For almost a century, Wisconsin has been a leader and a model for states throughout America. From the landmark defense of academic freedom by the University of Wisconsin's Board of Regents in the 1890's to the unprecedented reforms enacted by the Progressives in the first years of this century, from the creation of America's first unemployment compensation program in the 1930's to the passage of path-breaking environmental legislation in the early 1970's and the Wisconsin Consumer Act in 1972, Wisconsin has had a reputation for honest, informed, and innovative government.

Such government is only possible if elected legislative and executive officials, agency administrators, and civil servants are unwilling to rest on past laurels, and constantly search for new ways to upgrade and improve governmental operations. The important work that has been performed in recent years by citizens' study groups and task forces—and the reforms in our tax structure and the organization of government which have resulted—are a measure of the openness of our officials and institutions to new ideas and outside assistance. This openness, this vigilance, must be maintained. It is only by making our government more productive and accountable to the people that Wisconsin can retain her preeminent position among the states.

At this moment the leadership which states can provide America is more important than at any time in recent history. The focus of governmental power appears to be shifting away from the federal government and back to the states. While this shift could be a great disaster for America—if both levels of government use it as a smoke screen for the abandonment of major social commitments—it is also a great opportunity. It represents a rare moment of fluidity within our federal system, when government can be reinvigorated by bringing it closer to the people, and where old priorities and programs can be put aside and new ones initiated.
The priorities which we as a people face in the 1970's and 1980's differ from those of the past in that they refer more to the "quality of life" than the quantity of life. It is not that there still aren't people in need of government support to assure them adequate shelter and adequate diet—and we must continue to give that support. But for most of us, a new set of issues has come to dominate the public agenda: pollution, overcrowding, shoddy products, dangerous additives and elements in our food, vanishing wilderness and recreation areas, work that is unsatisfying and unfulfilling, diminishing energy resources.

In tackling these problems, the first prerequisite is adequate information. Without this information, government can only react—it cannot lead. For many years, the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau has been in the business of providing lawmakers and interested citizens with the information they need to "stay ahead of the game". This year is no exception. The 1973 Wisconsin Blue Book, in addition to providing the most recent election returns, biographies of state officials, descriptions of state agencies and functions, and thousands of important pieces of statistical information, has a major article on "Protecting Wisconsin's Environment", by Selma Parker of the Legislative Reference Bureau staff. This helpful article provides a useful framework and background for the legislative actions which are required in the next decade, if we are to assure our citizens the quality of life which they deserve.

The 1973 Wisconsin Blue Book, like so many which have preceded it, is a proud reflection of a state which has always been a leader. We must all work to assure that Wisconsin continues to lead, and serve as a model for the rest of the states.

Sincerely,

PATRICK J. LUCEY
Governor