

# The Ecologist

September/October 1994

## CAMPAIGNS

### McDonalds Under Scrutiny

THE NUTRITIONAL quality of McDonalds food, the welfare of animals raised for the company and its packaging have been scrutinized recently as part of the defence in the British trial of two campaigners who McDonalds' are suing for libel (see CAMPAIGNS May/June 1994).

A former Assistant Attorney General of Texas told the court that in 1987 the Attorney Generals of Texas, California and New York asked McDonalds to withdraw its "deceptive" advertising campaign which claimed its food was nutritious. McDonalds memos were read to the court, one saying "We can't really address or defend nutrition", another that its advertising "aimed to neutralize junk food misconceptions about McDonalds good food". Verner Wheelock, an expert witness for McDonalds, explained he defined "nutritious" as "has nutrients".

The court heard that a site visit to a McDonalds meat supplier found that 44 percent of chickens had leg abnormalities because they were fattened up so rapidly. On the slaughter of cattle for McDonalds,

a witness admitted "the accuracy of shooting was not particularly good".

Paul Preston, McDonalds UK Presi-



dent, said in court that, for every million drinks sold, only 100 to 150 cups end up as litter. He also claimed that styrofoam packaging is less environmentally-damaging than washable plates and cutlery, although Professor Duxbury, another expert witness for McDonalds, admitted that the company's styrofoam blowing agent, pentane, contributes to smog formation

and the greenhouse effect.

McDonalds Corporation Environmental Affairs Director Robert Langert, accepted in court that CFCs, formerly used in McDonalds packaging, were banned by US Congress as an aerosol propellant in 1978, but claimed that McDonalds were not aware until the mid-1980s that CFCs cause ozone depletion. The trial is expected to continue into next year.

Meanwhile Operation Send-It-Back has been launched, encouraging people to collect some of the ten million kilos of waste produced each year by McDonalds in the UK and send it back to them. In the US, such action helped force the withdrawal of styrofoam "clamshells" for burgers.

**DONATIONS** are urgently needed for court expenses to McLibel Support Campaign, c/o 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, Tel/Fax: 071 713 1269, or McLibel Support Campaign (USA), c/o PO Box 120, East Calais, VT 056650. Make cheques payable to McLibel Support Campaign.

**McPROTESTS:** picket McDonalds UK Head Office, 11-59 High Road, London N2 (by East Finchley tube), 4.30-6.30pm, 14 October or send McWaste there. March Against McDonalds, Starting Euston Station, London, Noon on 15 October.

### Rubber Tappers Fear New Campaign

ON 9 JUNE Brazilian military police arrested Edson Silva, an adviser to the rubber-tapper movement in the forest community of Nova Esperança, Acre state. Doctors who examined him confirm that he was beaten and tortured.

The state prosecutor has falsely accused four leading rubber tapper figures with inciting violence and targeted them for arrest or harassment. Rubber tappers in Xapuri, where the movement once led by Chico Mendes was started, fear a new campaign of violence to undermine the gains made by the rural workers' twenty years of non-violent struggle. Five "extractive reserves" have been granted for communities to harvest non-wood products, and four others are proposed.

In June, the rubber-tapper community of Nova Esperança prevented the logging of a further thousand acres of rainforest by organizing an *empate*, or non-violent blockade of the bulldozers. However, rancher aggression is increasing, and one rancher, Marcos Carvalho, recently encroached and clearcut an area with 1,000 rubber trees and IBAMA, the Brazilian environmental agency, has approved the clearcutting and burning of over 60,000 hectares of forest in Acre.

**WRITE**, expressing concern about the loss of rubber trees and the violence against the rubber-tapper movement to Judge Maria Tapajós Santana, Rua Floriano Peixoto S/N, 69.930-000 Xapuri - Acre, BRAZIL.

**SEND COPIES TO:** Beto Borges, RAN, 450 Sansome, Suite 700, San Francisco, CA 94111, USA, e-mail rainforest@igc.apc.org

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#### The Ecologist

##### CAMPAIGNS

This section highlights current campaigns, suggests how to support them and gives updates on feature articles. Send details of any campaigns to:

Alex Wilks, The Ecologist (Campaigns), Agriculture Hse, Bath Road, Sturminster Newton, Dorset, DT10 1DU, UK, E-mail: ecologist@gn.apc.org, Fax: 0258 473748. No copyright on Campaigns.

## Colombian Flower Protests Grow

COLOMBIA IS the second largest flower producer in the world and Britain's second largest supplier after The Netherlands. Christian Aid has launched a campaign in support of Colombians pressing the flower industry to improve working conditions, especially on pesticide use.

About 20 per cent of the pesticides used are banned or unregistered in Europe and the US. Some companies send workers into greenhouses within an hour of plants being sprayed, leading to fainting, nausea, skin irritations, miscarriages and premature births. US guidelines recommend staying outside greenhouses for 12 to 48 hours after spraying.

Colombia banned 7 organo-chloride pesticides earlier this year (including lindane and endosulfan) but organophosphates such as ethyl parathion and malathion are still allowed. Malnutrition and lack of water — common in the



savannah region of Colombia — heighten the impact of the chemicals which can affect the central nervous system (see *The Ecologist*, May/June 1994).

Workers trying to organise independent trade unions among the flower industry's 70,000 employees have been sacked and blacklisted. Now the Colombian government has introduced Ley 50 (Law 50) which allows workers to be hired on short-term contracts of three, four or six months with no reason needed for termination after this time.

Campaigners want British flower importers to buy only from companies which respect workers' right to organize, hire employees on indefinite contracts, respect maternity laws, avoid banned pesticides, and offer employees regular health tests.

**WRITE TO:** Anthony McAlister, Chair, Flower Import Trade Association, Town Mill, Bagshot Road, Chobham, SURREY GU24 8BZ, UK.

## Pesticide Progress

**HARD LOBBYING** and intimidation of activists by German multinational Hoechst has not stopped the Philippines government banning the company's endosulfan and triphenyltin pesticides (see *CAMPAIGNS* March/April 1994).

Fernando Hilario of the Pesticide Action Group stressed that, to ensure compliance after the June deadline, "citizen vigilance is even more necessary now".

**NOW AVAILABLE:** *Citizens, Pesticides, Hoechst*, US\$10 from PAN Asia and the Pacific, PO Box 1170, 1850 Penang, MALAYSIA.

● The Svarna Hansa Foundation in Sri Lanka says international pressure helped persuade the new government to write off farmers' cultivation loans (See *CAMPAIGNS* July/August 1994). Svarna Hansa is, however, still concerned about farmers' private debts to local money-lenders, and the lack of alternatives to chemical inputs.

● Environmentalist pressure has forced Germany to agree to take back 400 tonnes of toxic pesticides which it sent to Albania (See *CAMPAIGNS*, May/June 1994).

## Biotech Destroyed

IN AUGUST activists destroyed genetically-engineered plants worth over \$6 million in a test field belonging to AgrEvo, an agrochemicals joint venture between German multinationals Hoechst and Schering.

It is not known who carried out the attack in Gersthofen, southern Germany, but it is not the first time experimental genetic crops have been destroyed by groups concerned about government inaction over biotech innovations and their possible effects on natural genetic patterns.

AgrEvo recently applied to the EU for permission to market bioengineered rapeseed that is resistant to AgrEvo's pesticide Basta (see *CAMPAIGNS*, May/June 1994). In Denmark, the public and parliament rejected the application, but no other EU country has undertaken a public consultation, and the EU Council of Ministers is likely to override Denmark. The EU has received over 100 applications for pesticide-resistant crops.

## Labelling Danger

IN OCTOBER the US is expected to oppose labelling for genetically-engineered foods at the Codex Alimentarius Commission, GATT's food safety standards body (see *The Ecologist* May/June 1993).

In response the Pure Food Campaign is coordinating a joint statement calling for pre-market testing and labelling of all genetically-engineered foods.

**CONTACT:** Pure Food Campaign, 1130 Seventeenth Street, N.W., Suite 300, Washington DC 20036, USA, Tel: +1 202 775 1132.

## Bank Raid Blocked

IN WHAT a Malaysian official called a "dawn raid", the World Bank recently tried to take over the Consultative Group on International Agriculture (CGIAR), which controls the world's most important collection of gene banks. Once the news leaked out, however, governments and NGOs combined to block the Bank, although groups fear it may try again.

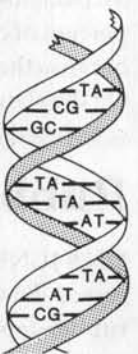
**CONTACT:** GRAIN, Jonqueres 16, 6<sup>o</sup>D, E-08003 Barcelona, SPAIN, Tel: +34 3 310 5952.

## Gene Robbery

A RECENT US Supreme Court judgement will help biotechnology companies take and use genetic material from people without their consent or benefit.

In the 1980s, John Moore, a leukemia patient in a California University hospital, had cells taken from him by doctors and later patented to make drugs. Lower courts accepted Moore's case that he should share in any profits derived from his cell-line. The Supreme Court has overruled this, stating "unencumbered access to human tissue for research is essential to progress and human health . . . [If the] plaintiff is permitted to have decision-making authority and a financial interest in the cell line, he would then have the unlimited power to inhibit medical research that could potentially benefit humanity".

**CONTACT:** No Patents On Life, Blauenstrasse 15, CH - 4142 Münchenstein, SWITZERLAND.





## Roads Or People?

A FOUR-LANE beltway road threatens to evict 300 families from a shantytown in São Paulo, Brazil. People who have lived there for 20 years only became aware of the threat when they saw officials surveying the land.

The City of São Paulo is building the road with funds from the Inter-American Development Bank. A local activist commented "If the families are forced to leave, where would they go in a city with a housing deficit of one million homes?"

**WRITE**, asking that community leaders are consulted about the road, and that everyone displaced by the project is given adequate compensation, to: Enrique V. Iglesias, President, Inter-American Development Bank, 1300 New York Avenue, NW, Washington DC, 20577, USA.

- In Glasgow, Scotland, people have declared independence at a camp in the path of the M77 motorway threatening the city's largest remaining greenbelt.

- The UK Department of Transport has applied for injunctions against protesters at the M11 Link Road, London who have just celebrated a year of action.

- The alliance of groups opposing the Newbury bypass will picket the Department of Transport on 27 October.

**UK ROAD CONTACTS:** Glasgow: 041 636 1924; M11, London: 081 558 2638; Newbury: 0635 46524.

## Eviction Protests

**PROTESTS** against the World Bank on its fiftieth anniversary have focussed on its eviction of millions of people without proper compensation.

Among other protests, a squatter settlement was built outside the Bank's Washington office, while its London office was occupied by activists.

A new report by *The Ecologist* on the World Bank and evictions shows that:

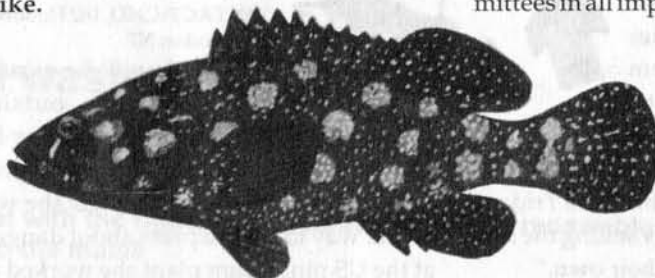
- Bank estimates of the number of people being evicted by its projects omitted over 620,000 people, an error of 47 per cent.
- The income of families evicted by the Kiambere dam project in Kenya dropped by 82 per cent.

**FOR THE REPORT:** send £2 to The Ecologist. Also available from The Ecologist, Public Interest Research Group's *The World Bank and India*, £4.

- Thousands of Indonesians evicted by the Bank-funded Kedung Ombo dam may be owed massive extra compensation after a recent Supreme Court ruling.

## Indian Fishers Strike Against TNCs

**INDIAN** fishworkers opposing the government's deep sea fishing policy held a country-wide strike on 24 February, a "Black Day" of protest marches on 20 July, and are threatening an indefinite strike.



New government fishing policy gives multinationals open access to the sea beyond 22km. They can export their whole catch in exchange for only 12 percent of their earnings and have been offered incentives including diesel purchases at a quarter the local price.

Tom Kochery, Chair of the National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF), said "this new central government fishing policy of opening up the seas to foreign vessels that are 100 per cent export orientated, would displace 7.5 million active fishworkers and deprive 300 million Indian consumers of cheap protein". Many government com-

mittees also warn against the new policy, partly because only 20 out of 148 deep sea fishing boats off India are making money, the rest are deep in debt.

The NFF has established Harbour Committees in all important harbours "to identify and report on foreign vessels — to block and impound if required".

The coalition of the NFF, the Small Mechanized Boat Owners Associations, the Associations of Whole Sale Fish Merchants, and the Processing Plants and Exporters is now planning an indefinite strike.

They have given the government of India notice that the strike will start on 23 November unless it revokes the joint venture licences of the multi-national operators and "reviews the deep sea policy in ways which ensure the life and livelihoods of fisherfolk and the sustainability of the resources".

**CONTACT:** National Fisheries Action Committee against Joint Venture, 41-1771 Kochi 682 018, INDIA.

## Tourism Threatens Tribals, Fishers

**ON 5 JUNE**, tribals in Tamil Nadu, South India, protested against a proposed open-air zoo and tourist centre.

The zoo project, mainly designed for foreign tourists, would take up 400 acres of land of which 300 are government-owned, but inhabited by tribals who have been unable to get land titles. Tribals from Thoovaipatty, a village in Coimbatore District, have opposed the scheme since 1989, but have suffered harassment from officials and hired thugs they believe are linked to the developers, the Coimbatore Zoological Society. The village hall and some houses have been destroyed. Welfare programmes have been promised, but the tribals think this is only a ruse to stop them defending their land.

**WRITE TO:** Dr Ms. J. Jayalitha, Chief Minister of Tamilnadu, Fort St. George, Madras, Tamilnadu, INDIA. Ask for a judicial probe into the alleged harassment of tribals, and that land titles be granted to them, not to the tourist centre.

- Inhabitants of a Garifuna (ex-slave) community in Guatemala are being denied access to their fishing grounds by an eco-tourism project. Four communities on the Cayos Cochinos islands face a decree banning them from fishing within 9km of the islands. Soldiers have been stationed to enforce the decree, although local people point out that it is commercial fishing and tourist diving on the coral reefs which have damaged fish stocks.



**WRITE TO:** Presidente de la República de Honduras, Dr. Carlos Roberto Roina, Casa Presidencial, Col. Miraflores, Tegucigalpa, HONDURAS, CA, fax: +504 378 521. Ask for a moratorium on the eco-tourism project as long as the local people are excluded from their means of subsistence and from participating in the project.

**SEND COPY TO:** OFRRANEH, Apdo. Post. 341, La Ceiba, HONDURAS, CA.

## Major Protests Against Nuclear Weapons

A CND MARCH in London on October 29 will call for a complete worldwide ban on nuclear weapons.

CND says "at the moment countries with nuclear weapons tell other countries that they can't have them because they are not to be trusted. At the same time they are building new and more powerful nuclear weapons such as Britain's Trident for themselves and quietly selling the rest the technology to make their own."

CND is asking people to sign its detailed Charter for Nuclear Disarmament



before the negotiations for the renewal of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty in April 1995.

MARCH from Temple Tube, noon, Sat. 29 October. CONTACT: CND, 162 Holloway Rd., London N7.

● There will be a camp and actions outside Sellafield on November 11-

14, the 20th anniversary of Karen Silkwood's mysterious death as she was on her way to tell the press about dangers at the US plutonium plant she worked at.

CONTACT: Shut Sellafield, Dept 66, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW, Tel: 0706 371 387.

## Textile, Asbestos Workers Make Links

BRITISH BUSINESSMAN Reginald Brealey is the focus of a campaign to expose how "British and foreign employers are being allowed into India to exploit workers and drain resources out of the country under policies dictated by the World Bank and the IMF".

The 20,000 workers at the four jute mills controlled by Brealey's company, Titagur plc, are owed five years' statutory bonuses and more than six months wages. When workers protested in 1993, police fired on them and raided their homes. Campaigners in Britain have staged protests and joined with the mainly Turkish/Kurdish textile workers in Hack-

ney, London, who also suffer police harassment when they complain about working conditions.

CONTACT: Brealey Jute Workers Support, c/o Londec, Instrument Hse., 205-217 King's Cross Rd., London WC1X 9DB.

● Asbestos workers have also set up an international network, to call for a ban on asbestos, after a meeting in Brazil attended by a UK asbestos campaigner. At one company he visited in Brazil the workers make car parts using asbestos without proper safety clothes and the employer lays them off after three months.

MORE DETAILS: Hull Asbestos Action Group, 123 Cambridge St., Anlaby Road, Hull HU3 2EE.

## TV Advert Banned

COMPLAINTS BY environmentalists have forced the withdrawal from British television of an advert made by the Indonesian Forestry Community, a consortium of forest concessionaires and industrialists.

The advert claimed forest clearcutting was not allowed in Indonesia and that 79 per cent of forested land had been made into permanent forest. The Independent Television Commission upheld the complaints, saying it "received evidence to suggest that, despite the practices being illegal, clearcutting goes on in protected or limited production forest".

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact: Down To Earth, PO Box 3618, London N6 5PP.

## Arun Resignation

A SENIOR World Bank official has taken early retirement over the Bank's handling of the Arun dam in Nepal.

Martin Karcher, a Division Chief in the Bank's South Asia Department, is leaving the Bank after 29 years because he believes the Bank has not been open enough with critics and that its economic analysis of the dam is unrealistic, estimating for example that consumers will be willing to pay between seven and eight times the amount that they are currently paying for their electricity. The Bank has frequently postponed its decision on whether to lend to the controversial dam which would cost a year's national budget for Nepal (see CAMPAIGNS Nov/Dec 1994).

## Time At Watts Bar?

IN JULY 58 people were arrested for blocking the road outside the Watts Bar Nuclear Facility, Tennessee, USA.

The Facility, started by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) in 1972, was expected to cost \$325 million, but is still unfinished and has cost \$7.2 billion. The TVA, a government agency, has frequently had to postpone opening because of safety problems and is deep in debt after funding nine nuclear plants. Across the USA nuclear plants are being shut early, and no new plant has been ordered since the 1970s.

CONTACT: Earth First!, PO Box 281, Chattanooga, TN 37401, USA

## IN BRIEF ●●●●●●●●●●

### ● NEW GATT REPORT

"Trading Away US Food Safety" is a new report by Public Citizen and the Environmental Working Group. The report explains how, if GATT is ratified, health and safety laws could be challenged as "illegal trade barriers" before secretive panels of experts with little input from the public and how its food standards would allow more cancer-causing residues on food in about 300 cases.

CONTACT: Public Citizen, 215 Pennsylvania Ave., SE, Washington DC 20003, USA.

### ● RETAILERS AGAINST BST

The British Retail Consortium, representing 90 per cent of British retailing, has stated "We strongly support the continuation of the moratorium [on BST] until such a time when it might be possible to ensure that milk and milk products from cows treated with BST can be labelled as such."

### ● CLIMATE OUTCRY

The Global Commons Institute is coordinating a letter protesting against climate change economists' "global cost benefit analysis" which values a Chinese life at ten times less than a US life.

TO SIGN, contact: Global Commons Institute, 42 Windsor Rd., London NW2 5OS.

### ● CJB PROTESTS

There have been major protests against the Criminal Justice Bill all over the UK. For details of future protests and musical events against the Bill near you, phone the Freedom Network on 071 738 6721.