

# The Ecologist

January/February 1995

## CAMPAIGNS

### Opencast Miners Plunder Wales

**WALES AGAINST Opencast (WAO) and Sustainable Wales have launched a new campaign manual, *Wales For Sale!, Opencast Mining and Privatization*, which condemns opencast coal mining as environmentally destructive and of little benefit to Welsh people.**

Since 1983, approvals have been granted to opencast mine areas of England, Scotland and Wales amounting to 93 square miles. A quarter of UK coal is now opencast. Combined with the increase in coal imports and gas-fired power stations, opencast mining has contributed to the closure of many of Britain's deep mines. The privatization of British Coal will lead to more companies applying for opencast mines.

Opencast mining employs four to five times fewer people per tonne of coal than deep mining and needs an average of 10 to 20 times more land. Opencast mined coal is marginally cheaper than deep mined coal, but WAO comments that "if the true costs to a community of restoration of opencast sites, damage to minor roads by opencast lorries, water pollution, planning blight and other opencast-created problems were used in calculating the price of coal, then this form of

mining would be far less profitable".

Although planning law treats opencast mines as a "temporary" use of the land and companies commit themselves to "restoring" the land to as near as possible its original state, WAO says that restored sites are "a bland, prairie-style land-



James Cox

scape, usually dotted with 'alien' species such as sitka spruce". Water regimes on the land and downstream are often severely disrupted, and historical and cultural sites are destroyed.

High asthma rates have been reported near opencast mines, while doctors near the Glynneath mines in West Glamorgan claimed in 1989 that opencasting aggravates a range of health complaints.

WAO suggests that communities confronted with opencast mining applications use the government's newly-issued

Mineral Planning Guidance Note 3 which, unlike previous guidance, does not state that coal mining is in the national interest or that opencast coal is a low cost resource.

**THE MANUAL** *Wales For Sale!, Opencast Mining and Privatization*, is available from Wales Against Opencast, 11 Park Avenue, Porthcawl, Mid Glam. CF36 5EP, voluntary groups £5, others £12.50.

### UK Land Reform Bid

A NEW campaign in Britain, The Land Is Ours, proposes four elements of land reform: universal right of access to the countryside; restitution of urban common spaces; requirement of planning permission for agricultural development; and facilitation of permission to build low-impact housing so that people can live on their own land.

A land occupation in April will press these demands and challenge the exclusive private ownership of land.

The week-long occupation will start on 23 April. Meet at the Cooltan Centre, 372 Coldharbour Lane, London SW9 at 9.30 am. For information, send SAE to: Land Reform, Box E, 111 Magdalen Road, Oxford OX4, E-mail: [eartharc@gn.apc.org](mailto:eartharc@gn.apc.org)

### Navajo Tackle Peabody Coal at AGM

**REPRESENTATIVES OF the Navajo Native American people recently protested in London at the annual general meeting of Hanson plc, parent company of Peabody Coal which is strip-mining coal on traditional Navajo land in Arizona.**

The Navajo say that Peabody has forcibly relocated about 250 families, disturbed sacred sites, caused wells and streams to dry up and produced large quantities of coal dust. They maintain that selenium pollution is affecting human and animal health and condemn the company's efforts to reclaim mined land:

the Navajo want cedar trees and herbs, not "foreign" hay and grass recommended by company scientists.

At the Hanson AGM, the Navajo demanded the return of their grazing lands, a regional water and health assessment, a health care plan and an end to harassment of residents who do not want to move.

**WRITE**, supporting these demands, to: Lord Hanson, Hanson plc., 1 Grosvenor Place, London SW1X 7HJ, UK.

**CONTACT:** Peabody Watch, 412 South Beaver Street, Flagstaff, Arizona 86001, USA, or Minewatch, 218 Liverpool Rd., London N1, UK. Minewatch is asking people to write to their Local Authority to press them not to invest pension funds in Hanson. Write to Minewatch for details.

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#### CAMPAIGNS

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

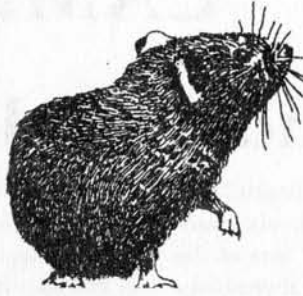
Alex Wilks, The Ecologist (Campaigns), Agriculture House, Bath Road, Sturminster Newton, Dorset, DT10 1DU, UK, E-mail: [ecologist@gn.apc.org](mailto:ecologist@gn.apc.org), Fax: 01258 473748. No copyright on Campaigns.

## Good News on Life Patenting

THE EUROPEAN Parliament has voted against a directive that would have allowed companies to patent living organisms. The vote followed a successful campaign by the Green Group in the European Parliament and farming, environmental, medical and human rights groups.

GRAIN, one of the groups which campaigned against the directive since it was first tabled in 1988, called the vote "a strong political message to the entire world that patenting life is immoral and inadmissible". The failure of the European directive means that rules on patenting living organisms will continue to be made by individual countries or by the European Patent Office under the European Patent Convention.

Another success for the European campaigners against the patenting of living



organisms was the February decision by the European Patent Office to uphold a Greenpeace appeal against a patent application on genetically-engineered herbicide resistant rapeseed.

The original patent, granted in 1990 to Plant Genetic Systems (Belgium) and Biogen (USA), has had six claims deleted. The patent now covers only the genetically-engineered plant cells and the techniques for inserting them into the plant, and excludes the whole plant, its seeds and future plant generations. Greenpeace believes that biotechnology companies will now be unable to make farmers pay royalties to replant genetically-engineered crop seed.

**CONTACT:** Patent Concern, 5-11 Worship St., London EC2, UK, E-mail: geneticforum@gn.apc.org  
GRAIN, Girona 25, pral., E-08010 Barcelona, SPAIN, E-mail: grain@gn.apc.org

## Doubts on EU Genetic Screening

EU AUTHORIZATION to market Raboral V-RG — a genetically-engineered virus developed for use in a vaccine against rabies in rural foxes (see *The Ecologist*, Nov/Dec 1994) — seems imminent, while US authorities are also considering licensing the vaccine.

So far the EU has not permitted the vaccine to go on general sale, but only allowed it to be used in trials. When authorizing the trials, the EU overruled objections that there has been no critical evaluation of the virus' potential to exchange genetic information with other poxviruses or be transmitted to humans. EU marketing consent has also been given for another genetically-engineered viral

vaccine, Aujesky Pseudorabies, and for genetically-engineered herbicide-resistant tobacco.

The EC has proposed that the directives on the deliberate release of genetically-engineered organisms be streamlined to remove "unnecessary regulatory burden" on the European biotechnology industry. However Greenpeace and others believe the Raboral V-RG case demonstrates that existing regulation is already too weak to protect human health and the environment.

**CONTACT:** Ruth McNally, Genetics Forum, 14A Elthorne Road, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 2PS, UK, Tel: 01895 259 058, E-mail: r-mcnall@uwe.ac.uk

## Genetic Engineering Signature Request

THIRD WORLD Network is circulating two statements against genetic engineering, one intended for signature by scientists and one by NGOs.

The statements warn that the claimed benefits of genetically-engineered organisms (GEOs) have been exaggerated and that they involve unpredictable risks, es-

pecially to peoples' health and to natural ecosystems. They recommend a moratorium on commercial releases of GEOs until there is a full public debate and an appropriate international agreement.

**FOR DETAILS** of the statements, contact: Third World Network, 228 Macalister Road, 10400 Penang, MALAYSIA, Tel: +60 4 3735 11, E-mail: tw@igc.apc.org

## Fish Victory

INDIAN FISHERS have persuaded the government to stop issuing fishing licences to foreign companies seeking deep sea fishing joint ventures.

Food processing minister Gogoi said the foreign investment ban would remain until a committee reviews the impacts of the government's 1991 deep sea fishing policy on traditional fishworkers. Over ten million fishworkers have been agitating against foreign industrial trawlers, because intensive fishing has deprived artisanal fishers of their livelihoods and raised the price of fish (see *CAMPAIGNS*, Nov/Dec 1994).

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

## McLibel Continues

THE LIBEL case brought by McDonalds against two unwaged campaigners (see *CAMPAIGNS*, Sept/Oct 1994) has been in court for 100 days and may continue until September 1995.

Helen Steel and Dave Morris, defending themselves, have secured many interesting admissions from McDonalds, including evidence that the company used beef from Brazil. Over the next few months, the trial will cover issues such as employment and rainforest destruction.

**CONTACT:** McLibel Support Campaign, c/o 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX. Send cheques made out to McLibel Support Campaign for donations to cover witness and other costs.

ON APRIL 15, McDonalds' 40th anniversary, there will be an international day of action against McDonalds.

## Stone Deaths

IN NOVEMBER 1994, paper company Stone Container cancelled its planned wood chip mill at Punta Estrella, in the Golfo Dulce on Costa Rica's Pacific coast after opposition from environmentalists (see *CAMPAIGNS*, Sept/Oct 1993).

But in mid-December, three of the environmentalists who had played leading roles in the campaign were killed in a housefire. The cause of the fire remains unknown, but the Asociacion Ecologista Costarricense, of which the environmentalists were members, is conducting its own investigation.

**CONTACT:** AECO, Fax: + 506 223 3925, E-mail: aecoo@nicarao.apc.org



## Nuke "Colonialism"

LATIN AMERICAN NGOs are campaigning to stop Canadian companies AECL and Hydro Ontario building nuclear power plants in their countries. Raul Montenegro, President of Argentinian NGO FUNAM, appealed to Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien to stop Canada's "policy of nuclear colonialism which threatens to increase both foreign debt and environmental risks in Latin America".

In Central America, Honduras and Guatemala have already refused offers of Canadian nuclear reactors, the latter because of a campaign by FUNAM. Demonstrations and legal action are now planned in Chile, where Canadian companies want to build a \$1.7 billion reactor. Chilean NGO Instituto de Ecología Política says Chile is being pressed to buy a reactor as a way of strengthening its case for becoming a member of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

**CONTACT:** FUNAM, Casilla de Correo 83, Correo Central (5000), Córdoba, ARGENTINA, Tel: +54 51 69 02 82.

## Anti-NAFTA Move

A MAPUCHE indigenous peoples' conference has criticized Chilean government moves to sign NAFTA.

The Mapuche maintained autonomy from the Spanish invaders until the nineteenth century and now number about one and a half million; most in Chile and some in Argentina. Their conference expressed concerns about natural resource extraction and intellectual property rights and condemned "the colonialist nature of the free trade agreement [which] implies a genocide and ecocide for indigenous peoples, [and] stands in contrast to the indigenous economies of reciprocity and self-sustainability".

They appealed to the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas organization to discuss a common position on free trade and asked that concerned movements worldwide join indigenous peoples in facing "the continental and global assault of neoliberalism, based on productive accumulation of material wealth, putting the future of humanity and the planet at risk."

**CONTACT:** Aukin Wallmapu Ngulam, Mackenna 152, Casilla 448, Temuco, CHILE, Tel/Fax: +56 45 235 697.

## Macuxi Removed For Brazilian Dam

ON 7 JANUARY, Roraima State military police and Brazilian soldiers invaded a Macuxi Indian community which has been opposing plans to build the Cotingo River hydroelectric dam in North-Eastern Brazil. The police and soldiers expelled 400 Indians, seriously injuring two of them and destroyed three houses.

The dam, which the state government of Roraima wants to build in the Raposa / Serra do Sol indigenous area, would flood nearly 4,000 hectares, displace about 3,400 people, ruin local fisheries and hasten land acquisition by companies planting soya monocultures. Dam opponents are also concerned about the roads which would be built to service the dam.

The ex-Governor of Roraima plans to head a consortium of companies to build the project for the state electricity company, CER. Even the national electricity company, Eletrobras, has criticized the project's environmental and social planning. Since the expulsion, and the resulting negative publicity, the National De-



partment of Waters and Electrical Energy has officially told the Electricity Company of Roraima that the dam will require approval by the National Congress because of its likely impact on indigenous lands.

The Pro-Indian Commission of Sao Paulo and the Indigenous Council of Roraima have appealed for people to write to the Brazilian authorities to protest about the military action, demand that those responsible be punished, and ask for a complete social and environmental impact study for the dam project and the demarcation of Raposa Serra do Sul Indian area.

**WRITE TO:** Exc. Sr. Presidente Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Presidente da Republica Federativa do Brasil, Palacio do Planalto, 3 andar, 70.159-970 Brasilia, DF, BRAZIL, Fax: +55 61 226 7566, or Governador Neudo Campos, Palacio Senador Helio Campos, Praca do Centro Civico, s/no - Centro, 69.300 Boa Vista, Roraima, BRAZIL, FAX: +55 95 6243 2440.

**CONTACT:** International Rivers Network, 1847 Berkeley Way, CA 94703, USA, E-mail: [irn@igc.apc.org](mailto:irn@igc.apc.org), Survival International, 11-15 Emerald Street, London WC1N 3QL, UK.

## Nigerian Oil Activist on Trial

KEN SARO-WIWA, spokesperson for the Ogoni people in Nigeria's Niger Delta region and campaigner against pollution by Shell Oil, faces a possible death sentence after his arrest as part of a military clampdown which has been linked to Shell's operations.

Thousands of Ogoni have protested against the effects of oil spills, pipeline ruptures and gas flaring from Shell's operations. They have received little or no compensation for Shell's oil drilling in the area which started in 1958 and now supplies 14 per cent of all Shell's oil.

Shell has repeatedly denied any responsibility for the persecution of the Ogoni people, but an internal Nigerian government memo, dated 12 May 1994, suggests that atrocities and human rights violations in Ogoniland were planned to assist Shell. The memo, issued by Major P.



Okuntimo, chair of the Rivers State internal security, states: "Shell operations still impossible unless ruthless military operations are undertaken for smooth economic activities to commence." It details that 400 soldiers should undertake "wasting operations" on Ogoni leaders who are "especially vocal individuals". Nine days after this memo was issued four Ogoni leaders were killed.

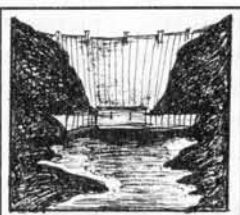
Ken Saro-Wiwa, arrested a few days later, now faces a trial by a special military court. Amnesty International and the European Parliament have accepted him as a prisoner of conscience, while Greenpeace, the Body Shop and others are demanding that Saro-Wiwa be given a fair and open hearing and that Shell accept its responsibility for the situation.

**WRITE TO:** C. Herkströter, CEO, Shell International, Shell Centre, London SE1 7NA, UK.

## World Bank Limits Arun Study

THE WORLD Bank has announced that its Inspection Panel will investigate the environmental aspects of the Arun III dam, Nepal. Nepali NGO Arun Concerned Group, however, accuses Bank management of misrepresenting the Panel and using its influence to ensure that alternatives to the \$764 million Arun project are not investigated further (see *The Ecologist*, May/June 1994).

The Inspection Panel's 16 December Memorandum noted "the absence of a close study of alternatives" to Arun, a finding which Bank management misrepresented to the Bank's Board so that it excluded the study of alternatives. Public



participation and access to information have also been omitted and the Panel has been told it may only go to Nepal after the new Nepalese Government formally requests Bank financing for the project as it stands.

The Arun case, the Inspection Panel's first, shows the Bank Board's power to limit the work of this supposedly "independent" body, but outside pressure may still be able to force the Board to accept Nepali demands that the Panel investigate project alternatives, access to project information and public participation in project planning.

**WRITE TO:** Lewis Preston, President, The World Bank, 1818 H Street, Washington DC 20433, USA.

## US Seeks To Undo Basel Waste Ban

A LEAKED US State Department memo reveals that the US is trying to undermine the Basel Convention agreement prohibiting the export of hazardous waste from the world's 25 most industrialized — OECD — countries to poor countries.

OECD countries produce 98 per cent of the world's annual waste of 400 million tons, 40 million tons of which they export to poor countries. In March 1994, member countries of the Basel Convention agreed to an immediate ban on the movement of hazardous waste for disposal and a ban

starting in 1997 for hazardous waste destined for "recycling" (see *The Ecologist* March/April 1994, May/June 1994).

The ban was supported by 120 countries, including the EU, but not the US, which has still not ratified the original Basel Convention. Under pressure from the US Chamber of Commerce and the US waste industry, the US is trying to "promote the US view that categorical trade bans are undesirable" and thus to overturn or weaken the ban. The US position is apparently supported by Canada, France and Australia.

## Climate Action

ON 11 FEBRUARY, 45 groups in 11 European countries held actions to demand that governments and people commit themselves to real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

The actions included pro-bike, anti-car demonstrations, tree planting and banner hanging. The campaign demands that people and governments "change their behaviour, not the climate" and that industrialized countries reduce carbon dioxide emissions by at least 20 per cent by the year 2005.

ON MAY 15 there is a second climate action day, and from 1-8 April there is an alternative climate conference in Berlin.

**CONTACT:** International Youth Climate Campaign, Celebstraat 80, 1094 ET Amsterdam, THE NETHERLANDS, Tel/Fax: +31 20 693 2024.

## Nuclear Treaty

THE NUCLEAR Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) will be renegotiated at a conference in April-May. The NPT, signed in 1968, committed states with nuclear weapons to disarm and states without nuclear weapons not to manufacture or acquire them, in return for equal access to nuclear power technology.

States with nuclear weapons want to extend the treaty indefinitely, while non-nuclear states, led by Nigeria, Indonesia, Iran and Egypt, want any extension to be conditional on an agreed timetable to disarm the world's estimated 120,000 nuclear weapons.

**CONTACT:** CND, 162 Holloway Road, London N7 8DQ, UK.

## IN BRIEF ●●●●●●●●●●

### ● DEPARTMENT SCRAPPED

In late January, the African Development Bank (AfDB) abolished its Environment and Social Policy Division. The Bank says environmental staff will be redistributed to country departments, but critics point to a recent official review which found that already "too much attention is paid to the quantity of lending and too little, perhaps even none, to its quality".

**CONTACT:** Korinna Horta, Environmental Defense Fund, 1875 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington DC 20009, USA.

### ● TAPOL FUNDING APPEAL

TAPOL, the UK-based group working in support of Indonesians on labour issues, press freedom, East Timor and military, aid, and trade links between Britain and Indonesia, is appealing for funds to expand its work. 1995 is the 50th anniversary of the Indonesian Republic, the 30th anniversary of Suharto's seizure of power and the 20th anniversary of the invasion of East Timor.

**SEND CHEQUES** for "TAPOL UK Campaign" to: TAPOL, 111 Northwood Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8HW, UK.

### ● UK ROADS PROTESTS

The M65 motorway extension in Lancashire threatens greenbelt land and homes; activists are occupying tree houses in the path of contractors Amec/Alfred McAlpine. M65 campaigners and protesters against the planned M77 motorway in Glasgow, Scotland are requesting support.

**CONTACT:** For the M65 campaign, Tel: 0161 861 7895. For the M77 campaign, Tel: 0141 810 1600.

### ● TRANS-EURO NETWORKS

The European Commission's plans to build 15,000 km of new roads before 2010 are being opposed with direct action, letter-writing and other protests. Critics believe the economic, environmental and strategic arguments for TENs are flawed.

**CONTACT:** ASEED Europe, Postbus 92066 - 1090 AB Amsterdam, THE NETHERLANDS, E-mail: aseedeur@antenna.nl

### ● PULP FRICTION

On 18 April, there will be a non-violent day of action against the pulp and paper industry to protest against deforestation and pollution from the bleaching process.

**CONTACT:** Native Forest Network, POB 57, Burlington, VA 05402, USA, E-mail: peacejustice@igc.apc.org