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## Editorial

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# environmental practice news (epn)

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## EDITORIAL

It is current wisdom that the best way to insure proper economic growth is to "balance" the requirements of a clean environment against future economic growth. When environmental regulation unduly restricts economic growth, so the thought goes, the regulation should cease in the interests of a greater social good. In a slow economic growth period, as exists at present, the theory gains greater currency especially among those whose pocketbooks are likewise restricted. In its usual expression, however, the new faith adopts certain assumptions, some of which we shall identify below.

The most obvious assumption is that on the scale of national priorities the economy rates higher than a quality environment. It is probably true that most Americans agree with this assumption. It enables them to say that any conflict between the environment and economy should be resolved in favor of the latter. We may disagree with that choice, but we cannot call into question the right of people to so decide.

The second assumption, however, deserves closer scrutiny: that over the long term and the short term the economy will be more healthy if environmental controls are not imposed---it assumes that the economy and environment are mutually exclusive. This belief is at best questionable. Pollution is a cost of production just as much as materials and labor are. The consumer of the finished goods normally reimburses society for the cost of materials and labor used in the production of goods that they consume. Frequently consumers do not reimburse society for the cost of pollution. Thus society in general pays for the cleanup and the consumers who cause the pollution do not pay the real price for goods. The economy becomes dislocated because the price of the finished product does not reflect its true cost. Imposition of environmental controls is the only way to assure that our economy produces the optimum array of goods at proper prices which reflect the true cost of goods. A healthy economy is only possible when consumers are required to pay for what they get, and this can only occur when judicious environmental controls are imposed. Otherwise society bears a much greater cost in subsidizing those who consume the most. A healthy economy and clean environment are not mutually exclusive---they are inseparable.

## note

In our efforts to publish relevant material for our readers, EPN asks you, our readers, to send us information on those environmental cases and controversies in which you are involved. Many cases are never reported; but we hope that through this method, EPN can disseminate more current information to the readers.

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