

Changes to Make

"There are changes to make – many changes to make,
"If we are to survive," cry the cod and the hake.
"You have been overfishing, exhausting our stock;
"And it's *not* only we who have suffered this shock.
"For a third of all sea fish have been so depleted;
"All the seas are exploited, our oceans maltreated;
"For your nets dredge the sea floor and damage its bed
"As you plough up the depths, as destruction you spread.
"And just what have you done to the coastal terrains –
"To the forests and marshes and tidal domains?
"For although of the ocean they're just two percent,
"Do you know what they store is of such an extent
"That it's *half* of the carbon that's found in the seas?
"And yet *still* you exploit them and do as you please.
"Oh, the mangroves, salt-marshes and swathes of seagrass
"You destroy year by year at a rate to surpass
"By some four times as much as the damage you wreak
"On the tropical forests. The outlook is bleak.
"You've enhanced global warming with more CO₂
"Making seas more acidic and warming them through
"Which, alas, is dissolving three quarters or more
"Of the reefs formed of coral which hereinbefore
"Once supported such biodiverse populations,
"And provided significant spawning locations,
"While protecting your shores from the worst of the waves.
"But see *now* they are dying; they are bare; they're just graves.
"And for centuries you've dumped in the sea so much waste
"With a carefree complacency so much misplaced;
"In the two centuries past this has grown so much worse –
"It is poisonous, it's toxic, a death-bearing curse
"Of your oil, radioactive materials, debris
"Made of plastic that will not degrade in the sea
"And all manner of other industrial stuff.
"So we beg you to stop it. It's making life tough
"For the ones who survive all the damage you've wrought.
"You must change, yes, you should; yes, you must; yes, you ought.
"If the ocean's not healthy, the planet is doomed;
"On a dead sterile globe we shall all be entombed.
"Oh yes, changes are needed; you've changes to make,
"If we're all to survive," cry the cod and the hake.

"There are changes to make – many changes to make,
"If we are to survive," cry the crow and the crake.
"For the air that we breathe is polluted and bad;
"It is driving us crazy – it's driving us mad.
"For the sulphur dioxides that industry spews
"And the nitrogen oxides your cars do diffuse
"Makes the rain all acidic which does us no good;
"It makes forests die back and not grow as they should,
"Then the soil is eroded and the lakes are as gall.
"And though *that's* bad enough, it's not all, no, not all
"Of the damage your cars and your factories do
"With the carbon monoxide and methane they spew
"Out in quantities vaster than nature intended;
"These with other pollutants are harmfully blended
"To absorb and emit thermal infrared rays
"And th' effect is so baneful in so many ways:
"For the glaciers are melting, and seas getting higher,
"And more coastlands get flooded, while deserts are drier
"As they spread ever further, while elsewhere we meet
"Such unseasonal weather where cold and where heat
"Are severer than normal; this causes alarm
"To the earth's ecosystems and does them great harm.
"And those nitrogen oxides react, you must know,
"With organic compounds which are volatile so
"That at ground level ozone is formed which provokes
"For asthmatics and children and elderly folks
"Many problems with breathing. And not only that –
"The particulate matter continually spat
"From the fossil fuel burnt by your cars and your planes,
"By industrial plants, by your trucks and your trains
"Is polluting the air that we breathe all the time
"And it's troubling our lungs with their poisonous grime,
"Thus affecting our blood and diseasing the heart,
"And endangering cells so that cancers may start.
"Yes, we know there are some who have shared our concern
"And that they for a cleaner environment yearn
"And have taken some measures they think are quite tough.
"But get *serious*, please! It ain't *nearly* enough!
"Oh yes, changes are needed; you've changes to make,
"If we're all to survive," cry the crow and the crake.

"There are changes to make – many changes to make,
 "If we are to survive," cry the skunk and the snake.
 "We find too many hazards as we move around
 "On account of the trash that is left on the ground.
 "Don't you know that stuff leaches and rots and decays?
 "Or is lazy indifference a human malaise?
 "Tell us why are you treating the land like a sink
 "Into which you may dump so much trash, slime and stink?
 "'Oh, it's land-fill,' you say, and you think that is good.
 "And you say 'I recycle the things that I should.'
 "Do not be so complacent, you still waste too much.
 "And not everyone's careful. You've really lost touch.
 "Do you think of the food that you buy in your shops?
 "Of the pesticides wantonly sprayed over crops,
 "That it kills both the pests and the good insects too
 "As it leaches the soil with its pestilent brew.
 "Do you think of your meat raised on factory farms?
 "Do you think of the problems they cause and the harms
 "That are done by the phosph'rous and nitrogen matter
 "To grow protein rich feed so that beasts may grow fatter
 "At a rate so unnatural – for profits need haste.
 "Do you think of the high concentration of waste
 "Which is not always properly disposed of and so
 "It will leak into brooks; into streams it will go
 "And contaminate water, creating dead zones.
 "And just look at the slag, the detritus and stones
 "Round your mines as you greedily delve in the earth
 "For to grab for yourselves all its mineral worth.
 "And your tunnels leave sink holes, while open cast mines
 "Leave vast scars in the earth, ugly pits and inclines;
 "It take *years* to put right all the damage you've done.
 "And your deforestation for us is no fun
 "For the wind and the sun and the rain so erode
 "All the soil from the rocks, leaving us no abode.
 "And do tell us, we pray, what you think may still grow
 "On the land you have marred and have maltreated so?
 "The extinction of species is woefully great –
 "Several thousand times more than the natural rate.
 "Oh yes, changes are needed; you've changes to make,
 "If we're all to survive," cry the skunk and the snake.

"So please come to your senses, your folly forsake,
"Make the changes we need," cry the cod and the hake.
"Stop your wars genocidal! Let bigotry cease!
"Put an end to all hatreds and let there be peace.
"You're abusing resources and talents and skill
"In devising more deadly machines just to kill.
"You're destroying the planet, yourselves and us too.
"Do you really want that? Oh please think what you do.
"There are changes to make, oh yes, changes to make,"
Cry the cod and the hake.

"So please come to your senses, your folly forsake,
"Make the changes we need," cry the crow and the crake.
"Put an end to your greed; learn to *share* what you've got.
"Put your envy aside; be content with your lot.
"Feed the hungry, the starving and learn that we all
"Should be working together lest evil befall
"And we *all* face disaster when Famine is rife
"Letting War and Disease bring an end to all life.
"There are changes to make, oh yes, changes to make,"
Cry the crow and the crake.

So please come to your senses, your folly forsake,
"Make the changes we need," cry the skunk and the snake.
"Does a plant grow for ever, a beast not attain
"The appropriate size at which it should remain?
"Tell us *why* then you think your economies should
"Keep on growing for ever or else they're no good.
"For resources are finite; so think and take heed.
"And let sustainability now be your creed.
"There are changes to make, oh yes, changes to make,"
Cry the skunk and the snake.

"Won't you give up your hatreds so love may awake?
"Won't you change from your greed and in sharing partake?
"Or was Man's evolution a monstrous mistake?"
Ask the cod and the hake,
And the crow and the crake,
And the skunk and the snake.
And they all cry as one: "There are changes to make!"