

No. 2/1984
January 12, 1984

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MOST EUROPEANS SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ABOVE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Most Europeans support environmental protection measures, even if they lead to higher prices or restrict economic growth, a survey of citizens in the 10 member states of the European Community has found.

Sixty percent of 9,700 individuals surveyed said protecting the environment was more important than keeping prices under control and 59 percent said it was more important than economic growth. The Danes were the strongest supporters of environmental protection; about three-fourths of them gave it priority over both economic options.

The survey, which was conducted in October 1982, is described in The Europeans and Their Environment, a recent publication of the Commission of the European Communities.

The poll found that Europeans are much more concerned about the national and global environment than about their immediate surroundings. When asked about nine environmental problems at the national and global level, more than 90 percent said they worried about at least one of them and, on average, they expressed concern about 7 of the topics. The top three concerns were: damage to sea life and beaches by spillage or discharges from tankers; disposal of industrial chemical waste; disposal of nuclear waste.

By contrast, only 55 percent said they had any complaints about the local environment, with only 22 percent expressing concern about more than two of six topics covered by the survey. The local issue that attracted the most worry was deterioration of the landscape, followed by noise. Those living in large towns were much more likely to complain about the local environment (72 percent) than those in small towns (58 percent) or the country (39 percent).

At the national and global level, the Dutch were most worried about environmental problems, the Irish the least worried. Ireland was also the only nation in which a majority of citizens gave more priority to price

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stability and economic growth than to environmental protection.

The survey also found that sensitivity to environmental hazards increased with education and income, and at both ends of the political scale, particularly to the left.

The Europeans and Their Environment is available from the European Community Information Service, 2100 M Street, N.W., Suite 707, Washington, D.C. 20037; (202) 862-9500.