your house, your car, your possessions in some place or manner that tempts someone to steal from you?

Even if you are always moral in your behavior, even if you set the best possible example, even if you've never done a single solitary thing wrong in your life - if you make it easier for another person to be immoral, to commit a crime, to lie or steal or cheat, then you contribute to the crime rate.

As individuals we have an obligation to ourselves and each other to be active and not passive about our lives. Take stand for what is right. Scrap for it if necessary. Speak out. Act.

If you don't, bad things will get worse.