



Earth Day, 1970

... a cough and a whimper

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It would be the irony of all time if our industrial society would go out, not with a bang, but with a cough and a whimper.

So on April 22, 1970, there was an Earth Day. It began early and ended late with a candlelight march.

Regardless of the attempts to inform people of the problems of pollution, starvation and, in general, the destruction of the earth, an aura of futility was in the minds of many of the about 200 students who participated in the candlelight march to the Capitol.

As the students stood on the steps of the Capitol, one of them read some words from Albert Schweitzer. The words were not consoling. They were pessimistic and painted a gloomy picture of the destruc-

tion of the world by man. But that same student reiterated, "it looks even worse if we don't try to save our earth."

The students were angry but not ready for violence. Instead, they voiced what might be termed "jovial cynicism."

Before they left the Capitol, they sang happy birthday to the earth and added a few bars for Mayor Sam Schwartzkopf.

They were pessimistic, but not without cause. Earlier in the day Mayor Schwartzkopf indicated that industries recognize their responsibilities for pollution cleanup and are doing their share in "saving the earth."

Earlier, Mark M. Hammer, associate professor of civil engineering destroyed the myth that no pollution problems existed in Nebraska.

Hammer predicted that in 10-15 years Lake McConaughy will be unsuitable for recreational

use. Hammer said this would be caused by the upstream usage of herbicides and pesticides.

During the panel discussion on statewide ETV stations, Robert Roselle, entomology professor said that most pesticides used in Nebraska are not pollutants.

Roselle went on to justify the use of DDT and, in effect, said there is nothing to worry about. Things look so bright for the future that Roselle could laugh and smile about everything he said.

Paul Johnsgard, zoology professor said the levels of mercury in pheasant and quail were so high in Alberta, Canada, that hunting season on these birds was closed because they were unfit to eat.

No one knows what will come of Earth Day. The question remains, "Will there be an earth suitable for life?"

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