New group wages war on environmental spoiling

By Bruce Schwartz

Sandwiched between the week of October 15 and the beginning of November, and thus likely to be ignored by most people, is the Boston Area Ecology Action, which opened its headquarters, Ecology Center, at 425 Mass. Ave. in Cambridge last Monday.

Ecology Action was formed this fall by a group of people, largely students, to "promote public awareness" and to take actions against environmental pollution and other abuses of the biosphere. The group takes its name from the science of ecology, which deals with the complex relationships of organisms in the physical and biologic environment, or "biosphere." Its formation reflects the growing concern that man's continued disturbance of the balance of nature may lead to disasters - widespread disease and wholesale death. The Brainchild of one Allen Brube, by day a worker for the American Friends Service Committee in Cambridge, LA claimed forty members by the time it undertook its first sponsors, the screening of a film at MIT on October 16.

The film, entitled "Multiply and Subdue the Earth," features ecologist Ian McHarg, draws about 80 viewers in room 1-190. A donation of $1 was asked, because, as an LA representative put it, "we need bread." Initially, the group needs money just to keep their storefront open; it receives $200 per month. According to a volunteer this reporter talked to at the Ecology Center, many of the people who attended the film filled out forms to do volunteer work, and LA now claims over 75 active members and is still growing.

The Ecology Center, basically a storefront covered with posters saying things like "Ban DDT," contains the nucleus of a "pollution library" and is well stocked with leaflets detailing the evils of DDT, artificial sweeteners, exhaust fumes, etc. A particularly horrifying piece of literature entitled "Ecocatastrophe" describes the all-but-impossible death of the ocean due to pesticidal pollution.

LA also has information about how to report offenders to state pollution control agencies and intends to act as a clearinghouse for such complaints, as well as being a pressure group on the agencies themselves.

Long-range activities and tactics are yet to be determined. LA is still in its infancy. Such things as mass petitions to the state legislature to enact stricter laws and enforcement are under consideration. For the present, LA plans a campaign to build public awareness of the problem. It will feature dramatic activities such as picketing and guerrilla theater.

The organization also plans to name an "Air Polluter of the Month," sometimes next week. The offender will be presented, with appropriate fanfare, an Air Pollution Prize. The "Ecology Theatre," will invade the Auto Show opening this Sunday at War Memorial Auditorium in Boston. Pollution protestors will circulate wearing gas masks to dramatize their point. Ecology Action is asking for people to join them in their campaign, and notes that gas masks can be purchased for about three dollars at Army-Navy stores.

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