

*** First, we must protect our children's world.**

Steelworkers have always fought for a better life for their children. Most of us are the descendants of immigrants who came to the United States or Canada seeking a better future, not just for themselves, but for later generations as well. They sacrificed enormously to build a finer tomorrow for their offspring. They created this union as a force to ensure that their sons and daughters would have a better life.

Today, the greatest threat to our children's future may be the destruction of their environment. Some of the worst consequences of environmental damage, such as global warming and the death of the oceans, will not occur in our lifetime. But they could devastate the world of our children.

Some people believe that we can leave the problem to future generations. That is a delusion. Like a bad debt, the cost increases every day. CFCs were first developed in the 1930s. By the early 1970s several scientists warned about their capacity for damaging the ozone. However CFC manufacturers, led by DuPont, argued for delay. CFCs were banned from aerosol sprays in the U.S. and Canada in 1978, but other uses quickly filled the gap. It took almost ten more years to achieve an agreement cutting the use of CFCs, during which time 15 billion pounds were produced. The ultimate damage will be much greater as a result.

The longer we wait, the worse it will get. It will cost billions to clean up toxic waste problems that could have been avoided for far less money, and with far fewer cases of death and disease. It will cost our children much more to tackle these problems than it will cost us. Leaving it all to them is the worst sort of irresponsibility.