



IS POLLUTION JUST A LOAD OF RUBBISH?

"Weekend"

It's bound to be—one way or the other. But while the alarmists throw up their hands in horror TERRY GEORGE holds out hope for us all

Canadian scientist found that fish in Lake St. Clair, near Detroit, contained three times the maximum level of mercury allowed under American food laws.

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Fish elsewhere, especially tuna, were found to have high mercury levels. The dumping of mercury waste was blamed.

In Britain, tinned tuna was under a cloud. Were we poisoning ourselves with contaminated fish?

It was all a red herring.

Scientists analysed museum specimens of tuna caught between 1878 and 1909, long before mercury waste was being

dumped. They contained almost identical levels of mercury.

Tests on human tissue dating back to 1913 showed we are now absorbing *less* mercury than then, mainly because we have fewer coal fires.

As for tuna, only one tin in 20 exceeded the US maximum, itself only a 20th of the known danger level.

The latest scare is "inner pollution."

For the first time millions of people can lead normal lives provided they take pills regularly. "But how do we know there are no long-term side effects?" people ask.

The drugs have been thoroughly tested and the possibility of side-effects is remote. But if these people do not take their pills, many will get a very unpleasant side-effect—death.

Cardiff microscopist Brian Ford, who has made a study of what he calls Non-science, says: "You might just as well talk about the long-term side-effects of cream of mushroom soup."

Let us be quite clear. It is important to fight pollution, but in a balanced way.

Perhaps more people should remember that this is what our public health inspectors are doing every day as they keep tabs on the air we breathe, the food we eat and the water we drink, wash and bathe in.

While the scaremongers are busy thinking up new pollution terrors, the professionals are busy fighting—and winning.