wider cultivation of less erosion-resistant row crops, e.g., soybeans and corn. But technical remedies exist. "Conservation tillage," for example, reduces erosion by 50 to 90 percent, and is already used on about 25 percent of U.S. farmland. Higher costs, farmers' habits, and subsidies for certain crops are among the factors slowing wider implementation of such techniques.

A greater imponderable is the possibility of a sudden climate change. Nevertheless, the authors argue, Washington policy-makers should do more to limit such long-term risks. Among their options: encouraging wider dispersal of farms and diversification of crops in one-crop regions, ending farm subsidies that encourage unwise land use.

The legendary bounty of America's farms seems secure for the near future. Taking a few prudent steps now will ensure that it stays that way for a long time to come.

Arctic Oil

"The Great Arctic Energy Rush" in *Business Week* (Jan. 24, 1983), 1221 Ave. of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10020.

Although the 1981–83 oil glut has eased fears of future energy shortages, oilmen are spending billions to find and tap new oil and natural gas in the Arctic.

According to *Business Week*, OPEC's daily output is now running at least 10 million barrels below capacity. But some specialists believe that surplus may dry up by 1986. The United States, Canada, Norway, Greenland, and the Soviet Union (which owns the biggest slice of Arctic territory) are all stepping up Arctic exploration. The prize: up to 170 billion barrels of oil and 1,800 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

For the United States, the stakes are high. The flow of oil from Alaska's giant Prudhoe Bay field, which still holds 9.6 billion barrels of crude, one-third of known U.S. reserves, is slowing. But according to the U.S. National Petroleum Council, Alaska may harbor another 45 billion barrels of undiscovered oil, much of it offshore in the frigid Beaufort and Bering seas. Exploiting such deposits could help cut U.S. oil imports to less than two million barrels per day by 1990, compared to 6.6 million in 1977.

U.S. Interior Secretary James Watt is opening more Arctic areas to drilling to speed exploitation. A recent auction of Beaufort Sea leases netted more than $2 billion. Yet environmental constraints may limit Watt's plans. Congress has declared 125 million of Alaska's 375 million acres, including a portion of the Beaufort coast, off-limits to developers. And Arctic exploration is expensive: A single offshore drilling rig can cost $20 million. Washington estimates that the total bill for Alaskan oil development could come to $100 billion.

Other nations are also joining the Arctic energy rush. The Soviet Union plans to invest $40 billion during the next five years, mostly to build up natural gas output. (One reason: Moscow reaps 70 percent of its hard-currency receipts from oil and gas exports.) Also prospecting in

RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

the Arctic are Norway, whose offshore Troll field could increase Western Europe's natural gas reserves by 50 percent, and Canada, which is searching for successors to its Alberta oil fields.

The possibility of an OPEC price collapse or a sudden breakthrough in synthetic fuel production makes investing in Arctic oil a financial gamble. But to oilmen searching for energy supplies outside of OPEC's grasp, it seems a risk worth taking.

ARTS & LETTERS

Did Success Spoil The Naturalists?

"American Naturalism and the Problem of Sincerity" by Christopher P. Wilson, in *American Literature* (Dec. 1982), Duke Univ. Press, East Campus, Duke Univ., Durham, N.C. 27706.

America's so-called "naturalist" writers—notably Jack London, Frank Norris, Upton Sinclair—won fame around the turn of the century. Wilson, a Boston College English professor, argues that the naive optimism of the age shaped their writing, and ultimately impoverished it.

Prosperity created a new audience for magazine stories and novels. The naturalists reacted by proclaiming themselves "professionals" and renouncing the "effete" aestheticism of their Victorian predecessors. Literature, in their view, was a product of hard work, not genius. "Don't loaf and invite inspiration," Jack London advised younger writers, "light out after it with a club." The naturalists' own work habits were legendary: Upton Sinclair churned out a potboiler every week during a yearlong stint for a Manhattan publishing house before winning fame with *The Jungle* (1906).

Sinclair and his colleagues—often reformers or socialists—tried to shun commercialism, Wilson says. They were serious advocates of "sincerity"—a combination of Romantic spirituality and Realist facts—in literature. What London called their "impassioned realism" demanded a direct, forceful writing style.

Yet from their vigorous prose to their passion for "sincerity" and hard work, Wilson argues, the naturalists unwittingly echoed the voices of the nation's emerging Big Business culture. New self-help manuals for corporate climbers, for example, stressed the importance of selling oneself by exuding confidence and an upbeat attitude. "The essential element" in such "personal magnetism," advertising mogul Bruce Barton told readers in 1925, "is a consuming sincerity."

It was the same advice that London and his colleagues received from their editors and publishers—self-made literary salesmen such as S. S. McClure and Frank Doubleday.

Once sincerity had become "a learned attribute, a public presentation rather than a spontaneous emotion," Wilson writes, the damage was done. The naturalists' embrace of the "power of positive thinking,"