

PERTEMUAN PERSATUAN **Meetings of the Society**

Ceramah Teknik (Technical Talk)

Marine debris — A global problem: pelagic plastics, pollution and environmental impacts, biogeographic and other implications

MURRAY R. GREGORY

Laporan (Report)

Dr. Murray R. Gregory, who is an Associate Professor of Geology, at the Faculty of Science, University of Auckland, New Zealand, gave the above talk to about 30 participants on 8 September 1997 at the Geology Department, University of Malaya at 5.00 pm.

Dr. Gregory who considers himself a traditional sedimentologist has research interests in organism-sediment-substrate relationships and trace fossils and have lately been involved in multi- and inter-disciplinary environmental programmes.

Abstrak (Abstract)

Plastic litter and debris of all kinds is conspicuous on shorelines around the world. It is most frequently encountered near metropolitan centres but is also to be seen on remote and even unpopulated islands. Pollution by plastics is aesthetically distasteful and also creates a number of environmental problems that have become global in magnitude. These include entanglement and death of marine wild life, blockages to the intestinal tract through ingestion reducing quality of life and perhaps reproductive performance. Larger items may hazard shipping and there is a growing awareness that litter stranded on beaches may be detrimental to tourism. An encrusting pseudoplanktic biota has been recognised on drift plastics. This material could be a vector for the local, regional and trans-oceanic dispersal of aggressive alien taxa which could endanger the biota of sensitive island ecosystems.

There is need to educate the public about the environmental problems arising from the indiscriminate disposal of plastics into the oceans and seas of the world. Alleviation of some of the problems may come from Annex V of MARPOL and the London Dumping Convention but the real solutions will lie in changing long ingrained habits.

G.H. Teh

