We have been hearing much about the lax enforcement of environmental legislation — the "implementation gap". Some national administrations simply refuse to acknowledge it. Others, while recognizing the seriousness of the problem, do little more than pay lip service to strict compliance. The economic situation, following the energy crisis, has surely been a convenient excuse, but no more, for the easing of enforcement. With the recession winding down and with a brighter economic outlook generally, we should be able to look ahead to more stringent enforcement in the environmental field. The growth versus environment issue should not become institutionalized — the conflict is not an inherent one. In this regard, we ask our readers to let us have their views and comments on the existing enforcement situation in their respective countries. Our pages will be very much open to such contributions and we will assign special priority to coverage of this important matter.

* * *

Somewhat related developments in the United States give cause for concern. The 1300-kilometer-long Alaska pipeline, which upon completion, will carry daily 93,000,000 litres of crude across America's largest state, has been touted by its promoters as so nearly the next wonder of the world. The recent discovery of 3200 leakage points prompted the federal government to make on-site investigations. Blame is inevitably being shifted about from contractors to subcontractors and vice-versa. We hope the authorities approach their work resolutely.

Science and technology have made our world increasingly more complex. Recently, public opinion surveys as well as referenda have attempted to measure general thinking on environmental risk taking. But ordinary citizens, indeed legislators, are hard put to make decisions often involving a puzzling array of risk/benefit equations. Debate on such issues tends often to be emotionally charged and clear thinking is frequently shrouded by rhetoric and conflicting data. Recently, voters in California unequivocally rejected a controversial proposal that would have all but banned construction of nuclear power facilities in that state. It was perhaps the first referendum on so complex a technological/environmental question. Both sides seemed to have been involved in a battle which amounted to bluff calling. All concerned were perhaps too extreme in their presentation of the issues. It was a case of oversimplification, the environmentalists insisting on no-growth, the utilities emphasizing "no alternative" but significantly increased atomic energy. As sobering as the proposition's 2-1 defeat was, it shouldn't give carte blanche to the utilities — 2 million people did say "no" to atomic power and a new constituency has emerged. A more moderate, reasoned analysis by both sides might yet lead to an accommodation.

* * *

This issue particularly emphasizes what we believe are especially newsworthy events. There was some conflict in our editorial rooms over the question of postponing less time-dependent material. We reached a middle ground by expanding our page length for this number and contracting the next two numbers somewhat. Additionally, we were obliged to split some pieces and continue them in our following numbers. We trust our readers will find the compromise satisfactory.

Environmental Policy and Law, 2 (1976)