

The Ecologist

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The Ecologist

Contents

Vol. 24, No. 4, July/August 1994

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Editorials

Sound Advice for the DoT 122

Simon Fairlie

Who Will Tame the Supermarkets? 123

Tim Lang and Hugh Raven

Feature Articles

From Market to Hypermarket: Food Retailing in Britain 124

Tim Lang and Hugh Raven

Over the last 30 years, a handful of supermarket chains have gained control over food retailing in the UK. Between them, they now determine how food is grown, who grows it, how it is distributed and who benefits. As a result, shopping has become dependent on the car.

Living Under Contract: The Social Impacts of Contract Farming in West Africa .. 130

Michael J. Watts

Contract farming — in which farmers grow a specified crop to a specified schedule for a specific corporation — enables companies to “manage” producers without directly owning land or controlling labour. Farmers become the agents of their own “self-exploitation” with potentially dire consequences for the household.

Misshaping Europe: The European Round Table of Industrialists 135

Ann Doherty and Olivier Hoedeman

In 1983, a group of European-based multinationals formed a coalition — the European Round Table — to lobby the European Commission on wide-ranging issues. This influential group has orchestrated European policy for its own ends through its access to politicians and business leaders.

The Political Economy of Tourism 142

Anita Pleumarom

International tourism, particularly to destinations in the South, is directed at transforming cultures and economies to promote “development”. Because eco-tourism and “sustainable” tourism ignore this, they perpetuate patterns of power and dominance that are destructive of the environment and of people.

Between the Loggers and the Owls: The Clinton Northwest Forest Plan 149

Brian Tokar

Bill Clinton’s election as US President in 1992 raised great hopes for the mainstream environmental movement. But his attempts to defuse conflicts between conservationists and timber interests over logging in the Pacific Northwest has led to his being accused of a corporate sell-out.

Books 154

Time, Discounting & Value — The Environmental Movement in Germany — A Social History of Eating — Lessons from Bhopal.

Letters 160

Campaigns **Centre Pages**

World Bank in Brazil • World Bank 50 Years • School of the Americas • Innu Blockade • UK Nuclear Review • Narmada Update • British Forestry Aid • Argentine Plantations • Sri Lankan Farmers’ Suicide • UK Criminal Justice Bill

Cover: The Ifugao people of Banaue in the Cordillera are promoted as a tourist attraction by the Philippine government. (Gerry Atkinson)

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Sound Advice for the DoT

Is economic growth demand-led? Or is it stimulated by supply? In other words, do people choose of their own free will to consume more and more? Or are they impelled to transfer allegiance to new ranges of commodities by the need to maintain their competitiveness as producers and their access to the market as consumers, in a world of changing opportunities?

These are tricky questions, but the UK Department of Transport (DoT), until very recently, has been sure of the answer. Traffic growth results simply from "a large increase in demand for transport and travel". People are more prosperous and so choose to travel further: more roads must therefore be built to accommodate this demand — and if they are not built fast enough, congestion will result.

So certain is the DoT of this increase in demand that it quantifies it in the form of annually adjusted National Road Traffic Forecasts. At present, the DoT calculates that road traffic will increase in Britain by between 69 and 113 per cent by 2025. This means that in about 30 or 40 years time, there will be twice as many cars on the roads as there are now — a prospect which DoT analysts contemplate with the equanimity peculiar to those who spend their working lives studying computer models.

This forecast provides the rationale for the UK government's multibillion pound road programme. It also provides the yardstick by which the DoT, in its cost-benefit analysis computer programme known as COBA, assesses whether these roads will be economically beneficial. New roads are evaluated by the savings in time they will afford motorists — every working motorist's minute is presently assumed to be worth 18.6 pence. These time savings are measured not against what exists now, but against what conditions might be like if the road remained unbuilt while traffic increased over the next 30 years. In other words, the DoT forecasts a doubling of traffic — a nightmare that few members of the public would welcome — and then calculates the economic benefits of relief from the congestion that this hypothetical nightmare would cause.

Circular Logic

The DoT's methodology has been increasingly challenged over the last few years. Critics maintain that if new roads were not built, traffic would only increase up to the point where there was so much congestion that people adopted other means of transport, or did not travel at all — hence the predicted doubling of traffic would not occur.

In fact, roadbuilding, they argue, actively generates new traffic. As faster roads make transport costs cheaper, businesses are compelled to compete further afield, since their own territory is likely to be encroached upon by distant competitors; workers are similarly compelled to compete further afield for jobs; production becomes centralized as distribution costs yield to economies of scale; alternative modes of transport are rendered uneconomical and close down; and facilities such as schools, hospitals and shops are sited further from people's homes. People travel more because they have to. A variant of Parkinson's Law operates whereby traffic increases to fill the road-space available.

Until recently, the DoT has adamantly refused to concede that

road building creates traffic — and with good reason, for to do so would make a nonsense of the National Road Traffic Forecasts, and hence of COBA. It would be to admit that the accuracy of these forecasts is dependent upon the very projects they purport to justify. COBA would be exposed as a circular argument — fraudulent logic masked in the impenetrable jargon of computerized economics.

Spanner in the Works

But in the last few months a virus seems to have infected the corridors of the DoT. In February 1994, *Local Transport Today* (LTT) reported that:

"The government-appointed Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment (SACTRA) has concluded that new roads induce extra traffic . . . The report is not due to be handed in to the DoT until April, but it is known that the DoT is 'extremely worried' about the content of the draft that it has already received."

Three months later, on 12 May, LTT reported that the SACTRA report "could be delayed"; that "the committee is said to be unanimous in its view that many new roads create traffic"; and that "some fear that the conclusions may be too politically sensitive to release . . ." And on 26 May, LTT announced that the national traffic forecasts looked "doomed":

"It now seems certain that no future National Road Traffic Forecasts will be issued on the same basis as previous estimates, following establishment of a DoT expert advisory panel to undertake a fundamental review of traffic forecasting practices . . . The new panel is to consider how construction of new roads could affect future traffic levels."

The DoT has not yet published the SACTRA report. It may be that what will eventually appear will be a watered-down version of the original document, or that the DoT will claim that its findings can be "incorporated" into COBA without undermining COBA's integrity. The government would be unlikely to come clean with a document suggesting that the method used to assess every major road scheme now under construction in the UK is inherently faulty.

But some kind of change is taking place. Someone in the DoT (who knows? — it may even be the much-maligned Colossus of Roads, DoT minister Robert Key) has stuck a spanner in the *perpetuum mobile* of traffic growth. With a bit of luck, within a few years the engine driving the government's road programme will grind to a halt.

Double or Quit

If released, and assuming it lives up to its promise, the SACTRA report will back up the commonsense doubts of an increasing number of the British public about the desirability of unlimited growth. Few people actually want a doubling of road traffic, however essential it may be perceived to be to the growth of the economy, any more than they want limitless growth in the amount of packaging or a limitless spread of housing development. They may choose in a given situation to drive further or to

consume more to maintain their quality of life; but they may well also be inclined to vote against a policy that pushes them to make such choices.

The SACTRA report must not be left to moulder in the vaults of the DoT. Anti-road groups should haul it out at every public inquiry into a road scheme, and its implications for the future

should be fully explained in the media. The government does not usually admit that economic growth can or should be constrained. When it does so, the green movement should make sure that the point is followed through.

Simon Fairlie

Who Will Tame the Supermarkets?

Merry Hill in the West Midlands is one at least 750 "out-of-town" superstores built in Britain over the last seven years. Covering an area the size of 20 football pitches, and with an overhead monorail to whisk shoppers between its glass-vaulted shopping centre and its various retail warehouses, the superstore has 19 car parks, space for 10,000 cars and an annual turnover of £300 million. Profitable though it may be for its owners, for local traders in nearby towns such as Dudley, the superstore has proved ruinous. According to a 1993 government-sponsored survey, Dudley town centre has lost 70 per cent of its trade since Merry Hill was completed in 1989, while other centres like Stourbridge and West Bromwich have lost between 20 and 40 per cent; and eight other town centres have also suffered.

The squeezing of local traders and High Street shops by chainstores is nothing new — particularly in food retailing where the rise of the supermarket has, since the 1950s, led to the demise of thousands of independent food shops, from grocers to butchers and bakers (see pp. 124-129). What is new, however, is the upsurge of public hostility in Britain and other parts of the affluent world to supermarkets and other big retailers. As the public has come to question the assumed benefits of car-based shopping and the control that supermarkets — with their vast buying power — now exert over the production, distribution and quality of food, opposition to giant new stores on the edge of towns has mushroomed in the last two years.

In response to such opposition, the Secretary of State for the Environment, John Gummer, announced in March this year that the building of out-of-town shopping centres would, in future, be severely restricted under a new set of planning guidelines, signalling an apparent willingness to rein in the retail giants. Describing out-of-town superstores as "sheds on the bypasses", Gummer told the Town and Country Planning Association that they were damaging to the environment and to society: with them came "the drive-in philosophy we see across the Atlantic, where people mourn the loss of the main street", creating a car dependent society with all the attendant impacts in terms of air pollution and new roads. "We should see the car as our servant, not the determinant of how we build."

But the new guidelines do not sound the death knell for the supermarket. The key issue of corporate control over food retailing — the issue at the centre of many people's opposition to supermarkets — has not been addressed. In fact, without government action to limit the size of food companies, the ban on building out-of-town shopping centres may prove to be the final blow to the small independent food retailers who so far have managed to survive the onslaught of the supermarkets. Even before Gummer's announcement, the supermarket giants were beginning to move back into city and town centres, largely in response to increasing competition from inner-city discount foodshops like Kwiksave, Netto and Aldi which had seen a market to be exploited. Tesco, for instance, has already launched its chain of Metro stores specifically to compete with its new

rivals. With the supermarkets back in the inner cities, the last remaining independent traders will find themselves mopped up.

The result is likely to be still further corporate concentration in food retailing as independent traders are driven out of business and the supermarket giants battle with each other to capture the inner-city markets. International pressures — particularly in the wake of the GATT agreement and the increased access of foreign retail giants to British and European markets — look set to reinforce the trend. Looking ahead to the year 2010, financial analysts Coopers and Lybrand predict the emergence of a few world-class "global leviathans" in the "serious seventeen" countries with high disposable incomes. The market, it argues, will be dominated by companies which can project powerful brands and use the latest information technology and distribution systems to drive down costs and to "interact" with consumers. In Europe there are some signs of these global partnerships emerging. The Argyll group (Safeway) has entered into an alliance with eight other European food retailers. Tesco has bought into the French food retailers, Catteau, purchasing an entire 300 shop chain. Firms such as Aldi, Carrefour, Ahold and Promodes are multinational organizations with branches across Europe and in the US. Ahold owns 36 per cent of the Dutch grocery market and is one of the top ten US food retailers.

Such restructuring is being actively encouraged by national governments which are set on creating favourable economic conditions for their own nationally-based corporations to be able to compete globally. The means are de-regulation, flexible workforces and labour-shedding new technology. Meanwhile, laws originally aimed at preventing any single company from establishing a trade monopoly within a given market are being reinterpreted so that they do not interfere with the rise of the new leviathans. Under British law, for example, a company is held to have a monopoly only if it controls 25 per cent of a market. At a national level, no supermarket company has reached this formal level of monopoly — although at a regional level, it is frequently exceeded. As mergers and takeovers increase the share held by the retail giants, however, the goalposts are being shifted: since the European Single Market came into existence on 1st January 1993, a "market" is increasingly being defined as "Europe-wide". With the signing of the revised GATT agreement, it is perhaps only a question of time before markets are defined globally.

If the march of the retail leviathans is to be halted, there is an urgent need to reevaluate existing legal constraints on the size of companies and their share of markets. Central to that reevaluation is one key question: How is a market to be defined as "concentrated"? Globally? Regionally? Nationally? Or, locally by the consumers — the people who markets are supposed to work for?

Tim Lang and Hugh Raven

From Market to Hypermarket

Food Retailing in Britain

by

Tim Lang and Hugh Raven

The ability of supermarket chains to provide a wide range of products at competitive prices has enabled them, over the last 30 years, to secure a stranglehold over the food industry from seedbed to dinner table. Supermarkets keep their prices low through their control over producers, economies of scale and through transport and packaging strategies for which the industry does not pay the full costs — while the “consumer choice” that they offer is not accessible for everyone.

“To found a great empire for the sole purpose of raising up a people of customers may at first sight appear a project fit only for a nation of shopkeepers. It is, however, a project altogether unfit for a nation of shopkeepers; but extremely fit for a nation that is governed by shopkeepers.”

Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, II, iv, 7, iii.

Napoleon is credited with denouncing the British as a “nation of shopkeepers”; that he was quoting economist Adam Smith is less well known. Even 30 years ago, however, his description still had a ring of truth: open air markets thrived in many British towns and cities, cornershops on residential streets were commonplace, villages had local stores and High Streets boasted haberdashers, grocers, bakers and butchers where the vast majority of people living nearby shopped.

Since the 1960s, however, the shops and shopping habits of Britain have undergone a radical transformation as ownership of High Street stores has become concentrated in the hands of conglomerates and chainstores. The food sector, in particular, is now dominated by a handful of supermarket companies, the top three of which — Sainsbury, Tesco and the Argyll group (Safeway) — control 40 per cent of the market nationally.¹ At a regional level, the supermarkets’ dominance of food retailing is yet more pronounced: Tesco, for instance, has 24 per cent of sales space in the South-East’s metropolitan area, whilst in some areas, the big three may control 65 per cent of the market.² In fact, a kind of generic monopoly operates whereby large food outlets — irrespective of whom they actually belong to — account for a majority of sales. By 1988, just two per cent of food outlets accounted for 52 per cent of all food retail sales, while some 20 per cent accounted for 90 per cent of sales.³ Independent family-run grocery shops have been squeezed out of business: in 1950, they had 58 per cent of the UK grocery market in terms of sales; by 1991, this share had dropped to 12 per cent.⁴

Such changes have hardly been challenged, most consumers eagerly embracing supermarket shopping because it offers

quick access to a wide range of goods at low prices. Indeed, supermarkets provide shelves of products beyond the wildest dreams of the shopper of the 1950s — from out-of-season vegetables flown in from around the world to time-saving processed or pre-cooked foods. But such “choice” comes at a cost: supermarkets can undercut small, independent grocers because they capitalize on economies of scale, exploit “flexible” cheap labour (generally women), use their effective monopoly over retailing to squeeze food producers, and benefit from a raft of hidden state subsidies, particularly in transport, wages and waste disposal. In this respect, Britain is a prime example of changes taking place elsewhere in the world — changes which reveal how power in the marketplace lies less and less with producers or consumers but more and more with those who control the retailing sector. Not surprisingly, an increasing number of people are beginning to question whether “choice” and “value for money” is simply a matter of having access to 57,000 varieties at apparently bargain prices.

Indentured Suppliers

Between them, the supermarket companies wield immense influence over the way people in Britain grow, buy and eat their food. Paradoxically, their ability to supply a wide range of products rests on their being able to secure large volumes of uniform produce to a predictable schedule. To achieve such a smooth uniformity of supply, supermarkets have ruthlessly exploited the monopoly they hold over the retail market — because they are the biggest buyers of food, they have secured effective control over the suppliers of foods. Not only are they now in a position to dictate the prices paid to producers; they can also dictate the terms and conditions under which produce is grown and delivered.

In agriculture, many producers have been reduced to little more than assembly-line workers in an industrial system. To ensure uniformity in the fresh produce they sell, supermarkets have pursued two objectives: standardized production methods and the elimination of seasonal variation. Growers who supply supermarket chains are given specifications for every crop,

Tim Lang is Professor of Food Policy at Thames Valley University, London and Chair of the Sustainable Agriculture, Food and Environment (SAFE) Alliance; Hugh Raven is Coordinator of the SAFE Alliance.

detailing the variety to be grown, the approved seed supplier, when to plant, how to treat the growing crop, and the method and timing of harvest. Similar prescriptions apply to staff training, clothing, packaging, labelling, and even sticking plasters for minor cuts.

Effective control over production has passed to the supermarket technician. Moreover, the restrictions placed on growers have gradually eliminated any supermarket suppliers under a certain size, because to supply a supermarket, growers are obliged to invest large sums in expensive technical infrastructure, such as storage and packhouses. Since small companies typically cannot do this, particularly in such a high-risk sector as horticulture (subject as it is to the vagaries of climate and pests), the average size of horticultural holdings in Britain is increasing, and "the number of small producers is expected to decline sharply over the next five to ten years".⁵

Nor are growers — particularly smaller operatives — able to contest such restrictions. As the food retailing market has become concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, so producers have no alternative but to sell to the large supermarkets. In such circumstances, failure to meet the requirements laid down by the supermarket technicians incurs the risk of being struck off the supermarket's list of suppliers. Since none of the major multiples will enter binding, contractual commitments, their suppliers have no redress in the event of rejection. According to some growers, if there is a shortage of a particular type of fresh produce, supermarkets may temporarily suspend the line altogether rather than pay better prices. If supermarket buyers de-list the crop because of uncertainty of supply, growers' returns and businesses are devastated.

The threat of de-listing means that complaints about first-hand experience of supermarkets' buying policies are usually anonymous, for fear of retribution. According to the weekly trade magazine, *The Grower*, a feature article it published on supermarkets' abuse of growers produced "a flood of letters, 'phone calls and faxes all in broad agreement . . . [but] few correspondents are prepared to be identified, a testimony to the awful power these companies wield." These correspondents feared "having orders cancelled for a period, perhaps a few weeks, on some trumped-up excuse, usually at the last minute. This is the punishment meted out to those who offend against the rules or over-step the mark". In the view of the editor of *The Grower*, "this is not the cut and thrust of the free market, this is

commercial tyranny".⁶ Even the National Farmers Union observes that vegetable growers are "concerned about having a viable alternative to the multiples [the supermarket chainstores]".⁷

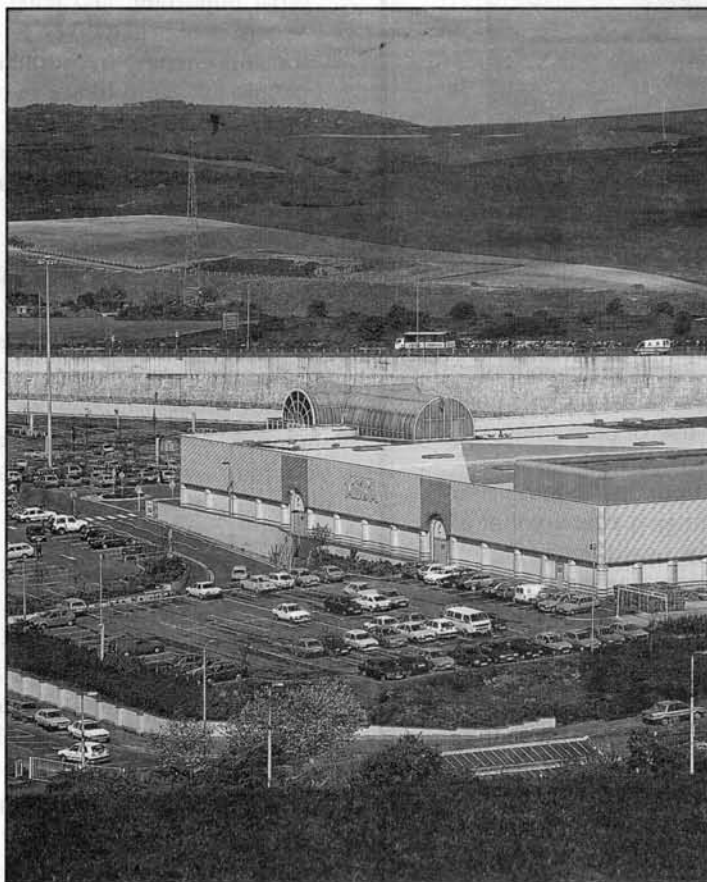
Driven Out-of-Season

The supermarkets' drive to provide vegetables and fruit out-of-season has undermined the bargaining position of growers. The ability to supply "primeurs" — the first crop of the season of a certain kind of fruit or vegetable — has traditionally provided an important income for some growers. This market is disappearing as out-of-season produce is either grown intensively in glass-houses or plastic "poly-tunnels" or flown in from around the world — developments which have been spearheaded by the supermarkets. Early-season tomatoes from the Canaries are a case in point. Increasing production and imports into the UK has caused prices to collapse. As *The Grower* points out:

"The growers most affected are those who have geared their businesses up to meet supermarket demands . . . some accused the supermarkets of reneging on undertakings to support the UK industry. 'They've pulled the rug from under our feet', said one."⁸

The same picture applies to a wide range of fresh fruit and vegetable products besides tomatoes. With the costs of transport artificially low, and falling, larger and larger quantities of products are sourced from further afield. This undermines the UK horticultural sector and cuts rural jobs as large areas of land where labour-intensive, high-value horticultural crops, particularly "top fruit" such as apples and pears, used to be grown revert to arable or livestock farming — or are taken out of production. Some of the imported supplies are even provided by domestic producers, who themselves import to ensure they can continuously supply their buyers rather than be de-listed, a high-risk strategy, given the possibility of the supermarkets' rejection of the produce. In times of shortage, the supermarkets themselves:

"import produce at what are sometimes exorbitant rates, yet retail it at the same low price as the available home-grown version . . . subsidiz[ing] the foreign imports out of the UK growers' margin . . . This [is] done with iceberg lettuce, celery, broccoli and cauliflower, all expensive bulky produce, air-freighted in from as far as California and retailed at a loss on actual cost rather than risk reducing demand by raising prices on the shelf."⁹



Martin Bond/Environmental Picture Library

Out-of-town shopping centres on greenfield sites have increased traffic levels and urban sprawl at the expense of town centres and the environment. Rather than alter their plans, supermarket developers have obliterated many ecologically-valuable sites and then, in certain cases, attempted to recreate the ecological features destroyed. Wildlife destruction becomes wildlife conservation.

Lobbying for Packaging



"Supermarkets could not exist without packaging. Savings in the labour overhead are achieved by pre-packaging at the factory instead of delivering in bulk," says the Industrial Council for Packaging and the Environment. In other words, the supermarkets' low prices derive in part from their use of packaging to replace workers.

Thus supermarkets benefit from the "externalities" or hidden costs within the packaging industry that are borne by society as a whole: the use of fossil fuel energy, non-renewable resources, and public funds, land and atmosphere for waste disposal. In addition, the costs of workers made redundant by "savings in the labour overhead" are also likely to be borne by society.

Since excessive disposable packaging gives the supermarkets a "free ride", they consistently oppose measures to reduce packaging and to encourage the use of reusable containers. A 1981 UK government study of returnable containers found that "the stocking policy of supermarkets . . . favours non-returnables" and "has . . . largely contributed to non-returnables attaining their present share of the market." In 1992, the European Recovery and Recycling Association, of which Sainsbury is an associate member, announced that it would oppose EU proposals to encourage reusable packaging.

Industry groups have repeatedly failed to produce their own voluntary strategy for diminishing packaging waste. "I do not think anyone could accuse us of being hasty in imposing 'solutions' on industry," said a UK minister in 1992, "but I have to say that the response from industry has been disappointing".

In 1993 the industry, represented by the Packaging Responsibility Industry Group (PRG) whose members include Sainsbury, Tesco, Argyl, ASDA, and Marks and Spencer, was requested by the Department of the Environment to draw up a "plan to recover value from between 50 and 75 per cent of all packaging waste by the year 2000". The group came up with a proposal to increase the amount of packaging produced by over 10 per cent in six years. By incorporating this increase into their figures, and by defining incineration for energy as "value recovery", it passed off a 44 per cent recovery rate on present waste levels as a 58 per cent recovery rate.

Packaging is indispensable for the centralized production, long-haul freight and extended shelf-life upon which supermarkets rely. If they were made liable for the real costs of their activities, their distribution and production patterns would probably change radically.

The costs of global sourcing are not only felt domestically. Changing production patterns in the exporting countries also take their toll, typically on the poor:

"Opportunities for trade can result in changes in land ownership and other property rights. This may be trade's most important, and least studied, environmental effect. Where land is perceived as only valuable for growing food for subsistence, traditional smallholders and indigenous people are more likely to be left undisturbed. Where it is perceived as being able to grow food for export . . . then powerful interests immediately have an incentive to expropriate it from its original farmers."¹⁰

Food Miles: More Miles for the Producer . . .

Squeezing domestic producers is only part of the uncounted costs of the supermarket economy; the heavy environmental costs of transporting exotic, out-of-season vegetables to the supermarket shelf are also externalized. The beans "picked yesterday on Kilimanjaro" are transported several thousand miles by air — yet their price does not reflect environmental damage caused such as air pollution.

Within Britain too, the rise of the supermarket has increased the distance travelled by food from the point of production to the point of consumption. Many independent retailers source locally a proportion of their produce — typically perishables such as fresh fruit and vegetables, bread, milk and meat products — thus minimizing their reliance on road haulage. The large supermarket chains, by contrast, are highly centralized, with a few Regional Distribution Centres (RDCs) serving their stores throughout the country. The proportion of goods passing through RDCs (rather than being delivered direct to the store) for the three largest supermarket chains in Britain has increased from between half and three-quarters, by volume, in the mid-1980s to 95 per cent for Sainsbury and Tesco and 97 per cent for Safeway in 1992.¹¹ Of Safeway's 11 RDCs, its Leicestershire centre specializing in dairy products supplies all their stores nationwide. Fresh milk from a dairy near England's south coast is being sold in the north of Scotland. Fruit and vegetable distributor Geest imports bananas through Southampton, takes them by road to Lancashire for ripening, sends them back by road to a warehouse in Somerset from where they are distributed all over Britain.¹²

The absurdities of this system are illustrated by an example of a vegetable grower who sells his or her produce through two outlets, a greengrocer and a supermarket, in the local town five miles away. Sales through the greengrocer involve the vegetables travelling from the farm direct to the shop, a distance of five miles. However, the vegetables sold through the town's superstore are transported to a packing station in the town, then to the supermarket's RDC over 100 miles away, then back to the shop — a round trip of over 200 miles.

An associated development is the introduction of "Just-In-Time" distribution systems where instead of keeping reserves of stock in warehouses, supermarkets now ensure supply through regular, finely timed and calibrated truck deliveries. (This development relies upon computerized bar coding and electronic point-of-sale (EPOS) which provide instant and accurate information for stock control.) Because deliveries to the RDC are more frequent but carry 30-40 per cent smaller loads, the delivery costs borne by the produce suppliers can rise by up to 50 per cent.¹³

The supermarkets claim that fewer centralized distribution centres means that the transport and distribution of goods is more efficient. Tesco estimates "that composite distribution now means that one vehicle can be used instead of five", resulting in an estimated 20 per cent decrease in energy use in the final journey needed to deliver goods to the point of sale.¹⁴ However, this figure does not take into consideration the increased "upstream" transport requirements imposed upon the primary suppliers who deliver to the RDCs: fewer centralized distribution depots means longer journeys for producers and manufacturers.

According to a study by the Heriot-Watt Business School, centralization "carries a transport cost penalty, as it has the effect of increasing the average length of haul... In concentrating their production and warehousing capacity in larger units, firms trade off lower facility costs against higher transport costs". This rise in transport costs may be relatively slight: "the development of the motorway network has enabled firms to extend the hinterlands of their factories and warehouses without adding significantly to transport costs or delivery times".¹⁵

Certainly the supermarkets' claims of transport efficiency have not been borne out in Department of Transport figures. Between 1976 and 1992, as the supermarkets increased their hold over food retailing, the volume of food moved in heavy goods vehicles stayed more or less constant — but the distance it travelled increased by almost 50 per cent.¹⁶

... and More Miles for the Consumer

The supermarket economy has not only affected the way in which food is produced and distributed. It has also encouraged a "car culture" which determines who gets to eat what. It is widely believed that modern shopping patterns involve a reduced number of shopping trips, a misapprehension welcomed and promoted by the supermarkets. In fact, shoppers now undertake more shopping trips; the trips are longer; and more are made by car. The average annual number of shopping trips increased by over 25 per cent between the mid-1970s and 1989-91, while the total distance travelled for shopping increased by nearly 60 per cent over the same period.¹⁷ Clearly journeys became longer: the distance travelled on foot increased 11 per cent, and that by car 91 per cent.¹⁸ The time spent on shopping in total (not just for food) each week has also increased from an average 41 minutes per day in the 1960s to 70 minutes per day in the 1980s.¹⁹

In fact, the supermarkets' development policies are designed to encourage car usage. Sainsbury's boast that "today, we



Paul Farraby/Environmental Picture Library

To fulfil the supermarkets' requirement for standardized agricultural fruit and vegetables, producers have to grow uniform plants. This requires uniform genetic material and has thus resulted in a huge loss of genetic variation in the food crops grown. Of the 6,000 varieties on the National Apple Register, for example, nine dominate commercial orchards. Even within the limited range of varieties demanded by the large food retailers, only a few will be grown on a large scale. Such "genetic monoculture" has profound effects on the interaction of plants and their pathogens, and can lead to disease epidemics, to calls for new "disease-resistant" varieties and to increased use of pesticides and other chemicals.

would not open a store which did not have a large surface level car park" and that "new sites are located where safe and convenient access is obtainable by car" — which usually means places that are inconvenient (and often unsafe) for pedestrians. Encouragement of car-borne traffic has been startlingly successful: "Sainsbury's own research shows that of those housewives [sic] with access to a car, 97 per cent use it for the main food and grocery shopping";²⁰ Sainsbury also "already claims that over 70 per cent of the population lives within 15 minutes' drive of one of its foodstores".²¹

Where Wealth Buys Health

The distance travelled by shoppers also shows a strong correlation with social class. One third of all shoppers travel less than one mile to do their regular shopping — but for those in groups A and B (the wealthiest in the conventional classification of British social groups), the figure is less than 25 per cent, while for those in group E (the lowest), it is more than 40 per cent. The wealthier groups tend to travel more by car — nearly 90 per cent doing their regular main shopping by car, whilst, for the poorest group, the figure is just over a third.²²

Poor consumers, particularly those without a car, are thus often faced with a difficult decision. Their low income means that they must economize; yet the cheapest food, and the widest choice of food, tends to be found in the large supermarkets which are likely to be sited at a distance and are expensive to reach. The "choice" which the supermarkets purport to offer consumers is, in fact, limited by the consumers' circumstances.

Poor consumers in Britain and elsewhere pay higher prices for their food and have less access to healthy foods than rich people. The connection with the rise of the supermarket has been made by a study in Edinburgh:

"The restriction of cost can make many healthy foods unavailable for the low income group (wholemeal bread, for example, can cost up to 25 per cent more than white bread) but another major problem can be physical unavailability. In recent years, the big food chains have adopted a policy of building the "superstore" slightly out of town. For the more affluent members of society who have their own transport, this is a convenient and economical way to shop. Those in the lower income brackets, who may not have transport, are left to patronize small and expensive local stores. Choice is restricted and goods with a short "shelf-life" may not be promoted (such as fruit and vegetables). Therefore, it seems that "choice" can be something of an illusion and that "choosing" a healthy diet is not as simple as it may seem."²³



Changing social patterns combined with smaller households have been closely linked to the development of the industrial food system. While more British women work for pay outside the home than they did 40 years ago, it is still women, by and large, who are considered responsible for food shopping and cooking. The development of factory-processed, extended-shelf-life "convenience" foods — which require little preparation time — has helped make it possible to saddle women with this double role. With less time to spend at home, women themselves demand such foods. At the same time, the need to buy the refrigerators, freezers and labour-saving devices which these foods require reinforces women's incentives to seek paid employment outside the home.³⁴

Similar findings reported by other researchers provide evidence to the contention that a "two nations" diet is emerging, in which the poor are unable to afford healthier foods. A 1994 study carried out by the children's charity, Barnado's, found that the price of a basket of food on an out-of-town housing estate in Bradford was 13 per cent higher than that of the same basket bought in a shop in the fashionable west London district of Kensington. The charity claimed that families often had to use small shops because supermarkets have abandoned the estates.²⁴ A 1991 National Children's Home survey of 354 low-income families found that not one was eating a diet which met current nutrition guidelines. Two-thirds of the children and over half the parents were eating a nutritionally poor diet. The cost of a "healthy" basket of food was much higher than "less healthy" equivalents. The greatest difference in costs, ironically, was in rural areas where most food is grown.²⁵

Cheap Labour

Ironically, the low-income groups that benefit least from supermarkets form the pool of labour from which the supermarkets draw their sales staff. Since 1976, the number of people employed in large food retailers has increased by about 400,000 — over half of them part-time workers and the vast majority women²⁶ — while jobs in independent grocers have collapsed.

Although supermarkets tend to compare well with other retail stores in terms of staff development and training, and remuneration, rates of pay are still low. In 1992, when the minimum hourly rate laid down by the Retail Food and Allied Trades Wages Council was £3.08, a government survey showed that one quarter of women shopworkers working less than 30 hours a week were earning less than £3.10 an hour.²⁷ Three months after the Wages Council was abolished in August 1993, a survey by the campaigning group, the Low Pay Network, found a catastrophic drop in pay, with 44.3 per cent of full-time retail jobs offering rates below those agreed in 1992, the average hourly pay being £2.70.²⁸

Indeed, Member of Parliament Frank Field, chair of the House of Commons' Select Committee on Social Security, has accused the large food retailers of paying low wages in the

knowledge "that the difference between what they pay and a decent minimum will be made up by the taxpayer through the welfare budget." Welfare benefits, he argued, were, *de facto*, being used to supplement low pay.²⁹ Meanwhile, executive pay in the food retailing sector is of a different order; in 1993-1994, Sir Ian MacLaurin, chair of Tesco, earned £635,000.³⁰

As they are part-time, many jobs in supermarkets are insecure: if working less than 16 hours per week, a worker has no right to a state pension, unemployment benefit nor sickness and invalidity benefit. Recently, supermarkets have embraced the "flexible contract", encouraging still further this "casualization" of its labour force. Gateway supermarkets, with a total workforce nationwide of 25,000, is reported to be cutting wage bills by reducing some workers from full to part-time contracts — but having had their hours reduced, some employees are being asked to work two "shifts" a day.³¹ Two recent studies have suggested that jobs in the food retail sector are also becoming gradually "de-skilled". Eventually, many of these jobs — check-out counter staff, for example — will simply disappear as electronic check-out systems become automated and as consumers rather than staff put their purchases through a laser scanning system.

Local Networks

When this broader picture of hidden costs is considered, the supermarkets' claims to provide greater "choice" and value are questionable. They can hardly be said to be improving consumer choice by putting tens of thousands of independent shopkeepers out of business and thus blocking distribution channels for small food producers. Nor can they be said to be providing cheaper food when the external costs of the additional transport, packaging and building development are borne by the consumer, either directly or indirectly through taxation or in the form of environmental deterioration. A policy which makes processed food cheaper and healthier fresh food relatively more expensive will not help consumers to make wise choices or sensible economies. The fact that the benefits of supermarkets are easily accessible to the wealthier, motorized sections of the population, but less so to the underprivileged,

must cast doubts upon their contribution to social well-being.

But the era of supermarket expansion may have arrived at a critical juncture. Widespread public opposition in the UK to the government's extensive road-building programme, European moves to limit the volume of packaging, and growing local resistance to large developments on green spaces and open fields all suggest that there is increased public concern about environmental impacts. Proposals to build new supermarkets in some localities have been greeted with opposition or demonstrations: in February 1994, Sainsbury abandoned plans to build a new superstore in Yeovil, Somerset, after demonstrators squatted on the roof of an abandoned Tesco store.³²

The Department of the Environment's 1993 Planning Policy Guidance on Transport, an acknowledged response to the Earth Summit's Agenda 21, does not proscribe "large superstores for bulk shopping", (their italics) but encourages the "location of facilities in local centres . . . which are more likely to be accessible to those without the use of a private car . . . and making such areas readily accessible on foot or by bicycle."³³ There is a guarded recognition here, and elsewhere in the document, that locally accessible facilities are environmentally desirable, while unnecessary transport, particularly by road, is not. If these insights are followed up in future years by more rigorous measures — the introduction of transport taxes and packaging targets, the revitalization of town centre retail and regional wholesale markets, incentives for local trading schemes, consumer and producer co-operatives, and stronger legislation against concentration and monopoly in the retailing sector — then the supermarket system will become increasingly irrelevant. When that happens, decisions about price, value and choice will no longer be governed by a few highly-centralized corporations, but could be transferred to an organic network of producer and consumer communities, making for a beneficial market economy rather than the hypermarket oligopoly of today.

This article is drawn from a major report on food retail concentration in Britain, due to be published by the SAFE Alliance, 38 Ebury St. London SW1W 0LU, UK.

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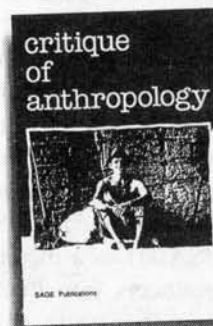
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Living Under Contract

The Social Impacts of Contract Farming in West Africa

by

Michael J. Watts

Contract farming is now a common form of agricultural production in both North and South. For agribusiness corporations, it is a convenient means of spreading risks, but for contracted growers it often brings draconian production regimes and oppressive new forms of "management". Because the onus of finding and organizing the labour force is placed on the contracted grower — generally the male head of household — contract farming can also create new tensions within the household over who should work, under what conditions and with what rewards, and can bring out resistance to dominant notions of gender and property.

Contract farming — a form of industrialized agriculture in which farmers grow a specified crop to a specified schedule for a specific entity, public or private, at a specified price — has long been common in North America and Western Europe. But it is also an increasingly common form of agricultural production in Third World countries.¹ In response to a combination of worker militancy, nationalist agitation (and hence the threat of land expropriation) and changing patterns of global competition, many agribusiness concerns which used to own land directly, farming it with waged labour, have switched to contracting out production.² In addition, contracting has been actively promoted over the past few decades by agencies such as the World Bank and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) as a means of integrating nominally independent producers into the export economy.³ Although the nomenclature frequently changes, "core-satellite", "nucleus estate" or "outgrower" schemes — all of which involve smallholders being contracted to companies or state enterprises — have been central to many of the agricultural resettlement programmes funded by the World Bank and host governments in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Contracting also confers a certain ideological legitimacy on Third World elites and governments, who portray contracting as a means of "helping the poor" and "putting peasants first". Some of the largest contracting schemes in the Third World — tea production in Kenya, tobacco and livestock in Thailand, rubber in Malaysia, palm oil in the Philippines — are public sector enterprises in which the state is the dominant partner in joint ventures with transnational agroindustry and foreign banks.⁴

Servitude and Self-Exploitation

The details of the contracts between individual producers and their contractors vary widely from scheme to scheme. In some cases, the grower lends to the production process his or her labour and land, while the contractor supplies inputs (seeds,

fertilizer, pesticides and credit), makes the critical production decisions and holds title to the produce. In others, land may be leased to the grower on condition that the contract is fulfilled.

A number of features, however, are common to all forms of contract farming. First, the contract drastically limits the growers' autonomy. Through it, the contractor controls not only what is grown, but also how it is grown. On the Kibirigwe horticultural project in Kenya, for example, the contractor — in this case, the state — determines crop choices, rotations and all on-farm operations in highly-regimented work routines.⁵ If a grower fails to undertake a specified farm operation, the project brings in its own labourers to carry out the work and even retains the right of evicting growers from their land if the provisions of the lease are contravened. Nominally independent growers are thus subordinated to "management" through the contract — even though they are not directly employed by the contractor. Although they retain the illusion of autonomy and may hold title to the land, they have become in practice "propertied proletarians", *de facto* workers cultivating company plots on private allotments. The basis of peasant contracting is thus *self-exploitation*: as a woman Tanzanian tea grower puts it, contract work is "the big slavery! Work has no boundaries, it is endless."⁶

Secondly, under contract farming, the onus of finding and organizing the labour force is placed on the grower — more specifically, on the person with whom the contract is taken out, usually the head of the household, who is generally a man. He thus acts as the agent of the contractor, organizing family members in a production regime imposed by the contract. Decisions — and conflicts — over who will work, under what conditions and with what rewards are not fought out between management and unions but between the person who signed the contract and other members of the household — between husbands and wives, parents and children, parents and grandparents. In some cases, the resulting struggles may be collectively resolved through households joining together to form grower organizations or co-operatives; but they may also generate tensions *within* grower households themselves, resulting in increased divorce, domestic tension, and the renegotiation of family and marital responsibilities.

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Rice Growing in The Gambia

The recent history of rice growing amongst the Mandinka of The Gambia and Senegal in West Africa illustrates how contract farming can intensify existing struggles within the household and create new ones — struggles which, in this instance, have been articulated in terms of gender, conjugality and property rights. The resulting adjustments by and within the household have thrown local traditions into turmoil.

Well before the first European presence, rice was widely cultivated as a staple food in The Gambia. As a rainfed cultivar, it was grown on the well-drained sandy uplands, while as a lowland paddy crop, it was sown in saline and freshwater tidal swamps. An elaborate indigenous rice-growing technology included complex drainage and water control which drew praise from early British and French explorers. This production system proved flexible enough to incorporate several highly-productive Asian rices introduced by Portuguese traders in the sixteenth century. By the 1760s, the French were purchasing large quantities of paddy rice near the mouth of the river Gambia, and there was some speculation by British and French administrators alike that the territories of the region might be converted into a highly productive rice bowl.⁷

As the British slowly acquired more territory, so the meteoric rise of commercial groundnut production during the 1830s, a revolution actively promoted by the British and French merchant houses, sounded the death knell for the nascent rice trade. Groundnut exports took off after 1843 — output quadrupling in the following 15 years — placing new and onerous demands on women to cover domestic subsistence needs as male labour was gradually diverted from upland cereals (millet and sorghum) to the relatively lucrative groundnut.⁸ The sexual division of labour shifted from being task-specific — for instance, men preparing the ground, women transplanting — to being crop-specific, with men cultivating groundnuts and women cultivating rice.

Today, the lowland rice-growing swamps in The Gambia are still very much the domain of women (men typically refer to rice growing as “women’s work” and women see rice as “women’s sweat”) and much of the ritual and ideological activity associated with women’s work groups and age-grade socialization takes place in and around the alluvial flats. Women rarely have land rights in the heavily-tilled, sandy loams on the uplands where production is still dominated by groundnuts, which in Mandinka society are the male crop *par excellence*. Nonetheless, the functional separation of men’s work and women’s work is not rigid: men customarily assist in transporting rice seedlings or take part in bringing paddy back to the village from peripheral fields. In the same way, women may help in the cultivation of millet for household consumption on the upland fields or, in the case of maize, in gardens adjacent to the compounds.



Michael J. Watts

Rice has been grown in The Gambia since well before the first European presence in the country. In the mid-19th century, as male labour was drawn into the booming groundnut sector, women had to shoulder subsistence rice-growing responsibilities. Still today they see the crop as “women’s sweat”.

Expanding Production

From the 1850s onwards, the growth of agricultural export production and the increased burden of work on women led to demand within both The Gambia and Senegal for staples rapidly outstripping local supplies. By the end of the century, the new British colony of The Gambia had a major food deficit, prompting efforts by the colonial state to expand domestic rice output. After some half-hearted efforts at seed improvement and local water control in the 1920s, a rice import-substitution programme began in earnest in the 1940s, the area devoted to swamp rice production growing from 23,000 acres in 1946 to 65,000 acres in 1965.⁹ The expansion rested almost wholly on the intensification of women’s labour, a process subject to certain limits. For largely cultural reasons, men steadfastly refused to work in the swamps and the resulting labour shortage caused the rice expansion programme to flounder. The prospects for national food self-sufficiency were bleak.

In the context of increasing rice imports, the Gambian state, in conjunction with its primary donor, the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), renewed its efforts to expand rice output in the 1980s. As part of that programme, 2,000 peasant households drawn from 70 villages in central Gambia entered a contract to grow rice on a large-scale irrigation project set up at Jahaly-Pacharr. Under the contract, the project’s management advances inputs and determines the cultivation routines (water distribution, planting times, weeding, fertilizer application) through extension agents. Management appropriates a share (roughly one-third) of the rice harvest, while grower households provide all on-farm labour.¹⁰ The contract also stipulates that the right to farm land is dependent on the grower complying with cropping schedules, production targets and loan repayment. The project also promoted dry season rice production for which there were no customary labour arrangements, nor rules as to how the crop should be shared.

Struggling Over Land . . .

In just 10 years, the Jahaly-Pacharr project has opened up, or deepened, fissures within Mandinka society, generating militancy among many women rice growers, a spectacular escalation in conflicts over land claims and crop rights, and growing domestic violence. The land for the project was appropriated from local Mandinka. In some cases, the land was "collective" household property, but in many others, it included swamp rice fields owned individually by Mandinka women, who stood to lose an important and highly-valued source of personal income. The sequestered land was allocated on a 30-year lease, primarily to male heads of household who agreed to farm rice under contract — 87 per cent of the 220 hectares distributed during the first land allocation in 1984 was registered in the names of men, hence centralizing land rights within the household under the jurisdiction of the patriarch. This gender bias was justified by the project authorities on the grounds that Mandinka women lacked the ability to mobilize sufficient labour for irrigated cultivation — and would thus not be in a position to fulfil the contract.

The removal of their land rights led women rice growers to become increasingly militant. The national Women's Bureau yielded to their pressure and lobbied the project management. As a result, IFAD intervened directly in land distribution and adjudication in the following year. Of the 340 hectares distributed in 1985, 99 per cent of the plots were registered in women's names, although some 110 original tillers still remained without access to irrigated plots. Even today, some women who lost swampland have yet to receive compensation and have been compelled to search for tidal swamps outside the project area or to take up dry season gardening, either of which can account for a substantial increase in travel time. It is not unusual, for example, for women to commute more than five miles each way to reach the alternative unimproved swamp sites.

Despite such problems, the restructuring of the land allocation process was roundly praised as an equitable solution in which "the rights of women to possess their own plots, against the pressure from male farmers, was protected . . . (which) was a notable achievement in male-dominated Gambian society."¹¹ But the reregistration did not defuse the tensions of land within the household unit: rather they intensified. For the project managers, it mattered little who had title over the land, as long as the contract was fulfilled: for the Mandinka, however, title to land was as much about social relations as it was about

property. Specifically, Mandinka society distinguishes between two types of land use on family property, namely, individual fields (*kamanyango*) and collective or familial property (*maruo*). Each land use category confers specific crop rights to which specific labour claims are attached.¹² *Maruo* fields contribute directly to "collective" subsistence needs, and hence all household members are obliged to contribute labour; but the control and disposition of the collective product is under the jurisdiction of the senior man.

In return for their contributions to domestic consumption needs, the male head typically allocates land rights to junior members (sons, wives), the product of which is appropriated individually. These *kamanyango* usufructuary rights are central to the terms on which family members exchange services and labour. In other words, individual rights over land are granted to family members by the head of the household on the condition that they participate in the collective domestic economy, ensuring its survival and growth from one season to the next. Thus individual access to land

confers obligations to work for the collective project of securing the subsistence needs of the entire household. Land labour rights and obligations are inseparable. Women may also possess *kamanyango* rights in rice lands, not as a function of their marriage but as a result of clearance. The land may be theirs in perpetuity because they cleared the field — or, alternatively, inherited it from kin who themselves cleared the swamp.

This tension between individual and collective responsibilities is structurally part of the Mandinka domestic sphere and is played out annually in the pattern of labour allocation in wet season farming activities. Participation by family members in the annual provision of food for the household is determined in large measure by the distribution of property rights, that is, the ability to have access and control over land and labour.

The direct consequence of the Jahaly-Pacharr land registration was to call this whole property complex into question and led to much conflict within households. In spite of the formal registration of plots by women, some men successfully claimed that the irrigation plots were *maruo* and hence under their control. Insofar as these fields now produced substantial marketable surpluses, men gained control over a very substantial cash disposition. Second, many women had lost control of their own individual rice fields (typically inherited from their mothers) to the project and hence contested the classification of the new irrigated fields as household property. They questioned the classification and demanded compensation for the new claims over their labour exercised by men in the name of familial responsibilities. And third, even in cases in which women had



Men who were previously resistant to working in the rice fields now provide close to half the farm labour in the Jahaly-Pacharr swamps.

Michael Watts

not lost their own *kamanyango* rice fields, the unprecedented labour demands associated with contract irrigated rice production placed massive strains on the traditional division of labour and thus necessitated a renegotiation within the household of work conditions and rewards.

Land registration was thus in many respects a gloss, a papering over, of deep-rooted domestic contradictions among property, patriarchy and labour. The irrigation technologies introduced, coupled with the imposition of new cropping patterns and new relations of production, placed heavy strains on the internal social architecture of the peasant production unit — the household. The naming and classification of land and the nature of domestic labour obligations, especially between senior men and their wives, who possessed critical knowledge and skills related to rice production, were among the issues that were subject to a complex process of domestic bargaining and negotiation within the household.

... And Labour

For senior Mandinka men and project staff alike, the resolution of these domestic disputes was fundamental. The contract presupposed that the contracted growers could mobilize domestic labour promptly and efficiently, especially since the new production regime created major labour bottlenecks — particularly in November/December and May/June.¹³ But to recruit the necessary labour meant renegotiating the traditional understanding which governed labour allocation — creating yet more tensions at the household level. No customary labour arrangements existed, for example, for the new dry season crop introduced by the project — nor customs as to who should benefit from the crop. In addition, the regimented work schedules and routines laid down by the contract placed radically new labour demands on growers.

One result has been the breakdown of the traditional sexual and spatial division of labour: within the project area, rice production is no longer solely or even predominantly a female activity. Men who had previously been resistant to working the rice fields now have no option but to grow rice if the contract is to be fulfilled. Consequently, they now provide close to half the farm labour on the irrigated plots during the dry season and almost half of the labour during the rainfed cropping cycle.¹⁴ They are not only physically rooted in the lowlands in “women’s work” but are significantly diverted from upland production. Since 1984, groundnut production has fallen by 30 per cent: in practice, men are now spending at least two-thirds of

their on-farm labour time in lowland rice production from which they derive the majority of their cash income.¹⁵

Rice yields from the fully water-controlled plots in the 1984 dry season were in excess of five tons per hectare and one year later rose to close to 7.5 tons per hectare (three times greater than traditional swamp rice productivities). Furthermore, double-cropping and high-yielding varieties accounted for a substantial increase in marketed surpluses; in seven villages surveyed by the International Food Policy Institute (IFPRI), for example, 35 per cent of the total irrigated rice output was sold.¹⁶ The income effect was quite dramatic; one half-hectare plot was capable of generating between two and three times the preproject per capita income.

The increased income that has resulted from the project, combined with the breakdown of traditional rules allocating the crops grown with collective labour, has generated considerable domestic strife.



Lacking autonomy and fair compensation for their work under contract, some women have withdrawn their labour from irrigated household plots and turned traditional reciprocal work parties into work gangs for hire.

Adjusting to the Contract

What, then, were the sorts of adjustments and resolutions that emerged from the bargaining process between husbands and wives over working on, and the returns from, contract irrigated rice production? Judith Carney’s research reveals that three broad adjustments were in evidence by 1987.¹⁷ First, women provided labour on the irrigated plots and received compensation through other usufructary rights in tidal-irrigated and rainfed plots. While this reflects a maintenance of some property rights by Mandinka women — and a source of personal income — these ricelands are less productive than the irrigated fields, are often shared among several women, and confer crop rights only while the wife is resident in the compound of her husband. Resolutions of this sort typically occurred in well-to-do households which had adequate land for both subsistence and commercial needs.

Second, women were compensated for work on irrigated plots by receiving a fixed share of the rice yield. In one community, the share amounted on average to roughly 10 per cent of total paddy output. In the main, however, women received no compensation and were dispossessed.

The third, and most commonplace, adjustment was that women withdrew from domestic farming responsibilities on irrigated plots and sold their labour power or engaged in other income earning enterprises. The project thus created a local labour market; roughly 25 per cent of all irrigated farm labour is hired, typically propertyless women endeavouring to com-

compensate for their loss of rice income. Many of these women sold their labour power, however, not as individuals but as participants in traditional female age-grade, that is, nonwage, reciprocal labour networks (*kafo*), which employed customary social relations as the basis for recruitment, but in practice functioned as proletarian gang labour.¹⁸ In these households, the adjustments are especially radical because when women become *de facto* wage workers, men increasingly have to resort to the hiring-in of paid labour. Domestic tensions are deepened by the withdrawal of women's labour, which constitutes, in the eyes of a patriarch, abrogation of domestic responsibilities. It is precisely in such circumstances that domestic violence, social tension and divorce attend the withdrawal of female labour.

The variety of domestic household adjustments — sometimes women maintained land rights, sometimes they secured a share of the rice income, and sometimes neither — were the products of long and intense negotiation and struggle, a bargaining process whose consequences occasionally extended beyond the boundaries of the Mandinka household itself. The genesis of gang labour is one dramatic case in point, insofar as it engages new and politicized social forms in the name of the "traditional" collective work party.¹⁸ But there are other examples. Some women contested their loss of land rights when they got divorced by taking their cases to the local courts. More generally, women have become active voices in the project Land Allocation Committees, which provide the forum for property disputes. Further, the dissent manufactured by the project, building upon a history of domestic struggles over

swamp clearance and women's property, has, in a profound sense, put the prevailing cultural notions of patriarchy and gender to the test. Reflecting on the impact of irrigation, a woman from the Jahaly-Pacharr area referred to this changing consciousness when she observed that women "were asleep in the past (but) now we are awake."

Refashioning Perception

Almost a century and a half ago, the cultural economy of Mandinka peasants was fundamentally shaped by their rapid incorporation into the colonial economy. One of the consequences of this incorporation was a deepening of gender-specific crop production, a sexual division of labour firmly rooted in cultural, social and property relations. In the last decade, however, the relatively rigid Mandinka space-crop-gender complex has, in an uneven and complex way, once again been refashioned by a conjuncture of world forces. In this regard, the changing geography of labour allocation — where men and women work in agriculture — points to a more profound realignment of cultural and social practices, adjustments by and within the household, which call into question the very essence of local notions of what it is to be Mandinka, for men and women alike.¹⁹

This article is drawn from "Living under Contract: Work, Production Politics, and the Manufacture of Discontent in a Peasant Society" in *Reworking Modernity: Capitalisms and Symbolic Discontent* by Allan Pred and Michael John Watts, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1992. The African case study is taken from the work of Judith Carney; for more information on her work, see references below.

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3. In the early 1980s, USAID commissioned, through its Bureau of Private Enterprise, a study of agribusiness and the small farmer. Many of the case studies described contracting as a glowing testament to the notion of a "dynamic partnership" between capital and peasant producers. See: Karen, R. and Williams, S. (eds.), *Agribusiness and the Small Farmer*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1985.
4. Large public sector contract farming schemes typically have some equity holding by transnational capital, and the project may be managed by foreign agribusiness.
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11. *African Business*, January 1986, p.22.
12. Carney, J., 1988, *op. cit.* 7; Carney, J., "Contracting a Food Staple in The Gambia" in Watts, M. and Little, P. (eds.), *op. cit.* 1.
13. These periods mark the transition between dry season and wet season irrigation cycles but also correspond to the planting and harvesting periods of upland crops.
14. von Braun, J. and Webb, P., *op. cit.* 10; Carney, J., 1986, 1988, *op. cit.* 7.
15. Some women are apparently exercising claims over upland farms for individual use, and hence breaking through the barrier of sex-specific crop production. This is especially the case for women who have lost control of their individual swamp plots. In general, therefore, the deepening of male labour allocation in the lowland rice sector has a counterpoint in the gradual involvement by Mandinka women in upland production.
16. von Braun, J., "Effects of Technology and Change in Agriculture on Food Consumption and Nutrition", *World Development*, 16/9, 1988, pp.1268-83. See also von Braun, J., Puetz, D. and Webb, P., "Irrigation Technology and Commercialization of Rice in The Gambia", Research Report 75, International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington DC, 1989.
17. Carney, J., 1988, *op. cit.* 7.
18. Carney, J., 1987, *op. cit.* 7. The need for skilled paddy field labour, which women can supply, and the grower's dependency on prompt in-field operations to meet the rigorous schedules imposed by project management enable the *kafo* groups to increase their bargaining power. Working as a group, the women can transplant two plots a day, the proceeds from which total roughly 60 per cent more than the individual daily rate.
19. Richard Schroeder examines similar struggles triggered among the Mandinka by a drought-induced market-gardening boom, a sector also controlled in large measure by women. See Schroeder, R., "Shady Practice", *Economic Geography*, 69/3, 1993, pp.349-365.

Misshaping Europe

The European Round Table of Industrialists

by

Ann Doherty and Olivier Hoedeman

The European Round Table of Industrialists, a discrete body of 40 heads of European-based multinationals, is the eminence grise behind the economic integration of the 12 member countries of the European Union. With access to the top national and European decision-makers, it is influencing, if not directing, policy for the multinationals' benefit in areas as diverse as transport, education, employment, environment and the Third World.

In the 1980s, there was a dramatic change in the economic and political landscape of Europe with the introduction of the Single Market between the 12 member countries of the European Community and, more recently, the proposed European Union (EU), as outlined in the Maastricht Treaty.¹ Some of the major advocates of this European integration have been a handful of European-based multinational companies who reap the greatest benefits. Behind the scenes, these corporations are orchestrating the present and future shape of Europe.

One of their main channels of influence is a corporate lobby group called the European Round Table of Industrialists, or ERT. Membership is exclusive: approximately 40 men (no women), all Chairs or Chief Executives of large multinationals, mainly, though not exclusively, based in the European Union. Member companies include 11 of the 20 largest European companies — British Petroleum, Daimler-Benz, Fiat, Siemens, Unilever, Nestlé, Philips, Hoechst, Total, Thyssen and ICI — all of which are listed among the world's top 50 companies. In 1991, the combined sales of the 40 ERT member companies exceeded 500 billion dollars, accounting for approximately 60 per cent of total EU industrial production.²

The Origins of the ERT

In 1983, a handful of multinational business leaders created the ERT to express their concern that industry was playing an insufficient role in European policy-making.

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ing; what was urgently needed was a coalition of like-minded corporate leaders to provide input and vision to Brussels, the home of the European Commission. Umberto Agnelli of Fiat, Wisse Dekker of Philips and Pehr Gyllenhammar of Volvo were the initiators; for the first few months of its existence, the ERT's accounts were run through the spare parts division of Volvo's Paris headquarters.³ They were encouraged by Europe's Commissioner for Industry and the Internal Market, Viscount Etienne Davignon, and the Commissioner for Finance, François Xavier Ortoli. In 1986, Davignon left the Commission and joined the ERT representing the Société Générale de Belgique (a holding company which includes the largest bank in Belgium), while Ortoli joined it as President of the French oil company, Total. But bonds between the ERT and the Commission were maintained under Jacques Delors's regime. In March 1985, early in his tenure as President of the European Commission, Delors set up an "on the record" meeting with the ERT "to discuss ERT goals,"⁴ meetings which have continued at regular intervals.

Corporate Vision

The ERT has consistently striven for "effective decision-making bodies at a European level, even when implementation is better left in national and regional hands,"⁵ and has organized itself into policy groups mirroring the main issues considered by these bodies. These groups, which cover education, competition policy, infrastructure, Central and Eastern Europe, North-South issues, trade and

GATT, environment and social policy, produce reports which are eagerly received by both national governments and Brussels; there have been more than 20 of them over the past decade.

When the ERT issues a new report, the Commission jumps to attention. In 1991, ERT members sent an advance copy of its agenda for the 1990s, *Reshaping Europe*, to Commission President Jacques Delors and then arranged a series of high-level consultations with Delors and European Commissioners to discuss the contents. A press conference in December 1993 to launch the ERT's report on competitiveness in Europe, *Beating the Crisis*, was held one week before the release of the Commission's White Paper on the same subject; both events were attended by Delors.

On the national level too, ERT member companies arrange regular consultations with leading politicians: Presidents Kohl of Germany and Mitterrand of France have had regular dealings with the ERT;⁶ Dutch Ministers had several meetings with Floris Maljers of Unilever to discuss the content of *Reshaping Europe*;⁷ and, during its presidency of the European Council, the Italian government met with the ERT in May 1985 to discuss infrastructure policy.⁸

According to ERT Secretary-General Keith Richardson, "access" is the key to the ERT's success:

"Access means being able to 'phone Helmut Kohl and recommend that he read a report . . . Access also means John Major 'phoning . . . to thank the ERT for its viewpoints, or having lunch with Swedish Prime Minister just prior to the Swedish decision to apply for EC membership."⁹

This easy access to EU decision-makers stands in sharp contrast with the influence wielded by other non-governmental groups such as trade unions, small businesses and environmental groups.¹⁰ Eurogroup, a lobby group representing small businesses (a category into which 99 per cent of European firms fall) has to wait weeks for an appointment with a civil servant, and the highly-regarded, Brussels-based European Environmental Bureau has managed to meet only once in two decades with the Commission President. Other lobby groups, when questioned about the influence of the ERT, respond that the ERT is no longer a lobby group, but has become part of the EU apparatus.¹¹

This relationship between the ERT and European policy-makers over the past 10 years has, in many cases, resulted in an unmistakable influence by the ERT on European policies, most obviously in the implementation of the Single Market; in the creation of the Trans-European Network infrastructure scheme; in the restructuring of European education policy; and in the whittling away of social protection measures. The ERT is clear in its agenda:

"What industry cannot accept is that the pursuit of other objectives is used as an excuse for damaging the wealth-creating machine itself, whether by raising its costs or blocking its development. There can be no healthy society or healthy environment without a healthy economy to pay for them."¹²

This agenda is fraught with dangers for workers, students, local business, rural areas, traditional cultures, the environment and the developing world.

Pushing the Single Market

The ERT's first campaign was an attempt to accelerate the sluggish progress towards a European single market. In 1984, its report, *Europe 1990: An Agenda for Action*, ambitiously proposed a five-year plan to eliminate trade barriers, harmonize regulations and abolish fiscal frontiers. Wisse Dekker of Philips, co-drafter of the report with Umberto Agnelli of Fiat, explained the urgent need for integration:

"Only in this way can industry compete globally by exploiting economies of scale, for what will be the biggest home market in the world today, the European Community Home market."¹³

After publication, ERT members vigorously lobbied government leaders in EC countries and EC Commissioners. The strategy paid off: proposals from the ERT's *Europe 1990* were rehashed in the 1985 EC White Paper, "Completion of the Internal Market", which became the basis of the 1986 Single European Act. The only rather trivial difference between the ERT report and the White Paper was the postponement of the ERT's optimistic 1990 deadline for internal market completion to 1992. Britain's Lord Cockfield, who directed the drafting of the White Paper, has admitted that it was influenced by the ERT's action plan,¹⁴ while Jacques Delors recognized the "continuing pressure" of the ERT in a television interview in 1993, claiming that it was "one of the main driving forces behind the single market."¹⁵

ERT lobbying activities around the single market were meticulously coordinated. In 1986, the ERT founded an Internal Market Support Committee (IMSC), on the initiative of Wisse Dekker, to ensure "that the White Paper would indeed be implemented, above all, that these directives should be implemented at the national level." All of this required numerous meetings between industry and the Commission, as well as "thousands of contacts on an *ad hoc* basis" between ERT members and EC officials.¹⁶

In the Commission's eagerness to comply with industry's agenda for the single market, they ignored other EC regulations and reports, as well as the admonitions of environmental groups. For instance, in 1989, the Commission ordered an investigation into the effects of the single European market upon the environment. The resulting Task Force Report listed an ominous inventory of negative effects including large-scale waste transport, obligatory acceptance of products with less stringent controls, diminished opportunity for environmental taxes on the national level, and increased road traffic and resulting emissions. Subsequently, the European Environment Bureau issued a dire warning that:

"The internal market programme promotes cost reduction through mass production. Ecological and cultural diversity are thereby becoming eroded by the uniformity of mass production inherent to the globalized economy."¹⁷

Both these reports fell on deaf ears, or at any rate ears receptive primarily to the desires of Euro-corporations. The trium-

NAME	COMPANY (COUNTRY)
Torvil Aakvaag	Norsk Hydro(N)
Umberto Agnelli	Fiat (I)
Américo Amorim	Amorim (P)
Nigel Broackes	Trafalgar House (UK)
Jean-Louis Beffa	St Gobain (F)
Marcus Bierich	Robert Bosch (D)
Vincent Bolloré	Groupe Bolloré (F)
Yves Boël	Sofina (B)
Bertrand Collomb	LafargeCoppée (F)
François Cornélis	Petrofina (B)
Gerhard Cromme	Fried. Krupp (D)
Etienne Davignon	Sté Générale de Belg (B)
Carlo de Benedetti	Olivetti (I)
Casimir Ehrnrooth	Kymmene Corp (FIN)
Raul Gardini	Ferruzzi (I)
José Antonio Garrido	Iberdrola (E)
Fritz Gerber	Hoffmann-La Roche (CH)
Pehr Gyllenhammer	Volvo (S)
Denys Henderson	ICI (GB)
Wolfgang Hilger	Hoechst (D)
Daniel Janssen	Solvay (B)
Heinz Kriwet	Thyssen (D)
André Leysen	Gevaert (B)
Luis Magaña	CEPSA (E)
Floris Maljers	Unilever (NL)
Helmut O. Maucher	Nestlé (CH)
Maersk McKinney Møller	AP Møller (DK)
Jérôme Monod	Lyonnais des Eaux (F)
Harald Norvik	Statoil (N)
Theodore Pappalopoulos	Titan Cement (GR)
Heinrich von Pierer	Siemens (D)
Antony Pilkington	Pilkington (GB)
Edzard Reuter	Daimler-Benz (D)
Antoine Riboud	BSN (F)
Tony Ryan	GPA (IRE)
Stephan Schmidheiny	Anova AG (CH)
H M Sekyra	Austrian Industries (A)
Patrick Sheehy	BAT Industries (UK)
David Simon	British Petroleum (UK)
Poul Svanholm	Carlsberg (D)
Serge Tchuruk	Total (F)
Jan Timmer	Philips (NL)
Marco Tronchetti Provera	Pirelli (I)
Cándido Velásquez	Telefónica (E)
Lo Van Wachem	Shell (NL/UK)

A=Austria; B=Belgium; CH=Switzerland;

phant ERT member companies, with a malleable home market of 340 million consumers now secured, turned their focus to their next free market objective: the creation of "Europe's Infrastructure . . . a single interacting system or meganetwork with a single output: mobility."¹⁸

Missing Links, Missing Networks

In 1984, the ERT published *Missing Links*, outlining the grave shortcomings of European transport infrastructure which it claimed acted as a "barrier to European

A GUIDE TO 1993 ERT MEMBERS

ACTIVITIES	SUBSIDIARIES, BRANDS	COMMENT
Dams, metals, petrochem.	Fisons Fertilizers.	Norway's largest company.
Cars, aviation, robotics	Lancia, Alfa Romeo, Iveco	Part of Agnelli's "dynasty-led, government-fed" empire
Transport, haulage, agribus.	Wilkerling Ltd	One of the largest companies in Portugal
Construction, shipbuilding	Davy Co, John Brown, Cement. Intl.	Plans to build Britain's first toll motorway north of Birmingham
Glass, paper, building materials	Norton Co, TSL Group	Largest French glassmaker; criticized for asbestos production in Brazil
Car motors, electronics	Blaupunkt, BSH, Telenorma	Germany's largest supplier to the auto industry
Tobacco, shipping	Job, Zig-Zag, Seita, Philip Morris	Ship poisonous chemicals to Africa and tropical hardwoods to France
Electric utilities, waterworks	SOFILEC, REBELCO, SIDRO	Various interests in metal production and finances
Cement, building materials	Cementia Holding AG	Second largest producer of cement worldwide
Oil, petrochemicals	Sigma Coatings, Fina, Beverol	Drilling for oil in Vietnam and Siberia
Machines, electronics, telecom.	Hoesch, Moulinex, Polysius	Quarter of the shares owned by Iranian Ayatollahs
Banking	CBR Cimenteries, Gechem	Interests in finance, machines, mining, metal, chemical industry
Typewriters, computers	Acorn, Triumph Adler	Bribery charges brought against de Benedetti
Wood pulp, paper	Irvine, Caledonian paper (UK)	Largest Finnish forestry company, with mills in UK, France and Germany
Agroindustry, chemicals	Eridiana Beglin-Say, Lesieur	Gardini committed suicide in 1993 after being charged with bribery
Electricity, construction	Garona, Trillo, Almaraz	Second largest Spanish company in 1992 in turnover; involved in nuclear
Pharmaceuticals	Now called Roche holdings	Advocates of gene patents and human genetic engineering
Cars, trucks	Links to Procordia (S), Renault	Gyllenhammer toppled in 1993 after failed merger with Renault
Chemicals	Zeneca, ICI	Main UK producer of ozone-depleting chemicals
Chemicals	Schwarzkopf, Herberts GmbH	Notorious for pesticide policies, especially in the Third World
Chemicals, oil, transport, finance	Interlox, Venilia	Interlox fined £12,000 plus costs in 1993 for polluting River Mersey
Steel, motor vehicle parts	-----	Alleged to have supplied military equipment to Iraq
Film, transport, chemicals	AGFA	Owned by Bayer, alleged violator of pharmaceutical and pesticide regulations
Petroleum refining	Asfaltos Espanoles	-----
Food, household products	John West, Brooke Bond	Tropical cash crops (plantations, prawns); owns India's largest sales network
Food	Rowntree, Perrier	Boycotted because of Baby Milk sales in Third World
Shipping	Maersk Air, Roulund	-----
Utilities, transport, finance	Dumez SA, SITA, SMD, GTM	Second largest French water company; accused of corruption
Oil, petrol	Joint ventures with BP	Becoming increasingly multinational because of North Sea Oil revenues
Building materials	Intercement	Second largest Greek company
Electrical, arms, nuclear	Osram, Nixforf, Arco Solar, Plessey	Europe's biggest employer; world's fifth largest nuclear company
Glass	SOLA	Dependent on auto industry because of its automotive glass products
Cars, arms.	AEG, Messerschmidt, Dornier, MTU	Part owned by Deutsche Bank; alliances with Mitsubishi & Aerospatiale
Processed foods	HP	Trades with Third World
Airplane leasing	Pacific Aviation Group, Air Tora	Largest airplane leaser worldwide
Construction materials	Eternit, Intergips	Pioneered asbestos products
Chemicals, metal	VOEST, Agrolinz, Chemie Linz	Everything from aluminium and packaging materials to chemicals
Diversified inc. tobacco	Kent, Lucky Strike, Pall Mall	Exports 45 billion cigarettes from UK; markets in 3rd World, Asia, Russia
Oil, plastics, chemicals, mines	Gulf, Kennecott, Purina, Distillers	Globally aggressive: "Our focus is on SE Asia"
Beverages	Allied/Tetley	Tenth largest brewery worldwide
Oil, petrol	-----	Second largest French oil company; maintains links with Iraq and Burma
Electrical goods	Polygram	Affiliates in 60 countries; ex-Volvo CEO and ex-Hoechst chair on board
Tyres, cables	Standard Motor	Major sponsor of Formula One motor-racing
Communications	Links with AT&T, ENTEL	Largest Spanish company in 1992 in terms of turnover
Oil, petrol, plastics, chemicals	Billiton, Montedison	Vies with Exxon and General Motors to be "world's biggest company"

D=Germany; E=Spain; F=France; FIN=Finland; GR=Greece; I=Italy; IRE=Eire; N=Norway; NL=Netherlands; P=Portugal; UK=United Kingdom

economic and social progress." They used the implementation of the single market to argue for the speedy creation of this infrastructure. Some particularly urgent deficiencies were pinpointed: the Scan-Link bridge project linking Germany, Denmark and Sweden, high-speed trans-European train links and the Channel Tunnel.¹⁹

The ERT contributed two new arguments to the Channel debate: they suggested that it would be cost-effective if it were plugged into a European network, and that it could be funded by "Euro-shares" rather than public money. Particularly influential in the formation of

this policy was ERT member Ian MacGregor, then head of British Steel, who chaired the Euroroute consortium promoting the tunnel.²⁰ Later in 1984, MacGregor was employed by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to dismantle the British coal industry, and became the British government's major protagonist in the 1984-5 miner's strike.

Through its intensive lobbying of European transport ministers, and also the support of French Prime Minister Laurent Fabius, the ERT was astonishingly successful in introducing European power brokers to its vision of a future infrastructure. In 1985, Volvo's Pehr

Gyllenhammar could report to ERT members that the Italian government, "on behalf of all the ministers of transportation within the Community, is referring to the *Missing Links* as a master plan for European infrastructure."²¹ By the early 1990s, Scan-Link, the Channel Tunnel and the high-speed rail networks were all under construction, while the obligation to develop "trans-European networks" was being written into the Maastricht Treaty.

In its subsequent 1991 report, *Missing Networks*, the ERT's infrastructure plans are even more grandiose, including proposals for new roads through the "Alpine and Pyrenean barrier and to Eastern Eu-

rope." The ERT has also worked with six other road lobby groups in the Motorways Working Group,²² an *ad hoc* organization created to advise the Commission on the EC's 1992 Trans-European Network (TEN) programme which includes plans for 12,000 kilometres of new motorways by the year 2002, increasing the network by 32 per cent, and for spending over 124 billion ECU (US\$143 billion) in the first six years.²³

However, as if to recognize that the projected expansion of the network could never keep up with potential demand, *Missing Networks* also advocates the introduction of "user charges . . . to distribute the existing scarce transport resources more rationally" and "to generate funds for improving effective capacity". In effect, this means privately-built toll roads, affordable only by wealthier motorists, in particular company cars. In September 1992, a leading article in *The Economist* — part of which bears a striking resemblance to a passage in *Missing Networks* comparing traffic congestion to Russian shopping queues — argued vigorously for a road-pricing policy to stimulate investment in infrastructure.²⁴ A few months later, both Britain and Germany announced that they would be introducing private toll motorways.

Missing Networks also promises the creation of a new organization "for prospective analysis on infrastructure" which would "place infrastructure at the top of the European political agenda" and "act as a friendly watchdog over European, national and municipal authorities". Such a body has now appeared — the European Centre for Infrastructure Studies (ECIS). Founding members, personally solicited by Fiat's Agnelli, include corporations, government officials and research institutes. The claims of ECIS to provide "a background of unbiased and broadly accessible assessment,"²⁵ are highly suspect, given the ERT's wish to "accelerate the construction of Trans-European infrastructure networks — with greater political determination [and] a commitment to more resources."

Lifelong Learning

Education is another area where the ERT has pushed its corporate agenda. The 1989 ERT publication, *Education and European Competence*, complains mainly about the inadequacy of the European educational system in preparing "human resources" for industry. It advocates a

major overhaul of education and condemns the present system which "allows and even encourages its young individuals to take the liberty of pursuing 'interesting', not directly job-related studies which in many cases have little prospect of practical application."²⁶ The ineptitudes of Europe in the field of education are compared with more streamlined systems in Japan and the US.

Industry cannot accept the pursuit of other objectives used as an excuse for damaging the wealth-creating machine itself.

The ERT has several remedies. One recommendation is the greater involvement of industrialists in education, including positions on the administrative bodies of educational institutions, and "participation in the development of the curricula and other teaching tools."²⁷ A second is that "in order to make university and college education more related to the world of work, it is desirable that teachers and professors should have working experience in industry."²⁸ And a third remedy is "lifelong learning" — regular training to keep up with technological change — in order for European industry to maintain competitiveness.

Since the Maastricht Treaty, the field of education has been formally assigned as a competence of the European Union. In 1991, the EC Memorandum on Higher Education was published, a document with striking similarities to the arguments for educational reform provided by the ERT. According to the Memorandum, not only should cooperation between higher educational institutes and industry increase, but in addition academic structures and methods should be adapted to facilitate this partnership. The concept of lifelong learning also rears its head, with the goal of rehabilitating workers who are no longer "useful" for the labour market.

These parallels between ERT brainstorms and EU policy in the area of education are no coincidence. The Memorandum was prepared in a series of workshops and conferences in which ministries, industry and a select number of representatives from higher education were invited. No students were involved. The same exclusivity was exemplified at a meeting in December 1993 of the ERT working group on education to discuss

the draft version of a new report *Reshaping European Education*. Participants included senior representatives from Petrofina, Hoffman LaRoche and Société Générale de Belgique, members of the EU Commission, and representatives from the administrations of the Universities of Dublin, Brussels and Louvain. Such collaborations are likely to result in the sacrifice of academic freedom, diversity and objectivity to a single-minded drive for industrial efficiency and output.

Social Protection

The basic message of the ERT with respect to labour is that "financing social security must not be allowed to become an obstacle to economic growth."²⁹ In its several reports dealing with employment and social security, it claims that the labour market is too rigid in areas including hiring and firing laws, regulation of working hours, minimum wage regulations, and even housing policies. Again, the ERT seeks "flexibility" in the labour market: workers that can be shuttled around Europe, flexible hours, seasonal contracts, job sharing and part-time work. All of these arrangements indicate the rootless employment practices of transnational plants, which are prone to spontaneous relocation depending upon the most profitable operating conditions. The Round Table also wishes to exclude workers from corporate decision-making for fear that they will jeopardize "the local flexibility needed to compete in an international market."

In December 1993, seven years after the publication of *Making Europe Work* (a relatively long period given the speed with which other ERT demands have gained political respectability), the European Commission presented a White Paper on "Growth, Competitiveness and Employment: The Challenges and Ways Forward into the 21st Century". Flexibility is a key word in the text, paving the way for the removal of social protections.

The European Trade Union Confederation reacted swiftly and angrily to the White Paper, deploring the "short-sighted and counter-productive measures . . . which sometimes go as far as cutting wages, making it easier to sack people, reducing employment benefits, and even attacking basic trade union rights."³⁰ The opinions of the labour movement, however, have attracted far less attention from European decision-makers than those of big business.

Disagreements about Free Trade . . .

Despite the smooth facade represented by the ERT's glossy reports, internal dissension has not been unknown to the group; conflict has arisen in particular around the thorny issues of protectionism versus unfettered free marketism. In the 1980s, the outlook of member companies was predominantly protectionist, defensive against imports from other trade blocs, and dependent on a strong European state.³¹

Evidence of this tendency can be gleaned by examining the changes in membership; early drop-outs included the more globally-oriented, deregulatory-inclined companies, Shell, Unilever and ICI. The "Europrotectionist" approach also grated with some politicians including Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the only political leader of a major European country who refused to meet the ERT.³²

However, in recent years, clear transformations in both the strategy and the membership of the ERT can be discerned. In part, the ERT's new, more globally aggressive, freemarket approach can be attributed to the merger of the ERT with the "Groupe des Presidents", an elite industrialists' dining club which, according to former member Floris Maljers of Unilever, grouped together "more liberals than protectionists".³³ The merger encouraged Shell, Unilever and ICI to return to the fold — indeed Maljers is now one of ERT's vice-chairs. Furthermore, the headquarters of the ERT moved from Paris (where policy tended to be infiltrated by strongly nationalist French firms) to Brussels, "symbolizing the development of a symbiotic relationship between the ERT and the Commission over the years, involving close and intense mutual consultation supported by a network of personal contacts."³⁴ Given the current globalization of capital and industry, and the potential access to developing markets, it seems likely that the ERT will maintain this neo-liberal posture.

. . . and the Environment

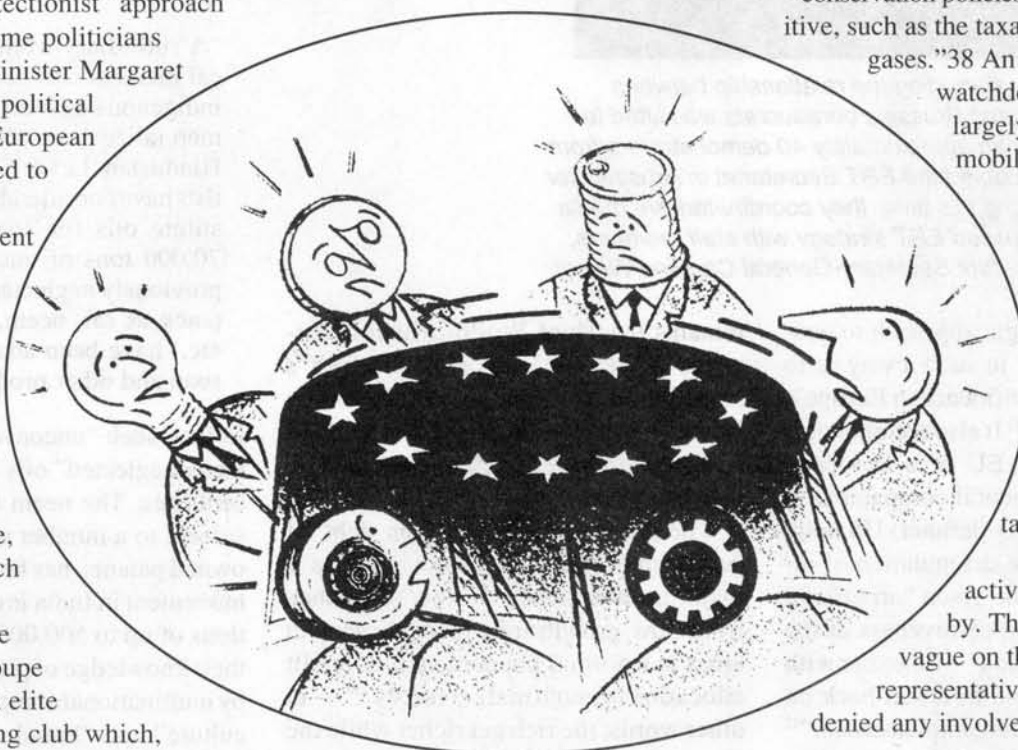
Internal disputes have also arisen over environmental policy. In recent months, billionaire Stephan Schmidheiny, head of the Swiss company, Anova, (whose "Eternit" products have provided the French language with its word for asbestos sheeting) has defected from the ERT.

Schmidheiny is well-known in environmental and development circles for his collaboration with 1992 UNCED "Earth Summit" Secretary-General Maurice Strong in creating the Business Council for Sustainable Development (BCSD) in 1990. The goal of the BCSD — which boasted among its supporters industrial giants such as DuPont, Dow Chemical, Ciba Geigy, Asea Brown

piecemeal approach of many existing programmes that seek to control polluters through punitive measures."³⁶ This unsubtle praise was probably viewed by the BCSD as harmful to its carefully-cultivated green image. Since, according to Schmidheiny's assistant, "the ERT is acting like an industry lobby, but not always in harmony with the BCSD philosophy," Schmidheiny's desertion is not surprising.³⁷

The ERT's approach to the environment is more muted, although it has made some of its views on environmental policy clear, preferring voluntary adherence to vague codes of conduct rather than enforcement of taxation methods. "We recommend energy efficiency, which has several advantages over other energy-conservation policies, many of them punitive, such as the taxation of green-house gases."³⁸ An ERT environmental watchdog group, composed largely of chemical, automobile and oil companies (Pilkington, British Petroleum, Pirelli,

Thyssen, Fiat, Petrofina, Hoechst, Volvo and Solvay, for example) is rumoured to be formulating a reaction to a proposed EU energy tax, although information on the group's activities is hard to come by. The ERT Secretariat is vague on this subject while the representative of Philips recently denied any involvement in the group.³⁹



Boveri, Chevron, and ERT members Daimler Benz and Norsk Hydro — was "to provide a business perspective on sustainable development for the UNCED conference".³⁵ The BCSD became famous during the UNCED process for ensuring that language supporting the regulation of transnational corporations was cut from final declarations. In many ways, the BCSD resembles the ERT except that it cloaks all of its activities in "greenwash" — unsubstantiated babble about the necessity of unregulated free trade in ensuring "sustainable development", and glowing accolades of the environmental achievements of member companies.

In *Reshaping Europe*, the ERT commended the "powerful idea" of the BCSD, which "can replace entirely the

Looking Ahead

In the near future, the ERT is likely to concentrate its activities in several fields. Firstly, its involvement in the monetary union is likely to be intensified, particularly in hastening its implementation. "Japan has one currency," bleats the ERT, "The US has one currency. How can the Community live with twelve?"⁴⁰ A precedent in this area has already been set; the timetable for fiscal union presented in *Reshaping Europe* was snapped up a few months later by the Commission and published in the Maastricht Treaty.

Secondly, in its December 1993 report *Beating the Crisis*, the ERT proposes a "Charter for Industry" and proposes that the European Council formally adopts an



The veil of secrecy shrouding the relationship between European industry and Brussels bureaucrats was lifted in December 1993 when approximately 40 demonstrators from all over Europe occupied the ERT Secretariat in Brussels for several hours. During this time, they coordinated live media coverage and discussed ERT strategy with staff members, including ERT Assistant Secretary-General Caroline Walcot.

outline for a "strategic approach to economic recovery . . . in such a way as to give industry full confidence in Europe's political direction."⁴¹ It also recommends the creation by the EU of a European Competitiveness Council comparable to a similar (but recently defunct) US body set up to oversee the deregulation of industry. This would be given "an official mandate to keep competitiveness at the top of the policy agenda" — together with infrastructure — "and to report back on how the Charter is being implemented."⁴²

Enlargement of the Union to include aspiring member countries from Eastern Europe is a third likely target for future ERT lobbying. "The West gave a lead to inspire Eastern Europe along the path towards democracy and free market economics. We cannot now refuse to help. The Community must open up to its neighbours."⁴³ The deeper motivations are also candidly explained: a bigger market for goods and services, with up to 200 million "new" customers, and "access to natural resources, including fuels, minerals and land, which are generally in short supply in Western Europe".⁴⁴

Global Reach

But the largest potential market and source of raw materials for European industry

remains the Third World, which is surveyed in the 1993 report of the ERT's North-South working group (chaired by Nestlé head Helmut Maucher) entitled *European Industry: a Partner of the Developing World*.

The \$100 billion per year debt of developing countries is not seen as a major problem since "a flow of finance from slow-growth areas to higher growth areas is a normal phenomenon of credit allocation through market forces"⁴⁵ — in other words, the rich get richer while the poor get poorer. Nonetheless, the aggregate of people burdened by this debt are characterized as "a vast potential in non-saturated markets." The report is peppered with tempting illustrations of these markets: for example, "two-thirds of any increase in world demand for cars . . . will come from Asia in the next few years."⁴⁶

The ERT's approach to these markets is unabashedly partisan and aggressive:

"Adopting a global perspective . . . will help us manage our companies in an environment where our markets, our financing and our investment are increasingly to be found in new regions of the world . . . We must learn to compete globally, or risk being pushed aside by competitors who do."⁴⁷

The competitors that the ERT is most worried about are the US and, more especially, Japan, which doubled its share of investment in the Third World between 1980 and 1991, while the EC's share dropped by six per cent. But it also acknowledges that the real losers are likely to be smaller businesses in the South. It encourages "rivalry between domestic companies as well as between domestic and foreign companies (and no nursing of national champions)."⁴⁸ "Multinational companies", the ERT insists, "are champions of brand-oriented marketing, and they introduce the culture related to it wherever they become active."⁴⁹

The ERT's brazen contempt for Third World culture, epitomized by the importance it attaches to "brands", is at times staggering:

"A subsidiary well-rooted in the local markets will be able to mobilize indigenous resources and to commercialize them with a strong brand. Hindustan Lever (Unilever) scientists have considerably advanced substitute oils for soap-making. Over 70,000 tons of unconventional and previously neglected indigenous oils (such as sal, neem, kusum, karanja etc.) have been adapted for making soap and other products."⁵⁰

In fact, such "unconventional and previously neglected" oils have been used for centuries. The neem tree, which is now subject to a number of US and Japanese owned patents, has become a symbol of a movement in India involving demonstrations of up to 500,000 farmers, irate that their knowledge of plants is being pirated by multinational companies.⁵¹ The "brand culture" and "brand-oriented economy" which the ERT champions is at root a device for taking locally produced commodities out of the hands of ordinary people and placing them at the disposal of a multinationally-controlled hierarchy, from whose ranks will emerge the crucial new market for cars and similar ERT products.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the ERT has been an ardent supporter of the recent negotiations of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which started in Uruguay in 1986. As ERT Assistant Secretary-General Caroline Walcot said in October 1993:

"We are very, very firm believers in the Uruguay Round; we believe it must be completed, and the ERT has individually [and] together, different members together [and] as a group,

we have spoken to everybody, we've made press statements, we've written to Prime Ministers, we've done everything we can think of to try and press for the end of the Uruguay Round."⁵²

Bypassing Democracy

The ERT courts publicity selectively, seeking to publicize their views rather than themselves and their influence as a lobby organization. Within one month of the 1984 publication of *Missing Links*, over 90 articles about European infrastructure appeared in the European press, while the 1993 publication of *Beating the Crisis* evoked articles concerning the need for "efficiency" in the workplace and "flexibility" of the labour force in various European newspapers. Rarely has a critical word been written in the mainstream European media about the ERT or its policies. This one-sided and complimentary coverage results from close connections that the ERT has fostered with select members of the press including jour-

nalists from the *Financial Times*, *The Economist*, *Le Monde*, *Sud Deutsche Zeitung*, *De Standaard*, *La Repubblica* and *Der Spiegel*.

It is only recently that environmental and social activists have become aware how much of what is now taken for granted as the policy and the vocabulary of European economic and political integration has been formed by a handful of organizations that stand to profit. At a recent demonstration at the ERT's headquarters in Brussels, British activist Kate Geary stated:

"The ERT is not comparable with the other lobbying groups at Brussels. Through its personal contacts, it is setting the agenda for Europe. The problem is not so much the ERT, as the fact that the EC is still highly undemocratic."

The ERT's response to activists who have thrown down the gauntlet and challenged the groups on its operations and its secrecy can be gleaned from *Missing Networks*:

"The increasingly effective organization of those arguing for environmental citizens' rights must be matched by a more effective organization of the advocates of change, adaption and growth."⁵³

It remains to be seen whether the knights of the European Round Table will pursue their battle against citizens' rights in the public arena; or whether they will simply carry on whispering into the ear of compliant politicians.

A SEED Europe has published two critical reports about the ERT, *Misshaping Europe* and *Boosting the Crisis*, available for £5 each, including postage and packing, from A SEED Europe, Postbus 92066, 1090 AB Amsterdam, THE NETHERLANDS.

A 20-minute video about the ERT, *dERTy business*, is available from Small World Media Ltd, 1a Waterlow Road, London N19 9JF, UK. Fax: 071-272 9243. Price: institutions £21.50; individuals and groups £9.50; students £5.50.

ERT publications are available free from ERT, Avenue Henri Jaspar 113, B-1060 Brussels, BELGIUM.

Notes and References

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2. ERT, *Reshaping Europe*, Brussels, 1991, p.2.
3. Green, M. L., "The Politics of Big Business in the Single Market Program", paper presented at the European Community Studies Association, Third Biennial Conference, 27 May 1993, Washington, DC, p.16. The ERT members who wield the greatest influence are the founding members and are also from the largest and most globally-oriented companies of the group. The number of ERT members fluctuates frequently, but floats between 40 and 45. When heads of companies leave the group, new ones are recruited, but former members often retain close links with ERT. For example, Shell is no longer an official member of the ERT but still participates actively in working groups. For example, it contributed to the 1993 ERT report *European Industry: A Partner of the Developing World; Foreign Direct Investment as a Tool for Economic Development and Cooperation — Suggestions for Future Improvements*.
4. Ibid., p.35.
5. ERT, *Beating the Crisis*, Brussels, 1993, p.1
6. Green, M., op. cit. 3, p.33.
7. van Apeldoorn, B., and Holman, O., "Transnational Class Strategy and the Relaunching of European Integration: The Role of the European Round Table of Industrialists", paper presented at the 35th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Washington, DC, 28 March—1 April, 1994, p.21.
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11. Ibid.
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13. A SEED Europe, *Misshaping Europe*, Amsterdam, 1993, p.11.
14. van Apeldoorn, B., and Holman, O., op. cit. 7, pp.10-11.
15. ERT Brochure, September 1993.
16. van Apeldoorn, B., and Holman, O., op. cit. 7, p.11.
17. A SEED Europe, op. cit. 13, p.12.
18. ERT, *Missing Networks*, Brussels, 1991, p.17.
19. See Bower, C., "Europe's Motorways: The Drive for Mobility", *The Ecologist*, Vol. 23, No. 4, July/August 1993, pp.125-131.
20. Green, M., op. cit. 3, p.18-19.
21. Gyllenhammer, P., letter to Hans Merkle, Chair of the German engineering company, Bosch, quoted in Green, M., op. cit. 3.
22. The Motorway Working Group is composed of several road and industry lobby groups as well as EC Commissioners.
23. Since Pehr Gyllenhammer's departure from Volvo earlier this year, he has been personally recruited by EU Commissioner Martin Bangemann to join a special Commission working group (which includes ERT members Carlo de Benedetti of Olivetti, Jan Timmer of Philips and Heinrich von Pierer of Siemens), to implement the Trans-European Networks.
24. "The Case for Central Planning," *The Economist*, 12 September 1992, p.13.
25. ERT, European Centre for Infrastructure Studies, brochure. ECIS annual membership fees begin at 2,500 ECU (US\$2,890). Based in Rotterdam, the Secretariat hopes to support at least 15 staff in the near future.
26. ERT, *Education and European Confidence*, Brussels, 1989, p.4.
27. Ibid., p.8.
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29. ERT, *Reshaping Europe*, op. cit. 2, p.25.
30. European Trade Union Confederation, Preliminary European Trade Union Confederation contribution to the Commission White Paper, Brussels, 1993, p.4.
31. van Apeldoorn, B., and Holman, O., op. cit. 7, p.12.
32. Green, M., op. cit. 3, p.34..
33. van Apeldoorn, B., and Holman, O., op. cit. 7, p.19. Shell has since left the ERT. See reference 3.
34. Ibid., p.15.
35. BCSD Annual Report, Geneva, 1993.
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37. Personal communication, 14 March 1994.
38. ERT, *Reshaping Europe*, op. cit. 2, p.33.
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40. ERT, *Reshaping Europe*, op. cit. 2, p.46. ERT member Etienne Davignon, chair of Société de Générale de Belgique and former EEC Commissioner for Industry, is chair of another lobbying group, the ECU Banking Association, which is seeking fast implementation of European Monetary Union. See *De Financieel Economische Tijd*, 18 June 1994.
41. ERT, *Reshaping Europe*, op. cit. 2, p.49.
42. Ibid., p.48.
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44. Ibid., p.48.
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46. Ibid., p.7.
47. E. Reuter of Daimler-Benz, quoted in *ibid*, p.8, original emphasis.
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RISC/Dave Richards

The Political Economy of Tourism

by

Anita Pleumarom

Over the past few decades, tourism has been promoted through aid finance as a way of integrating communities and countries into the global market economy. Most countries in the world now sell their culture, society and natural environment for consumption by visitors.

Attempts to mitigate the adverse effects of this industry on marginalized people and the environment through "eco" or "sustainable" tourism do not take into account the roles that the industry and its supporters play in perpetuating structures of domination.

People have embarked on pilgrimages, adventure tours, trading voyages and military expeditions for centuries. But travel as a leisure activity is relatively new. Mass commercial tourism began only after the Second World War.¹ Most of this travel was within and between North America and Western Europe, until the advent of high-speed, wide-bodied airplanes in the 1970s brought Third World destinations within easy reach of large numbers of people. By the mid-1970s, some eight per cent of all tourists were people from the North travelling on holiday to Third World countries, a figure which had more than doubled to 17 per cent a decade later.² According to the World Tourist Organization, annual international tourist arrivals are expected to reach 937 million by the year 2010, almost doubling the 500 million registered in 1993.

This boom in tourism has often been attributed to the fact that "an increasing number of people seek to escape from urban environments which they find op-

pressive and dehumanizing".³ But it is also the result of political and economic conditions and demands systematically created by international agencies such as the World Bank, together with national governments. Without the substantial involvement of such agencies, tourism would not have grown so phenomenally — nor caused such immense and partly irreversible social and environmental damage.

Tourism as Development

The "development" of "underdeveloped areas" required more than capital input and technology transfer. Cultures too had to be reconciled with economic competition and integration. Tourism provided a means to achieve both.

When Third World countries faced obstacles such as unstable commodity prices on the world markets or quotas on the export of manufactured goods exported to the First World, tourism was billed as "a useful element in diversifying . . . sources of foreign exchange and for some, one of the few export opportunities available".⁴

Dispatching large numbers of people from the North to the South was also seen as a way of helping instil modern values in traditional societies. As activist Cynthia Enloe says, "Tourism is as much ideology as physical movement. It is a package of ideas about industrial, bureaucratic life. It is a set of presumptions about manhood, education and pleasure".⁵ Small wonder that:

"international technocrats express such satisfaction when a government announces that it plans to promote tourism as one of its major industries. For such a policy implies a willingness to meet the expectations of those foreigners who want political stability, safety and congeniality when they travel. A government which decides to rely on money from tourism for its development is a government which has decided to be internationally compliant".⁶

Many Third World governments responded positively to tourism development because it brought access to foreign currency, investment potential, planning, technology, infrastructure and enhanced prestige in exchange for readily available

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resources — sun, sea, sand, exotic cultures, beautiful environments and wildlife. In many cases, however, they were offered “tourism or nothing”.⁷

Development Aid

The first tourism-related loan allocated by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private-lending arm of the World Bank, was \$2.9 million in 1967 for a hotel in Kenya, managed and part-owned by the Inter-Continental Hotel Corporation, a subsidiary of the US airline, Pan Am.⁸ Thereafter, the World Bank became the major financier of tourism-related projects. Between 1969 and 1979, it supported 24 tourism projects in 18 countries with loans and credits from the International Development Association (IDA) totalling some \$450 million. These included huge resort developments along the Mediterranean coast, on the Black Sea in Romania and Bulgaria, and in Tunisia, Thailand, Mexico and the Caribbean.⁹

Since the United Nations' declaration of 1967 as “The Year of the Tourist”, other UN agencies such as UNDP, UNESCO, UNCTAD, UNEP and ILO have financed and assisted tourism research, feasibility studies, master plans, education and training programmes and the preservation and restoration of historic sites for tourism.¹⁰

Mounting criticism, however, of Bank-funded tourism projects,¹¹ led to the Bank's loaning money for infrastructure such as airport and road construction rather than specific tourist facilities, although the link with tourism was usually clear. In its 1990 annual report, for instance, the Bank states that “through a [\$7.5 million IDA loan] to upgrade Male airport, the revenue-generating capacity of the tourist industry will be maintained and the basis provided for its continued growth”.

The regional development banks also tend to support tourism through funding transportation. For example, in August 1993, the Asian Development Bank began supporting five new road projects linking the major cities of Thailand, Burma, South China, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia to boost trade and tourism within the region.

Since the 1960s, the World Bank has also encouraged Third World countries, particularly those with large foreign debts, to attract foreign investment in tourism

Green tourism owes more to labelling and marketing than to any profound change in the organization, basic values or power patterns of the industry.

by providing fiscal concessions and promotional privileges. The Dominican Republic, Mexico, Turkey, Puerto Rico, Haiti, Nepal and the Gambia have all pursued tourism in the hope of lessening their debt burden, as have countries such as Cuba, Tanzania, North Korea, Vietnam and Nicaragua, which “previously were most dubious about [tourism] as a route to genuine development”.¹² Clearly in the 1990s, “the international politics of debt and the international pursuit of pleasure have become tightly knotted together”.¹³

“Alternative” Tourism

In fact, the economic benefits of tourism have been substantially overestimated. Numerous studies have pointed out the high “foreign exchange leakage” of tourism-generated income; as much as two-thirds of the money tourists spend goes to foreign-owned tour operators, airlines, hotels and pays for imported food and drink.¹⁴ Little money goes to local people who tend to be employed in the lower-paid and menial tourist jobs and bear the brunt of the adverse impacts, including disrespectful tourist behaviour, increased prostitution, the erosion of cultural and spiritual values, and extensive environmental degradation.¹⁵

Under pressure to address such concerns, some sectors of the industry began to offer “alternative” tourism in the 1970s, catering for an “alternative” traveller seeking intimate but “non-destructive” contact with foreign cultures and environments. This “niche” market took on a mass form in the early 1980s as “alternatives” such as hideaways on paradise islands — Phuket in Thailand, Bali in Indonesia and the Pacific Islands — and “ethnic-tourism” like trekking in Nepal and northern Thailand were actively promoted. Fashionable and lucrative, particularly among Europeans and North Americans, the search for “authenticity”

quickly superseded concern for the impacts of tourism on the host society or economy.¹⁶ Looking for places “untouched” or “unvisited” by other Westerners, “alternative” backpack and adventure tourism only served to open up many destinations “off the beaten track” to mass tourism, accelerating the pace of social and environmental degradation in host communities. Goa, which has since become a major tourist destination with international hotels for foreigners and wealthy Indians, was one of the places “discovered” by these travellers. Similar developments took place in Kathmandu, Bali, Phuket and Chiang Mai.

Tourism's Common Future

By the late 1980s, environmental concerns and their integration into “sustainable development” pressured the tourism industry to make another shift in the way it promoted itself and its products. The hotel industry boasted “environmentally-friendly” construction and management.¹⁷ International and national travel organizations created environment awards for “ecologically-friendly” tourism projects and published codes of ethics on “responsible” tourism, emphasizing “low-impact sightseeing . . . that brings benefits to the local communities”.¹⁸

British Airways, for example, now presents a Tourism for Tomorrow Award; the “global category” was most recently awarded to a British organization, Coral Cay Conservation, which aims to protect the Belizean barrier reef. Chair of British Airways Colin Marshall said:

“Let all of us in travel and tourism recognize that, when it comes down to it, our business is essentially the renting out, for short-term lets, of other people's environments, whether that is a coastline, a city, a mountain range or a rainforest. These ‘products’ must be kept fresh and unsullied not just for the next day, but for every tomorrow”.¹⁹

Eco-Terrorism

Many tourism companies in North and South have also promoted “green”, “nature” or “eco”-tourism so as to diversify into new “products”, such as walking, mountaineering, mountain-bike riding, skiing, canoeing or rafting in a strategy reminiscent of earlier “adventure” tour-

ism.²⁰ In 1991, nearly 500 US tour companies offered trips with an environmental theme, mostly to Third World destinations.²¹ With an annual growth rate of 25 to 30 per cent, eco-tourism is the fastest growing segment of the travel industry in the United States²² and now accounts for some 10 per cent of international travel for pleasure.²³

Yet, as Virginia Hadsell of the US Center for Responsible Tourism points out, "many tour operators are simply putting 'eco' in front of what they've always been doing without changing at

Likewise, in Belize, much "eco-tourism" replicates the characteristic problems of conventional mass tourism. For example, without informing local people, the government secretly made a deal with a Mississippi entrepreneur to build a \$1 billion resort on Ambergris Caye, an island rich in wildlife and Mayan artefacts; the "integrated and ecologically sound resort development" covering some 20,000 acres, two-thirds of the island, included luxury hotels, condominiums, duty-free shopping, golf courses and polo fields.²⁹

identifying geographically-isolated places with fragile and vulnerable ecosystems and cultures in Africa, Indonesia, the Amazon, Central America and the Himalayas so as to turn them into nature reserves and national parks for conservation and eco-tourism.

Conservation groups are backed by the World Bank, which has renewed its interest in tourism in the name of "sustainable development" and "biodiversity protection" by funding a growing number of projects through its Global Environment Facility (GEF) (see Box, p.145). USAID is also active in funding eco-tourism: recently it announced its support for a biodiversity support programme — which mandates enterprise-based activities such as eco-tourism — for the Asia-Pacific region, led by a consortium of WWF, the Nature Conservancy and WRI.³¹ The designation of such biodiversity reserves as "global commons", however, has reinforced the belief that everyone has an equal right of access to them.

People or Parks?

In most cases, eco-tourism projects that seek to preserve biodiversity rely on "ring-fencing" particular areas, either literally or by policing the area, from the outside world. Too often this has been done at the expense of the environment itself and of local people who rely on the area for their livelihood. Many of the problems emerging from such projects are similar to those that have been apparent for many years in national parks set up in the 1950s.

With the establishment of biodiversity protection-cum-tourism conservation projects, people living in the area tend to lose their homes and means of livelihood. Rather than accepting community rights to use and manage natural resources, such projects often regard local people as ignorant of and responsible for the destruction of their environment.

This clash of conservation-versus-people has become particularly common in Africa, as Western conservation concepts are imposed through US-style national parks, local people expelled, and the forests kept for the tourists. In Namibia, bushmen either had to leave a 6,000 square kilometre nature reserve in Eastern Bushmanland or pose as a tourist attraction.³² In Botswana, the Basarwa people in the central Kalahari Desert were resettled to make way for an eco-tourist project,³³ while in the Okavango delta,



With the gradual takeover of their grazing grounds in Kenya, many of the once nomadic Maasai cannot find enough land on which to graze their cattle and end up herding them along roads. Posing for tourist photographs is another means of making a living.

all".²⁴ The US Adventure Travel Society is more direct: "Economics is the engine that powers the vehicle of eco-tourism."²⁵

Costa Rica has been called the top eco-tourism destination in the world²⁶ with protected conservation areas, including reserves for indigenous peoples, covering almost 30 per cent of the country in 1990.²⁷ Large-scale tourist complexes have sprung up all over the country in the drive to make tourism Costa Rica's top source of foreign exchange. Maurice Strong — organizer of the 1992 UNCED "Earth Summit" and president of the Eco Institute, an NGO in Costa Rica which promotes "sustainable tourism" — was accused in May 1992 of illegally establishing a \$35 million luxury beach resort in a protected nature reserve, set aside for the Bribri and Cabecar indigenous people, who were not informed of the development until construction was nearly finished. An adviser to the natural resources ministry held that this was "not even tourism — just land speculation".²⁸

When another US developer used explosives to blow a 50-foot hole in a section of coral reef to allow easier boat access to his island resort, angry Belizeans talked about "eco-terrorism" rather than eco-tourism.³⁰

Biodiversity Protection

The tourism-as-development language of UNCED has also led to an emerging alliance between the tourist industry and the mainstream conservation movement. By supposedly providing the revenue to protect threatened ecosystems and conserve biodiversity, eco-tourism is being promoted as a means of "giving nature value" and hence of achieving "sustainable development". Without challenging the development process itself, organizations such as the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the World Resources Institute (WRI) are now

Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Tourism

The absurdities of tourism-as-development policies are clearly illustrated by a GEF loan to **Egypt**. Unless "immediate action" is taken, states the World Bank, "it is likely that the [coral] reefs will continue to be 'loved to death'" by tourists. Yet the Bank decided in December 1992 to allocate \$130 million of GEF funds to support the tourism industry in Egypt along the Red Sea coast — and an additional \$4.75 million to protect the coral reefs. The project, to be implemented by the Egypt Tourism Development Authority, includes infrastructure for three luxury tourism complexes with accommodation for more than 10,000 tourists and 5,000 employees.

In the **Seychelles**, the World Bank allocated \$4.5 million for an Environment and Transport project, together with \$1.8 million in GEF funds. Resource management accounts for 25 per cent of the budget and biodiversity conservation and marine pollution control for 26 per cent. The largest tranche, however, 39 per cent, was allocated for transport to "improve the basis for sustained tourism growth by facilitating tourist access" and will include the pavement of main roads on Praslin Island, resurfacing the runway and expanding parking provision at Praslin airport, and preparing and implementing a road traffic safety plan on the main island, Mahe.

A five-year Conservation Training and Biodiversity Action Plan began in November 1992 in **Vietnam** with UNDP administering the \$3 million GEF input. The Plan aims to conserve the country's forest through a system of protected areas, community and buffer zones, reforestation and promotion of sustainable use of living resources

outside protected areas. As poor villagers, including minority peoples in the mountain areas, are considered a main threat to the effort, the Plan includes income-generating projects such as growing medicinal plants for sale, deer-farming and eco-tourism, so that they do not rely on the forest for their livelihood.

In **Belize**, the government has announced that a \$3 million GEF grant will be used to establish a marine management system for the country's fragile 185-mile long barrier reef, the longest in the Western hemisphere.

GEF will provide \$20 million and the World Bank an estimated \$48 million towards a massive \$93 million Conservation Forest Area Protection, Management and Development Project in **Thailand**. The area will cover forests on the Thai-Burmese border including the Thung Yai and Huay Kha Kaeng wildlife sanctuaries, where the Thai military clashes frequently with the Burmese army and with members of the Karen ethnic minority. The area was designated a World Heritage Site in 1991 to prevent the flooding of the forest by the proposed Nam Choan hydroelectric dam. In consequence, however, the Karen, who have lived there for hundreds of years, are now regarded as a threat to the sanctuaries' biological diversity. World Bank representatives have already discussed the relocation of villages from proposed conservation areas where "no human activities would be allowed". As sanctuary ranger Karen Tai Sa comments ironically, "We have our ancestors to blame for our predicament. If they had not protected these forests over so many centuries, we would not be threatened with eviction today".

local people have been prevented from planting, hunting and gathering wood on land set aside for eco-tourists.³⁴ In Rwanda, residents of land designated for "gorilla tourism" have been branded "poachers".³⁵ In Uganda's Kibale Forest, forest dwellers have been threatened by eviction to make way for "chimpanzee tourists".³⁶

In South Africa, the Kosy Bay area of rich wetlands, beaches and coral reefs in Natal province was designated as a nature reserve in 1988. Now the Kwa Zulu government, the Natal conservation authority, the South African Tourist Corporation, private investors, international travel agencies and WWF have joined forces to implement an intensive "ecological rehabilitation programme". Local people and refugees from neighbouring war-struck Mozambique are to be forced out to protect wildlife — and to establish luxury accommodation, "bush-suites" and private airports for tourists. One old man said:

"Where do these people take the right to make money out of our land? We don't want compensation, we want our land. I've lived here for more

than 80 years... Until now, we could kill a snake when it devoured our animals or a hippo when it destroyed our fields. But what is this now, where hippos have all rights, and we have none? They say they want to protect nature. But aren't people also part of God's nature?"³⁷

Despite offers of compensation, most people have not moved. Electric barbed wire fences have been erected around the whole project area and armed guards posted at the entrance gates. Special permits are needed to visit local residents who have in effect become prisoners. According to a report of a rural development NGO involved in the area:

"Kwa Zulu's new tourism strategy... excludes the local population from any profits from tourism and results in increased resistance which ranges from tearing down the reserve's fences to attacks on tourists".³⁸

Ironically, given that parks are intended to protect nature, resistance by local people to their exclusion from areas over which they have traditional rights has, in some cases, resulted in accelerated environmental destruction. For example, in

India, local people's resentment at national parks legislation and enforcement agencies has caused some villagers to set fire to large areas of national parks.

"This kind of 'incendiarism' has occurred in... the Nagarhole National Park in South India which displaced the Bette Kurumbas and Jen Kurumbas peoples to establish a tiger sanctuary, where some 20 square kilometres of forest were recently burned after wildlife guards were accused of killing a poacher."³⁹

Tourism as "Sustainable Development"

Although there have been some innovative attempts to involve local people in eco-tourism and conservation projects — the Annapurna Conservation Area Project in Nepal and CAMPFIRE (Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources) in Zimbabwe are oft-cited examples — their involvement has generally been as guides, porters or trackers, or as providers of the usual services associated with mass tourism —

waiters, sellers of arts and crafts or models for photographs. Rarely have local people been involved in management. Decision-making authority — including deciding whether a project should go ahead in the first place — has generally been denied.

While many projects do profess a commitment to local people's participation to ensure that they benefit economically, a 1992 study on people and parks concluded that "the results [of participation] have been disappointing, to say the least".⁴⁰ Often, provisions for "local participation" have been included mainly as a means of defusing dissent.⁴¹

Neither do local people necessarily benefit economically. In Kenya's Amboseli National Park, tourist revenues allocated for community development, including the digging of wells in Maasai villages living within the Park, were pocketed by corrupt officials. This spurred the Maasai to reclaim their right to hunt wildlife and let their cattle drink in the reserve area, resulting in conflicts with park rangers. In Nepal's Annapurna region where local communities provide accommodation for some 40,000 annual trekkers, the same number of people as local inhabitants, only 20 cents of the average \$3 spent each day by a tourist stays in the village.⁴²

Nor does the money generated by ecotourism necessarily go towards maintaining biodiversity, the rationale of many projects. A World Bank consultant estimates that entrance fees to Nepal's national parks raise less than \$1 million annually, little of which goes to pay for conservation. The parks cost some \$4.6 million to run; four-fifths of this goes on employing troops to keep villagers looking for fuelwood out of the parks.⁴³

Indeed, tourism to the "unspoilt, pristine wilderness" of a national park is internally contradictory. To generate substantial revenue — whether for conservation, foreign exchange, tour companies or local people — the number of tourists has to be large. That implies a greater impact on the local culture and the environment, fewer controls and, with more foreign involvement, more foreign currency leakage.

The GATT Attack

The recent signing of the revised General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which for the first time includes services, may accelerate this trend. "Liberaliza-

Tourism often exacerbates unequal relations, exemplified by increased militarization.

tion" of the hotel, tourism and airline industries will increase the power of foreign investors in Third World countries and the extent of foreign control as limits on foreign ownership are dropped; fledgling domestic industries, including national airlines, are likely to be driven out of business as the dominant US, European and Japanese tourism and travel companies attempt to sell their "services" everywhere with no restrictions.

Environmental restrictions, particularly on resort and golf course developers, are also likely to be significantly lower. Countries of Eastern Europe and Indochina, now opening up to the global economy, are the new targets of "sustainable nature, culture and adventure tourism". Some proponents of "sustainable tourism" have actively endorsed the free trade principles of GATT, arguing that "efforts must be directed towards the removal of, or minimization of, all barriers to travel, including: physical barriers, economic barriers, organizational barriers and legal barriers".⁴⁴

Militarization

Although many advocates of "eco" or "sustainable" tourism recognize its problems, they maintain that potential benefits outweigh any problems or past mistakes, which can be solved or avoided in the future with more political will and better planning and management.⁴⁵ These options, however, do not take into account the political and economic structures of tourism, the realities of corporate interests, highly-centralized decision-making, and the control of nature and people underlying the development process. In essence, "tourism is not just about escaping work and drizzle; it is about power, increasingly internationalized power."⁴⁶

Tourism, particularly in the context of "sustainable development", often only serves to exacerbate the entrenched asymmetry of unequal relations in the world. Militarization is the most visible tendency of this process. For example, "legitimate" violence in the name of resource control, such as "shoot-to-kill" actions in Ken-

ya's game parks, has been commonplace for many years, a tendency reinforced by the provision of para-military training for park rangers and anti-poaching equipment by international conservation groups.⁴⁷

In South Africa, plans have been made to expand the "uninhabited" conservation area of Kosy Bay so as to create an "international peace park", covering the whole border region between South Africa, Mozambique and Swaziland. With the South African military, the secret service, the security forces of the national police and the Kwa Zulu security apparatus all involved in project construction, border security would seem to be as major an issue as tourism. Adding to support from the South African Nature Foundation (the South African WWF), and South African and transnational companies such as Armsoor, BP, Caltex Oil, Shell and SA Sugar Association, the World Bank has provided \$12 million for the programme and may double its contribution.

The World Bank now contends that conservationists would benefit from "systematically" approaching national defence services:

"as conflicts between people and resources increase in the coming years, the military will require detailed understanding of the biological, ecological, social and economic issues involved if they are to deal effectively with these conflicts".⁴⁸

Alternatives to Tourism and Development

For local people involved in immediate livelihood struggles in the Third World, such as protesting against illegally-obtained title deeds to land and permits to start hotel construction or violation of environmental regulations,⁴⁹ the issue of power is central, although this has been sidestepped by mainstream critics of tourism. Rather than trying to reform tourism, local people's criticisms tend to be part of a struggle for self-realization, social transformation and development options that put people's and often ecological concerns at the forefront.

The experience of attempts by groups in the South in the 1980s to foster small-scale, locally-controlled, visitor industries, sensitive to indigenous culture and environment, is instructive.⁵⁰ In Thailand, for example, Chayant Pholpoke set up Life Travel Service in the early 1980s

with the help of local development workers and supportive academics to enable visitors to witness at first hand the structural inequalities between First and Third Worlds and to foster support for the Thai people's struggle against exploitation and injustice. He saw alternative tourism as capable of playing "a supportive role in building solidarity among people all over the world who want to build a more just society."⁵¹

The movement had some success. In localities where people were politicized and organized, "bottom-up" tourism initiatives shook vested interest and power. In the Philippines, for example, they preempted President Ferdinand Marcos' plans to turn the Puerto Galara and Boracay islands into luxury resorts by developing and controlling a new "backyard tourism". In Ubud on the Indonesian island of Bali, local people curbed large, outside tourism developers by setting up and enforcing strict regulations for tourists and self-reliant projects that benefited the community and the natural environment. These included organic farming, an information centre, publishing a newspaper and upgrading the village.

Local people's vision of development for themselves may or may not involve hosting tourists. But the focus of "alternative" forms of tourism is critical — tourist or touristed? Much of the rhetoric of the tourism industry has become indistinguishable from many of the demands of grassroots movements for socially- and environmentally-accountable development, making it easy for vested interests to abuse genuine efforts towards social and ecological justice in tourism.

Yet if it is to pose a real challenge to the status quo, tourism alternatives must be part of a wider debate as to how to construct an alternative "new world order" in which people themselves, rather than outside interests, determine and control their lives.

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Mount St. Helens volcano in Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Washington state.

Between the Loggers and the Owls

The Clinton Northwest Forest Plan

by

Brian Tokar

In April 1994, the administration of US President Bill Clinton released the final details of a long-awaited plan for the ancient forests of the Pacific Northwest. The plan — which would permit the logging of over 20,000 acres of pristine National Forest every year — is being presented as an acceptable compromise between environmental and economic concerns which will protect the forests and logging jobs. For most eco-activists in the Northwest, however, it is a thin veneer of conservation over the continued destruction of the region's unique forest ecosystems. The means used by the administration to "sell" the plan cast doubts on the sincerity of the environmental commitments professed in Clinton's election campaign.

The vast ancient forests of the Pacific Northwest are a place of overwhelming power and mystery. From the thousand-year-old redwoods of northern California to the mixed Douglas fir and hemlock forests of Oregon and Washington and the giant red cedars and Sitka spruce of British Columbia and coastal Alaska, the forests inspire a profound sense of awe and reverence. Scientific studies in the 1970s and 1980s revealed the forests to be among the most biologically diverse and abundant on earth. Thousands of species of plants and animals depend on intact, old-growth ecosystems for their survival, including some 150 varieties of salmon, the northern spotted owl and the marbled murrelet, a rare seabird that nests inland on the mossy limbs of old-growth trees. The forests help maintain soil fertility and protect gravel mountainsides from erosion and valleys from flooding,

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while the lush Northwestern coastal rainforests are unique in the Northern hemisphere.

Timber interests, however, have long characterized the Northwestern forests as "decadent" and "overgrown", a view tacitly accepted by generations of loggers. Widespread logging began about a century ago, but increased dramatically in the 1980s. Today, less than five per cent of the original old-growth forest remains, most of it in the National Parks, National Forests and other government and state lands.

Satellite photographs released by the US space agency, NASA, during the 1992 UNCED "Earth Summit" revealed destruction and fragmentation in the Northwest far more advanced than the destruction of the Amazon rainforest in Brazil. People who have hiked the Cascades or the Olympic Mountains of Oregon and Washington, or who have seen the dramatic aerial photographs of logged areas,

are stunned by the checkerboard of clearcut devastation. Forests on steep mountainsides are routinely reduced to stumps; the exposed soils are washed away by heavy rains, silting up the rivers and threatening fish populations.

Today, half the region's timber is exported, largely to Japan, in the form of whole unprocessed logs, wood chips or pulp. As many of the region's lumber mills have moved to Mexico and other lower-wage countries, local employment in the timber industry and the regional economy has declined steadily (see Box, p.150). In 1992, out of 12 billion boardfeet of softwood that left US West Coast ports, nearly one third was in the form of pulp, 29 per cent raw logs and 23 per cent wood chips; only 16 per cent was classified as processed lumber.¹ Of the major US-based multinational timber companies, Weyerhaeuser is by far the most active in exporting logs from both public and private lands in the Northwest.²

Expendable Forests, Expendable Workers

Forest preservation has become an increasingly polarized issue in the US in recent years, with loggers and millworkers in economically depressed parts of the country often blaming environmentalists for the loss of their jobs.

In fact, most of the decline in logging jobs in the Northwest in recent years has resulted not from environmental protection but from increased exports of unprocessed timber and corporate policies designed to increase profits at the expense of employees — and of the forests. According to the draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Clinton forest plan, employment in the Northwest timber industry fell 13 per cent in the two years after the northern spotted owl was listed as an endangered species, while job losses from manufacturing layoffs in the region over the same period have greatly exceeded this amount.

In fact, job losses in the timber industry predate recent environmental restrictions, declining as logging became increasingly automated during the timber boom of the 1980s, and as companies moved their milling operations to Mexico in search of cheaper labour. In California redwood country in particular, a spate of corporate buyouts and mill closings by companies such as Maxxam and Louisiana Pacific has caused the

collapse of many timber-dependent communities, even as the pace of logging increased. In Oregon, employment in the timber industry fell 20 per cent during the 1980s, while logging increased by over 20 per cent.

In California, environmental activists are attempting to forge new alliances between loggers and environmentalists, arguing that *both* the environment *and* workers are being treated as expendable commodities by the industry. Environmentalists have begun to invite dissident timber workers to their rallies, in addition to supporting the loggers in their grievances against the companies. In one California community which recently prevented its last grove of intact redwoods from being logged, Earth First! activists are working with unemployed loggers to form a wood-working co-operative. They plan to cut younger redwoods selectively in already-damaged but recovering areas in an ecologically sustainable manner. Elsewhere other groups are attempting to make common cause with loggers against the corporations.

Despite such efforts, however, most timber communities continue to accept industry claims that environmentalists are to blame for their woes. Many Northwestern towns dependent on logging are culturally and socially isolated, some of them almost "company towns" where families have worked for a single timber company for two or three generations. In addition, as logging has become more mechanized

and as people cling to their forest-dependent way of life, the local culture has increasingly embraced an ethic of "dominating the natural world". Logging old-growth has come to be regarded as removing "overaged" trees while clearcutting has been promoted as a technology to perpetuate the life of the forest, even though it is perhaps the ultimate symbol of the demise of the loggers' traditional way of life.

Cultures in decline are susceptible to the creation of scapegoats and agitation to blame their fate on ominous outside influences, and it has been easy for timber companies to place environmentalists in that role. Any logging town in the Northwest now displays countless yellow ribbons (once an emblem in the US of patriotic vigilance, now of right-wing causes), banners proclaiming support for embattled loggers and images of owls in a noose or in the cross-sights of a rifle.

But at the turn of this century, the timber towns of the Northwest were a centre of labour agitation, a legacy activists are seeking to revive as they venture into these embattled enclaves with a sympathetic ear and news of grossly underreported corporate abuses. They have also pointed out that restoration of areas damaged by excessive logging could create as many jobs as would be lost if logging in the region's National Forests were banned outright.

A Battle Ground

Controversy surrounding the logging of the Northwestern forests came to a head in 1992 when a dozen regional and national environmental groups took the US Forest Service to court under the 1976 National Forest Management Act, charging that logging threatened the survival of the endangered northern spotted owl.³ Citing "repeated and systematic" violations of environmental laws by the timber industry, the presiding judge, William Dwyer, ruled in favour of the environmentalists and issued an injunction halting the sale of new logging concessions on government lands in the region. Although logging was permitted to continue on company-owned land and on government lands where concessions had

already been granted, the release of new acreage for logging in the national forests of the Northwest came to a halt.

The ruling exacerbated the long-standing and increasingly bitter conflict between Northwestern communities dependent upon logging and environmentalists, who are often portrayed as an elite, urban interest group. Media images of angry loggers venting their frustrations against eco-activists, government regulations and spotted owls sustained corporate efforts to paint environmental struggles as conflicts between environmental protection and "jobs". Indeed, the Northwest has become a main focus for "wise use" groups seeking to mobilize displaced working people on behalf of corporate agendas. The region has also become enmeshed in Congressional

power politics and in heated conflicts between grassroots eco-activists and national, Washington, DC-based environmental groups.

Clinton to the Rescue

During his 1992 presidential campaign, Bill Clinton gained significant support in the Northwest by promising that, if elected, he would draw up a forest plan to please everybody. In April 1993, he held a much publicized "forest summit" in Portland, Oregon, which brought together a narrow but impressive spectrum of mainstream forest advocates and industry representatives. Their task was to consider the long-term health of both the forests and timber communities and to

outline a plan for preserving endangered ecosystems while producing a "predictable and sustainable level of timber sales and non-timber resources".⁴ Although regional eco-activists were wary, they nonetheless hoped for the best. As Jeff St Clair, editor of the Portland-based *Wild Forest Review*, recalls: "Everyone was expecting that Clinton would give us a plan that would at least end logging of old-growth in the national forests."⁵

After the forest summit, the Clinton administration commissioned the US Forest Service (USFS) to come up with a

series of options for resuming timber sales which complied with Judge Dwyer's 1992 ruling requiring a "scientifically credible plan" that fully protected the habitat of the spotted owl and other endangered species.

The study team was led by Jack Ward Thomas, a senior research ecologist at USFS who has since been appointed by Clinton as head of the agency. Thomas was the author of a pioneering text on wildlife management and architect of a 1990 "conservation strategy" for the northern spotted owl. Despite document-

ing the need for millions of acres to be set aside for owl habitat, this strategy nonetheless bowed to political expediency and recommended that half the owls be sacrificed in the short-term in the hope of stabilizing the population in a hundred years. The Clinton plan was expected to echo this proposal, allowing some of the last remaining old-growth to be cut in exchange for the promise of a more regulated forest in the future.

By June 1993, the Thomas team had come up with eight scenarios, each permitting up to nearly one billion board-

Clinton's Environmental Sell-Out

Bill Clinton's election as US President in 1992 raised great hopes for the mainstream environmental movement. There was a triple prospect of jobs in the administration for many of the movement's high-fliers; of better access to the government through these appointments for those who remained working in environmental NGOs; and thus of a government committed to reversing the anti-environmental policies of the previous 12 years of Republican rule.

Things did not turn out quite as expected. While Bruce Babbitt, President of the League of Conservation Voters, was made head of the Interior Department, and the prominent public-policy environmentalist, Carol Browner, was appointed to head the Environmental Protection Agency, others were less amply rewarded or passed over. A sprinkling of jobs throughout the different administrative departments — mostly of an advisory rather than a policy-making nature — were given to second-rung environmentalists.

The improved access to the centre of power as a result of these appointments has been a boost to environmentalists still working outside the administration, who, in the words of one lobbyist, are delighted "to walk down the hall in the White House or a government agency and be greeted by your first name". But the process also works in reverse. According to environmental historian Mark Dowie:

"it is Clinton who has gained the lion's share of the access — to the mainstream leadership . . . First-name euphoria has allowed Clinton and [Vice-President] Gore to fudge most of their green campaign promises with barely a

whisper of protest from the Washington environmental establishment."

Those still working outside the administration are not keen to challenge any compromises made by their former colleagues working within it, while:

"the Administration has been shielded from attack on its environmentally incorrect policy decisions . . . by not bringing into the government the more conservative old guard at the top of the environmental movement, which would have allowed feistier members to take control."

After gaining the confidence of Greens by abolishing former Vice-President Dan Quayle's Competitiveness Council on his first day in office and signing the UNCED Biodiversity Treaty, Clinton has used the influence of his appointees to undermine his own pre-election environmental agenda.

- Shortly after taking up her post, Carol Browner announced that she intended to re-evaluate the Food and Drug Act's Delaney amendment, which stipulates a zero tolerance for carcinogenic residue on all food products.
- Bruce Babbitt capitulated to Western governors and senators opposed to increased fees for grazing and mining, and later fired Jim Baca, the main advocate of grazing and mining reform, from the Bureau of Land Management.
- Babbitt also brokered a deal in Florida that allows sugar farmers to continue polluting the Everglades.
- After repeatedly scolding George Bush for inaction on global warming and promising to reduce automobile and industrial emissions by the year 2000, Clinton announced a set of air quality standards that call for only voluntary compliance.

- Clinton and Browner asked DuPont, which had voluntarily agreed to cease production of ozone-depleting CFCs, to delay the action for a year as a favour to the car-manufacturing industry.

- The President's Council on Sustainable Development — with a brief to develop "a national sustainable development action strategy that will foster economic vitality" — was packed with executives from some of the most notorious corporations in the country. The environmentalists on the panel — Jay Hair of the National Wildlife Federation, Fred Krupp of the Environmental Defense Fund, John Sawhill of the Nature Conservancy and John Adams of the Natural Resources Development Council — are all noted for their cooperation with industry and are all supporters of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Clinton's administration has predictably fallen prey to the heavily-financed lobbying of the corporate sector — and it has taken Clinton and Gore's environmental proteges and a significant proportion of the mainstream environmental movement with it. As Mark Dowie suggests:

"maybe the best strategy for grassroots activists would be to start doing some lobbying themselves — targeting not the White House, Congress or the bureaucracy, but the Sierra Club, the Environmental Defense Fund and the National Wildlife Federation".

Source: Dowie, M., "The Selling (Out) of the Greens", *The Nation*, Washington DC, 18 April 1994.

feet of National Forest timber to be extracted every year for the next decade — a quarter of the average annual cut during the 1980s — a quantity which would require levelling approximately 20,000 acres of forest annually. Each scenario was evaluated for its projected impact on the probability of survival of key forest species (owls, murrelets, salmon and over a thousand others) through the next century.

The Clinton administration rejected all eight options as not permitting enough logging to satisfy the timber industry and ordered Thomas back to the drawing board. In just three weeks, the team came up with an additional scenario which was declared the preferred alternative — Option 9.

Power Politics

Option 9 presents a highly deceptive package of proposals. It contains measures to limit future logging and to establish reserves for spotted owls and buffer zones along important river watersheds. But each recommendation is accompanied by exceptions, conditions and loopholes that could give the timber industry free rein over half of the remaining old-growth forest. Thinning and "salvage" logging would be allowed even in the owl reserves while logging on the drier eastern slopes of the Cascades could be stepped

up to make up for losses in timber revenue on the western side. The plan would relax controls on logging on privately-owned lands, a matter of special concern in California where most of the remaining, unprotected redwoods are owned by corporations such as the Maxxam conglomerate. Forest-dependent species would continue to disappear, even according to the plan's own calculations. The land would continue to be degraded, and the rapacious practices of the timber companies would continue to dominate the ecology and the economy of the region long into the future.

To implement the plan, the Clinton administration had to persuade the 12 environmental groups which had brought the "spotted owl" case in 1992 to agree to



A spotted owl in the Breitenbusch river area of Willamette National Forest in Oregon State. Environmentalists have found that framing environmental demands in the language of resource economics, including describing forests as "timber sales" or old growth trees as "board feet", has made it difficult to regain public support for full protection of endangered ecosystems. The promotion of cost-benefit analysis and profitability standards as measures for environmental decisions has poisoned debates over forest policy in the Northwest. Endorsements of privatization of National Forests by self-professed environmentalists add fuel to corporate efforts to dismantle environmental gains.

the lifting of the injunction on future timber sales. The carrot offered the plaintiffs was a vague promise that they would have a role in developing the final version of the forest plan; the stick was a threat by the administration to make future timber sales immune from legal action. As US conservationists have become increasingly dependent on legal challenges against timber sales to save patches of forest from the chainsaws, the threat of this "sufficiency" legislation — so-called because it would declare any future government decisions concerning the forests "sufficient" to meet requirements of national environmental legislation, even if they violated statutory mandates — was enough to bring the 12 groups to the bargaining table.

By November 1993, the 12 plaintiffs agreed to release some 83 million board feet (over 2,000 acres) of timber from the injunction. The Sierra Club's independent legal arm, the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund (SCLDF), was widely reported to have pressured reluctant activists to accept the agreement. For some, it was a legitimate trade-off: sacrificing forests that would be cut anyway — what Andy Stahl of SCLDF termed "stands of sales on death row" — would allow more crucial areas to be safeguarded inside agreed reserves.⁶

A last-minute legal action by four, smaller Oregon-based environmental groups — Save the West, the Native Forest Council (which is campaigning to end logging in all national forests), the Kalmiopsis (south-western Oregon) chapter of the Audubon society, and the Friends of the Breitenbusch Cascades — temporarily blocked the deal.

In February 1994 a final draft of the plan's Environmental Impact Statement was released which reduced the authorized annual timber cut from 1.2 to 1.1 billion board-feet. But instead of limiting further logging on private (in other words, corporate) lands that would affect spotted owl habitat, it also exempted large holdings for the first time from the prohibition of the 1973 Endangered Species Act against "incidental taking"

of endangered species, weakened standards for watershed analysis and substantially reduced the acreage set aside for protection of the marbled murrelet.

At the beginning of June, despite last-minute interventions by the Native Forest Council and two other groups, Judge Dwyer lifted his 1992 injunction against continuing timber sales, arguing that the procedural requirements of the injunction had been met and that separate hearings on the merits of Clinton's plan would commence in September.⁷

Meanwhile, the timber industry is pursuing its own legal actions and, despite the removal of the injunction, is continuing its high-profile public campaign against any limitations on logging in the National Forests. The exception is

Environmental Images/Elizabeth Ferry

Weyerhaeuser, which announced its support for the Clinton forest plan in late April. With huge private holdings throughout the Northwest, Weyerhaeuser would benefit from logging restrictions on public lands and exemptions from provisions of the Endangered Species Act.

Reaction and Acquiescence

Overall, activists fear that logging in the Northwest may soon return to the devastating pace of the 1980s. For many environmentalists working at either a local or national level, the struggle for the Northwest forests has highlighted the dangers of attempting to win change by "working within the system". As Jeff St Clair explains:

"The point of Option 9 was never about the amount of timber released but to turn key environmentalists from defenders of ancient forests to designers and defenders of timber sales in ancient forests. The point was about building a relationship of power and control, not goodwill, cooperation and trust. The Clinton team has been a nightmare for us. They've given us a plan that could have been produced during the Reagan-Bush years and environmentalists are unwilling to criticize their former leaders who are now in Washington. People act as if they expect a 'stealth revolution' from within the administration, but it's not coming."⁸

Environmentalism may have come to the White House with the election of Bill Clinton and his Vice-President Al Gore

of *Earth in the Balance* renown, but it is environmentalism with a corporate agenda. Clinton and Gore have backtracked on pledges to reform mining and grazing policies, enshrined controversial risk assessment methods as a substitute for the ban on carcinogenic pesticides in food, and persuaded environmentalists to support the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (see Box, p.151). Even the resolutely pro-business *New York Times* pointed out in an editorial in May that "time and again, the White House has refused to spend political capital" on controversial environmental issues.

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt has been making deals with developers and timber interests to demonstrate the "flexibility" of the Endangered Species Act and to soften opposition to it, for example, by permitting development in sections of endangered habitats. The fragmentation and isolation of rare habitats, however, threaten the long-term survival of rare species, even where nesting sites for birds and small patches of wetland are protected in the short-term.

These concessions are being offered by the Clinton administration in response to the widespread backlash on the part of industry since the 1980s against environmental regulation. Under the transparent guise of protecting jobs, efforts are underway to abolish all remaining constraints on the unencumbered workings of capital. With no foreign "enemies" worth taking seriously since the collapse of the Soviet Union, environmentalists have become a key "enemy in our midst" for many ideologues on the right.⁹

The struggle for the future of the for-

ests of the Northwest demonstrates the current US administration's ability to manipulate its supposed friends to diffuse opposition from the Left, while compelling liberals to submit to corporate agendas. It deserves serious attention as other activists prepare for struggles over health care, welfare reform, and other matters of urgent social import.¹⁰ As President Bill Clinton has evolved from being a mere disappointment to liberals to actively courting the right, the acquiescence of progressive forces becomes a recipe for disaster.

Notes and References

1. Donnelly, M., "The Great Timber Famine Fallacy", *Wild Forest Review*, No. 2, December 1993, p.23.
2. Other major players include Georgia Pacific, International Paper, ITT-Rayonier and several regionally-significant companies such as Plum Creek, Willamette Industries, and Young and Morgan.
3. The Act contains a provision that proper timber management on government-owned land must allow for "widely-distributed viability" of forest-dependent species.
4. *Forest Watch*, Vol. 13, No. 9, April/May 1993, p.30.
5. Personal communication, 28 February 1994. *Wild Forest Review* is available from Save the West, 3758 SE Milwaukie, Portland, OR 97202, USA.
6. Clinton aides are said to have used their personal knowledge of the divisions among environmentalists in the Northwest to extract concessions from these environmentalists over timber sales. The divisions were broadly between local and regional activists on the one hand and regional representatives of national groups, most of them based in Washington, DC, on the other.
7. The Native Forest Council and the Oregon Natural Resources Council (an original plaintiff in the injunction) have pledged new lawsuits to seek greater protection for salmon and other species, as well as a ban on log exports. Clinton had been forced to acknowledge this key issue at his "forest summit", but he has steadily stepped back from it, even opposing a recent Congressional proposal for a log export ban.
8. Personal communication, op. cit. 5.
9. Environmentalists are therefore watching closely Congressional action on the Endangered Species Act, due to be renewed in 1993, the 1972 Clean Water Act and the long-embattled Superfund for toxic waste cleanups.
10. Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign covered a wide-ranging social agenda including the first ever comprehensive health care system. In the past year, however, he has sought to cultivate support from the right-wing by emphasizing anti-crime proposals, efforts to reduce government deficits and a plan to limit welfare payments to 18 months. His latest proposals for health care concentrate control in the hands of the largest private insurance companies, and he has come under tremendous pressure to abandon obtaining health coverage for those who cannot afford private insurance. In each case, liberals and progressives have been pressured to agree to the proposals by arguments that they are simply the best that can be hoped for.

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Books

Count the Future

Time, Discounting and Value by Colin Price, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1993, £15.99/\$24.95 (pb) 393pp. ISBN 0-631-17986-0

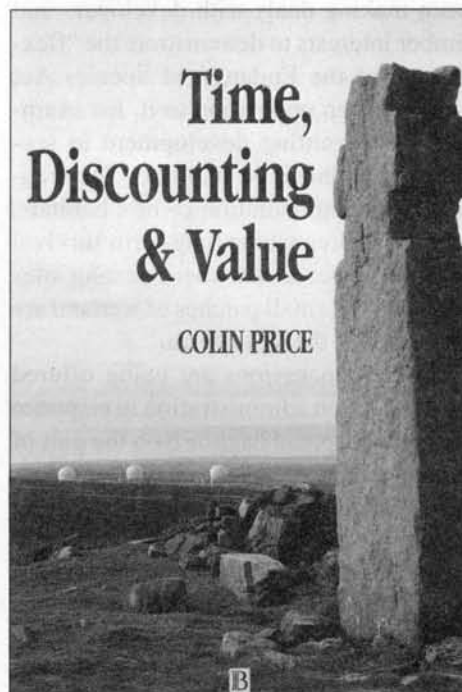
A team of over 60 of the world's leading economists is currently attempting to establish if humankind can afford to halt global warming and prevent a climatic catastrophe. The team, Working Group III of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), is comparing the costs and benefits of six ways of responding to global warming so that national governments can choose between them. These scenarios range from "business as usual" — allowing the level of greenhouse gas emissions to be determined by unfettered market forces — to reducing human-made emissions so that the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases stabilizes.

Cost-benefit analysis (CBA), however, is completely inadequate for the task. To succeed, it would have to estimate all the consequences of all six scenarios, including the specific years in the future in which they will occur and their impact in cash terms. This is a ridiculous calculation to attempt, not least because of the extent of the uncertainties — we are not even sure whether the temperate areas of the world will warm or be plunged into a new ice age. But even if we knew, how does one put a monetary value on the loss of a species or the submergence of an archipelago, or even on the loss of life? The IPCC economists, however, have valued a European life at \$1.5 million and an Asian and African one at one tenth of that, \$150,000.

To succeed, CBA would also have to

assess how to relate costs and benefits which will occur at different times in the future to each other. The problems connected with this challenge are the subject of Colin Price's marvellous book, *Time, Discounting and Value*.

The economists' technique of comparing current costs and future benefits, known as discounting, is to reduce the monetary value of the expected future benefits to their present values — values which are calculated by estimating the sums of money which, if invested now to earn compound interest, would yield the designated amounts at the relevant times in the future.



Clearly, the interest rate — the discount rate — chosen for this calculation is crucial — the higher the rate, the more the future is devalued. If a rate of 10 per cent is used, as is common in industry, half the present-day value of a perpetual fixed stream of income is contributed by the flow in the first seven years, while the flow from year 40 to infinity is worth almost nothing at all.

The British government uses a discount rate of six per cent which means that half the benefits of a project yielding a constant stream of benefits, such as a road or a school, come from its first 12 years. Such a rate might easily mean that the discounted cost of putting up a cheaply-built school and replacing it 15 years later with another cheap building is less than the current cost of building a school to last a century.

Similarly, the use of high interest rates in a CBA calculation can provide the economic justification for a decision to

hunt whales to extinction as it can make the present value of catching all the whales in the world as soon as possible higher than the present value of harvesting a few each year in perpetuity.

Despite these outcomes, supporters of discounting claim that one ought not to use an interest rate lower than the real rate of return that can be obtained from other, equally-risky investments because this would lead to a misallocation of resources. Moreover, they point out, people automatically discount events in their daily lives, preferring £1,000 now to the same sum in a year's time, for example.

But the argument that if people discount in their private lives, then governments should reflect the public's time preference by doing likewise is mistaken. Individuals are mortal; society, we hope, is not, and a government ought to act in the continuous collective interest. In addition, as Price points out, while consumers can choose between two products presented to them in one time period, the present, they cannot choose between two time periods, because the choice is made from within one of those time periods. We can only make informed choices in the context of our current circumstances, not in relation to future circumstances which are largely unknown and, in any event, unreal — particularly since we might not even be alive. As to the problem of securing the best allocation of resources, Price regards this as secondary to that of selecting the best project or approach.

Price is doubtful whether any discounting should be done at all, arguing that, if it is carried out, the interest rate should be chosen specifically for the particular type of cost or benefit it is to discount:

"[I make] no presumption whatever that there should be a rate of discount . . . My premise is that weighting the value of future consumption by a uniform negative exponential function of time is an extraordinary process and needs special justification: if that justification is not found and agreed to, we should stop doing it."

The consequences of abandoning discounting would be enormous. It would mean that we could begin to select those projects with the greatest total benefits, regardless of the length of time over which they occurred, instead of those with the greatest immediate gains.

Time, Discounting and Value is a well-written, painstaking book which is perfectly accessible to a non-economist and ought to equip campaigners to run rings

around almost every CBA practitioner they come across. As a result, it could be one of the most influential economics books of the decade. In his "Epilogue", Price writes:

"It is a commonplace that when people do what they know to be wrong, they cast around for specious reasons why it could be considered right. Among ethnographers this process is also, revealingly, known as discounting . . . When a whole society does what it suspects to be wrong, it seeks professional apologists to justify its actions. In the case of discounting the future, the professional apologists have preceded the bad social conscience: economists got their retaliation in first".

One wonders whether he was thinking of, among others, the economists of Working Group III.

Richard Douthwaite

Richard Douthwaite was once a professional economist and is the author of *The Growth Illusion: How Economic Growth has Enriched the Few, Impoverished the Many and Endangered the Planet*, 1992.

German Greens — Myth and Reality

THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT IN GERMANY: Prophets and Pioneers, 1871-1971, by Raymond H. Dominick III, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 1992, \$35.00 (hb), 320pp. ISBN 0-253-31819-X

BETWEEN PROTEST AND POWER: The Green Party in Germany, E. Gene Frankland and Donald Schoonmaker, Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1992, \$19.95/£13.50 (pb), 257pp. ISBN 0-8133-8070-7.

The international environmental community is watching the new, united Germany closely to see what path the country that was a frontrunner in environmental politics in the 1980s will take in the next decade. Perception of German green politics has always been dominated by two themes which are closely tied to the prospects of this new Germany. The first is Germany's historical legacy: while fears of a new German authoritarianism have been fuelled by a revival of ultra-right groups, early German environmentalism

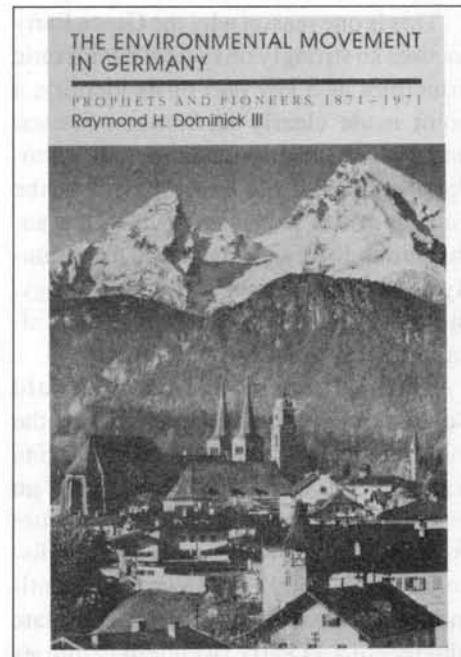
has often been linked to an anti-modernist, anti-democratic culture, which contributed to the rise of Adolf Hitler. Indeed, a historic continuity has been suggested between Nazi and other far-right ideologies and contemporary ecological programmes.

The second theme also has a history. Ever since the German Green party shot to international prominence in 1983 when it won seats in the national parliament for the first time, predictions of its imminent demise have been commonplace, particularly in the US and British press. That prediction appeared to have been confirmed when the West German Greens lost all their seats in December 1990 in the first elections of the unified Germany.

The Environment Movement in Germany and *Between Protest and Power* provide a balanced and authoritative analysis of both these themes. Raymond Dominick carefully interprets an impressive range of material — largely forgotten campaigns, groups, articles and books — on the German environmental movement since the formation of a unified German state in 1871. Throughout the book, he counters suggestions that the choice of the environment as a campaigning topic was (and is) merely incidental to the "real" political aims of the movement.

Dominick shows that there was no support for Nazi policies among environmental groups in the 1920s, and that the Nazis did not make any effort to campaign on environmental issues nor to address the "nature protection" constituency as a potential source of political support. Where innovative environmental policies were pursued under the Nazi regime, their protagonists had no close organizational or ideological links with the Nazi party. Dominick argues that the overlap in the ideas propagated by the nature protection movement and the Nazis was marginal, while major differences existed between key Nazi policies and nature protection positions.

But while the connection between nature conservationism and Nazism may have been less close than previously thought, Dominick's study contains plenty of evidence to suggest that the pre-Nazi conservation movement was among the forces which undermined support for Germany's first democratic constitution. Early thinking on nature protection did have a nationalist and, in part, racist orientation, emphasizing the spiritual role of German nature for the German *Volk*. The nature protection constituency also



displayed anti-modernist, anti-materialist and anti-communist tendencies and an apparent ambivalence to the democratic institutions of the Weimar Republic. Thus even if this movement did not tally exactly with Nazi ideology, the attitudes and opinions it advanced facilitated the Nazi takeover.

Dominick mentions only briefly the influential "life reform" and natural healing movements. He does not discuss anarchist antecedents of environmentalism, and gives scant attention to the protection of workers from industrial pollution and the perception of industrialization in the North and West of Germany.

Dominick's account of citizens' action against environmental damage in Bavaria in the early 1950s is impressive, countering generalizations that environmental citizen action began only in the 1960s. But he overemphasizes the role of "environmental" issues in the anti-war campaigns of the 1950s. Although several people widened the anti-nuclear issue from an anti-weapons one to a general rejection of nuclear power, their actions were marginal at the time.

The history of Germany's environmental movement is critical to an understanding of the radical ecology movement which emerged in the 1970s. It is precisely because modern German environmentalists tend to perceive the history of nature conservation in Germany in terms of its links with Nazism and its "establishment" orientation — a perception which may have been simplistic but still retains a core of truth — that they see a hiatus between their movement and the conservation efforts of the past.

This is one reason why the Green Party focuses so strongly on radical democratic principles as a key part of its identity, a point made clearly in *Between Protest and Power*. In this readable and up-to-date account of the development of the Greens in the 1970s and 1980s, the authors roundly reject any idea of a continuity of Nazi and Green political ideology, but rightly portray the Greens as a political effort to "master the past".

Gene Frankland and Donald Schoonmaker align the Greens within the main democratic and anti-authoritarian traditions of Germany. They make no particular reference to the early nature conservation movements, but find "disconcerting" parallels between the anti-industrial romantic movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the anti-industrial critique formulated by the modern Green movement. The Green party itself has hotly debated this topic, going out of its way to repudiate authoritarian solutions to environmental crises and championing civil liberties and the rights of ethnic minorities.

The main part of *Between Protest and Power* describes key aspects of the party's development, analyzing its voters, internal organization, programme development and role in parliamentary politics. Frankland and Schoonmaker provide ample evidence that the Greens are not disappearing from German politics, although their long-term prospects may be far from secure. The party staged an impressive comeback in the early 1990s, largely ignored by the foreign press, with excellent results in virtually all the state elections they contested.

Despite this revival, the authors list no fewer than nine problems which stifled the party's progress in the 1980s and which still remain. Most of these are related to the internal workings of the party, a lack of cohesion in policy-making and organizational discipline. Frankland and Schoonmaker echo frequent demands for the need to "professionalize" and make the organization of the party more efficient without damaging its "alternative" identity. The departure of the last "fundamentalists" is perceived as a positive development, cutting the level of internal strife.

A key issue — the relationship of the Greens to the Alliance of East German citizen movements which arose in the campaign to end the communist regime — has recently been resolved: the Greens merged with the Alliance in 1993 to form

a united party, Alliance 90/The Greens. This fusion brought only a few thousand new members to the party, bringing the total membership to around 40,000, but injected a new spirit of realism and pragmatism. Old divisions and disagreements looked insignificant compared to economic and environmental problems in Eastern Germany.

Electoral success is in part due to the lack of confidence ordinary voters have in the major German political parties because of a sequence of high-level political scandals and broken promises. If the pattern of the 1993 Hamburg state elections — in which the Greens and a new populist, anti-establishment party picked up support lost by the two main parties, the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats — is repeated in the many elections of 1994, the character of German politics could shift profoundly.

In addition, this crisis of establishment politics may provide a major opportunity for the Greens to win public office — particularly if the political appeal of the far right parties should rise. In such a case, the Greens would become more attractive as a coalition partner, increasing the prospect of an *Ampel* (traffic light) coalition between the "red" Social Democrats, the "yellow" Liberals and the Greens. All this lends weight to Frankland and Schoonmaker's conclusion that there is still a niche for the Greens in the German party political system.

To benefit still further from the lack of confidence in established parties, the Greens need to address in a positive way the economic issues which have contributed to the crisis — the recession, West German disgruntlement about hand-outs to the East, and East German disappointment about failures to reach Western economic standards. But while the Green party can be expected to raise its voice for the economically disadvantaged and the protection of the welfare state, as it has done before, further adaption might turn it into a populist party, trying to maximize electoral support opportunistically by making ever-changing promises to suit the mood of the electorate.

Indeed, *Between Protest and Power* itself pays little attention to environmental issues in assessing the party's future. This neglect may be due to the fact that the Greens' emphasis on global environmental problems rather than German unification in their 1990 federal election manifesto led to their being criticized for not adapting their agenda to the "real"

issues of the country.

But moving too far from its ecological identity could close the party off from further support as new environmental issues emerge. As Dominick has shown in his history of the environmental movement in Germany, specifically environmental issues are often of decisive importance.

Wolfgang Rüdig

Wolfgang Rüdig is senior lecturer in the Department of Government at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland.

Food, Glorious Food

THE PARADOX OF PLENTY: A Social History of Eating in Modern America by Harvey Levenstein, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1993, 337pp. ISBN 0-19-505543-8.

The Paradox of Plenty is a diet book with a difference. It is a fascinating step-by-step account of food policy in the United States from the 1930s to the present day. In chronicling the changing social, cultural, political and economic contexts of food, Harvey Levenstein deals extensively with the politics of hunger at home and abroad.

Whereas the Great Depression of the 1930s reinforced family values, leading to a renewed reverence for home cooking, the 1950s and 1960s saw machines and processed foods beginning to replace the "kitchen drudgery" which many disillusioned women associated with feeding the family.

In the 1980s, ostentatious excess existed alongside equally ostentatious restraint. While many gorged themselves on exotic ingredients, the obscenities of "Reagonomics" left a hungry and malnourished underclass; one in ten Americans was poor enough to qualify for food stamps. At the same time, eating disorders and dieting reached new heights.

The Paradox of Plenty pays greatest attention to hunger in the United States itself. During the Great Depression, at least 82 breadlines formed in New York City and food riots broke out in Oklahoma and Arkansas while the members' dining room of the House of Representatives in Washington, DC, served a popular dieters' menu.

In 1967, rising politician Senator

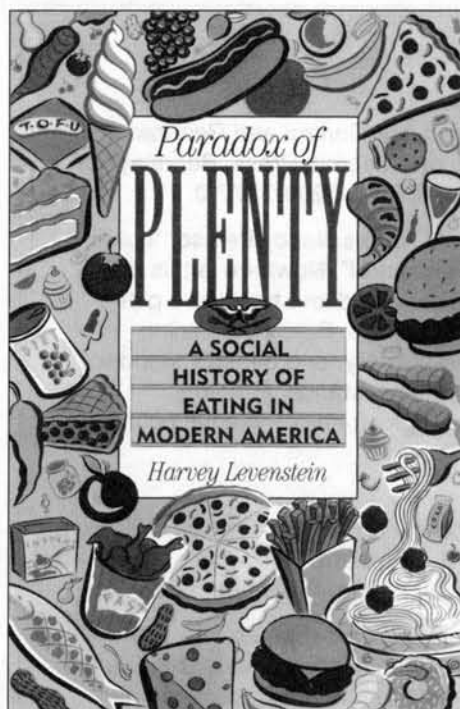
Robert Kennedy visited Jackson, Mississippi where thousands of black farm workers and sharecroppers had been thrown off the land by the relentless push of mechanization, chemical farming and government subsidies for crop reduction and were living in conditions of near starvation. Kennedy was shocked at what he saw. "My God, I didn't know this kind of thing existed," he said with tears running down his face. "How can a country like this allow this?"

A year later, after details of chronic hunger and severe malnutrition throughout the United States were broadcast on television, hunger became a national political issue overnight. The US public could not understand how breadlines and food banks could exist in a land of agricultural abundance nor among a people that believed its own propaganda of the US as a land of opportunity.

The subsequent food assistance programmes were considered a nutritional success until the 1970s when the media became tired of stories about food stamps and school meals for the poor. Instead, it began to expose "scandal-ridden" schemes which wasted millions of dollars on food aid. As in the 1930s, the poor became "undeserving", paving the way for the 1980s' cutbacks in many welfare programmes.

Levenstein argues that the growing concern of the middle classes in the 1970s for the safety and nutritional value of their own diet also helped drive hunger and malnutrition off the US political stage. Consumer campaigns directed against chemical adulteration of meat, microbiological contamination, misuse of hormones and antibiotics, pesticide residues, ingredient standards, and food colourings and additives attacked corporate American agribusiness. By 1977, a public opinion poll rated food manufacturing as the industry the public would most like to see investigated by the government. The government itself, however, was part of the problem: only 40 per cent of consumers surveyed by the US Food and Drug Administration in 1974 thought that the government ensured that food was "good and nutritious" and only 56 per cent thought it tried to ensure honest food advertising.

Even today, as Levenstein ponders on the paradox of a nation surrounded by abundance and yet unable to enjoy it, nutritionists are castigated for a "dietary cacophony" — changing their minds about what is healthy to eat, overstating



nutritional arguments, creating food scares and generally causing confusion without producing any significant health benefits — while the power of vested commercial interests continues unabated. In 1991, the US government withdrew basic dietary guidelines under pressure from the food industry, placing agribusiness before public health yet again, a familiar scenario in Britain as well across the Atlantic.

Indeed, the parallels between US and UK food policy debates over the past 60 years are remarkably noticeable. In its food culture, like its politics, Britain is more closely allied to the US than to Europe, where eating habits are more varied. Brand names such as Kellogg's, Kraft and Heinz have long traditions on both sides of the Atlantic. Food stamps may not yet have been introduced in Britain, but food manufacturers and retailers hand out unsaleable foods to the poor and homeless without offering any longer-term solutions.

However, the globalization of food markets is now opening the rest of Europe up to US and British food interests in the wake of trailblazers such as Coca-Cola and McDonalds which have already taken US corporate identity to almost every country in the world. Concentrating on the past, however, Levenstein does not consider how our food will be affected by future developments such as GATT, which will open up even more markets to the United States and its agribusinesses, and new technologies, for example, genetic engineering or food irradiation.

It is interesting (although depressing)

to see how the same food policy arguments have been spelled out, decade after decade. The arguments of the anti-poverty and food quality campaigns of recent years, for instance, are remarkably similar to those of the 1930s. Readers could easily feel, therefore, that there is little they can do to determine or influence the food supply and must resign themselves to being swept along by an economic and political tide which drowns out the voice of consumer reason. To some extent, this is true; it is a myth that the consumer is king (or queen).

But many people are still questioning the politics of food and looking for alternatives. We may not have a food supply that is equitable, healthful and a source of contentment rather than conflict, but the struggle is not yet over.

Sue Dibb

Sue Dibb is co-director of the Food Commission, London.

Justice at Bhopal

THE UNCERTAIN PROMISE OF LAW: Lessons from Bhopal by Jamie Cassels, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1993, £13.00/\$22.00 (pb) 364pp. ISBN 0-8020-7722-6

The world's worst industrial disaster occurred on the night of 2 December 1984 when a Union Carbide pesticide plant spewed deadly gas over the sleeping city of Bhopal in central India, killing thousands and injuring tens of thousands of people. An industry representative has called the incident the "Hiroshima of the chemical industry".

Jamie Cassels suggests in his preface to *The Uncertain Promise of Law* that Chernobyl may have been worse. But if the yardstick is immediate loss of life, Bhopal is in first place by a wide margin — as far as is known. But why quibble? Both are horrific manifestations of "advanced" technology run amok.

Cassels seeks to answer three questions in this careful, measured and judicious book on a historic tragedy: How did Bhopal happen? What is, and should be, the response of law to the victims of the disaster? What can be learned from the Bhopal tragedy? For the most part, he performs this task well, being sensitive to the intense suffering of the victims which continues to this day.

BOOKS DIGEST

- **RICH FORESTS, POOR PEOPLE:** *Resource Control and Resistance in Java*, by Nancy Lee Peluso, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA and Oxford, 1992, £36/\$56 (hb), 321pp. ISBN 0-520-07377-0.

"Forestry has evolved not only as a science", writes Nancy Peluso, "but also as a political-economic system for resource control". Nowhere is this more evident than Central Java, where conflicts over land and teak have pitted villagers against state foresters since colonial days. Boldly combining political economy, cultural anthropology and history, and densely studded with fruitful insights about peasant power and resistance, Peluso's painstakingly-crafted book makes most writings on environmental politics seem shallow and trivial by comparison.

- **DEVELOPMENT BETRAYED:** *The End of Progress and a Coevolutionary Revisioning of the Future*, by Richard B. Norgaard, Routledge, London and New York, 1994, £12.99/\$18.95 (pb), 280pp. ISBN 0-415-06862-2.

One of the North American academy's most wide-ranging, erudite and theoretically sophisticated writers on the environment synthesizes his views on development, democracy, economics, and cultural and biological evolution in an original "big picture" of the contemporary age.

- **THE CASE AGAINST "FREE TRADE":** *GATT, NAFTA, and the Globalization of Corporate Power*, by Ralph Nader and others, Earth Island Press and North Atlantic Books, San Francisco and Berkeley, CA, (available in Britain from WEC Books, Worthyvale Manor, Camelford PL32 9TT) 1993, £5.00/\$10.00 (pb), 230pp. ISBN 1-55643-169-4.

Essays by 16 activists examine the ideological roots of free trade, discuss trade negotiations and detail the devastating effect these agreements will have on communities and the environment worldwide. In the words of Wendell Berry, "The proposed GATT revisions offend against democracy and freedom, against people's natural concern for bodily and ecological health, and against the very possibility of a sustainable food supply".

- **ECOLOGY, POLICY AND POLITICS:** *Human Well-Being and the Natural World*, by John O'Neill, Routledge, London and New York, 1993, £11.99/\$15.95 (pb), 227pp. ISBN 0-415-07300-6.

In this superbly-written, argument-packed study, John O'Neill critiques both market-based and "deep ecological" approaches to environmental action. Along the way he offers one of the most rigorous, thorough and far-reaching debunkings available of cost-benefit analysis as a decision-making tool.

- **VICTIMS OF DEVELOPMENT:** *Resistance and Alternatives*, by Jeremy Seabrook, Verso, London, 1994, £12.95/\$18.95 (pb), 250pp. ISBN 0-86091-611-1.

Much has been written about the connections among development, economic growth, social justice and the environment, but little on how this "tangle of relationships" affects people in their daily lives, and even less on how people themselves view their experience and struggles. Vivid, first-hand stories ranging from the tenements of São Paulo and the slums of Manila to the inner-city areas of Liverpool and the council estates of rural Cornwall go some way towards filling this gap.

- **THINKING GREEN!** *Essays on Environmentalism, Feminism and Nonviolence*, by Petra K. Kelly, Parallax Press, Berkeley, CA, (distributed in UK by Airlift Books, 26-8 Eden Grove, London N7 8EF) 1994, £15/\$18 (hb), 167pp. ISBN 0-938077-62-7.

A compilation of Petra Kelly's speeches and writings which weave together her vision of green politics as embracing peace, ecology, human rights and nonviolence in everyday life as well as in national and international affairs.

Given the complex character and duration of the events, there are remarkably few errors of fact or omission — but he does slip occasionally. For example, in an effort to discredit the damaging affidavit of Union Carbide's former executive, Edward Munoz, that the key decision to store large quantities of the highly-toxic and unstable methyl iso-cyanate at the Bhopal plant was made in the United States, not India, the company claimed Munoz was in the pay of one of the leading US contingency fee lawyers, Stanley Chesley, not the government of India, as Cassels states.

Cassels also seems unaware that, in the criminal proceedings now at last in progress in Bhopal, Carbide has abandoned its trumped-up theory of sabotage by a disgruntled employee. One of Carbide's senior New York-based lawyers, under strong questioning while giving a talk at Yale Law School, acknowledged that this sabotage "theory" was only a public relations ploy without legal merit. A more serious flaw in the book is the weight Cassels gives to this false theory as a valid Carbide defence.

Another, more pervasive problem with *The Uncertain Promise of Law* is the author's faith in the ability of regulatory regimes such as those in industrialized countries to protect workers and communities from Bhopal-like disasters. Along the Texas Gulf Coast, Union Carbide and the Formosa Plastics Corporation (a Taiwan-based company which makes Carbide look almost saintly) operate extremely hazardous chemical plants where numerous accidents have taken place, killing and injuring dozens of workers. These corporations routinely violate national and state regulations; when relevant agencies such as the US Environmental Protection Agency are informed of these violations, they do not enforce the law.

Cassels believes that multinational corporations have "a pivotal role to play in Third World development" and that it would be another kind of disaster if multinationals "cry foul and . . . threaten capital flight". But the real problem in both South and North is that multinationals have grown so large that they now dominate the global political economy. The 15 largest corporations today have gross incomes greater than the gross domestic products of over 120 countries. We live with the myth that these global giants are accountable to the governments of the countries in which they operate and

need not be subject to international law which is concerned only with relations between nation states.

The reality is that multinationals have become lawless monsters roaming the earth, beyond the reach of any judicial system. In his seminal book *Normal Accidents*, Charles Perrow points out that "in decisions about risks that a few have decided the many cannot do without, the issue is not risk but power". The denouement of the Bhopal disaster has been determined not by legal merit, forensic skill, corporate virtue, government bungling or victim suffering, but by the distribution of economic and political power.

There is nothing uncertain about the promise of the law in a tragedy of such epic proportions. In such circumstances, the law is certain to deliver injustice. It has done just that in the case of Bhopal: a settlement for all the Bhopal damage claims of US\$470 million, negotiated in secret by Carbide and the government of India with the connivance of the Chief Justice of the Indian Supreme Court, works out at an average of \$783 for each of the 600,000 (at least) injured claimants. The Indian government must cover any shortfall in claims, effectively making Indian taxpayers liable for Carbide's gross negligence.

Union Carbide shareholders were charged 43 cents per share for this settlement in a year in which Carbide showed record profits — and Carbide's share price jumped \$2 on the day the settlement was announced. This is a classic case of corporate immunity, as reprehensible as the immunity from prosecution of death squads in Central America.

So much for the promise of the law. With the benefit of hindsight, those of us involved in the struggle for justice for the victims and for accountability from Carbide should have abandoned the courts and taken to the streets much sooner — as the victims themselves did.

Although Cassels appears at times to confuse law with justice, *The Uncertain Promise of Law* is likely to become the definitive work on the Bhopal litigation for some time. It is also a searching analysis of why the law failed the victims of the world's greatest industrial disaster so abysmally.

Ward Morehouse

Ward Morehouse is one of the founders of the International Coalition for Justice in Bhopal and coauthor of *The Bhopal Tragedy and Abuse of Power: The Social Performance of Multinational Corporations*.

BOOKS DIGEST

- **GERMS, SEEDS AND ANIMALS: *Studies in Ecological History***, by Alfred W. Crosby, M. E. Sharpe, Armonk, NY and London, 1994, £14.00/\$17.95 (pb), 232pp. ISBN 1-56324-250-8.

Two years after the Columbus quincentennial, a pioneer "ecological historian" continues his inquiries into how the introduction of exotic diseases helped Europeans triumph in the Americas, how Amerindian crops fed the labourers of the Industrial Revolution, and other aspects of the "mixing, mingling, jumbling and homogenizing" of our planet's biota since 1492.

- **WHO WILL SAVE THE FORESTS? *Knowledge, Power and Environmental Destruction***, edited by Tariq Banuri and Frédérique Apffel Marglin, Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1993, £11.95/\$17.50 (pb), 195pp. ISBN 185649-160-9.

The six scholars who collaborated on this volume argue that modern forestry management compares unfavourably to many other systems of knowledge which shape human-forest interaction. In essays about forest communities in India, Finland and Maine, they show how the dominating way this system of knowledge relates to others has resulted in both deforestation and social breakdown. The book pleads for decentralization of political power and recognition of the validity of a plurality of ways of knowing.

- **VOICES FROM THE ODEYAK**, by Michael Posluns, NC Press Limited, Toronto (distributed in UK by Dundurn Distribution, 73 Lime Walk, Headington OX3 7AD), 1993, £10.95/\$17.95 (pb), 230pp. ISBN 1-55021-070-X.

In April 1990, the *Odeyak*, a half Cree, half-Inuit canoe, travelled down the Hudson River to Manhattan to ask the people of New England and New York not to buy power generated from the proposed James Bay hydro-electric project. Based on interviews with Cree and Inuit elders and youth, environmental activists and those who encountered the *Odeyak* on its journey, *Voices* gives first-hand accounts of grassroots political organizing, lobbying and networking among diverse communities and interests.

- **FEMINISM AND THE MASTERY OF NATURE**, by Val Plumwood, Routledge, London and New York, 1993, £11.99/\$17.95 (pb), 239pp. ISBN 0-415-06810-X.

Val Plumwood maintains that an adequate account of the domination of nature must draw widely on accounts of other forms of domination, particularly those based on gender, race and class, because these categories have constantly interacted with that of "nature". For example, racism, colonialism and sexism have drawn their conceptual strength from casting women and non-White people as closer to the animal and the body. By examining these oppressions, the author develops a critical ecological feminism.

- **FIELDS OF VISION: *Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States*** by Stephen Daniels, Polity Press, Oxford, 1994, £12.95 (pb), 257pp. ISBN 0-745-613543 (Princeton University Press, \$39.50 (hb) ISBN 0-745 604501.

This intriguing volume examines how "the depiction of national identity in landscape [urban and industrial as well as rural] negotiates many other forms of identity: local, regional and international; social, religious and familial". In particular, the author considers paintings which reflect uncertainties about national identities and the "durability and effectiveness of the cultures which have sustained them". For example, in the 1980s, John Constable's painting epitomizing the English countryside, the *Haywain*, was used by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament as an illustration that cruise missiles could be dragged around our country lanes on transporters (or horse carts) carrying three at a time.



Letters

"Normal" Genes

Concerning "The Eugenics of Normalcy" (*The Ecologist*, September/October 1993), the issue is very simple: genetic engineers have an enormously powerful tool without a context in which to understand it. It is only possible to understand the role and meaning of genes by viewing them in their background, a holistic view of genes as taken by population geneticists, such as Lewontin, Ayala and Vanderplank.

The point is that *no gene can be defined as normal*. All genes fall into a distribution curve, a "normal" distribution curve for quantitative characteristics such as height, a binomial curve for qualitative characters such as male or female, and Poisson distribution for unusual characteristics. A standard bell-shaped distribution curve has long tails on either side of the belled median region. But the characteristics found there, such as shortness or tallness, are perfectly "normal", predictable and expected. Indeed, it is their absence which would be remarkable.

Thus the concept of applying genetic engineering to eugenic goals of creating "normal" individuals is scientifically flawed. The irony is that we laud and fete one of the "tails" of normal physical development, the great athletes of the world. By definition, world class athletes are "exceptional" (think of the height of the US basketball team); yet "exceptional" is another word for "not normal". Will the new eugenicists seek to stop exceptionally tall babies from developing to their full potential? Or will only the exceptionally small be treated? Or if you are a basketball fan, will you be able to treat your median son to make him exceptionally tall? The ethical questions here are extremely complex and difficult to solve.

False syllogisms are all too easy to propagate (dogs and tables both have four legs; therefore a dog is a table). Finding

that one gene in a small group of individuals is associated with a particular characteristic tells us that in the group tested, a gene is associated with that characteristic. It does not tie that characteristic to the gene concerned except in the case of the individuals concerned. It is invalid to extrapolate from the specific to the general.

On the question of "gay genes", it is ludicrous to categorize all gay behaviour as being linked to one gene. There may well be one or more identifiable genes linked with sexual orientation, but this possibility is confounded by the political agendas attached to such a "discovery". Too much is at stake to believe such research easily, and it will need very careful validation. Ironically, it will be used both for and against gay people.

Beyond the genes themselves, there is the profound effect of the environment of the expression of the genes. Again, the only valid perspective is that of a population geneticist, that it is the phenotype which is finally expressed in a population, the result of a genotype and the environment it interacts with. Given that humans have the lengthiest childhood and most complex of all animal societies, humans are also the animals on which environment has the greatest impact, and genotype the least.

The simplistic approach and grandiose claims of molecular geneticists to have found *the* gene coding for *this* and *that* behaviour pattern is highly questionable, ignoring most of population genetics. The ethical questions that neo-eugenics raise are enormous. It is an issue too important and too complex just to leave it to the scientists involved in making it happen.

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Man and the Machine

I was very interested, and not a little concerned, to read your editorial "Eggs, Eugenics and Economics" (*The Ecologist*, March/April 1994). I feel the core of the problem, which was not emphasized enough, was that the whole concept of "genetic engineering", starting with the terminology used, reinforces a mechanistic view of the human being as being purely a machine. There is no consideration given to our higher "spiritual" senses.

E F Schumacher developed the problem in his book *A Guide for the Perplexed*:

"We are given a large number of definitions of man [*sic*] which make him out to be nothing but an exceptionally intelligent animal with an unduly large brain, or a tool-making animal, or a political animal, or an unfinished animal, or simply a naked ape . . . Nothing is more conducive to the brutalization of the modern world than the launching in the name of science of wrongful and degraded definitions of man, such as the 'naked ape'. What could one expect of such a creature, of other 'naked apes' or, indeed, of oneself? When people speak of animals as 'animal machines', they soon start treating them accordingly and when they think of people as 'naked apes', all doors are opened to the free entry of bestiality."

With "genetic engineering", have we moved even further down the slippery slope to man as machine?

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501 Political Philosophy

Judas Skelton-Robinson regrets in his review of Noam Chomsky's *Year 501* (*The Ecologist*, November/December 1993) that the author's "scholarly contributions to political philosophy and history have been ignored by academia." The main reason may be, however, other than the Chomsky's "radical, libertarian leanings." Most of us — including most of academia — live in a world affected by international terrorism, Muslim fundamentalism (the two came together in the New York Trade Center bombing) and drug barons, both civilian and military, ranging from Colombia to Burma — excuse me, Myanmar. This may cause some difficulty of connecting with (or even paying attention to) political "philosophers" who inform us (no matter how "convincingly") that these are mere US fabricated pretexts to facilitate the post Cold War continuation of an interventionist foreign policy.

Jaro Mayda

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PORTUGAL

Classified

DIARY DATES

29-31, July 1994: **THE SAVE BRITAIN FROM THE ROAD BUILDERS CAMP** in Hereford and Worcester. Extravaganza of workshops, discussions and shared experiences on how people are fighting off the bulldozers. For more information, send an SAE to Peter Lang, Green & Away, PO Box 40, Malvern, Worcs, WR14 1YS, UK.

31 July, 1994: **WALK FOR THE YANOMAMI** organized by **Survival International**. Walks taking place in London, Oxford, Leeds, Bedford, Powys. For more details, contact Survival Walkathon, 310 Edgware Road, London W2 1DY, UK. Tel: 071-723 5535.

14-21 August, 1994: **TURTLE ISLAND BIOREGIONAL GATHERING VI** at the Ohio River, Nr. Louisville, Kentucky. A self-organizing, cooperative community for a fresh perspective on life. Further details from Ed Paynter, 6140 N College Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46220, USA.

COURSES

Centre for Environmental Management and Planning is holding a variety of seminars and courses in Scotland, Algeria, Brazil, Hungary, Iceland and Kuwait, and a programme in Portugal throughout the year. For details, contact: Brian D Clark, CEMP, Auris Business Centre, 23 St Macher Drive, Old Aberdeen AB2 1RY, Scotland, UK. Tel: 0224 272483; Fax: 0224 487658.

Visiting Research Fellowships, Agrarian Studies, Yale University from September 1995-6. For more information, contact James C Scott, Program in Agrarian Studies, Box 208300, New Haven, Connecticut, CT 06520-8300, USA. Fax +1(203)432 3296.

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DAVID HOLMGREN (co-ordinator of Permaculture) is giving **advanced design workshops**, 30-31 July in Devon and 6-7 August in North Wales; **CHRIS EVANS** and **MIKE FEINGOLD** will teach a **Permaculture Design Course**, 31 July-13 August in Cornwall. For more information, send an SAE to George Sobol, PO Box 1, Buckfastleigh, Devon, TQ11 0LH, UK. Tel: 03643 333.

Environmental Analysis Foundation Course at the University of Sussex. 6-8 September 1994, including hands-on practicals. Contact Jane Davies, Tel: 0248 354103, Fax: 0248 352497.

SITUATIONS VACANT

MINEWATCH support and service a global network of land-based organizations, national and international NGOs and others concerned about the social and environmental impacts of mining. We seek a volunteer to help us extend our information base and to answer inquiries about quarrying, 1-2 days per week, London-based. Tel: 071-609 1852 or write to Minewatch, 218 Liverpool Road, London N1 1LE, UK.

PUBLICATIONS

Slavery in Brazil gives first-hand accounts of debt bondage in forest clearance, charcoal burning, rubber tapping and mining in the Amazon and evidence of the trafficking of women and girls. Available from Anti-Slavery International, Unit 4, Stableyard, Broomgrove Road, London SW9 9TL, Tel: 071-924 9555, Fax: 071-738 4110, price £5.95.

Let Them Be, a booklet and song to raise awareness of the political and cultural aspirations of the people of West Papua and to promote their human rights. For more information, contact Australia West Papua Association, PO Box 1148, Collingwood 3066, AUSTRALIA. Tel: +61 (3) 387 2095, Fax: +61 (3) 4162746.

MISCELLANEOUS

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DIRECT ACTION VIDEO — 30 minutes of footage from environmental campaigns across the world. Contact Earth Action Resource Centre, Box E, 111 Magdalen Road, Oxford, OX4 1RQ, UK. Tel: 0865 201706/202 706; Fax: 0865 201705, e-mail gn:eartharc.

UNDERCURRENTS — the alternative news video. Contains footage from a wide range of issues and campaigns across the country. Produced by **Small World**, a non-profit company set up to support environment and social justice campaign groups. Contact Thomas Harding, Tel: 0865 20270, or Jamie Hartzell, Tel: 071-272 5255.

A **PROJECT** to build **solar heated bedsits and flats** for rent is planned in Mid-Wales. Opportunity for environmentally-conscious people to participate in a housing cooperative framework. Information from David Huw Stephens, Tir Gaia Solar Village, Mid Wales LD6 5DY, Tel: 0597 810929.

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Ralph Nader et al, The Case against Free Trade: GATT, NAFTA and the Globalization of Corporate Power. Essays by leading citizen-oriented trade experts opposing trade agreements that threaten our ecological, agricultural, economical, political and cultural ideals. 230pp, paperback, 1994, £5.

Michael McCoy and Patrick McCully, The Road from Rio. An NGO action guide to environment and development. Read here what was agreed and disagreed at the UNCED Earth Summit, which organizations are making the decisions for the future and what strategies NGOs should adopt for environment and development. 112pp, paperback, 1994, £9.99.

Vandana Shiva, Monocultures of the Mind: Biodiversity, Biotechnology and the Third World. The North's approach to scientific understanding has led to a system of monoculture in agriculture, which is foisted on the South, resulting in a sterile planet. 184pp, paperback, 1993, £6.

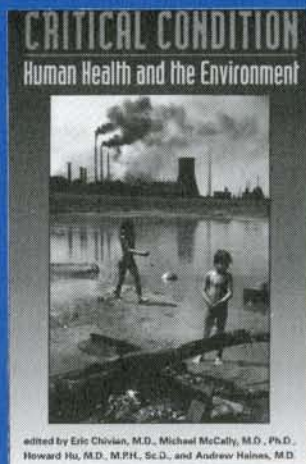
Alla Yaroshinskaya, Chernobyl: The Forbidden Truth. A devastating tale of bureaucratic intrigue, as young and old are left to this day to burn alive in the radiation aftermath of the world's worst nuclear accident so far. 144pp and photographs, paperback, 1994, £8.99.

Marcus Colchester and Larry Lohmann (eds.), The Struggle for Land and the Fate of the Forests. Based on six countries, the book illustrates the complexity of the problem, with a large section discussing future options to avoid total destruction of the ecosystems. 389pp, paperback, 1993, £9.

Bharat Dogra, Living for Others: Vimla and Sunderal Bahuguna. An inspiring story about the couple who led the Chipko movement. 64pp, paperback with b&w photos. **Now £1.50.**

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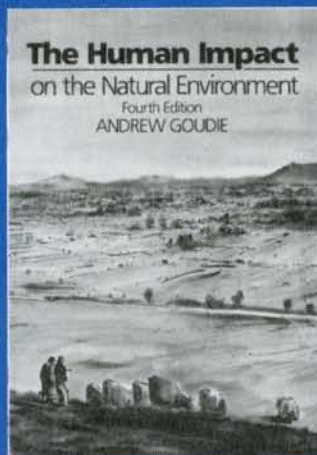
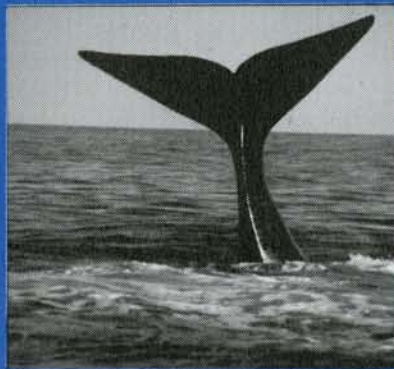
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