

**Shivers Says
Sayonara to
the 'Veer'
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Love That
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Minnich,**

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We Are the World

Save the
environment?
Save ourselves.

BY GEORGE VUKELICH

Twenty years ago, Harold (Bud) Jordahl Jr. was one of the point men in Sen. Gaylord Nelson's environmental crusade that led to the creation of the very first Earth Day.

A longtime Nelson associate, Jordahl roamed the political thickets like a blooded bird dog, helping then-Gov. Nelson create Wisconsin's landmark ORAP program that funded outdoor recreation programs in the state and blazed the trail for today's far-sweeping Stewardship Fund.

When Gov. Nelson was elected to the U.S. Senate, Jordahl helped him frame the legislation that created the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore and designated the St. Croix a "wild and scenic" river.

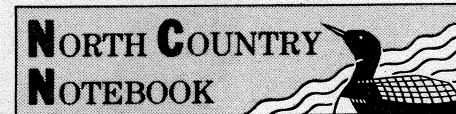
Now an emeritus professor in the UW-Extension's Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Jordahl is not surprised that Earth Day is still alive and kicking as it approaches its 20th anniversary.

Ten years ago, he admits, there wasn't the interest in the environment that there is today. Now the environment is constantly in the news and people are really worried about it: about the ozone layer, the destruction

of the rain forests, world hunger and starvation. These are big, global issues that won't go away. They're like the Exxon oil spill.

"We've had two decades of enormously increased media attention and education," Jordahl says, "addressing environmental issues. People like Gaylord Nelson have stayed on the stump giving speeches throughout those years, and this has had significant influence on America."

Jordahl defines environment as "quality of life," and for more and

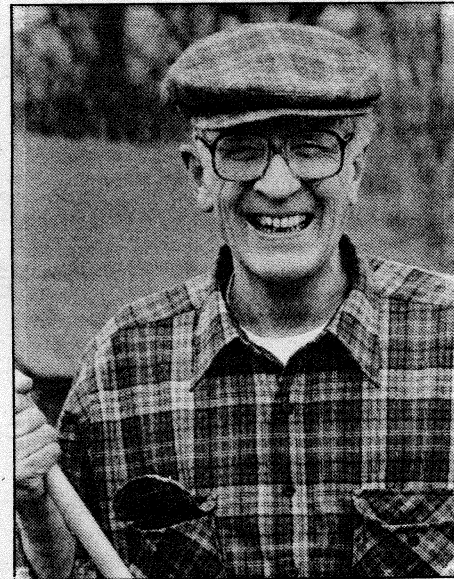


more people throughout America, indeed throughout the world, that quality is no longer there.

"I think worldwide global population," he says, "is the most serious environmental problem we face. These people are concerned with staying alive first and foremost, and 'environmental protection' is not going to be very high on their agendas."

"The challenge this country faces—and all developed countries face—is our willingness to lower our levels of living, lower our levels of consumption in order to help the poor countries develop into viable states with viable technologies. Technologies that avoid the mistakes we made."

Jordahl is not surprised that poor



BRENT NICASTRO

Bud Jordahl: 'The challenge here is to lower our standard of living.'

countries protest, "Why can't we be like you? You got yours. What about us?" The only way we can have credibility with poor countries, he says, is to lower our consumption of resources, our degradation of the environment.

"It's hard for America to do that," he concedes, "because we still worship at the feet of technology. We still think there will be a technological 'fix' for our environmental problems. Of course, that's a myth. Our scientists perpetuate that myth, often claiming that the fix is

just over the horizon. But there is no fix.

"Most people," Jordahl says, "think of environment as lakes and trees and trout streams and moose. That's a copout, because the worse environmental problems we face in America today are in the central cities. You can't continue to disenfranchise millions of minorities in the central cities and expect to get away with it. You simply can't!"

The system is breaking down all over the country, Jordahl contends, and we can look at the statistics in Milwaukee for verification: The homicides, teenage pregnancies, the educational levels, the school dropouts, the drug use.

"The Milwaukee Journal," he says, "is doing a good job reporting this stuff, but how many people read the Journal? Who really cares? There is going to be violence, social and political upheaval in our central cities. I don't think that we're beyond a civil war in the central cities of America."

The problem of the central cities, Jordahl argues, is a responsibility of our political parties, but both major parties are unwilling to take it on. The Democrats have moved to the center because they believe they cannot win elections if they are identified with the left. The American people, the polls say, are unwilling to vote that way at this time.

"And in the central cities," Jordahl adds, "the walled-in central cities, the people aren't voting because so many of

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them have lost all hope. We treat our inner cities like Third World countries, and the same thing is happening here that is happening in Third World countries. People are losing hope, and when hopelessness sets in, we are all sitting on a powder keg."

Jordahl says that he would like to see the United States move more in the direction of socialism, and admittedly, that means the redistribution of income.

"I know that scares the hell out of a lot of people," he acknowledges,

"particularly rich people. But the rising cost of health care just might be the stimulus that will get people to demand socialized medicine."

"We just don't see the interconnections in the environment. There's a cost to everything, and we're unwilling to pay that cost. We're living off the future. We're leaving the kids worse off than we were. What we're really saying is: 'Screw the kids!' We should be ashamed of ourselves." ■

George Vukelich reads selections from North Country Notebook Sunday nights at 10 on Wisconsin Public Radio, WERN (88.7 FM).