

# SAT\* Verbal

*This passage is from a paper on the problem of noise pollution prepared for the 1997 International Environmental Conference. This paper was written by a member of the Consortium for the Reduction of Harmful Noise.*

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(5) The problem of environmental noise is one that grows every time a new car operates on the highways, a new industrial park is opened, or a pristine lake is opened up to mechanized boating. In Europe we have seen a general movement toward the reduction of noise pollution. This movement is real, not a figment of the Green's\* propaganda. In fact, some polls show the concern about noise pollution is significantly higher than concern about air and water pollution. Perhaps this is simply the politics of selfishness,  
(10) but no matter how you slice it, people around the world are beginning to realize the quandary of excessive noise.

The 1993 Fifth Environmental Action Program clearly states a policy of worldwide noise abatement and sets goals for noise reduction to be reached by the year 2000. These  
(15) goals are sorely needed. In Europe around 20 percent of the population (about 80 million people) live in "red areas" where noise levels are so high that scientists believe public health is adversely effected. These effects range from annoyance to shattered sleep patterns. Another 170 million  
(20) people in Europe live in so-called "gray areas" where daytime noise levels increase stress. But are we overreacting? Can't people just put in earplugs? Aren't there more important issues to deal with?

Absolutely. There are more important issues. Without  
(25) clean air and water, the ecosystem will collapse and all life will be endangered. But the costs of excessive noise to society are too great to ignore. Heart disease, abnormal psychological reactions, and stress-related accidents and sickness take millions of lives worldwide and cost billions  
(30) of dollars annually. But have we had any impact on this problem? Have we made progress in the last 30 years?

Once again, absolutely. Since 1970 the noise level of individual cars has been reduced more than 85%, and at the

Line same time jet planes are almost 9 times quieter than their  
(35) 1970's counterparts. This is due in large part to legislative  
controls placed on the airline and automotive industries, which  
fostered the improvement of noise reduction technology. It is  
worth noting that those advancements in noise reduction  
(40) technology would probably not have occurred had there not  
been legislative pressure. Environmental abuse by corporations  
is like blood flowing from an open wound—neither stop  
without direct pressure. But do these advancements show  
that the efforts of noise reduction advocates have been  
highly successful?

(45) Sadly, the answer this time is absolutely not. Almost  
all progress in noise reduction has been counterbalanced by  
an exponential growth in the use of automobiles, airplanes,  
and rail systems. Furthermore, the increase in motorized  
(50) leisure activities has also cut into the number of "quiet  
areas" that once could be found surrounding suburban com-  
munities. Efforts to formulate additional noise pollution  
laws have met with stalwart resistance on the part of indus-  
try leaders, who feel they have done enough to alleviate the  
problem. Nations that attempt to set noise emission stan-  
(55) dards for products are often stymied by the high costs of  
redesign. The creation of quiet technology does not come  
cheaply.

We will now present our group's recommendation for  
the next step in noise admissions reduction. It may surprise  
(60) many of you, but we propose a shift of our current strategy  
away from international policy and toward action on the  
local level. We have come to believe that community-based  
groups can best influence regional noise pollution standards,  
and to that end, the governing board of the Consortium for  
(65) the Reduction of Harmful Noise proposes to promote the  
development of a Community Noise Alert Network  
(CNAN). This network of small cells of concerned citizens  
will work primarily to reduce noise levels in their own  
communities, while at the same time sharing information  
(70) between cells and furthering the cause of global noise  
reduction. The CNAN will facilitate the development of  
standards of acceptable noise by creating databases of noise  
levels, and aid scientists and health officials in the accurate  
assessment of the harm caused by obnoxious resonance.  
(75) Transportation and heavy industry will continue to be  
targeted, but it is hoped that pressure from local  
taxpayers will have a greater effect on their practices  
than the exertions of a faceless consortium.

\* The Greens are an environmentally focused political organization with a significant power