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Conservation priorities

From Mr R E Podmore

SIR, By now we must all know that conservation affects many interests, and has various aspects. As I write there should be no excuse for not taking immediate action.

Undoubtedly the first consideration should be that which so affects the life and health of wildlife, animals and ourselves—chemical pollution.

We have spent wisely on habitat areas, but nothing should deflect us from dealing with the true priority.

The use of persistent poisons and other chemical dangers must be stopped. DDT has the definite rating of a chemical carcinogen and cancer has increased beyond reason. The sterilizing and destruction of wildlife will also continue for years after the last application of persistent poison has been made. What are we waiting for?

Are we considering our scientists—those who claim the ability to produce cheaper and really safe chemicals, and say that they need co-operation, or are we merely continuing to crush such discoveries with inactivity?

America has already acted against DDT. She is considering further steps and declares that the cost of not doing so is 'beyond calculation'. Sweden, Australia and other countries are moving, but we, who claimed to lead, may be the last.

I am much encouraged, though, by the voluntary withdrawal of the polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) by Monsanto Chemicals Ltd—our sole manufacturer. I learned of this from the RSPB's magazine *Birds*, March-April, 1971.

This fine example may effectively reduce the destruction of marine life, and it seems that people are also busy on oil pollution—all too lethal at sea. The detergents with which we thought to reduce the

mess have, unfortunately, made matters worse for wildlife.

On land we could end much destruction by following the example of those who have seen the facts, and by helping to find the cheap and safe alternatives circumstances have demanded for so long.

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