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## Our Second State of the State Issue

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## Our Second State of the State Issue

In January 1989, the Minnesota Academy of Science published a special issue of its journal which assessed the progress Minnesota was making in such endeavors as public education, health, transportation, agriculture, and the environment. The current issue, published one year later, represents the second such annual examination of how we are doing as a state. As it did last year, the Academy invited leaders and experts in several fields to describe what they see as some of the important challenges facing Minnesotans. The beginning of a new decade, this year provided the authors a special opportunity for reflection. As the world enters the 1990s, there is at once reason for great hope (the political changes in eastern Europe) and grave concern (the continued degradation of the earth's environment). Taken together, the articles in this issue demonstrate why Minnesotans may be viewing their own future with similar ambivalence.

Novak, in her article on the economic linkages among different regions in the state, describes the benefits which can be achieved from increased development in Minnesota. However, increased development puts added pressure on the environment. In their articles on wilderness and conservation, authors Evans and French emphasize how little of Minnesota's original natural heritage exists even today. Pressure on Minnesota's natural areas will only go up in the nineties if the state's industrial and agricultural sectors respond to the opportunities created by new world markets. Fortunately, new practices in industry and agriculture may enable Minnesota to meet these new market demands while at the same time reducing damage to the environment. Morris argues for a coordinated state-wide plan to improve the efficiency of use and recovery of materials used in industry. In their article on sustainable agriculture, Kroese and Cramer describe how it is possible to farm in both an environmentally and economically sound way.

The articles make clear that the people of Minnesota are still the State's greatest resource. In their article on the elderly of Minnesota, Bloedow and Brown emphasize the special contributions that this group can make to Minnesota life. As Bloedow and Brown point out, in some cases contributions by the elderly can meet some of the needs of another group, e.g. children, for whom the elderly can be role models and day care providers. The optimism of Bloedow and Brown's article is tempered by the sobering reviews of Bouza (drugs), Cooper (human rights), and Johnson (children). The degree of suffering and wasted human potential in Minnesota resulting from discrimination, child abuse, and the use of illegal drugs remains staggering, and according to the authors actually may be getting worse.

As Minnesota heads into the nineties, it is fitting that we also reexamine the path we took to get here. In their articles on Minnesota's historic sites and preservation, Woods and Gimmestad describe ongoing efforts by the Historical Society not only to preserve our heritage but to account more fully for the contributions made by women, blacks, native Americans, and other cultural and ethnic groups.

In a real sense, this review of the state of the State of Minnesota is a local examination of the same fundamental challenges confronting people and countries throughout the world: How to grow enough food and sustain economic development without destroying the environment; and how to affirm human diversity and guarantee opportunity and justice for all people. The state of the State of Minnesota at the end of this decade will largely depend on how successfully we meet these two challenges.