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## **Veiled Environmental Issues**

80 years ago it was said that there was one patient among about 80 who suffered from cancer. Today it is reported that one out of 3 persons die of cancer. Now we face a crucial phase unconsciously made by ourselves in the form of world- wide terminal ailments. Why are degenerative diseases like cancers, Alzheimer's, endometriosis, a collagen disease, and crohn's disease .... increasing in recent years? What on earth does such illnesses correlate to ? It will be necessary to gather a variety of information about this issue and to think about possible clues to solve it. Here it is pursued to prove the interrelation between these enigmatic ailments and recent environmental issues. There are three rough divisions to environmental issues: the destruction of our ecosystem, the strain on the earth and the insidious threat to our health.

According to Carson, Colborn and Dumanoski in " Our Stolen Future", our future will be lost without solving these present issues. The first serious issue is air pollution caused by car's exhaust, the burning of garbage, smog of factories and deforestation. As a result, many chemicals such as dioxins, nitrogen oxides, diesel mists and the like are produced. Moreover the amount of carbon dioxide is becoming a much more serious problem as what we call " the greenhouse effect " develops.

The second problem is water that has been contaminated by various wastes in the rivers, lakes and the sea. Even tap water is reportedly not safe because it contains over 700 chemicals. In the book " Our Stolen Future," the surprising biomagnification of PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyl) at Lake Ontario in Canada is described. As PCBs work their way up the food chain, their concentrations in animal tissues can be magnified up to 25million times ( in phytoplankton they are magnified 250 times; in zooplankton 500 times; in lake trout, 2.8million times; in the herring gull, 25million times).

The third is the destruction of the ozone-layer by man-made chemical gas ( Colborn et. al.1997:p.240). People have been exposed to the risk of skin cancer. Moreover the topsoil damaged by artificial chemicals as fertilizers and pesticides such as amitrole, benomyl, DBCP, dicofol, and oxychlordan ( listed as hormone-destructive material,or hormone impostor ) will be taken up as an awfully agricultural issue. The ratio of minerals and vitamins contained in vegetables is going down every year.

Furthermore, as one of the inner problems to our health, artificial chemicals that destroy our immune systems and our hormone balance should be referred to here. Here are some disorders happening in human beings, which are similar to the phenomena that Rachel Carson, who cautioned the peril of DDT in her book, *Silent Spring*, warned of : man-made chemicals causing a deadly toll on birds and wildlife 40 years ago. One is male sperm count. They have dropped more than 50 % in recent decades ( Colborn et al. 1997: p.173). Some scientists predict that 80 % of men in industrialized countries will lose their ability to make descendants after 10 years. The other is females' hormone disorder. According to a large scale survey in America over 3% of 3-year-old African American girls and 1 % of Caucasian American girls start their menses. 48.3% of 8-year-old African American girls and 14.3% of Caucasian American girls start their menses in contrast to American former data which shows 1% of 8-year-old American girls who start the first menstrual period. This is mainly caused by dairy and beef that are made from the cows given artificial growth hormone, RBGH( recombinant bovine growth hormone ), which works as a hormone disruptor.

Women also have suffered a dramatic rise in hormone-related cancers, endometriosis and other disorders. The cause of endometriosis is unclear. It is defined as a serious condition in which tiny islets of endometrium become scattered in areas where they don't belong (Ree 1997:p.240). These ominous phenomena can be explained by the theory of hormone impostors, which was brought to our attention in *Our Stolen Future*. Hormone impostors or hormone disruptors are PCB, dioxin, DES, SLS, pesticide, and other chemicals. Especially dioxin is notorious for use as a chemical weapon in the Vietnam War. A few tens of thousands of deformed babies were born there as a consequence.

In addition we cannot forget that contaminated food such as hamburger, fruit juice, baby lettuce, frozen strawberries, etc kills 9,000 Americans and

causes sickness transmitted by some disease-causing organism in as many as 81 million people every year (Fox 1998). Not only food but also cosmetics, tooth pastes and shampoo are not always safe because of their artificial chemical ingredients (Epstein 1998: p.479). Now in Japan the number of patients suffering from "Chemical Material Syndrome" is over 10 % of its population. The patients are tortured by dizziness, nausea, migraine and so on. There are reportedly 118 new incurable diseases that have been specified in a national research project since 1972 in Japan. The number of patients who have been troubled with these malignant complaints such as Behcet's disease, Smon, Parkinson's disease .....have grown from 17,595 in 1974 to 472,312 in 2000.

We can keep in mind three things pointed out in Our Stolen Future in order to protect our health from exposure to dangerous chemicals : 1. know our water, 2. choose our food intelligently, 3. avoid unnecessary uses and exposure such as pesticides or farm chemicals.

In conclusion men have artificially made over 40 million chemicals or billions of pounds of chemicals over the past half century. Only 4 % of them have been ascertained as safe. What about the rest of them? Who can forget that human breast milk without exception is polluted by dioxin or PCB? Mothers have the right to decide to breastfeed or use artificial formula. As far as these environmental problems are concerned, collecting exact information and knowing facts clearly will become powerful weapons to confront physical ailments. Furthermore, we should make good use of many achievements of the scientific approach and theoretical study based on facts without hesitation because we have no time to stand by these environmental issues. The matters are serious and urgent beyond our imagination. All of us have the right to know about these environmental issues. We are standing at the turning point in an inevitable ordeal. The good earth as it is should be handed down to our children and grandchildren as our obligation.

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