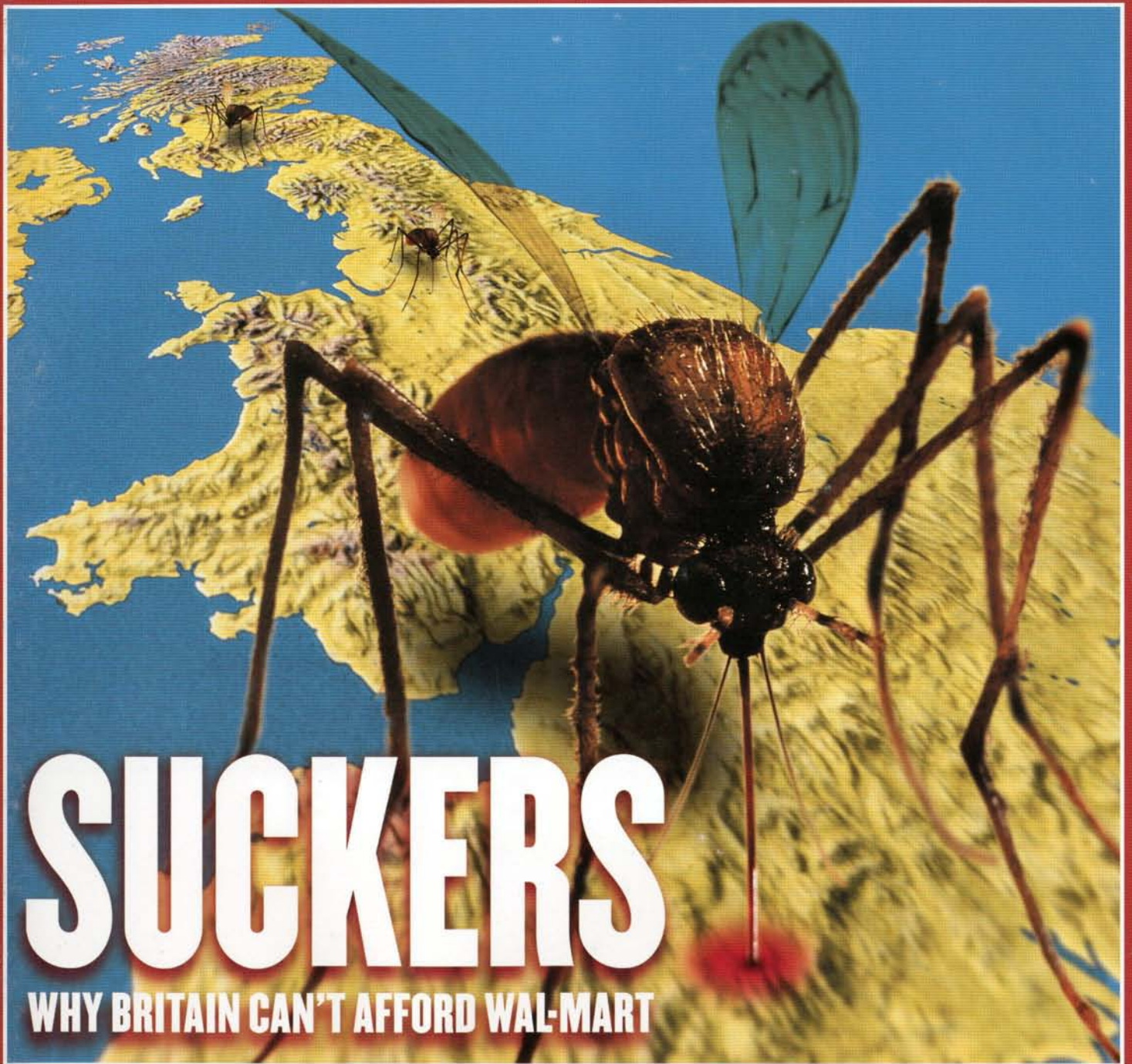


THE Ecologist

VOLUME 30 NO 6 £3.50

RETHINKING BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

SEPTEMBER 2000



SUCKERS

WHY BRITAIN CAN'T AFFORD WAL-MART

FREE REPORT
Exposing the IMF,
World Bank, and WTO

FIGHTING TALK
Exclusive interview
with Arundhati Roy

BLOWN AWAY
The non-violent
use of gunpowder



JONATHON PORRITT vs GEORGE MONBIOT · TONY BENN · TONY JUNIPER



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ROBIN COOK HAS NO CLOTHES

Try to imagine a government with total disregard for the voting system. It's quite easy, actually. Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and, until recently, Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan can provide obvious working examples (the latter having won more votes in some constituencies than there are voters). But then imagine a government that prides itself on its transparency and democratic credentials. It would be inconceivable, surely, that such a government could have a similar attitude. Sadly not, it seems.

Before the last general election, Tony Blair promised the British people the chance to vote on a fundamental issue. Should we or should we not abandon our currency in favour of the Euro? Having initially camouflaged his own ardent belief in the shift, he has since set about trying to panic the British people into similar acceptance. To that end, he deployed his army of spin-doctors to persuade us that the Euro Emperor is, in fact, wearing wonderful clothes.

Then, a few weeks ago, it emerged that a small group of Britons had raised nearly £100,000 on behalf of the Danish campaign against the single currency. Their plan was to launch a series of adverts in Denmark, in advance of their forthcoming referendum on the subject, explaining UK resistance to the single currency, and informing the Danes that they would be in good company should they choose to maintain the Kroner on 28 September. The Danish 'no' campaigners believe that the single currency represents a frightening step towards the federalisation of Europe and the consequent erosion of democracy as power shifts further away from the locality towards an invisible and increasingly corrupt bureaucracy. They see, what's more, that the European Parliament has become little more than a democratic façade behind which the unelected Commission is able to push through its corporate-influenced agenda.

As such, the sentiments of this small group appear to reflect those of the majority of British people and, if polls are accurate, the vast majority of Danes. For British anti-Euro campaigners, Denmark's referendum is crucial. A 'no' vote may, according to a worried EU, trigger a 'domino effect' throughout Europe. And if our own referendum in Britain produces a similar result, the pressure on Blair to resign will be immense. Which is why his team is becoming hysterical.

Leaping to the rescue, Robin Cook, our 'ethical' Foreign Secretary, expressed his outrage that Britons would want to 'interfere in Denmark's internal affairs'. 'Their intervention,' he said, 'is nothing more than a cynical attempt to exploit the [Danish] referendum to advance their own agenda.'

All ostensibly honourable stuff. Of

course, it can't be right that outsiders should seek to deform the course of another nation's destiny. But is this the same Robin Cook who condemned Pakistan following the ousting of a notoriously corrupt Prime Minister; the same Cook who, with all his loathing of 'interference' in the affairs of other nations, regularly supplies arms to crooked African governments? The hypocritical nature of Cook's intervention was staggering. It is fine, he implied, for big business, with generous helpings of taxpayers' money and full support from powerful governments, to fight one corner. But it is immoral for campaigners, with no governmental support of any kind, to assist the other. As news of the donations surfaced, Anders Panum, Secretary-General of the Danish European Movement asked, 'What would people in the UK say if the French or Germans were pouring money into a British referendum?' Quite so.

Every one of our (taxpaying) European readers has contributed to a war chest whose sole purpose is to persuade voters of the merits of the single currency. In other words, regardless of your views, you are paying 'them' to persuade you to support 'them'. They are lavishing, without even informing you, your money on a propaganda campaign whose target is YOU. And we're not talking about a few pounds. Each year, the European Commission is estimated to spend £850 million of taxpayers' money on 'information'. This includes glossy pamphlets sent to 30,000 British schools with a heavily pro-EU message. It includes CD-Roms, videos and brochures, all singing the same tune. It includes comics about Captain Euro, a hero dedicated to the EU masterplan, fighting daily with Dr Vider, an evil menace determined to break up the Superstate (significantly, the good guys in this comic strip are handsome and unmistakably Aryan, while the baddies are clearly not).

Much of this propaganda is targeted at children and, to that end, a large 'mobile information centre' bus was until recently deployed for school visits. EU 'information' makes no pretence of objectivity in its attempts to shape young minds, despite article 406 of the 1996 Education Act which forbids bias in the presentation of political issues at school.

£850 million. That's how much we as European taxpayers are spending on a political campaign that we don't even support. Compare that with the few thousand pounds supplied by a handful of philanthropists; then re-consider Mr Cook's remarks.

The Ecologist has set up a 'Save Denmark Fund' to which we hope some of our readers may contribute. We will attempt to match any funds received by 15 September (no later) and will channel, with the advice of the Democracy Movement, any money received to the most effective 'NO' groups in that country.

Let's see what Robin has to say about that.

by Zac Goldsmith



THE Ecologist *contents*

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COVER STORY

Wal-Mart has landed in Britain. Wherever you turn, it seems, the mega-retailer's arrival is being trumpeted as a boon to the consumer, the people's choice.

But has anyone thoroughly examined the true cost to the country – and indeed, other countries – of Wal-Mart's planned international explosion? How will it affect competition? Will employment levels be worsened? What will be the environmental cost?

It is more important now than ever before that we put aside the hype, and examine precisely what type of creature the British Government and media are so cheerfully allowing to invade our communities.

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Cover photograph: Tony Stone/Image Bank

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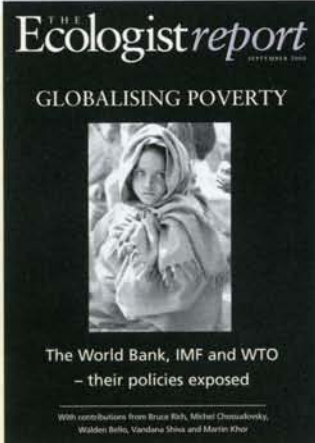


THE Ecologistreport

Globalising poverty

Our 60-page bound-in special supplement on the effects of the World Bank, IMF and WTO on the poorer countries of the world makes disturbing reading. It shows that far from bridging the gap between the rich and the poor, these three institutions are in the process of widening it.

Turn to the centre section of this issue for the full picture.



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How to use the law in the environmental struggle.

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GLOBALISATION: GOOD FOR THE POOR?

With reference to WTO Special Adviser Philippe Legrain's letter Free Trade Tirade (Vol 30 No 4): If the so-called free trade can improve the lots of the poor in poor countries, why are 30 million Americans going hungry in the world's richest country during its greatest period of growth?

The US economy is booming but the number of hungry has not decreased over the last four years, a study released recently said. 'At the peak of the longest economic boom in our history, over 30 million people live in households that experience hunger and food insecurity – about the same number as four years ago,' said Larry Brown, director of the Center on Hunger and Poverty at Tufts University, Massachusetts.

Some 20 per cent to 30 per cent of workers earn so little that 'they're making choices between rent and medical bill and adequate diet'. Minimum wages have not kept up with inflation, Brown said, and many jobs no longer include paid benefits.

Children are disproportionately burdened by hunger, the study showed: 15.2 per cent of all households with children are hungry and 16.3 per cent of households with children under six years don't have enough to eat.

Prof Barry Schwartz of Swarthmore College points out: 'What do we know about the great economic "boom" we are living in the midst of? The income of the average wage-earning workers in 1997 was 3.1 per cent lower than it was in 1989. Median family income was \$1,000 less in 1997 than in 1989. The typical couple worked 270 more hours in 1997 than in 1989'.

Prof Schwartz further points out: 'The richest 1 per cent of Americans have almost 50 per cent of the nation's wealth. The next 9 per cent have about a third. And the remaining 90 per cent have about a sixth.'

Schwartz concludes: 'The United States has the highest poverty rate than any developed nation, and uses government income transfers less than any developed nation'.

The United States, with its extreme poverty and obscene income inequality, shows that simple globalisation (or is it corporatisation of the globe?) without proper safeguards to protect the poor will only enrich the rich and impoverish the poor. This calls for progressive taxation, improv-

DEVELOP AND BE DAMNED

I was recently shown your excellent feature on the farming crisis (Vol 30 No 4). However, it was hard not to suppress a dark laugh at Steven Gorelick's revelation that 'in the US... it is not unusual to find places like McPherson County in Nebraska, which has lost two-thirds of its population... since 1920.'

That's nothing. Here in the Alentejo, the sprawling farming province in southern Portugal that makes up one third of the entire country, most communities have lost two thirds of their population in the last 30 years. In districts such as Mertola, villages have been officially closed down, because everyone there has either left or died. The district of Odemira (the largest in Europe) has the world's highest suicide rate (61 per 100,000).

The reason? Farming communities here are under the same threats from globalisation as elsewhere, only worse. Traditionally the area's forest farms are deeply wedded to their natural surroundings, with a mosaic of different land-uses and habitats that produce wild foods for people and animals, and have ensured diversity for both local communities and wildlife. At the centre of this system is *Quercus suber*, or the cork oak tree, whose carefully stripped bark is used for wine bottles, a labour-intensive indus-

try which has traditionally employed thousands of people, and a cash income for the communities themselves.

Now all this is changing as a result of EU-subsidised infrastructure investment and 'development' schemes (which impose clearances for dams and highways), logging companies turning much of the area into a huge eucalyptus plantation and now the American multinationals persuading winemakers to use their plastic corks instead.

The results have been predictable – mass urban migration, depleted groundwater supplies, colossal forest fires (one million hectares of pine and eucalyptus forests have gone up in flames over the last decade), and the tiger-like Iberian lynx being declared the most endangered species of wild cat anywhere in the world.

In the process, Portugal's biggest landowner is now a logging company, and a handful of rich Americans have become even richer.

It was hard to find a better example of humanity and nature co-existing in harmony, or a more sustainable system of farming, anywhere in the world. But no doubt the latest international GDP statistics will show that Portugal has become more 'developed'.

PENNIE BARDSLEY *Alentejo, Portugal*

ing the minimum wages and working conditions, increased unemployment benefits and lowering working hours, protection against child labour in poor overpopulated countries and a host of other measures.

Today's corporate globalism, promising to improve the lives of the downtrodden, resembles the communist globalism of a bygone era. Both have something in common – the former was guided by the lust for power, the latter by the lust for profit. When power or greed is the motivating factor, the result can be disastrous.

With 30 million Americans going hungry in the world's richest country in the midst of its greatest boom, Philippe Legrain may not have to go far to see the danger inherent in unrestricted 'free trade' and corporate globalisation with its emphasis on bottom lines and profits over people.

MAHMOOD ELAHI *Ottawa, Canada*

THE MEDIA VACUUM

I enjoyed the June 2000 issue immensely,

especially the positive dialogue between Caspar Henderson and David Edwards (Vol 30 No 4). It is interesting to note that, while both gentlemen make reference to the myriad information and media sources made possible by modern technology, neither discusses the actual reach, market penetration, or effect of these new sources. They appear to assume that the mere existence of alternative choices is sufficient to ensure the public's exposure to those alternatives. Unfortunately, not only has it been difficult to bring the horses to water, but they aren't drinking.

Here in the States, alternative media have become extremely compartmentalised. The necessities of the marketplace have led alternative media to focus upon their particular niches, and as a result find themselves 'preaching to the converted'. The vast majority of citizens still receive their news, opinion, and information from a mainstream daily newspaper, as well as the mainstream broadcast and cable networks.

Only occasionally is alternative information able to break through this structural barrier and reach the general public.

Worse, the small number of megacorporations monopolising the mainstream media in the US are now seeking to eliminate those few restrictions on media ownership that still exist. They are currently petitioning the Federal Communications Committee (FCC) to 'liberalise' ownership rules. And their argument? That the Internet and other forms of direct communication are sufficient to ensure that the public receives adequately diverse and varied information.

HARV TEITELBAUM Colorado, USA

LET US VOTE

Reading the debate between Charles Kennedy and Andrew Wood (Vol 30 No 5), it struck me that both sides had good and valid points to make and that, looking to the future, the days to come would probably be constructed from a combination of their views... what Charles Kennedy referred to as the stuff of politics – ie compromise. And this, of course, is what society in general is about.

Herein lies the problem and the reason why the British people are so disillusioned with politics and why the so-called Third Way is destined to be just a political wheeze rather than anything which would amount to any kind of substance. Andrew Wood referred to a democratic overhaul to make our democracy more representative. Unfortunately he failed to elaborate.

If we're to be able to call ourselves a 'representative democracy' then voters have to be able to feel their MPs represent them in Parliament, rather than merely representing their particular parliamentary parties in the constituencies they are delegated to stand in.

One solution may be to ban the party whip and, preferably, the political party itself. Perhaps then people will be able to vote for someone who actually does represent their views for a four to five-year term.

Or perhaps we should simply hand the reins of government directly to the people. Let us vote on any issue we like! After all, if credit card transactions are virtually watertight on the Internet, why not democratic voting?

CHRIS MILTON Buckinghamshire, UK

INDEPENDENT SCIENCE

As Tom Wakeford (The Appliance of Science Vol 30 No 5) suggests in his piece there is a need for a body which will raise the status of scientists and bring them closer to their fellow citizens. I would suggest that there is a body in this country like the UCS in the United States of America. It is the recently created Science Council which was launched by Lord Sainsbury.

The Science Council comprises some of the most influential science-based institutions and learned societies in the UK. Its first chairman, Sir Colin Spedding, was a real driving force with a bold vision to match. The Council's recently installed chairman, Sir Gareth Roberts, has picked up the challenge and is committed to creating an independent lead body for the science community.

With Tom's support, and that of his colleagues, the Science Council can do just that.

NICK REEVES UK

MUST PROTEST

Anthony Barnett (*Why radicals need a history lesson* Vol 30 No 5) may see parallels between the 'self-absorbed violence of the May Day protests and the collapse of 1960s radicalism', but he also fails wholeheartedly to see the power of direct action against property by a broad coalition of individuals.

The suffragette movement, racial rights and other movements have all bloomed due to non-violent damage against property. So what if a few protesters damaged a monument? Football matches inevitably seem to end in violence. We don't call for them to be banned though Tony Blair might like to draw parallels between the May Day demonstration and football riots.

The demonstration saw participation by anarchists, ecologists, socialists and others who see capitalism as *the* threat to our environment and human rights.

Anthony Barnett has simply regurgitated the media message that demonstrations are violent and should be banned. The Government peddled this message in the attempt to push through its human rights-destroying Prevention of Terrorism Bill.

We are heading towards catastrophe. The last thing activists need is people being hoodwinked by the *Daily Mail* gutter press. We need to work together to fight the dangers we face. Smashing up McDonald's is hardly revolutionary, but who can say that McDonald's doesn't deserve it?

LINDEN FARRER Oxford, UK

NOBLE SAVAGES?

Sale's comment regarding the so-called revisionist depiction of the 'Savage Indian' (Vol 30 No 4) attempts to give a more accurate portrayal of American Indians, but succeeds only in re-emphasising old stereotypes of the 'ecologically noble savage' who lives in peaceful harmony with nature. He portrays views inconsistent with the 'noble savage' idea as pure evil – an academic conspiracy that undermines environmentalism. In doing so, he does a disservice to the conservationist community, American Indians and native peoples everywhere. He insults native communities by imagining them as pure-hearted stewards, and not as humans with the same desires as everyone else.

Some of this confusion stems from a confounding of conservationist actions and outcomes. Many small-scale traditional societies of foraging horticulturists in the Amazon basin, for example, are conservationist only in the sense that small population size and limited access to markets are compatible with a sustainable existence. The sustainability outcome is not a result of deliberate conservationist behaviour in ALL societies where this has been examined. Instead, foraging and harvesting is far more consistent with optimal foraging theory, which assumes that individuals are interested in maximising the net rate of food intake, or income, over the short term. The 'soulless' researchers investigating these issues are actively working towards conserving biodiversity in many areas in the world, and at the same time serving the needs of indigenous communities that live there.

The moral is that we don't have to rely on the Noble Savage or the Destructive Indian to justify conservationist goals. Six billion people, destructive technologies and global markets make the conservationist crisis our own problem, and require new solutions that cannot be found in characterisations of the 'way it used to be'.

MICHAEL GURVEN New Mexico, USA

JUST A QUICK WORD...

THE POLITICS OF TEETH

I am dismayed to hear that the Government has decided to force water companies nationwide to fluoridate the public water supply. Is there nothing we can do to prevent what can only be described as enforced medication? The public has been denied access to honest information on the harmful effects of fluoride. On the contrary most people are told daily that fluoride prevents tooth decay and strengthens the bones.

MARGARET GEARY Liverpool, UK

Editor's reply: You're not alone in your fears. Turn to page 57 for more on the subject.

CROW'S FOOTNOTES

David Norton, the author of The Crow Vol 30 No 5, asks us to point out that Chinua Achebe, Chinweizu and Leonard Shlain should be given credit for elements of the piece. Consider it done.

BRAZIL SELLS AMAZON TO NOVARTIS

The biotech firm has teamed up with a Brazilian company to patent Amazon lifeforms.

BioAmazonia, a company created by the Brazilian Government to develop biotechnology in the Amazon region, and Novartis AG, the Swiss pharmaceutical corporation, have signed an agreement regarding Brazil's share of the Amazon's genetic resources. The parties agreed to 'collaborative research' for three years, during which they intend to collect, isolate and identify up to 10,000 micro-organisms (bacteria and fungi) in the first year alone. Whilst BioAmazonia's laboratories will produce extracts and chromatographic analysis, Novartis will be

responsible for the screening. The deal has evoked loud criticism; many fearing that Novartis's unique access to the Amazon's genetic resources is extremely dangerous. The aggressive nature of the global race for life patents has been well documented, and the management agreement signed between the Government and BioAmazonia only establishes basic objectives and goals and leaves the company free to decide on issues such as collaborative agreements. This means that BioAmazonia is essentially operating under market forces. This may well leave Novartis free to grab the gains of the research for itself.



SEBASTIAN TITUS

SOMETHING FISHY

Fish farm pollution is killing off wild salmon.

Whilst John Home Robertson, Scotland's fisheries minister claims that persistent toxic algal bloom is natural and has nothing to do with fish farm waste dumped into the seas and rivers, the summer toxic algal season is already sickening mussels and scallops on the Scottish west coast and islands. Diarrhetic Shellfish Poisoning (DSP) has been detected in mussels, scallops and queen scallops on numerous occasions. The same goes for Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP). The maximum permitted level of PSP in shellfish is 80 micrograms per 100 grams of flesh. In Little Loch Broom alone, 828mg per 100 grams was found in shellfish. Yes, that's 10 times above the 'safe' level. Thanks to a whistleblower, Friends of the Earth has exposed the illegal use of cypermethrin at the Ardessie Salmon Farm in Little Loch Broom. According to the Environment Agency, cypermethrin is an endocrine-disrupting substance and around 100 times more toxic to some elements of the aquatic environment than organophosphate sheep dips. Makes one wonder why John Home Robertson still keeps on insisting that there is no 'scientific evidence' to show that disease and pollution from fish farms is driving wild salmon to extinction.

BACK TO THE TREES

New Labour has resurrected road building.

John Prescott, the deputy prime minister, who in late spring hit the headlines for expressing honest-sounding fears on the impacts of climate change, recently promised 'no new roads'. No new roads, that is, apart from 100 recently announced new bypasses, the widening of 360 miles of motorway and the continuation of the controversial Birmingham Northern Relief toll road scheme. In response, anti-road groups are beginning to spring up again. 'Action against the Toll Motorway' is campaigning against the Birmingham toll road (action-againstthetollmotorway@hotmail.com) and the Non-Alignment Group (NAAG) has been set up to oppose the proposed A701 near Edinburgh. This £20 million project will cut through miles of Green Belt and change the face of local communities. Call 01968 675109 or visit www.spokes.org.uk/naag/



FRIENDS OF THE EARTH

NEWS IN BRIEF

UPDATE: INDIAN COAL VICTORY

The World Bank, the Government of India and Coal India Ltd have mutually agreed to cancel \$250 million of an original loan of \$530 million for the India Coal Sector Rehabilitation Project (see *The Ecologist*, vol. 30/5).

FOXED

Jane Acre and Steve Wilson, two investigative journalists who claim that the US channel Fox television ordered them to distort findings on the effects of milk from hormone-injected

cows, have paved their way to court by defying three Fox motions to dismiss the case without trial. The landmark whistleblower lawsuit is believed to be the first time any journalist has filed a claim against their own news organisation and offered evidence of behind-the-scenes manipulation of the news. Visit www.foxBGH.com for more details.

TRANSPLANT DANGERS

Western health authorities have imposed a moratorium on all xenotransplant surgery after a study proved that viruses jump species. Transplanting animal organs into humans could therefore trigger a global pandemic of deadly new diseases.

MCDOMINATION

McDonald's tactic of buying pubs, enabling them to forego planning application, has suffered a severe blow. After 18 months of occupation, residents of Hinchley Wood, UK, have succeeded in forcing McDonald's to return the lease to the original owner. By winning this victory, the residents have provoked a review of the loophole by the Department of Transport & the Regions.

EUROPE TO BAN LINDANE ON CROPS

The controversial insecticide lindane could be subject to a partial ban by the EU's 15 member countries within 18 months. Once ratified, countries will be given 6 months to

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TROUBLED WATER

The last 10 months have witnessed terrible pollution to the world's waters; intense oil spills alone have occurred on a monthly basis.

Last December, a Russian tanker sank at the mouth of the Bosphorus, spilling 800 tons of oil. In January, Total Fina's *Erika* discharged 12,000 tons into the Atlantic Ocean. Over in Brazil, a third of a million tons of oil leaked into a bay near Rio de Janeiro. In February, 39,000 barrels escaped into Lake Poopo in Bolivia, devastating the Uru Morato native community which has lived on the lake's shore for 5,000 years. Transredes, the company responsible, jointly owned by Royal Dutch/Shell and Enron, has refused to pay damages. In April, 110,000 gallons of oil leaked into a Maryland waterway. It found its way into the Patuxent River, which drains into Chesapeake Bay. By July, Virginia fisheries authorities declared a vast fishermen-free

zone throughout Chesapeake Bay. A vessel owned by Universal Pearl carried 1,300 tons of oil, when the crew discovered a hole. The spill fouled the nesting areas of 44 per cent of the world's African penguins. In early July, a damaged barge spilled approximately 14,000 gallons into America's Narragansett Bay. Meanwhile, one million gallons of oil escaped into Brazil's Barigui river. Petrobras, the company responsible, had equally caused the spill near Rio de Janeiro. Barely two weeks later, after receiving complaints of nausea, Petrobras admitted that yet another of its pipelines had spilled 1,000 litres of a highly toxic fuel additive near Rio de Janeiro. In early August a 'mysterious' oil spill polluted 20 miles of Florida's coast, the state's worst oil spill in a decade.

The ecological damage of the oil industry, not just from evident disasters, is systematic and 'beyond principle' (bp).



SMALL FARMERS ARE MAKING THEIR WAY

America's family farmers and their organisations are beginning to win small but significant victories in their struggle against agri-business giants.

Their pressure has resulted in the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) agreeing to hold a referendum in September on ending mandatory assessments on pig farmers for pork industry promotions and to consider changing rules governing the marketing of 'captive' livestock – cattle that the packers own but which might feed on contracted feedlots. Bill Christison, president of the national Family Farm Coalition said that win-

ning approval for a referendum on pork industry assessments was important because USDA rules had to be rewritten to allow it to happen. Commodity groups and large agribusinesses 'never thought it would happen', he said.

The referendum will also look into reforming livestock marketing regulations, which is important since big meatpackers manipulate the system and depress prices by using secret contracts instead of public auctions. The effects of a growing concentration of farms has become obvious: of America's 1.9 million

farms, 17 per cent were producing 83 per cent of the nation's farm product. Four corporations control 82 per cent of American beef packing; four other large firms control 69 per cent of the North American seed corn market and 47 per cent of the soyabean market. At the end of 1998 one company, Monsanto, sold 88 per cent of genetically engineered seeds in the US. Although change will take time, the fear that farmers are becoming nothing more than tractor drivers or hog-house janitors has built up considerable and unavoidable pressure on decision-makers.

withdraw approval, plus a further 12 months to use up stocks. Use of lindane in domestic products will still be permitted.

INDIA GOES GM

India's Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) has given permission to Maharashtra Hybrid Seed Company (MAHYCO), which has a joint venture with Monsanto, to conduct field trials of transgenic cotton in India.

NUCLEAR PROGRESS

France and the UK were isolated by a decision calling for an end to nuclear reprocessing at the latest OSPAR convention in Copenhagen. A three-quarter majority,

including five of BNFL's major customers, backed a legally binding proposal by Denmark that supports an end to reprocessing and development of the alternative of dry storage of nuclear waste.

GM DOWN UNDER

After three years of heated debate, Australia and New Zealand have agreed to strict rules on the labelling of food containing GMOs. Due to pressure from the New Zealand Government, which depends for its majority on the support of the Green Party – and overwhelming public support for labelling, these new regulations are believed to be the toughest in the world.

GERMAN EMISSIONS TRADING

The German stock exchange and PricewaterhouseCoopers, an international consulting firm, have submitted a paper on emissions trading to the Red/Green coalition Government. It suggests that, on a national level, trading could be introduced as soon as 2002. An expert committee, composed of industry members and ministers is supposed to prepare the logistics of the trading system. The government would like to see an emissions target, decreasing on an annual basis, and divided into industry sectors which will be able to trade amongst themselves. The higher their price the more lucrative green energy will become.

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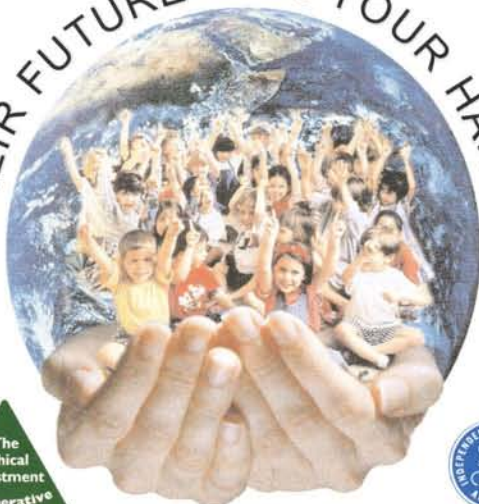
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GM PUGILISTS LIMBER UP

The EU and the US are coming to blows over GM foods.

On 13 July, the European Commission declared its own current moratorium on GM crops illegal and proposed kick-starting its stalled approval process. It plans to apply new rules governing the labelling and traceability of GM crops as soon as they are agreed by EU governments and the European Parliament. This could be as soon as the end of the year, and would avoid waiting for legislation to be transposed into national laws, which usually takes about two years. 'We have already waited too long to act. The moratorium is illegal and not justified. The value of biotechnology is poorly appreciated in Europe and there's a risk the biotechnology will not develop,' said European environment commissioner Margot Wallstrom. Environmental groups have attacked the Commission's decision saying that the EU is caving into US pressure. They might have a point. Barely two weeks later, the US threatened the EU with a formal complaint to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), on the grounds that labelling GM products is an unfair discrimination against US goods and a 'restraint of trade'. This is based on reports by the Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) which

believes that GM food is so safe that there is no need to even mention to consumers the process by which it was grown. But the FDA position is less clear than it seems. In 1999 it became apparent that the FDA had declared GM foods to be safe in the face of disagreement from its own experts. Internal reports and memoranda disclosed that FDA scientists repeatedly cautioned that foods produced through recombinant DNA technology entails different risks from their conventionally produced counterparts and that this input was consistently disregarded by the bureaucrats who crafted the agency's policy.

Dr Jim Maryanski, the FDA biotechnology co-ordinator, acknowledged that there is no consensus about the safety of GM foods in the scientific community at large. But disregarding the warnings of its own advisers, FDA's official policy now asserts 'The agency is not aware of any information showing that foods derived by these new methods differ from any other foods in a meaningful or uniform way.' The one argument nobody disagrees on is that in the event that the WTO is called in to settle the dispute, the world will witness a US/EU trade war that will make present disputes look like 'peanuts'.

BEAR NECESSITIES

The Arctic ice is melting faster than ever.

An article published in *Cicerone*, a Norwegian science journal, reports that Arctic ice is now melting so fast that it could disappear entirely each summer, beginning in just 50 years. Since 1978, the coverage of Arctic sea ice has decreased by 6 per cent, equivalent to an area the size of Texas. Submarine sonar measurements have recorded a decline of average Arctic ice thickness of 42 per cent since the 1950s. Tore Furevik, a polar researcher and co-author of the paper said he could foresee

ice-dwelling mammals making 'a desperate last stand' north of Greenland, where he believes the final patch of Arctic sea ice will linger before vanishing into the waves in about 2050.

According to a WWF poll, 73 per cent of American voters believe that global warming is a serious threat.



STILL PICTURES

“NOTES & QUOTES”

'If anyone tells you GM is going to feed the world, tell him that it is not. To feed the world takes political and financial will, it's not about production and distribution. It may produce more for less and create more food but it won't feed the world.'

Steve Smith, Novartis

'Confusion in the debate seems to originate from failure to distinguish what is fact, hypothesis, speculation, opinion, and fear of the unknown. There now seems global acceptance that the science isn't perfect, but it is better than the alternative, which is guesswork and stargazing.'

Tony Coombes, director of corporate affairs, Monsanto UK

'I've probably come in with more ideas and done more about the environment than any other secretary of state.'

John Prescott, deputy prime minister

'Fines up to now have in some cases been derisory. They have failed clearly to match the seriousness with which society now regards pollution.'

Michael Meacher, minister for the environment

The number of motor vehicles in the world has risen from 391.1 million in 1980 to 676.2 million in 1996 and the rate is increasing. Transport now accounts for one-quarter of the world energy use and about one-half of the world's oil production; motor vehicles account for nearly 80 per cent of all transport-related energy. From UNEP

Following the Government's failure to apply for planning permission for a change of land use for sites involved in this winter's farm scale trials of GM oil seed rape, Greenpeace is challenging New Labour over the legality of GM crop trials.

A UK survey on the ethics of modern food production found that 72 per cent of people believe that the environment is being damaged by global food production. 85 per cent feel big multinational companies have too much power over what we eat. 81 per cent think that it is wrong for Third World farmers to be exploited to bring us cheap food and a roaring 89 per cent think multinationals do not act in the interests of the general public.

BIG IS BAD FOR GLOBAL PROSPERITY

The United Nations secretary-general Kofi Annan is not in an easy position. What to do when both poverty and prosperity have become so concentrated?

In late July and under the auspices of the United Nations, 50 of the world's largest corporations signed a 'global compact' committing themselves to support independent trade unions, abolish child labour and protect the environment. Signatories include companies such as Royal Dutch/Shell, Nike and Rio Tinto. According to the *Financial Times*, this UN initiative is aimed at getting the debate on environmental protection and labour rights out of the World Trade Organisation. Whilst Mike Moore, president of the WTO must be delighted at not having to deal with such 'counter-productive' issues, the probability that this initiative will contribute to a more harmonious and less poverty-stricken world is questionable.



Adherence to the 'global compact' remains voluntary. Yet the UN is serious and has offered its newly converted the right to use the UN logo as proof that they abide by and promote a list of nine commandments or human rights principles. On the day prior to this very conference, Mr Annan in a

comment published by the *Herald Tribune*, wrote of his conviction that open markets offer the only realistic hope of pulling billions of people in developing countries out of abject poverty. With the 'global compact' illustrating just what kind of 'open markets' the UN envisages, the leasing of the UN logo to some of the very companies that undermine economic democracy seems inappropriate to say the least. With the UN desperately trying to redefine its role in the current global order, such moves may well do more to undermine than foster its legitimacy. Mr Annan should have given his 'quick-fix' another thought – or two.

THE STUFF THAT MAKES A HERO

An extract from Der Spiegel.

Once, a German company developed a medication which, after minimal trials, was released into society. Advanced as a cure for almost any illness, from bronchitis to multiple sclerosis, the remedy soon became an international bestseller. All the while the company was making millions in profit – probably because the drug is addictive. Just over 100 years on, the drug is illegal and whoever produces it is a criminal. The company is none other than Bayer and heroin is the cure. In 1897, Felix Hoffmann, creator of aspirin, created diacetylmorphine. When animals survived the trials, Bayer launched the drug. By 1902, heroin accounted for 5 per cent of the pharmaceutical market's global turnover. Since Bayer was only able to patent the name, not the mixture, other companies soon started to produce the drug, too. What made heroin so successful was Bayer's sheer marketing brutality. Samples were sent to China without having been ordered and doctors were supplied with leaflets and information. In 1906, Bayer started to market heroin as the cure against depression, asthma and stomach cancer. As hospitals in the US started to fill up with addicts, the Government started to regulate consumption. But this made the black market more lucrative. From 1931, heroin production was under government surveillance and consumption decreased significantly. Today, the UK remains the only legal heroin producer in the world – around 300 kilograms are (legally) used per year.

SURREPTITIOUS FORMS OF HYPNOSIS

SEXUAL HYPNOSIS...

YOU PROMISED TO PAINT THE HOUSE TODAY



CORPORATE HYPNOSIS...

TAKE THE MONEY... TAKE THE MONEY...



...GROUP HYPNOSIS...

TRUTH PUB



...REGRESSION HYPNOSIS

I CAN SEE A TIME WHEN I USED TO BELIEVE IN TRUTH AND INTEGRITY



STAN AT EASE
by Stan Eales

GREEN DEMAND

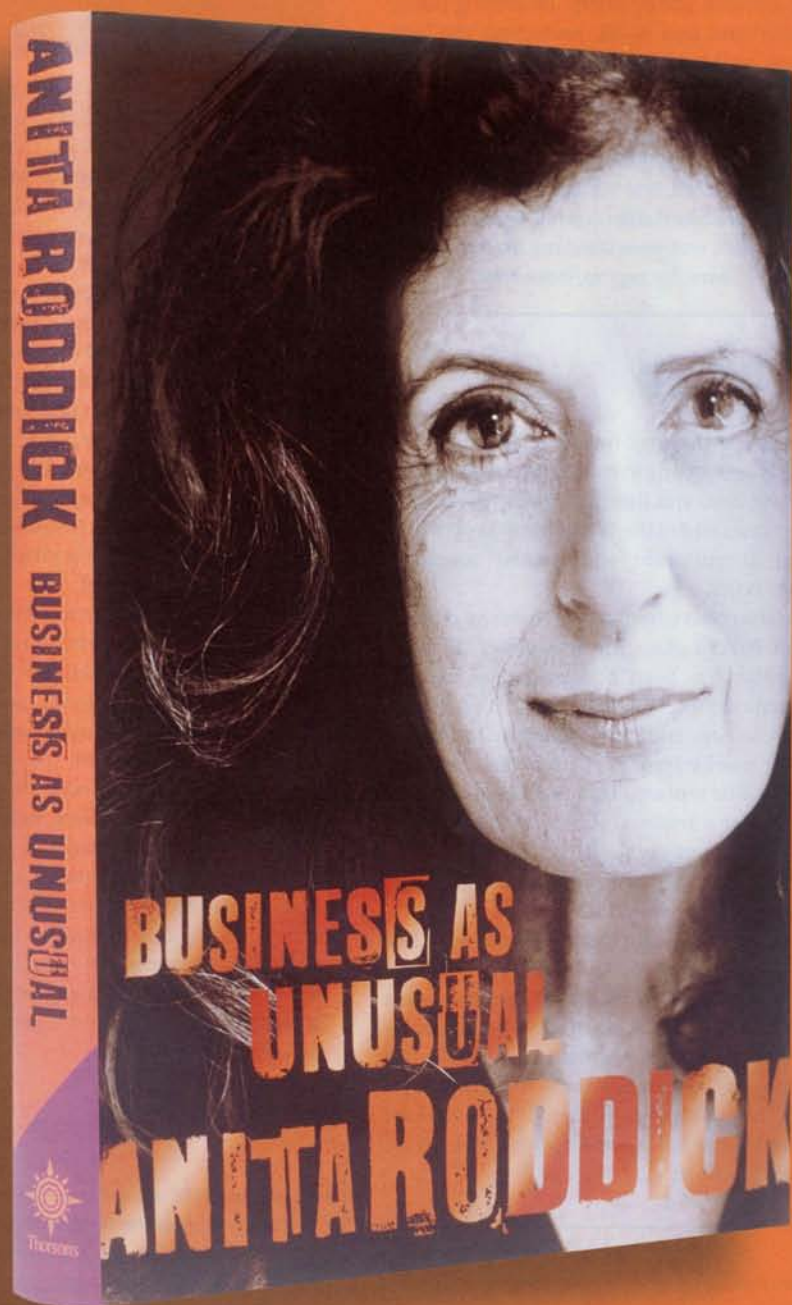
People are willing to pay more to go green.

According to a study conducted by UK-based analyst Datamonitor, over half the households in the UK, Germany and Sweden are willing to pay more for 'green' energy. The survey found that 62 per cent of Germans would be willing to pay more for greener alternatives such as biomass, wind, wave and solar power. In the UK and Sweden the findings were almost as high – 55 per cent and 61 per cent respectively. The report found no evidence linking earnings levels to a conscious choice to opt for greener power.

A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF THE LAST 10 YEARS
AND A PROVOCATIVE VISION FOR THE FUTURE.

‘THE NEXT TIME YOU GO **SHOPPING**
DEMAND MORE CHANGE.’

ANITA RODDICK



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THE BODY SHOP

OUT NOW IN HARDBACK

CAMPAIGNS

UK RIP UP RIP

The Regulation of Investigatory Powers (RIP) Bill, currently in the Lords and expected to become law by October was introduced last March by Jack Straw, the home secretary. The Bill will allow the police, and Mr Straw, to track every email sent and received, every site accessed – basically every move made on the Internet by groups or people the authorities have ‘reasonable’ grounds to want to track. Failing to provide details of encryption codes for emails will become a criminal offence, with a maximum penalty of two years in prison. For the first time, in other words, the emails and web movements of individuals will be subject to the surveillance of the state – and we won’t even know they’re doing it.

But there is even more to it. For the Government to be able to read messages, all UK Internet Service Providers (ISPs), now classified as ‘public telecommunication sys-

tems’ will be obliged to install a so-called ‘black box’ in their offices which will track subscribers’ communication traffic. The definition of ‘public telecommunication systems’ includes mobile phone providers, Net gateways, news-servers and potentially web applications such as Hotmail.

And the reasons for introducing such Orwellian measures? They include: ‘preventing disorder, public safety, protecting public health’ and best of all, protecting the ‘economic well-being’ of the UK.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Contact your local MP, let him know that you are concerned, and highlight the problems. For more information and full copies of the Bill, visit www.stand.org.uk and www.fipr.org/rip/index.html

ARGENTINA THE FATE OF THE WICHI



In the far northern province of Salta in Argentina, the Wichi Indians endure continual harassment and violence as a result of the invasion of their lands. Despite promises, the Government has failed to recognise Wichi land ownership and now has major development plans for the area.

The area in dispute, comprising about 600,000 hectares, is home to about 5,000 Wichi Indians. In the early part of the 20th century, non-Indian settlers (called criollos) moved into the area with their cattle and

sheep, destroying fragile grasslands and forests and setting in motion an ongoing battle over land and hunting rights. There have been cases where the Wichi have been threatened at gunpoint and denied access to water holes.

Matters have been made worse by government-backed plans for developing the area. A bridge has been constructed across the Pilcomayo river, which forms the border between Argentina and Paraguay. The Wichi living nearby have been told that their village will be replaced by a frontier town. And as part of a regional development scheme, linking Paraguay with Argentina, the Government is planning a major highway, cutting right through Wichi land.

According to Survival International, the history of deceit by the Salta Government towards the Wichi is unprecedented; even more so since Argentina’s Constitution explicitly recognises Indian land ownership rights, and obliges provinces to transfer land to the Indians. Unless the Federal Government acts to enforce this, the Wichi have no future.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Please send a polite letter of protest to: SE Fernando de la Rúa, Presidente de la República, Casa de Gobierno, Balcarce 50, 1064 Buenos Aires, Argentina and to Dr Juan Carlos Romero, Gobernador de la Provincia de Salta, Centro Cívico, Av de los Incas s/n, 4400 Salta, Argentina. Please send copies of your letters to *Survival International*, 11-15 Emerald Street, London WC1N 3QL, www.survival-international.org

UK ORGANIC ON TARGET



The Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill campaign was initiated to press MPs to pass into legislation a Bill that would call for 30 per cent of agriculture to be in organic production by 2010; that at least 20 per cent of food consumed in 2010 should be organic and that the Government should provide incentives to ensure that more people have access to and are able to afford organic food.

Last November, the Bill went through its first reading. The second reading is due soon. As of July this year, over 200 MPs and 60 organisations have signed up to the campaign. Yet the Government is still not supporting the Bill, and public pressure is vital to make them change their mind.

This is an important initiative, particularly since an overwhelming majority of consumers would like to have access to more organic food. In order to meet demand which is increasing by 40 per cent per annum, the UK currently has to import 80 per cent of organic products sold. The Government needs to recognise the huge potential, not only in terms of economic value but also as a sustainable means to save the farming sector. It has a long way to go – this year alone, the Government allocated 23.6 per cent of its research budget to biotechnology but only 1.8 per cent to organic production.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Write to your MP and tell him why he or she should support the Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill. You can find out who your MP is by calling 0207 2194272. Or send an electronic letter to your MP on www.sustainweb.org/organictarget/get.htm For more information contact Sustain on 0207 8371228 or www.sustainweb.org

CAMPAIGNS DIARY

GLOBAL THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

At the request of the Russian delegation, the intriguingly named Transnational Radical Party (TRP) runs the risk of formal expulsion from the United Nations. Due to the party's 'consultative status' at the UN, dissidents and victims of international crimes have been able to shed light on their causes, address delegates and provoke discussions on issues such as invasion, violence, famine and war. TRP has been actively campaigning for the universal abolition of the death penalty and has played a vital role in the establishment of the International Criminal Court against genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

There is now a danger that TRP will no longer have this opportunity. The Russian delegation to the UN has officially requested that the party be expelled for having allowed Akhiad Idigov, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chechen Government and a member of TRP, to address the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.

On the basis of this request, the Committee of non-governmental organisations to the UN proposed on 23 June a suspension of the consultative status of TRP for three years. So far, none of the charges against TRP have been substantiated. On 27 July, the Committee of NGOs decided to consider TRP's initial defence to the accusation and has requested a comprehensive response.

Since 1955, the Transnational Radical Party has provided a vital platform for dissidents and victims, whose vital contributions would otherwise have remained unheard.

An international endorsement against its suspension has been supported by hundreds of individuals, amongst whom are parliamentarians and representatives of important organisations.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The expulsion of TRP would set a dangerous precedent and is an attack on freedom of expression. Sign the petition for them to continue speaking at the United Nations. Transnational Radical Party, Rue Wietz 60, 1049 Brussels or visit www.radicalparty.org

1-4 September 2000

Geneva, Switzerland.

'Global Leaders for Tomorrow' Summit

Organised by the World Economic Forum

Visit www.weforum.org or fax +41 228691403

3-8 September 2000

Berlin, Germany.

11th International Biotechnology Symposium

Incorporating two European Congresses; one on Applied Genome Research and one on Agri-Biotechnology. Contact DECHEMA eV on + 49 697564235 or visit

www.dechema.de/englisch/

5 September 2000

New York, NY, USA

Can the United Nations be salvaged?

Teach-in organised by the International Forum on Globalisation. Speakers include Lori Wallach, Randy Hayes, Joshua Karlinger, Vandana Shiva and Martin Khor.

For tickets call +1 8886299269 or visit

www.ifg.org

6 September 2000

7.30 pm., Mackarness Hall, High Street,

Honiton, Devon.

Genetic Engineering, Food and the

Environment

Fourth Annual Offwell Lecture with Luke Anderson as the speaker.

Call Offwell Environment Link on 01494

831375.

7-9 September 2000

Rome, Italy.

The Release of Genetically Modified

Organisms: Is it a Human Health Hazard?

Visit www.who.it/Emissues/GMO/gmos.htm

or contact Marco Jermini on +39 064877525.

11-15 September 2000

Lyon, France.

13th Session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies

Call the UNFCCC on +49 2288 151 000 or visit

www.unfccc.int

15-17 September 2000

Chain O Lakes Conference Centre, USA.

14th Annual National Forest Reform Rally

Learn how the US Government is supporting

the logging of old-growth trees in National

Forests and learn what can be done. Call +1

512441122 or visit www.americanlands.org

16 September 2000

Belgium, France, Germany & Luxembourg

International Landmines Day

16 cities will build shoe-pyramids to raise

awareness of the danger involved with land-

mines. Call +33 478697979 or visit

www.handicap-international.org

and bring a shoe.

22 September 2000

Europe

Car-Free Day

70 French, 100 Italian towns and the district of

Geneva will shut off their cars for the day.

Call +33 1 47652486 or visit www.22septem-ber.org

22-23 September 2000

Harvard University, Boston, Mass, USA.

International Conference on Biotechnology in

the Global Economy: Science and the

Precautionary Principle

Send a fax to Derya Honca on +1 6174 968753

or visit [www.cid.harvard.edu/cidbiotech/bio-](http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidbiotech/bio-confpp/)

[confpp/](http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidbiotech/bio-confpp/)

24-25 September 2000

Bangalore, India

Bija Panchayat – Seed Tribunal

Organised by 'Navdanya', the IFG and others.

Call +91 116 968077 or fax +91 116 856795

25-28 September 2000

Joensuu, Finland

Woody Biomass as an Energy source:

Role & Potential

Including a special session on land use and

forestry since the UNFCCC conference. Contact

the European Forest Institute on +35 8 1325

20223 or visit www.efi.fi/events/2000/woody

26 September 2000

Royal Geographical Society, London, UK.

Asia's Lost World – Conservation in

Cambodia's Cardamom Mountains

For tickets call +44 (0)1223 571000 or email

info@fauna-flora.org

29 September 2000

Britannic House, 1 Finsbury Circus, London

Peaceful demonstration against BP's

Investment in PetroChina

Call 'Free Tibet' on + 44 (0)207 833 9958

29-30 September 2000

Fredericksburg, USA.

Renewable Energy Roundup and

Sustainability Fair

Renewable Energy, green & sustainable build-

ing, organic farming & gardening

Contact Russell Smith on +1 512 3455446 or

visit www.renewableenergyroundup.com

World-Wise Web: The five best online campaigns

<http://www.nrdc.org/wildlife/habitat/belize.asp>

Send an electronic message to Fortis Inc and Duke Energy to stop them building a dam that will obliterate a crucial stretch of the Macal River in Belize; one of Central America's last floodplain habitats.

<http://www.antenna.nl/wise/cop6/coeng.html>

In November, during the COP6 meeting in The Hague, the decision will be taken on whether nuclear energy is eligible for the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol. Sign this petition to make nuclear power a thing of the past.

<http://green.votnader.org/petition/petitionform.html>

The Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD); hosting the presidential debates this autumn, has set an unfair criteria by demanding that contenders must receive 15 per cent in a series of five polls. Sign this petition and get Ralph Nader into the debates.

http://www.earthisland.org/takeaction/actionalert_map21.html

The coastal mangrove ecosystem of the Gulf of Fonseca in Honduras, part of which is supposed to be a protected zone, is being destroyed by one shrimp farmer expanding business within the protected site. Save these wetlands.

www.americanlands.org/forestweb/goesign.htm

In the fiscal years of 1997 to 1999, over \$3.6 billion was appropriated from the General Fund of the US Treasury for expenditures associated with timber sale on National Forests. Ask Vice President Al Gore to end old-growth logging on public lands.

GLOBAL

WEST ASKED TO WORSEN RUSSIA'S NUCLEAR LEGACY

The G8 summit agenda in Okinawa was extensive and expensive. With the important issue of debt cancellation in the foreground, there was still ample time to discuss other issues. This is one: In early June, Russia and the US agreed on a plan to 'dispose' of 68 tonnes of weapons grade plutonium and decided to use the G8 summit to campaign for international financial backing. Official figures estimate that the 'disposal' of 34 tonnes of Russian plutonium will cost \$1.7 billion, and \$4.4 billion for the US, and will take 20 years to complete. The US Administration has pledged a total of \$400 million towards the Russian side of the deal.

On 28 June David Chaytor MP put down an early day motion (EDM 887) in the UK House of Commons, calling on the Government not to support this agreement and work on an independent assessment of it. It appears that the Government has ignored this call, for Tony Blair has pledged \$105 million of UK funding to support the Russian project.

According to WISE International, Russia



STILL PICTURES

insisted on MOX (Mixed Oxide) conversion, rather than immobilisation, and argued that its surplus plutonium was a valuable source of energy. There are plans to build 29 new reactors fuelled by MOX, and Swiss utilities have expressed interest in buying Russian MOX fuel, which could have implications for the La Hague and Sellafield reprocessing plants. In the US, some of the plutonium will be burned as reactor fuel; the rest will be stored underground.

With Russia burning instead of immobilising all of its plutonium the question of lia-

bility is of utmost importance. Up to this date Russia has not ratified any convention covering liability and the US will not take responsibility for it. In addition, MOX fuel poses greater risks than uranium fuel. Whilst Western European states are still paying hundreds of millions of tax dollars a year (via EBRD) for the clean-up and restoration of the Chernobyl disaster, taxpayers' money might soon be paying for a huge expansion of the Russian nuclear industry.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The start-up of the Russian MOX programme depends on the export of key components of the closed-down Hanau MOX facility in Germany. Although Joschka Fischer, the German foreign minister, has refused to sanction the transfer, he might be pressured to change his mind. Download a sample letter to Fischer on www.theecologist.org or call + (0) 207 9480170. If you live outside the UK, write a letter to your prime minister; ask if they support or intend to support the project and explain why they should not. If you live in the UK, write a letter to Tony Blair, 10 Downing Street, SW1A 2AA and tell him to revoke his contribution.

World-Wise Web: The five best bookmarks

<http://browse.to/herenow>

Gets you on to *Here & Now*, a great environmental magazine.

<http://www.public-i.org>

Reports on US politics, politicians and the 'fog' in between.

<http://etan.org>

Find out what's going on in East Timor.

<http://www.rachel.org>

The online version of the best magazine on environment and health.

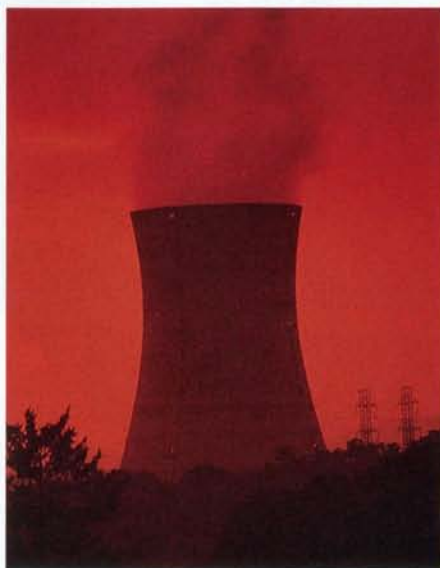
<http://www.saveourenvironment.org>

more excellent campaigns for the 'hooked'.

US THREE MILE JIMMY

Before the accident at Three Mile Island in 1979, few had heard of this nuclear power plant. The crisis began 21 years ago in the early hours of 28 March when failure of the cooling system in one of the reactors led to overheating, partial melting of the uranium core and production of hydrogen gas. The accident dramatically changed America's perception of the safety of nuclear energy and the Three Mile Island plant has become a rallying symbol for the anti-nuclear movement. The US has built no new plant since.

After the accident, President Jimmy Carter – himself a former nuclear engineer – commissioned a report. Its original version was never published. This was due to pressure around President Carter, from people like Admiral Hyman Rickover, 'father' of the nuclear navy. In an affidavit made after Rickover's death and in the wake of the Chernobyl accident,



MAKE A DIFFERENCE

For a copy of a petition asking Jimmy Carter to disclose the truth about the accident, write to Bill Smirnov, 168 Maple Hill Road, Huntington, New York 11743, USA or email smirnovb@ix.netcom.com

his daughter-in-law stated that: 'He (my father-in-law) said that the report, if published in its entirety, would have destroyed the civilian nuclear power industry because the accident at Three Mile Island was infinitely more dangerous than was ever made public. He had told me that he had used his enormous personal influence with President Carter to persuade him to publish the report only in a "highly" diluted form. The President himself had originally wished the full report to be made public. In November 1985, my father-in-law told me that he had come to deeply

regret his action in persuading President Carter to suppress the most alarming aspects of the report'.

Disclosure of the truth of the Three Mile Island accident is important; for both the victims and the world, with its 433 commercial reactors in operation.

PORTUGAL/SPAIN TIME FOR A LYNX-UP

Portuguese and Spanish environmentalists are warning that if powerful wine retailers force the end for natural cork, endangered Iberian wildlife, like the lynx, could be wiped out within the next 10 to twenty years. The last five years have witnessed an unprecedented increase of British, Australian and American wine retailers switching from natural to plastic corks. Marks & Spencer for example, are already using up to 30 per cent of plastic stoppers in their own-brand wines. This severely threatens the 3,000-year-old practice of cork-stripping in southern Portugal and Spain, which in return preserves one of Europe's most ancient woodlands. These forests are home to rare animals like the black stork, vultures and the Spanish Imperial eagle who depend on the rich diversity of these cork oak forests. The

beautiful woodlands are also one of the last habitats for the Iberian lynx which can not survive without these traditional systems of cork farming. If demand for cork collapses, warns Helena Freitas, president of the 'Liga para Protecao de Natureza', eucalyptus plantation for paper and pulp companies will wipe out the remaining habitat for the lynx; a population which has halved in the last 10 years; leaving just fifty in Portugal.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Write to your wine retailers and ask them to use natural cork. Return accidentally bought plastic corked wine. Please send copies of your letters sent and received from wine retailers, vineyards and supermarkets to : SOS Lynx, 7665-8991 Luzianes-Gare, Portugal or email SOS.LYNX@CLIX.PT

CONSCIOUS CONSUMER

'Cleaning-up' images, so that the consumer feels good about consuming, has long been a major marketing factor for corporations. The latest example is British Petroleum (BP) whose abbreviation is now supposed to stand for 'beyond petrol'. Daily papers from London to Timbuktu recently carried three full-page ads, inviting readers into 'a new brand of progress'. The shield-shaped logo has gone and has been replaced by something resembling a flower – at a cost of £7 million. To quote *The Times*: 'White-hearted, yellow-waisted and green be-skirted, it's a sign that could stand for everything – a genetically modified sunflower, a logo for a new no-cow-input butter, a recruiting centre for Greenpeace'.

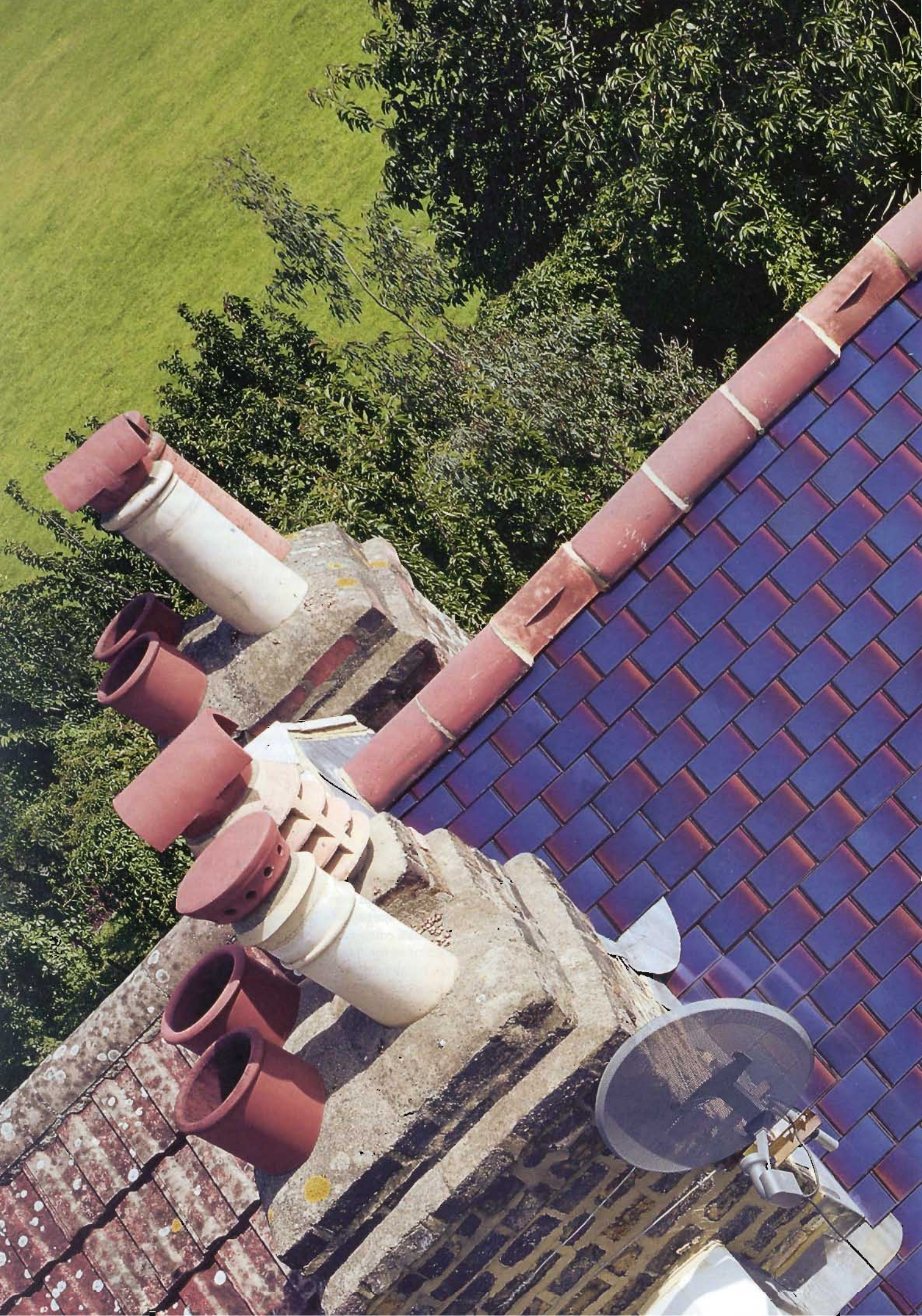
In 1997, John Browne, BP's chairman, announced that 'the time to consider the policy dimensions of climate change is not when the link between greenhouse gases and climate change is conclusively proven, but when the possibility can not be discounted and is taken seriously by the society of which we are part. We in BP have reached that point'. Soon after, BP withdrew from the Global Climate Coalition (GCC) which had launched an aggressive campaign preventing the US from endorsing an agreement to reduce global carbon emissions. Instead it joined the Business Environmental Leadership Council, which counts Shell, Dupont, Enron, Toyota and Boeing amongst its clients (watch out for new logos).

But the new 'flower' doesn't mean a 'softer' approach. Society equals consumers and more consumers equals more profit. BP's latest quarterly results show a stunning £12bn pre-tax profit, the largest ever made by a British company. But where does it all come from? As their website, www.bp.com, exemplifies, reality is not as simple as simply 'bp'. Whilst inviting the web-surfer to find out more about the 'flower', a flashing heading reads 'Kazakhstan Oil Discovery'. And sure enough, oil exploration will continue. Scrolling through recent press releases, one reads: 'BP Amoco completes purchase of Burmah Castrol', 'BP Amoco to acquire Bayer's stake in Erdoelchemie', 'BP Amoco third operated oil discovery in Angola', 'BP Amoco and Partners align Alaskan Interests', 'BP Amoco agrees major China joint venture'...

So don't be fooled. BP remains the abbreviation for British Petroleum, which burns petrol (bp) – and the planet.



ENVIRONMENTAL IMAGES



You're going to see a lot more of solar power. As global warming accelerates and our energy demands continue to rise, we have to adopt cleaner, more sustainable sources of energy, before it's too late. The latest technology finally makes domestic solar power a practical and affordable reality even in grey old UK. Add value to your home and lead the way into an era of clean energy.

It took just 36 hours to replace the slates of this ordinary terrace house with solar roof tiles. They work in normal daylight, even in cloudy weather, and the house now generates 14% more electricity than it needs, selling back the surplus to the national grid. Solar Century has a wide range of innovative solar products designed to put clean energy within your reach. welcome to the solar century

For more information
visit our website
www.solarcentury.co.uk
or call us on 0800 970 0733

SOLAR
CENTURY



DEBATE

DOES WORKING COMPROMISE THE

WRITERS GEORGE MONBIOT AND



George Monbiot is an environmental writer and campaigner, regular *Guardian* columnist, and founder of *The Land is Ours*.

Dear Jonathon

Corporate power is not the only threat to the environment, but it is surely the most pressing. By lobbying and cajoling our governments, corporations have undermined or avoided the environmental laws which would restrict their destructive activities. Globally, making use of the World Trade Organisation and other shadowy international bodies, they have forced down standards to minimise environmental protection.

Corporations behave like this not because the people who run them are evil, but simply because the directors have a 'fiduciary duty' to maximise their share value. Even if they wanted to act like philanthropic organisations, they could not. This means that they must, legally and constitutionally, seek to offload as many of their costs onto other people or the environment as they can. This is why they clamour so loudly for deregulation, in the hope of diluting the health and safety, consumer protection and environmental standards which force them to carry their own costs.

Our duty as environmentalists is also clear: we must fight to ensure that companies are subordinated to democratic control, re-regulated and held to account. As a result of our activities, the corporations have acquired a further duty: to co-opt and capture us, in order to prevent us from reducing their market value. They seem to be encountering some success.

The Cheshire Wildlife Trust was one of the most outspoken opponents of Manchester Airport's second runway. But after it lost the public inquiry, it took money from both the airport and the runway contractors. At the same time, its position switched from outright opposition to co-operation, leaving the protesters who were still trying to stop the development exposed and bewildered.

Robert Napier, the new chief executive of the World Wide Fund for Nature, was formerly a senior manager at the mining company RTZ (now Rio Tinto) and the peat diggers Fisons, and the chief executive of the quarrying firm Redland. They are all among the UK's most destructive corporations. Mr Napier announced that he would 'increase our engagement considerably with companies'. Some of WWF's employees have reported a corresponding decline in the radical content of the organisation's work.

Your own organisation, Forum for the Future, also

makes a virtue of working closely with big companies. The Forum claims that its partners all have 'a demonstrable commitment to the pursuit of sustainable development'. Among other defenders of the environment, they include BP Amoco, Blue Circle Industries and Tesco. Could this be the same BP Amoco which is building the world's first offshore oil development in the Arctic? It's surely another Blue Circle that has been seeking permission to use tyres, chlorinated solvents and heavy metals as fuel in its cement plants. Perhaps there are also two Tescos. The one I've heard about has squashed the Government's out-of-town parking tax, and is pursuing its expansion plans as vigorously as ever before. It seems to me that these companies have a demonstrable commitment to the most unsustainable development they can get away with.

By allowing yourselves to become dependent on corporate funding, and allowing them to use you as a public relations opportunity, you surely put yourselves in a position of weakness. Where is the power disposed in this relationship? What do you tell them if you don't like what they're doing – do what we say, or we won't take your money any more?

And it's not just a question of funding. Going for Green, for example, struck a deal with McDonald's to print environmental messages on the company's sugar sachets. Going for Green was praised by McDonald's chief executive for being a 'non-political campaign'. The role of the individual in protecting the environment should not become a political issue'. The deal, he added, 'encourages... the feelgood factor'. An environmental group, in other words, was helping McDonald's to create the impression that it was protecting the environment, without changing any of its practices. Compromised? We're being cauterised.

I have no objection to talking to corporations, or indeed to efforts to encourage them to moderate or improve their technical processes. But it is both naïve and dangerous to imagine that gentle persuasion can change their core activities. They will do what is most profitable, whatever the impact on the planet might be. Their destructive activities become unprofitable only when campaigners turn their customers against them. This is much harder to do if other environmentalists are convincing their customers that the companies are not half as bad as the radicals say. By working with them while withholding from public criticism, you allow them to appear both credible and reasonable, undermining the only people who could really hold them to account.

We must deal with corporations on our own terms or not at all. In the absence of draconian democratic

YES



WITH BUSINESS ENVIRONMENTALIST?

JONATHON PORRITT BATTLE IT OUT.

controls or new market imperatives, they will remain the enemies of the environment. Their fiduciary duty demands it.

George Monbiot

Dear George

It would seem we share the analysis, but not the prescription. Part of the problem (as you say) is the way companies are incorporated and held accountable. Their 'fiduciary duties' do indeed oblige them to pursue unsustainable profits, whether they feel happy about this or not. That's precisely why I have been fighting 'to ensure that companies are subject to democratic control, re-regulated and held to account' for the last 30 years, and why I continue to do so today – though in a different way.

Your prescription is to campaign against large multinationals as the source of all Earth-bashing evil, and to go on hammering them until they change their wicked ways. Paradoxically, as an upholder of democracy, you have little respect for the notion of promoting diversity within the Green Movement, and expect everybody instantly to toe your particular tactical line.

By contrast, even though I think your arguments are flawed, I am delighted that you should keep firing off your weighty anti-corporate salvos, and delighted that organisations like Greenpeace keep biting corporate ankles with undiminished vigour. Unlike you, I believe we all need each other, pursuing the same goal (of an equitable, sustainable world) in different ways.

In that more pluralistic, less authoritarian context, we each put our energies where we think they can more effectively be deployed. In 1995, after 25 years of campaigning against people, principally through the Green Party and Friends of the Earth, I chose to put my energies into forming partnerships with companies, local authorities, universities and professions to help accelerate the transition to a sustainable society. I chose to work with 'the enemy' – in your moral universe – not because my views are any less radical now than they were in 1970, but because I am convinced that solution-based partnerships are a key part of the overall picture.

For one thing, I have much less faith in the power of consumers or the efficacy of government than you appear to have. Campaigners fool themselves if they think the odd triumph against a Monsanto, Shell or Nike is evidence of some radical consumerate (ie an electorate that prefers to shop rather than vote). Relative to other factors, there is not a lot of consumer pressure on companies today; indeed, the vast majority are quite happy to go on buying their products and

services regardless of their impact on other people or the planet.

You would seem to prefer to avert your eyes to your uncomfortable reality, precisely because it is so much easier to hit the companies than it is to hit out at the hundreds of millions of people buying their way into an ecological meltdown. Yet the reluctance to look upstream at the source of the problem – namely, us – is both politically naïve and vaguely dishonest.

As to governments, you are of course right to keep coming back to regulation as the most effective way of ensuring corporate social responsibility on our terms, of transforming the very concept of fiduciary duty. That's why I keep campaigning to drive that particular agenda. But how well do you think we are doing, George? The occasional tweak of the regulatory ratchet is as much as we can get these days – precisely because people like you and me have persuaded too few voters to give these issues the overarching significance they deserve.

In the meantime, there's a huge amount to be done by working to bring about change from within companies as well as from without. The companies we work with do not pretend to be exemplars of sustainable practice, and go on getting a lot wrong, with damaging environmental and social consequences. But in a way that would have been unthinkable even five years ago, they all accept the need to change over time, and are quite genuinely looking for help in effecting that change. That's where Forum for the Future comes in, to help change mindsets, incrementally improve performance, drive innovation, improve the dialogue with stakeholders and so on. We engage forthrightly (as a campaigning charity, not a business consultancy), but always on the basis of trust and shared challenge.

A 'position of weakness'? In an odd kind of way, our work with companies is both mundane and high risk at the same time. We understand the risks of co-option and 'selling out' rather better than I suspect you ever will. Yours, after all, remains the easy option, looking down with (occasionally patronising!) moral superiority, secure in your absolutist world view that multinationals are the principal engine of environmental destruction, that the individuals who work for those companies are amoral, incapable of being influenced by cogent analysis or moved by fears for their own children, and that those who work with them must by definition be morally inadequate and politically compromised. 🐦



Jonathon Porritt is a director of Forum for the Future. He has been a leading member of the Green Party, and director of Friends of the Earth UK.

NO

'I am concerned that your will to believe has allowed you to be used.'

George Monbiot

✎ Your final argument (that people like me, working with companies, undermine the efforts of people like you, working against companies) is interesting but unsubstantiated. There has, for example, been no diminution in campaigns against BP Amoco since that particular company entered into partnership with a number of different non-governmental organisations – including, I might add, Greenpeace itself! If anything, external pressure has increased since then. And like Greenpeace, we too feel that we are dealing with corporations 'on our own terms'. And that our work complements everything that you and others are doing at the same time.

Jonathon Porritt

Dear Jonathon

We agree that corporations behave as they do because their fiduciary duty demands it. So why do you go on to insist that I think it's because their directors are 'amoral'?

If you accept that corporate bosses do bad things not because of the badness of their hearts but because they are obliged to, then surely you can see that they also do good things, not because of the goodness of their hearts, but because they are obliged to. Monsanto collapsed not because we asked them nicely, but because we made their corporate strategy unworkable. Conversely, when Malcolm Walker, the head of Iceland, received a BEMA environment award last year for his company's stand against genetic engineering, he commented, with commendable honesty, 'you are rewarding me for pure self-interest'.

Perhaps you could point to some historical occasions on which gentle persuasion has led to dramatic political change. I can't think of any. As the freed slave and anti-slavery campaigner Frederick Douglass remarked in 1857, 'Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will'. Have you really unlearned this lesson to the extent that you believe we can persuade corporations to abandon their core business practices, by appealing to the good grace of their directors?

I am concerned that your will to believe has allowed you to be used. Your magazine, *Green Futures*, carries adverts for Lafarge Redland Aggregates, the company seeking to turn the proposed Special Area of Conservation in South Harris into a gigantic superquarry. But this is not mentioned. Instead, readers are assured that the firm has a 'long-standing commitment to environmental improvement'. The magazine insists that members of your 'Forum Business Network', such as BAA and Vodafone, are 'interested in tackling sustainability issues'. Yet nowhere does it tell us that BAA is still seeking to build Heathrow Terminal 5, the biggest and most fiercely contested greenfield development ever conceived in the United Kingdom, while Vodafone is now constructing its world headquarters on greenfield land in one of the most sensitive places in southern England. Why do you tell us only one side of the story? Why are you helping your corporate partners to mislead us?

You compare your approach with that of

Greenpeace. Yes, Greenpeace has been lobbying to persuade BP's shareholders to demand more investment in renewables. But it has also been taking direct action against BP's attempts to drill in the Arctic Wildlife Refuge. Greenpeace, in other words, is prepared to use the stick as well as the carrot. It's not clear to me that you are using either.

Isn't it obvious that this leaves you compromised? By publishing misleading corporate propaganda while refraining from attacking malpractice in public, you surely help to legitimise and validate the way these companies operate. By insisting that, with the right voices in their ears, corporations will regulate their own behaviour, you surely help them to avoid the external regulations we both agree are necessary. If they can wear the Jonathon Porritt badge of approval before they have changed, then what incentive to change are you offering?

Of course I support pluralism and a diversity of approaches. And, as you know perfectly well, I also campaign to persuade consumers to change their buying habits: I wasn't aware that contesting corporate malpractice precluded this. But I do not support uncritical collaboration. Talk to corporations, by all means, but don't allow yourself to be used, by them, against the rest of us.

George Monbiot

Dear George

What a touchingly naïve world you live in to suppose organisations like Forum for the Future seek to change business behaviour 'by appealing to the good grace of their directors'!

Our task is really rather different: to show the world as it is, and as it will be; to explain what sustainability is and isn't – confusion is still chronic; and then, one way or another, to elaborate 'the business case' for that company in committing proactively to more environmentally and socially responsible behaviour.

As your quote from Malcolm Walker demonstrates, self-interest (often of the 'enlightened' rather than 'pure' variety, by the way) works far more powerfully than vapid moralising when dealing with the company as a whole – ie as a legal entity with pre-existing fiduciary duties. It is different for the individuals in that company, who it is possible to inspire and motivate in a quite different and less pragmatic way.

Your lack of logic about this is overwhelming. On the one hand you acknowledge that these companies (and the individuals in them) are in no position to leap from their wholly unsustainable present to a wholly sustainable future in one fell swoop – precisely because of those pre-existing duties. They must therefore set out on the long journey towards sustainability, inevitably, doing both good and bad in the short term, but hopefully moving in the right direction.

On the other hand, your absolutism compels you to deny any positive benefits arising from the steps taken on that journey. For you, it has to be all bad, all the time. So you talk of BAA and the proposed Terminal 5 at Heathrow, but would never allow yourself to admit in

public that BAA may also be doing many good things (<http://www.baa.co.uk/BAAHome.htm>). So why do you tell us only one side of the story? Why do you seek, in everything you write, to mislead us by ignoring those elements in the journey that are so inconvenient to your particular approach?

Your reading of environmental change, by the way, is as jejune as those who read the history of nation states purely in terms of wars, dramatic events and mighty rulers, as if these things could ever define a nation and the changes it goes through. The history of the environment movement is indeed punctuated by the occasional 'dramatic' moment, but its real success lies in unceasing, undramatic persuasion and pressure, leading to steady, incremental change amongst both politicians and business people. So fixated are you on a macho, 'them and us' battleground that you deliberately ignore this rather more humble model of transformation.

For me, that approach is just beginning to work. What was unthinkable for most companies even five years ago is now thinkable, do-able, and in some commendable cases, already done. But you're absolutely right to point out that such incrementalism will never get us far enough fast enough – which is why we both campaign hard for tougher regulations, new controls, far higher (and mandatory) standards of corporate governance, and so on. You just choose to put all your eggs in that one basket; I prefer to work on both fronts simultaneously, and do not believe (as you do) that the one excludes the other.

'Compromise' to us is therefore not the offensive insult you would like it to be. In the work it does with companies (which is only one aspect of our work, by the way!), the Forum for the Future has consciously chosen to embrace compromise as part and parcel of the business of accelerating change. We do that purposefully, and free of the absurd illusions with which you believe we are imbued. That means I do indeed allow myself to be 'used', in the admittedly simple belief that commending and multiplying the take-up of good practice is as likely to prove effective in securing change as constantly castigating bad practice. For you, that means the 'Porritt brand', in conferring that 'badge of approval', is terminally contaminated.

You might well be right, but I rather hope others will see it differently.

Jonathon Porritt

Dear Jonathon

If you have managed to change some corporate practices, I'm very pleased, but this doesn't mean that you have to help companies whose net impact is deeply negative to create the impression that they are the friends of the environment. Isn't it sufficient that the editors of most national newspapers and TV stations sit in their back pockets? That adverts everywhere tell only their side of the story? That there are precious few outlets for the people trying to expose malpractice? Do they really need your help to spin a partial picture of their activities?

I don't believe that the battle to save the environment is all about dramatic events, but I do believe it is about them and us, for corporate interests, as we have agreed, are at variance with those of society as a whole, and they will exploit us if they can get away with it. This is why we must be so wary of helping them to pull the wool over our eyes.

This needn't, of course, prevent us from praising good practice when we see it, but I believe there is a world of difference between this and lending our brands to a corporate public relations programme. You might believe that your endorsement of BAA has nothing to do with Terminal 5, but as far as they are concerned, bringing the former director of Friends of the Earth on board, while the current director is fiercely opposed to their plans, is a brilliant coup. Why do you lend them your name when they are still planning to go ahead with this development? Why not make your approval conditional on their withdrawal? Or would that threaten your own 'enlightened self-interest'? Wouldn't your case be more robust if you weren't taking their money?

George Monbiot

Dear George

I suppose if you've only got one song, you'd better keep on singing it. Just weave in a bit of holier-than-thou personal abuse to spice it up – though I hope you won't mind my mentioning that I haven't noticed you refusing to work for *The Guardian* unless they stop carrying adverts for the companies you so despise. Or would that threaten your own enlightened self-interest?

We're all compromised, in one way or another, even pious George. We all draw the line in a slightly different place, as activists, consumers or citizens, depending on our judgement of how we can be most effective. To a certain extent, we have deliberately built up Forum for the Future to be effective with precisely the kind of people and organisations you wouldn't give the time of day to.

In turn, that's because your effectiveness depends on your absolutism. It must be all black or all white, with no shades of grey in between. You know as well as I do that the world isn't quite like that, but you couldn't be the media person you've become if you did the kind of 'on the one hand, then again on the other' stuff that I do.

And thank God for that absolutism! Over the last 10 years, I have learned just how much those working 'the inside track' – with companies or government – depend on those hammering away from outside. Many of the companies we work with, for instance, live in dread of being targeted by Greenpeace or Friends of the Earth, and that's no bad thing. In fact, it would be a disaster to the Green Movement as a whole if those organisations renounced confrontation and embraced the Forum's 'solutions-based partnerships', or if you started writing corporate puff pieces instead of your sustained and powerful invective.

So enjoy the contrast, George. I need you, to do the work I do; sure as hell you don't need me!

Jonathon Porritt

'I haven't noticed you refusing to work for *The Guardian* unless they stop carrying adverts for the companies you so despise.'
Jonathon Porritt

SUCKERS

Andy Rowell explains why Wal-Mart's much trumpeted arrival in Britain is likely to spell disaster for local communities



On 24 July, the world's largest retailer, Wal-Mart, opened its first American-style supercentre in the UK, placing it on the outskirts of Bristol. As queues of cars choked the July sunshine, clamouring to squeeze into the 1,000-space car park, both the local and national media, with a disturbing unanimity of message, warmly welcomed the behemoth's arrival. 'Store wars as US giant offers 60 per cent off' blazed the approving headline in the *Daily Mail*. 'Shoppers set for cut-price bonanza' yelled the *Bristol Evening News*. The pundits agreed with the journalists, who in turn agreed with the City analysts and senior members of Britain's government: Wal-Mart's arrival in Britain was a Good Thing. The 50,000 people who visited the Bristol store during its first two weeks apparently agreed.

This chorus of almost adulatory approval from all sides of British public life is probably not that hard to explain. After all, Wal-Mart, the vast megastore chain which, in its 40 years of existence, has risen to dominate and revolutionise American shopping, appeals to that most basic of consumer instincts: the purse. Wal-Mart is cheap. Very cheap. It lives and thrives by undercutting all and any competitors.

Ever since last June, when it was announced that Wal-Mart was taking over Britain's third-largest supermarket chain, Asda, in a deal worth £6.7 billion – a deal which doubled its overseas business overnight¹ – we have heard the same message from all sides: Wal-Mart is good for the consumer. The government thinks so – Wal-Mart's executives held a top-level personal meeting with Tony Blair before the Asda takeover, during which they were given the green light for expansion in the UK. The media thinks so – national papers from the *Guardian* to the *Daily Telegraph* have praised the store.

We have heard less, though, about what Wal-Mart will be bad for. And when its record in the States and elsewhere is examined, we can begin to get a good idea. Wal-Mart will, in all likelihood, be bad for the British countryside and the wider environment; bad for workers, both in Britain and abroad; bad for jobs; bad for small communities and independent shops; bad for local economies; bad, even, for other supermarkets. Bad, in other words,

for almost everyone but Wal-Mart.

Wal-Mart's takeover of Asda is more – much more – than one supermarket merging with, or even being swallowed by, another. It is the likely beginning of a retail revolution, which could change more than just shopping habits. Wal-Mart's aggressive 'low-cost at any price' culture, according to serious retail analysts, looks set to force a series of mega-mergers that could, within a decade or less, leave only Wal-Mart, and possibly one competitor, standing. Britain could be on the verge of a vast upheaval that it is utterly unprepared for.

THE DRIVE TO DOMINATE

It is just under 40 years since Sam Walton, Wal-Mart's founder, opened his first store in Arkansas. Since then, the company has grown into the US's largest private employer, with over 920,000 staff. Every week some 93 million Americans shop at Wal-Mart and every three days another Wal-Mart opens.² Just before he died in 1992, Walton, who had amassed the greatest personal fortune in American history, accepted one of the country's highest civilian honours, the Medal of Freedom, saying that 'We're all working together; that's the secret. And we'll lower the cost of living for everyone, not just in America, but we'll give the world an opportunity to see what it's like to save and have a better lifestyle, a better life for all. We're proud of what we've accomplished; we've just begun.'³

And they had. Having saturated its home market, in a country that now has more shopping centres than high schools, Wal-Mart now has its sights set overseas. Over the last decade, it has acquired over 700 stores outside the US, expanding into Mexico in 1991, Puerto Rico in 1992, Canada in 1994, Argentina and Brazil in 1995, and China and Indonesia in 1996. The following year, it moved into Germany and now it is the UK's turn. With over 3,600 stores on four continents, Wal-Mart is now set to become the world's largest corporation in the next five to ten years.⁴

But the company's phenomenal success comes at a huge ecological, cultural and social price. Its growing legion of critics has consistently pointed out that Wal-Mart, in its drive to dominate, has systematically destroyed downtown America. Furthermore, it is notorious for its low wages, and there is evidence that it imports its goods from nations where the workers are either enslaved or paid a pittance. In its wake, the company has destroyed thousands of competitors, crippled and depersonalised local communities and left a sprawling suburban wasteland. Wal-Mart, says one critic, ex-*Rolling Stone* editor James Howard Kunstler, is 'the exemplar of a form of corporate colonialism... going into distant places and strip-mining them culturally and economically'.⁵

RETAIL REVOLUTIONARIES

But this is not Sam Walton's worst legacy, says journalist Bob Ortega, in his book, *In Sam We Trust*: 'Walton and Wal-Mart transformed retailing the way Henry Ford revolutionised transportation', he writes. 'Wal-Mart's way of doing business is the new paradigm, and the company embodies both the shining success and the dark underbelly of modern American business.'⁶

This revolution is now set to sweep the UK. And in case there was any doubt about its significance, listen to the understated words of



'Wal-Mart is not the beginning of competition, it is the end of competition. Once it has driven out the competitors, it is free to do whatever it wants with its prices' – Al Norman of Sprawl-Busters, USA

Wal-Mart will try its best to destroy the competition. But that's not all it will destroy. It also has its eyes on Britain's planning restrictions. Its success in the US has been based on the vast size of its stores, which can sell all and everything under one roof. In the UK, tight planning restrictions on out-of-town superstores seem to preclude such expansion – at present. But the company is clear on this point. 'If you really want to make it more competitive, the thing to do is to loosen planning', says Allan Leighton, CEO of Wal-Mart Europe.¹¹ If that happens, Wal-Mart will be given the green light to move in on Britain's small towns and cannibalise local businesses – with potentially devastating results.

THE CONSUMER'S FRIEND?

Wal-Mart's claim to be the consumer's friend is the bedrock of its success. But how true is it? Tim Lang, Professor of Food Policy at Thames Valley University, has his doubts. 'It is dubious whether Wal-Mart's take-over of Asda will be of benefit to consumers', he argues. 'Consumers should ask themselves whether a six pence reduction in the price of baked-beans is worth the environmental cost of having to buy the car and travel even further to get to the tin shed to buy the tin can on the edge of a motorway. Is it really worth it?'¹²

The message from the company's home country is the same. 'The idea that Wal-Mart will be an inducement to lower prices is ridiculous,' argues Al Norman, founder of the community group Sprawl-Busters, which has helped 88 communities fight the company over the last eight years in North America. 'Prices will only remain low while there is active competition. Wal-Mart is not the beginning of competition, it is the end of competition. Once it has driven out the competitors, it is free to do whatever it wants with its prices'.¹³

Only one other UK retailer is prepared to say anything at all about Wal-Mart's arrival in the UK. A spokesperson for Iceland says: 'From what we have seen in the States, we can see that Wal-Mart does affect the High Street. They are going to be quite detrimental to consumer choice at the end of the day'.¹⁴

Al Norman's evidence is based on his experience in the US, where, using brutal economies of scale, Wal-Mart has flexed its economic

the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD), which analyses the sector. Wal-Mart's take-over of Asda, it says, 'is the most significant entry into the UK by a foreign retailer to date'.⁷ Translated, this means: big changes ahead.

But what changes? Wal-Mart is playing its cards characteristically close to its chest, and its message is one of caution. Its communications strategy appears to be to reassure: it wants the British consumer to rest safe in the knowledge that it will not change too much, or too fast. It is unlikely, though, based on its record, that this is anything like the truth.

So, although the company maintains that it only plans to open 10 stores in five years,⁸ the company's real aim, says the IGD, is 'very clear' – to become the 'leading retailer' in the UK.⁹ 'Keep in mind', writes Bob Ortega, 'that Wal-Mart started small in Canada and Mexico, too, and that despite stumbling early on, in less than seven years it had become the largest retailer in both countries'. In Germany, the company moved from the 15th to 4th largest retailer in just two years.¹⁰

muscle to squash competitors. The company has a history of undercutting the local competition until it goes bankrupt. An employee song goes: 'Stack it deep, sell it cheap, watch it fly and hear those downtown merchants cry'.

'For saving a few cents, we are supposed to sacrifice 20 to 30 acres of land, lose jobs in other stores, and support low wage labour', argues Norman. 'It is a quality of life issue. You're surrounded by gridlock, and the architectural graffiti of a windowless Wal-Mart store. People in America have lamented for years that Wal-Mart is scarring the face of home-town America and turning one community into a look-alike for every community'.¹⁵ Since 1962, writes Norman in his book *Slam-Dunking Wal-Mart – how you can stop superstore sprawl in your hometown*, Wal-Mart has 'cannibalised the retail food chain from the Mom and Pops on the bottom, to the mid-level regional chains to the very top national chains' in every county in America.¹⁶ His message is clear: local communities pay a big price for low prices.

CRUSHING COMPETITION, CRUSHING JOBS

No company is immune. The Wal-Mart casualty department is overflowing with those who could not compete. According to Iowa State University Professor Ken Stone, for example, in the ten years after Wal-Mart moved into Iowa, the state lost over 555 grocery stores, 298 hard-ware stores, 293 building suppliers, 161 variety stores and 158 women's clothing stores, 153 shoe stores, 116 drug stores and 111 children's clothing stores. In total, some 7,326 businesses went to the wall. There is no reason to believe that the company intends to spare Britain's beleaguered High Street the same fate.

Ironically, the retail giant also destroys jobs. Study after study in the US has shown that when Wal-Mart comes to town, jobs are destroyed. Last year, in a study in Virginia, economist Tom Muller showed that, while Wal-Mart's arrival would create 246 part-time jobs, 248 jobs in local businesses would be destroyed as a result. Another survey by Muller found that in nine counties examined, on average 84 per cent of Wal-Mart's sales came from existing businesses. In some areas it was as high as 100 per cent.¹⁷ In a saturated retail market, in other words, Wal-Mart's gains are another store's losses.

Another study by Muller and Beth Humstone into a proposed Wal-Mart in Franklin County, Vermont, projected that 'over time, the number of jobs in the county would decline by a net 200 jobs... this is due to the fact that the existing retail businesses are more labour intensive than Wal-Mart. For every \$10 million in sales in a typical Franklin County retail business, 106 people are employed. For every \$10 million sales at a Wal-Mart, 70 people are employed'. In other

Whilst it destroys jobs elsewhere, the jobs Wal-Mart does create are often low-wage and part-time.

words, for every job generated at Wal-Mart one and a half jobs are lost elsewhere.¹⁸

Even studies connected to Wal-Mart admit that job losses are a problem. In the town of Greenfield near Boston, an economic survey underwritten by Wal-Mart in 1993 found that, despite creating a promised 293 new jobs, the net impact of the store would be just 27 jobs, because of jobs lost from other businesses. The study also concluded that 232,000 square feet of retail space would close because of Wal-Mart's store. Nearly half the sales for the new store would be poached from existing businesses.¹⁹

What's more, just as Wal-Mart can come in and close down the competition, it can also leave once all the competition has gone. There are over 4,000 abandoned shopping malls in America, with 22 empty Wal-Mart stores in Alabama alone. 'They came in and ravaged all the small businesses,' says the President of the First National Bank in Nowata, Oklahoma. 'And when it came to the point when they were not satisfied, they left.'²⁰

Wal-Mart UK, though, denies that jobs are an issue. Nick Agarwal, from Asda/Wal-Mart, wants us to believe that Wal-Mart is good for surrounding businesses. 'The evidence is', he says, without producing any evidence 'that the [Bristol] store is attracting trade to the shopping centre in and around the area. That is part of its success.'²¹

But claiming that large, out-of-town superstores are good for local businesses flies in the face of the evidence. UK Government research published in 1988, for example, showed that edge-of-town and out-of-town supermarkets have a serious impact on between 13 and 50 per cent of the local market in market towns and centres.²² The industry's own figures, from the National Retail Planning Forum report, says that a superstore costs on average 276 local jobs.²³

The Sussex Rural Community Council has predicted that a new supermarket in its region would close all village shops within a seven-mile radius. The Cornwall Association of Village Shopkeepers found that 202 jobs out of 270 were at risk from a supermarket.²⁴ One of Britain's leading think-tanks has calculated that a typical out-of-town supermarket has a subsidy of £25,000 per week over its town centre equivalent, because of pollution and congestion caused by the car culture that out-of-town stores rely on and encourage.²⁵

Wal-Mart's record, then, tells a clear story: the arrival of Wal-Mart in a community doesn't create new jobs, it just steals other peoples'. And its commitment to that community lasts only as long as its profits and its retail strategy allow it to. In Bristol, the company boasts of employing an extra 200 people at its new store. But how many of these will be at the expense of job losses in the surrounding area? And how long will they last? Only Wal-Mart knows – and it's not telling. Meanwhile, local businesses, led by the Bristol Chamber of Commerce, are already publicly expressing their worries.

EXPLOITATION

Whilst it destroys jobs elsewhere, the jobs Wal-Mart does create are often low-wage and part-time. 'They are pushing down US labour standards. This is a company that pays low wages – on average two to three dollars an hour less than a union employer,' says Jill Cashen from the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) in the US. As she explains, 'Wal-Mart has gone to tremendous lengths to deny their own employees a union. Only 10 people out of 920,000 workers at Wal-Mart are members of a union in the US.'²⁶

Other Wal-Mart business practices also leave much to be desired. In his Wal-Mart exposé, *Wall Street Journal* journalist Bob Ortega wrote: 'Wal-Mart's executives have demonstrated an often breathtaking contempt for laws and regulations. In the US, courts again and again have found the company to have lied, to have illegally falsified, destroyed and withheld documents, to have committed civil fraud, to have wilfully sold counterfeit goods, to have deliberately





discriminated against disabled job applicants, to have illegally fired workers for interracial dating, to have discriminated against black and Mexican employees in other ways, to have allowed managers to sexually harass women workers – and to have fired women who had the temerity to complain.²⁷

Now, Wal-Mart has brought its anti-union agenda to Europe. In July 2000, German Wal-Mart workers launched a two-day 'warning' strike against the company because it had refused to sign the German wage agreement and join the German employers' association. 'Your struggle demonstrates that Wal-Mart is committed to spreading its anti-union, anti-worker operation to any country it does business, regardless of national labour laws or international labour standards protecting the right of workers to organise', said UFCW President Doug Dority in a letter of support.²⁸

Not content with bullying its domestic workers, Wal-Mart has also taken its attitude to workers' rights towards the Third World, where factories producing clothes for Wal-Mart have consistently been found using forced or child labour. A 1992 American NBC investigation found garments sewn by 12-year-olds in Bangladesh for Wal-Mart being proudly touted as 'Made in the USA'. The factory children were locked in at night until they had finished their production quotas. Only a year before Wal-Mart had shifted production to the notorious Saraka factory in the country, 25 child workers had died in a fire at the facility, unable to escape.²⁹

The reaction of Wal-Mart's Chief Executive, David Glass, to this, was as tactful as could be. 'There are tragic things that happen all over the world', he spluttered. And anyway: 'You and I might define children differently.'³⁰

'Wal-Mart's executives have demonstrated an often breathtaking contempt for laws and regulations. In the US, courts again and again have found the company to have lied, to have illegally falsified, destroyed and withheld documents, to have committed civil fraud, to have wilfully sold counterfeit goods, to have deliberately discriminated against disabled job applicants, to have illegally fired workers for interracial dating, to have discriminated against black and Mexican employees in other ways, to have allowed managers to sexually harass women workers – and to have fired women who had the temerity to complain' – Bob Ortega, *The Wall Street Journal*

Subsequent investigations by the human rights group the National Labour Committee (NLC) in the US looked at factory conditions in Honduras and Bangladesh where Wal-Mart clothing is sewn. In Honduras, the NLC found that women as young as fourteen were employed in up to 14-hour daily shifts, with occasional mandatory 24-hour shifts. They had to work seven days a week, and if they could not, they would be fired.³¹

In response to these allegations, Wal-Mart introduced a much-trumpeted Code of Conduct for its suppliers. But the evidence is that sweatshop labour continued to be used. Last year, the NLC released reports on the continuing use of sweatshop labour for clothes made for Wal-Mart in Honduras, Mexico, El Salvador, China, Bangladesh and Guatemala. Wal-Mart continues to be 'one of the worst sweat-



shop abusers in the world, if not the worst', says a spokesperson for the NLC.³² Meanwhile, only last month, the UFCW announced that Wal-Mart Canada had imported 60 tonnes of garments from Burma, a country reviled for its appalling human rights record and the use of forced labour.

In the UK, the company have followed the same strategy. Asda recently announced a new Code of Practice on sourcing and labour, even though Wal-Mart's similar code in the US has been found to be effectively meaningless. All of this perhaps goes some way towards explaining how Wal-Mart keeps its prices so low.

WATCH OUT BRITAIN

So what is in store for Britain, as the Wal-Mart noose begins to tighten around its local communities? Despite all the positive rhetoric by Asda/Wal-Mart, Al Norman from Sprawl-Busters believes that the company will behave no differently to its operations in the US. 'I don't see why the experience in the UK will be any different from the States, unless consumers in the UK reject the American company and its philosophy', he says. 'This is not really a debate about stores at all, it is a debate about what communities in the UK are going to look like ten years from now. We are talking about community control, quality of life and a unique sense of place. It all adds up to what scale of commercial activity we want in our lives, forcing conspicuous over-consumption. I would hate to see that become the dominant mentality in England. There is a lot at risk here that goes beyond cheap underwear.'³³ ♦

Andy Rowell is a freelance journalist. *References on page 66.*

For more information

For the most in-depth and up-to-date study on Wal-Mart, read award-winning investigative reporter's Bob Ortega's book *In Sam we Trust, the Untold Story of Sam Walton and How Wal-Mart is Devouring the World*. Published by Kogan Page, £12.99.

Al Norman, regarded by many as the 'guru' of the anti-Wal-Mart movement in the US, has also written a recent book *Slam-Dunking Wal-Mart! How You can Stop Superstore Sprawl in your Hometown*. Published by Raphel Marketing, \$29.95. It provides a good overview of the company, and hot tips on how to defeat a proposed Wal-Mart store in your area. Check out details from Norman's web-site: www.Sprawl-busters.com – also a useful place to start for information on Wal-Mart. It is linked to many other web-sites.

Have a look too at the internationally famous anti-Wal-mart site www.walmartsucks.com

Two other websites are maintained by the US United Food and Commercial Workers Union:

www.walmartyrs.com – worker issues

www.walmartwatch.com – community issues

For company websites, see:

www.Walmart.com

www.Walmartstores.com

www.Asda.co.uk



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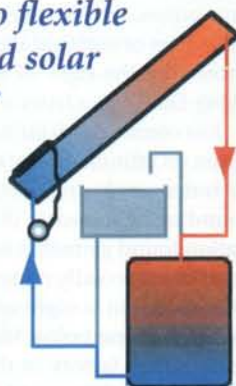
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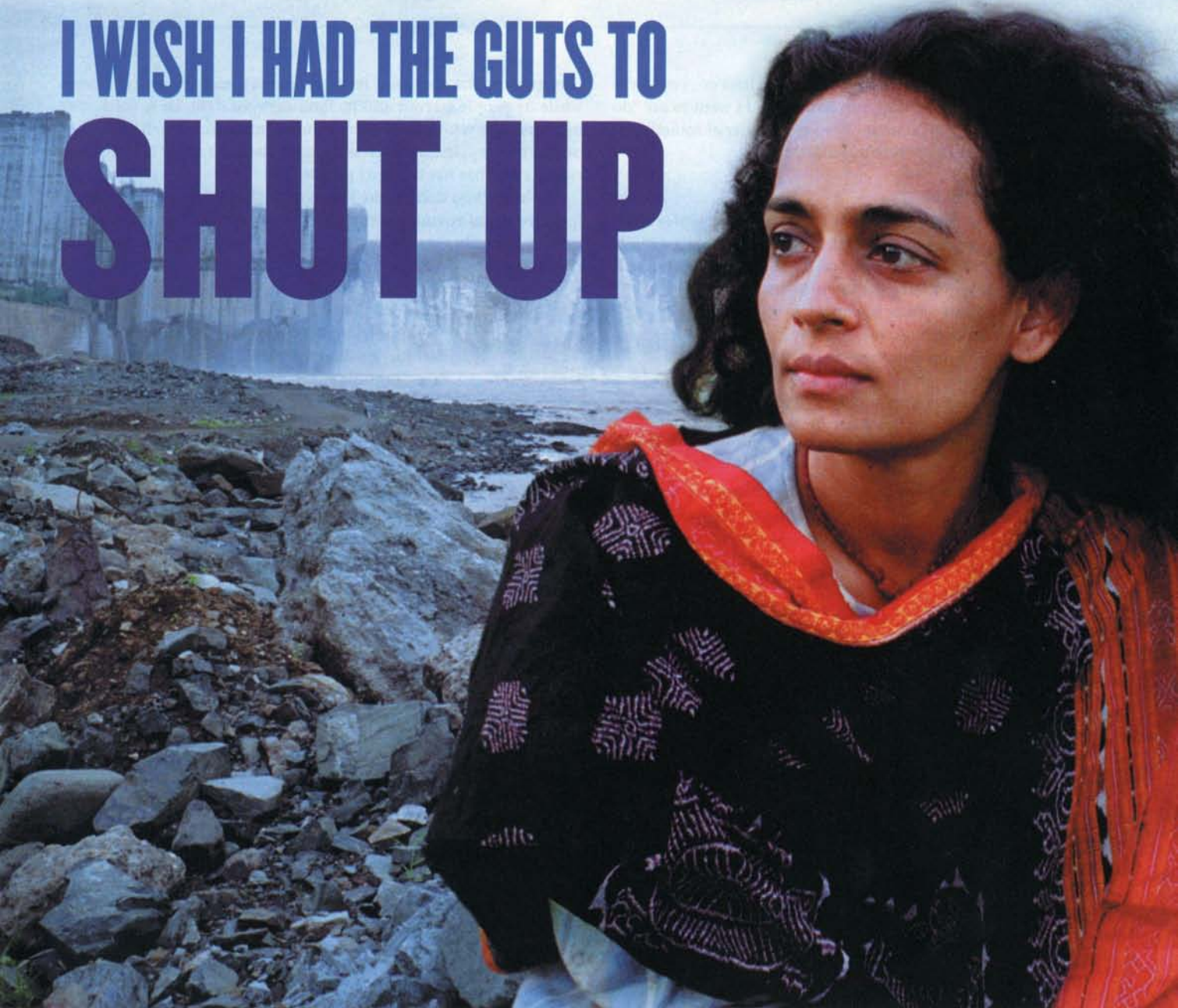
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I WISH I HAD THE GUTS TO SHUT UP



Booker Prize-winning novelist turned anti-dam campaigner Arundhati Roy attracted the wrath of her government, and the attention of the world, when she shifted her focus from fiction to fact. But, as she tells Paul Kingsnorth, she can't see the difference.

Arundhati Roy is tired. Tired of being who she is expected to be. Tired of being lauded and condemned in equal measure and at the same time. Tired of the way her country is going. Tired of having to explain herself.

Maybe this isn't surprising. For the Indian writer and, more recently, activist (not a word she likes to use about herself, but an accurate one nonetheless) is three years into a journey which began back in 1997 with the publication of her debut novel *The God of Small Things*, and which has since sent her in directions she probably never expected to travel, for reasons she is still trying to make clear.

'It has,' she wrote recently in the Indian magazine *Frontline*, 'a sort of cloying *Reader's Digest* ring to it – an unknown writer who spent secret years writing her first novel, which was subsequently published in 40 languages, sold several million copies and went on to win the Booker Prize.' Cloying, maybe, but also, as she says herself, fascinating, exciting – and, in a strange way, unsurprising. This, after all, is

the sort of thing that happens to writers. Not many of them, true, but famous writers are like film stars; they're always with us, and they do what's expected. They go to award ceremonies. They get crabby in the pages of obscure literary reviews about the talent of their rivals. They appear on late-night TV arts programmes. They do the literary thing. They know their place.

But this is where Arundhati Roy's story diverges from the rest. She has done what few other novelists, in these louche, post-modern times, have dared, or even been inclined, to do. She has nailed her colours to the mast. Arundhati Roy is that most unusual, and welcome, of animals: a writer who takes sides.

Now she sits, small, slight, quiet and cross-legged, on the floor of her New Delhi flat, and dares anyone to tell her how a novelist should behave.

'People ask me all the time, am I a writer or an activist,' she says, 'and it's such a sad comment on our times that you can even be asked'

ALL PHOTOS: PANOS

that question. Because I thought that's what writers do, you know – they write about the society that they live in. And I want to say “do you think it's my job just to be some cheap entertainer or something? Why should you even ask me that question?”

'THE AIR IS THICK WITH UGLINESS'

The unexpected capture of the 1997 Booker Prize by *The God of Small Things*, a complex, lyrical and tragic tale of the interlocking generations of an Indian family, loosely based on Roy's own childhood, sent the reputation of this previously unknown 36-year-old trained architect and former screenwriter into the stratosphere. The novel's success took Roy from her quiet life in Delhi on a year-long world tour – book signings, lectures, prize ceremonies and everything else that comes with sudden celebrity. She was fêted wherever she went. Indian politicians went out of their way to be associated with this new 'Pride of India'.

Then, after a year, she returned to a country that had changed forever. What had happened in her absence was to change Roy too, and change the way people saw her. In May 1998, the Indian Government

conducted a series of nuclear tests in the Thar desert, and officially announced itself

a nuclear power.

Roy returned to a country that had thrown itself into the nuclear arms race with gusto. She hated it. In July 1998 she published an essay, *The End of Imagination*, in two national magazines simultaneously. *The End of Imagination* was

a coruscating blast of wit, fact and fury against India's BJP

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water is supposed to go and where the drought is – there's no overlap. And you know, they [the state Government] used 85 per cent of Gujarat's irrigation budget for the project...'

Figures like this are common in the battle of words over the Narmada. The NBA and its allies have amassed a formidable array of facts and statistics which highlight just how fragile the case for the dam has become. Activists say the

dams will displace more than 320,000 people and affect the lives of at least a million. They will submerge more than 4,000 square kilometres of forest. Ten thousand fisher families who depend on the Narmada estuary for a living are likely to lose their livelihood when the dams are raised (though, remarkably, the Government, over the entire 20 years of the dams' progression, has never conducted a study to determine what the effects of the dams will be on the environment downstream). The Sardar Sarovar dam alone will cost at least \$450 million to construct – a sum which was originally to be provided by the World Bank but is now (following the Bank's withdrawal, as a direct result of the NBA's campaign) to be provided by the Gujarat Government.

The legion of facts and figures, and the complexity of the arguments for and against the dams can be numbing. But Roy is insistent that this is not an issue that can be left to the experts. That, she says, was one of the reasons she got involved in the first place. She came back from her first visit to the Narmada valley last year 'convinced that the valley needed a writer'.

'A writer,' she says, by way of explanation – meaning a novelist, a creator of fiction, rather than a journalist – 'has licence to write things differently... As a writer, I have the licence, and the ability I guess, to move between feelings and numbers and technical stuff and, you know, to tell the whole story in a way which an expert doesn't seem to have the right to do. And in this case I think that's crucial.' Roy sees the connections between the economics, the politics, the ecology and the human story of the Narmada as the key to the problem. 'When I went to the valley,' she says, 'I realised that what has happened is that all these experts had come in and



'Activists say that the dams will displace more than 320,000 people and affect the lives of at least a million.'



hijacked various aspects of it, and taken it off to their lairs. They didn't want people to understand.' Roy, on the other hand, wanted to tell the whole story. She wanted to make people understand.

'IT'S LIKE GIVING THEM A BOMB'

And she did. She perhaps told the story of the Narmada valley too well for her own comfort. For *The Greater Common Good* (later published, along with *The End of Imagination*, as a small book, entitled *The Cost of Living*) became more than just an essay; it became the latest phase in the anti-Narmada dams campaign, and Roy's support was a huge shot in the arm for the NBA and its allies. 'I've given them a

book,' she says now, with a quiet pride in her voice. 'It's like giving them a bomb or something, you know?' And it was. It exploded across the world with varying degrees of damage. Roy undertook a speaking tour last year, visiting various countries to talk about the damage the dams were doing. She gave the annual Nehru memorial lecture at Cambridge University, and attended the World Water Forum in The Hague to counter the presence and arguments of the Gujarat Government ('I'd never been to a conference before, and I'll never go again,' she says, wrinkling her nose. 'I don't like these dead people.'). Her visits to the Narmada valley itself invariably ended in media scrums and, once, her own arrest, as she struggled to highlight the plight of the villagers and activists who, even as you read this, are promising to drown themselves in the rising waters of the reservoirs above the half-completed dam walls. Meanwhile, in Gujarat, BJP activists and 'patriotic' citizens burnt copies of *The God of Small Things* in fury at her anti-Indian insolence.

It's easy to understand, then, why Arundhati Roy is tired. But what really exhausts her, it seems, is people's expectations. When she first took up the cause of the Narmada Bachao Andolan, other writers, critics, even readers, seemed surprised. Roy wrote fiction. What did she think she was doing playing around with fact? Some of this attitude still persists, but she doesn't care. 'There's no division on my bookshelf between fiction and non-fiction,' she insists. 'As far as I'm concerned, fiction is about the truth.'

More recently, though, these expectations have been flipped around. Roy is now seen as a 'campaigning novelist,' and this infuriates her too. All she is doing, she insists, is what any good novelist should – making the connections between fiction and reality. Instead, she finds that people put her into a box. She tells a story about a phone call she received after *The Greater Common Good* was first published. 'This

‘society editor rang me up,’ she says, ‘and she said, “oh darling, that was such a lovely essay. Now I want you to do a piece for me on child abuse”. So I said, “sure. For or against?” She put down the phone.’

The point, she says, is that her views have never been as easy to categorise as both her supporters and her enemies would sometimes like to make out. Yes, she opposes the dam and she opposes the bomb, but she is ‘not an anti-development junkie, nor a proselytiser for the eternal upholding of custom and tradition’. She believes that the growing urban-rural divide is killing India, and that the country’s newly trained legion of urban-minded ‘experts’ are more of a danger to the future than an illiterate peasantry could ever be. (‘As soon as you see a river,’ she says of their mindset, ‘your mind wants to pour concrete into it.’) Yet she refuses, too, to buy into the sometimes romantic ideal of Village India. ‘I grew up in a village,’ she says, ‘and I spent my entire childhood thinking about how to escape – how to not marry someone there and how not to produce their goddam children. I’m not going back.’

‘YOU NEED TO THINK POLITICALLY’

Arundhati Roy did not set out to be a ‘political writer’. And if people now see her as one, that perhaps reflects on the rest of the literary world rather than her. ‘People say to me, “oh, it’s so wonderful that you’re writing about real things,” and that it’s a political thing to do, and I say, look... to be in my position and not to say anything is a hell of a political thing. You need to think politically, otherwise you’ll be

one of these people who says “oh, this person’s saying this and that person’s saying that, and I’m confused”. And I say, yeah, because you *want* to be confused. No one in the valley’s confused... If you have the luxury of being confused, be confused... it’s a political intelligence you need to understand.’

“To be in my position and not to say anything is a hell of a political thing.”

It is just such a political intelligence that informed and spurred both of Roy’s essays, and which, if you look hard enough, can be found weaving through the pages of *The God Of Small Things* – a book which could never, in the conventional sense, be called a ‘political’ novel. ‘The first time I met one of the activists from the NBA,’ she remembers, ‘I told her that I’d written *The God of Small Things*, and she said, “I knew you’d be anti-dam and anti-World Bank”.’ The link may not be immediately obvious, but to Roy, making just this sort of connection is crucial for any real understanding of where things are going wrong.

The novel, she says, is ‘not just about small things, it’s about how the smallest things connect to the biggest things – that’s the important thing. And that’s what writing will always be about for me... I’m not a crusader in any sense’. Her opponents might dispute this, but Roy is clear – has always been clear, right from the outset – about where she fits in to the Narmada struggle. As a writer, and, ultimately, as an outsider. ‘I can’t fight their fight,’ she says quietly. ‘I can fight as a writer to prevent it, but my house isn’t drowning, my land isn’t being submerged, and my anger shall never be more than theirs. They have to fight. I don’t.’

‘THERE HAS TO BE SOME BALANCE’

But maybe she does. Maybe, now that she has started, she won’t be able to stop. Maybe now that she has begun to make, and articulate, the connections between the big and the small, between beauty and destruction, between fact and fiction, she will never be able to keep quiet.

There’s a fascinating paragraph in *The Greater Common Good* which explores the link between Roy’s two chosen emblems of national disaster – the big bomb and the big dam. ‘They’re both weapons of mass destruction,’ she writes. ‘They’re both weapons governments use to control their own people... they represent the severing of the link, not just the link – the understanding – between human beings and the planet they live on. They scramble the intelligence that connects eggs to hens, milk to cows, food to forests, water to rivers, air to life and the earth to human existence.’

Again, the message is about connections. And the failure to make these connections, she says, is what is leading India – and the West, upon which it increasingly models itself – astray. Ask her about this and she takes a deep breath. ‘I have to believe,’ she says, ‘that what is being done – the dams and the nuclear bombs; the whole development model – they’re the symptoms of a terrible malaise, and that lies inside people’s heads. I don’t know how you address that... but the idea that you just accept it all makes me angry.’

This anger is clear, and the anger is directed, often, at what her country has become. Her prescription, too, if it can be called that, is interesting. ‘I’m not an economist,’ she says (which, considering the damage economists have done to the Narmada valley, could be considered a positive plus), ‘so I can’t really give you an alternative that works.’



Nevertheless, in following through the implications of what she has seen, she is clear, at least in principle, about one thing: 'The only alternative can be local'. This, she believes, has to be the future for India – decentralised economics, decentralised control; handing some measure of power back to the people it affects. 'Unless that happens,' she believes, 'however far into the information age three per cent of the population goes, they're always going to be pulled back by what they're doing to everybody else.'

Connections, again. Connections, and smallness and the need to listen, watch and understand. These are the instincts that won Roy the Booker Prize; and these are the same instincts which led her into conflict with her own Government and which will more than likely, whatever she says now, lead her to keep searching for a direction in which, in her mind, India can go and still retain what makes it India.

Whatever direction that is, Arundhati Roy is convinced of one thing: it must be one which India's people choose for themselves, and which reflects the realities with which people have always lived – realities fashioned by everyday existence, by community life and by the patterns of nature. The alternative is there for all to see, in the increasingly atomised, mechanised and disconnected West. 'When you go to Europe or America for the first time,' she says, 'you arrive in a city

where you don't see any mud, and everything looks really nice, all the cars and the steel and the glass. But I look at a car and I think, "somehow this came from earth and water and forest". How? I don't know. But you need to know – you need to know what the connection is; who paid the price of what. If you at least know that, there'll be some balance.' She smiles slightly, as if the point was almost too obvious to be worth making. 'There has to be some balance.' ♦

DAMMING EVIDENCE

In 1998, the World Commission on Dams (WCD) was established, its stated objectives being to:

1. Review the development effectiveness of dams and assess alternatives for water resources and energy development;
2. Develop internationally acceptable criteria, guidelines, and standards where appropriate, for the planning, design, appraisal, construction, operation, monitoring and decommissioning of dams.

The WCD will be presenting its findings on 16 November 2000 in London. Meanwhile, turn to pages 50 and 52 for *The Ecologist's* progress reports on dam projects in Thailand and Turkey.

THE NON-VIOLENT USE OF GUNPOWDER

Contrary to what many think, international anti-dam campaigning is not new. Activist Sigmund Kvaloy recalls to Paul Kingsnorth how an Icelandic anti-dam campaign back in the 1970s resorted to radical measures to save a river from damnation.

On the morning of 7 August 1970, on the Laxa river in Iceland, a dam exploded. It was no accident.

Shortly before it happened, I was standing on the bank of the Laxá ('salmon river') with Eysteinn Sigurdsson, a local farmer who was leading a campaign in the region against the recently built dam. Like dams everywhere, its construction had severely damaged the ecosystem of the river and its surroundings, and was wrecking the livelihoods of the farmers and fisherfolk of the region.

'I've lived by this river for a thousand years,' said Eysteinn. 'Destroy her and I will be destroyed.' Like other farmers in the region, Eysteinn viewed his own position in the region within the context of his ancestors and future descendants. His was not an isolated existence, but was rather a small part of a very long chain. Many of the inhabitants of the region had the same mentality, and for this reason, the campaign against the Laxa dam, in which I was involved, was fuelled with an unstoppable energy.

Laxá was more than simply a body of water for those whose lives depended on it. And when, in 1970, the river was dammed, locals swore to use any avenue to reverse it. They fought long and hard, with all legal means, to do so. They failed. And it was when they failed that the concept of the 'non-violent' use of gunpowder arose. The concept was simple: the dam would be blown up. This would not be an act of violence, but an act of salvation for an ecosystem devastated by destructive development. Care would be taken to avoid harming any living creature. The objective was to use dynamite to prevent a violation of the natural world.

One of the strongest supporters of the local campaigners against the dam was the author Stefan Jónsson, programme editor of the national radio. When the time came, he made the necessary dynamite available (for his efforts he was later elected a member of parliament for Thingeyarsýsla, the county where Laxá is situated).

And so, on 7 August 1970, 250 women, men and children gathered at the site. Two farm tractors dug into the dam foundations on both sides and the dynamite was placed. The fuse was lit. And a few moments later the dam ceased to exist.

The following morning, virtually the entire population surrounding Myvatn, and those living along the length of the Laxa valley, made calls to the local police, each one of them claiming personal responsibility for the night's activities. For obvious reasons, the practicalities involved in trying an entire community made proceedings impossible. Laxá was saved, and no one was ever convicted for the 'crime' of destroying the dam.

As one activist said shortly after, 'we ought to earn the Nobel Peace Prize, since we actually used Nobel's invention [dynamite] to re-establish peace between man and nature'. And today, 30 years on, Laxá remains a symbol of independence from destructive industrialism, as well as a symbol of a rooted people's strength.



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BEAUTY

The writings of Britain's Romantic poets show that environmental sensibilities are nothing new.

Lucy Moore delves into the minds of the ecologists of two centuries past.

The prevailing image of a Romantic poet is that of William Wordsworth, walking through his beloved Lake District and chancing upon a hillside covered with daffodils. Later, remembering this unexpected blaze of gold, Wordsworth is transported back to a mood of simple happiness and gratitude. With this poem, Wordsworth did much to bring into the British consciousness an appreciation of the picturesque, and a sense that nature, in the abstract, has a meaning that goes beyond the day-to-day provision of man's needs.

Until the eighteenth century, man looked on nature as a resource to be harvested to supply his needs. Only the very rich, and even then only in times of peace, had time to spare worrying about gardens and hunting. But with trade and with the first rumblings of the Industrial Revolution emerged a leisured, town-based middle class. People began to think about recreation, and about escaping from the dirty, cramped cities in which they lived. This was the age of the novel, of clubs; of landscaped gardens in the country and pleasure gardens in the city. While men like Capability Brown enabled their rich patrons to feel they could control nature, transporting whole villages to achieve rolling acres of parkland, the urban middle classes took to rambling and nature walks. When the Reverend William Gilpin published his *Observations on the River Wye... Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty: Made in the Summer of the Year 1770*, a new craze was born. For the first time, nature became an object, instead of being taken for granted; and this may be the moment the modern environmental movement began.

Although William Wordsworth was a popular poet, even appointed Poet Laureate in 1843, in his lifetime his writings on the Lake District far outsold any of his volumes of verse. His guide to the beauty of the hills and lakes in which he was brought up and lived most of his adult life not only made him famous but brought to the area a host of visitors. It became fashionable to go on walking holidays – and even more fashionable to have encountered Wordsworth or Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the two most famous residents of the area, along the way. Coleridge described carving his name on a rock atop a peak in Cumbria, where other climbers had carved

their names, and seeing a party a moment later coming across it. 'That must be the poet Coleridge,' said a man importantly to his female companions, pointing it out.

In some ways the Lake District's sudden popularity – making his wild landscape almost crowded – must have saddened Wordsworth, whose poetry describes the rapture he experienced through solitary contact with nature:

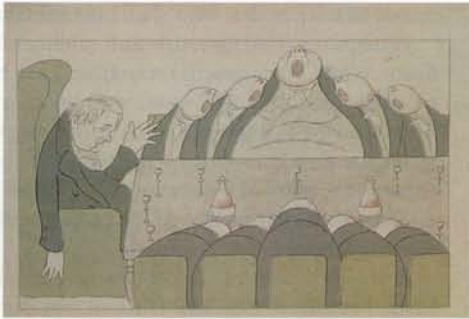
And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts, a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

In *On the projected Kendal and Windermere Railway* he further lamented: 'Is then no nook of English ground secure / From rash assault?'

Wordsworth's use of the word 'sublime' in the first extract is key to an understanding of the Romantics. In the dictionary its meaning is given as lofty, elevated by joy, exalted in character; awakening or expressing an uplifting emotion, producing a sense of elevated beauty, nobility, grandeur, solemnity or awe. Its best pictorial representation comes in the work of JMW Turner, in his *Studies from Nature* (another manifestation of the fashion for the picturesque) and, most resonantly, in his watercolours, which seem almost to capture the essence of light.

The Romantic poets saw nature as a powerful redemptive force, a form of purification and transcendence. In *Frost at Midnight*, Coleridge, with his young son at his side, muses on his own childhood in London, where he 'saw nought lovely but the sky and stars / But thou, my babe!' he continues, 'shalt wander like a breeze', seeing in all of nature's wildest shapes and sounds the 'eternal language, which thy God / Utters, who from eternity doth teach / Himself in all, and all things in himself'.

'Wordsworth did much to bring into the British consciousness an appreciation of the picturesque'



True romance: From left, Keats, Coleridge and Shelley

IS TRUTH

If we think of Wordsworth in a field of daffodils, our abiding image of Coleridge is of the poet perched on a rocky, windswept crag, wearing an open-necked shirt, thick breeches, worn hob-nailed boots, with a stick beside him and an old leather knapsack containing paper and pens, and a night-cap.

Coleridge, unable to be moderate in his passions, loved the wildness of nature. 'The farther I ascend from animated Nature, from men, and cattle, and the common birds of the woods, and fields, the greater becomes in me the intensity of the feeling of Life,' he wrote to his friend and patron Thomas Wedgwood in 1803. 'Life seems to me then a universal spirit that neither has nor can have an opposite'.

For Shelley, as for Coleridge, wilderness expressed an inner yearning, the sense that man's potential was limitless:

I love all waste
And solitary places; where we taste
The pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be.

For Coleridge, this sense of longing manifested itself in personal excess, his addiction to opium; in Shelley it came out in political radicalism. Many of Shelley's ideas today sound reasonable, because over the past two centuries modern thinking has come into line with them; but it is important to remember how seditious his contemporaries would have found his views, and how because of them he in turn felt unable to live a conventional life.

Shelley was expelled from Oxford for writing a pamphlet in which he declared himself an atheist, 'through deficiency of proof'. Later, he came to admire Christian virtues, but he continued to denounce the Church for its anthropomorphism of God and the venality of the priesthood. Shelley's own beliefs were a combination of pantheism and

Platonism, a belief in a universal spirit presiding over all; although his more mature convictions were often in line with the tenets of Christianity he still accepted the description of atheist 'to express my abhorrence of superstition'.

Shelley's ideas on marriage were a natural extension of his anti-institutionalism.

Based on the ideas of William Godwin's 1793 treatise, *Political Justice*, Shelley believed 'in almost every instance' a young couple were manoeuvred into marriage, a societal trap, with their eyes shut, knowing neither each other nor themselves. When enlightenment dawned, they were 'forced to make the best of an irretrievable mistake', instead of being allowed to rectify it by separating. Although initially Godwin was flattered at Shelley's wholehearted acceptance of his thinking, he was not pleased when, acting on these principles, the unhappily married (trapped, he might have said) Shelley eloped with his teenaged daughter Mary.

Another tenet by which Shelley lived was vegetarianism. In *Queen Mab*, his first political poem published in 1813, when he was 20, Shelley argued that by not eating meat man put himself on an equal level with animals, rather than raising himself above them as their predator. The painter Benjamin Haydon, affronted by Shelley's refutation of Christianity at dinner when they met, described the poet in his diary as a 'hectic, spare, weakly yet intellectual-looking creature... carving a bit of broccoli or cabbage on his plate, as if it had been the substantial wing of a chicken'.

This is not the image of Shelley that has endured, however. I like to think of him as his friend Thomas Jefferson Hogg described him in his chaotic, book-filled rooms at Oxford in 1810. Although he disliked scientific methods – agreeing with Wordsworth that 'we murder to dissect' – Shelley was fascinated by the advances being made

in science at the start of the nineteenth century. He admired the radical poet and biologist Erasmus Darwin, whose grandson, Charles, wrote *The Origin of the the Species*. Electricity enthralled Shelley: its sparkling, elusive, almost magical qualities resembled nothing so much as poetic inspiration, or spiritual illumination. He had in his rooms a primitive apparatus to which he would attach himself, entreating poor Hogg (who, having once nearly drunk a teacup of concentrated acid, was understandably wary of Shelley's experiments) to crank up the machine so that currents of electricity flowed through Shelley until 'his long wild locks bristled and stood up on end'.

The Romantics were divided on their views on science. William Wordsworth numbered the electro-chemist, and president of the Royal Society, Sir Humphrey Davy, among his friends; they shared a love of fishing. Davy was also something of a poet and visionary, who, like Shelley, felt his scientific experiments only enhanced his powers of imagination. His account of lying beneath an oak tree in a high wind, watching the branches tremble above him as the clouds flew past, approaches Coleridge or Keats: 'Everything seemed alive, and myself part of the series of visible impressions; I should have felt pain in tearing a leaf from one of the trees.'

The Royal Society was next to the Royal Academy in London where another of Davy's friends, Turner, was then lecturing on perspective. In his quest to achieve greater realism in his depiction of light and colour, Turner looked to innovative chemical techniques for the creation of pigments and colours. Chrome yellow, for instance – a fundamentally Turnerian colour – was invented during this period.

But many of Wordsworth and Shelley's contemporaries distrusted the new developments in science. The critic William Hazlitt believed 'Science clips the wings of poetry'. Charles Lamb, the essayist, was more strident; his words sound ominously modern. 'Can we unlearn the arts that pretend to civilise, and then burn the world? There is a

march of science. But who shall beat the drum for its retreat?'

Perhaps the most famously anti-science of the Romantics was John Keats. While Wordsworth revered Sir Isaac Newton, and was able to reconcile Newton's discoveries with his own mystical view of nature, Keats accused Newton of having destroyed the beauty of the rainbow by explaining its scientific origin. With its mystery dispelled, he argued, our sense of wonder at the rainbow is diminished.

'Do not all charms fly / At the mere touch of cold philosophy?' he asked in despair.

If Shelley's political radicalism was extreme his optimism was at times boundless too. His faith in the perfectibility of man (and woman) led him to advocate republicanism, land reform and universal adult suffrage. 'The habitable earth is full of bliss,' he wrote in *Queen Mab*. 'Every heart contains perfection's germ.'

His utopianism was reflected in his wife Mary's novel, *Frankenstein* - albeit in a dark mirror. On discovering the cruelty of the world the gentle Creature brought to life by Frankenstein longs to run away to South America, with a mate he hopes Frankenstein will make for him. There in the forest they can live in peace and partnership, eating acorns and berries, sleeping on a bed of leaves. They need nothing more than the shelter of the trees and the warmth of the sun. But Frankenstein, afraid of the

Creature's power, destroys the female he is making and thus forces the unhappy Creature back into the civilised world, with famous and tragic consequences.

Coleridge, too, had utopian hopes. He and Robert Southey dreamt of living off the earth in an egalitarian community on the banks of the Susquehanna River. In his enthusiasm for their plan, Coleridge even married Southey's sister-in-law. But their dream, pantisocracy, proved no more than a fantasy, disintegrating just as Coleridge's ill-advised marriage did.

John Clare, whose brief experience of London's literary society literally drove him mad, idealised the simple way of life of the cottager:

'Keats accused Newton of having destroyed the beauty of the rainbow by explaining its scientific origin'

PHOTODISC



'Time, scarcely noticed, turns his hair to gray, / Yet leaves him happy as a child at play.' The life of a 'Peasant-Poet' was what Clare hoped for himself:

A silent man in Life's affairs,
A thinker from a boy,
A peasant in his daily cares,
A poet in his joy.

The worldly world that Clare turned his back on profoundly troubled his peers, even if they were more able than he to survive in it when necessary. Shelley, most virulent, deplored the 'mean lust' that bound the world in chains. Later, in *Prometheus Unbound*, he protested at the ignorance and selfishness of the world:

Many are strong and rich, and would be just,
But live among their suffering fellow-men
As if none felt: they know not what they do.

Wordsworth, too, saw avarice as the abiding sin of his age:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

It was perhaps John Keats who best articulated the sense of sorrow at man's destruction of nature, and the loss this entails, that marked Romanticism. In *The Pot of Basil* Isabella's lover, the modest Lorenzo, is contrasted with her merchant brothers, 'these ledger-men', who murder Lorenzo to prevent their sister's marriage to a poor man. At their will, says Keats, the diver in Ceylon, searching for pearls, 'went all naked to the hungry shark', his ears gushing blood from the underwater pressure; at their will seals lay stabbed by spears 'on the cold ice, with piteous bark'.

Keats's empathy for the suffering was a cornerstone of his poetry and his private vision. Even the Lake District – that hallowed Romantic spot – only made him feel anew that abundance can never be experienced except in relation to lack. At first he was overwhelmed by the beauty of his surroundings, but the impersonality of it all brought home to him the thought that mere aestheticism, in its self-centredness, is ultimately unsatisfying. 'Health and spirits can only belong unalloyed to the selfish man – the man who thinks much of

his fellows can never be in spirits,' he concluded. His was a heightened sensitivity to life in all its forms. Benjamin Haydon described how 'the humming of a bee, the sight of a flower, the glitter of the sun, seemed to make his spirit tremble'.

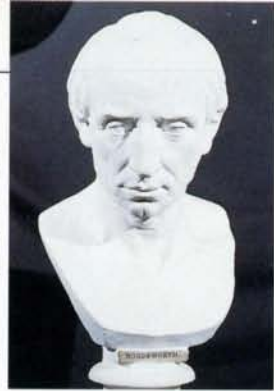
William Blake shared Keats's sensibility. 'Can I see a falling tear, / And not feel my sorrow's share?' he asked in *Songs of Innocence*. Interconnectedness is a fundamental of Blake's world-view. 'For a Line or a Lineament is not formed by Chance,' he wrote to a friend in 1827, just before his death. 'A Line is a Line in its Minutest Subdivisions: Strait or Crooked It is Itself and Not Intermeasurable with or by any Thing Else.'

Rachel Carson used as her epigraph for *Silent Spring* (and the inspiration for her title) a line from Keats's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*: 'The sedge is wither'd from the lake, / And no birds sing'. Carson's use of Keats to open a book about the damage man is wreaking on his environment adds a new dimension to the familiar fable. Where nature is usually personified as a woman, and man the destroyer, here the roles are reversed. The pale, sickly knight, seduced and discarded, is the earth; the beautiful maiden who, uncaring, watches him suffer, is mankind. The result of her neglect is a sterility from which it is only to be hoped we will recover.

As the pace of modern life spirals out of control literature remains one of the few things that can bring us back to a solid starting point. Writers like the Romantics, who found mystery in the commonplace and saw the universal in each individual's experience, remind us to hope. Poetry's power, its sense of rightness and intuitive knowledge, of things felt and understood, can bring us back to Eden. It reminds us of what we have lost and what still remains for us to save.

There is much in the words and thoughts of the Romantic poets that is excessive or impractical, but their beliefs and the passion with which they pursued them still serve as an example. They weren't perfect, but at least they thought about the world and their place in it. They tried to live by the principles they espoused. In retrospect it may be easy to ridicule them or poke holes in their aims, but who can deny the energy with which they pursued them, the integrity of their intentions, or the relevance that these issues still hold for us today? ♦

Lucy Moore is the author of three books, the most recent being *Amphibious Thing* (Viking), released in the UK September 2000.



William Wordsworth

*'To see a World in a Grain of Sand,
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the Palm of your Hand,
And Eternity in an Hour'*

William Blake

POLITICAL ALCHEMY



Scientific truth is like gold. You can't manufacture it. So why, asks Molly Scott Cato of Green Audit, do politicians pretend they can?

In modern science Truth is a slippery concept. Decisions we make about issues that affect our very survival must be based on truths that change from day to day. No wonder that citizens have lost faith in scientists' advice. The standing of scientists has never been lower. When Liam Donaldson, chief medical officer, advised people not to look at the eclipse amidst panic that large proportions of the population might suffer blindness, his opinions were greeted with barely concealed hilarity. The parade of scientific error proclaimed as Truth stretches back through GM food and BSE to nuclear safety.

The citizens of the UK have lost faith in the scientific establishment. According to a recent ICM poll public trust in scientists is now lower than their trust in policemen. Only 35 per cent of those questioned said they trusted scientists 'a lot'; 54 per cent trusted them 'a little'; and 12 per cent did not trust them at all. The only professions to come lower in the trust ranking were politicians and journalists. On specific issues levels of lack of trust rose as high as 49 per cent on the issue of cloning animals and 40 per cent on the issue of genetically modified food.¹

ADVISORY STATUS

What is 'the best scientific advice' on which, we are reassuringly told, the Government bases its decisions? Is it any more reliable than the advert we read for crystal healing suggesting that the forces of quartz will remove tumours? Those without a scientific education are in no position to decide. We find ourselves increasingly seeing the world from the perspective of the innocent child observing holes in the sky.

Recent research reveals that our MPs may, in many cases, be scarcely better informed. On the basis of a questionnaire, backed up with data from *The Vacher Dod Guide to the New House of Commons*, Green Audit estimated that at least one third of all MPs are not scientifically or mathematically literate. About the same proportion probably do not even have O-level maths and may find themselves struggling with concepts such as ratios and percentages, never mind such technicalities as statistical significance of research findings or the interpretation of epidemiological results.

Green Audit looked in depth at the scientific expertise of the members of the Backbench Environment Committee, it being the one most closely involved with our central areas of concern. The table on page 42 gives some information about the members of the Committee, their qualifications and experience. The information on qualifications was not easy to obtain. Several members of the Committee objected to being questioned and one refused to answer. As far as we could ascertain on the basis of repeated phone calls, of the 11 members

of the Committee, not a single one has a degree in either physics, chemistry or biology. There are two with A-level maths and one with A-level physics, none with post-O-level qualifications in chemistry or biological sciences.

Does this lack of scientific expertise on the part of our decision-makers matter? For many of the political decisions that have to be considered, perhaps not. But in a world that is increasingly affected by scientific and technological knowledge, those who are unable to understand basic scientific or mathematical concepts are at a great disadvantage. In particular, they are prisoners to advice which is given by scientifically literate civil servants, expert committees and lobbyists whose interests may be tied to transnational corporations. And

such advice is increasingly biased towards permitting questionable or hazardous procedures and processes where the result is likely to increase profit or employment.

When defending her decision to grant the contract for the operation of the Aldermaston weapons plant to BNFL, Baroness Symons admitted that 'I have the humility to say that I am not a nuclear scientist, but there are those who are and who understand the reports in full. I have to rely on those with real expertise'.² The implicit assumption made is that these 'nuclear scientists' would be unbiased either as a consequence of their connections with the nuclear industry or following their education or experience in the field of nuclear physics. It is unlikely, for example, that Baroness Symons consulted experts whose provenance or background was with Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, or the Nuclear Awareness Group in Reading, the town most likely to be affected by the operation of the plant.

Our research also revealed the narrow range of expertise of our elected decision-makers: 40 per cent of them have backgrounds in the law, education or PR, with other more practical backgrounds correspondingly under-represented. The dominance of lawyers becomes of particular relevance when we consider the question of 'evidence', which has a very different meaning in legal and scientific contexts. When a lawyer reports that 'there is no evidence that Mr Blair was at the scene of the crime', he is making a strong claim that tends to exonerate the suspect. In science the position is entirely different. When a government scientist reports to Michael Meacher that 'there is no evidence that genetically modified crops are damaging to health', he is simply stating that none of the research studies conducted have found 'significant' (in a narrow, statistical sense) answers to this question, or even that no studies have been carried out at all.

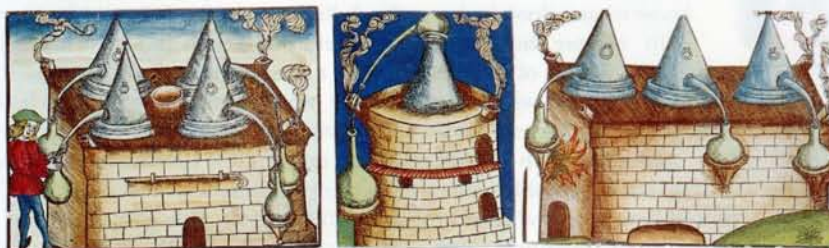
The nature of scientific evidence presented to government committees and thence to ministers is limited and biased in another way. Most of the scientific research carried out in universities today has been part-funded by industry. As a result of the Thatcherite push towards 'market-driven research' only research programmes that can eventually yield a profit are likely to be funded. So what is the university scientist to do, if s/he undertakes a research project and finds results which would undermine the product of the very company that funded the research? If, as Arpad Pusztai has identified,³ 'the future of science lies with industry' it would take a brave, or rich, scientist to oppose industry's priorities.

Following recent concern expressed about the possible health effects of mobile phone use the Government set up the Stewart Committee, which recommended a thorough programme of research. With astonishing

obtuseness, however, this research was to be funded partly by the mobile phone industry, a procedure akin to asking Bernard Matthews to investigate whether we should continue to have turkeys as the centrepiece of our Christmas meal.

An account of a recent piece of peer-reviewed research into just this issue will remove any lingering trust in the objectivity of industry-funded research. In a recent survey, published in the journal *Epidemiology*, the results were reported of a study of 195,775 employees of the company Motorola, who develop and manufacture mobile phone equipment.⁴ The study was part-funded by Motorola and carried out by a non-university organisation Exponent Health Group. It examined all causes of mortality, with brain cancers, lymphomas and

'According to a recent poll, the only professions to come lower in trust ranking than scientists are politicians and journalists.'



leukaemias as major a priori outcomes of interest. The study seemed to report no excess risk from any cause of death among the workers. The abstract of the results states: 'Our findings do not support an association between occupational RF exposure and brain cancer, lymphoma or leukaemia.'

However, close inspection of the paper reveals a quite different picture. The study compares mortality risk in the highly educated, upper social class, electronics workers with members of the general public in four States of the USA: Arizona, Florida, Texas and Illinois. Comparison of the death rates reveals that although the Motorola employees enjoy lower death rates (owing to their higher socio-economic status), their death rates from all causes were significantly lower than their death rates from leukaemia and lymphatic system cancers and most other cancers (but not brain cancers). The effect was particularly clear in the case of the lymphatic system cancer Hodgkin's

disease, a result which was not mentioned in the abstract. If the overall mortality risk from all causes is used as an internal control for the 'healthy worker effect' there was a higher risk of dying of most cancer types. In fact, it was possible to use data reported in the paper to argue that there was a strong excess risk of most types of cancer in the workers, since standardised risk by period of employment consistently showed a 50 to 100 per cent elevated risk in those who had worked more than five years with the radiation relative to those who had worked from 0-5 years. Nothing was made of this result.

There is a great deal of scope in epidemiology for tailoring the results to fit the hypothesis. Yet the results of this mobile phone paper, and others like it, reporting studies which were funded by industry

and showing results which counter any suggestion that these industries may be causing harm, are commonplace in the reference section of review committees which give advice to government. Do the committee members look through the original papers? Would they know what to look for?

To explore how and why the system of science advice is failing we examined the work of several advisory committees in detail. These unaccountable committees have been evaluated in terms of their openness and accountability by Democratic Audit.⁵ The Novel Foods and Processes Committee (ACNFP) received a relatively favourable score, choosing to publish an annual

THE COMMONS BACKBENCH ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

NAME	SCIENTIFIC EDUCATION	CAREER BACKGROUND
Andrew Bennett (Chair)	Refused to respond	Social science degree
Thomas Brake	3 science O-levels; maths and physics A-levels	IT manager
Christine Butler	O-level maths	Pharmaceutical; NHS; lab technician; sculptor; management
John Cummings	O-level maths	Miner and colliery electrician
Brian Donohoe	O-level maths and physics	Apprenticed engineer; Hunterston nuclear power station; ICI
Gwyneth Dunwoody	None	Film production
Louise Ellman	O-level maths	Education; social policy/ local government
James Gray	3 science O-levels; maths A-level	Shipping broker
Bill Olnor	None	Apprenticed engineer; skilled machinist
Hilary Benn	O-level maths	Russian studies
Alan Whitehead	4 science O-levels	Education; public policy

Source: Constituency offices; authors' questionnaire; The Vacher Dod Guide to the New House of Commons (1997)

reports and a register of its members' interests,

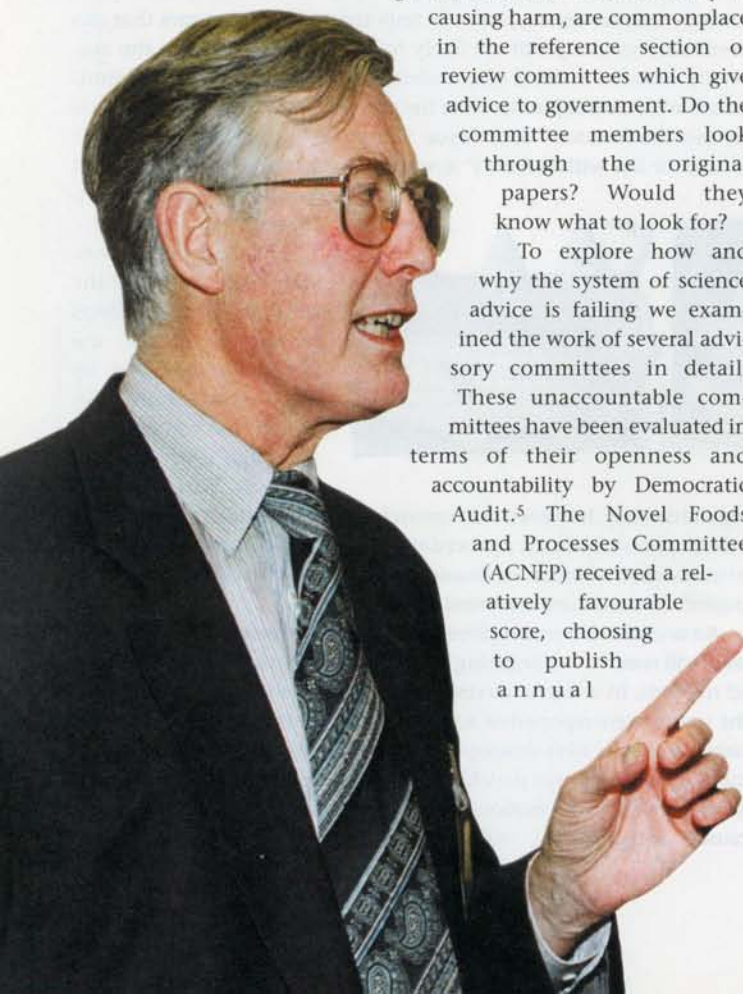
as well as carrying out public consultations and publishing its advice to government. However, the other committee considered here – the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) scores poorly, its only concession to accountability being to publish a register of members' interests.

According to *The Independent on Sunday*, a majority of the members of the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes have links, either personally or institutionally, with the food industry. In an attempt to broaden the interest-base of the Committee it was agreed to appoint a 'consumer representative' last year. 'Maff rejected a sceptic on GM foods from the Consumers' Association in favour of the wife of a board member of the chemical company Boots'.⁶ The Committee's independence is devastated by the information that it actually commissions no research of its own and relies mainly on information provided by biotech companies. The Committee's most recent Annual Report⁷ contains no references to peer-reviewed papers: there are a mere five references, three to papers by Zeneca, the other two being publications from the Committee itself.

COMARE (the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment) was set up following a recommendation of the Black Report into the Sellafield leukaemia cluster, a tacit acknowledgement that doubts about the independence of the Government's official nuclear watchdog, the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB), were justified. The problem is that COMARE is based at the NRPB offices at Chilton, Oxfordshire. If you phone the COMARE telephone number it is answered with 'Hello, NRPB'. What is more, the three-person secretariat that organises COMARE's agendas are all on the NRPB payroll. This point has been raised with various leading members of NRPB and the COMARE chairman as being worrying but they cannot see a problem. When asked why it was necessary for COMARE to be based at NRPB one replied that it enables members to use the NRPB library, although they are not themselves based there.

One of COMARE's three secretaries, Roy Hamlet, gives one further cause to suspect that there is, indeed, something rotten in the state of Didcot. He spends a proportion of his time conducting research for NRPB and the rest preparing paperwork for the members of COMARE, whose raison d'être is to be independent of NRPB. We were recently amused to have copied to us a letter from the Department of

Pointing the finger: When a government scientist reports to Michael Meacher (left) that 'there is no evidence that genetically modified crops are damaging to health', he is simply stating that none of the research studies conducted have found 'significant' answers to this question.'



Health in London advising an enquirer into radiation and health that the DoH took this area very seriously and were advised by the 'independent committee COMARE' on the effects of radiation. The letter was signed by Dr Roy Hamlet, who signed himself, Radiation Advisor, Department of Health. He does not have far to walk to get advice from the 'independent committee' since he is, himself, their secretary.

Further concern was raised after we received a leak copy of minutes of COMARE's 55th meeting, held on 18 March 1999, at which they discussed a report, by Green Audit, that there was increased cancer near those parts of the Irish Sea coast of Wales where radioisotopes from Sellafield had become concentrated. The authors of the report were not invited to the meeting, where the following extraordinary exchange took place:

7.13 Professor MacMillan asked whether it was possible to be sure that there was no coastline effect on the incidence of leukaemia. Professor Clayton also thought it would be premature to say that the coastline effect did not exist.

7.15 The chairman (Professor Bridges) asked the committee members whether they would wish to recommend a further study to test Dr Busby's hypothesis.

7.16 Dr Hamlet (COMARE secretary) said that this would raise Dr Busby's credibility and would open the door for others to lean on COMARE to recommend research.

The question here is whether the alarming possibility of increasing Dr Busby's credibility is more important than investigating what he claims to have found, even though this may save hundreds of lives, if he is right.

To counter the apparently irresistible bias towards industry in current research priorities we propose the development of a new structure of scientific advice based on the opposition principle that is so fundamental to the UK constitution. Just as in the House of Commons the Government, as protagonist, is opposed axiomatically by the Opposition, so the corporations, as developers of new processes and products, should face opposition by government scientists on behalf of the citizen. While the problems associated with an oppositional system – especially its engendering of an antagonistic rather than co-operative policy – have been emphasised, in recent years its main benefit has been ignored. This is the strengthening of legislation by means of a process of bombardment to identify any weaknesses. And just as in the House the most effective route to promotion for an ambitious back-bencher is to pick a sizeable hole in government legislation, so in an oppositional scientific environment, any new process or product would be subjected to a barrage of research by the young scientist eager to make her name. This would guarantee the genuine scrutiny of technological advance that the effete committees of eminent academics have so clearly failed to provide. Under the new structure government advisory committees act as referees between the evidence provided by the corporations, on the



Burger King: Would you accept a hamburger from this man? John Selwyn Gummer (then agriculture minister) and daughter Cordelia in the notorious anti-BSE PR campaign in 1990.

one side, and the counter evidence provided by government-funded independent scientists on the other.

It is apparent that such a system will be successful only if it is provided with research from both sides of any debate. At present research, much of it part-funded by industry and part by our taxes, is biased in favour of industry. We propose the abandonment of such joint funding arrangements. The money that we provide towards scientific research should fund independent scientists whose objective is to protect our interests and our health. We propose the creation of a new position of 'citizen scientist'.

The combination of increasing teaching pressure and corporation funding has undermined the ability of the academic to carry out powerful and independent research. By contrast, the citizen scientists would be funded by public money to do just that. They could continue in their own university, or even work outside the university structure altogether, but compete with each other for fixed-term government-funded contracts within designated areas of public concern. They would then be required to produce and publish research and to provide information and advice to ministers and expert committees.

In a country which enjoyed the benefits of responsibility and accountability amongst its decision-makers, those who caused the deaths of 53 people through their negligence could be identified and should be tried for manslaughter. In this country, not only has nobody been punished for this appalling tragedy, but the system that allowed it to occur remains unchanged. Worse still, it appears that it is allowing precisely the same mistakes to occur in the potentially more widespread and damaging arena of genetic manipulation of crops. The people have learnt: they no longer trust scientists or politicians. But politicians appear to have learnt nothing. Unlike Pilate they do not ask 'What is Truth?', but blindly follow the advice of their civil servants and scientific advisers. The BSE tragedy proves that in this debate the stakes are high. It is time public money was invested in defending public health against the onslaught from those who seek private profits. ♦

Molly Scott Cato is a researcher with Green Audit, an independent environmental consultancy. Her publications include *Seven Myths About Work* (1997) and *Green Economics: Beyond Supply and Demand to Meeting People's Needs* (1999; co-edited with Miriam Kennett). *I Don't Know Much About Science: Political Decision-Making Involving Science and Technology* (published May 2000, ISBN: 1-897761-21-X, £5) is available from Green Audit or by order from any bookshop.



References on page 66

THIS SPORTING LIFE

IF THE WEST INSISTS ON MARGINALISING MASCULINITY, SAYS AIDAN RANKIN, THEN WE SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED BY THE FERVOUR THAT ACCOMPANIES EVENTS LIKE THE OLYMPICS.

THE OLYMPICS ARE almost upon us, as I write. For many ecologists, this will be a matter of indifference at best, or at worst hostility. Indifference, because the ecologically-minded tend to attach scant importance to competitive sport. Its very competitiveness troubles them. They prefer co-operative endeavours, or activities where the individual sets his own pace without testing himself against others. The hostility, meanwhile, is like most hostilities born of ideological zeal. For the Olympics, and other mass sporting events, are seen as commercialist jamborees which legitimise corporate power. The cult of the athlete is dismissed as selfish individualism, the flag-waving is jingoistic, the vast expenditure condemned as immoral.

Worse still, the iniquities of global capitalism appear to be highlighted by international sport. The image springs to mind of children on the Indian sub-continent who sew footballs for the World Cup. Such powerful images sit very uneasily upon the green conscience. They should disturb anyone who is concerned about social justice, or who believes that economics should serve an ethical purpose. Many green campaigners will view Sydney, this year's Olympic venue, less as one of the world's great cities and more as a reminder of racial oppression. They will remember the destruction of the Aboriginal culture by white invaders and the continuing plight of the First Australians. The Olympics are not, therefore, widely perceived as a 'green' event. But should we allow the argument to end there?

In the West, especially, the rise of mass sporting events accompanies the decline of participation in sport and the rise of couch potato culture. The more we watch sport on television, the less we kick footballs around in the park or walk over rugged countryside. The more we turn sportsmen into celebrities, the fewer playing fields we provide for our children. We build stadiums the cost of which would feed and house millions. We buy and sell football players, as if they were servile gladiators in Ancient Rome. And yet, we become ever more unhealthy, both as individuals and as a society. The more detached from nature, the more alienated from our own bodies we become, the more sport becomes the new opium of the people.

Looked at this way, the ecological case against the Olympics, the World Cup or Euro 2000 becomes compelling. Yet one of the weak-



THE MORE WE TURN
SPORTSMEN INTO
CELEBRITIES,
THE FEWER PLAYING
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nesses of green thinking has been the failure to apply the same criteria to human societies as the natural world. Greens wax lyrical about conservation and biodiversity, but tend to dismiss cultural conservatism and human diversity in favour of homogenising 'equality' and a 'liberal' social agenda bequeathed by the left. In this sense, the ecological movement is making the same mistake as the 'anthropocentric' politics it opposes, that of dividing man from the rest of nature.

Ecological wisdom cannot exist without human understanding. That requires us to throw out the ideological baggage of an ageing New Left and look more closely at social issues, such as sport. When we do this, we can see a connection between the flag-waving nationalism, or the exaggerated regional loyalties, sport provokes, and the decline of national symbols, the erosion of that sense of place that gives our lives context and purpose. We can see a connection between the attack on masculine values in the West and the eruptions of male violence associated with sporting events. Adulation of athletes is the last refuge of patriots. Football hooliganism is becoming the last refuge for

the strong, healthy young male. The commercial exploitation and the violence are not mere products of 'capitalism'. Instead, they are the result of bad social policies that fail to respond to human need.

RD Laing, the radical psychiatrist, once posed the question: 'who could be so superstitious as to suppose that the soul does not exist, merely because we cannot see it at the end of a microscope?' Although a Marxist and humanist, he realised that the decline of religion and the absence of the sacred from public life were creating a hole in the heart of Western civilisation. For many individuals, this hole was filled by mental disease. Laing rebuked his scientific colleagues for the modern superstition of secularism. There are many other modern superstitions, if we accept the Oxford English Dictionary definition of superstition as 'an unreasonable or groundless notion'. Two of the strongest and most intimately connected of these are internationalism and uni-sexism. They are part of a twisted version of liberalism that rides roughshod over tradition and refuses to understand the value of ritual.

Increasingly, it is assumed by *bien pensant* legislators, academics and commentators that national symbols are irrelevant to the modern world, or that the loyalties they embody can be swept

away. Through a mixture of brainwashing 'education' and coercion, it is thought that the British can cease to think of themselves as British and become citizens of 'Europe'. It is believed, too, that distinctions of culture, creed or way of life can be abolished or levelled down by 'multi-culturalism', that our historical memory as a people can be erased. Further, it is widely assumed that such changes constitute progress, that the upward devolution of power or the blurring of cultural boundaries creates a new understanding between human beings.

Such ideas are superstitious because they are belied by actual human behaviour. We have seen, from the last century especially, the dangers of artificial political unions. Much of what we call the Third World is defined by lines on a map, abstractions based on colonial borders, remote from the way people think and feel. To most Nigerians, membership of the Ibo, Yoruba or Hausa nations, or many nations smaller but just as proud, is more important than being Nigerian. Few Congolese feel loyalty to the government in Kinshasa. In Africa especially, artificial political unions have led to centralised, bureaucratic and corrupt regimes, which reinforce Western prejudices.

We have a contrast between the highly participatory structures of the African village or region and dictatorial governments, civilian or military.

Closer to home, we can observe that more than seventy years of Soviet tyranny failed to create the 'new Soviet man', that national loyalties and entrenched religious beliefs won out over secular internationalism. Yugoslavia also was a political union intended to bring peace to the Balkans, but only a strong, energetic leader could hold its component parts together. In Britain, internationalist bias in education and politics has achieved little more than a revival of English nationalist fervour. 'Multi-culturalism' and the denigration of history have not fostered a common citizenship but increased tension between ethnic

groups. Young racist whites are products of 'liberal' education and its pacifist bias. They know nothing of the Afro-Caribbean regiments that fought on our side in World War II.

The denial of national identity, and the instincts that support it, fosters distrust between nations. Conversely, an individual's affection for his own culture enables him to open himself to other cultures, too. Thus it is wrong to blame 'nationalism' for the violence and vulgarity of mass sporting events. It is the cult of internationalism that is to blame, for stifling national sentiments that could be directed to positive ends – including wise stewardship of the environment.

Much of the violence associated with sport is the violence of exuberant young males. This has led fashionable psychologists, afraid of 'liberal' opinion, to conclude that there is a 'crisis of masculinity'.

Yet such behaviour suggests instead that masculinity is alive and well. The problem is a society that neglects its young men, wastes its male energy, devalues masculine creativity and the role of men as fathers or providers. Since the 1960s, public policy has been founded on the pretence that men can be socialised, trained and educated in exactly the same way as women, that the sexes are not only 'equal' in politics but socially interchangeable. Like internationalism, uni-sexism is intended to create a new type of society

where differences are abolished. Internationalists belittle national flags as jingoistic and despise national armies. Uni-sexists belittle fatherhood and dismiss most traditions as 'patriarchal'. Male bastions, such as the church or the Armed Forces, must be 'feminised' or pushed to the margins of society – or preferably both.

In the interests of socially engineered 'equality', we ignore the emotional needs of young men, which societies more ecologically balanced than ours know instinctively. They know that the adolescent male requires a rite of passage, by which he makes the transition from boy to man. In India, the young Brahmin learns Vedic tradition from an older male relative, usually his grandfather. Amongst the Melanesian Samba, youths are befriended by older warriors and that friendship is lifelong. Native American myths and hunting skills are passed along from older to younger men.

All human societies, so-called primitive and so-called civilised, have given male initiation cultural and spiritual pride of place. As well as learning from his elders, the young man must often step outside society, acting out anti-social adolescent desires as part of initiation. Robert Brain, describing Australian Aboriginal rituals, refers to the 'unbridled independence and unruly temper of the

uninitiated boy' as something considered normal, not daunting, by the tribe.¹ Initiations usually involve an element of danger. Young Maasai men become both warriors and intelligent beings through placing their lives at risk. As Teplillit Ole Saitoti, himself a Maasai, explains:

*'A warrior must be strong, clever, courageous, confident, wise and gentle. he must hunt lions for his headdress, protect his herds from predators, retrieve stolen or strayed cattle... and safeguard his community.'*²

Through testing himself against nature, the young man becomes 'wise and gentle', as well as strong. Through satisfying his sense of adventure, he

becomes a useful member of society.

The young Maasai is therefore luckier than his Western counterparts. For the further removed from nature the West becomes, the more it represses young males. Education is increasingly about sitting still for hours and learning irrelevant facts by rote. Safety is placed above adventure. The idea of the man as provider for children, or protector of women, is derided as old-fashioned. Military service is no longer valued and is increasingly subject to civilian norms. For more and more boys, there is no father-figure to revere and emulate, no male role model at school and no heroes left except for sporting celebrities.

Male football violence is therefore as 'green', in its own way, as protests against genetically modified crops. It is a desperate plea for a return to a society that reflects our true nature.

Ecologists should go on being critical of sporting events where they are wasteful and iniquitous. But they should look on the patriotism which inspires viewers of the Olympics and other similar events, and the male solidarity which inspires football crowds, as positive forces. For they are part and parcel of the human ecosystem.

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MALE FOOTBALL VIOLENCE IS AS 'GREEN', IN ITS OWN WAY, AS PROTESTS AGAINST GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS

FISHING WRONGS

ED METCALFE BELIEVES ONE OF THE STUPIDEST THINGS YOU CAN DO IS GIVE UP EATING MEAT AND CONTINUE EATING FISH.

WHILE IT IS true that fish have less intelligence than other animals and may even suffer less in their last moments than a pig, for instance, does in an abattoir, on environmental grounds it is sheer madness to eat fish and not meat. This insanity is, however, the fashionable practice of many quasi-vegetarians who turn to fish as a source of animal protein that is seen as less fleshy and sentient than other sources, as well as being healthier.

On entering a supermarket one finds frozen cod fish fingers, for example, right along side frozen mince meat; or fresh herring and lemon sole under a counter only feet away from fresh lamb chops and chicken breasts.

Despite such proximity on the shelves, between fish and meat there exists a crucial distinction the implications of which most consumers never give thought to. Whereas meat has been domesticated for millennia and can therefore be eaten, quite literally, until the cows come home; with some notable exceptions, fish are wild and like anything else nature provides, vulnerable to depletion and extinction. Over 80 per cent of fish found in supermarkets, whether fresh or pre-packed, were completely wild. Such favourites as herring, plaice, cod, Dover sole, haddock, monkfish, snapper, mackerel, sardines, scallops and tuna are all as wild as cheetahs and antelopes. Though salmon, trout and prawn are now farmed on a massive scale they account for less than a fifth of fish consumed in the UK.

Of all the species of fish it is tuna that the consumer takes for granted. This fish, which is the mainstay of salads, baps and sandwiches across the nation, is in a perilous situation. So common is the sight of a can of tuna that one might mistakenly believe it to be a small round fish that lives in olive oil or brine, not the three-metre migratory giant that can live up to 30 years and travel 50 miles per hour.

To comprehend the extent of the tuna's plight I would ask the reader to engage in a short visualisation exercise.

Imagine yourself in a supermarket next to the shelves stacked with tuna. In your mind's eye picture all the tins of tuna stacked on top of each other extending in rows along the length of the shelves. Now multiply this scene by all the supermarkets in the country, then in the world if you can, add to this the tins of tuna found in every corner shop and kitchen cupboard. Several football stadia full of tinned tuna should be the result.

Now repeat the magic words: 'This is a wild animal'. The thought that should come to mind is: 'How long can this continue?' The most conservative estimates predict serious shortfalls within the next decade and decimation by 2020.



THE MOST
CONSERVATIVE
ESTIMATES ON TUNA
POPULATION PREDICT
DECIMATION BY 2020

There are different types of tuna. The tuna found in tins is the Yellowfin. The most sought after tuna, however, is the Bluefin, used to make tuna sashimi in sushi restaurants. The fatty part of the Bluefin is the supreme delicacy known as 'toro'. Around 55 per cent of all tuna caught worldwide goes to Japan where brokers for the sushi business pay from \$10-25,000 for a single fish – flown in fresh overnight from wherever in the world it has been caught. In the last two decades over-fishing has resulted in a 90 per cent reduction of Bluefin tuna stocks.

It is the misfortune of the tuna that sushi has taken off in Western Europe and the US.

Sushi is the most chic, healthiest food around, and it perfectly complements today's trend for eating less meat. Sushi bars have sprung up all over London, and many other international capitals and cities. Sushi boxes are even sold next to lunchtime sandwiches at chain outlets such as Prêt à Manger. With the exception of salmon (and sometimes prawn) all fish sold in sushi restaurants are wild.

I once spoke to the owner of a well-known Japanese restaurant and asked him whether he was aware of any potential problems with fish stocks, tuna in particular. 'Haven't a clue about depletion', he answered honestly.

He thought for a while and then continued: 'Multiply like rabbits, they do... could never become extinct... the seas are simply too huge.'

His answer reflects the degree to which even people in the industry are uninformed. If anyone who doubts that tuna could be fished to near extinction one need only be reminded of what happened in only a few short decades to cod stocks in the north Atlantic.

The use of factory trawlers working around the clock using huge dragnets to scoop the fish – which are located by sonar – out of the sea, managed to reduce an one-time annual catch of 800,000 tonnes to a total population of a mere 1,700 tonnes in just 30 years.

Tuna are now being farmed at Cartagena in Spain. This points the way towards a more sustainable future, although sanctuaries in which fish are free to multiply are also needed.

The truth is staring us in the face. Until we can be sure that wild fish come from sustainable catches the only solution is simply not to eat it.

Ed Metcalfe is a freelance journalist specialising in ecological and environmental issues.

FREE US FROM FREE TRADE

WE'RE OFTEN TOLD THAT FREE TRADE WILL BENEFIT THE WORLD.
TONY BENN CAN'T SEE A SHRED OF EVIDENCE.

FREE TRADE AND global capitalism are accepted almost unanimously among important people in Britain. Multi-national companies demand free trade because it gives them freedom. The City needs it to prosper as a financial centre. Speculators depend on it. Most newspaper proprietors and editors are committed to it. The BBC is so devout about free trade that it broadcasts share values and currency values every hour, entirely replacing the daily prayer service. Teachers explain free trade in business study courses, and some trade union leaders believe that free trade is bound to come about.

The truth is that the benefits of free trade are not really being seen in the world at all. We are told, for example, that the best way to narrow the gap between rich and poor is to have free trade and world capitalism. Ten years ago, the world had 147 dollar billionaires; five years ago, it had 274 dollar billionaires, and that number increased recently to 447, a rise of 25 per cent. Those billionaires have a combined wealth equivalent to the annual income of half of the world's population.

We must consider also what the World Health Organisation says about the health of the world. One-fifth of the world's children live in poverty; one-third of the world's population lack access to essential drugs. Each year, 12 million children under five die, and 95 per cent of them die from poverty-related illness; more than half a million mothers die in childbirth, and more than one million babies die of tetanus. What contribution have globalisation and free trade made to solving those problems? The theory that wealth trickles down and that the richer Bill Gates gets, the richer people in Asia will get, is one of the most ludicrous illusions that could possibly be imagined.

Multinational corporations want free trade because they are trying to get Governments off their back so that they can exploit the profits that they can make with the minimum of interference. They think that global capitalism and free trade will end redistributive taxation and, although this has not been mentioned so far, gradually turn health and education into market-related activities.

A restricted paper circulated to World Trade Organisation delegates was brought to my attention by one of the Members of the European Parliament who received it. It asked:

'How can WTO members ensure that ongoing reforms in national health systems are mutually supportive and whenever relevant market-based?'

It will not be long before some countries can say to others, 'You are discriminating against us because you have a health service and our workers have not, so you must cut back your health service



POWER IN BRITAIN HAS
BEEN TRANSFERRED TO
EDDIE GEORGE. I DO
NOT KNOW WHICH
CONSTITUENCY HE WON

so that you are not taking unfair advantage.'

Another important point is that global capitalism empowers companies to move money freely, but it does not allow workers to move freely. If someone owns a factory in London but the wages are so high that he cannot make a profit, he can close it and open it in Malaysia, where wages are lower. If, however, someone from Malaysia tries to come to London where wages are higher, immigration laws would keep him out.

Globalisation has nothing to do with internationalism. At least in the European Union there is a free movement of capital and labour. We are not talking about letting workers move in search of higher wages, but only of companies moving in search of higher profits. Global capitalism allows big business to run the banana republics. It involves risks to the protection of the environment, and we are told that it is inevitable.

Let us look at the matter from another point of view that is all the more important. Global capital is eroding political democracy. Power in Britain, for instance, has already been transferred to Eddie George. I do not know which constituency he won at the election; I could not find his name anywhere on the list. None the less, he has

more power than the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The European central bank will have more power than either of them.

None of the representatives of the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO is elected. Who elects the secretary-general of NATO and the director-general of the WTO? Nobody. Our political democracy has been decapitated in the interests of worship of money. As Keir Hardie said at the beginning of the century, we must choose between worshipping God or *Mammon*, and there is no doubt on which we decided.

There is a quote that, in a way, sums up what I feel on this issue.

We have lived so long at the mercy of uncontrolled economic forces that we have become sceptical about any plan for human emancipation. Such a rational and deliberate reorganisation of our economic life would enable us, out of the increased wealth production, to establish an irreducible minimum standard which might progressively be raised to one of comfort and security.

Those are the words of Harold Macmillan in his book *The Middle Way*. If as a democrat, an internationalist and a committed socialist I may endorse that view, I suspect that I would be doing so with the support of most people in the world who do not benefit from the worship of money.

Tony Benn is the Labour MP for Chesterfield.



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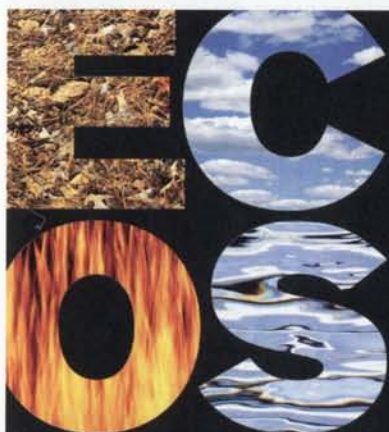
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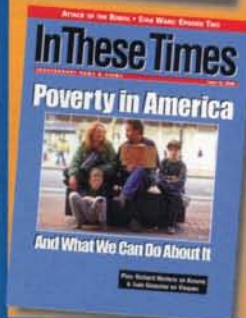


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Doctor's Handwriting

A monthly column that helps you decipher the medical truth.

Most of us operate under the assumption that we exercise ultimate control over our children's health, particularly in a nice, reasonable place like Britain, which, after all, almost alone among Western countries, doesn't even mandate vaccination.

And then you hear the case of a Nottingham family I've been calling the Smiths. The couple, who were very dedicated to natural parenting, had baby Alexander last February. Alexander was breastfeeding well, but over the first few weeks, he wasn't gaining any weight – a situation not unheard of among breastfed babies. Nevertheless all else being well – he was content, cheery and sleeping soundly – their midwife was unconcerned enough about the weight to discharge him at 28 days.

Nevertheless, the Smiths weren't happy and requested a meeting with their GP. When the GP finally arrived two weeks later with the health worker, he professed alarm at the baby's weight and rushed the Smiths to hospital.

There, Social Services took the issue of Alex's slight lack of weight and proceeded to build an entire case of parental failure to attend to the baby's medical needs around what were well-informed decisions about alternative health care. The Smiths' refusal to give their newborn injected vitamin K, the Guthrie (heel-prick) test or vaccinations – that is, their refusal to conform to the views of the 'professionals' – were interpreted as 'anti-establishment', even 'neglectful'. Social Services managed to secure an interim care order and insisted that the Smiths be placed in a family centre under 24-hour surveillance, where they stayed for four months.

Family centres, for the uninitiated, are like prisons, where parents with social problems can be monitored around the clock until Social Services deems them fit to be left to their own devices.

The Smiths have now been let out of the family centre, but have been ordered to live with Joe Smith's parents. This has caused no end of friction between the couple. Joe's parents smoke in front of the baby, against Lisa's wishes. His mother is critical of everything Lisa does. Lisa has no privacy and no self-determination. Disabled from a series of botched knee operations, she is forced to live in a house with stairs that she has to continually negotiate just to go to the loo.

Relations between Lisa and Joe, which had been 'extremely' happy for 12 years, are so strained that the word 'divorce' sometimes creeps into the conversation. Yet the Smiths are convinced they could save their relationship if they were able to proceed with their plans to move to Wales. They have put an offer on a three-bedroom house and are soon to exchange contracts. Joe, a former



FALLING FOUL OF THE SS

BY LYNNE McTAGGART

'Social Services are firmly standing in the way of the Smiths' rosy future'

bricklayer who has studied to be a financial adviser, would like to go and seek permanent work. The best school in the area has already accepted baby Alex. The Smiths are keen to get off state benefits.

Nevertheless, Social Services are firmly standing in the way of this rosy future. They don't want Joe to work because Lisa is disabled (although she can get around perfectly adequately in a one-storey dwelling). Everything – even custody of Alexander – rests upon psychological and paediatric assessments, and a court case in January, which will determine whether Social Services can still retain joint control over Alex until he is school age.

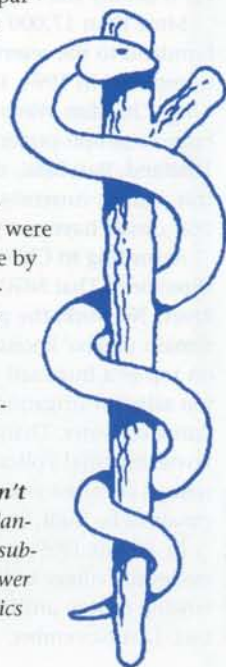
This case isn't about the health of Alex who, at six months, is a chunky little bruiser between the top quarter percentile in height and weight. This case is about professionals wishing to assert arbitrary control. From her own bad experiences at the hands of medicine, Lisa gets a bit prickly with mindless authority. She is the Randle P McMurphy – the Jack Nicholson character in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* – to a small army of Nurse Ratched. Instead of electric shock treatment, in this instance, the instrument used to crush her will is psychological assessment and custody of her child. It's the same instrument used by many doctors when parents clash with them over their intended treatment of a minor. The

latest ploy with Lisa is a charge of 'Munchausen's syndrome-by-proxy' – deliberate attempts to harm the baby – an increasingly common charge being hurled at parents whose greatest problem is disagreement with some medical professional in charge.

How many of the rest of us would pass a psychological profile if our own informed decisions about alternative medicine were placed under the microscope by a group of people who violently disagree with us? The Smiths' experience indicates

that Big Brother is alive and well in Britain, and wearing a white coat and stethoscope.

Lynne McTaggart is editor of *What Doctors Don't Tell You*, a monthly newsletter which exposes dangers and unproven practices in medicine. Annual subscriptions cost £34.95. For details: WDDTY, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Market Harborough, Leics LE16 9EF. Tel: 01858 438894.





SOUTH-EAST ASIA RIVERS NETWORK

DAM-BUSTING

**CAMPAIGNS AGAINST DESTRUCTIVE DAMS CAN WORK.
AVIVA IMHOF SENDS IN A PROGRESS REPORT FROM THAILAND.**

ON 6 JULY this year, the Thai government announced that the gates of the Rasi Salai dam would be opened for at least two years for environmental restoration and that investigations would be held to determine who has been affected by the project. This represents a significant victory – yet it is only the beginning.

More than 17,000 people have lost farmland to the reservoir. Completed in 1994, the dam is part of the Kong-Chi-Mun Water Diversion project, a huge irrigation project in the northeast of Thailand. Rasi Salai, the first dam built in this plan, is currently useless as the irrigation canals have not yet been completed.

According to Chainarong Srettachau, Director of Thai NGO South-East Asia Rivers Network, the project is 'likely to remain useless' because 'the reservoir sits on top of a huge salt dome and its water is too salty for irrigation'. Due to the heavily salinated water, Thailand's Office of Environmental Policy and Planning has refused permission for the dam's irrigation canals to be built.

In August 1999, protesters established a makeshift village in the reservoir area, vowing to stay until their demands were met. Last November, 400 villagers risked

THE OPENING OF the Rasi Salai dam in Thailand represents a victory for the local villagers after a bloody seven-year fight. But their compatriots at the World Bank-funded Pak Mun Dam are still fighting for justice.

drowning as the waters rose around them. They said they would not move until the dam gates were opened. When the Government temporarily agreed to open the gates, but offered no permanent solution, 800 villagers took over the dam and occupied the dam crest in May this year. Frustrated by the Government's inaction, villagers started removing rocks from the southern part of the dam to restore the Mun River to its natural course.

The long years of protest by the villagers have borne fruit. Additional concessions by the government include a promise to investigate the compensation claims of the affected villagers, including a new survey of land held by villagers around the reservoir. Because land was not surveyed prior to construction the exact location of the villagers' land and its use are not known.

The Thai government also agreed to conduct soil salinity studies. Villagers have been complaining of salinity problems in

the reservoir since the dam was completed in 1994. A report by the Land Development Department revealed that over 42 per cent of the area irrigated by the dam is at risk of facing salinity problems due to the high salt content of the reservoir waters. Pajit Silarak, a leader of the Assembly of the Poor, claims the water from the dam flooded salt mines causing soil and water contamination in the area. Since the Government's decisions were made the villagers have vacated their protest sites on top of the dam and in the reservoir. The victory at Rasi Salai has been bittersweet, however, as Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai has remained steadfast in his refusal to permanently open the gates at the World Bank-funded Pak Mun Dam, 200 kilometres downstream from Rasi Salai.

PAK MUN

Villagers affected by the Pak Mun dam have been protesting for the last year and a half to pressure the Thai government and the World Bank to open Pak Mun's floodgates to restore the river's fisheries. In March 1999, more than 5,000 villagers occupied the land adjacent to the Pak Mun dam and established Ban Mae Mun Man

Yuen 1, or 'Long-Lasting Mun River Village Number 1'. Six other protest villages with the same name were subsequently established at other dam sites around Thailand. After 14 months of demonstration at the Pak Mun dam site with little response from the government, last May more than 1,000 villagers took over the dam and fish ladder.

'Our experience has proved that the Pak Mun Dam has destroyed the river's fertility. It has also destroyed the peaceful livelihood of our community,' said Mr. Thongcharoen Srihadham, a village leader. 'The fish ladder which was supposed to solve the dam's damage to fish breeding, could not be a substitute for the natural river. Hence, we are demanding that the Pak Mun Dam's gate be opened in order to regain the abundance of the Mun River.'

The 136 MW Pak Mun Dam, which was completed in 1994, was built by the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand with US\$24 million in financing from the World Bank. From the outset, the project was highly controversial due to the predicted impacts on the rich and productive fisheries of the Mun River, the largest tributary of the Mekong River. As a direct result of the dam, more than 20,000 people have been affected by drastic reductions in fish populations upstream of the dam site, and other changes to their livelihoods. The dam has blocked the migration of fish, and a fish ladder, promoted by the World Bank's fisheries experts as a mitigation measure, has proved useless.

After the dam occupation, Deputy Prime Minister Banyat Banthadthana appointed a neutral committee to investigate the dam and 15 other problems regarding dam, forest and land issues raised by the Thai people's movement Assembly of the Poor. Last month, the committee recommended that the Government open Pak Mun's gates for four months during the rainy season each year to allow fish migration. The Deputy Prime Minister subsequently refused to comply with the committee's recommendations.

Frustrated by the lack of response from the government, in mid-July thousands of villagers traveled to Bangkok to protest. On 16 July, more than 200 villagers entered Government House. Police wielded batons and fired tear gas at the protesters. Some 50

DETAILS OF THE DESTRUCTION

An independent study of the Pak Mun Dam's costs and benefits has been recently completed by the World Commission on Dams (WCD). The WCD study found that the dam, which was supposed to generate 136 megawatts, is barely generating 40 megawatts in the high-demand months of April and May.

Completed in 1994, the dam's final cost was US\$265 million, almost twice as much as originally estimated. Today it isn't generating enough electricity to recover its investment costs.

The WCD states that 169 out of 265 species of fish in the Mun River were affected by the dam. Of these, 56 species have completely disappeared. The WCD estimated that the actual catch in the reservoir and upstream is 60 to 80 percent less than before the dam was built, resulting in an economic loss of around US\$1.4 million per annum.

people were injured, 10 of whom were admitted to the hospital, and 225 villagers were arrested and charged with trespassing and illegal assembly. Their charges are still pending.

'They trampled us as if we were not humans,' said Sa-nguan Puebkunthod, one of the hospitalised protesters. 'I saw a 70-year-old grandmother being hit until her head was bleeding. We didn't want to harm anybody. We had only our bare hands. The only thing we wanted to say was that our suffering is real.'

The violent response from the police was met with national and international condemnation and increasing protests in Bangkok. More than 30 groups released statements condemning the government for its use of force. They demanded the unconditional release of all detained villagers and the opening of the sluice gates at Pak Mun dam. More than 40 pro-democracy and activist groups also agreed to join the villagers in their protest at Government House.

On 24 July, 96 organisations from 26 countries wrote to the Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai urging him to open the gates of the dam and expressing their outrage at the use of force. In Japan, representatives of 10 environmental groups and three members of the Japanese Diet (Parliament) sent an open letter to the Thai embassy in Tokyo calling on the Thai government to address the protesters' grievances. In Washington DC, three protesters fasted for three days and held a vigil outside the Thai embassy.

In response to national and international pressure, the Thai cabinet met on 25 July to discuss the problems raised by Assembly of the Poor, including the Pak

Mun Dam, national forests and other 'development projects'. The Cabinet agreed to open the gates of Pak Mun until the end of August but refused to make any future promises. The government also refused to pay compensation to more than 2,000 families affected by the nearby Sirindhorn Dam, completed in 1972.

The protesting villagers described the action as 'too little too late'. The Pak Mun dam's gates would have been opened anyway due to flooding upstream. Chaiphon Praphasawat of Assembly of the Poor said the Cabinet had conceded very little

while appearing to have agreed to many of the recommendations made by the government-appointed committee to solve the problems of the poor.

'It may sound good to Bangkok's middle class who may feel the government has shown much mercy to the villagers', Mr Chaiphon said. 'But if you read it carefully, it does not help the poor that much.'

Two days after the Cabinet resolution, 40 people began a hunger strike to pressure the government to adhere to their demands, the first mass hunger strike ever staged in Thailand. Their number has fluctuated ever since and at time of press, 472 people were striking. On 30 July, more than 10,000 people, including Assembly of the Poor protesters, labour groups, social activists and business leaders, converged in Bangkok to express displeasure with Chuan Leekpai's administration. Chuan said he would grant one major concession and organise a public hearing on the issues, but said that the Government could not meet all the protesters' demands.

The Assembly of the Poor has vowed to continue their struggle until all of their demands are met. In a statement released on 28 July, the Assembly of the Poor said, 'We've realised that to preserve our dignity is to fight for justice and righteousness; not to fight for personal gains. We have to fight to keep our cherished local culture, our rivers, mountains, forests as well as wildlife and riverine animals for the future sake of our descendants.'

Aviva Imhof is South-East Asia Campaigner with Berkeley, CA-based International Rivers Network. For further information on the work of IRN see www.irn.org

STUFFING TURKEY

IF BRITAIN AND OTHER COUNTRIES SUPPORT AN ENVIRONMENTALLY DESTRUCTIVE DAM PROJECT IN TURKEY, WHAT ARE WE THEN TO MAKE OF OUR 'ETHICAL FOREIGN POLICY'? TONY JUNIPER REPORTS.

IMAGINE A CONSORTIUM of international companies arriving near Oxford to build a two-kilometre-long hydroelectric dam across the River Thames. The city is to be flooded and tens of thousands made homeless. Worse still, the local people have not been consulted about the project, nor offered compensation or rehousing. The city's historical treasures are to be submerged and lost for ever, for a project that will last 40 years. An impossible prospect? In Oxford perhaps, but not in the ancient Kurdish city of Hasankeyf.

Citizens there are bracing themselves for the construction of the Ilisu Dam and a deluge that will not only make them homeless and undermine their human rights, but damage the environment, wreck an ancient cultural heritage and threaten regional political stability. A group of developed nations must now decide whether they will support the project. The governments of Britain, Austria, Japan, Germany, the United States, Italy, Switzerland, Sweden and Portugal have received applications for insurance cover against the risk that the companies involved will not be paid for their work. As such, these governments have a serious dilemma on their hands. Do they back their exporters, or respect human rights, the environment and international law?

Construction will be led by British company Balfour Beatty which has requested a £200 million investment guarantee from the Export Credits Guarantee Department (ECGD). Balfour Beatty is no stranger to environmentally damaging and controversial projects. It built the Pergau Dam in Malaysia, the Cardiff Bay Barrage in Wales and the road that Swampy famously tunneled beneath. Although the company now faces prosecution for corruption in Lesotho¹ and has been raided by the FBI in the United States², the UK Government, pressed on by the Prime Minister himself³, has announced that it is 'minded' to grant the company an export credit for its part in the project.

Ilisu is one in a series of some 22 dams

THE KURDISH CITY of Hasankeyf is threatened with the construction of a mighty dam that will displace whole communities. And it's the western world that is considering putting up the finance for the project.

and related power plants and irrigation projects that comprise the so-called South-East Anatolia project. These major infrastructure works in the Tigris and Euphrates basins have been developed by the Turkish Government as a means to meet both the growing national demand



There's no place like home: The site of the dam (left), and an emergency new dwelling-place.

for electric power and as a route to modernising the economy of the south-east of the country, through irrigation of farmland for example. The dam is intended to produce 3,800 gwh of electricity per annum. But located only 65 kilometres from the point where the Tigris forms the border with Syria and flows on into Iraq, the potential for Turkey to regulate the flow of the river for political purposes is considerable. The consistently hostile tone of Turkish politicians on the matter of water resources bodes ill for an amicable settlement with neighbouring nations.

Aside from the international political tensions linked to the control of river flow, the direct impacts anticipated from the dam's construction would be massive. Not only would the reservoir engulf an area of the Tigris valley larger than Manchester, it would submerge more than 70 villages and towns leading to the displacement of some 25,000 Kurdish people. Hasankeyf, the largest settlement, has a population of 5,500 and a history stretching back 10,000 years. The city is a cultural centre for the Kurdish people and it is not surprising that some locals interpret the dam as a calculated act of cultural genocide in the region

most hotly contested during the bitter war between the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) and the Turkish state.

Irrespective of Turkish motivations, there has as yet been no consultation with the local people, no compensation package has been agreed and, as of July 2000, there is no resettlement plan. Given previous experience in the region, the inhabitants of the area can expect little or nothing in terms of state assistance but instead to finish up swelling the hundreds of thousands of already displaced people who populate the shanty towns at the edges of Turkey's

larger cities. The fact that a project of this nature could edge to the brink of official approval in countries like the UK is remarkable. Part of the reason for this is official secrecy.

The threat of legal action by Friends of the Earth in the summer of 1999 under European freedom of information

laws forced the release of details on a previously secret environmental assessment commissioned by the consortium members. The environmental report (not its crucial annexes however) was examined by consultants working for the British Government with their findings published late in 1999⁴. In addition to highlighting a number of serious impacts that will follow dam construction, such as lowered water quality, they found the existing assessment to be deficient in many important respects. There was no consideration of the cumulative effects of the dam in conjunction with other projects, even though the report reveals another planned dam to be built downstream from Ilisu. No information was available on the effects of altered river flow on wetlands downstream. And while the dam's supporters claim a clean source of climate-friendly energy⁵, there has been no mention of recent findings that demonstrate a huge contribution of methane (a potent greenhouse gas) from rotting organic matter in dam reservoirs.

In contravention of internationally agreed standards for environmental assessment, there is also no evaluation of alternative works that might achieve the same

outcome. For example, the upgrading of Turkey's grid transmission system would save enormous quantities of power whilst altering consumer behaviour could have a similar effect. A new and allegedly comprehensive environmental assessment has been promised but this has been subject to unexplained delays and, like the earlier report, remains unpublished.

These revelations on the environmental impacts of the Ilisu Dam were accompanied with another devastating consultant's report on the expected social and cultural consequences of the project⁶. The two reports prompted the UK Government to announce four conditions⁷ that must be met before British assistance will be provided. These require that a proper resettlement plan will be put in place, that the conservation of Hasankeyf's archaeological riches is secured, for good water quality to be maintained and for flow rates to be preserved. On all counts, Turkey appears unable or unwilling to act.

As far as the resettlement plan is concerned, Turkey has had nearly 20 years since the dam was first proposed to provide for the needs of displaced local people. Only now after a public campaign in western countries has it been forced, reluctantly, to act. So far, the Turkish authorities have appointed a company specialising in package holidays and business seminars to develop resettlement plans. Aside from laying on coaches and distributing leaflets, this company is not experienced in dealing with the serious upheavals that will follow the forced removal of 25,000 people from their homes⁸.

The maintenance of Hasankeyf's archaeological riches beneath 50 metres of murky water would appear impossible. Even if some form of rescue was possible, the recent flooding of the Roman city of Zeugma beneath the waters of the Birecik Dam on the Euphrates provides one more indication of Turkish indifference to anything other than progressing its dam-building aspirations. In planning to flood Hasankeyf, the Turkish Government is also directly contradicting its own Department of Culture's 1978 ruling that conferred 'complete archaeological protection' on the city. Assuring water quality would require many tens of millions of pounds-worth of upstream investment in sanitation and sewage treatment facilities. Although financial support for sanitation works is being considered by Germany, the extent to which river quality can be protected from

sewage from shanty towns remains in grave doubt.

The assurance that flow rates will be maintained can only be proved in practice. Should Turkey decide in the future to use water for political purposes, there would be little that the participating export credit agencies could do about it. And should disputes over water escalate into conflict, then most of the countries supporting the dam would be under pressure as NATO members to side with Turkey.

Importantly, following the preparation of a legal opinion by lawyers acting for Friends of the Earth⁹, the British Government has now announced a fifth condition¹⁰. This relates to Turkey's international legal requirements as a signatory of regional water agreements. If Turkey fails to consult with its downstream neighbours prior to progressing the Ilisu proposal, it is held that the country will be in breach of international law. And because even the loosest interpretation of export credit rules cannot justify assistance to another country to violate international treaties, then action might be taken in the British courts to challenge any decision by the UK to grant a credit. In July 2000, the Syrian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs confirmed that 'the Government of the Republic of Turkey has not officially informed, consulted, or negotiated with us about the implementation of the Ilisu Dam project on the Tigris river as stipulated by the rules of international law

'The Ilisu Dam demonstrates the huge chasm that still divides the rich countries' industrial policies from sustainable development.'

and the relevant agreement on the Tigris river and other agreements concluded between the two countries'¹¹. The project is therefore vulnerable to legal challenge – at least in the UK where campaigners can challenge official decisions through judicial review.

Underlining the disastrous nature of the Ilisu proposal, a committee of British MPs in July recommended that the British Government should not support the project. 'The Ilisu Dam was from the outset planned in contravention of international standards and still does not comply. For that reason, cover should not be given', they said. The MPs suggested that compa-

nies convicted of bribery or corruption should be barred from receiving ECGD support and that there should be no assistance for exports that infringe human rights. Their crushing conclusions included the view that 'relevant international criteria should be met before a proposal is agreed and cover sought – it is a sign of political will, institutional capacity, developmental commitment and good faith... The shotgun wedding approach to export credit that we find in the case of the Ilisu Dam does not in our view bode well for the implementation of commitments but is rather the worst form of export credit practice'¹². Campaigners opposing the dam agreed.

The Ilisu Dam clearly demonstrates the huge chasm that still divides the rich countries' industrial policy from sustainable development. Export credit agencies are exposed as preoccupied with supporting their national enterprises at the expense of human rights, the environment and political stability – even where politicians publicly express an understanding of the risks involved. But should any one of them decline support, it is clear that agencies with lower standards would provide assistance anyway. This classic race to the bottom in pursuit of narrow business aims emphasises the urgent need for international action to agree common binding standards applying to all export credit agencies. A discussion on this very matter taking place in the OECD has however stalled because of the negative attitude of some governments, including Germany and Spain, who continue to champion an unregulated approach.

But there is still the prospect for a positive impact from the Ilisu scheme. If campaigners are successful in preventing export credit agency support, then certainly there would be a refocus of political attention on the policies operated by these most powerful but secretive institutions. If Britain's so-called ethical foreign policy amounts to anything more than voter-friendly spin, the UK cannot support Ilisu: it must instead press for changes in the rules by which its Export Credits Guarantee Department does business.

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THE MODIFIED EAST

AS WESTERN EUROPE TURNS AGAINST GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS, SO THE TRANSNATIONAL 'LIFE SCIENCES' COMPANIES ARE TURNING THEIR ATTENTION TO THE MORE VULNERABLE EAST OF THE CONTINENT, SAYS IZA KRUSZEWSKA.

THE RECENT SCANDAL of GM-contaminated rape seed, imported to Western Europe from Canada by the seed company Advanta, highlighted the problem of cross-pollination of conventional plants by their GM relatives. It also threw up the difficulties of finding regions which are still GM-free. In response, Advanta claimed to have moved seed production to countries like New Zealand where no GM production takes place. Meanwhile, Pioneer Hi-Bred, which specialises in maize seed, has moved European maize seed production to Romania, Hungary and Austria.

Romania is a strange choice. Since 1997, US seed companies have tested and registered seven varieties of GM crops in the country, and in 1999, the Ministry of Agriculture approved the commercial growing of GM soybeans and large-scale trials of potatoes, maize and sunflower seeds, despite the absence of any law on GM seeds. Last year Romania cultivated at least 100,000 hectares of GM crops.

Yet Romania is not the only country in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) that is growing GM crops. The uncertainty surrounding what is actually going on in CEE and the Newly Independent States (NIS) lies in the absence of any public right to information and, in many cases, poor government oversight.

EASTERN EUROPE – A BRIEF BACKGROUND

Science and technology have a long history in this region. Indeed the grandfather of genetics is Mendel, a monk who lived in Brno, now in the Czech Republic. Already in the 1980s, scientists in many of these

A REPORT INTO *the rampant usage of GM seeds and foods in former Soviet countries.*

countries were undertaking experiments in agri-biotechnology, and by the early 1990s were releasing genetically modified organisms (GMOs) into the environment without any regulatory controls. Since 1991, Bulgarian scientists from the Institute of Genetic Engineering in Kostinbrod have been releasing GM tobacco plants during

Pioneer, are choosing Eastern Europe and the NIS as a playground for their genetic experiments. Where better to exploit a culture of secrecy and oppression than in a region where decades of authoritarian rule has created a society afraid to assert their democratic rights to information and participation. These may be nominally democratic countries, but state officials there are still regarded with fear, rather than as public servants. The transnationals know that their activities are safe from public scrutiny and legal challenge.

Many countries in the region still have no specific GM laws, and even in those that have laws, they are either weak or non-enforced.

First-round EU accession countries, such as Hungary, Czech Republic and Poland, and those torn by war in the former Yugoslavia, like Croatia, have been spared some of the worst corporate excesses. Yet second-round countries, like Bulgaria, and certainly the Newly Independent States of the former Soviet Union, offer the best chances for TNCs to push their GM seeds.

It is clear that companies want some legal basis for starting field

trials of GM plants, because these are the first steps to commercialisation. In 1996, when Bulgaria became the first country in the region to introduce minimal regulations providing for an approval system for GM seeds, this was the cue for Monsanto to introduce GM seeds.

The picture presented below is sketchy, since information held by officials in most of these countries is closely guarded. They prefer to bend to the wishes of industry which demands that information on field



Sunflowers: among the many Eastern European GM crops.

field trials. In 1996, in Poland, Greenpeace discovered GM carp with human growth hormone genes (to make them grow faster) that had been swimming in the ponds of a government institute since at least 1994! At this time, most of the biotech research was still domestically driven and funded by the public purse.

Now, in the face of strong opposition to GM foods in Western Europe and increasingly elsewhere, the transnational 'life sciences' companies, such as Monsanto and

trials be confidential, despite the fact that these same companies accept extensive lists of their field trials in Western Europe being publicly available on the Web. Some information about field trials then may not even reach officials, since few countries require the maintenance of a publicly accessible central database of all GMO releases.

Information on the presence of GM food on the market is likewise non-existent.

According to a Polish environmental ministry official: 'Strictly for ethical reasons, producers should label products which contain GMOs. Companies are the ones that have the problem [in enforcing Polish GM labelling law], not the Polish Trade Inspection Service'.

To overcome this information deficit, the NGO network, ANPED, The Northern Alliance for Sustainability, based in Amsterdam, has been working with member groups in Croatia, Bulgaria and Poland to undertake a 'mapping' of the national situation. Information about the level of commercialisation of GM crops, regulatory structures and so on, has helped identify the most urgent targets for campaigning. The findings have been published in reports, released in both English and the local language.

Elsewhere, the situation in Ukraine and Georgia, and in particular the activities of Monsanto, have been documented by Greenpeace. In Hungary and the Czech Republic, NGO campaigns provide a picture of the situation.

However, large parts of this region, including Russia, remain largely uncharted by NGOs, although campaigns are starting to emerge. And these are urgently needed. UNIDO's database of GMO releases in Russia reveals that AgrEvo's herbicide-tolerant sugar beet and Monsanto's Roundup Ready soybeans are already grown commercially.

EU ACCESSION COUNTRIES

Hungary has the strongest regulatory and civil oversight over GE activities, and also one of the longest-running NGO campaigns against genetic engineering in the region. A comprehensive law on genetically modified organisms (GMOs), complying with EU Directive 90/220 has been in place since 1999, with model participation provisions. The 17-member Genetech Committee that evaluates applications for releases of GMOs includes four representatives of environmental NGOs and two from consumer groups.

Information on field trials of GM sugar beet, corn and oilseed rape is available on

the web. The campaign's visibility was boosted when the NGO, ETK Nature Conservation Club, the main group in Hungary working on GE, invited Arpad Pusztai, the Hungarian scientist gagged in Britain for his criticisms of genetic engineering, to speak at public meetings in Budapest in April 1999.

In the Czech Republic, a law on GMOs was adopted only in May 2000, despite the fact that field trials have been going on for several years and GM food is on the market. However, due to intense lobbying by the pro-biotech group, Biotrin, which is funded in part by Monsanto and other TNCs, the new law is weak on public participation. It does not cover GM food and its labelling, despite the fact that testing of foods by the media and Greenpeace has revealed GM-contaminated foods on the market. A new law on GM labelling is to be introduced in summer 2000, but will not cover GM food additives.

'A recently introduced regulation requires approval and labelling of GM food, but it is not enforced and no labelled food can be found in Polish supermarkets.'

Poland was the first country in Eastern Europe where NGOs started campaigning on GMOs. In November 1996, the Polish group, Green Federation, working with international NGOs, released a report 'Playing God' to alert officials and the public to the releases of GMOs taking place in Poland and elsewhere in the region, in the complete absence of any legal framework. It revealed releases of GM carp in Poland, field trials of GM tobacco and alfalfa in Bulgaria, GM potatoes in Russia and of potatoes, tobacco, maize, oilseed rape and alfalfa in Hungary.

The Polish parliament finally passed a GMO regulation in late 1999 that introduced a permitting system for field trials. However, field trials with potatoes, corn and beet had already started in 1997 and some 10–20 trials with corn, potato and oilseed rape had taken place in 1998 – mainly by AgrEvo, Pioneer and Monsanto. Permits for field trials are approved by the same geneticists that are working on GM plants. According to a Ministry of Agriculture official: 'The scientists police each other'. In 1999, 10 permits were granted for oilseed rape, sugar beet, fodder beet, maize and potato, each of which can cover several sites.

A recently introduced regulation requires approval and labelling of GM food, but it is not enforced and no labelled food can be found in Polish supermarkets. Even Environment Ministry officials admit that the law is 'just a paper tiger', since there are no reference laboratories and no enforcement procedures.

MONSANTO'S GM POTATOES ON THE LOOSE IN UKRAINE

If the situation seems lawless in first-round Accession countries, elsewhere in the region, it really is the 'wild east' as far as the companies from the 'wild west' are concerned. The activities of Monsanto in Ukraine and Monsanto and Pioneer in Bulgaria provide a picture of the chaos that parts of this region suffer and that these companies exploit.

In 1997, Monsanto first imported GM *Bt* potatoes to Ukraine, allegedly for field trials. The seed potatoes came from Prince Edward Island in Canada. However, only in August 1998 was a government resolution introduced, in an attempt to legalise what had already been taking place for two years.

The field trials were the first steps towards commercialisation of the GM potato. The two years of 'trials' were used to multiply the initial stock of imported seed potatoes, after which Monsanto hoped they would gain approval of the *Bt* potatoes for human consumption and have them included on the National Seed List.

After two years of 'trials', the 1,300-ton harvest of GM seed potatoes was stored in refrigerated warehouses while Monsanto sought authorisation to commercialise the potato in Ukraine. In early 1999, Monsanto and Solanum PEI – an arms-length company of the provincial government of Prince Edward Island, which grows the potatoes for Monsanto – held a press conference at the Canadian Embassy in Kiev to announce their intention to establish seed production of the *Bt* potato in Ukraine. This event coincided with the visit to Ukraine of the Canadian Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, and was used to convince Ukrainian officials and journalists of the necessity to register the transgenic potatoes.

By this time, the Ukrainian media was picking up stories of the controversy surrounding GM crops and foods in countries like the UK. This probably influenced the decision of the minister of health who refused to certify the transgenic potatoes for human consumption. Without this approval, the Ministry of Agro-Industrial

Complex advised Monsanto to destroy the 1998 harvest of seed potatoes by industrial processing.

Monsanto, however, destroyed the 1,300 tons of potatoes by crushing and composting, since this avoided transport costs. But, this was no solution. Monsanto's *Bt* potato also contains a kanamycin antibiotic resistance gene as a marker, which through horizontal gene transfer, could confer antibiotic resistance to soil bacteria, and, potentially, on through the food chain.

The key foreign players in this story – Monsanto, Solanum PEI and the Canadian government – exploited the lack of biosafety rules in Ukraine. They failed to undertake an environmental impact assessment of introducing GM potatoes, even though this is required by Ukrainian law and in Canada and the US. They were helped in their efforts to introduce the GM potato by the citizens network agribusiness alliance (CNAA), whose members include Monsanto, Novartis and Pioneer Hi-Bred. CNAA has been helping the Ukrainian Ministry of Environment draft legislation on GMOs, since the absence of laws is regarded by its corporate members as a major barrier to getting GMOs in place. Since Ukraine has no liability regime, any negative impacts on biodiversity, human health or on the agricultural economy, will be borne by Ukrainian society, with no recourse to compensation.

BULGARIA: THE CORPORATE EUROPEAN PLAYGROUND FOR GM FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

In 1999, Bulgarian farmers harvested the first crop of GM herbicide-tolerant and pest-resistant maize. Most of this maize was probably used for animal feed and thus entered the human food chain. Farmers bought the maize seeds from local seed distributors, having seen them advertised in the catalogues and seed offers of the TNCs that produce them – Monsanto and Pioneer. In 1999, Monsanto's GM maize was allegedly grown on 12,000 hectares and in 2000, this increased to 20,000 hectares.

While this is the reality, officials from the Council for Safe Use of GM Higher Plants, giving permits for releases of GMOs, claim that these are just large-scale field trials. The Council was established on the basis of a 1996 regulation, which itself was based on a law from 1958 on Seeds and Seed Material. As in the USA – Bulgaria's mentor on biotech matters – parliament was bypassed. This Council meanwhile, is accountable to no one – not even the Government – and all its activities are considered an administrative secret, including the registers of GMO releases. Members of the Council include officials and scientists; the most prominent being Professor Atanassov, who is both executive secretary of the Council and director of the Institute of Genetic Engineering, which undertakes projects for Monsanto. The fox is guarding the hen house. 'Is there no conflict of interest? Is Prof. Atanassov serving the public interest of biosafety and public health, or is he serving Monsanto?' asks Dr. Dian Deyanov, from the Bulgarian environmental group EcoSouthWest.

This NGO, along with three other groups, recently filed papers challenging the legal status of the 1996 regulation and the Council. This followed the launch of a joint ANPED-EcoSouthWest report,

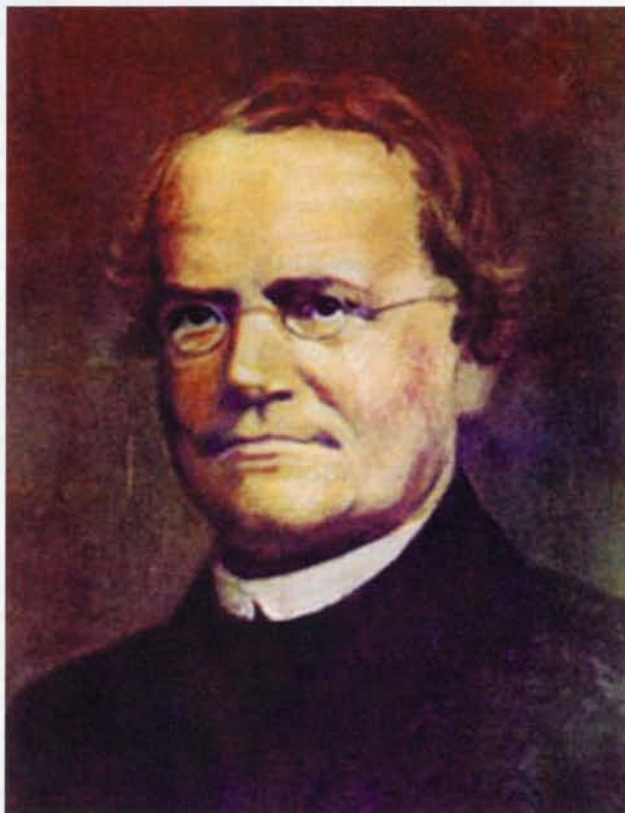
Bulgaria: The Corporate European Playground for Genetically Engineered Food and Agriculture, that finally prompted a public debate on this issue. The stranglehold of Monsanto on Bulgarian scientists and officials was clearly evident when they infiltrated the NGO press conference in Sofia, held to release the report in May 2000. In an attempt to discredit the report, Prof Atanassov brought with him to the press conference a farmer and a seed distributor from Sevlievo (300 km away) that NGOs had interviewed for the report, to refute their earlier statements.

In the long term, the commercialisation of GM crops could have severe impacts on biodiversity and human health. More immediately, the cultivation of GM maize in Bulgaria, the lack of segregation of GM maize from non-GM and thus traceability, threaten to destroy Bulgaria's export market for maize derivatives and fodder. Already, foreign food-processing companies and grain handlers in Bulgaria, such as the Belgian starch company Amylum and UK's Glencore, wanting to buy maize and maize derivatives for the EU market, are starting to request GM-free certificates of purity. These cannot be guaranteed.

CORPORATE GAMES OF RUSSIAN ROULETTE WITH EASTERN EUROPEAN AGRICULTURE

There is a serious threat that countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States are becoming a dumping ground for GE seeds and products, as EU farmers and consumers reject them.

In the short term, if this region chooses to go the route of GM agriculture, there is the increasingly real threat that it will close itself off from EU markets, as consumers there reject GM food. The lack of any regulations to ensure segregation and labelling of GE foods, plus the threat of genetic contamination



Mendel: grandfather of genetics.

will undermine consumer confidence in agricultural products from throughout the region. Even EU consumer suspicion of GM contamination of foods imported from CEE-NIS will be sufficient to destroy this market for the farmers there. This would have disastrous impacts on the economies of CEE countries and NIS and the farmers there, given their reliance on agriculture.

The only viable alternative for agriculture in this region and entry into the EU market is to move towards organic and other more sustainable farming methods. The millions of smallholdings in this region, particularly in Poland and Croatia, the reduced use of agro-chemicals during the last decade and the availability of traditional varieties of plants provide an excellent base on which to build organic farming. 'Instead of looking towards genetic engineering to "improve" crop varieties, we need to look at what our rich local biodiversity has to offer. Due to our being economically "underdeveloped", we still have the biodiversity on which organic agriculture relies,' explains Vladimir Lay, from the Croatian group, Green Action.

Iza Kruszewska is an environmental activist who has been working with NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe for ten years, tracking the transfer of hazardous technologies.

THE DENTIST'S TALE

FLUORIDE CAN KILL. PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE TRAGIC FABLE OF THE CHEMIST, THE WATER BOARD, THE DENTIST AND HIS LIFE. BY GEORGE GLASSER.

ONCE, THERE WAS a dentist. His name was Lester. For many years, like all the other dentists he knew, Lester believed that fluoride in the drinking water was good for everyone. Like all the other dentists, Lester had learnt in dental school that fluoride reduces tooth decay. And, like all the other dentists, Lester believed that fluoride was fluoride.

Then, one day, he met a chemist and began discussing drinking water fluoridation.

The chemist asked what kind of fluoride was being used to fluoridate the drinking water. Lester replied: 'We are simply adjusting the fluoride level in the water by adding one part per million of, well, just fluoride.'

'There is no such thing as "just fluoride",' said the chemist.

Lester scratched his head. 'But they told me that it was only fluoride they are adding to the water.'

The chemist laughed heartily. 'Fluorine is the most reactive, electronegative element and it's never found alone in nature,' he said. 'There are many kinds of fluorides: for instance, calcium fluoride is found naturally in water. Then there are other fluorides such as lead fluoride, aluminium fluoride, etc. If you add fluoride to the water it has to be a compound. You can't just add fluoride to the water, so which one is it?'

Lester felt silly. He didn't know.

The next day Lester went to the library to check the chemistry books and learnt that calcium fluoride is, indeed, found naturally in the water. He also discovered that calcium fluoride is almost insoluble and could not be easily absorbed by the body. And his friend the chemist was quite right - there were innumerable fluoride compounds.

Now intrigued, Lester looked up some scientific studies about water fluoridation. He read that in laboratory tests, workers use a very pure grade of sodium fluoride and purified water to do their research. He discovered that sodium fluoride is taken up by the body much more readily than calcium fluoride. His friend was right. The dentist wondered how anyone could say that calcium fluoride is the same as sodium fluoride.



The next day, Lester called his water department to ask if they were adding sodium fluoride or calcium fluoride to his drinking water. The WD manager said that they were adding a product called silicofluorides to the water. The WD manager said they bought a very low grade product because it would be too expensive to use a good grade and, anyway, the public health people would not pay for a good quality calcium fluoride, because, they said, fluoride is fluoride, no matter where it comes from. By now, Lester was completely bewildered.

'Where do you buy these silicofluorides from?' he asked. The WD manager said that the silicofluorides - known as hexafluorosilicic acid - are the toxic waste product from phosphate fertilizer pollution scrubbers. The dentist was aghast. 'You have to be crazy putting that stuff in the water!'

The water department manager agreed because, he said, the hexafluorosilicic acid also contains other toxic substances such as arsenic, beryllium, mercury, lead and many more. He said he didn't drink the city water because many of the contaminants in the fluoridation agent cause health problems. 'For instance,' he said, 'arsenic causes prostate, bladder, kidney, skin and lung cancers and there is no safe level for arsenic.'

Lester was appalled. He asked the manager why he did not stop fluoridating the water with this pollution scrubber liquor. 'And why would anyone add any amount of a known carcinogen to the water?'

Shrugging, the manager replied, 'I'm just doing my job. The public health people have their agenda, and I have a family to feed.'

After a sleepless night, Lester contemplated the fluoridation dilemma as he soaped himself in the shower. 'They say they are simply adjusting the level of natural fluoride in the water - which is calcium fluoride - but they are using a pure grade of sodium fluoride and very pure water for the rat experiments in the laboratory. But they are adding toxic pollution scrubber liquor to my drinking water!' It didn't make sense.

He called a man at the dental association and told him what he had learnt. The man said, coldly:

'If you value your licence to practise, don't ever mention this subject again!'

Lester was shocked.

He had worked hard and was very proud of his practice and his two classic cars. He couldn't bear to lose them. He thought about his wife and family and how they would miss their luxury home with its four bathrooms and a jacuzzi, the private schools and foreign vacations. After a while he made a decision. 'We won't drink the tap water. We'll buy bottled water.' But he was not a happy man as he walked into the reception room and greeted his first patient of the day.

Several months later he visited his friend the doctor for his annual check-up and was stunned to learn that he had prostate cancer. He recalled the words of the water department manager. 'Arsenic causes prostate cancer.'

Lester was shattered. He couldn't understand it. Yet there was a reason. Despite taking care to drink only bottled water, Lester didn't know that much more of the pollution-laced tap water is absorbed through the skin from bathing and washing clothes.

Poor Lester.

Although 64-91 per cent of exposure to water-borne contaminants is known to occur via dermal absorption, no studies have ever been done to determine the toxicity of pollution scrubber liquor - the fluoride used in water fluoridation schemes.

George Glasser is an investigative journalist who focuses on environmental issues.

DESERTED VICTIMS OF WAR

IN LIGHT OF A REPORT LISTING THE HORRORS OF THE GULF WAR, FELICITY ARBUTHNOT ASKS HOW LONG GULF WAR SYNDROME CAN BE IGNORED.

PROFESSOR MALCOLM HOOPER is emeritus professor of medicinal chemistry at the University of Sunderland, an eminent adviser who sits on the British Government's independent panel on Gulf War illnesses, and is chief scientific adviser to the Gulf Veterans' Association. With these credentials, his analysis of Gulf War syndrome, one would imagine, should make the Government sit up and take notice.

If, that is, it says what they want to hear. Yet Professor Hooper's new report – entitled 'The Most Toxic War in Modern Military History' – is a strong condemnation of the newly announced governmental investigation into the effects of the war on the many ill and dying veterans.

'There is no concern', he writes, 'with diagnosis or treatment of Gulf War veterans – the research (which is being undertaken on marmosets) will throw no light on Gulf War illness.' Results are not expected until 2003. Yet Gulf War veterans 'have died at the rate of one a week since the end of the Gulf War.' Recently a north of England coroner also stated that an average case of one veteran a week who committed suicide came before his court.

One sick Edinburgh-based Gulf veteran with 13 years' service with the 1st Battalion of the Royal Scots told *The Ecologist*: 'The unit is ravaged with Gulf War illnesses. An entire platoon (36 men) are unwell and four friends who worked from the same vehicle have cancer. My illness is almost as long as my service.' Veteran MP Tam Dalyell is pursuing the matter 'with particular vigour' with the British Government. He himself once served in the Royal Scots.

According to Hooper, there is a battery of potential causes of the syndrome. These

A NEW REPORT on the 1991 Gulf War suggests that the British Ministry of Defence Medical Assessment Programme is subject to 'crass ignorance, gross incompetence or calculated deception'.

include experimental vaccinations which breached established guidelines, exposure to a variety of toxins damaging to both man and the environment, depleted uranium, chemical warfare agents, biological warfare agents and extensive exposure to oil, smoke and chemicals from oil-well fires.



Studies by the MOD and US Department of Defence dismissing health detriments resulting from the fires are: 'bad science, flawed, and amount to a cover-up,' says Professor Hooper. Exposure to oil and smoke from the oil-well fires compounded health effects: 'providing a deadly brew of potent and damaging chemicals including carcinogens'.

The presence of depleted uranium (DU) in the bodies of Gulf veterans after nine

years: 'indicates a prolonged radiological exposure... the consequences of such cumulative radiotoxic dosage is probably considerable'.

Back in 1990, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority put together a report on the potential environmental impact of DU weapons. They were so concerned by the results that they sent a copy of their findings to the Government. They warned that, in their estimation, if 50 tonnes of residual DU dust remained 'in the region' there could be half a million extra cancers by the end of the century¹.

Estimates of residual dust now range from the Pentagon's 325 tonnes to other scientific bodies who put the figure as high as 900 tonnes.

The DU weapons used in the Gulf War included 120, 105, 30, 25 and 20mm rounds for use by tanks, aircraft, naval cannon and machine guns. The cruise missiles used to attack major sites in and around Baghdad and major cities carried DU as counterweight to stabilise flight – this would also burn on impact. An estimated 74 per cent of the larger DU weapons containing DU penetrators missed their targets: 'representing a considerable radiological and toxicological hazard to the local

environment. People and animals will be affected, as will the water supply. Children playing with these penetrators would be particularly vulnerable,' says Hooper².

'Casualties brought from the battlefield, particularly Iraqi wounded, would also bring DU dust in their clothing, raising the possibility of contamination of personnel in hospital units.' A notable pattern of Gulf War illness amongst veterans has been the high incidence of crippling and debilitat-

ing symptoms amongst medical personnel who were not in the war zone, but based in medical units in Saudia Arabia to where casualties were brought.

When I was visiting Basra General Hospital in February 1998, a doctor drew my attention to a farmer with a virulent form of bone cancer, which had spread, they said, with unprecedented speed. With no history of cancer in his family and previously the fittest of beings, they had tried to piece together a cause. During the Gulf War he had found numerous bodies of Iraqi soldiers and civilians and had made it his mission to collect them, load them into the back of his pick-up truck and take them to the authorities for identification and proper burial. Both his legs had been amputated in an effort to stop the spread, but his spine and the rest of his body had become infected. He died shortly afterwards.

'Everyone in or near the theatre of operations – military personnel, civilians, men, women, children and future generations yet unborn – are at risk, as is the whole environment,' says Malcolm Hooper.

The soaring cancers and chilling birth deformities in the Basra region of Iraq, which was in the eye of Operation Desert Storm, are well recorded. No one who has visited the area can escape the conclusion that something terrible has gone wrong since 1991. Dr Jenan Hussein at Basra Maternity and Paediatric Hospital has kept a photographic record of birth defects since late 1991: babies without eyes; babies full term but part-formed; internal organs grotesquely adhered to the stomach and back; foreshortened limbs – no limbs; no genitalia, no brain, no nose, no trachea... no head.

The US investigation into Gulf War sickness, also addressed, has come under fire from experts, with one Congressional report finding: '...efforts on Gulf war issues by the Department of Defense (DOD), Veterans' Administration (VA) Central Intelligence Agency and Food and Drug Administration to be irreparably flawed... efforts hobbled by institutional inertia that mistakes motion for progress... efforts plagued by arrogant incuriosity and a pervasive myopia that sees lack of evidence as proof. We find approaches to research, diagnosis and treatment unlikely to yield answers to veterans' "life or death" questions in the foreseeable or distant future.'³

A toxic onslaught of mind-bending dimensions on veterans, the people and environment of the region includes a range of insecticides including organophosphates,

associated with chronic neurological damage in farmers when used in sheep dip and organochlorines including lindane, 'a known nerve poison causing convulsions, kidney and liver damage' and damage to heart and lungs. 'These are now widely dispersed in the (Gulf) environment – organochlorines have a 50-year life and organophosphates are long-lived and resist washing – the persistence of chemical and biological agents is well known.' Further, says Professor Hooper: 'other agents used cause joint, muscle and nerve damage; the neurotoxicity of the compounds cannot be exaggerated.'

Wide contamination also resulted: 'from leaking containers and local supplies of insecticides buried because of their aggressive side effects'.

Further exposures were from Iraqi chemical weapons, despite: 'continuous denial by

'Babies born without eyes; internal organs adhered to the stomach and back; foreshortened limbs – no limbs; no genitalia, no brain, no nose, no trachea... no head.'

the Pentagon, DOD, VA and MOD' states Professor Hooper. This in spite of 'overwhelming evidence of chemical detections... each of nearly 14,000 alarms went off on average two to three times daily'. They were written off 'in a variety of explanations - one favoured by the MOD is that of a plane flying over the area with a leaking fuel tank!' Another, echoed last year in the Balkans, was that the alarms were inaccurate 'because they were made in Czechoslovakia'.

However, 'a US Marine Corps survey of 1,600 chemical defence specialists who served in the Gulf War, stated that 221 respondents (about 13 per cent) reported some contact with or detection of Iraqi chemical weapons during the ground war.' A Major Michael Johnson reported his unit detecting sulphur mustard in the soil in the Sabaniyah district, while a British soldier received chemical burns in Sabaniyah, Southern Iraq, of the kind used in Scud missiles. Exposures, says Professor Hooper, were from nerve agents, mustard gases/agents, lewisite – another WW1 blister agent with extensive chemical and biological properties – an organo-arsenical compound, and hydrogen cyanide,

phosgene and its derivatives. The nerve agents, combined with the OPs constitute a 'cholinergic triple whammy'. Interaction between the various compounds can increase the detrimental effects to the entire nervous system up to 100-fold.

'Chemical fallout appears to have come from three sources: aerial bombardment of Iraqi field munitions depots, production and storage sites; explosive demolition of munitions bunkers by ground forces, as in Khamisiyah; sporadic and unco-ordinated (Iraqi) use of chemical weapons such as in Scud and Frog missiles. Over 55 specific chemical weapons detections or exposure incidents and their locations were identified between 13 January and 26 March 1991... The Pentagon has now conceded that the Czech detections were valid and credible. Not so the MOD which still insists that there was no chemical exposure.' Scud missiles were explained away 'as sonic booms – but still the alarms went off.'

Intelligence reports had led coalition leaders to believe Iraq had biological weapons including anthrax, plague, botulinum toxin and tularaemia ('rabbit fever') – stockpiled by the USA between 1971–1973 – then sold to Iraq. All agents: 'have varying capacity to kill by damaging the major sites of the body', however: 'there were no detection devices available for rapid detection of biological weapons' it is thus 'impossible to know what exposures, if any, occurred... any exposure will take time to emerge'.

The 656 oil-well fires – 'of which 94 were detonated by coalition bombing' – exposed all in the region to a variety of toxins and carcinogens – a massive pall remained suspended over Kuwait for some two years. Deposits from the smoke were found in South America and the Himalayas. The fires presented: 'a major health risk'.

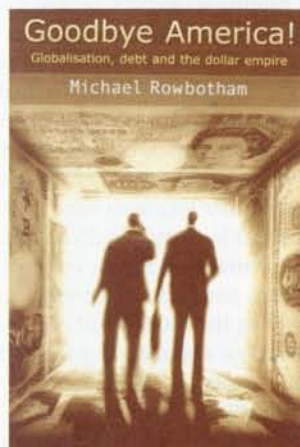
Professor Hooper is demanding a public inquiry and an end to the: 'bad science, spurious conclusions, tin ears, cold hearts, closed minds and the belittled, misunderstood and misrepresented' plight of Gulf War veterans by the authorities. Such an inquiry would also shed light on the epidemic of illnesses and deformities mirrored in the region since Operation Desert Storm.

Felicity Arbutnot is an Iraqi specialist, focusing on social and environmental issues. She provided the research for John Pilger's recent award-winning film 'Paying the price – killing the children of Iraq'.

References on page 66

GOODBYE AMERICA! GLOBALISATION, DEBT AND THE DOLLAR EMPIRE

By Michael Rowbotham
JON CARPENTER PUBLISHING 2000
£11.00



In *Goodbye America!* Michael Rowbotham argues that Third World debt is inherently unrepayable and lacking in economic and moral validity. The 'debtor' nations, he says, should be released from this unjust burden immediately.

Rowbotham traces the cause of the Third World's present debt crisis to the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference. The American delegation at Bretton Woods refused to accept the Keynesian mechanism designed to redress trade imbalances that would have supported the Third World in its efforts to escape from debt. The Conference gave rise to the two institutions that have steered Third World development over the past 50 years: the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Both institutions were given the task of promoting a free-trade ideology thereby leaving the balance of global trade to be regulated by free-market forces. This, Rowbotham argues, sealed the destiny of the US's dollar supremacy and Third World's unrepayable debt burden.

The book exposes the World Bank and IMF's allegiance to 'a collection of economic theories that are supposed to work and the massive documentary evidence that shows they do not'. The theoretical model accompanying borrowing from the IMF/World Bank reads accordingly: the developing nation borrows, invests (in agriculture or industry), exports (goods born from investment), repays (with surplus export revenues) the capital loan. In reality, however, achiev-

ing the required export revenues from wealthy nations is impossible, leading to the conclusion that the debt 'inherently lacks validity'. The aggressive trading of 'creditor' nations reflects their unwillingness to sustain trade deficits sufficient for the debts to be repaid. Moreover, the terms and conventions set up at Bretton Woods ensure that developing nations receive a pittance for their exports, further compounding the impossibility of repayment.

Rowbotham focuses on the policy of deregulated free trade, a core ideology of the IMF/World Bank since their inception. An idea which sounds fair and in theory is supposed to lead to the erosion of disparities between trading nations in practice leads to inequality and economic imbalance between developing and industrial nations. While opening up developing nations to foreign investment allows multinational corporations to purchase – at rock bottom prices – the most valuable natural assets of Third World nations, or use them as simply cheap manufacturing outposts.

The obligation to repay debts gives rise to an export-led growth in 'debtor' nations that expands at the expense of the development of agricultural and industrial infrastructure for domestic consumption. So while the 'creditor' nations benefit from cheap imports, the people of the 'debtor' nations experience no corresponding improvement in their standard of living.

The 'debtor' nations of the Third World have transferred vast quantities of material wealth to industrialised nations in the form of undervalued commodities, minerals and raw materials. Such 'debtor' nations therefore, 'owe nothing in material terms to any nation or institution beyond their borders,' argues Rowbotham. Lifting the debt burden is urgently needed if developing nations are to regain control of their economic policy and concentrate on domestic needs. Rowbotham examines two ways in which this could be done. The debt bonds could simply be cancelled 'with little or no cost to anyone' with a creative accountancy. Alternatively, the international debts of Third World nations could be converted into national debts that would remove the export imperative without breaching the contractual obligation of debt and interest repayment.

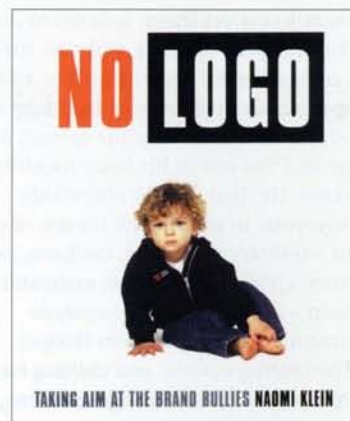
Rowbotham further explores the drive behind globalisation, the spurious and condescending arguments that have blamed the Third World for the debt crisis as well as its legal and moral status. He writes with a conventional but extremely clear academic style

with excellent use of sub-headings and detailed footnotes. All students of economics who are seeking an original and alternative explanation of the world's financial ills should read this book.

Ed Metcalfe

NO LOGO TAKING AIM AT THE BRAND BULLIES

By Naomi Klein
ST MARTIN'S PRESS 1999/US\$28



Slavery isn't dead – it just went underground! Some 15 years ago, the American William Kowinski had a book published with the clever title *The Malling of America*. As the title of the book implies, it described how the big chain stores, clustered in giant suburban shopping malls, were elbowing out the main street retail shops and sucking the life blood out of downtown, USA. Now a young Canadian journalist, Naomi Klein, has written a 250-page sequel to the demise of the ma and pa emporium. Her witty and well-written book, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, gives a detailed and scary account of the smothering conformity enveloping the Earth in the age of globalisation.

Reminiscent of recent headlines about The Battle in Seattle, Klein's book is a scathing indictment of corporate global branding, and a vivid account of the mounting worldwide backlash against it. She describes a promising movement among today's youths: the growing rebellion against the marketing of universal brand names in lieu of locally manufactured products. Armed with a strong thesis and a light literary style, she shows how corporations like Nike, Reebok, Microsoft, Disney, McDonald's, Starbucks, Shell and the Virgin

Group have abandoned traditional product advertising and instead poured billions into brand imaging. Convinced that 'image is everything', they have relinquished manufacturing to become bargain hunters in search of the best deal in the global mall.

Thus Richard Branson derisively refers to 'the stilted Anglo-Saxon view' which holds that a name should be associated with a specific product. Such menial tasks can be delegated to subcontractors, whose only job it is 'to fill the order on time and under budget'. This leaves HQ free for the really important job: to infuse meaning into the raw objects cranked out by slave labour, by affixing its corporate brand name. Eureka! In this age of

enlightenment, slaves are no longer branded – only the fruits of their labour.

According to Klein's carefully researched book, some 27 million workers in more than 70 Third World countries are now turning out the bulk of the brand-name merchandise on display in the malls and megastores of the West. Many of these workers are employed in Export Production Zones (EPZs) outside the jurisdiction of the host nation, and are not protected by any laws mandating minimum pay, maximum hours, safety regulations or health benefits. In essence, they are nothing more than modern-day slaves, hidden from importunate scrutiny and out of sight and mind of the brand-blinkered consumer.

Since the mid-80s, when India offered a five-year tax break to companies manufacturing in its low-wage zones, the EPZ industry has really taken off. In the Philippines alone, there are now 52 EPZs employing close to half a million workers – up from 23,000 in 1986. But the largest zone economy is China, where by conservative estimates there are 18 million people working for slave wages in 124 EPZs. No doubt it was this access to cheap labour which recently prompted the US Congress to put the greed of the transnationals before the need of the Chinese workers by granting their country full and unconditional membership in the WTO. Since no such cheap labour pool is available in Cuba, ✎

CANCER: WHY WE'RE STILL DYING TO KNOW THE TRUTH

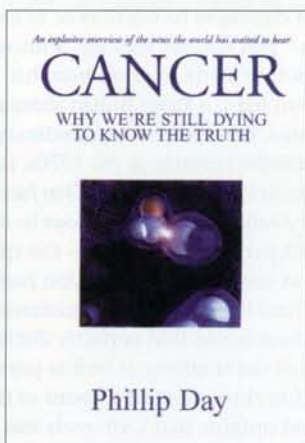
By Phillip Day

CREDENCE PUBLICATIONS 1999/£12.95

Phillip Day has a speciality: he uncovers suppressed stories. And as far as he is concerned, the truth about cancer, its cure and prevention, is 'quite simply the greatest medical story of the 20th century'.

Over the last 40 years, the medical establishment has had us hoodwinked, he says. And the cancer industry in particular has fattened itself on our ignorance. Chemotherapy, for example, is a multi-billion-dollar business. Every year, new chemical agents are introduced into oncology centres. Yet, despite the claims of the establishment, these so-called cures aren't doing any good. Alan C Nixon, PhD, erstwhile president of the American Chemical Society, lays it all out: 'As a chemist trained to interpret data, it is incomprehensible to me that physicians can ignore the clear evidence that chemotherapy does much more harm than good'. Many doctors know this. Though they may treat their patients with chemotherapy and radiation therapy, they wouldn't touch the stuff themselves. In a survey of 79 oncologists from McGill Cancer Center in which the doctors were asked to imagine they had cancer, 64 said they would not consent to treatment with cisplatin, a common chemotherapy drug, whilst 58 said they would reject all the current trials being carried out by their establishment. The reason? 'The ineffectiveness of chemotherapy and its unacceptable degree of toxicity.'

But if chemotherapy doesn't work, then what's the answer? According to Day, it's apricots. At the heart of the fleshy fruit, snug within its stony kernel, lies a bitter seed that is purported to hold miraculous anti-tumour properties. Apricot seeds are a strange molecular combination; part glucose and part the deadly poisons cyanide and benzaldehyde. But the seeds' toxicity is only 'unlocked' by another compound: beta-glucosidase, which is found in large quantities within, you guessed it, tumours. When beta-glucosidase 'unlocks' the seeds' poisons at the cancer site they combine to make a super-poison many times more deadly than either substance alone. So, effectively, apricot seeds are



potent tumour busters. And Day isn't the first to say so. One of Memorial Sloan Kettering's most respected scientists, Dr Kanematsu Sugiura, was commissioned to research the anti-cancer properties of apricot seeds. He was amazed by the results. After five years of experimentation he concluded that apricot seeds were the most effective anti-cancer agent he had ever tested. In his official report he showed that the seeds, or amygdalin B17, inhibit cancer growth, stop cancer spreading, relieve pain and act as a cancer preventative. However, his colleagues, alarmed that a cheap, unpatentable product was threatening the whole chemotherapy industry, panned his research. After sending in researchers to work alongside Sugiura in repeat trials, they held a

press conference discrediting his work. 'Through exhaustive testing, Laetrile was found to possess neither preventative, nor tumour-regressant, nor anti-metastatic, nor curative anti-cancer activity', said Dr Robert Good, president of the centre. A journalist rounded on Sugiura, asking: 'Do you stick by your belief that amygdalin stops the spread of cancer?' 'I stick', he replied firmly.

But are apricot seeds the whole story? Day thinks cancer is a metabolic disease. Like scurvy or pernicious anaemia, he puts it down to nutritional deficiencies in the modern diet: the lack of the essential vitamin B17. But how does this explain the four-year-olds with brain tumours? Many scientists think such cases can be blamed on genetics. Certainly the researchers who have been scrabbling to unravel the human genome are hoping their work will help unveil the genetic switches with which we could turn off hereditary cancers. Other cancer specialists think the key to cancer cure lies in the mind-body link; where emotional traumas are said to lie dormant within our 'cellular memory', eventually festering into physical form as tumours.

So I'm not sure Day's got the cancer story cracked quite yet. But his infectious enthusiasm, sense of humour and engaging indignation make this a spell-binding and informative read.

Lucinda Labes

there is no incentive to grant that former Soviet dependency the same privilege as Communist China. Besides, the virulently anti-Castro Cuban expatriates in the USA carry a lot of political clout. Unlike Chinese dissidents, they get to vote in US elections.

Abandoning the democratic principles which it is supposed to uphold, the Clinton administration had earlier capitulated to the interests of the multinationals, who already had the Republican majority in Congress securely tucked away in their well-lined pockets. Thus, after the enactment of NAFTA, the number of Mexican factories jumped from a few dozen to several thousand in just a few years. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of American textile and assembly-line workers have literally seen their jobs 'go South'.

In a chapter somewhat ironically titled 'The Branding of Learning' the author quotes the CEO of ZapMe! Computer systems, Frank Vigil. Defending the pervasive intrusion of brand names into the classrooms of America, he said that 'America's youth is exposed to advertising in many aspects of their lives... [but] we believe students are savvy enough to discern between editorial content and marketing materials'. If only Frank had been more vigilant and savvy in his choice of words, substituted 'facets' for aspects and 'distinguish' for discern, his faith in the US educational system and the incorruptibility of American youth might have been more credible. But this is the kind of imprecise language one can expect from a computer geek accustomed to spouting gibberish unintelligible to the digitally uninitiated. As some wit put it: 'Muddled speech is the product of a befuddled brain'.

No Logo reveals a betrayal of the promise of choice and increased personal freedom that was supposed to be the hallmark of the information age. The global village turns out to be just a Potemkin mirage – the mirror opposite of its proclaimed image: instead of greater diversity, we are left with a homo-genised culture, where ever fewer 'brand leaders' direct ever widening spheres of our existence.

But, as depressing as it is to read Naomi Klein's perceptive analysis of the forces fuelling the global economy and forcing untold millions into virtual servitude, it is encouraging to learn that there is a groundswell of opposition among young people all over the world against the abuses of the marketplace. It is on them that she pins her hopes for a better and more equitable world. For it is they who must decide 'the labour, human rights, and environmental agenda of a new global economy'.

Gard Binney

THE WHEEL OF TIME

By Carlos Castaneda
PENGUIN BOOKS 2000/£7.99



'We either choose to be warriors or to be ordinary men.' This was the message anthropologist Carlos Castaneda received from his teacher Don Juan, a Yaqui Indian shaman from Mexico. In a series of extraordinary books, published mostly in the 1970s, including the classics *The Teachings of Don Juan* and *A Separate Reality*, Castaneda set out to explain the ancient path of the shaman – the spiritual warrior – as revealed to him by Don Juan. *The Wheel of Time* is a collection of quotations from all those books that perfectly distils the teachings of the shamans as well as providing a fascinating chronological account of the rigours and insights that Castaneda was exposed to as a pupil of Don Juan.

As with the Hindu yogi or Buddhist meditator, the shaman's path is the path of self-perfection. The human spirit becomes bent and contorted by a lifetime of habits and misuse. 'If the spirit is distorted the warrior should simply fix it – purge it, make it perfect – because there is no task in our entire lives which is more worthwhile... than seeking perfection,' says Don Juan. In a clue as to the nature of shamanic enlightenment Don Juan promises that after years of impeccable conduct and shamanic practice, 'a moment will come when the energy fields contorted by a lifetime of habit are straightened out'. The event is so powerful that if the warrior's conduct has not been entirely impeccable he could die as a result of the straightening out process.

Central to the practice of the shaman is the dropping of his personal history. Castaneda recounts that Don Juan instructed him to 'endeavour to erase my personal history by any means conceivable'. Dropping one's per-

sonal history means setting the axe against the root of the ego. Personal history is constantly renewed by telling parents, relatives and friends everything one has done, thus determining what is expected in the future. Not so the warrior; he drops the baggage of the past, he 'has no family, no name, no country', the expectations of others do not pin him down, 'he has only life to be lived'.

The warrior treads lightly, he touches the world sparingly, above all, 'he deliberately avoids exhausting himself and others'. There is nothing more exhausting than 'dwelling upon the self', which produces 'a terrible fatigue'. The shaman thus roots out self-obsession and dethrones self-importance.

The shamanic warrior is always aware of death and the impermanence of life: 'he knows death is stalking him'. Whenever he feels that everything is going wrong and he is about to be annihilated, 'he can turn to death and ask if that is so... his death will tell him that he is wrong, that nothing really matters outside his touch... death will tell him, "I haven't touched you yet."'

As with eastern meditational paths the shaman is concerned with quieting the mind. 'We talk to ourselves incessantly,' Don Juan tells Castaneda. This internal talk is what maintains our world. 'The passageway into the world of shamans opens up after the warrior has learned to shut off his internal dialogue.' When the internal dialogue stops our illusory world collapses and 'extraordinary facets of ourselves surface'. Don Juan's admonitions are in keeping with the teachings of Krishna and Buddha. Unlike the latter, however, Castaneda does not give us techniques with which to subdue a chattering mind.

The insights that Castaneda gained – through Don Juan – into the nature of reality again draws parallels with eastern mystical paths. Human beings, Don Juan tells us, 'have no solidity', they are literally 'boundless'. When the shaman's perception is cleansed he is able to see energy as it flows in the universe. In this heightened perception human beings appear as 'fibres of light' that assume the form of 'luminous eggs'.

Amongst the deluge of magical-new-age literature that is currently filling bookshops Castaneda's work stands out as a genuine encounter between enlightened master and pupil. Those of us who have read his books share a kind of frustration at the slowness with which Castaneda learnt from Don Juan. *The Wheel of Time* is an opportunity to access Don Juan's teachings directly, without the interruptions of Castaneda's doubt and academic conceptualising. A must for all seekers.

Ed Metcalfe

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PEOPLE, PEOPLE EVERYWHERE!

THE CROW examines Malthus' population predictions, and draws some controversial conclusions.

The year 1998 marked the bicentenary of the publication of the famous *Essay on the Principle of Population* by Thomas Malthus, in which he argued that the population of a region would always grow until checked by famine, pestilence or war. Even if agricultural production were improved, the only result would be an increase in population, and people would be no better off. The Malthusian principle can be summed up in two short sentences: Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical rate; subsistence only increases in an arithmetical ratio.

According to Malthus' calculations, the unchecked world population would tend to double every 50 years. Estimating that it was about 500 million at the time he wrote his essay in 1798, he arrived at a figure of 8 billion (equal to four doublings) at the beginning of the third millennium. Written at the dawn of the industrial revolution, the First Essay — as it has come to be known — has proved itself to be remarkably prophetic. Now that an exploding world population, currently growing at the rate of 90 million a year, is incurring irreversible damage to our biosphere, the premise of Malthus' principle — geometrical multiplication — is more relevant than ever before in the history of the human race.

After increasing by a scant 1 million a year during the first nineteen centuries AD, reaching 2 billion in 1925, world population has more than tripled since then and now exceeds 6 billion. Put another way, about three times as many people have been born in the 20th century as during the entire previous history of mankind. The UN predicts that it could double again in the next half century — an unlikely scenario, as we are already stretching our planet's resources to their limit. The problem is, says Charles Westoff, professor of demography at Princeton University, that 'population growth is never an immediate problem; since politicians gain little by identifying with the long term, the pressure is to act on short-term interests'.

Of course, it is not just the sheer number of humans that impacts our biosphere: above all, it is the way we manage, or mismanage, the natural resources — the land and the forests, the ocean and its reefs, the potable water and the very air we

breathe — that determines what is a sustainable population. But it doesn't take an Einstein to realise that six billion people — given a certain standard of living — will use up twice as many non-renewable resources and wreak twice as much havoc on the environment as half that number.

According to the World Health Organisation, some 60 million 'unplanned' babies are born each year, of which about 12 million are doomed to die prematurely. This is one reason why such authorities on population policy as Professor Virginia Abernathy of Vanderbilt University warn against 'inappropriate aid [which] actively harms intended beneficiaries, because it neutralises environmental signs that would otherwise alert individuals to the need to limit child bearing. The proper scope of assistance is narrow: facilitating access to modern contraception'.

A case in point is the nation of Bangladesh, which in its 50-year existence has lost some 600,000 people to typhoons and other natural disasters, because a rapid population expansion (from fewer than 50 million to more than 120 million) has forced people to settle on flood-prone or otherwise marginal lands. This prompted the government of Bangladesh to put in place an aggressive family planning programme, so far credit-

'The UN predicts that population could double in the next 50 years.'

ed with preventing another 20 million unwanted births. That point of view is a radical departure from the official US aid policy, which, under pressure from the Catholic Church and various 'pro-life' groups, withholds contributions to any relief organisation advocating birth control.

One could have hoped that other 'developing' countries, which have seen their populations double or triple in the past half century, would have had the foresight to institute similar policies. A prime example is Ethiopia, where millions of people are now threatened with starvation — just 16 years after another devastating famine laid waste that country and its neighbours on the Horn of Africa. Instead of learning from past experiences, the government of Ethiopia has chastised Western nations for not responding fast enough to its pleas for international aid. But sadly, many people in the West suffer from what might be termed 'image fatigue' — you can only cry wolf or show pictures of starving children so many times before the public becomes inured to your pleas.

As the Nobel Laureate Dr Albert Schweitzer put it: 'Man has lost his capacity to foresee and forestall. He will end by destroying the Earth.'

The Crow is a mouthpiece for thinkers with individual and strong views. This month, the role of The Crow was taken by Gard Binney.

Page 24 *Suckers*

- 1 Institute of Grocery Distribution, *Grocery Retailing 2000*, 2000, p 78
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