

DRY BONES

Acid rain

In our craving for comfort and speed, are we destroying ourselves?



By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM



The Middle East isn't the only section of the globe in trouble. Things don't look too good around our big cities — where most of us live.

In a recent meeting in Detroit of an International Joint Commission authorized by a USA-Canadian treaty to safeguard the Great Lakes, scientists presented proof that sulfuric acid from the burning of coal and nitric acid from auto exhausts return to the earth in rain and snow sufficiently strong to kill and destroy soil fertility.

This report comes at a time when national policy is pushing increased use of coal and when millions of Americans would no more think of pedaling a bicycle to church than they would consider turning down the thermostat.

For the first time scientists are using the term "acid rain" to describe the latest environmental threat brought on by our desire to get there quicker. In our craving for comfort and speed, we are literally destroying ourselves.

It started in the mid-60s when a University of Toronto scientist, checking on salmon introduced in some Canadian lakes, discovered that the fish were not surviving. At first they blamed it on the fish. Then they checked the water in the lakes and found it highly acid.

Additional checks revealed the source of the problem was a coal-burning smelting plant at Sudbury which was belching 2.6 million tons of sulfur dioxide into the air annually. This returned to the earth as sulfuric acid in the rain and snow — killing all the fish in nearby lakes and rendering the ground worthless to grow crops.

When the scientists warned the community leaders of the danger, all they got was shrugged shoulders. "So, what do we do? Stop making

steel?" The belching continued — and the lakes and land remained sterile.

There is a temptation to stone messengers who bring unwelcome news. Almost three years ago when President Carter pleaded with the American public to cut down on gas consumption and lower our energy needs, no one paid any attention. Now the cry is, "Elect a new president."

But what do we do with the increasing number of scientists who are telling us that what we send up will eventually come down? On our own heads.

So far, it is only the fish that are being wiped out — fish and other creatures for whom fish are an indispensable link in the food chain. And, of course, there is the soil. But everybody knows you can't make any money raising food. No sir, if you

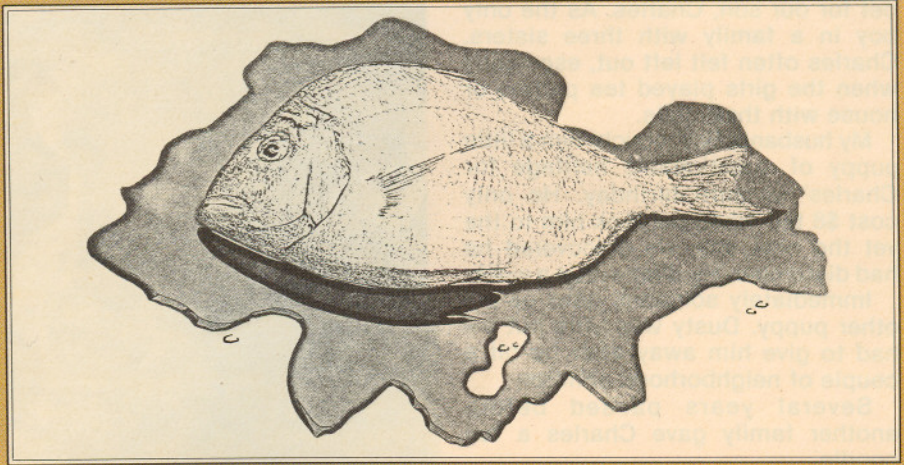
simplicities. For even gasahol will not save us when the end comes.

Maybe the only way God can salvage His earth is to cut off the supply of fuel which is destroying our atmosphere, poisoning our lands and seas, and keeping us moving so fast we don't have time to stop and hear Him.

Sure, it will mean hardships. I mean, the racketball court is six miles from my house and if I have to walk there I'll be too tired to exercise.

And what's going to happen at the end of this year when gasoline is \$3 a gallon and inflation hits 20 percent and folks don't have enough money to drive to church three times a week? Are we thinking ahead to establishing communities, getting involved in neighborhood relationship groups, adjusting to the New Testament concept of "lay pastors."

Our land is sick. The obvious ills —



want money, it's in condos and townhouses. And smelting plants.

But what's going to happen when the food is gone? Some Christians are investing in gold and diamonds. But have you ever tried to eat gold coins? Why, they're hardly palatable even with catsup.

When any life form crashes, there is a disturbing message for human beings. Especially if we are responsible.

From all sectors of the kingdom prophecy is beginning to trickle forth: Get ready for tough times. Return to

fuel shortage, inflation — are but outward manifestations of a much deeper disease of the soul. Granted, God is in the healing business, but His Word says He puts conditions on all healing; things like: humble yourselves, pray, seek His face, turn from your wicked ways ... then He will heal our land.

But of course, prophets who have brought such a message in the past have always been greeted with stones. One can only hope the disease is serious enough this time that the people of God will listen. <