

THE TABLET

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Corpus Christi—letters and the principal's statement

Blueprint for survival

A group called The Movement for Survival came into existence last week with the support of a number of distinguished scientists who have put their names to a Blueprint for Survival sponsored by the magazine *The Ecologist*. This points out that "current trends if allowed to persist" will bring "the disruption of the life-support system on this planet . . . possibly by the end of this century, certainly within the lifetimes of our children".

It is a pity that they should speak of fighting an electoral campaign for their policies. Rightly or wrongly, the British electorate thinks in two-party terms and the conservationists would be unlikely to meet with much success as an electoral party nor in that way would their proposals receive very careful consideration. People of the highest authority like Sir David Barran warn us that the world's petrol supplies will be exhausted in about thirty years' time. But when one repeats such warnings to the ordinary uninformed man in the street, he breezily shrugs his shoulders and replies, "Oh, then they will find something else". Threats of calamity in a slightly distant future are too far beyond the average man's imagination to have much effect on his conduct. The ideas of the Blueprint are, in general, too large to have much effect in knock-about platform controversy. They are for quiet and detailed consideration.

In the last century the protest against industrial progress was left to a few romantics like Ruskin and based entirely on aesthetic grounds. Hard-headed realists dismissed them as sentimental. Now Blueprint for Survival shows us the protest against pollution as the protest of the scientist and the condition for the very survival of our world.

Professor Galbraith tells us that in America fashionable rhetoric now pays lip service to the need for conservation

but has not yet got to the stage when it is willing to sacrifice any important industrial process in its favour. Is it the same situation here? We still all too often hold up the increase of the Gross National Product, irrespective of consequences, as the supreme purpose of policy. It is significant that the Duke of Edinburgh should ask the Government to take measures to prevent us from having more children but that it should not occur to him to ask the Government to take measures to prevent us from having more motor cars. Blueprint for Survival tells us that we must have fewer cars, that we must travel only when it is really necessary and then by public transport; that we must be prepared to eat less, that we must spread out our population more widely over the countryside, that we must ruthlessly suppress polluting industrial processes and by stern taxation prevent the exhaustion of our raw materials. On top of all this it tells us that our population must be drastically reduced so as to get it down to 30 million and that to achieve that purpose contraception, abortion and sterilisation must be encouraged.

This is not the moment to enter into the argument what forms of family planning can properly be advocated, but it must be said that talk about the population explosion is now so much in the air that there is a danger that these proposals will be entertained to the exclusion of all the others. We need not invoke any dogma or ecclesiastical authority to see that these proposals in the form in which they are put forward are dangerously indefinite.

It is true that the world's population is increasing with a frightening rapidity and, whatever may be the truth about possibilities of increased food production, if the present rate continues, the day is sure to come when the world will no longer be able to feed itself.

It may be that, whatever the methods, we should reduce