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World Bank, Japan Committed To Environmental Preservation

by John Neagle
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On Sept. 11 in Tokyo, World Bank president Barber Conable told a conference on the environment that the bank plans to increase funding for population control projects and forestry development to assist in curbing the "greenhouse effect." Conable said the world's population, currently about 5 billion, will grow to 6 billion by the year 2000, adding to the use of fossil fuels that is blamed for the greenhouse effect and atmospheric warming. He announced that the bank is establishing a Gas Development Unit to promote use of natural gas because it is the least polluting of fossil fuels. He also announced that the Bank plans to triple lending to forestry in the next few years. Conable said World Bank lending on population-control projects has totaled over $500 million in the last five years. Spending for such programs, he added, will rise to over $800 million in the 1990-92 period. The conference was sponsored by the Japanese government and the UN Environment Program (UNEP). Mostafa K. Tolba, UNEP executive director, said depletion of the ozone layer, caused by chlorofluoro-carbons and other chemicals, was increasing skin cancer and eye cataracts. "The human immunity system may be weakening. Agricultural patterns may be impacted, and marine food chains affected," he told delegates. Japan has been a primary focus of environmentalists' attacks since it is a major importer of tropical forest products. Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu pledged more aid for research on sustainable development of tropical forests. Kaifu said Japan plans to increase its foreign environmental aid to $2.25 billion in three years. (Basic data from AP, 09/11/89)

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