The focus of the January 1999 issue of *EM* was environmental justice. Still a controversial concept today, back in 1999, environmental justice sparked spirited discussion among lawmakers, attorneys, regulators, industry executives, and community groups. In this issue of *EM*, the topic was discussed by two guest authors: one arguing that environmental justice harms people by denying economic prosperity, the other defending environmental justice as a marker of fairness to all, regardless of race or economic status.

In the first article by Jeffrey S. Heaton, “Environmental Justice: Deterrent to Economic Justice,” the author says that for many, the American Dream is fundamentally an economic dream, one of prosperity. Environmental justice, the author asserts, hinders this dream for everyone because it thwarts the influx of industry and jobs into economically depressed areas. Furthermore, he contends, the environmental justice movement adversely affects public health.

*Quoting from the article:* “Social equality is a building block of our nation and must be vigilantly protected and ensured. However, asking EPA or state and local environmental agencies to maintain that vigilance is not wise. Federal and state environmental agencies are staffed and trained to administer environmental laws and regulations. It is their mission to ensure that environmental statutes are implemented and that permits issued to industry have appropriate limits and controls to ensure public health and safety. It is not the mission, nor do they have the appropriately trained staff, to administer social policy matters.”

In the second article by Denise D. Feiber, “Environmental Justice: A Fledgling Voice for Fairness,” the author states environmental justice means that no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial or other operations. While stricter regulations might be a bitter pill for industry to swallow and some businesses might be negatively affected by environmental justice mandates, fairness to residents in neighboring communities must be considered, says the author.

*Quoting from the article:* “Although there is contradictory information about the health impacts of pollution on human health and the environment, upon observation it is difficult to deny the negative impacts minority populations and low-income populations are enduring because of their proximity to industrial facilities. Environmental justice is about fairness. So, what is there about the environmental justice initiative that needs to be defended? I agree it would be unfortunate if a legitimate project was stopped because of the power of a well-organized activist group, but is that a reason to wipe the environmental justice directive off the books or to rewrite it so that it cannot interfere with industry when they are meeting minimum regulatory requirements?”

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**In Next Month’s Issue…**

**Environmental Education**

The February issue will present an overview of the challenges facing environmental education and training, associated with environmental education accreditation, distance learning, sustainability, ethics, entrepreneurship, environmental engineering curriculum, sustainability, and outreach. Case histories will be presented to explain the current and future efforts in these areas.