

THE Ecologist

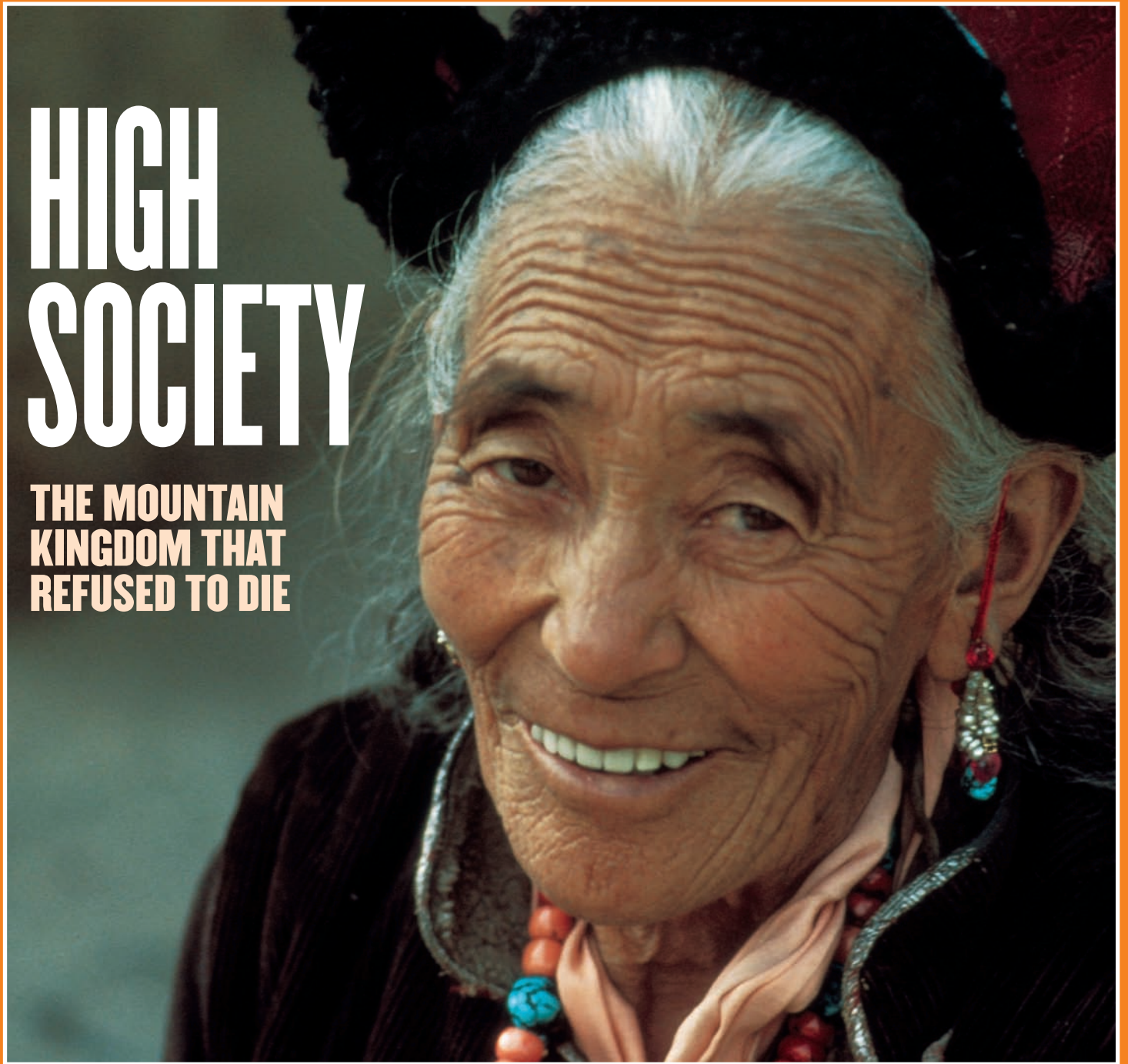
VOLUME 30 NO 8 £3.50

RETHINKING BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

NOVEMBER 2000

HIGH SOCIETY

THE MOUNTAIN
KINGDOM THAT
REFUSED TO DIE



BRAVE NEW WORLD?
Orwell and Huxley –
which one was right?

BUYING UP BRITAIN
How the supermarkets
took us all over

OUT OF AFRICA
Time for the West
to pack its bags



SATISH KUMAR vs JAKE BOWERS · GEORGE MONBIOT · KIRKPATRICK SALE

Lannan Prize for Cultural Freedom

2000



photo by Claudia Andujar

Claudia Andujar

ARTIST, HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATE, WITNESS

Claudia Andujar is a photographer and founding member of the CCPY, *Comissão Pró-Yanomami* in Brazil. She has dedicated her life to protecting the freedom, culture, and land rights of the Yanomami people.

Lannan Foundation's *Prize for Cultural Freedom* was established in 1999 to recognize people whose extraordinary and courageous work celebrates the human right to freedom of imagination, inquiry, and expression. Cultural freedom is the right of individuals and communities to define and protect valued and diverse ways of life currently threatened by globalization.



Claudia Andujar

The ancestral wisdom of the Yanomami people concerns everyone interested in preserving the well-being and balance of the Amazon's ecosystem and therefore the whole planet.

Founder Edward Goldsmith
Editor Zac Goldsmith
Deputy Editor Paul Kingsnorth
Managing Editor Malcolm Tait
News & Campaigns Stephanie Roth
Science Editor Peter Bunyard
Distribution Manager Sally Snow
Marketing Manager Kate de Bass
Art Director Chris Gregory
Designer Lou Tait
Advertising Manager Chris Massey
Publisher Ian McAuliffe

Editorial Office

Unit 18, Chelsea Wharf, 15 Lots Road,
 London SW10 0QJ, UK.
 Tel: +44 (0)20 7351 3578
 Fax: +44 (0)20 7351 3617
 Email: sally@theecologist.org
 Website: www.theecologist.org

Associates

Agnes Bertrand, Institute for the
 Relocalisation of the Economy, France
Marcus Colchester, World Rainforest
 Movement, UK
Samuel Epstein, University of Illinois, US
Sally Fallon, The Weston A Price
 Foundation, US
Ross Hume Hall, McMaster University, US
Mae-Wan Ho, Open University, UK
Mohammed Idris, Consumers'
 Association of Penang, Malaysia
Martin Khor Kok Peng, Third World
 Network, Malaysia
Sigmund Kvaloy, Ecopolitical Ring of
 Cooperation, Norway
Kalle Lasn, Adbusters Media
 Foundation, Canada
José Lutzenberger, Former Minister
 for the Environment, Brazil
Jerry Mander, International Forum on
 Globalization, US
Patrick McCully, International Rivers
 Network, US
Robin Page, Countryside Restoration
 Trust, UK
John Papworth, Fourth World Review, UK
Jakub Patocka, Literarni Noviny,
 Czech Republic
Jeremy Rifkin, Foundation on Economic
 Trends, US
Charles Secrett, Friends of the Earth, UK
Vandana Shiva, Research Foundation for
 Science, Technology and Ecology, India
David Suzuki, David Suzuki
 Foundation, Canada
Richard Willson, The Times, UK
Tracy Worcester, ISEC, UK

Advertising and publishing handled on
 behalf of Ecosystems by Think Publishing
 Ltd, Vigilant House, 120 Wilton Road,
 London SW1V 1JZ.
 Tel: +44 (0)20 7808 7535
 Fax: +44 (0)20 7808 7536
 Email: watchdog@thinkpublishing.co.uk

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU'RE FUELLING?

Last month, the notorious Reggie Kray died, and newspapers went wild with excitement. Story after story detailed the methods with which the Krays came to dominate east London – demonstrating their dangerousness to owners of pubs, clubs and restaurants, then offering their services as ‘protectors’.

In all such myths hides a lesson – and the manner in which the recent fuel crisis was handled demonstrates it well.

With world oil prices rising sharply for six months, coupled with substantial taxes on fuel, those whose livelihoods depended on it – particularly truckers and farmers – finally cracked. Following the French example, Britain's oil distribution points were targeted by protesters, triggering, with a little help from the media, panic buying of petrol. The effect was that a small handful of angry men almost brought down the entire country.

The established ‘green’ voice came down on the side of the government. Of course, they cried, we need high fuel taxes. How else can we deal with the looming threat of climate change and gridlock on the roads?

But has fuel tax really been used to achieve environmental ends? The answer can only be ‘yes’ if two conditions have been met. Firstly, the government would have needed to commit the fruits of such a tax to ecological causes, and secondly, it would need to be shown that higher prices for petrol have actually reduced its use. The government has failed to do either. Worse, with astounding hypocrisy, it has done everything possible to make society unnaturally dependent on the stuff. This is no accident.

Our current government, and all of its predecessors, have between them engineered a fundamental reorientation of society over several decades towards absolute dependence on fossil fuels. In the US, for instance, the average citizen is estimated to use 40 road tankers of fuel in a lifetime – largely through the consumption of food that has been transported thousands of miles. Every one of our leaders is devoted to the notion that the success of a country can only be judged by the yardstick of international competitiveness. In other words, nations must seek to attract as much foreign direct investment (FDI) as possible. As the number of foreign direct investors is shrinking by the week (more than 30 per cent of FDI is controlled by just 100 corporations), this means we are competing for the affections of a very small number of bodies. As a result, our policy-makers tend to ‘listen’ to those bodies. This all manifests very neatly in transport policy – particularly at the EU level where following colossal pressure from the

European Round Table of Industrialists, our representatives agreed to lavish more than 400 billion Euros on the world's biggest ever road building scheme, the purpose of which is to facilitate the movement of their goods.

We might well ask why a government apparently committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions is so supportive of vast road schemes. The truth is that our policymakers continue to aggressively support policies that will increase dramatically our dependence on fuels. Next to these priorities, any ‘green’ fuel tax is little more than a figleaf.

But it was not the government, motorists or oil companies that lost out over the crisis. It was the environment. For as climatic instability looms, our dependence on fossil fuels grows. Responsible governments need to implement policy that will reverse these trends – and fast. But because of the fuel crisis, it may be that future governments will forever associate genuine ecological policies with mass unpopularity.

Meanwhile, the massively under-taxed oil companies, whose current financial year has been, according to UBS Warburg, ‘as good as it gets’, gained most from the actions – not least because they were able to demonstrate their tremendous political and economic might just weeks before meetings in The Hague to formalise action on global warming. Their tolerant behaviour during the protest was suspiciously uncharacteristic, to say the least. But tactical mistakes have also been made by environmental groups, who rushed to the government's rescue, and, simply through association, gave legitimacy to bogus government claims about ‘ecological’ taxation.

In truth, we are paying far too little for our fuel. When externalities (climate change damage, air pollution, asthma, road building costs etc) are internalised, the price of fuel is heavily subsidised. But taxing individual users without providing genuine alternatives is like breaking a man's legs and taxing him for the use of his crutches.

Like that of the Krays, it is a policy that creates dependence and then charges for it. Many people cannot choose not to drive to work; there is no alternative. They cannot choose to shop locally when supermarkets (supported by government and subsidised by taxpayers) have out-competed local shops. Never before has it been so clear just how hooked we are on this vulnerable import. How long, in current conditions, would we survive without petrol? It is now up to our policy-makers to begin the process of re-shaping society so that sustainable lives can be led. Making life harder for the dependants is not the answer. Investing in alternatives and re-localising economic activity very clearly is. Then, it will be fairer to expect individual motorists to start taking real responsibility for their actions.

ZAC GOLDSMITH



RICHARD WILLSON

THE Ecologist *contents*

VOLUME 30 NO 8, NOVEMBER 2000



COVER STORY

Nestling on the edge of the Tibetan border, high in the Indian Himalayas, the tiny, ancient kingdom of Ladakh has fended for itself for hundreds of years, carving its own, uniquely sustainable agricultural economy out of the hostile landscape. But over the last few decades, tourism, modern development and globalisation have threatened to destroy it for ever. Yet Ladakh is also home to a remarkable network of organisations and individuals who are slowly succeeding in fighting off the worst excesses of the global economy and developing their own future, based on the best of their traditions. The story of this fightback is one from which the rest of the world can learn – if it will only listen.

Page 34.

Cover photograph: John Page

FEATURES

25 Get out of Africa

While the West sheds crocodile tears over the plight of modern-day Africa, it continues to exploit the continent's problems and political disunity, says Malcolm Tait. It's time to let Africa decide its own future.

30 Buying up Britain

Big supermarket chains claim that their dominance is achieved by giving consumers what they want. In fact, reveals George Monbiot, their success is down to political influence, money and the cravenness of our elected officials.

34 Shadows in the Kingdom of Light

Paul Kingsnorth reports on how the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Ladakh is fighting back against the global economy.

40 The future brought to book

George Orwell's *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* are the two most famous dystopia novels of the 20th century. But which one of them, asks Kirkpatrick Sale, produced the most accurate vision of how the future actually turned out? And are we already living that future today?



COMMENT

44 Paul Kingsnorth

The recent Prague protests, believes *The Ecologist's* deputy editor, were the birth-pangs of a genuinely new political movement.

46 Peter Bunyard

Fear of an asteroid strike makes a great story, but is a distraction from the real dangers we face closer to home.

47 David Boyle

If local trade and the grassroots economy is to survive in the UK's capital, it is time London got its own currency.



Editorial Board: *Helena Norberg-Hodge, John Page, Steven Gorelick*, all of the International Society for Ecology and Culture. Tel: +44 (0) 1803 868 650 (UK) Tel: +1 510 548 4915 (US)

The Ecologist special issues

Editor Edward Goldsmith

Editor's PA Rita Kassai

Managing Editor Simon Retallack

Research Stephanie Roth

46 The Vineyard, Richmond, Surrey TW10 6AN.

Tel: +44 (0)20 8332 0295 • Fax: +44 (0)20 8948 6787

Subscription rates (10 issues per year):

UK and US: Individuals and schools	£28 (\$45)
Institutions and companies	£54 (\$86)
Concessionary rate	£22 (\$35)
Europe: Individuals and schools	£33 (\$53)
Institutions and companies	£59 (\$95)
Concessionary rate	£27 (\$43)
Rest of world: Individuals and schools	£40 (\$64)
Institutions and companies	£66 (\$105)
Concessionary rate	£34 (\$54)

Concessionary rates: Unwaged, Students, Retired.

Subscriptions and back issues (non US):

PO Box 326, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 8FA, UK. Tel: +44 (0) 1795 414963.

Subscriptions (US): *The Ecologist* US, 1920 Martin Luther King Jr Way, Berkeley, CA 94704 US. Tel: +1 510 548 2032.

Subscriptions payable to *The Ecologist*. Payment by UK cheque drawn on UK bank, US\$ cheque drawn on US bank, eurocheque written in UKE, banker's draft payable through a British bank, postal order, Access, Visa or MasterCard.

PROFILE

48 **The Good, the Bad and the Ugly**

The first of a new series in which *The Ecologist* takes a questioning look at the heroes and villains of our time. This month: US presidential candidates Ralph Nader and George W Bush.



REGULARS

6 **Letters**

Your chance to air your views.

8 **News**

The latest events and stories from around the world.

14 **Campaigns**

Find out what's going on, where, when, and how to get involved. Plus, bone up on the latest, and best, Internet-based campaigns.

20 **Debate**

Can the use of violence be justified as we campaign for a better world? *Resurgence* editor Satish Kumar and Earth First! co-founder Jake Bowers take up their metaphorical cudgels.



51 **Doctor's handwriting**

Lynne McTaggart wonders why no-one is talking about the 'alternative' cancer cures that really work.

60 **Reviews**

A roundup of some of the best environmental reading around.

65 **References**

Further reading and resources.



66 **The Crow**

The Crow observes that meddling with nature can only have one result – and it's expensive.

REPORTS



52 **Bags of rubbish**

Plastic bags, says Robert Edwards, are choking the life out of India. And that's just how the plastics industry likes it.

54 **Too hot for Heidi**

The alps are melting, and the finger points at climate change. As Mark Lynas reports, there's much more at stake than just pretty landscapes.

57 **Stop your wine-ing**

The increasing popularity of plastic wine-bottle stoppers is threatening the unique cork forests of Portugal, as Tom Bruce-Gardyne reports.

58 **Sinking Kyoto**

The Clinton-Gore administration is doing its best to torpedo global efforts at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Simon Retallack reports.

NEXT MONTH

Should we abolish the WTO, or can it be made to work for all? Philippe Legrain of the WTO and Philippines-based economist Walden Bello go head to head in The Debate.

Despite growing evidence that xenotransplantation could be extremely dangerous, the transfer of organs across species looks set to go ahead. We explore the facts.

What is it like to interview a senior politician and realise they're not up to the job? Simon Retallack spills the beans on Blair's rottweiler Clare Short.

Agents: Subscriptions are accepted on behalf of *The Ecologist* by the following agents (concessionary rates and trial offers are not available through these agents):

India: Allied Publishers Subscriptions Agency, 750 Mount Road, Madras 600 002.

Japan: Kinokuniya, PO Box 55, Chitose, Tokyo 156.

New Zealand: John Hogan, Three Streams, RD3, Albany, Auckland, Tel/Fax: +64 (0) 9415 9336.

The *Ecologist's* International Serial Number is ISSN 0261-3131. The *Ecologist* is a member of the Independent News Collective (INK). Periodicals Postage Paid at Rahway, NJ. Postmaster: Send address corrections to: The *Ecologist*, c/o Mercury Airfreight International Ltd, 365 Blair Road, Avenel NJ 07001.

Retail Distribution: Central Books, Tel: (0)20 8986 4854 Fax: (0)20 8533 5821. Lakeside Publishing Services Ltd, Tel: (0)20 7720 6680 Fax: (0)20 7498 9616 Email: lakepubser@aol.com

Send contributions and proposals to the editorial office. We cannot guarantee to return submissions.

All information correct at time of going to press. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited without prior written permission of the copyright owner. No responsibility will be accepted for any errors or omissions, or comments made by writers or interviewees. Views expressed and goods advertised are not necessarily the views of, or are endorsed by, Ecosystems Ltd or Think Publishing. Printed by The Friary Press. © The *Ecologist* 2000.



LETTERS

The Ecologist welcomes correspondence on any subject. Contact us at:

The Ecologist, Unit 18 Chelsea Wharf, 15 Lots Road, London SW10 0QJ. Fax: (0)20 7351 3617. Email: letters@theecologist.org

Please attach your name and postal address, even when sending by email. The editor reserves the right to shorten or edit correspondence where necessary.

RE: CYCLING

Jim McGurn's plea on behalf of cyclists (*Two wheels good, four wheels bad*, Vol 30 No 7) contains the following sentence: 'Friends of the Earth have long since done without a cycle campaigner, and there seems to be a sentiment abroad that all will be well once the boffins come up with cleaner fuel'.

This is a most unfortunate juxtaposition. It is true that FOE has no dedicated cycle campaigner. It has transport campaigners who work on behalf of cyclists, pedestrians and public transport users without fear or favour. It is however quite false to imply that anyone at FOE thinks 'all will be well' when cleaner fuel is more widely used in cars.

A main focus of our transport campaign is for a national target to cut road traffic levels. Among other things, we have drafted and passed two Acts of Parliament in pursuit of this objective.

We have fought long and hard against ministers such as Lord McDonald for suggesting that anything less than a big fall in the number of journeys made by car would be environmentally or socially acceptable.

Jim needs to remember who his friends are.

IAN WILLMORE, *Media Co-ordinator, Friends of the Earth, London, UK*

BROAD VIEW

I agree, in the main, with your special report (*Globalising Poverty*, free with Vol 30 No 6). However, you neglected to mention the rampant corruption of national governments in 'the South' who have absconded with the aid. You also leave out the role of the US State Dept embassies which mediate much of this theft and the proliferation of kakistocracies across the globe. The WTO/IMF/WB do need to go but we need to do a lot more hard work on institutional design issues before the call that we're merely complaining becomes even more powerful.

On this we should not let US activists take the lead because you're simply switching which US elites call the tune. Watch out for the Americans in the IFG, their discourse is way too vague to come anywhere near 'a solution'.

IAN MURRAY *Seattle, WA*

PIETY POLITICS

In my view, the real key to the fight (sorry, debate) between George Monbiot and Jonathon Porritt (Vol 30 No 6), is contained in Porritt's belief, 'We're all compromised, in one way or another,' and his remark, 'we all draw the line in a slightly different place'. Monbiot, I would think, does not believe either. Indeed, he seems to feel that Porritt has 'compromised' to an extent that puts him not 'in a slightly different place' but squarely with 'the enemy'. After all, if BP is a company friendly to the environment (as it tells us it is), then why not have environmentalists friendly to BP! I don't agree with Porritt that 'we're all compromised'. Why should we be? I certainly don't think that the organisation I have worked with for nearly 30 years (not for the environment, but for tribal peoples) has. Indeed, if I thought it had, I would leave.

Porritt characterises this position as 'pious'

and he clearly intends it to be an insult. Yet my dictionary gives three meanings, two of them positive albeit currently out of fashion ('devout'; 'dutiful'), and only one negative ('hypocritically virtuous'). I suppose it all really boils down to whether you think things are really changed more by idealists driven by devotion and duty, however naive and simplistic, or by compromise.

History has as many examples of such idealists as it has of erstwhile radicals who let the passing of time (and all that accompanies it) nudge them gradually into accepting the 'inevitability' of the status quo. Neither will be open to persuasion, of course: our capacity for convincing ourselves of the most unlikely, even palpably impossible, things is, in my view, one of humankind's most astonishing traits. It remains undiminished by so-called modern 'science' whether 'environmental' or not.

STEPHEN CORRY *Survival International*

ANIMAL TRAGIC

Marion Shoard is right to blame intensive farming for our wildlife loss: the rambler-effect is minimal (*Debate*, Vol 30 No 7). Robin Page is also correct to blame government and CAP for our flora and fauna disappearance. But to the obvious causes like global warming, monocultures, pesticides, loss of woodland, meadow and moorland through building growth as well as ploughing, we should add the following:

Fertilisers: there has been a huge decline in birds such as the skylark, which is mainly a seed-eater, because of these inorganic chemicals.

Intensive farming: To gain maximum milk production one high-yielding but aggressive grass (perennial rye-grass) is favoured by farmers, but it has the effect of killing off nearly all other weed and grass competitors. Unfortunately the family of grasses is more important as a wildlife food source than any other family. The result is starvation of birds and invertebrates too well-known to list.

Autumn ploughing: to survive winter many creatures, not just birds, need fields left just as they are after harvest, until the spring. But cereals, especially wheat, sown in the autumn and winter are more profitable (higher-yielding) than those sown in the spring, which should be the only season for ploughing. So by autumn plough-

ing all the weeds which germinate after harvest are at once buried under the plough, along with their equally necessary insect life. (This includes slugs, now safely out of reach of their many predators.)

Again, the result is not enough food to see animals and birds safely through the winter. The Environment Agency and English Nature claim their policy is to encourage farmers into spring ploughing but I have seen little evidence of it as yet.

Antibiotics: chemicals fed to farm animals cause wildlife harm. Parasites in cattle are controlled in this way but their dung is altered so that dung beetles feeding on it and using it as habitat are also on the decline, so one of our most endangered mammals – the greater horseshoe bat – is adversely affected as these beetles feature largely in its diet. So decline is inevitable.

TONY HILLS *Crediton, Devon, UK*

ALTERNATIVE SCIENCE

Tom Wakeford (*The appliance of Science*, Vol 30 No 5) certainly has a point. Britain does need a body of scientists who have a concern that science should be conducted more openly and accountably. A body that questions the way in which science is funded by vested interests and which debates such issues as genetically modified organisms, weapons production, climate change and what I would call a dangerous

new phenomenon: the 'market forces/scientific complex' where all is potentially for sale: ideas, attitudes, use of technology.

In fact there IS such an organisation – Scientists for Global Responsibility. We have a relatively small membership of 600 across the UK. However, we rely solely on voluntary effort – unlike UCS in the United States which has many full-time staff members.

We want to change this situation and become an effective voice for and of scientists promoting the responsible and ethical use of science. We secured some funding to start writing an 'ethical careers guide' – intended to better inform young scientists and engineers about where early career or study choices may lead them. We hope at some point to set up links with career opportunities that offer applications of science and technology such as solar power, hydro-power, recycling, resource use minimisation, climate and nature conservation etc. After all implementation of 'factor four' or 'factor ten' will need the best science and technology we have got combined with proper application of the precautionary principle.

We have other ideas such as Open Science – a draft protocol for a new kind of scientific research where scientists would state their values, open up their findings to outside non-scientific bodies and discuss possible applications with lay persons.

We are putting together a funding proposal package with the intention of enabling us to properly support this and other research and activity. We will also be seeking new members and supporters who can help fund work via a regular subscription to our newsletter and email discussion groups.

PHILIP WEBBER *Brighouse, W Yorks, UK*
<http://www.sgr.org.uk/>

WHERE'S THE THERAPY?

Having just read your article on the cancer research industry (*Your money and your Life?* Vol 30 No 7), I feel compelled to express my concern about its bedfellow, chemotherapy.

The chemotherapy industry is the second largest in the UK after petrochemicals. I became very interested in this therapy after my mother's death earlier this year from bowel cancer.

Oncology specialists I met seemed unapproachable and arrogant. When there was no more hope, my mother was sent home to die without adequate pain relief or management.

I practise natural therapies and have come to understand the huge significance of the bowels in the health of the body. If the bowels aren't working efficiently, then

the waste returns to the bloodstream and circulates around the body, causing more debilitation at vulnerable places.

I would like someone to explain what happens to the chemicals and all the cells these chemicals kill if the bowel is already blocked with cancer. I would add here that these chemicals have been in use for 40 years and are still the preferred drug for NHS patients. Whatever happened to all those billions of pounds on research?

If the results of one of my treatments were to wipe out a patient's immune system, cause most unpleasant side effects, destroy countless good cells, and eventually destroy the will to live, it would be headline news.

During my mother's last months, I was privileged to practise my natural healing skills and know she benefited from the deep relaxation and emotional peace brought about by touch therapies. Is it not strange that there has never been any research money dedicated to natural healing and preventative medicine?

KATH MORRELL *Powys, UK*

HUMANE CHANCE

Your editorial (Vol 30 No 7) cites vivisection as an example of 'prosopagnosia' – viewing problems in compartments instead of holistically. You say that scientists 'still believe (despite all available evidence) that if a chemical has little effect on a rat it will be OK for humans'.

The cover story in the same edition was Martin J Walker's robust exposé of the major cancer charities. He said that they pay scant attention to industrial chemicals as a primary cause of the disease. Surprisingly, Mr Walker made no mention of the millions of animals who have been made to suffer at the hands of cancer charities.

It is undoubtedly true that research charities should pay far more attention to the environmental causes of cancer and in particular the carcinogenic effect of chemicals. However, this should not be at the cost of yet more animal suffering. The European Commission is about to produce proposals for a mass programme of animal testing of tens of thousands of industrial chemicals which have been on the market since 1981 or before. The tests involved are likely to be extremely invasive.

The reaction of some environmentalists has been very disappointing. They justify the tests on the basis that chemicals have a deleterious effect on wildlife as well as people. They do not appear to realise that the logical conclusion from the proposition that testing on animals is justified if it benefits other animals would be that testing on people is also justified if it benefits other people. No one believes that.

Animal tests for the carcinogenic effect of chemicals are thought by many to be unreliable. The answer is for governments to be much more willing to remove chemicals from the market where there are reasonable fears about their safety and to commission research which is both relevant and humane.

DAVID THOMAS *Chobham, Surrey, UK*

VITAL VITAMINS

Professor Linus Pauling once suggested to me that he did not think 'deficiency in Vitamin C is the sole cause of cancer, but I think it contributes significantly to the incidence of cancer'.

Yet, in this country, the nutritionalists who advise on the feeding of monkeys in our zoos recommend more Vitamin C for their monkeys than doctors recommend for human beings.

DAVID MARTIN *Manchester, UK*

JUST A QUICK WORD...

FISHY FIGURES

The news item *Something Fishy* (Vol 30 No 6) regarding killing off wild salmon through fish-farm pollution is truly alarming. As if it were not already bad enough that farm salmon are loaded with chemicals, now it turns out that wild salmon are being poisoned in the process. In addition, if the maximum permitted level of PSP in shellfish is 80 micrograms per 100 grams of flesh, then the 828mg discovered in the case you quote should surely be 828 micrograms.

MYLES CROWE *Co Cork, Ireland*

FUEL FOR THOUGHT

So it's official. The UK fuel crisis showed that we are consumers first, social citizens second, and ecological citizens when it suits us. We all knew this of course but how can greens respond to such a terrifying example of 'advanced' societies bawling for their sweeties as another brownlash looms into view? May I suggest a dialogue on the subject of the potential benefits of recent events.

GREG JONES *Malton, N Yorks, UK*



MONKEYING AROUND WITH WILDLIFE



F. W. FROHAWK, CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

A new report published by the World Conservation Union warns that up to 18,000 species are at risk of disappearing for ever.

According to the World Conservation Union (WCU) 2000 Red List (www.redlist.org), produced by a network of 7,000 species experts working in almost every country in the world, one in every four mammals and one in every eight birds are at risk. WCU pointed out that their study only scratches the surface and that the current extinction rate is 1,000 to 10,000 times higher than it should be under 'normal' conditions. Since their last assessment in 1996, the number of mammals identified as closest to extinction has increased from 169 to 180. The number of birds rose from 168 to 182.

Meanwhile, one of our closest cousins has gone extinct: according to Conservation International, Miss Waldron's Red Colobus, a red and black monkey listed as endangered since 1988, is no more. Researchers who, since 1993, have been surveying 19 forest areas in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, said that they have neither seen nor heard any; the last positive sighting was in 1978. Instead of the monkey, researchers found forests fragmented by logging and road construction making access for poachers a lot easier.

TITLE: BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

OZONE HOLE STILL GROWING

The hole in the Antarctic ozone layer is now threatening humans.

Scientists from New Zealand recently reported that the hole in the Antarctic ozone layer has, for the first time, stretched over a city.

During two days in early September the hole extended over the southern Chilean city of Punta Arenas, exposing locals to

high levels of ultraviolet radiation.

Citing data from NASA, scientists said that the ozone hole now covered 11.4 million square miles (29.6 million square kilometres) – the biggest it has ever been.

Overexposure to ultraviolet radiation can cause skin cancer and destroy tiny plants at the beginning of the world's food chain.

WATCH WHAT YOU EAT

Recent events have reconfirmed the malfunctioning of government food and hygiene regulations.

As the long-awaited report on BSE, or 'Mad Cow Disease' reaches ministers, more cows are developing symptoms of BSE – and this although they were born after the 1996 feed restrictions. At the same time, the number of victims dying from Creutzfeldt-Jacob, the fatal brain disorder and human form of BSE, continues to climb. Something, it seems, is madly wrong, too.

In 1996, MAFF decided that animal blood, gelatine and tallow were 'safe' to be fed to cows. In a statement this year, Baroness Hayman, the minister of state for Agriculture, commented: 'gelatine and blood products are exempt from the feed ban in both the EU and UK legislation. Such materials are not widely used in animal feed in the UK'. Well, so much for logic and precaution. According to the Department of Agriculture's own figures, 22,000 tonnes of cow material, including blood, gelatine and tallow are fed to cows each year. At the same time, a small number of scientists have continuously warned about the connection between animal blood, gelatine, tallow and BSE. That the solution of the problem may simply lie in feeding cows with less cannibalistic products doesn't seem to cross the government's mind.

Elsewhere, 'solutions' don't look too promising either. Last year's Belgian dioxin scandal has not prevented mineral oils ending up in chicken feed and our breakfast eggs. Swiss experts recently revealed that well over half of all mineral oils used in the production of chicken feed exceed Swiss safety limits between 10 and 100 times. They also found oil

traces in pork, chicken and beef. The EU does not have any safety limit for oils, but since the majority of the EU's and Switzerland's animal feed is imported from similar sources, the Swiss experts suggest that Europe's situation is likely to be as serious as Switzerland's. The European Commission recently announced an end to the cramped conditions suffered by hens housed in battery cages. Nine out of 10 of Europe's 300 million hens are kept in such conditions, unable to stretch their wings or perform any other natural behaviour such as nesting, scratching, perching and dust bathing. Whilst the Commission acknowledges that battery hens become stressed by living in these conditions, the new measure will not come into effect until 2012. Why not earlier? Because in 2005 the issue will be reviewed for possible conflicts with the WTO, and thus might never come into effect.

Meanwhile, with the UK government encouraging people to eat fresh fruit and vegetables, comes evidence that almost half of them contain pesticides. Government advisers still insist that pesticide residue levels are safe, yet at the same time have introduced a new regulation limiting residues in baby food by 2002. And there's more. Danish researchers have found that antibiotic-resistant bacteria from chicken can flourish in the human gut. An outright ban on the use of antibiotics to fatten animals would perhaps make sense; but instead, much of the government's research budget will be spent producing lengthy reports promoting more regulations and 'safe' levels of anything as long as it is not organic – for that, apparently, is even more of a 'health hazard'.

LET THEM EAT CRUDE

What on Earth was Britain's recent 'oil crisis' actually about? And what are the implications?

Ever wondered why the UK's oil price revolt came about so suddenly and... forcefully? Or why the timing of the 'crisis' was so convenient for some of those who gained from it, whilst inconveniencing everyone else?

It wasn't just prices. True, after an unreasonably low period – troughing around \$10 a barrel – oil prices had been going up, but very slowly for the past six months or so. There was no sudden explosion in prices or availability of petrol at the pumps. So why the sudden outburst of truckers' and farmers' rage?

Well, winter is coming, as is the next budget – even a costly election – and the post-1997 political edifice is starting to show cracks. Warnings about high petrol prices have been piling on government desks for the last four months, yet politicians failed to act while life got progressively tougher for those who rely on petrol for a living. Yet earnings have been rising with prices, and there is no recession on the immediate horizon; so this is not an explanation in itself.

In fact, it's something else entirely. Take your eyes off the truckers at the refinery gates, and look instead inside those gates, at the big oil companies; there you will find the real spark that lit the flame.

In the UK, North Sea Oil operating profits have almost doubled during the last 10 years, yet tax on them has remained non-existent. According to Greg Muttitt of Corporate Watch, the UK's North Sea is the world's second-cheapest oil-producing region after Ireland. With only corporation tax to pay, companies in effect pay nothing for the oil they take away and sell around the world.

Thus it would seem natural for Chancellor Gordon Brown to consider options for raking back some of that 'corporate cream'. It was common knowledge

in the oil industry that Brown was considering more burdensome taxes on oil corporations – taxes that would perhaps at least begin to reflect the real price of oil for society. Conveniently, then, blockades at refineries and depots were the best thing that could have happened to Esso, Shell, BP, Total-Fina and Texaco.

True, the companies didn't start the blockades. But consider this: if the refineries had been blockaded by environmentalists protesting about climate change, or union pickets protesting about wage levels, who could imagine a scene in which the country ground to a halt? Remember the Wapping disputes and miners' strike of the



Who's fuelling who?: drivers blockading the Total Fuel terminal, Cross Green, Leeds.

80s, or the road protests of the 90s; such protesters would be cleared and carted off to cells by any means necessary. Somehow, though, a handful of angry lorry drivers scared the big oil companies so much that they refused to let the drivers that they use work; even in the face of direct pleas from the prime minister? Come off it.

The reality, then, is that a series of minor protests at refineries here in the UK served as an excuse for oil companies to hold back the drivers, create public panic and send a forceful warning to New Labour about taxing their absurd profits in the next budget.

Unless public transport is improved and fares cut with revenues used for the transition into a fuel-free economy, oil companies will continue to grow in size and power; and to use that power as blatantly as they did in September.

NOTES & QUOTES

'I think that it is necessary to address another restructuring, concerning the system of values on which contemporary civilisation rests.'

Václav Havel, president of the Czech Republic, speaking in Prague

'If we cancel the debt there will be no World Bank. The World Bank pays my salary.'

Steen Jorgensen, sector manager at the World Bank

'We should remember that even when we do halve world poverty that will leave a lot of poor.'

Mark Malloch Brown, UNDEP's administrator

'Globalisation gave a banana grower in Ecuador the markets in Russia and China that have turned his farm into an integrated agribusiness with packaging, fertiliser, transport operations and even a new container port. ...Globalisation is what can help the business owners and would-be industrialists change the label of their countries from developing to developed.'

Peter Woike, managing director of the World Bank & executive vice president of the International Finance Corporation

'The World Bank Group's approach to the oil and gas sector is based on a belief that oil and gas can make a significant positive contribution to sustainable development.'

World Bank briefing the World Bank Group and the oil and gas sector

'No country would like to be told what to do by the IMF, or be forced to sell off distressed companies to foreign buyers, especially at fire-sale prices.'

Lee Hsien Loong, Singapore's Prime Minister

'Certain scientists... may argue that human cloning is about the promotion of human health when it is really about the promotion of the wealth of scientific companies.'

Rev Ian Paisley, Northern Ireland MP

'Ten years ago we were told gene therapy was the best thing since sliced bread. Today its record stands at: cures – nil, deaths – five, and at least 1,000 major adverse effects'

Dr R. Nicholson, editor of 'The Bulletin of Medical Ethics'

continued on page 12



UK Environment News provides unrivalled coverage of environmental policy initiatives, regulation and legislation in the UK and European Union

- Essential, but manageable reading for Agenda 21 officers, recycling departments, policy advisors, regulators, compliance officers and researchers.
- Subscribe now and keep your company or local authority informed about policies for promoting sustainability, cutting climate change and making the polluter pay.
- Published every 6 weeks
- Discounts for charities, local authorities and academic institutions

Visit our web-site at www.ukenvironment.com for access to our free archive and for subscription details – or call us today on 020 7351 3954 for a complimentary copy of UK Environment News.

Online news and analysis of the World Bank and IMF – their activities and the efforts to confront them. Reports, links, actions and more. Get the bi-monthly *Bretton Woods Update* emailed to you free: subs@brettonwoodsproject.org

www.brettonwoodsproject.org



Bretton Woods Project was established by a network of UK NGOs to monitor the World Bank and IMF. The Project's reports and bi-monthly bulletin *Bretton Woods Update* aim to clarify current issues and provide links to campaigners and researchers worldwide.

Blindness! Paralysis! Death!

- ◆ Research on different animal species failed to demonstrate these Adverse Drug Reactions in humans - because of the differences in body function between animals and humans.
- ◆ We now risk epidemic diseases, as animal experimenters work on cross-species organ transplants.

Support our campaign to end this insanity!
Doctors & Lawyers
for Responsible Medicine

104 B Weston Park N8 9PP
Tel: 020 8340 9813 - Fax 0208 342 9878
email: drlm@gn.apc.org
www.drlm.org



ASTOUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Market breakthrough nutritionals creating a health sensation in vital cell-to-cell communication and immune system support.

For more information visit
www.mannapages.com/robert
or call +44 (0) 796 76 44 796



COMPASSION IN WORLD FARMING

...is the UK's leading farm animal welfare organisation.

Last year, CIWF helped to achieve two major farm animal victories. On Jan 1 it became illegal in the UK for pregnant sows to be chained to the floor or kept in narrow stalls. On June 15 the EU Ministers voted to ban the battery cage.

In the new millennium, CIWF continues to campaign on many issues:



- Millions of animals, donkeys, horses, lambs, cows and pigs are transported across long distances often without food, rest or water
- Sows are kept in tethers and stalls in many countries across the EU
- Dairy cows are milked to capacity, often suffering from lameness and mastitis
- Broiler chickens are kept in cramped windowless sheds, forced to grow at twice their natural rate
- Animals are genetically engineered to alter their genetic make-up to make them grow faster, bigger or leaner

By joining CIWF you could help us to win an end to these cruel factory farming systems. To become a supporter costs just £21 a year or £1.75 a month. To become a life supporter costs £1000. Students, the unemployed and senior citizens can join for just £10 a year.

To join by credit card or to request a special joining pack, please call Kerry Cutting on 01730 264 208. Alternatively, please e-mail Kerry@ciwf.co.uk. Enquiries about advertising in *Agscene*, our quarterly magazine, are also very welcome. Our freepost address is Kerry Cutting, AQM, FREEPOST (GI/2198), Petersfield, Hants GU32 3BR.

Website: www.ciwf.co.uk Registered Office: Charles House, 5A Charles Street, Petersfield, Hants GU32 3EH Reg. No. 2998256 England

MONSANTO PLAYS DIRTY – AGAIN

A leaked internal report from Monsanto reveals that the company is up to its old tricks.

A confidential report leaked to GeneWatch UK has revealed that Monsanto is involved in a campaign to promote GM products by attempting to determine which experts get on international scientific committees. Their strategy is to promote their views through supposedly independent scientists and gain influence with key decision makers in government departments.

The leaked report (download it from www.genewatch.org), stamped 'company confidential', summarises the activities of its Regulatory Affairs and Scientific Outreach teams from May and June 2000. It describes development in the regulation of GM crops in 20 countries and Monsanto's strategy to influence them.

For example: 'a meeting was held with Prof David Khayat, an internationally well-known cancer specialist, to collaborate on an article demonstrating the absence of links between GM food and cancer...

Regulatory Affairs and Scientific Outreach was instrumental in ensuring that key internationally recognised scientific experts were nominated to the FAO/WHO expert consultation on food safety held in Geneva... The consultation and final report were very supportive of plant biotechnology, including support for the critical role of substantial equivalence in food safety assessments, antibiotic resistance makers used in these products, and the reservation of animal feeding studies'.

And there's more: 'In Thailand a GMO detection lab was established by the Ministry of Public Health to develop methods to certify exports to Europe. The lab director Dr Pakdi is a key player in the international Codex activities and has requested Monsanto's assistance to train technicians and provide reference samples. Co-operation with this request is likely given the importance of the lab and Dr Pakdi's position'.

So now you know.

TACTLESS TACOS

Unlabelled GMOs in US food may lead to pressure for a change in labelling policy.

Kraft Foods Inc, the largest food marketer in the US and a division of New York-based Philip Morris Tobacco, has recalled all of its 'Taco Bell Home Originals' brand taco shells from US supermarket shelves in response to charges made by Friends of the Earth (FOE). Presenting findings made by an independent laboratory FOE proved that the particular brand contained significant traces of a variety of genetically modified corn known as 'StarLink'. Marketed by Aventis, this type of corn has not been approved for human consumption because it has been found to be heat-stable, resistant to stomach acids and enzymes and a potential allergen. The human health effects of allergens can include skin rashes, nausea and respiratory problems. In severe cases, allergens can lead to death. Highlighting the fact that genetically engineered foods are not efficiently regulated, the Kraft recall has made other food producers look at their ingredient-related safeguards and wonder about the attitude they should take regarding genetically engineered ingredients. In response Aventis has halted sales of 'StarLink' corn and will buy back all of this year's crop as well as reimburse farmers. The agreement will be implemented by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The FDA, which has done little to stop the flood of GM products entering the US market, may well, under pressure from big food manufacturers, have to revise its series of voluntary biotech guidelines.

REPORT PROMOTES LOCAL FOOD

A new report from the International Society for Ecology and Culture (ISEC), published this month, brings together valuable information about the adverse effects of the global food economy, and also provides concrete examples of how the localisation of food can work in practice. The report, *Bringing The Food Economy Home*, is likely to provide vital ammunition for campaigners attempting to challenge the dominant political agenda on agricultural development.

For more information, see page 63.

STAN
AT
EASE
by
Stan
Eales

RIISING TIDES

TRAFFIC



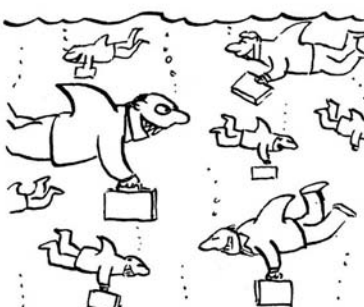
IDIOCY



CRIME



CORPORATISM



GLOBALISERS DIG IN

Post-Prague, politicians are running scared of the growing opposition to globalisation.

Just in time for the World Bank and IMF's fractured meeting in Prague at the end of September, Tony Blair welcomed a report (www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/innovation) aiming to show that it is possible to balance an open system of free trade with raising labour and animal welfare standards and protecting human health and the environment. 'We intend to use the report's conclusion as the framework for our long-term agenda,' said the prime minister.

According to the press release, 'the UK government has been leading the way in taking a strategic look at these issues.' In effect, the report, entitled *Rights of Exchange: Social, Health, Environmental and Trade Objectives on the Global Stage* is just another example of the balancing act currently in vogue amongst politicians who are attempting to portray themselves as



PAUL KINGSNORTH

being more enlightened. The simple truth is that they are scared. According to the *International Herald Tribune* 'the Federal Reserve Board chairman, Alan Greenspan, has acknowledged that antipathy towards globalisation runs so deep that a recession could force a retreat from market-oriented policies and a return to protectionism, even in the United States'.

A recession is definitely something Mr Blair would like to avoid, particularly with elections on the distant horizon. A pragmatic George Soros summed it up in a more honest fashion: 'It is in our enlightened self-interest to make sure that the losers in this global system – and right now there are billions of them – get a chance to participate.

Why? Because otherwise the people who are disadvantaged will use their political clout to capture the system'.

Perhaps the rumblings on the streets in Prague in September, when 15,000 people from around the world protested against the World Bank and the IMF, could give some idea of the shape of things to come

if the politicians manage to play their cards wrong.

Meanwhile, whether the Blair government's recent policies will appease the 'disadvantaged' is questionable. While Tony Blair warns that rich countries must help developing nations get rid of 'sweatshop' conditions, he welcomes companies like Wal-Mart to the UK, whose contractor in Bangladesh pays teenage seamstresses less than the minimum wage; or McDonald's, whose toymaking contractor in Hong Kong was found to employ 400 children as young as 14, or Nike which pays 58 cents per day to its labourers in Indonesia, or Ralph Lauren which pays its Chinese workers 23 cents per hour. To quote *The Economist*, 'There is, and always has been, a huge gap between Mr Blair's rhetoric and reality'. Changing the fundamentals that dictate the behaviour of the global market is, it seems, politically and financially unpalatable to politicians trapped in short-term electoral cycles and dependent on corporate funds. But until they do, globalisation will provide no panacea.

NOTES & QUOTES₂

According to the Worldwatch Institute, if you pay a dollar for a loaf of bread, about 5 cents goes for the wheat, another 5 cents goes for the wrapper and about 75 cents goes to marketing.

According to investment bank Lehman Brothers, the combined profits of BP, Shell, Exxon Mobil and TotalFina Elf are expected to more than double to \$50bn this year.

A government survey has found that Brazil accounts for 10 per cent of the entire environmental heritage of the world and has crowned this finding with a monetary value of \$2.072 billion.

In Argentina and Venezuela, more than 50 per cent of banking assets are controlled by foreign institutions.

During 1999, 25,744 tonnes of pesticide active ingredients were used by farmers and local authorities in the UK.

3,000 grizzly bears have been illegally shot in British Columbia since 1990, with tourists paying up to \$10-15,000 to take home 'trophies' such as the head, paws or the skin.

SUING THE CLIMATE CRIMINALS

Friends of the Earth is planning to take legal action against governments and industries that attempt to block the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol.

Following the example of the landmark lawsuits in the US that forced the tobacco industry to pay up for its wrongdoing, Friends of the Earth is looking into possible legal liabilities that may accrue to those responsible for climate change such as major fossil fuel users and the coal, oil and gas industries.

Friends of the Earth said that when it raised the subject of a climate change lawsuit, British Petroleum (BP) lawyers responded in a similar fashion to the tobacco industry when testifying to the US Congress that it believed that tobacco

was not addictive. BP's lawyer's said 'that climate change hasn't been proven'.

Friends of the Earth International will undertake a two-year study determining whether or not there is a sound case to recoup damages caused by global warming. Christian Aid estimates that the total cost of climate change over the next 20 years could be £6.5 trillion. Munich Re, one of the world's top insurance companies, has also been adding up the financial cost of the recent, unprecedentedly high, number of 'natural' catastrophes and is pointing at climate and environmental change as the principal reason for this alarming increase.

NEWS IN BRIEF

ILISU DAM: ONE DOWN

Skanska, the Swedish construction firm with a 24 per cent stake in the seven-company consortium has pulled out of the controversial hydroelectric dam project (see *Stuffing Turkey*, Vol 30 No 6). Other partners include ABB of Switzerland, Impregilo of Italy, Kiska, Nurof and Tekfen of Turkey. The UK's Balfour Beatty, which has a 31 per cent stake, leads the civil engineering wing. The governments of Austria, Germany, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Switzerland, the UK and the US are all considering supporting the dam with export guarantees or credits of around \$850 million.

POWER LINES DO CAUSE CANCER

A team from Bristol University has discovered that particles from pollutants close to power lines, such as exhaust from passing cars, get an electrical charge and can magnetically cling to the insides of people's lungs. It has been estimated that people living 500 metres downwind of power lines have a 29 per cent greater chance of contracting lung cancer.

GENETIC SCREENING HERE

Paul Miller, the US equal opportunities commissioner, wants tougher controls for workers against genetic screening after it emerged that hundreds of people lost their jobs or insurance as a direct result of genetic screening. According to an article published in *The Guardian*, a survey carried out by the Shriver Centre for public health reported 582 cases of people turned down for jobs or health insurance because of 'flaws' in their genes. By the way, New Labour is about to give the formal go-ahead to insurers to ask potential customers whether they have genetic predisposition to illness.

BEYOND FRANKENSTEIN

Researchers at Brandeis University recently announced a computerised system that automatically creates, evolves, improves and builds a variety of mobile creatures without significant human intervention. According to *The International Herald Tribune*, experts are convinced that exponential growth in computing power may soon put robotic systems within reach of the kind of brainpower that could ultimately put humanity out of

business. Carnegie Mellon, for example, has devised self-directing tractors that harvest around the clock in California, combining location information from global positioning sensors with video image processing that identifies rows of uncut crops.

BNFL – STILL AT IT

The UK Environment Agency recently served an Enforcement Notice on British Nuclear Fuels plc for failing to comply with a number of conditions regarding gaseous waste authorisation at Sellafield. The notice has been issued following two environmental audits and a follow-up investigation in July/August this year. Amongst other things, the Agency found that BNFL failed to provide written



reports about differences in levels of radioactivity being recorded and reported to the Agency.

WHALE OF A TIME

Japan's 'scientific' whaling fleet has returned with 43 Bryde's whales, five sperm whales and 40 minke whales. According to Takaaki Sakamoto of the Fishery Agency, next year it plans to kill up to 100 minke whales, 50 Bryde's and 10 sperm whales in the north-western Pacific Ocean. Having just enough time to clean whale blood off its boats, Japan's shipping fleet has returned to the seas – this time for the dolphin season. So, whilst environmentalists warn that these incredible creatures are rapidly becoming extinct, Japan will butcher about 22,000 dolphins and porpoises this season alone.

GOOD NEWS, MS BROWN: IT'S A PIG

Scientists have successfully produced an embryonic pig-human hybrid. Human DNA was inserted into pig cells which became embryos. Researchers have not revealed what happened to them, but suggested they

could have been grown further by being implanted into a womb – and that either a pig or a human mother would have been suitable. The intentions of the researchers are not made clear in an application they have submitted to the European Patent Office. Experts in medical ethics are deeply concerned about the patent application, which has a strong chance of being granted.

SLAVE LABOUR IN BURMA

A ruling by the Central District Court of California has found that 'the evidence does suggest that [the oil company] Unocal knew that forced labour was being used and that [Unocal and Total Oil] benefited from the practice of forced labour used to build a gas pipeline in Burma'. According to Judge Lew, the plaintiffs had presented evidence 'demonstrating... that the [pipeline] project hired the military to provide security... a military that forced villagers to work and entire villages to relocate for the benefit of the project; that the military, while forcing villagers to work and relocate committed numerous acts of violence'. EarthRights (www.earthrights.org), the plaintiffs, are confident the case will go to trial.

SUPREME COURT REJECTS EXXON APPEAL ON ALASKA OIL SPILL

In its first term session the US Supreme Court rejected an Exxon Mobil Corp. appeal over the nation's worst oil spill.

Acting without comment, the Court let stand a \$5 billion award that was claimed by Alaskan fishermen. The 1989 Exxon/Valdez oil spill polluted more than 1,600 kilometres of shoreline and killed tens of thousands of birds and marine mammals.

CORK STILL UNDER THREAT

Portuguese environmental group Quercus has denounced as 'scandalous' government plans to expand the country's huge pine and eucalyptus plantations even further whilst reducing financial aid for indigenous cork oaks. They revealed that the eucalyptus species Tasmanian blue gum is now more numerous in Portugal than in its native Tasmania. Plantations of the trees are blamed for massive soil erosion, forest fires and destruction of wildlife habitats. Plantations of this single eucalyptus species now comprise almost a third of Portugal's total forested area. Quercus also attacked government proposals to reduce the legal protection on cork oaks, allowing the felling of established trees to make way for urban development and new tourist resorts. Further information on p 57.

REUTERS



CAMPAIGNS

Please send information on your local, national or international campaigns to Stephanie Roth at: The Ecologist Campaigns Office, 46 The Vineyard, Richmond, Surrey TW10 6AN, UK. Tel: +44 (0)20 8948 0170. Fax: +44 (0)20 8948 6787. Email: campaigns@theecologist.org

EU STOP THE 'FAST-TRACK'

The small amount of news that surfaces regarding discussions between EU member states on a further revision of the EU Treaty suggests that we may be approaching a dangerous increase in the EU's competence over international trade negotiations.

NGOs such as Corporate Europe Observatory are warning that current trends point to the establishment of a US-like 'fast track' negotiating authority for the European Commission in the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The occasion is the revision of article 133 of the Amsterdam Treaty, which is likely to be finalised at the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) during the forthcoming EU Summit in Nice.

Currently, all EU participation in WTO proceedings is based on the assumption that on services, investment and intellectual property rights, there is a so-called 'mixed competence' between the European Commission and member states.

Mixed competence issues require unanimous decisions in the Council and national ratification procedures for any resulting agreements in all 15 EU member states. This is precisely what current proposals for treaty revision intend to do away with.

Although EU Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy talks about 'modernising decision-making', the proposed changes to Article 133 of the Amsterdam Treaty would place all international trade issues under exclusive EU competence, with individual countries no longer being able to veto proposals.

There is now a real risk that the EU's already unaccountable powers will be extended. Democracy is at stake and with the EU's Nice Summit taking place in December, there is little time to prevent this scenario from unfolding.

URGENT TURN DOWN THE HEAT AT THE HAGUE

Everyone who is sane enough to care about the future of the planet and the human race should be pretty scared about what could

happen this month at The Hague in the Netherlands (see also p 58). The Kyoto Protocol – the agreement reached by governments in 1997 to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions responsible for climate change, probably the most serious problem facing mankind – could be fatally wounded there.



ENVIRONMENTAL IMAGES

Its crucial operating rules, which were left unfinished in Kyoto and which must now be completed by 24 November in The Hague in vital negotiations, look set to be hijacked by the governments of the largest polluting countries, led by the US. They are attempting to insert enormous loopholes into these rules to render them virtually meaningless, enabling the governments responsible to continue to emit greenhouse gas emissions on a business-as-usual basis.

The only way left to stop them is for the public to apply maximum pressure on governments responsible to ensure that they avoid caving in to US bullying at The Hague. In particular, governments must be urged to reject the widespread use of 'sinks' (forestry and soil activities which absorb emissions). If this doesn't happen, governments will be able to claim that trees and soils are absorbing most of their emissions, removing the need for action to be taken to reduce them at source.

Just as importantly, governments must be pressured to reject all use of 'sinks' in the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) – by which governments will be able to take credit for supposed emission-reducing measures that they would pay developing countries to undertake for them. Outrageously, the US and other developed country governments also want such measures to include the building of nuclear power stations, hydroelectric dams and coal-fired power plants.

Readers should also demand that EU governments reject US calls that there be no limits placed on emissions trading, which would enable governments to buy unused emission allocations from countries like Russia and claim them as their own without any real reductions having taken place. EU governments must stick to their guns and demand that all emissions trading be capped so that governments are forced to reach at least half of their reduction targets at home.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Write a letter to your head of state, prime minister and environment minister and tell them not to accept any of the US loopholes.

UK contacts: Tony Blair, 10 Downing Street, London SW1; John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport & the Regions; Michael Meacher MP, Minister for the Environment; Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU or fax 0207 8904499.

Also, send a message to world leaders on www.climatevoice.org to help ensure a sane outcome at the climate negotiations in The Hague, and sign a petition on www.antenna.nl/wise/cop6/coeng.html to make nuclear power a thing of the past.

If you can, try to get to The Hague and protest outside the negotiations (see *Campaigns Diary*, p 15) between 11 and 24 November.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Write to Robin Cook, Foreign Secretary, and Keith Vaz, FCO Secretary for Europe at: FCO, King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AH.

Write to Sir Stephen Wall, UK Permanent Representative to the EU, Avenue d'Auderghem 10, 1040 Brussels, Belgium. Start a debate on www.number-10.gov.uk Visit 'Dialogue on Europe' on

http://europa.eu.int/comm/igc2000/dialogue/index_en.htm and email the IGC. Contact Ecoropa on ecoropa@magic.fr or +33 143383817 for activities during the IGC.

TITLE: MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

COLOMBIA THE FATE OF THE EMBERA-KATIO

The Embera-Katio of north-west Colombia have nowhere to go. They can't leave because their lands are what sustains them, yet they are being targeted from all sides. Roads, rivers and paths are riddled with checkpoints where they are routinely checked and have to obey sporadic demands. Many have simply disappeared and selective assassinations, massacres and tortures have become a brutal reality.

In late September, three canoes carrying fishing supplies were held up by gunmen who seized all goods and abducted the 23 people on board. The leader of the Embera community of Dosà was taken from his home the very same day. The next day he was found dead, together with three other community leaders who had been on board the canoe.

Colombia's 'dirty war' claims thousands of lives every year. Armed groups consider Embera-Katio territory a strategic corridor, as it allows access to several regions of Colombia. Although the majority of the country's indigenous communities have declared themselves neutral, such statements are not respected. The Embera-Katio are given no choice; even when refusing to be recruited by any of the armed groups (whether paramilitary, guerrilla or government forces) or refusing to provide information.

The US government is currently supporting the Colombian military with a \$1.3bn aid package. As the paramilitaries are well known to be backed by the military, the US is in effect supporting these atrocities against the Embera-Katio.



CHRISTIAN AID/JUDITH ESCOBARANO

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Please send urgent messages to Bill Clinton, President of the United States, on president@whitehouse.gov or fax on +1 202 4562461, to Madeleine Albright, Secretary of State on secretary@state.gov or fax +1 202 6477120, William Cohen, Secretary of Defense, 1000 Defense Pentagon, Washington DC. 20301-1000 and ask them to halt US military aid to Colombia. Copy your letters to 'Global Exchange' at sandra@globalexchange.org or fax on +1 415 2557498.

CAMPAIGNS DIARY

4-5 November 2000
Warwick University, Coventry, UK.

Shared Planet 2000

The largest student conference in Europe on World Poverty, Human Rights and the Environment. Visit www.peopleandplanet.org or call +44 (0) 1865 245678

5-24 November 2000
Schumacher College, Dartington, Totnes, Devon, UK.

The Deep Ecology Movement

With Stephen Harding, Max Oelschlager and George Sessions. Visit www.gn.apc.org/schumachercollege/ or call +44 (0)1803 866899

9-13 November 2000
Oaxaca, Mexico.

Annual Forest Stewardship Conference

Forest Management, certification, indigenous people issues & community forestry. Visit <http://fsoax.prg/principal.htm>

11-24 November 2000
The Hague, Netherlands.

THE MONTH'S MOST CRUCIAL CAMPAIGN: Rising Tide: A Coalition to Climate Change

Come to the Hague and join grassroots initiatives and their impressive programme to pressure the COP6 meeting for a successful outcome. Visit www.antenna.nl/aseed/climate/ or call +31 20 6682236 and www.foeeurope.org/dike or call +32 2 5426102 also visit www.climateconference.org

12-14 November 2000
Marseille, France.

NGO Civil Forum in preparation to Barcelona IV
Visit www.euromed-ong.org For activities planned by ATTAC contact ootero@ens-lyon.fr

13-14 November 2000
Antwerp, Belgium.

'The Kyoto Effect'

Major conference on the effects of the New Carbon Economy upon business. Speakers include Michael Meacher MP, Michael Moore of the WTO, Gerald Doucet and John H Sununu. Visit www.globalcarbonreduction.com or call +44 (0) 7977354610

13-24 November 2000
The Hague, Netherlands.

6th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework on Climate Change

Negotiations on implementing the Kyoto Protocol. Visit <http://cop6.unfccc.int/> or call +49 228 8151000

16-18 November 2000
Omni Netherlands Hotel, Cincinnati, USA.

TABD meeting

The Transatlantic Business Dialogue co-ordinates US and EU trade agendas going the WTO rounds. Keep an eye on www.tabd.com and email mstrand@citizen.org for activity planning

17-19 November 2000
Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand.

Second International Development Studies Network Conference

Visit www.drc.org or call +64 44 4729545

18 November 2000
University of Westminster, 309 Regent Street, London, UK.

Safety, Ethics & Health

Conference on the effects of Biotechnology. Speakers include Ian Gibson MP and Arpad Pusztai. Call +44 (0) 1344 360033 to register

24 November 2000

Buy Nothing Day

Protest against the harmful environmental and social effects of over-consumption. Visit www.adbusters.org or call +1 604 7369401

25 November 2000
Curtin University of Technology, Bentley, Australia.

Globalisation: Trash or Treasure – Community Responses

Visit www.ecwa.asn.au/n25/index.html or call +61 8 92463882

27 November 2000
Brussels, Belgium.

GATS 2000 Negotiations, European Service Forum

Visit www.esf.be For European NGO activities visit www.wdm.org.uk or call +44 (0) 207 7376215 and www.foeeurope.org or call +32 2 5375596

30 November - 2 December 2000
La Villette, Paris, France.

Building a World of Citizens: One year after Seattle

Contact Secretariat de la Recontre Internationale, 64 Boulevard Blanqui, 75013 Paris or email infos@postseattle.org

3-4 December 2000

Day of Action – one year on from Seattle and two years since the demise of MAI

Watch www.citizen.org or call +1 2025881000 and www.foe.co.uk or call +44 (0)207 4901555 for action alerts

World-Wise Web: The five best online bookmarks

www.antislavery.org/home-page/campaign/bonded.htm

Find out about debt bondage in Nepal, and what you can do to stop it.

www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy/index.htm

Support the demand for international trade rules to protect workers' rights, human rights and the environment.

www.corpwatch.org/action/2000/18.html

Send a free fax to Michael Carpenter, Salomon Smith Barney CEO, telling him to set an industry standard and boycott World Bank Bonds.

www.gn.apc.org/activities/wbgateway_letter.html

Sign on to a letter of concern to the World Bank's President James Wolfensohn about the Global Development Gateway.

www.zeg.org/raisonsdagir/inhalt.htm

Click on to 'Charter 2000' to add your support to the call for an international structure bringing together all organised forms of resistance to neo-liberal policies.

RUSSIA THE REAL PRICE OF OIL

Whilst motorists are fuming in anger about oil prices, the reindeer-herding tribal peoples of Siberia are paying, sometimes with their lives, for the oil industry which devastates their homes. Their lands are being destroyed and their reindeer killed – the situation has become so desperate that many are driven to suicide.

As oil prices rise, the pressure mounts on tribal peoples such as the Khanty, who live in oil-rich areas. Their traditional way of life came to an abrupt halt when, in

the 1960s, oil companies arrived on their lands. Between the oil companies' arrival and 1994 many Khanty were forced into 'native villages' to make way for oil exploration, which polluted the land, killed reindeer and scared off the game. In 1994 the Khanty-Mansiysk administration gave land documents to people still living by hunting and fishing, but nothing to the many already driven from their lands. Theoretically these doc-



been destroyed.

Russian federal law needs to be changed to recognise the rights of Siberia's tribal peoples to the ownership of the land and its resources. Russia's indigenous peoples have been asking the government for years to ratify ILO Convention 169 for the rights of tribal and indigenous peoples, which include such land ownership rights.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Please write polite letters to Gennady Seleznyev, Chairman of State Duma, RF Federal Assembly, 1 Okhotny Riad St, Moskov 103159, Russia. Fax: +7 0952928600. Vagit Alekperov, President LUKOIL, 11 Sretenski Boulevard, Moskov 101000, Russia. Fax: +7 0959160020. Alexander V Filipenko, Governor, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, Ul Mira 5, Khanty-Mansiysk, Tyumen Oblast 626200, Russia. Fax: +7 3467133460. Please copy your letter to Survival International, 11-15 Emerald Street, London WC1N 3QL, UK. Fax: +44 (0) 207 2421771 and visit www.survival-international.org

uments empower landowners to refuse oil companies from entering their territories; in reality the oil companies often do not approach the Khanty until they have already drilled for oil or built a road.

Even when the Khanty sign agreements for compensation, the companies invariably fail to give what they promise. Reindeer, central to the Khanty way of life, have been pushed off as huge stretches of forests have

World-Wise Web: The five best campaigns

www.allianceforchildhood.net

As the UK government is investing £700 million in its pledge to provide every schoolchild with access to computer technology by 2002. Download Fool's Gold: A Critical Look at Computers in Childhood.

www.truthabouttrade.org

See this to believe it. 'Did you know that thousands of children starve every day? ...it isn't because of a worldwide shortage of food. It is because of a worldwide shortage of trade and technology.' (!)

www.foe.org/international/worldbank/ifc.pdf

Download Dubious Development, an excellent report on how the IFC, the World Bank's private arm, is failing the poor and the environment.

www.pacificenvironment.org

One of the best sites for information and in-depth reports on Russia's environmental situation.

www.climateark.org

A favourite – dealing with climate change, alternative energy research and activist activities.

UK NO TO SLYFIELD GREEN INCINERATOR

Surrey County Council has received a planning application from Thames Water Management to build and operate an incinerator at Slyfield Green near Guildford. Construction could start as early as next year and once built it will operate with a 225,000 tonnes/year capacity; around six times the amount generated by Guildford and sufficient to process about two-thirds of all the waste Surrey intends to incinerate each year.

Slyfield is located near areas of outstanding natural beauty, such as Whitmoor Common and Riverside Park. The site chosen by Thames Water Management is a residential area, close to a school and right by the River Wey. Local residents are extremely concerned about Thames Water Management's health risk assessment, which they argue is flawed since it only considers the effect of emissions on the physical health of an average person weighing 70kg and not the effects on children or pregnant women. They are equally concerned about cancer risks and adverse effects on the immune system associated with the release of dioxins, furans and heavy metals from incineration. And the proposed 24-hour operation is likely to cause noise, light and emissions at night. The height of a 230ft chimney means that pollutant deposits would cover Guildford and

beyond. There are also serious risks of flooding and spreading contamination, exacerbated by the loss of soak-away capacity in Thames Water Management's proposal, which may lead to a greater risk of flooding elsewhere on the River Wey. What's more, Thames Water Management's track record of eight prosecutions for pollution incidents in the last year alone seriously questions their capability to run the 20 megawatt power station, particularly so in an area of high population density.

Guildford Anti-Incinerator Network believes that Surrey could and should substantially increase the proportion of waste recycled, reused or composted, thus reducing the need to even consider incineration.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Guildford Anti-Incinerator Network has prepared a letter of objection which can be downloaded from www.geocities.com/burphamca or ask for a copy by writing to c/o The Vicarage, 5 Orchard Rd, Burpham GU 4 7JH. Please send copies of your letters to Tony.Higgs@GCA-ITServices.co.uk or to the address given above.

KYRGYZSTAN KUMTOR GOLD MINE TOXINS

Located in the remote Tien Shan mountains of Kyrgyzstan, the Kumtor gold mine is believed to be the eighth-largest goldfield in the world. The mine and processing facility is a \$360 million project of the joint-venture Kumtor Operating Company (KOC), owned by the Kyrgyz government and Canada's Cameco Corporation, the world's largest uranium producer. Due to the high risks inherent in such large-scale project, the Kumtor gold mine has been financed by a host of leading financial institutions. Both the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) are providing a \$40 million loan, and the US Overseas Private Investment Corporation has, via the Chase Manhattan Bank, forked out \$192 million for political risk assurance. The Canadian Export Development Corporation has also provided financial backing.

In 1998, a KOC truck carrying sodium cyanide plunged into the Barksoon River, spilling nearly two tons of cyanide. Until the spill the river had been a source of drinking water for local people. The cyanide flowed downstream into Lake Issyk-Kul, the country's largest lake. For weeks, villagers exposed to cyanide and sodium hydrochloride poured into local hospitals. Hospital officials attributed four deaths to the cyanide poisoning.

KOC responded to the accident by disputing its magnitude, although it did later acknowledge that it had not notified downstream communities in a timely manner. The IFC also acknowledged this shortcoming and made public assurances that this and similar scenarios could in future be prevented with a Revised Emergency Response Plan (RERP). Government estimates of the cost of the spill are as high as \$42 million, but KOC got away with a settlement of a mere \$4.6 million.

Local and international NGOs have been calling upon the IFC and Cameco to release the Emergency Response Plan and an independent environmental audit for the mine.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Write to: Peter Woike, Executive Vice President, International Finance Corporation, 2121 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington DC 20433 USA. Fax: +1 202 4739169 and to Bernard Michel, Chairman & CEO, Cameco Corporation, 2121 11th Street West, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7M1J3, Canada. Fax: +1 3069566318. Send copies to Natalia Ablova, Bureau of HK & Rule of Law, 40 Manas Ave Room 77, Bishkek 72001, Kyrgyzstan or email rights@elcat.kg. Also visit www.pacenv.org

GLOBAL VIVISECTION BY AIR

Every year more than 10,000 non-human primates, including baboons, owl monkeys rhesus macaques and marmosets are transported by commercial airlines to research labs. Animals shipped as cargo for long distances suffer from cramped conditions, inadequate ventilation and extreme temperature fluctuations, often ending with illness or death.

Responding to a joint campaign by the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV) and the US Animal Protection Institute (API), China Airlines, the second largest transporter of monkeys, announced in late September that it will no longer carry such cargo.

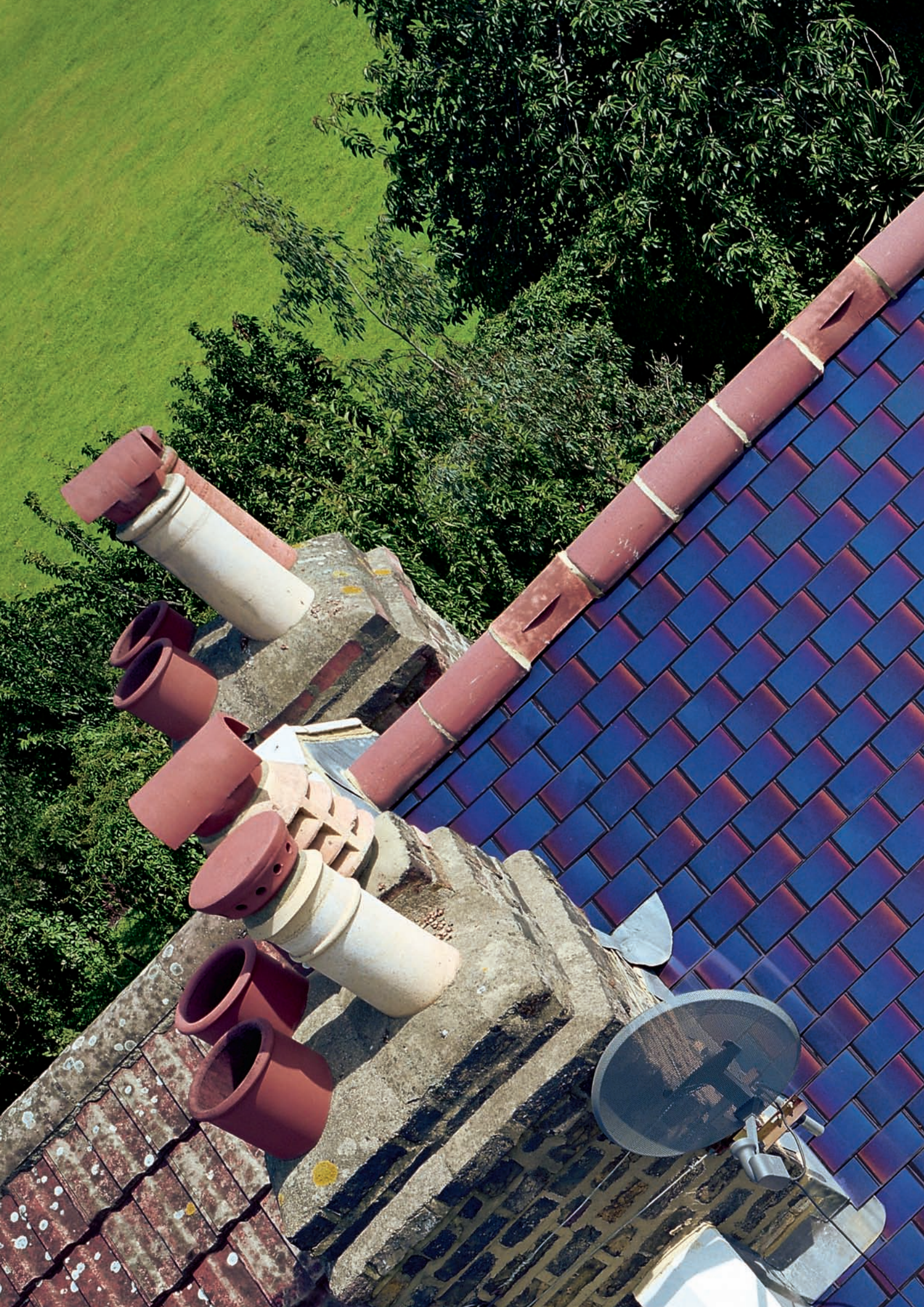
But Air France, the largest carrier of primates to the US in 1999, has repeatedly refused to end its involvement in this trade.



Last year Air France shipped 3,274 long-tailed macaque monkeys into the US alone. All shipments originated in Mauritius, entering the US via Paris. Responding to China Airline's embargo, North American vice president of Air France cargo, Bernard Fratinni, said that Air France is not about to stop carrying primates.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Visit www.buav.org for more ammunition. Write a letter to Jean-Cyril Spinetta, Chairman and CEO, Air France, 45 Rue de Paris, 95747 Roissy, France or fax on +33 141565600. Please send copies of your letter to BUAV – Airlines Campaign, 16a Crane Grove, London N7 8NN, UK or fax: +44 (0)2077000196.



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

CAN THE USE OF VIOLENCE ENVIRONMENTAL

WRITERS SATISH KUMAR AND JAKE



Satish Kumar is editor of *Resurgence* magazine, and director of Schumacher College. He is a former Jain monk and a peace activist.

Dear Jake,

You and I probably agree that our industrial, technological and capitalist society is a violent society. It is inflicting dreadful destruction on nature. Modern society behaves as if it is at war against nature. Soil, forests, oceans and animals are treated as if they have no integrity and no meaning. All this, we agree.

But where I part company with you is in the methods used to deal with this violence. People like you at Earth First! in the UK and in the USA seem to think that you can overcome violence with more violence. Your actions give the impression that by inflicting destruction on people, or the property of people, who are violent to nature, you will be able to transform the situation. I disagree with this position entirely.

I disagree on practical as well as philosophical grounds. Let us start with the practical. The forces you are fighting against are much more powerful, better trained and have greater resources than a small band of militant, radical activists can ever muster. The police, army and the courts have years of experience in the field of law and order – they are fully equipped to suppress your actions. Police can handle violent protesters more easily, because they are trained to do it, whereas they don't know how to handle non-violent protesters. Therefore, the success of violent methods is doubtful.

You may enjoy short-term TV exposure and media headlines, but even the media are pillars of the polluting society. They will sensationalise your actions and present your case with distortions. Furthermore, only a small number of people are ever going to feel able to use violent methods. So you are limiting the number of participants who can join your actions. If non-violent techniques of protest were used, many more people would be able to join you. So, by resorting to violence, you are reducing the scope of people's

participation.

There is no real distinction between violence to people and violence to property. Violence is ultimately violence. Your opponents are inflicting violence on nature; they might also claim that you are using violence to natural property. But even if you were successful in your violent methods, it is, in my view, philosophically, morally and ethically wrong. Fire cannot extinguish fire. Violence cannot bring an end to violence, in fact violence breeds more violence.

The ends do not justify the means. In conventional thinking, the police and army use violence because they believe that the ultimate ends are right. Also, industrial and technological society uses an unecological means of extraction, production and consumption because they believe that, in the end, this will benefit humanity. So it is very easy to have lofty aims and use unecological or violent means to achieve those aims. That, in my view, is flawed. The means must be compatible with the ends. If we are critical of the industrial society using the wrong means, destructive means and unecological means, then how can you justify violent actions to create a more ecologically sustainable society?

All wars have been justified by their perpetrators on the grounds that they were acting for the greater good, and for peace. But that greater good or peace is hardly ever achieved. In the meantime, terrible atrocities are committed. Therefore I believe that Earth First! and other militant green groups who are fighting for animal rights, or the rights of the Earth, should declare their total adherence and commitment to non-violence. That will earn them a greater number of supporters and followers and they will also be more effective.

We have precedents to prove that non-violent actions are effective. Take the example of Mahatma Gandhi. His non-violent, non-co-operation with the British became so popular and powerful that in the end, the British had to end their colonial rule in India. A similar example was set by Martin Luther King and the movement for civil rights. Because of that movement, a number of new laws and regulations were enacted to reduce racialism.

Similar non-violent actions in our time should be able to create pressure on governments, businesses and industry to reduce their obsession with economic growth.

This kind of non-violent action requires a campaign to educate the masses, so that large numbers of people are prepared to participate in consumer boycotts and even court arrest. The non-violent way is a good practical tactic, as well as a good philosophy, but above all, non-violence is a way of life. We cannot merely use non-violence as a means of protest – we have to learn to live non-violently, even if we are not able to practise non-violence 100 per cent, our commitment to non-violence must be unconditional.

I hope you will consider the use and practice of non-violence in a more creative and positive way, rather than dismiss it as mere idealism.

Satish Kumar

NO

EVER BE JUSTIFIED IN THE STRUGGLE?

BOWERS ROLL UP THEIR SLEEVES.

Dear Satish,

I would never dismiss non-violence as mere idealism. I think it is a good and beautiful path to follow. It is, in fact, one that I still follow up to a point, and I will come to that point later. I agree with the practical arguments you have given for non-violent activism. We can never challenge the state on a physical level; we would be demonised by the media, as well as physically destroyed. Any attempt to challenge the state's monopoly on violence would, quite literally, be suicide. All this is true for contemporary Britain. We live in an imperfect democracy where people can still persuade business and government, if they slog long enough and hard enough.

I disagree with you, however, on philosophical grounds, as well as with your definition of violence. But first, I'd like to set you straight on a few facts about Earth First! We have never advocated or engaged in any form of violence. Ever since it was started in this country, Earth First! has been a movement based upon non-violent direct action and civil disobedience. We have attracted thousands of people to engage in non-violent direct action in defence of the Earth and never injured a single person.

I believe that violence can only be committed towards living, feeling things. Surely, something must feel violated before we can say that violence has been used against it. Machines that are built for the sole purpose of raping nature cannot feel pain. Swords do not weep as they are turned into ploughshares. Their owners may feel aggravated and inconvenienced but I doubt that they feel pain. Property should only be destroyed if no living thing is going to be hurt. The friction that ecological sabotage causes within that great abusive machine we call progress is not only needed, it is great therapy for tired and weary environmentalists. A society which values property more than life may define sabotage as violence, but it, and you, are wrong to do so.

I cannot make an unconditional commitment to non-violence. On a personal level, as an unashamed meat eater, it would be hypocritical. On a political level, I can't do it because I think it has limitations. I once believed, like Gandhi, that allowing myself to be physically hurt by my opponents would provoke respect and humanity in them. A few good kickings later I quickly forgot that idea! There are people in this world whose humanity is buried so deep that it would take a millennium for it to come to the surface. I therefore retain my right to defend myself. It is a right that each and every one of us has.

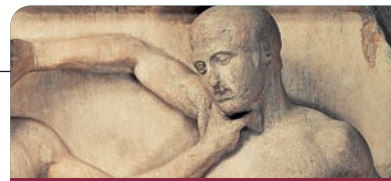
You are right that means and ends must be compatible. Violent struggle does indeed create a violent

society. But the same, sadly, cannot be said of non-violence for one very important reason: humans are naked apes who, by nature, are prone to being violent and domineering. Nuclear weapons in Gandhi's India, and Martin Luther King's America, with its death penalty, racial violence and gun culture are hardly what I would call long-term campaign successes. Nature itself, for all its symbiosis and beauty, is often a very violent thing and human nature reflects it. Predators eat prey, and prey animals defend themselves – that's just the way it is. We, too, are part of that world, not above or below it. We follow the same natural laws, and those laws also apply to political struggle.

Predatory capitalism sees nature as its prey. Indigenous peoples, the human component of the ecosystem, are also often targets of abuse and resisters to the attack. Native resistance in the 'wild west', or armed Zapatistas in Mexico, are examples of violent self-defence that are entirely justified. I hope I am never forced to do it, but I cannot condemn anybody that does. Crazy Horse may not have beaten the US cavalry, but I cannot condemn his actions, just as I cannot condemn the Mohawk of Oka in Quebec, who violently and successfully defended their sacred white pines in more recent times.

As a Romani activist, I believe that the struggle for cultural diversity is intimately linked to the fight for biological diversity. 500,000 of my people died in Nazi death camps. Nazi forces had detailed intelligence about the location of British Gypsy encampments prior to the Battle of Britain, and had there been a German invasion, my grandparents would have been on one of the first cross-channel shipments to Auschwitz. As much as I hate war, I for one am glad that British forces violently defended Britain at that time. I am equally indebted to the thousands of Romani partisans who used their knowledge of stealthy living to fight and wear down the Nazi war machine. Environmentalists, ultimately, have always got somewhere to go to when the bulldozers win the day. We have the luxury of choosing when to fight. But when you, personally, are the object of annihilation, when you are the hunted, non-violence is a luxury that cannot be afforded.

Jake Bowers



DEBATE



JO MACLEURE

Jake Bowers is a Romani activist and writer.

He co-founded Earth First! UK in 1991, and has recently completed a journey around Europe in a traditional Romany wagon.

YES



'Most people in the world, like you, will give qualified and conditional support to non-violence. Most people would be non-violent to those who are non-violent to them. What you mean is that you will practise non-violence when it suits you – this is not a very big deal.'

Satish Kumar

Dear Jake,

I am pleased to note that you accept non-violence as a tactical and practical way of campaigning. My point is that non-violence is not something which one can use when it suits.

I would accept that if there was something harmful to people or nature, removing that obstacle is part of non-violent action. For example, Greenpeace believed that GM crops would contaminate and pollute neighbouring farms, therefore with transparency and compassion, they removed the crops. I would consider this within the definition of non-violent action. Similarly, inspiring non-violent action was demonstrated by Julia 'Butterfly' Hill who camped in a redwood tree in California for two years, taking upon herself the pain and inconvenience of being there.

However, I feel that a number of actions taken by EarthFirst!, in the US particularly, don't have a similar commitment to non-violence. Most people in the world, like you, will give qualified and conditional support to non-violence. Most people would be non-violent to those who are non-violent to them. What you mean is that you will practise non-violence when it suits you – this is not a very big deal.

You propose that something must feel violated before we can say that violence has been used against it. My point here is that the people who commit violence are violating themselves.

You say that Gandhi's India and King's America do not follow the path of non-violence. Is that the fault of Gandhi and King? Pacifists during the war became conscientious objectors, even though that did not stop the war. Was that the fault of the pacifists? If we can create a culture of non-violence, if large numbers of people are educated and trained in the practice of non-violence, if the educational establishments, the media and the general social ethos were in favour of non-violence, and if the nations of the world agreed that they would resolve their differences through non-violence, then a huge amount of suffering, destruction and ecological genocide would come to an end. Even if this lofty aim cannot be achieved tomorrow, our efforts should be directed towards that goal.

'Self-defence' is a feeble excuse. All warmongers and dictators use this excuse. The real purpose of violence is that one side wishes to control the other side.

Of course I agree that in human nature both violence and non-violence exist. We harbour a certain amount of hate and love in our hearts. The question is, which side do we wish to cultivate and enhance. At the moment, violence gets the upperhand because we as a society spend an enormous amount of resources on violent techniques.

You are making a very weak defence of violence when you say that nature is violent. Predators prey to survive. Humans prey for greed and control. Who in the animal world spends billions of pounds on

research and producing nuclear weapons? When hunters and gatherers killed for their survival, they did it with humility and respect. Whereas in modern society, violence has become a way of life.

If humans used as little violence as nature does, I would not complain. It is the organised and premeditated violence committed by modern society which is totally unnatural and cause for concern. I am sure you will be against the violence of the established order, but my point is that we cannot pick and choose non-violence. Even though my sympathies are with the oppressed, with the victims and with the natural world, I will stand up for their rights and fight through non-violent means, and I would like you to join me in creating that kind of non-violent world order.

Satish Kumar

Dear Satish,

I'm glad you accept that the destruction of property can sometimes be justified. A similar view prevails when juries acquit activists charged with criminal damage. Thankfully, those jury members possess a sense of justice many judges often seem to lack.

I practise non-violence when it suits the situation. A person once attacked me with a knife. To my surprise, for I was a committed pacifist then, I reacted with an instinctive punch that put that person on the floor long enough for me to take the knife from their hands. This also is not a very big deal and I doubt that Mike Tyson would have been impressed. But just as I do not wish to compete with the sadism of a boxer, I have no wish to compete with the disturbing masochism that some pacifists possess. Your talk of taking pain and inconvenience on reminds me of this. Describing self-defence as a 'feeble excuse' is a kind of inverse machismo, where those who's suffering and martyrdom are greatest come highest in the pecking order. I have no desire to break my back on the wheels of capitalism, or prostrate myself before it. I'd rather break those wheels than be broken upon them. Enduring all the suffering they willingly dispense may make you feel better, it might even result in sainthood, but I doubt that it will actually change anything.

Of course Gandhi and Martin Luther King are not responsible for the violent states of their respective countries. I was merely reflecting upon the depressing fact that the love they talked of does not seem to be as contagious as the hatred they fought. I agree with you that non-violence is something that must be cultivated in a society. It is a seed of hope within what you rightly describe as a society based upon violence. I'm just not absolutist enough to think it has a universal application. Gandhi and King are examples to us all. But they stand alongside advocates of armed resistance like Crazy Horse, Nelson Mandela, Geronimo and Malcolm X in my personal hall of admiration.

To equate the plight of the oppressed with the empire building of dictators is not only insulting to their struggle, it is naïve. Such reasoning places Nelson Mandela on a par with Hitler and Stalin. Similarly, is a woman who kicks a rapist in the groin in an attempt to preserve her dignity as evil as the rapist? I think not. You've hinted that violence for survival is acceptable and that: 'If humans used as little violence as nature does, I would not complain'. This is my point entirely! In survival situations, when genocide or personal destruction is about to occur, violent self-defence is the only course of action. If you agree with this, your commitment to non-violence is actually no more unequivocal than my own.

'Violence is violence', may be a nice phrase, but it is as simplistic as saying that 'power is power'. Power is often used to oppress, but power from above is totally different from the power that comes from within. Personal empowerment is something that transforms the world rather than impoverishing it. I still believe that violence can be used defensively without mutating into an expansive, predatory urge to control and ultimately destroy everything in its path. With great discipline this is possible. There has, for example, been no large-scale lynching of white South Africans since the ANC came to power; instead a process of forgiveness and reconciliation has begun. By exchanging the bullet for the ballot box, they are helping to create a better world order that all of us dream of. The fact that violence played a role in their struggle does not make their victory a hollow one.

Jake Bowers

Dear Jake,

I did not say that the destruction of property is justified – I said that 'if there was something harmful to people or nature, removing that obstacle is part of non-violent action'. There is a profound difference between the two statements. I disapprove of the violent actions which took place in Prague, even though I am in support of protesters against globalisation.

Nelson Mandela is more non-violent than violent. The way he has shown forgiveness is exemplary, but I did not agree with him when he advocated armed struggle. It is not just a question of one place like South Africa – we have oppressed people all over the world. I would like to see all movements against oppression oppose oppression without violence. If the oppressed use the means applied by the oppressors, then when the oppressed come to power they are likely to continue to use violence.

Self-defence is no excuse. The real problem is not such small spontaneous acts of self-defence; the real problem is organised and institutionalised violence which is used in the name of self-defence and ultimately gives birth to weapons of mass destruction.

Somewhere we have to break the chain of violence and create a new culture of non-violence, so that people are trained in schools and colleges to use non-violent techniques to resolve differences. It may be a long journey, but a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.

Your comparison with violence and power is not quite accurate. 'Power over' is violent, 'empowerment within' is non-violent. Power over other people will always corrupt; in the same way, violence to others will always diminish our humanity. We need to move away from the culture of war heroes and even from green warriors, and stop 'fighting' for peace. One cannot fight fire with fire – or violence with violence.

Satish Kumar

Dear Satish,

I agree with a lot of what you say, particularly about the culture of hero worship. One of the reasons we started Earth First! was to encourage ordinary people to use non-violent direct action (NVDA) to save the planet. It was a direct response to the ultimately disempowering images of corporate environmentalists in uniforms heroically buzzing around in ships and helicopters. Earth First! has trained thousands of people, from school kids to pensioners, in NVDA and has always promoted the Gandhian philosophy you believe in. I'd like to state that EF! does not support violence. The support I've given for self-defence is based upon my own personal opinions formed during a decade of grassroots activism.

Fire cannot be fought with fire. Resistance should be like water, and always seek the lowest path. If dialogue is possible, that's great. Why fight when talking may achieve your aims. Most exploiters or oppressors, however, will not engage in dialogue until they see the need to. This is when creative conflict is best used. The greatest advances in democracy have always been made when marginalised people force their participation in processes that deliberately exclude them. If this can be achieved non-violently, that too is wonderful. The velvet revolutions in Eastern Europe prove that it can be done.

But sadly, there are times when non-violence is not enough. Especially when the will of the powerful is simply to exterminate the powerless. Such pressure forces violent action to ensure survival, just as water eventually turns to hot, expanding steam when put in a pressure cooker. The nature of a political struggle must match the conditions that surround it. Malcolm X articulated this well when he said we must liberate ourselves by any means necessary. I hope we never find it necessary to be violent, but let's not be dogmatic enough in our relative good fortune to condemn those who have no choice.

Jake Bowers

'To equate the plight of the oppressed with the empire building of dictators is not only insulting to their struggle, it is naïve. Such reasoning places Nelson Mandela on a par with Hitler and Stalin.'

Jake Bowers



READER OFFER
BREAKDOWN COVER
FROM £32

AA, RAC or ? The environmental choice.

Call 0800 212 810 Today

Quoting reference number 11711002

Established ten years ago as an ethical alternative to the AA and RAC, the ETA offers a wide range of insurance services to its members at extremely competitive prices. The ETA actively campaigns for a sustainable transport system for Britain and also co-ordinates ETA Green Transport Week and National Car Free Day.

www.eta.co.uk

The motoring organisation that won't cost the Earth

INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL ADVICE



Global & Ethical
Investment Advice

Global & Ethical Investment Advice *Money doesn't have to be the root of all evil...*

With ethical investment you can look after your financial future while using companies that are ethically and environmentally sound. GÆIA can give you an independent review of your pension, savings or investments.

INDEPENDENT ETHICAL & GREEN
FUND ADVICE SINCE 1989

CLIENTS NATIONWIDE

Tel: 0161 434 4681 Fax: 0161 445 8421
GÆIA, Investment House, 425 Wilmslow Rd,
Manchester, M20 4AF
Email office@gæia.co.uk
<http://www.gæia.co.uk>

GÆIA is regulated by The Personal Investment Authority



HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE
contact

The Ethical Investment Co-operative Ltd

Scotland

119 Bruntsfield Place
Edinburgh EH10 4EQ
Tel 0131 466 4666
e.mail ethicalmoney@gn.apc.org



England

Vincent House, 15 Victoria Rd
Darlington, Co Durham DL1 5SF
Tel 01325 267228
e.mail greeninvest@gn.apc.org

**SPECIALISTS IN INVESTMENTS THAT
WILL NOT COST THE EARTH**

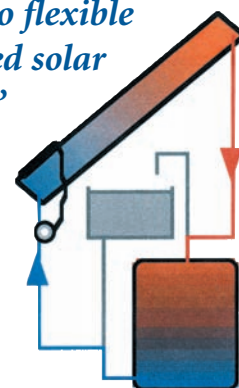
Regulated by the Personal Investment Authority

Solartwin

*at last – affordable
100% solar hot water for
washing and bathing*

*“one large solar panel, two flexible
pipes and a variable speed solar
electric pump – that’s it!”*

- Hotter water
- Works on cold, dull days
- Five year performance warranty
- Easy install: joins to existing pipes
- 100% solar; with solar electric pumping



Self-install kits £1599

(inc 17.5% VAT, ex delivery)

Professionally installed in a day, just £2499
(usual price, inc UK mainland delivery and 5% VAT)

Brochure: 01244 403 404

web: www.solartwin.com email: hi@solartwin.com

GET OUT OF AFRICA

While the West sheds crocodile tears over the plight of Africa, it continues to take advantage of the continent's disunity. The answer, believes Malcolm Tait, lies in the hands of Africans themselves.



Earlier this year, *The Economist* ran an extraordinary examination of Africa. Describing it as 'hopeless', and using Sierra Leone as an example, one of its articles bemoaned the fate of the entire continent's attempts at democratic unity and economic growth, laying much of the blame on the often-eпаuletted shoulders of the continent's 50+ leaders.

'It is not just unlucky coincidence that Africa has had such a poor crop of leaders. Leaders emerge from a society, and they remain a part of it,' it shrugged, damning 700 million people and the way that they live in one deft stroke. 'Does Africa have some inherent character flaw that keeps it backward and incapable of development? Some think so.'¹

The magazine's gross generalisations and stunning stereotyping spurred a howl of disgust from many quarters. 'Your articles,' stated one response, 'reflect the tendency for one sensational story to "epitomise"'



the continent, as you note Sierra Leone does today. This is precisely what prevents the policy-makers and the public from understanding the diversity of a continent more than three times the size of Europe.²

Very true, and *The Economist* is not alone in this approach. It is rare to find more than

one story about Africa appearing on the front page of any national newspaper, even when newsworthy events are happening simultaneously. The deaths in Zimbabwe of white farmers commanded vast acres of UK newsprint before that country's election, but the growing problems in Sierra Leone were held back, while Sudan, Ethiopia and other African stories barely saw the light of day. It is as if news editors can only run one African story at a time: 'Civil war in two parts of the continent and an election at the same time? Let's just run the bloodiest story, and then we've covered Africa'.

Well, good news is no news, we all know that, and African success stories rate a long way down on the priority lists of most general media outlets. Yet to blame *The Economist* and other newspapers for a myopic vision of such a vast continent is only to understand part of what is going on.

For the truth is that, for the time being at least, Africa's problems suit the West. Consider these words. 'We are at a pivotal point in Africa's history.' The speaker is Susan E Rice, US assistant secretary for African Affairs, in a speech in October 1998 to the Meridian International Center/Smithsonian Institution Forum.³ 'Today, Africa stands at a crossroads, a decisive time when its future hangs in the balance... The United States can stand on the sidelines, or we can recognise and act upon our growing interest in a thriving Africa that can take its rightful place on the world stage.'

Rice goes on to list a number of conflicts on the continent, before coming to the hub of her argument.

'Indeed, whether the challenge is adversity or opportunity, the reality is that the end of the Cold War calls for a new paradigm for US policymakers in Africa.' What reality is this? 'America, acting in its own interests, can and must play a constructive role in the region.' To achieve this: 'The Administration is actively supporting emergent democracies in Africa. We do so in full recognition that elections – although necessary – are not sufficient to sustain democratic change. As a result, we are investing also in the institutional foundations upon which lasting democracy thrives'.

ECONOMY RULES

Rice's speech is revealing. International terrorism, drug trafficking, civil unrest and weak democracies are all cited as paramount problems for Africa. AIDS and malaria are shoved right down the list and given scant mention. But then disease is unlikely to affect the careful US businessman doing trade with Africa, whereas terrorism and corruption have more chance of doing so. And this is what it's all about – making Africa more user-friendly. It's no coincidence that although the Middle East

"This is what it's all about – making Africa more user-friendly. It's no coincidence that although the Middle East provides the US with almost 18 per cent of its crude oil, Africa chips in with a further 14 per cent, which is likely to rise to well over 20 per cent before this decade is out."

provides the US with almost 18 per cent of its crude oil, Africa chips in with a further 14 per cent, which is likely to rise to well over 20 per cent before this decade is out.⁴

This mantra is not America's alone. French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, on a tour of former French colonies of West Africa, has stated that democracy needs to be constantly strengthened as 'an essential element of development for poor countries'.⁵ Meanwhile, France has around 6,000 troops permanently stationed on the continent, and 300 'political advisers' working in African governments.

Earlier this year, British and French foreign secretaries Robin Cook and Hubert Védrine visited Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. The two neighbouring countries, each once a part of the former colonial powers' empires, were chosen to host the tour as a

symbol of a cooling of the rivalry between Britain and France in Africa. European rivalry in Africa? Isn't that part of the continent's pillaged past?

Yet it's so much a part of its present and future, too. France is still miffed at its own impotence during and after the Rwandan war, leaving it bereft of a major presence in Central Africa. To help compensate, it has made a significant push into Kenya, emphasising on the way the importance to Kenyans of speaking French. Meanwhile, Britain has made a drive into Côte d'Ivoire, doubling its exports to the country. Franco-British rivalry is still a force in Africa – they just won't let it drop.

It seems that everyone wants a part of Africa still, and is scrapping furiously for economic control there.

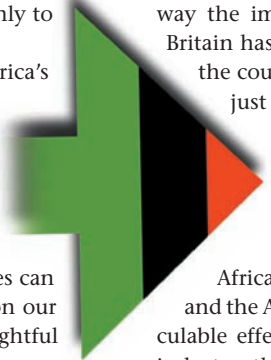
There's only one group of people that's not allowed to get involved – and that's the Africans themselves.

In the four decades of its steadily won independence, Africa has changed mightily: apartheid has fallen in the south, and the Asian influence in the east has risen; AIDS has had an incalculable effect on the continent, and tourism has become a major industry; the founding fathers have almost all passed on, and a new theme of regional co-operation has been developed. So much has changed, yet the political map of Africa – Eritrea's breakaway from Ethiopia apart, has stayed more or less the same. Even Europe, that long-evolving collection of empires and democracies, has introduced

new boundaries within itself in recent times. Discarding the inherited patchwork straitjacket of its nation-states may yet be the route to Africa's future. It is up to the rest of the world to let that troubled continent exercise its right to find out for itself.

Take the Democratic Republic of Congo. Possibly the greatest national absurdity that hangs over from the colonial carve-up of Africa, the country formerly known as Zaire is a monstrous beast that sprawls over nearly 8 per cent of the continent, lapping the Ruwenzori mountains in the east, and dipping its toe in the Atlantic waters in the west.

It is a bizarre lump of a nation whose very borders bear testament to the demands of colonial greed. Belgium's major contribution to African management from afar, the country, much of which is rich in mineral resource, tails off into the south-west because its original owners needed to get their pickings to the coast and away. But with the Zaire river – the country's border in the west – emptying at the



Despot: Zairian leader Mobutu.

REUTERS

coast through Portuguese land, the Belgians won the right to the land right up to the sea, thus splitting Portugal's ownership into two. After independence, this structure

remained, Angola owning a small chunk of mainland Africa on the other side of the river.

For years, the mighty Zaire was run by a man whose name is among the founding fathers of modern Africa in fact, but definitely not in spirit. Mobutu Sese Seko (see box page 28) pillaged his country cheerfully until his overthrow in 1997. He was vanquished by the hitherto unknown Laurent Kabila, whose 30-year opposition to the despot had begun when Mobutu disposed of and assassinated the first president of Zaire, the pan-Africanist Patrice Lumumba. No one expected Kabila to win once he started his seven-month push on the capital, Kinshasha, yet once he did, hopes were high that stability would come to the troubled Central African country. Instead, three years on, elections still lie on a distant horizon, opposition parties are silenced, over 100,000 Hutus have mysteriously disappeared, and foreign aid has vanished.

Kabila has turned to his neighbouring countries for help, both financial and military. DR Congo's great potential mineral wealth has guaranteed that many of them have weighed in. Countries such as Zimbabwe and Namibia have spent so much on sending troops to the region, that their own citizens are feeling the pinch back at home. Kabila is making private promises to prominent people. Congolese are complaining that life was actually better under Mobutu. Disaster looms.

Yet is any of this surprising? DR Congo would never have existed had Belgium not put its flag on those ridiculous boundaries. A land that no man or woman could or should control, reaching as it does across former tribal grounds, attempting to unite groups of people who have little in common with each other, is a land that needs rethinking. There will be further war, that is certain. In all probability, other African countries will get involved. And without interference from the West, if DR Congo doesn't work, then Africa will carve up the land itself, resulting in an entirely new set of boundaries. Perhaps there will be no boundaries at all. Perhaps, given time, Africa will sort out its own way of managing an unmanageable area of land, turning it into a system of co-operatives, or forming cross-continental alliances to administer and share one vast and rich region, or returning it to the many peoples who find themselves lumped within its crazy boundaries. Perhaps the Congo is one war away from being solved.

Unfortunately, the West will not allow this to happen. It will attempt to maintain the existing pattern of the nation-state that currently exists. The problems of the region currently called DR Congo will continue, because there's wealth in them thar hills, and it's much easier to be able to do deals and get access to it when you only have to woo a single desperate president who is tied in to the usual requirements of aid acceptance, UN membership, global trade and the rest.

The horror of all this is that DR Congo will see much more bloodshed in the years to come, whatever anyone, inside or outside of Africa, tries to do, and it's not alone. But the old colonial creations of

land masses that suited their proprietors' export and military needs have been examined frequently in retrospect, and history has consequently carried much of the can for Africa's current welfare. The conclusion is always the same: the colonial powers may have made a mess of the political grid that now cages Africa, but history can't be undone, so it's now a matter of making the most of what we've got.

This, of course, is rubbish. Africa is a mighty land, with a mighty history. Like the rest of the world, its people spent millennia working out their own way of life, some moving constantly across the desert wastes, some forming empires which rose and fell, others carving out an existence in a single environment which they maintained for centuries. The Malian empire, the astonishing edifices at Great Zimbabwe, the expansion of the Bantu people's range: the continent's history is rich with movement and human endeavour, as dozens of different peoples sorted out their own best ways of developing a sustainable relationship with their own lands. There were occasional incursions from outside – the Roman advance into the north, and

the slave trade on the east coast among the most notable examples – but Africans, in the land where man was born, were largely left alone to get on with it.

Then, in the space of just a few decades, the West moved in, stole people, carved up the continent, and made sure that thousands of years of evolving societal life were felled in a single chop. And now, only a couple or so lifetimes on from those days, Africa has been left

with a grid, structure, dependence, political dogma, financial entrapment, social reshaping, concept of nationhood, pillage of resources and series of beholden leaders that it never asked for, didn't want, and certainly never, ever needed.

None of this is to idealise or romanticise Africa's past, or even to suggest that the continent needs to find a way of returning to it: many of the links to yesteryear have been permanently severed. Yet the assumption that a blip of a couple of centuries in a history as long as man's own should have created the only possible existing continental order of Africa is arrogant, blinkered, and typical of the West, that part of the world that wants to recreate everyone else in its own likeness.

For many people, the current discussions about the possibility of an African Union fall firmly into that trap. Looking across the Mediterranean at the attempts by the EU to coalesce its members into a mighty force to take on the rest of the world's economic superpowers, Union-supportive national leaders are hoping to be able to do the same with Africa. In 1991, the Organisation of African Unity agreed in principle a treaty calling for a continental parliament. 🐘



I have a dream: The young idealist Kwame Nkrumah.

'Perhaps, given time, Africa will sort out its own way of managing the Democratic Republic of Congo... Perhaps the Congo is one war away from being solved.'



✱ The deadline set, however, was 2025, a magnificent stall of 34 years. Perhaps this was because, when it comes down to it, parliaments that attempt to govern the lives of 700 million people are ultimately what no one wants. In 1999, however, the Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi, called for the concept to be revisited, although moderating it somewhat into a United States of Africa. The Organisation of African Unity approved a blueprint for an African Union based on the EU model at its annual summit in Togo this July, but the timing of this event relies upon ratification by two-thirds of the OAU's 53 members.

Whether this union ever comes to pass remains to be seen, but as the concept has only received minor, nervous support over the years, it seems unlikely in the near future. Mass unions are often the brain-children of those who wish to rule them, and it is no coincidence that the current proponent of a form of single African rule is Gaddafi, whose lifelong attempts to head up the Arab world have now been dropped in favour of good PR with the West.

This tentative prodding at the inert body of African unity is a far

cry from the heady days of the early sixties, when the independent winds of change were gusting through the continent, and nation after nation was taking on the rule of self-government. The first of the founding fathers of Africa, Kwame Nkrumah, who took the reins of Ghana in 1957, was an avowed pan-Africanist. His belief in the potential strength of his continent knew few limits. 'Never before have a people had within their grasp so great an opportunity for developing a continent endowed with so much wealth,' he said in 1961⁶.

'Individually, the independent states of Africa, some of them potentially rich, others poor, can do little for their people. Together, by mutual help, they can achieve much. But the economic development of the continent must be planned and pursued as a whole. A loose confederation designed only for economic co-operation would not provide the necessary unity of purpose. Only a strong political union can bring about full and effective development of our natural resources for the benefit of our people.'

'The emergence of such a mighty stabilising force in this strife-worn world,' he continued, 'should be regarded not as the shadowy dream of a visionary, but as a practical proposition, which the peo-

TWO WINNERS, MILLIONS OF LOSERS: The leaders who took criminal advantage of their protected positions.

Not all Africans have been unable to benefit from the maintenance of the nation state and its patronage by the major world powers. Joseph Desiré Mobutu, the president of Zaire from 1965 to 1997, preceded his own notorious reign with a successful coup over pan-African prime minister Patrice Lumumba, who was placed under house arrest and later found murdered. There is evidence to implicate the American CIA's complicity in Mobutu's arrival, and so a political lifetime of cunningly managed alliances with world powers began.

In 1970, Mobutu held an election to which no other political parties were invited, and thus became the 'duly elected' president required by his international friends. He took on for himself the title of Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu wa za Banga, which officially translated as 'the all-powerful warrior who, because of his endurance and inflexible will to win, will go from conquest to conquest leaving fire in his wake'. Perhaps someone should have been clued in as to what was going on.

Yet Mobutu had spotted the perfect opportunity to force the rest of the world to ignore his internal political shortcomings. The mighty Zaire sat firmly in the middle of an Africa which in the sixties and seventies was being tugged by the forces of capitalism in the west and communism in the east. America saw the country as a potential barrier against the threat of strong left-wing incursions from the east of the continent, and the Soviet Union viewed it as an important linchpin to its own hopes of bringing socialism, at least, to Africa. Mobutu played his hand cannily, and was a friend to both.

In one notable example, to the east he portrayed himself as a mediator for peace in would-be communist Angola; to the west, in return for military support in the quashing of rebellions in Zaire, he provided a base for troops who were engaged in the fight against communism in oil-rich Angola.

With Mobutu consolidating power, and the rest of the non-African world fawning over him, it might have seemed that his nation could have a chance



Empire dreams: Central African terror, Bokassa.

of getting somewhere. Not so. Where Mobutu could have brought his country prosperity and stability, the man simply pillaged and then ignored his lands bringing ruination and despair. At one point in the 1980s, his personal fortune was conservatively estimated to be around \$4 billion, and he routinely imprisoned anyone who dared speak against him. His human rights record was abysmal, but for over 20 years the world largely turned a blind eye.

By the early nineties, communism was on its last legs. Russia didn't care about him any more, and the US was starting to ignore his requests for financial help, belatedly showing an interest in his bank balance and corruption. He was finally overthrown in 1997, and died of cancer while in hiding. For over 20 years, he had steadily run his country into the ground – and the world did nothing about it.

Perhaps even madder was the case of Jean-Bédel Bokassa, president of the Central African Republic from 1962 to 1976. His presidency ended that year for the simple reason that he then changed the name of the country to the Central African Empire, and declared himself Emperor. Bokassa's human rights record and

corrupt greed more than rivalled Mobutu's own – in 1979 he was to command his troops (borrowed, incidentally, from Zaire), to crush a demonstration in which 350 people died. The demonstration was by schoolchildren and their parents, who were peacefully marching against his edict that all their schoolclothes be bought from his own personal factory.

Yet despite his bestial ways, his country's former colonial power, France, turned up at his coronation, and helped finance it, and cheered him on. He was, after all, the major representative of French influence in Central Africa.

Mobutu and Bokassa are just two examples of puppet leaders who have been given free reign to destroy their own people by the international powers who protect them, and who hope in the long run to maximise their own opportunities in Africa.

ples of Africa can, and should, translate into reality. This is our chance. We must act now.⁷

Strong words, but perhaps they missed the point. Africa may be a single continent, it may be referred to by many almost as if it were a single country, but in reality, it's a geographical coincidence filled with a huge variety of different peoples trying to get by in their own way. Even the former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere, a committed socialist, African unionist, and lifelong friend of Nkrumah has had his doubts. 'I tried to get East Africa to unite before independence,' he told the *New Internationalist* in 1970. 'When we failed in this I was wary about Kwame's continental approach. We corresponded profusely on this.'

Today, the notion of pan-Africanism covers the entire African diaspora, embracing all the people of the world who can trace their recent roots back to Africa. The notion of being part of the African 'race' has never been stronger.

Meanwhile, as all this goes on, Jaabe So has more important matters on his mind. Jaabe is African, sure; Senegalese, certainly; but the most important regional label to him is that he lives in and belongs to Kounghani. The town was founded by So's ancestors in 1720 on the left bank of the Senegal River. In the mid-seventies, So set up an independent farmers' association in the region as a bulwark against the state's increasing dependence upon foreign aid. Time and again over the last quarter century, the Senegalese government has attempted to draw the members of the foundation into the national agricultural programme, to keep its western puppeteers happy, and time and again So has resisted. In consequence, the members of the Federation, who through donations without strings attached, and an insistence on agricultural processes which suit their land and their numbers, thrived. They are not alone. Similar groups are beginning to appear in other parts of Africa, each fiercely refusing to have anything to do with their nation's reliance upon aid and the western political model. Could there lie here the seeds of Africa's future?

In 1996, in collaboration with his recently deceased wife Adrian Adams, compiled a history of his region and Foundation, *A Claim to Land by the River* (Clarendon Press Oxford). He wrote: 'At the time of Independence, if we'd had our wits about us, we should have become independent as nations: Fuuta, Bundu, Gajaaga, each with their own ruler answerable to the people. We should not have agreed to being all thrown together, so that a few could prey on all. All the talk about democracy is a lie.'

His conclusion: 'There is no democracy now, nor will there ever be, unless it is based... upon our father's house, upon what we have.' ♦

Malcolm Tait is the managing editor of *The Ecologist*.

References on page 65.

DEMOCRACY IN ITS PUREST FORM

'My later notions of leadership were profoundly influenced by observing the regent and his court. I watched and learned from the tribal meetings that were regularly held at the Great Place. These were not scheduled, but were called as needed, and were held to discuss national matters such as drought, the culling of cattle, policies ordered by the magistrates, or new laws decreed by the government. All Thembus were free to come – and a great many did, on horseback or on foot.

'On these occasions, the regent was surrounded by a group of councillors of high rank who functioned as the regent's parliament and judiciary. They were wise men who retained the knowledge of tribal history and custom in their heads and whose opinions carried great weight.

'Letters advising these chiefs and headmen of a meeting were dispatched from the regent, and soon the Great Place became alive with important visitors and travellers from all over Thembuland. The guests would gather in the courtyard in front of the regent's house and he would open the meeting by thanking everyone for coming and explaining why he had summoned them. From that point on, he would not utter another word until the meeting was nearing its end.

'Everyone who wanted to speak did so. It was democracy in its purest form. There may have been a hierarchy of importance among the speakers, but everyone was heard, chief and subject, warrior and medicine man, shopkeeper and farmer, landowner and labourer. People spoke without interruption and the meetings lasted for many hours. The foundation of self-government was that all men were free to voice their opinions and equal in their value as citizens.

'A great banquet was served during the day, and I often gave myself a bellyache by eating too much while listening to speaker after speaker. I noticed how some speakers rambled and never seemed to get to the point. I grasped how others came to the matter at hand directly, and who made a set of arguments succinctly and cogently. I observed how some speakers used emotion and dramatic language, and tried to move the audience with such techniques, while other speakers were sober and even, and shunned emotion.

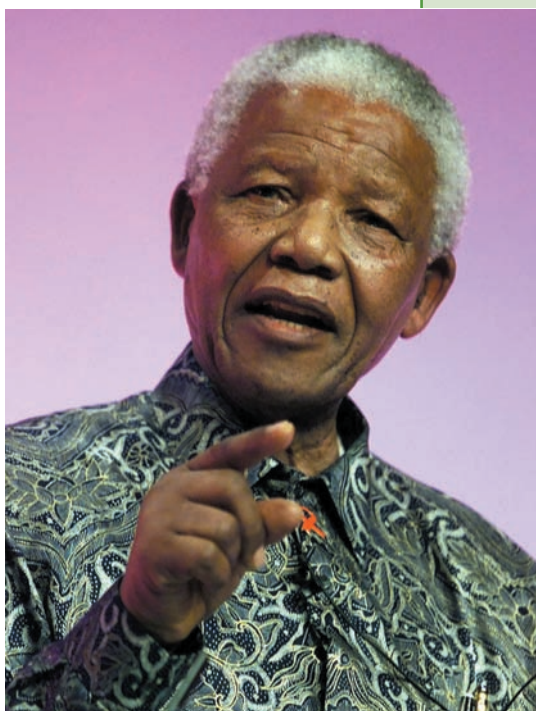
'At first, I was astonished by the vehemence – and candour – with which people criticised the regent. He was not above criticism – in fact, he was often the principal target of it. But no matter how flagrant the charge, the regent simply listened, not defending himself, showing no emotion at all.

'The meetings would continue until some consensus was reached. They ended in unanimity or not all. Unanimity, however, might be an agreement to disagree, to wait for a more propitious time to propose a solution.

'Democracy meant all men were to be heard, and a decision was taken together as a people. Majority rule was a foreign notion. A minority was not to be crushed by a majority.

'Only at the end of the meeting, as the sun was setting, would the regent speak. His purpose was to sum up what had been said and form some consensus among the diverse opinions. But no conclusion was forced on people who disagreed. If no agreement could be reached another meeting would be held. At the very end of the council, a praise singer or poet would deliver a panegyric to the ancient Kings, and a mixture of compliments to and satire on the present chiefs, and the audience, led by the regent, would roar with laughter.'

Nelson Mandela, from *Long Walk to Freedom*, published in paperback by Little Brown & Co



REUTERS

BUYING UP BRITAIN

The big supermarket chains claim that they have achieved their pre-eminence in Britain by providing people with what they want. Here, George Monbiot shows that the key to much of their success lies not within the market but outside it.

British supermarkets enjoy more political influence than almost any other corporate sector in Britain. Their huge financial muscle helps them to bend both local and national government to their will. This political power appears to have enabled them to trade on terms which would surely not be tolerated in any other area of British commercial life. They offer convenience and choice in their stores only by destroying convenience and choice everywhere else.

During the 1990s, according to the consultancy Verdict, the number of specialist shops fell by 22 per cent in Britain.¹ The smallest ones were hit hardest: between 1990 and 1996, shops with annual sales of less than £100,000 declined by 36 per cent.² Between 1986 and 1997, by contrast, superstore numbers rose from 457 to 1,102.³ While most towns have suffered substantial losses of shops, the impact has been even greater in the countryside: at the end of 1997 the Rural Development Commission revealed that 42 per cent of rural parishes no longer possessed a shop.

This is plainly not due to an overall reduction in trade: between 1992 and 1997 retail food sales in Britain increased by £18.6 billion, or 30 per cent.⁴ But while small shops lost 8.5 per cent of their trade between 1990 and 1996, large retailers gained 18 per cent.⁵ The two trends – of the decline in small independent shops and the expansion of the superstore chains – appear to be linked.

In 1998, the government published the most comprehensive assessment of the impact of superstores ever undertaken. Its findings were unequivocal. Food shops in market towns lost between 13 and 50 per cent of their trade when a supermarket opened at the edge of the town centre or out of town. The result is ‘the closure of some town centre food retailers; increases in vacancy levels; and a general decline in the quality of the environment of the centre... Even where town centre food retailers suffer an impact, but do not subsequently close, there may still be a concern that this will lead to a general decline in activity elsewhere in the centre, and adversely affect the vitality and viability of the centre.’⁶

GET A JOB

The superstores’ impact on jobs is just as disastrous. In 1997, Safeway announced that it would create 8,000 new jobs over the following two years. In 1998, Tesco boasted that it would boost British employment by 10,000. In 2000 it claimed it would create a further 4,000 jobs by opening grocery stores in Esso filling stations and another 7,000 through online sales. In 1999, Sainsbury’s maintained that the

hundreds of new ‘Sainsbury’s Local’ stores it planned to open would generate 10,000 jobs. In 2000 Asda promised it would create 27,000 jobs within five years. But these claims are wrong.

The refutation of them comes from the most embarrassing source: one of the superstores’ own research organisations, the National Retail Planning Forum. It is financed, among others, by Sainsbury, Tesco, Marks and Spencer, Boots and John Lewis (which owns Waitrose). Its report undermines every claim the Forum’s own funders have made.⁷

The Forum studied the changes that had taken place in the areas surrounding 93 new superstores. Its analysis, published in 1998, found that there is ‘strong evidence that new out-of-centre superstores have a negative net impact on retail employment up to 15km away’. Total employment in food selling within that radius, it reported, decreased by 5.2 per cent. As ‘retail employment actually increased by 0.1 per cent in GB outside the 15km catchment areas’, then ‘this decline could only be due to the new superstores in the sample’. ‘In other words,’ the report continued, ‘if the superstores had not opened, employment would have risen. All of the reduction in employment that occurred in the catchment areas is attributable to superstore openings.’ The 93 stores the researchers studied were responsible for the net loss of 25,685 employees: every time a large supermarket opened, in other words, 276 people lost their jobs.⁸

This shouldn’t be surprising. The superstores routinely boast about their ‘efficiency’: economies of scale and clever stock control and delivery systems allow them to shift a great deal of merchandise with very few staff. The New Economics Foundation has calculated that every £50,000 spent in small local shops creates one job, whereas £250,000 needs be spent in superstores for the same result.⁹ The supermarkets’ expansion relies not only upon increasing the total volume of trade but also upon seizing trade from the economically less efficient – and socially more efficient – employers in the independent sector.

FREE PARKING

The free parking the superstores offer their customers is subsidised by everyone in Britain. National Traffic Surveys show that the distance travelled to go shopping increased by 14 per cent between 1989/91 and 1994/96, as the retail chains brought down the cost of driving by offering free, convenient parking.¹⁰ This impact is not confined to

‘The superstores’ buying power, their demands for standardised, easily gradable produce and their centralised distribution systems have resulted in a profligate use of transport. Out-of-season Coxes are imported 14,000 miles from New Zealand during our own apple season, while our produce lies rotting on the ground. In France, 90 per cent of the apples sold in supermarkets are produced domestically. In the UK, the figure is just 25 per cent.’

out-of-town superstores: a survey of shopping journeys in inner London shows that just eight per cent of people visiting high street shops arrived by car, compared to 60 per cent of those shopping at a Sainsbury superstore in a similar area.¹¹ The result is more congestion, pollution and danger on the roads, which is often felt disproportionately by the people who cannot afford cars themselves.

The government recognises that all of us are paying for the superstores' free parking, and in 1997 the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) quietly resolved to do something about this. John Prescott planned to include a tax on out-of-town parking in his white paper on integrated transport. Lawson Lucas Mendelsohn, a lobbying company whose directors all worked for the Labour Party in opposition, warned Tesco that the tax was being considered, more than a year before the white paper was published.¹² Tesco began lobbying. In February 1998, it also made a £12 million donation to the Millennium Dome. While Tesco denies that this was part of a deal with the government, the gift must have done its relationship with Labour no harm. In May 1998, Tesco representatives met John Prescott.¹³ His white paper, which was due to appear imminently, was delayed. By the time it was published, in July of that year, the parking tax proposal had been dropped. Instead the paper called for 'a closer partnership' between local authorities and major retailers to 'identify appropriate measures funded by the private sector to reduce car dependency for access to these developments.'¹⁴

Central government, in other words, would take no action, while contributions from the superstores would remain voluntary.

Supermarkets are similarly adept at making society pay their costs of distribution. The big chains are reluctant to hold much stock, as storage is expensive. Instead they encourage the farms and food manufacturers which supply them to store the produce on their behalf, and operate a 'just-in-time' delivery system.

'This', John Breach,
head of the British
Independent

Fruit Growers' Association, observes, 'frequently leads to very environmentally unfriendly, refrigerated juggernauts visiting farms daily, often collecting just a few pallets of produce.'¹⁵

The superstores' buying power, their demands for standardised, easily gradable produce and their centralised distribution systems have resulted in a profligate use of transport. Out-of-season Coxes are imported 14,000 miles from New Zealand during our own apple season, while our produce lies rotting on the ground. In France, 90 per cent of the apples sold in supermarkets are produced domestically. In the UK, the figure is just 25 per cent.¹⁶ A study by the environmental organisation The Safe Alliance found that some of the vegetables being sold in two superstores on the outskirts of Evesham in Worcestershire had been grown just one mile from the town, but before they reached the shelves they had been trucked first to Hereford, then to Dyfed, then to a distribution depot in Manchester, from which they were delivered back to Evesham. The same report noted that all Safeway's dairy produce passes through a single depot in Warwickshire, before being trucked all over the country.¹⁷

Sainsbury, Safeway, Tesco Distribution, Asda and Marks and Spencer all are or have recently been members of the Freight Transport Association, the lobby group representing the interests of road hauliers. It campaigns against restrictions on lorries travelling through residential areas at night, against constraints on the size of lorries and for increases in the speed limit for large lorries on small country roads.¹⁸

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

While they destroy smaller traders by uncompetitive means, the superstores' relations with each other are not quite as red in tooth and claw as their advertising suggests. In 1996, 



Tesco, Sainsbury, Asda, Safeway, Waitrose and Marks and Spencer as well as 12 of Britain's biggest food manufacturers came together to draw up a pact. They would co-operate on promotions, product launches and distribution.¹⁹ This is not the first time that Britain's biggest retailers have worked together at the expense of their rivals. In 1993, Costco, an American 'discount club' offering goods to its members at prices considerably lower than the superstores charge, sought to open a number of giant stores in Britain. Sainsbury, Tesco and Safeway jointly hired a public relations agency and a planning consultancy in the hope of generating political pressure to prevent the stores from being built. They also took Costco to court, arguing that planning restrictions should be tightened in order to prevent its warehouses from receiving permission. They warned that planning permission for the discount stores would blight the landscape with 'unattractive trading sheds and huge car parks', while 'high streets would suffer'.²⁰ The chains which had lobbied for years to make planning permission for out-of-town outlets easier to obtain had united to prevent it from being granted, on the grounds that it would cause precisely the kinds of damage for which they themselves are most responsible.

Yet Tesco, according to its Clubcard magazine, is a robust defender of the local economy. 'You may be worried,' its readers were told, 'that buying meat, fish, dairy, fruit and veg from a supermarket means local suppliers lose out. You needn't be. At Tesco we support local farmers wherever possible.'²¹

It is not easy to see how Tesco can make this claim. A study of 81 small shops threatened by the opening of a new Tesco outside Saxmundham in Suffolk found that they stocked products from some 200 local producers: farmers, smallholders, wine, cheese and jam makers, beekeepers and bakers.²² The small shops, in other words, were a cornerstone of both the local retail economy and the local wholesale economy.

Tesco, by contrast, in common with the other superstore chains, buys most of its produce from a small number of very large suppliers. According to market analysts, the big chains are attempting to reduce the number of their horticultural suppliers to no more than three for each product: every company will buy from just three cauliflower producers, for example, or three apple growers, and their produce will be distributed all over the country.²³

The growers have to carry all of the costs of packaging and labelling the food they supply, according to the precise instructions they receive from the stores, which may change their specifications at a moment's notice. If the farmers slip up, they can expect to be severely punished.

A letter from Asda to a growers' co-operative at the end of 1998 complained that products arriving at its depot carried the previous week's prices. 'I ask that you focus your efforts on the processes that

are in place,' it insisted, 'and must warn you that any further breach will result in the flat rate charge of £10,000 per product error, and potentially loss of business.'²⁴

At the end of the year, both bakers and fruit growers supplying the superstores may be forced to pay a 'rebate' to the chain they supply: if they refuse they will not be asked to sell their produce to that company again.²⁵ The chairman of La Forneia, a firm that sells bread to one of the superstores, has revealed that when the chain he sells to is asked to make a donation to a charity, it will turn to him or one of its other suppliers and instruct them to hand over the money in the superstore's name.²⁶ The charity takes it in the belief that it had been

provided by the superstore, and the grateful disabled children, cancer patients or injured pets are pictured in the local papers with the superstore's beaming manager.

In November 1999, Safeway sent the farmers it bought from a notice entitled 'Good news from Safeway'. Its 'new promotional strategy' would 'deliver a much improved level of availability for your product'.

There was a catch, however.

'To take part in the programme we request a contribution from you per product line of £20,000. We look forward to you joining us in this campaign, and anticipating a favourable response, we will take the liberty of sending you an

invoice on Friday of this week. Thank you in advance for your support.'²⁷

While the supermarket owes nothing to the farmers, farmers often find themselves locked into selling food to the supermarket, simply because the collapsing wholesale market has left them with no options. The supermarket can gradually reduce the price it pays until the farmer's business folds, whereupon it switches to a new supplier, who is less aware of the hidden costs of the relationship. A survey by the *Daily Mail* revealed that apples in the superstores were marked up by as much as 198 per cent, while eggs commanded prices up to 439 per cent higher than were paid to the farmers.²⁸ Some of the big chains ensure that the producer's options remain limited: in some cases manufacturers have been warned that if they also supply their goods to the discount clubs, they will lose their trade with the superstore.²⁹

The contempt with which the supermarkets treat their suppliers also extends to local people. The chains, extraordinarily, have been able to continue growing by using new out-of-town planning regulations to force through developments within town and village centres, in the face of tremendous local opposition. In Gerrards Cross in south Buckinghamshire, Tesco's application received 39 letters of support and 3,922 letters of objection. But the planning inspector ruled that refusing planning permission 'would be ... a significant backtracking on encouragement given in published *Planning Policy Guidance Notes* to the promotion of new retail investment in established town centres'.³⁰ There is some evidence to back this assertion: the new planning guidance restricting out-of-town stores notes that



Buying power: Lord Sainsbury, whose retail chain Sainsbury is one of the three sponsors of the Town and Country Planning Association's inquiry into the future of planning – a subject in which the superstore chain has more than a passing interest.

'The Government wishes local planning authorities to take a positive role in partnership with the private sector, in identifying additional sites for retail development'.³¹ This could be interpreted to mean that new superstores must be permitted in town, whatever local opinion or local need might be.

The supermarkets conduct much of their lobbying through their trade association, the British Retail Consortium. According to its director general, 'BRC is no longer an organisation that simply reacts to government proposed legislation or white papers but sets out to help shape them. By creating significant links with special advisers, policy specialists and the leading think tanks, the intention is to work in a non-confrontational way so we are involved at the beginning of any legislative process'.³²

Its tactics appear to be successful. It has persuaded the government to allow 41-tonne lorries onto British roads and to consider its request for 44-tonne trucks to be permitted in a few years' time. It claims to have played an important role in the government's decision not to tax out-of-town car parking spaces.³³ Speakers at the BRC's annual dinner have included the Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, the Conservative Chancellor Kenneth Clarke, John Major and Tony Blair. The Consortium's submission on the minimum wage 'was read by Chancellor Gordon Brown, the Treasury and the Bank of England' and was 'influential in persuading the Government and the Low Pay Commission' to hold the level down to £3.60 and introduce a separate, lower rate 'not just for young people, but for returners to the labour market'.³⁴ The consortium successfully lobbied the Government to introduce amendments to the Competition Bill to permit 'vertical agreements' of the kind the superstores strike with their suppliers.³⁵

The BRC is also 'ready to shape the Brussels agenda in the same way it does the UK government agenda'. In Europe it has lobbied for 'flexible' consumer guarantees and against the European legislation requiring companies to inform and consult their workers.³⁶ It has influenced European food safety standards and defended its members against the European requirement that the pesticides used on the foods they sell should be listed on the packaging. It has succeeded in keeping

the definition of 'free range' as broad as possible.³⁷

Government is not the only realm in which the influence of superstores and their employees raises public concern. Sainsbury, for example, is a sponsor of the Soil Association, which regulates organic standards in Britain. In 1998, the *Sunday Times* alleged that a chemist from Sainsbury presented much of the case for the preservative sodium nitrite to the government's United Kingdom Register of Organic Food Standards. The chemical is banned from organic produce in Germany and Holland, partly because, in large doses, it has been linked to cancer.³⁸ What the *Sunday Times* did not discover, however, was that one of the members of the Register is Robert Duxbury, an employee of J Sainsbury PLC. Sainsbury was also one of the three sponsors of the Town and Country Planning Association's inquiry into the future of planning, a subject in which the superstore chain has more than a passing interest. The chairman of the Post Office, Neville Bain, is also a non-executive director of Safeway. This causes alarm to some of the people campaigning to keep post offices on the High Street and out of the superstores.

In 1999, the government published the first of its 'annual reports', which would tell the nation how well it was doing. It was launched not in Westminster, but in the Kensington Tesco. The prime minister's office had given the supermarket chain an exclusive contract to sell it. It officially entered the public domain when Jack Cunningham, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, handed a copy to the head of Tesco. The superstores no longer need to lobby the government, because the government is lobbying the superstores. ♦



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

This article is edited from a section of George Monbiot's new book *Captive State: The Corporate Takeover of Britain*, published by Macmillan, price £12.99. © George Monbiot 2000.

To order your copy of *Captive State* p&p free in the UK, please call 01624 836000.

References on page 65.

TRADING FAIR?

The Office of Fair Trading and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission have both examined the practices of the superstores in the past, yet with minimal change. By 1998, however, the demand for a full-blown inquiry had become irresistible. Parliament's Welsh Affairs Committee reported that the prices the supermarkets were paying to beef and lamb producers bore no relationship to the prices they charged their customers. A Liberal Democrat MP published a powerful report on competition in retailing.³⁹ Several national newspapers had run campaigns against high supermarket prices, and the wider social and environmental impact of the stores was at last being widely discussed. The Office of Fair Trading which had, in its own words, 'previously taken the view that the growth of the major supermarket groups has been to the advantage of consumers in terms of amenity, choice and most crucially prices'⁴⁰ was forced to act. It launched an eight-month inquiry into competition in the sector, and, in April 1999, concluded that the superstores had a substantial case to answer. To many people's surprise, it referred the matter to the Competition Commission.

The superstores responded with alacrity. Having repeatedly assured the public that their prices were already as low as they could possibly go, they suddenly found room for massive reductions. Tesco slashed the price of over 1,000 brands by more than 10 per cent. The cuts, it claimed, would amount to some £250 million. Sainsbury marked down 1,500 lines, while Asda promised to reduce the price of 10,000 items by as much as 50 per cent by

the end of 2000. Though he had previously argued that consumers were not being ripped off by the superstores, Archie Norman, the chairman of Asda, finally admitted that they were. 'The industry is where it deserves to be, and we have brought it all on ourselves... Nobody believes UK prices are lower – we have lost that argument already,' he conceded.⁴¹ The other superstores were furious that he had broken ranks.

His company's advertised cuts were not all that they seemed, however. In December 1999, the Advertising Standards Authority ruled that Asda's promotional campaign, which claimed that prices would stay 'permanently low' was misleading: after a short period, many of them rose again.⁴²

But the strategy seemed to work. In February 2000 the Competition Commission reported that there was 'only limited evidence of excessive profitability', as food prices had recently risen more slowly than general retail prices.⁴³ It did, however, conclude that the five biggest supermarkets were involved in two complex monopolies: the first relating to the pricing of groceries, the second concerning the power they wielded over their suppliers. But while it warned that it could force them to sell off some of their stores or could ban the use of loss leaders, the wording of its initial report made it clear to the superstores that it would do no such thing. One prominent retail analyst commented, 'This is as good as they could have hoped for. It is not ordering them to do anything but carry on.'⁴⁴ Critics of the superstores believe the Competition Commission has been fooled.

SHADOWS



The tiny Himalayan land of Ladakh is a unique example of how devastating modern development can be, and of how local alternatives can forge a different way forward. [Paul Kingsnorth](#) reports.

The monk is angry but, being a monk, he is trying not to show it. Shaven-headed, the sun-wizened old man is dressed in the maroon robes of the Dugpa Buddhist order. He is standing in the monastery courtyard looking down at a group of four English tourists. One is chewing gum, another is swigging from a can of Pepsi. On all sides of the courtyard sit hundreds like them, all gathered at this mountain pilgrimage site for the most important festival of the monastic year.

‘We’ve got a ticket!’ says the gum-chewing girl. She waves a small yellow slip of paper in the monk’s face.

‘Please,’ says the monk, patiently, for the third time, ‘please, you cannot sit here. This space reserved for monks only. Please, you move.’

He obviously hasn’t got the message, so the girl repeats herself. ‘WE’VE GOT A TICKET,’ she says. ‘We got this space hours ago. We paid TWENTY RUPEES.’ She waves the yellow stub again. ‘We’ve got

the best view,’ she says, to general agreement. ‘We don’t want to move.’

Twenty rupees is approximately 30 pence. The girl and her companions have paid this princely sum to witness the annual masked dances celebrating the birth of Padmasambhava, legendary founder of Tibetan Buddhism. The dances are one of the most sacred religious festivals of the year in the tiny hill-kingdom of Ladakh, in the Indian Himalayas. She and her friends will have travelled for hours to reach the 17th century Hemis monastery, the oldest in Ladakh, which hangs like an alpine plant to the side of an unassailable mountain.

Now she has parked herself in the corner of the courtyard reserved for monks, and she’s damned if she’s going to move. She is matched in her determination by most of the other tourists, who scuttle about like termites, obstructing the monks as they circle the arena in their ritual costumes, to the sound of conch trumpets and drums. Like the girl and her friends, they have come to see the show, and no one is

IN THE KINGDOM OF LIGHT



going to stop them. They're not sure what the show is about, but they know the photos will be good.

*

The fat man sits back in his chair and lights another cigarette, his second in five minutes. A lizard blinks down at him from the flaking wall of his government office.

'This is torture,' he says. Outside, bored officials sit on the collapsing wooden stairs in the sun, or chase each other along the balcony for something to do.

'Here in the agriculture department,' says the fat man, 'there is work for 100 people, yet there are 200 of us employed. Torture. I am a TRAINED MAN, sir. I train in Delhi, for three years, and then they send me here.' He looks around, disgustedly. To be sent to the Ladakh Department of Agriculture is the Indian government official's equivalent of Siberian exile.

'My job is to teach Ladakhi farmers about new technology. We have

some wonderful things now: power tillers, many fertilisers, high-yielding seeds. So I come here and I sit in this office and nobody calls me. Nobody asks me anything. These farmers, they don't want to know. They have two acres each and a dzo and they don't want to change. I don't understand them.' He sighs.

'More tea?' he says.

*

Twenty miles away, in a grove of trees at the edge of a village in the Indus valley, a group of women farmers, dressed in traditional costume, sit in a circle, listening to the village headman speak. They are all members of the Women's Alliance of Ladakh who aim to preserve the best of their small-scale, ecological farming traditions in the face of an avalanche of change sweeping in from the outside world. It is people like them who stop the smoking man in the agriculture department from getting on with his job.

'What you are doing is vital for Ladakh,' says the headman. 'It is

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN PAGE

important that women teach our future generations what education really is. Now our children go to school, and learn to read and write. But there is education also in farming, nurturing, spinning, running a family. Our children must understand this, so that they can support themselves and not end up at the mercy of outsiders.' Everyone nods in agreement. A group of curious children who have gathered on the other side of a stone wall to see what's going on, decide to go and play football instead.

*

Tourist brochures describe Ladakh in the usual clichés. 'Kingdom of light', 'land of endless discovery', and perhaps the most well-worn of all, 'land of contrasts'. In this, though, they are right, for this ancient mountain kingdom, which only opened up to the outside world a few decades ago, is undergoing a process of tumultuous change as forces bigger than anything it has experienced roll in and threaten to sweep away the past. But Ladakh is also home to a unique network of people and organisations who, between them, are battling to turn the tide in their direction – and who are beginning, slowly, to succeed.

LITTLE TIBET

Ladakh is a high-altitude desert, sandwiched between the mountain ranges of the Karakoram and the Himalayas in the far north of India. Culturally and religiously much of the region is part of neighbouring Tibet; it is often referred to as 'Little Tibet'.

Politically, it is part of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, with which it has an increasingly uneasy relationship. Its population is divided almost evenly between Buddhists, in the east, and Muslims, in the west (see box p 38).

What makes Ladakh so special is – or was – its economic independence. Though Ladakh has been invaded by outsiders from the Sikh emperors to the British, its local farming economy has always remained in the hands of its people. Even today, with trans-Himalayan roads linking it to mainland India and daily flights to the capital, Leh, from Delhi, Ladakh remains virtually cut off from the outside world for more than half the year by heavy snows. This has meant that, though it has been a trading centre for centuries (Leh was one of the crossroads on the silk road from China), it has, until recently, needed to rely on itself. Its isolation allowed it to develop a remarkable rural economy, based on small-scale farming, which enabled its people to make a living out of their high and hostile landscape.

CHANGING TIMES

Over the last three decades, though, things have changed fast. Until the 1960s, the region was virtually ignored by the rest of the world, and the rest of India. All that changed when the Chinese invaded Tibet in 1950, going on to launch an attack on Ladakh in 1962. The Indian government flooded the region with soldiers, who, because of the continuing Chinese and, more recently, Pakistani border conflicts, have never left. In the mid-60s, Ladakh's isolation was broken once and for all with the construction of a trans-Himalayan road linking it to the subcontinent.

Then things really began to change. The Indian government pursued an energetic policy of

drawing Ladakh in to the Indian economy. In 1974, it opened the region up to foreign tourism. The army, the tourists and the Indian government have combined to subject Ladakh to the biggest change that it has probably ever seen. And today, as India throws its own economy open to the global market, that change is gathering speed. Globalisation, tourism and politics are combining to produce a cocktail of communal tension, environmental destruction, social disintegration and economic breakdown that threaten to engulf this once stable and peaceful region.

LIVING FROM THE LAND

What has happened to Ladakhi farming since the region was opened up is symbolic of its wider experience. The Ladakhi economy has always been primarily agricultural. In itself this is remarkable, as Ladakh's landscape is supremely hostile. Under snow for more than half the year, dusty and dry for much of the rest, it is a place of climatic extremes and unforgiving soils. At altitudes of between 10,000 and 14,000 feet, where Ladakh's villages are situated, the growing season is only a few months long every year. Animals are scarce, and water is in short supply.

But over the centuries, the Ladakhis developed a farming system uniquely adapted to a unique environment. Farming is small-scale; traditionally, each family owns a few acres of land, and their whitewashed mud houses are grouped together in villages whose size varies according to the availability of water. The land is irrigated by a system of channels which funnel water from the melted ice and snow of the mountains. The principal crop is barley, the mainstay of traditional Ladakhi food. In the valleys there are orchards, and up on the high pastures, where not even barley will grow, people husband yaks, cows or sheep. Draft animals, especially the ubiquitous dzo, a cross between a yak and a cow, play a central part in the farming economy.

In order to get the best from this harsh landscape, systems of co-operative labour sharing have developed; Ladakh's traditional farmers have always known that to survive they need to work together. But for many years now, the fate of Ladakhi farming has been largely out of their hands. The state government of Jammu and Kashmir, following the example of the national government in Delhi, has been working to 'modernise' Ladakhi agriculture for decades. The results have been dire.

IMPOSING CHANGE

The way they went about achieving their aim is an interesting example of how policy can be deliberately set up to replace a local economy with one dependent on the outside world. First, a food grain distribution programme was set up by the government, under which vast quantities of subsidised rice, flour and wheat were trucked across the Himalayas and sold for virtually nothing to the Ladakhis. Rice had previously been a luxury in the Ladakhi diet, but now that it was so cheap, it quickly became a staple. Within a few years, Ladakh became virtually reliant on rice and wheat from the outside. There was less need to farm, and so less farming was done. Large-scale infrastructure projects built by the

'Though Ladakh has been invaded by outsiders from the Sikh emperors to the British, its local farming economy has always remained in the hands of its people.'

THE LADAKH AUTONOMOUS HILL COUNCIL

Until recently, Ladakh was run by the Jammu and Kashmir state government. In 1995, though, following years of pressure from local people, Ladakh was granted a degree of political autonomy. It now has its own 'Autonomous Hill Development Council' which is responsible for the development of Ladakh, including agriculture, education and cultural policy. Opinions are divided on its effectiveness. Its director, Thupstan Chhewang, a previous director of LEDeG, admits that progress is slower than he would like. 'When we set up, people wanted change overnight,' he says. 'But this is not possible. Still, change is happening, and our priority is to ensure that the work we do is genuinely supported by the people.' Others are more cynical, saying that the Hill Council is too hamstrung by the state government to oversee real change in Ladakh. The Ladakh Buddhist Association, and others, are lobbying for Ladakh to become a fully independent Union Territory. In this they appear to have growing popular support.



Indian government – including, crucially, road links – helped consolidate the new economy and create an urban alternative to farming. The combination of subsidised food and the new infrastructure accelerated a mass migration of menfolk from the farms into Leh, the capital, to service the burgeoning tourist industry and the new urban economy.

With the food grain distribution programme having the desired effect, the Ladakh Department of Agriculture was able to persuade farmers that their only means of survival was export-led development. College-trained experts were brought in from Delhi to oversee the introduction of high-yield seed, chemical fertilisers and machines to replace the communal labour system which was breaking down as people left the farms. Traditional crops, bred over centuries to fit in with the local climate and soils began disappearing, replaced by crops grown for export. Chemical fertiliser and pesticide use, previously unknown, rocketed. What looked like an inevitable trend began to take hold.

But the trend was not as inevitable as the government seemed to think.

CHALLENGING THE INEVITABLE

Helena Norberg-Hodge, the Swedish linguist and environmentalist, probably knows more about traditional Ladakh, and how it has changed in the face of such pressures, than any other outsider. She first arrived in the region in 1975, to study the language, but soon became more interested in what development and economic globalisation were doing to this ancient land. She has since become one of the most passionate, and controversial, advocates of the Ladakhi people as they struggle to adjust to modernisation; her book on Ladakh, *Ancient Futures*, has been translated into 32 languages.

The changes wrought on the Ladakhis over the last few decades, she says now, 'brought them a great sense of cultural inferiority. The combination of economic and psychological pressures led to a dramatic loss of self-esteem amongst people who had previously been very emotionally healthy. A sense of shame developed about their traditions and their way of life.'

What has happened in Ladakh, she says, exemplifies what has happened to local economies and communities around the world: 'It highlights the conflict between what I'd call the 'real economy' of water, soil and natural resources, and a centralised highly subsidised artificial economy that pulls people into a system over which they have no control.'

As an outsider, Norberg-Hodge came to see that what was being

presented to the Ladakhis as inevitable and evolutionary was, instead, a Western-driven imperative towards a very specific economic model. This belief led her into a 25-year project to inform and arm the people of Ladakh, and enable them to confront the coming of a new way of life on their own terms. It has been a project with results. Her institute, the UK-based International Society for Ecology and Culture (ISEC), has founded a number of local organisations that aim to open up both sides of the development story to its people.

One of the best-known is the Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDeG). Its pioneering work has included promoting organic agriculture, local handicraft production, small-scale solar technologies and general ecological awareness amongst Ladakhis; work which was recognised in 1986 when LEDeG won the Right Livelihood Award – the 'alternative Nobel prize'. Norberg-Hodge was also instrumental in the founding of the Womens' Alliance, in 1990 – which began with just 70 members and now has over 4000, scattered across more than 80 villages – and the Amchi Association, which promotes traditional Ladakhi medicine. ISEC also runs projects which aim to bring together Ladakhis and Westerners, to, as she puts it, 'open everyone's eyes to the real impacts of development and globalisation.' 'These include 'reality tours' in which Ladakhis visit the West to see for themselves both sides of the modern world; a tourist education programme which reaches 3000 visitors a year; and a farm project, under which Western volunteers work on Ladakhi farms.

Together, these organisations, and others, most of which are all now run by local people, have planted the seeds of a genuinely alternative future for Ladakh; seeds which are now beginning, shyly but persistently, to flower. 🌱



CLASH OF THE TITANS: Buddhist-Muslim tensions in Ladakh

Ladakh is divided into two districts: the Leh district, in the east, which is predominantly Buddhist, and the Kargil district in the west, which is predominantly Muslim. In recent years, politics and the pressures of development, including intensified competition over jobs and scarce resources in the modern sector, have led to growing communal tensions. Before the setting up of the Hill Council (see box p 36) Ladakh was administered directly by the Muslim-dominated state government of Jammu and Kashmir, which led Ladakh's Buddhists to complain of discrimination against them. Now that the Buddhist-dominated Hill Council runs the affairs of Leh District, some of the area's Muslims feel hard done by. Tensions have been inflamed by competition for jobs and tourist dollars, and by the politics of some religious

leaders. When communal tensions spilled over into street violence in 1989, for example, the Ladakh Buddhist Association called for a cultural boycott of Muslims. More recently, this July, a tactless comment about the Koran by a leading light in the Buddhist Association led to the retaliatory murder of three Buddhist monks, and the imposition of a military curfew on Leh. The head of the Ladakh Buddhist Association, Tsering Samphal, insists that relations between Buddhists and Muslims are 'very good, generally'. Ladakh's leading Muslim scholar, Abdul Ghani Sheikh, agrees that, at the everyday level, Muslims and Buddhists coexist happily. But he also warns that unless 'the politicians stop inciting the people' in the name of religion, tensions could get worse.

■ 'WE HAVE TO GO BACK'

To understand the impact all this is having on Ladakh's development, take a trip to the office of its chief agriculture officer, hidden in a dusty maze of run-down government offices on the edge of the world's highest polo ground in Leh. Mr Tsewang Dorje is a kindly, well-meaning and confused man. A Ladakhi himself, he is in charge of the region's agricultural policy, and he has a tough job to do. It's difficult to believe he enjoys it.

His first recourse, when asked about the future of Ladakhi agriculture, is to take the government line. Ladakh is backward, and must be modernised. Ladakhis, he says, have 'lost interest' in traditional agriculture. Leh is now full of shops selling trainers, televisions, consumer goods. People have motorbikes and jeeps and transistor radios. The old ways are breaking down, and his job is to help ease the transition. 'It was a very good system,' he says, of traditional Ladakhi agriculture, 'but it's gone. The world has changed. We need to export now, to survive.'

With that in mind, Mr Dorje wants the Ladakhis to replace their barley fields with vegetable cash crops, and their dzo with power-tillers. 'It is a very inefficient animal, this dzo,' he says. 'You need to keep it and feed it all year, but you use it to till at most for just 10 days. With power tillers, productivity will go up. Then people will be able to keep Jersey cows instead, which produce much milk.' But power tillers rely on outside input for fuel and parts. Jersey cows are not adapted to high altitudes. And as for productivity – studies have shown that Ladakhi traditional agriculture is among the most productive in the world.



'Yes, well,' says Mr Dorje, 'we can compromise. Let me read you this.' He pulls a scrap of paper out of the top drawer of his desk. It is covered in pencil scrawls and is, apparently, Ladakh's new agricultural policy, drawn up by Mr Dorje and Ladakh's Hill Council (see box p 36) just a few weeks previously. He reads out its nine points, which talk of importing new crop varieties, diversifying and mechanisation. But they also talk of preserving small farms, promoting organic food and protecting the livelihoods of small farmers. Isn't there a contradiction?

'No, no,' he says, 'you see, we can ... we can do

both. Small farmers can produce for export. They can build green-houses and ... they can ...' He stops, and thinks. Then, after a minute, he says, very quietly, 'eventually ... yes, we will have to go back.' Go back? This doesn't sound like government policy. He leans over the desk, cautiously. 'We will have to go back,' he says, again. 'We have no other avenues. We cannot rely on the outside – the market and the tourists. We need to support ourselves. We know this, but until people realise...' Then he says a most remarkable thing. 'This is what the NGOs have taught us,' he says.

CLEANING UP

Mr Dorje's epiphany is just one example of how the conventional model of development is being challenged, successfully, even in the minds of those responsible for implementing it. But none of the NGOs in Ladakh are under any illusions as to the scale of the challenge they still face. A walk around Leh shows how far things still have to go. As with so many of the world's beautiful places, tourism has become one of Ladakh's greatest problems, as well as a source of benefits. Central Leh is awash with Coke stands, 'German Bakeries,' trekking agencies, T-shirt shops and unshaven men shuffling around on street corners muttering 'you want good smoke?' More than half of Ladakh's tourist shops are run by non-Ladakhis, and few of them sell anything made in the region. Dreadlocked backpackers roar around the unpaved roads on hired motorbikes or sit in cafes complaining about the price of guest houses.

And Leh continues to grow. More and more impoverished farmers, their livelihoods destroyed or destabilised, drift in to Leh to try and make their fortune from tourists and the urban economy. They end up in run-down government housing colonies on the edge of town; a vocational underclass. Leh's population, largely due to the pull of tourist dollars, has doubled since 1975.

This causes problems all of its own, for Leh has no infrastructure to support this growth; as a result, the state of the capital is a pressing problem. Non-degradable rubbish litters the streets and blows into the streams, which are polluted with detergent from the laundries which have sprung up to service the tourists. Traditionally, virtually everything in Ladakh was made from natural materials and reused or recycled. Today, rubbish bins have sprung up around Leh, but there is nowhere to empty them; litter is dumped on a mountainside on the edge of the town. Water is another problem. Traditional Ladakhi compost toilets used no water, and rural Ladakhis knew that such a scarce resource must be used carefully. No such considerations inform the tourists or the new generation of young urban Ladakhis who emulate them. Today, compost toilets are being replaced with Western-style flush systems, despite the fact that Ladakh has no sewers. The new toilets, along with the increasing numbers of baths and showers, are seriously depleting the amount of water available in Leh, as gallons of precious fresh water are flushed into unreliable cesspits which regularly leak into the rivers and pollute the water table. As a result, much of Leh's drinking water is now trucked in across the mountains in government tankers.

But here, too, change is coming. The Women's Alliance of Ladakh, headed by the energetic Dolma Tsering, is having a remarkable impact. It is a grouping of Buddhist farming women, who exist to promote and protect Ladakh's rural culture, and to instil in Ladakhi women the self-confidence they need to see modernisation on their own terms. Its work in Leh has been pioneering too; it was largely due to the work of the Women's Alliance that a ban on plastic bags was introduced in the capital in 1998. The Alliance organises litter-picks in Leh every year, and works to educate people about the dangers of pollution and consumerism. Dolma Tsering believes they must go further. 'Development has brought some benefits for wealthy, educated women,' she says, 'but for much of our culture, mainly it has brought problems. But things are slowly changing. Year after year, there are more people understanding the problems, and taking part in what we do.'



EDUCATION

What much of this comes down to is education; something that Sonam Wangchuk knows very well. Wangchuk is the founder and director of SECMOL – the Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh – whose purpose is, as he puts it, 'to strengthen Ladakhis through education.' Wangchuk, in common with most of the other activists and community leaders in Ladakh, believes that education is the key to the future; only when it is its run in a distinctively Ladakhi way, he says, will Ladakh's people appreciate the value of who they really are.

'The Indian education system, which was based on the British colonial system, has done terrible things to Ladakhis,' he says. 'It helped convince people here that they were backward and primitive, that their language was worthless, that their traditions were bad.' SECMOL is trying, says Wangchuk, 'to create a balanced view of the West,' so that students are not lulled by the siren song of global consumerism. 'Ladakh will change,' says Wangchuk. 'In 20 years, who knows what it will be like? But we must remain Ladakhis still – culturally, economically, in our hearts – and not some imitation of what we think the rest of the world is like. Education is the key to regaining our sense of who we are.'

NAYSAYING

Ladakh carries many expectations on its fragile shoulders. 'Little Tibet' has been romanticised by Western travellers for centuries. According to the anthropologist Ravina Aggarwal, 'most visitors to Ladakh carry with them this romantic notion of an idyllic land, eclipsed from time and space'.¹ This can lead to controversy, as campaigners and NGOs, particularly those from outside Ladakh, are accused of wanting to airbrush out aspects of its past and present that don't fit with what they want to see.

So, say critics, we hear much about how development has brought new health problems to Ladakh (incidences of obesity, diabetes, coronary artery disease and various cancers are increasing as diets and lifestyles change) but less about the fact that, according to some researchers, traditional Ladakh has one of the highest rates of hyper-

tension in the world, possibly caused by traditional salt tea.² Similarly, much can be heard from campaigners about the wonders of Ladakh's co-operative farming culture, but little about the caste system which has made the original tribal people of the region, the Mons and Bedas, in the opinion of one academic, 'the most despised people in Ladakhi society'.³

There is undoubtedly some truth in this; there is no doubt that,

for an outsider, Ladakh is an easy place to romanticise. Norberg-Hodge, as a Westerner, has been the butt of such criticism for years. She is clear about her response.

'In fact,' she says, 'it is the consumer culture that is being romanticised, and this is a global problem. Campaigners here are not saying that traditional Ladakh was perfect and shouldn't change. But it's important that everyone gets a realistic picture of what's happening in the West.'

Furthermore, she says, 'one of the lessons that any foreigner working here learns is don't try and come in and tell the Ladakhis what to do. Don't presume to know enough about their culture to be able to say "oh, it's so wonderful, don't change". They know you don't know enough, so it will ring hollow. What you can do is speak from your own experience of what is happening in the West, and how it could happen here, and give them much needed information that will help them make their own decisions.'

FUTURE PERFECT?

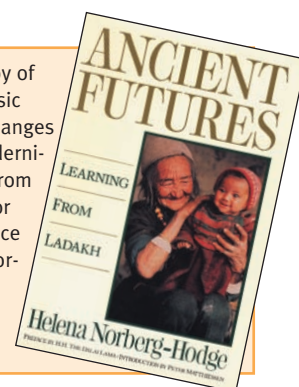
Whatever happens to Ladakh, its people are beginning to see that they can shape their future themselves, to their own agenda. Dolma Tsering, who has witnessed, and participated in, the massive changes that her land has seen over the last three decades, is optimistic about the future. She can see, she says, the perspectives of her fellow Ladakhis changing as time goes by; and for the better.

'For a while,' she says, 'we in Ladakh lost respect for ourselves and for our culture. But now we know we have no reason to feel inferior. Now we feel more confident about who we are. In fact, we know now that the world can learn a lot from us. It is important that our young people understand that. There is much that Ladakh can teach the world.' ♦

Paul Kingsnorth is deputy editor of *The Ecologist*.

References on page 65.

Ecologist readers can obtain a discounted copy of *Ancient Futures*, Helena Norberg-Hodge's classic book on Ladakh, which describes the many changes wrought on traditional Ladakhi culture by modernisation, and looks at what the West can learn from it. An accompanying video is also available. For the book, send a cheque for £8.99 (normal price £9.99), and for the video, a cheque for £10 (normal price £12), made out to ISEC, to: ISEC, Apple Barn, Week, Dartington, Totnes, Devon TQ9 6JP, UK





THE FUTURE BROUGHT TO BOOK

Many people see Orwell's *1984* as the ultimate dystopian future to fear. It is not, says **Kirkpatrick Sale**, who believes Huxley's *Brave New World* to be far more threatening... partly because we're already beginning to live it.

‘Whatever its artistic or philosophical qualities,’ wrote Aldous Huxley in a 1946 foreword to his 1932 novel, *Brave New World*, ‘a book about the future can interest us only if its prophecies look as though they might conceivably come true.’

Not quite: also if its prophecies either have come true, or at least resonate within us today in some eerily accurate way, capturing the deep spirit of our present world if not entirely the substance. By those criteria, *Brave New World* – whose artistic and philosophical qualities I must say I find limited – is an extremely interesting and relevant book, 68 years later. Another dystopian novel of roughly the same era, however – George Orwell’s *1984* – generally fails to evoke the same sense of resonant recognition.

And the provocative reason for the prophetic success of *Brave New World*, and the comparative lack of success of *1984*, is that the US and not the Soviet Union won the Cold War.

CRUX OF HUXLEY

Brave New World, you will recall, depicts a society some 600 years into the future in which all children are produced by batches of test tubes in huge hatchery systems and are conditioned in their embryos to become adults somewhere in the spectrum from intelligent, dominant Alphas to moronic, servile Epsilons. Further conditioning in childhood, largely through night-time ‘sleep-teaching’ recordings, assures that everyone will accept their lot in life without rebellion or resentment, and will concern themselves, beyond the jobs they are programmed to perform, with happiness and self-contentment, through sports, entertainment, and the benign feel-good drug, ‘soma’.

In a number of specifics Huxley’s prophecies are tellingly accurate – the ubiquity of sports, television in hotel and hospital rooms, a general ignorance of history, psychology and chemistry as important change agents – but of course in the broader sense nothing like BNW (the society has no name, so I will use the abbreviation instead) has come true... exactly. It is not until you start to think about the true nature of our society today, the deeper and most fundamental underpinnings of the present system of global corporate capitalism now reigning, that the resemblance to Huxley’s world become apparent.

Happiness as the guiding principle of economic and social life. In BNW, the World controllers have divided up the globe and make sure the populations do not ‘lose their faith in happiness as the Sovereign Good and take to believing, instead, that the goal was somewhere beyond, somewhere outside the present human sphere... some intensification and refining of consciousness, some enlargement of knowledge’. That may not be so overtly planned in our world today, but certainly the underlying goal of most of industrial society in recent decades is to maximise happiness, human happiness, and it is to this end that any enlargement of knowledge or amplification of power is largely dedicated. Survey after survey indicates that, increasingly, people are frank to acknowledge that, as one Japanese survey put it, they are less interested in wanting to ‘live a pure and just life’ than in wanting to ‘live a life that suits your own taste’ – ie hedonism.

That happiness is to be achieved primarily through consumption and amassment of material possessions. In Huxley’s world, there was a

‘conscripted of consumption’, making it the highest social duty, and underconsumption was in fact a crime against society: ‘Ending is better than mending’ went the thought-conditioning, ‘the more stitches, the less riches’. In our world, consumerism is a huge and pathological problem, wild and unrestrained in the richer countries but common and increasingly intemperate everywhere, encouraged in a thousand ways from advertising and films to tax laws and public policy; the growth in global per-capita consumption in the last 50 years is, according to Worldwatch researcher Alan Durning, ‘the most rapid and most fundamental change in day-to-day existence the human species has ever experienced’.

Concomitant with consumption is self-indulgence and pleasure-seeking, a life without limits or denials. One of the cardinal rules of BNW is that ‘industrial civilisation is only possible when there’s no self-denial,’ so self-indulgence is carried ‘up to the very limits imposed by hygiene and economics’; hence sex is frequent and casual, soma is taken freely, and sports and ‘feely’ movies (with scents, sounds, sights, and sensation) are daily passions. It is true in our world, of course, that not everyone even in the richer nations is able to be self-indulgent up to their ‘very limits’, but the aim is certainly encouraged by culture and conditioning in all capitalist societies. The celebrity status held up for the world to admire, the sexual revolution, the overconsumption of not only legal but also illegal drugs, and the preoccupation with games and sports are measures of how far it has gone.

Not everyone is thought to be able to achieve the highest levels of happiness, or have the money for continual self-indulgence, but both the rich and poor accept the fact of inequality and the failure of all schemes to alleviate it. In BNW, the lower strata are so conditioned to accept their lot that they are happy with the menial tasks they are assigned to perform (there are no machines for these jobs because unemployment would provide time for discontent) and given soma after work for night-time oblivion. Meanwhile, the higher strata are given privileges and perks in return for keeping everything running smoothly, and asking no questions. Not quite the same in our world, but the inequality is certainly there and just as glaring – the richest fifth of the world’s population in 1998 had a combined income 82 times greater than the poorest fifth, and the 200 richest people had assets equal to the income of the world’s poorest 2.5 billion.

Stability in society requires a narrow range of thinking, seriously indulged in by only a few, within a fairly confined set of political, economic, and cultural givens defined by academia and the major media. For most of the citizens of BNW there is ‘not a moment to sit down and think’ – ‘no leisure from pleasure,’ as a World Controller puts it – and no realm of thinking possible beyond a carefully monitored orthodoxy, for ‘no offence is as heinous as unorthodoxy of behaviour,’ worse than murder, say, because ‘it strikes at society itself’. The orthodoxy of contemporary capitalism is subtle indeed, even pervasive and powerful enough to permit unorthodoxies at the fringes, but it similarly confines political thought and practice to a narrow gamut of unthreatening palliatives, economic thought to variations on ‘free market’ licence and corporate power, and social thought to conventions set by churches, universities, foundations, and similar establishmentarian institutions; with the collapse of Soviet socialism, and the

The reason for the prophetic success of *Brave New World*, and the comparative lack of success of *1984*, is that the US and not the Soviet Union won the Cold War.



■ increasing spread of capitalist influence and such capitalist ideologies as globalism, human rights, and 'democracy', the orthodoxy seems now almost as unchallengeable as BNW's.

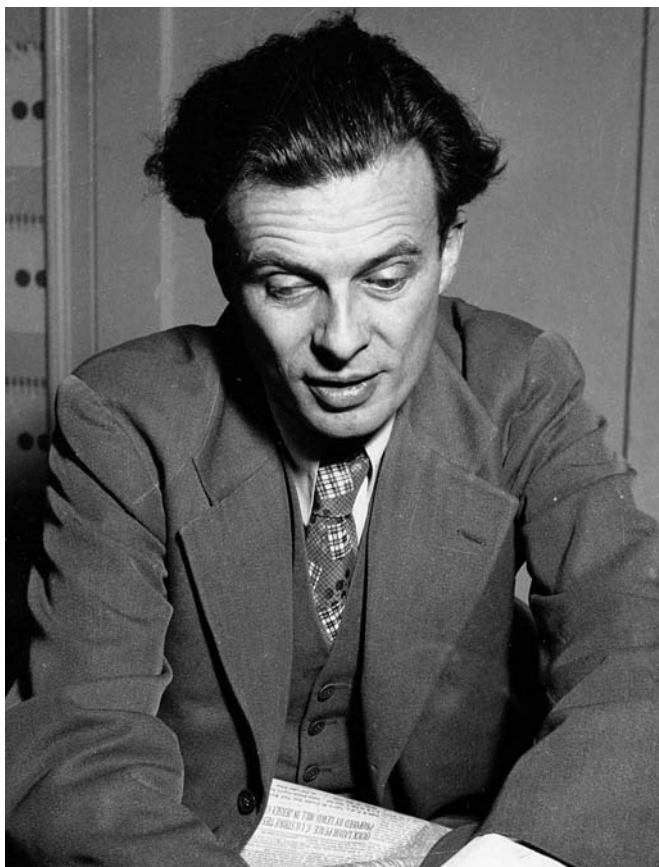
FORD FORWARD

Huxley, in other words, seems to have based his dystopia largely on the ideas of 20th century capitalism, especially the American version that produced Frederick Taylor's 'scientific management' and Henry Ford's production lines (hence the BNW dating system: AF standing for 'After Ford'). As this has more or less triumphed in the second half of the 20th century and given shape to the basic governmental international institutions we have today, its society inevitably takes on Huxleyan over- and undertones and provides the arena where the prophecies of *Brave New World* seem so close to the mark.

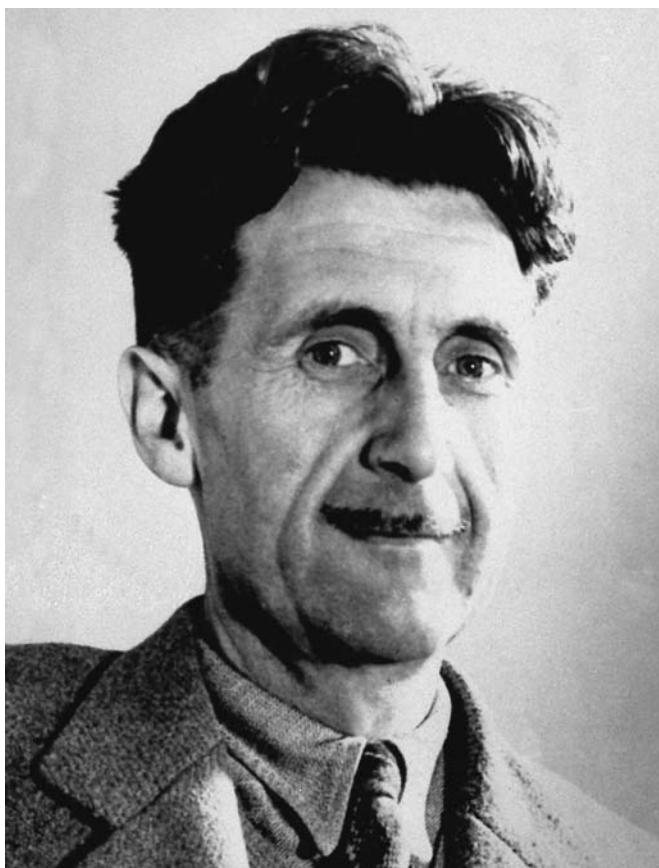
It is in this light that it is particularly interesting to compare Huxley's dystopia with George Orwell's, because Orwell based his version largely on some kind of Stalinist Soviet Union writ large and perfected with methods of surveillance and mental conditioning. And since that is the kind of society that has largely lost out today (even in its Chinese form), the Orwellian predictions do not stand up particularly well.

There are certain similarities in both versions, for they were written only 16 years apart: authoritarian governments, advanced technologies of control and conditioning, low-caste humans for menial work, lack of privacy, limited range of thought, manipulation of memory. But the crucial difference is that in 1984 life for all but a few under totalitarian socialism is grim indeed, a mixture of perpetual fear and perpetual want, without comfort or joy or easy pleasure (even sex is discouraged). 'The truly characteristic thing about modern life,' Orwell's hero declares, 'was not its cruelty and insecurity, but simply its bareness, its dinginess, its listlessness... decaying, dingy cities, where underfed people shuffled to and fro in leaky shoes.' Not only is happiness not the goal of society, it is not even a desirable by-product.

Of course Orwell is concerned to show how terrible Russian com-



Novel ideas: Aldous Huxley (above) and George Orwell (below) shared the belief that mankind was moving itself inexorably towards a destructive dehumanisation of society. Yet their views of how this would come about, as expressed in *Brave New World* and 1984 respectively, differed significantly.



munist is, and would be if it took over the world, and there is no capitalism in his society, no consumerism, and it has very few parallels with what exists today even in the last lingering communist states. A few touches, to be sure, do ring true. The ubiquity of the television set, for example, although it hasn't quite reached the point of receiving as well as transmitting as it does in 1984. It plays in the novel no role in stupefying populations, promoting violence, degrading politics, or programming materialism as it actually does today. Another similarity is the prevalence of what psychologists call 'cognitive dissonance', or the ability to hold two opposite beliefs at the same time – what Orwell calls 'double-think'. This is a high priority in Orwell's world and one we are familiar with today. It appears in the apparent contradiction that we believe modern technology to be benevolent, yet have the knowledge that it can be dangerous, destabilising, and toxic; similarly, we maintain the belief that democratic governments are produced by recurrent ballot-box voting, yet know deep down that elections are rigged, bought, marginalised exercises having little to do with the rule of the people.

BY GEORGE

But the most telling of Orwell's predictions has to do with 'Newspeak', the language of his totalitarian country, based on English but incorporating the ideological principles of the ruling party and designed to narrow vocabulary, by eliminating some words and making others meaningless, so that contrary and deviant modes of thought are impossible. This is not of course strictly what has happened to our language in the last half-century, but it's near enough in many unsettling ways. Advertising, of course, sucks meanings from words (the smallest olive size, for example, is 'giant', and french fry portions in fast food outlets are graded 'large', 'medium' and 'regular'), and the dumbing-down of schooling and mass entertainment has severely limited vocabulary, but it is in the realm of political thought, especially, that language has become distorted and constrained.

AP PHOTOS

AP PHOTOS

'Community', for example, is now a word used in such gibberish phrases as 'the international community', while 'democracy', as noted above, has come to be synonymous with intermittent voting, no matter how distorted the process or product, and 'liberal democracies', as defined by the Clinton Administration, are those nations that allow free-market capitalism full sway. It is still not possible to inject 'Nature' into serious political discourse – much less 'Gaia', 'deep ecology', or 'bioregionalism' – without being regarded as a flake.

And as always, the process continues in subtle, persistent, unnoticed ways, as with so many of the other schemes and ideologies and thought-systems by which capitalism maintains its hold. That's where Huxley and Orwell, like many with authoritarian dystopias, got it wrong – it doesn't take a centralised political elite, like the Inner Party of *1984* or the World Controllers of *BNW*, with Thought Police or human hatcheries, to manipulate society so that regimes maintain power. That can be done in much less overt, much quieter, more cunning ways by creating a culture that is embedded in society and pervasively spreads the dominant ideologies through all its benign and innocent tentacles.

The culture of capitalism, for example, whose principles (progress, say, and humanism) and practices (for example, 'free' markets and the corporation) have been ingrained in industrial societies for centuries now, seems to be so eternal and inevitable as almost to defy challenge. Against that, the strivings of totalitarian apparata seem

almost simplistic and contorted, doomed to result in failure in the long run.

It might be argued, then, that capitalism will triumph six centuries from now not because of the complex technologies and systems of *BNW* but because of the success of those principles of happiness and consumption and self-indulgence that operate in the background and are the inspiration of its culture, allowing it to seduce and manipulate its millions.

There is one rider, however, an ominous affliction that works at the very heart of capitalism and seems certain to reduce it to rubble, in the near if not immediate future: it is the depletion and despoliation of the resources of the natural world that capitalism demands, and the ruination of Nature that adds up to ecocide.

Imagining a future without having Nature as a player is like trying to have a symphony without music, a house without a foundation. There is no future – dystopian, utopian, or anything in between – that can exist, or be imagined, without the imperative presence of the natural, brave or otherwise, world. ♦

*Kirkpatrick Sale is the author of nine books, including **Rebels against the Future: the Luddites and Their War on the Industrial Revolution; Lessons for the Computer Age**. His latest book, **The Fire of his Genius: Robert Fulton and the American Dream** will appear next year.*

It doesn't take a centralised political elite, like the Inner Party or the World Controllers, to manipulate society so that regimes maintain power. That can be done in much less overt, more cunning ways.

www.theecologist  org



SEEDS OF THE NEW IN THE PRAGUE AUTUMN

PAUL KINGSNORTH SAYS THAT THE RECENT PRAGUE PROTESTS WERE THE GROWTH PANGS OF A NEW POLITICS.

DIDN'T TONY DO well? The sweat-soaked leader of New Labour, eyes flashing from behind his conference podium, employed all the rhetorical flourishes he knew to drag himself and his party back from the electoral doldrums after various flash-in-the-pan 'disasters' had knocked him behind the Conservatives in the opinion polls for the first time. He told Britain he was 'listening'. He told his country he believed; and they seem to have believed him. Polls are once again showing a Labour lead. The people's prime minister came back fighting and, not for the first time, he spun things back his way.

The pundits loved it. Newspaper columnists and political commentators on both right and left couldn't contain their admiration for the master politician's skills. This, they agreed, is what we want to hear. This is what politics is all about.

Curiously, perhaps, one of the few mainstream commentators in Britain who begged to differ was Simon Jenkins, writing in the conservative broadsheet *The Times*. 'If I were young, bushy-tailed and left-wing,' he wrote, 'I know where I would be today. I would not be in a stuffy Brighton conference hall, listening to forty-somethings waffling about their "contract with the people". I would be on the barricades in Prague, calling down hellfire on the fat cats of the IMF and the World Bank.' And there was more. 'The longer I listened to Mr Blair,' Jenkins went on, 'the more I yearned to pack my rucksack and head for Wenceslas Square. There was the cockpit of the last modern revolution. There now is the cauldron of global change.'

In fact, it was Peace Square, not Wenceslas Square, where it all began. In late September, as New Labour wheeled out its conference speeches, over 15,000 people from around the world gathered in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, where the IMF and the World Bank were holding their annual meetings. On Tuesday 26 September, those 15,000 people marched from Peace Square towards the conference centre where the meetings were being held, with the aim of shutting them down. The police blocked their paths with armoured cars, tear gas and water cannon. A few hundred (unrepresentative, as usual) rioters got going with cobblestones, planks and black masks. Bingo: the press had their story. Everyone went home, and the world went on unchanged.

Or did it? Actually, I don't think so. The images the world saw of Prague were of black-masked rioters hurling rocks at police through clouds of tear gas. This is *de rigueur* for media coverage of such mass protests, and there's probably not much to be done



SOME ROUGH BEAST, A
PLACARD IN ITS HAND
AND A GAS MASK OVER
ITS SHOULDER,
SLOUCHED TOWARDS
PRAGUE TO BE BORN

about it. But the real story of Prague was much more exciting than the protest itself, or even the iniquities of the Bank and the IMF. The real story is that of a new movement, a new politics, a new paradigm, fumbling its way into the light. Comparing what happened there, on the streets and in the squats, in the convergence centres and in the bars, with Labour's empty slideshow in Brighton only serves to show how the political energy of the world has shifted; though most of the world has not yet realised it. If the 'Velvet Revolution' of 1989 really was 'the last modern revolution', then Prague 2000, hot on the heels of Seattle, was the latest convulsion in the drawn-out birth-pangs of the first revolution of the 21st century: that of ordinary people against entrenched corporate power. Some rough beast, a placard in its hand and a gas mask over its shoulder, slouched towards Prague to be born. And, quietly, it was. It just doesn't yet have a name or a birth certificate.

The old politics is dead. Ask the Americans, who are currently undergoing the charade of having to choose their next president from two men of virtually identical beliefs who will run the country along the same lines, only differing in degrees. Here in Britain, we will be asked next year to make a similar choice. Meanwhile, political parties everywhere agonise over opinion polls which show, time and time again, that citizens, especially the young, just aren't interested in politics any more. They don't care enough to vote. The reason for this seems pretty obvious: there's hardly any point. Our reluctance to endorse either Suit A or Suit B at a ballot box every five years is not because we don't care about the future: it's because we know damn well that, if we do, we're going to have to take that future into our own hands. It's the only real choice left to us. You can vote for George or Al, William or Tony, and you know what you'll get: any colour you like, as long as it's black. Any world order you fancy, as long as it's market-based and neoliberal, and it doesn't upset the corporate horses.

It is this consensus by stealth that drew people to Prague, as it did to Seattle and Washington before. The ragtag army of protesters on the streets may not always have known exactly what they wanted, but they knew what they didn't. 'Bollocks,' read one placard, simply, 'to the New World Order.' You can't argue with that.

Bollocks, of course, isn't exactly a policy statement. So, if the energy has shifted, as it always does at crucial moments in history, from the placemen in Parliament to the ranters on the streets; if the old politics really is dead; what is the new one? Who

were the people on the streets in Prague, and what did they really want?

Asking the question that way makes it almost impossible to answer, for the very power of the Prague demonstrators was their diversity. This is why politicians, journalists and secret-service personnel find it so hard to pin them down, dissect them, define them: they are not one. This is not a top-down movement, it has no manifesto. Often it doesn't even have much of a consensus. And if that can be a weakness, it is also a great strength.

The ancient streets of Prague thronged with people who would usually cross the road to avoid each other. Trade unionists were there, unhappy at the watering down of labour standards. Environmentalists fumed about the World Bank's funding of destructive infrastructure projects and the IMF's reborn version of structural adjustment. Indigenous peoples from all over the world wanted their rights and their land back. A few unwelcome neo-Nazis mooched about in search of a new führer, their tattoos ugly in the autumn sun. Anarchists shouted for the abolition of all government, the most obvious being the sinister 'Black Block', with their flags and dark masks. The ubiquitous Socialist Workers, always adept at spotting a bandwagon, called for whatever it is they were shouting about that week. And many, many unaligned individuals shouted, sang and danced their way through the cobbled alleys.

If you didn't delve any deeper, what you might have thought you saw in Prague was the lumpen dissatisfactions of those whose politics had failed. Socialists and communists, living in the 1930s. Anarchists, living in the 1890s. Tribal people, fighting the inevitable. Earnest greenies, harking back to a vanished rural Utopia. A threadbare basket of whingeing lefties, woolly-headed liberals and frightened reactionaries, mounting a last-ditch fight against the future.

But that's not it at all. For while much of the language and symbolism is old, the movement it is forming is new. Many on the streets of Prague might not have known this themselves, but it's true nonetheless. And because it is true, it is necessarily undefined.

This is what bothers the guardians of the New World Order. They're worried, because they don't really know what's going on. They can't get a handle on this movement because it refuses, is unable to be defined. South African finance minister and conference chair Trevor Manuel said of the protesters: 'I know what they're against but I have no sense of what they're for'. A familiar accusation, this. All these problems you're shouting about, he was saying, plaintively: but where are the solutions?

Actually, there are plenty of potential solutions out there if Mr Manuel would bother to look for them. But he hasn't, because what bankers and politicians like him mean when they say they haven't heard any solutions is that they haven't had them presented to them in an official policy document in some stuffy forum in an expensive hotel. A document which they can then ignore for the next five years until some blue-chip NGO politely asks why they've done precisely nothing about poverty/exclusion/environmental degradation/the commodification of human relationships/the death of community (delete according to bugbear).

If Mr Manuel does want some ideas about the sort of global solutions being kicked around in Prague and elsewhere, he could try looking at the website of Charter 99 (www.charter99.org) for some fairly uncontroversial, practical proposals to strengthen democracy and accountability at the international level, sup-

ported by people and organisations from all over the world. He shouldn't confuse this with Charter 2000 (www.zeg.org/raisons-dagir/indexcharta.htm) which is making a start at organising a European movement focused on solutions to the problems of globalisation. He could listen to campaigners like the International Forum on Globalisation, which has produced workable proposals on regulating international trade, removing the artificial subsidies to big corporations, and shifting the focus to promoting the local economy. He could study the many variants of ideas for re-regulating corporations; removing their 'personhood' under the law, issuing them a strict 'licence to trade' which could be revoked when they transgress, and making their shareholders liable for the actions of the corporations they own. He could have a peek at Michael Rowbotham's book *Goodbye America*, in which he discusses a neo-Keynesian alternative to the unreformable World Bank and IMF: a global financial organisation which would charge interest on credit as well as debt, thus removing the imbalance which allows the Bank to profit from poverty and Third World debt.

But most of all, perhaps, he should try and understand that a genuinely new politics has to operate in a new way. When supporters of globalisation turn around to us, its critics, and sneer 'that's all very well, but what's the alternative?' we should look them in the eye and turn the question around. For it is the globalisers who are changing the world beyond all recognition. It is they who are tearing down sustainable economies, delicate environments and age-old social systems in the name of a one-size-

fits-all corporate beanfeast. They are the ones deliberately portraying the creation and entrenchment of a very specific economic system – global corporate capitalism – as an inevitable, evolutionary process. They are the ones who should have to justify their words and actions. The macho strutters of the Black Block might disagree, but it is the corporations and their allies who, in some ways, are the real radicals.

And us? Certainly, we want radical change. We want to stop this monster in its tracks, before it does any more damage. But our biggest mistake would be to try and replace one vast, unaccountable global system with another.

Yes, we need international rules, and international co-operation. But we don't have one international solution, and we never will have; because such blueprints are part of the problem.

For what this movement is about is summed up in the phrase coined by Mexico's Zapatistas to define their politics and their worldview: 'one no, many yeses'. We all know what we don't want.

As for what we do: we can work together on the big picture, but the rest has to come from the ground up. True change, lasting change, springs from the soil, it doesn't fall from the sky. It liberates people, communities and localities, and allows them to be themselves. It doesn't try to funnel them, it tries to free them.

So yes, this really is new. It's not the last gasp of the old left, or the resurgence of the new right. It's not protectionism, or even anarchism. It's something entirely different; something fresh being pieced together from the shards of old ideas, and glued with new solutions for a new age.

The world isn't listening yet, but it will be. We're onto something big.

Paul Kingsnorth is the deputy editor of *The Ecologist*.

THIS IS NOT THE LAST
GASP OF THE OLD LEFT,
OR THE RESURGENCE OF
THE NEW RIGHT.
IT'S SOMETHING
GENUINELY NEW

A MEGATON DISTRACTION

FEAR OF AN ASTEROID STRIKE, SAYS PETER BUNYARD, MAY BE IRRELEVANT IF WE DON'T ATTEND TO MORE PRESSING MATTERS.

TRUE, THE EARTH has been struck untold times by rocks hurtling into it over the past few billion years: true, when the rocks have been the size of Everest they have brought about mass extinctions. True too, in a bizarre twist of fate, we probably owe our existence to the asteroid that struck off the coast of Mexico's Yucatan some 65 million years ago. That blast, equivalent to some 10 million atom bombs, put paid to the dinosaurs, leaving the small, seemingly unobtrusive therapsid prototype mammal just scraping through. Lucky us and our fellow mammals, for suddenly the field was clear for our own explosive evolution. But for how long can we expect our luck to hold before it's our turn to be obliterated?

Who knows, the asteroid with our number on it, may already be lined up on a collision course with the earth, spinning its way towards us, until it gets caught in our gravitational field, accelerating faster and faster towards us until it is travelling at thousands of miles an hour before impact. But should we really be worrying about such an event? Well, according to the statistics we should be getting our knickers in a twist. In fact, says Duncan Steel, of the University of Salford and an expert in space technology, we face a considerably greater risk of being wiped out by an asteroid than of dying in an airliner, a risk about three times greater. It's the one-off event that virtually takes all with it that gives the statistics the twist and makes the asteroid the bigger risk. In historical times we have records of asteroid strikes, the most recent being the 15-megaton event that in 1908 flattened a 5,000 square kilometre swathe of forest in Siberia, and which would have completely taken out a city the size of London, were its course just a little different. And tens of thousands were killed by an impact over China in the 15th century.

Each year some 40,000 tons of fine debris get burnt up in the atmosphere. But it's the bigger bits that are the worry. On average we get struck by a rock 100 metres wide every 10,000 years and by one a kilometre wide every 100,000 years, equivalent in impact to thousands of hydrogen bombs and enough of an explosion to take out a good chunk of the human population. All too real, and a government task force led by Harry Atkinson, who has worked both for the European Space Agency and NASA, has now come up with its recommendations that we help set up a surveillance system of telescopes to keep watch over the heavens for unwelcome fragments from space. Then what? Perhaps Bruce Willis and



CONCERN OVER AN
APOCALYPTIC END TO
THE EARTH IS A
POWERFUL DISTRACTION
FROM MATTERS LIKE FUEL
TAXES AND THE WTO

Armageddon were not so fanciful after all.

The scientists concerned with the dangers from asteroids may be sincere in urging us and governments to take the risks seriously. But what we are really talking about is space war technology, no less. And who do we trust with both the development of that technology and the means to deploy it? Will Russia and China, or anywhere else in the world accept that the United States is forging ahead with 'Star Wars', simply to protect the rest of us? Or will we have to create a new role for an organisation such as the United Nations to be the guarantor that any such technology will be used for peaceful purposes only?

The mind boggles as to the implications of a war on asteroids, and in this cynical world, it is easy to imagine that the United States will relish the new-found earth-saving justification for nuclear weapons, as indeed may Russia, Britain, France, China or even India and Pakistan, let alone Israel and Iraq. At the same time, the statistics, as put out by Duncan Steel and the task force, are not particularly fruitful, since they indicate that unless we achieve a virtually impregnable earth defence system, it really doesn't matter what we do, for all

is likely to be blown away in the twinkling of an eye. And just imagine the US, or whoever, unleashing a bevy of missiles, supposedly on the pretext of defending us all, and what that would mean for trigger-happy defence systems.

But should we really be comparing the statistics of dying in an air-crash with those of annihilation from an asteroid? If we had any sense, we should rather be comparing the likelihood of destroying our fellow creatures and ourselves in a series of climatically-induced waves of extinction than worrying about what was like to fall in on us from space. The reality is that we are rapaciously destroying ecosystems and burning fossil fuels as if there were no tomorrow.

But, of course, concern over a Heaven-sent apocalyptic end to the earth is a powerful distraction from such mundane matters as fuel taxes, the World Trade Organisation and the occasional violent storm. Surely, before we start burying our heads in the stars we need to keep our feet on the ground and get our own house in order.

*Peter Bunyard is the science editor of **The Ecologist**. His latest book is **The Breakdown of Climate** (Floris Books, £9.99).*

CAPITAL GAINS

LONDON NEEDS ITS OWN CURRENCY, SAYS DAVID BOYLE,
IF LOCAL TRADE IS TO STAND A CHANCE OF SURVIVING.

IF YOU WANT a nail in a peculiar shape, or a weird kind of screwdriver, then you can't go wrong in Lordship Lane. The south London suburb of east Dulwich may be unexpectedly trendy, but it still has an absolute plethora of small DIY shops.

They've been there since anyone can remember, and most are staffed by ancient enthusiasts who know absolutely everything anyone could possibly want to know about plastering, emulsion and brass screws.

They and their shops are, unfortunately, an endangered species. A plan to build a Homebase DIY superstore on one of the last remaining bits of green nearby will probably strip Lordship Lane of this particular speciality. And although the balance sheets of the owner, Sainsbury, will probably show a big boost, we locals will have lost something too.

The question is this. Why don't these aspects of wealth show up in the figures? If money is supposed to reflect people's preferences, why doesn't it reflect the preferences of the locals?

There are lots of reasons, of course, but one is that the yardstick the global players use – an international currency like the pound – doesn't measure fine-mesh local wealth like that. And therein lies the problem: because the pound is all we've got.

That's fine for the international economy, the financial services sector. But there's another range of inter-locking local economies in London – as there are in any city – that feeds off the pickings from the rich table above it, but isn't really connected. Most of us rely on the local economy for our lives.

The international economy brings in executives from all over the world, whose employers will pay their housing expenses no matter what – forcing up the value of London homes beyond anywhere else in the country, and almost pricing London services beyond the other economy altogether. It doesn't measure our local preferences about trees, parks or DIY shops – because it isn't for us. It's for the traders and big players in Wall Street and the City.

But it's worse than that, because London has a third kind of economy too. It isn't really an economy at all, but it makes up the crucial human transactions that build families and neighbourhoods, look after old people, and without it we can't run any of the other economies successfully. Economists are starting to call this 'social capital' and market forces do not apply here – people don't after all bid for food at the dinner table. But without it, police can't catch criminals, doctors can't heal, children can't be educated and the other economies can't work.

The futurist Alvin Toffler asks executives what it would cost big business in hard cash if their new recruits had never been toilet-trained. They don't know, but it would be expensive.



THE YARDSTICK THE
GLOBAL PLAYERS USE
DOESN'T MEASURE FINE-
MESH LOCAL WEALTH

This social economy doesn't appear in the GDP, so politicians assume it is inexhaustible and ignore it. And the international economy tends to drive it out by converting social transactions done by people for each other into cash transactions done by paid professionals.

All these other economies are threatened because we don't see them, and because policy-makers see little else but the counting system provided for us by the big currencies. What can we do about it? One answer is to use more measuring systems, or provide the other economies with their own currencies.

This isn't such a new idea. The Swiss parallel currency Wir has been going strong since 1934, supporting small businesses and restaurants and providing cheap mortgages. The Scottish currency SOCS, backed by the EU, has been trying to do something similar; so do LETS currencies. And in St Louis, a city-wide 'time dollars' currency is paid to people helping out in the community – and spent on a range of services, from lifts or tutoring to recycled computers and emergency food.

So I reckon London needs not one, but two more currencies. One to boost the local economy – let's call it the Thames. One that doesn't seep away to international markets, but can provide low or no-interest credit for small or micro-businesses across London.

But to support the social economy, we need a new time currency – like the one earned through London's new time banks in Lewisham and Southwark by helping out in schools or visiting the elderly, or all those community-building activities that the city couldn't ever pay for.

It won't replace volunteering, but it will recognise the efforts people put in. In America and Japan, currencies like this have revitalised neighbourhoods, driven gangs out of gangland and kept whole districts of retired people healthy and living at home, rather than being packed off to municipal old people's institutions.

Currencies provide feedback. If we just borrow the measuring sticks forged to deal with the \$2 trillion that slosh across the trading screens every day, then it isn't surprising that it gives us a twisted picture of what's valuable and what's important. If we want London's interlocking economies to stay healthy, we have to invent some more.

We already do that a little, as we juggle our Air Miles, babysitting tokens, internet Beanz and telephone phonecards. It may be in the future we are going to have to juggle our different currencies a little more – but it's a small price to pay for Renaissance London.

David Boyle is the author of *Funny Money* (Harper Collins, £6.99) and the New Economics Foundation's pamphlet *Why London Needs its Own Currency* (info@neweconomics.org).

STEVE CARROLL

The first of an occasional series in which we profile the heroes and villains of our time. This month: US presidential candidates.

THE GOOD

With little over a month to go to the American election, Green Party nominee Ralph Nader arrived at the University of Massachusetts on 3 October to attend that day's presidential debate. Because he was not pulling in the required minimum 15 per cent in the polls, he was not allowed on stage, but, ticket in hand, he at least expected to take his place in the audience to see first-hand what his two main rivals had to say.

As soon as he got off his campaign bus, however, a commission security officer, backed tamely by police, told him he couldn't come in, because his ticket had been given to him by a student. 'I've been

instructed by the Commission [on Presidential Debates] to advise you that even though you have a ticket you are not the invited guest in possession of the ticket to this event.' Thrown out on a technicality, the third highest poller in the 2000 US presidential elections was barred from attending a public presidential debate.

RALPH NADER

Nader must be getting used to this kind of treatment by now. Way back in 1966, W R Murphy, then president of Campbell's Soup and a member of the Business Council, dismissed Nader's recently launched campaign for road safety with the words: 'It's of the same order as the hula hoop – a fad. Six months from now, we'll probably be on another kick'.

Indeed, throughout the years, Ralph Nader has been repeatedly dismissed by established political and corporate figures as a fad. But he's a fad who has lasted a long time.

In 1968, in the *New York Review of Books*, Nader wrote: 'What most troubles the corporations is the consumer movement's relentless documentation that consumers are being manipulated, defrauded and injured not just by marginal businesses or fly-by-night hucksters, but by the US blue-chip business firms whose practices are unchecked by the older regulatory agencies. It is becoming apparent that the reform of consumer abuses and the reform of corporate power itself are different sides of the same coin and that new approaches to the enforcement of the rights of consumers are necessary'.

This accent upon new approaches has been key to Nader's activities over the decades. His work has been based on the principle that the more seeds you sow, the more some are likely to grow. Among the groups he has set up, and then allowed to flourish, have been the Multinational Monitor, Public Interest Research Group, and the hugely impressive Public Citizen whose director, Lori Wallach, is credited for much of the success achieved in Seattle. 'I like to think of myself,' he once said, 'as a Johnny Appleseed

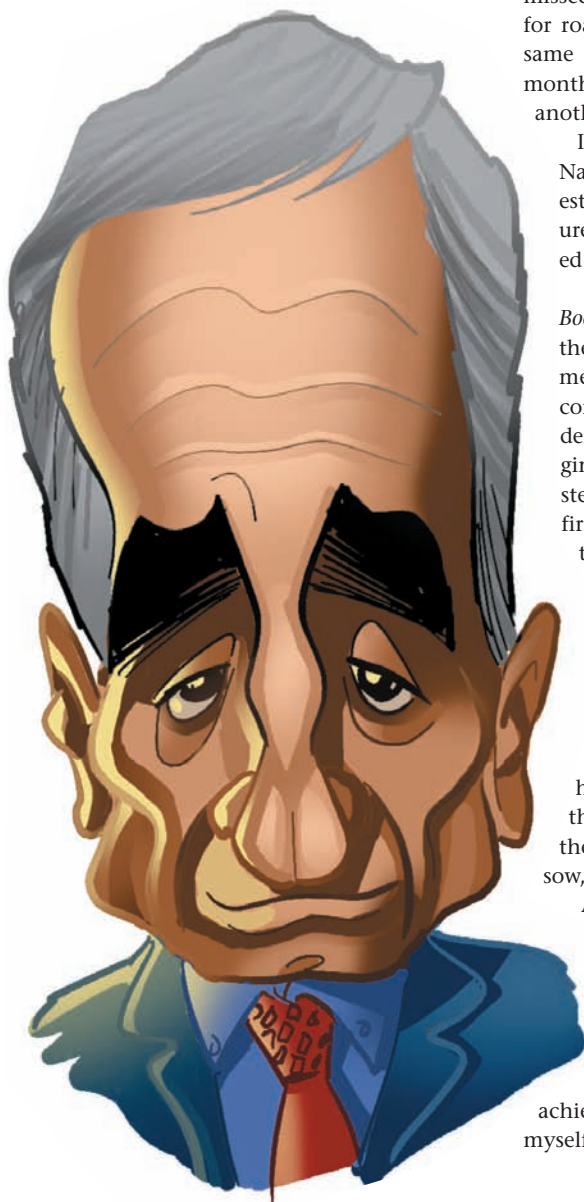
[the US folklore hero credited with planting the land with apple trees], getting consumer groups started and letting them grow on their own.'

One of the most powerful networks of change that he has helped bring about was the raft of Public Interest Research Groups in student campuses across the land. Each PIRG – based on student activism and inspired by Nader's initial model formed in Washington in 1970 – works to its own agenda, some taking on local issues, others national. Over the years, the PIRGs, or Nader's Raiders as they have been called, have tackled a mighty range of social and environmental problems from dental health in low income families to car repair fraud, bottle recycling to water pollution.

In fact, wherever he goes, Nader leaves behind a legacy of change: he worked with activists in Britain during the eighties to introduce an American-style Freedom of Information Act; he was one of the first people anywhere in the world to draw public attention to the potential destructive talents of nuclear power; in the seventies he led the way towards much-needed tax reform in the US; and within a week of publishing his environmental book *Water Wasteland*, had the Environmental Protection Agency announce several new actions towards greater pollution control. Truck safety, workplace protection, rights for air passengers: the list goes on.

And now Nader is running for president. At the time *The Ecologist* went to press, the most recent Reuters poll had him commanding 7 per cent of the vote. Not enough to win a state, let alone the election. It could well be, particularly with the tactical voters choosing Gore as a second-best candidate in an attempt to beat Bush at all costs, that he'll be viewed as the right man in the right place at the wrong time. Still, two out of three ain't bad.

But that would be to miss the point. Throughout his life, Nader has set forces for change in motion, and moved on, leaving behind good people to continue the fight, and often to succeed. He is the catalyst, others are the change. Perhaps what we are witnessing in the US election of 2000 is not just a Green Party candidate coming a distant third in a race he never stood a chance of winning, but Ralph Nader, as he has so many times before, sowing again those seeds of a system for change. We can but hope.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHRIS BLYTHE

THE BAD



The man who may become the next president of the most powerful country in the world notoriously believes that 'there ought to be limits to freedom'. This little nugget fell from his lips earlier this year, in reaction to one of many websites parodying his (lack of) policies. But it may turn out, if he does win the White House, to reflect his general approach to government too.

For George W Bush, or 'Dubya' as he is (apparently affectionately) known in his gubernatorial state of Texas, isn't too hot on personal liberty. But then he's not too hot on many concerns regarded as vital for the future of the US, from environmental protection to education. In fact, it's often rather difficult to discern why Dubya wants to be president at all; other than to get his hands on one of those nifty black combat jackets with 'Commander in Chief' stitched onto the lapel.

If it wasn't for Bob Dole's embarrassing attempt to become president in 1996, it would probably be fair to say that George W Bush is the most hopeless Republican contender for the presidential crown in a long time. Since Reagan, perhaps, with whom he shares many similarities: a disturbingly vague understanding of what he actually stands for; an entertaining ability to put his foot in his mouth at every opportunity; a parochial view of the big wide world beyond American shores.

Dubya was born in 1946, the son of former president George Bush. From the start he has had an easy ride, rising through the military, business ('when all is said and done, I will have made more money than I ever dreamed I would make') and eventually, politics, becoming governor of Texas in 1994. So far so predictable.

But Bush in particular has made a lot of powerful friends along the way. And critics assert that his political career so far has focused on nothing so much as paying off his debts to his wealthy backers. He has been accused, amongst other things, of channeling Texas state funds to his oil company

cronies, and altering tax laws to benefit his friends in the business community. If this is true, his corporate pals certainly repaid him handsomely: his campaign for president has been the best-funded in US political history – he was the first presidential candidate to raise over \$100 million to finance his campaign.

Whatever the truth of such charges, his record as Texas governor is disturbing enough in itself. Check out the rankings of Bush's state after six years of his governorship in key areas which affect real people. Texas has the highest number of children without health insurance in all America; the highest number of people stripped of medicare benefits; the highest number of executions; the highest level of greenhouse gas emissions and pollution released by industrial plants in violation of the US Clean Air Act. It has the lowest teacher salaries in America, and ranks in the bottom four states for delivery of social services, per capita funding of public health, high school completion rates, affordable housing and spending on the environment.

Still, never mind: maybe it will all be different when Dubya is in the Oval Office. Then again, maybe not. It's difficult to tell, as half the time it's hard to work out what his policies actually are. He wants to cut taxes, but he's not quite sure what Federal budgets

corporate crime, and easier for the perpetrators.

Then there's the matter of those now-notorious 'Bushisms'. Farmers, for example, will 'be in the forethought of our thinking' in government. And that government 'will not stand for the subsidisation of failure'. Meanwhile, on foreign policy, Dubya will not 'let terrorists and rogue nations hold this nation hostile'. As for hard questions on the information age, Dubya isn't afraid to ask them: 'will the highways on the Internet become more few?' he wondered in January. Maybe the best is his response to the budget back in May. 'It's clearly a budget,' he told Reuters, 'it's got a lot of numbers in it.'

So what is the point of electing Bush? Why is he even running? Some say that his primary motivation for the race is to avenge the defeat of his father by Bill Clinton in 1992. As usual, though, the best summation of why Dubya should not be allowed within 20 miles of the White House comes from his own lips, in response to a simple question from a journalist about his plans for the future.

'My plans?' he breezed. 'I don't worry about those things. I kind of figure life is going to work its way out somehow.'

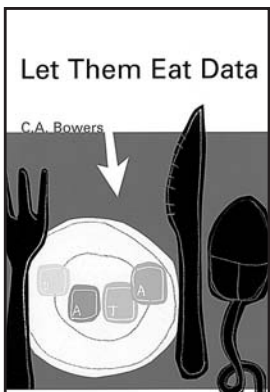
GEORGE W BUSH

he'll have to slash to do it. He wants to protect the environment, but not if it will mean new laws which inconvenience business. He likes free trade (which he seems to think will benefit 'American workers' – maybe he's never heard of NAFTA). Still, there are some things he has committed himself to. One of the most telling is a reform of tort law, which safeguards the rights of citizens to sue corporations. Bush's big corporate backers don't like being held to account, so Dubya has promised to make life harder for victims of

...AND THE UGLY

The New York Times: 'Given the major differences between the prospective Democratic and Republican nominees, there is no driving logic for third-party candidacy this year, and the public deserves to see the major-party candidates compete on an uncluttered playing field.'

Let Them Eat Data
C.A. Bowers



Let Them Eat Data
How Computers Affect Education,
Cultural Diversity, and the Prospects
of Ecological Sustainability
C.A. Bowers

"Parents, citizens, activists, and academics will find *Let Them Eat Data* a vital antidote to the techno-optimism that now dominates the media and public decision making."
—Richard E. Sclove, author of *Democracy and Technology*

"Bowers provides us with a lucid analysis of how computer-enforced cultural patterns contribute to the global ecological crisis and suggests alternative ways of integrating computers into education. I highly recommend this book to all who are concerned about creating sustainable futures."
—Fritjof Capra, author of *The Web of Life*

"This book might just rescue education from the moral sterility and ecological illiteracy of cyber-mindedness. A vital read. Pass it on."
—Stephanie Mills, author of *In Service of the Wild*

"An important, profound, and disturbing critique."
—David Suzuki

At Bookstores
\$40.00 hardcover
\$18.95 paperback

Orders: 1-800-266-5842
Email: books@ugapress.uga.edu
THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA PRESS

head, hand, heart

Have you ever wished education could be about **more** of you?

Do you believe science and feeling could work **together**?

Can you leave the world a **better place** than you found it?

We could have just what you're looking for . .

MSc Human Ecology

Core courses on **ecological, scientific** and qualitative thinking; **social and ecological justice**; leadership and change skills for sustainable development. Options in:

- Social Accounting
- Business & Sustainability
- Conservation of Biodiversity
- Field Trip
- Credit for prior learning/credit transfer
- Ecopsychology
- New Economics
- Ecobuilding
- Dissertation

One year full time or part time, studying locally or at a distance. Flexible courses include short intensive residential schools, guided reading, regular tutorials. Diploma/Certificate options. Limited overseas bursary fund.

0131-624 1974 (fax 0131-624 1973)

PO Box 1972, Edinburgh

EH9 1JB, Scotland

www.che.ac.uk

info@che.ac.uk



KEELE UNIVERSITY

School of Politics, International Relations and the Environment

(nominated by the European Union as a Marie Curie postgraduate site for the study of Environment Politics and Policy, 2000-3)

MA Environmental Politics. This discipline-specific degree is the only one of its kind in the world, with a wide relevance for people with differing policy, theory, transformational and/or institutional interests in environmental politics.

MA Environmental Law and Policy. This interdisciplinary degree is designed for practising environmental professionals or those requiring training to enter this field. No prior legal knowledge is required and the course is offered on a part-time (one afternoon per week, two years) or full time (one year) basis.

MA Politics of Sustainable Development. This course examines the contested nature of sustainable development and debates the obstacles to, and opportunities for, its implementation.

For more information please contact:

Professor Andrew Dobson
School of Politics, International Relations and the Environment
Keele University, Staffs, ST5 5BG, UK
Tel: +44 (0)1782 583351. Fax: +44 (0)1782 583592.
E-mail: poa15@keele.ac.uk

Or visit our website:

http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/spire/teaching/course_intro.htm#pg

School of Development Studies University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK

STUDY WORLD DEVELOPMENT

Development Studies is about social, economic, political and environmental change with a global perspective. Our degree programmes attract a wide diversity of students from both the UK and Overseas.

You can study at undergraduate and postgraduate level with opportunities to combine your studies with a language or a period of study overseas in the developing world.

For further information on our degree programmes visit our website: www.uea.ac.uk/dev

or contact:

The Admissions Office (Ref: E)
School of Development Studies
University of East Anglia
Norwich NR4 7TJ UK
Tel. 01603 592331/2
Email: dev.general@uea.ac.uk



DOCTOR'S HANDWRITING

A monthly column that helps you decipher the medical truth.

One of the things guaranteed to get me steamed is hearing a doctor or, more recently, one of a number of newspaper columnists, insist that there is no evidence that alternative treatments for cancer work.

Such an attitude betrays a simple, blinkered ignorance of cancer research. Many of the mainstays of alternative therapy actually do have solid published evidence of effectiveness or promise in fighting cancer. Take the work of Dr Stanislaw Burzynski who discovered a series of peptides, or antineoplastons, which act as a second immune system programming cells to develop normally again. He has published scores of findings, and has even submitted what adds up to a five-foot stack of records and studies to the US Food and Drug Administration in an attempt to get a 'new drug' licence. In one study of patients with advanced brain cancer, one-fifth of his patients achieved a complete remission. As a result of his evidence, the FDA has licensed him to administer his treatment at his own clinic in Texas – tacit acknowledgement of his success rate.

Oxygen therapies, which include hydrogen peroxide given intravenously, or ozone therapy, have been studied for 70 years, and have published evidence of successfully killing tumour cells which cannot exist in a high oxygen environment.¹

The late Linus Pauling, twice a Nobel Prize winner, conducted numerous excellent studies proving the value of vitamin C in fighting cancer. Vitamin C works by prompting cells to produce higher levels of a certain substance which prevents cancer cells from breaking down the intercellular cement between cells. In one Scottish study of terminally ill cancer patients, those given vitamin C lived four times as long as those who weren't given it. Many lived on for years, while those who didn't take the vitamin died.²

The Govallo treatment, which utilises substances in the human placenta, as an 'immunological shield' of sorts; certain herbs; amygdalin, or vitamin B17 (more commonly known as Laetrile); melatonin; ultraviolet irradiation of the blood; all have published proof of their ability to successfully fight off cancer.

Although all would benefit from further study, they certainly appear more promising than most of the tools of orthodox medicine. Despite encouraging noises from oncologists about the great strides made in chemotherapy, the new drugs and the new combinations of treatments, the bottom line is that collectively, chemotherapy has a success rate of only 13 per cent. It doesn't work for breast cancer, or colon cancer, for most lung cancer, for liver cancer. It doesn't work for 90 per cent of the cancers that are contracted every year and that people die of.



CANCER – THE BIGGER PICTURE

BY **LYNNE**
McTAGGART

'In the US, cancer pioneers have been prosecuted or hounded out of the country. In Britain it is illegal to claim to have a cure for cancer, even if you can prove you've cured thousands of patients.'

The tools of modern medicine are indiscriminate and brutal. Radiotherapy can spread cancer or cause cancer. Chemotherapy might work on one type of cancer but cause another kind of cancer years later. Many operations like radical prostatectomies or radical mastectomies rob patients of their dignity and their quality of life. In countless instances, the patient dies from the treatment and not the disease.

Despite its own singularly poor track record, medicine has jealously guarded its patch by effectively blocking any progress in any other direction. It is almost impossible for anyone with a promising discovery about cancer treatment to offer it up without suffering harassment or worse. In America, virtually every last cancer pioneer has been prosecuted or hounded out of the country. In Britain it is illegal to claim to have a cure for cancer – even if you can prove you've cured thousands of patients. Dr Burzynski, one of the youngest men ever to earn a PhD and medical degree in Europe, was hounded for 14 years by the FDA, which attempted (and failed) to put him in jail.

The latest scourge is the arrest (and subsequent acquittal) of Dr Hulda Clark, author of *A Cure for All Cancers*. Dr Clark postulates that pesticides and parasites are at the root of most cancers and has claimed an impressive success rate at curing those no-hopers that orthodox

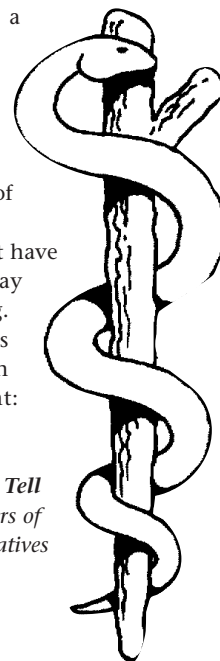
medicine has relegated to the dustbin.

These are not crackpots or snake-oil salesmen. Many of the pioneers of alternative cancer treatments are credible, fully paid-up members of the orthodox medical profession. These are highly original thinkers, who have developed a new way of treating cancer by moving away from the blunderbuss cutting-burning-poisoning approach of modern medicine. Thousands of their patients who are well five, 10, 20 years later, attest to the effectiveness of their treatments.

These innovators may not have all the answers; they may even, in the end, be wrong. But what they do have is something sorely needed in modern cancer treatment: fresh ideas.

*Lynne McTaggart is editor of **What Doctors Don't Tell You**, a monthly publication which exposes the dangers of modern medicine. WDDTY is holding an Alternatives Cancer Conference on 25 November in London. For tickets and details call: 01858 438894.*

References on page 65.





BAGS OF RUBBISH

PLASTIC BAGS, SAYS ROBERT EDWARDS, ARE CHOKING THE LIFE OUT OF INDIA. AND THAT'S JUST HOW THE PLASTICS INDUSTRY WANTS IT.

IN APRIL THIS year the *Lucknow Times* of India reported that local cows were dying as a result of eating discarded plastic bags. The number of cows was estimated to be 100 a day. 'The affected animal has a skeletal body but an abnormally bloated stomach. It eagerly goes to the trough but only sniffs at the fodder apparently unable to eat anything. It gradually becomes weak due to starvation and then finally becomes immobile. The end, which is excruciatingly painful, may take three or four days but surely not everyone will have the courage to watch it,' declared Ranjan Dubey, who runs a shelter for cows in Lucknow.

It was not the first time that such a story had been reported in the Indian press. But the plight of the Lucknow cows caught the national imagination. Photographer Manmohan Sharma stimulated it further with a shocking exhibition made up of photos of a rumenotomy (an operation on a cow's stomach, to remove the ingested plastic). The growing problem of plastic waste in India, which has been avoided by the authorities for years, was finally coming home to roost.

PLASTIC ECONOMICS

Material waste has only recently become a feature of Indian life – and it was the advent of non-biodegradable plastic that largely created it. Plastic litter has grown in proportion to the expansion of the plastics industry. In the mid-1980s the government of India sanctioned a huge increase in the national production of plastic so that India would become self-sufficient in petrochemical products and be able to compete in the global plastics market. Over 50 per cent of all plastic produced in India is used for packaging. Most of this is discarded once used – and in a country where traditionally waste was largely unknown, this has caused a massive environmental problem.

This problem of plastic litter is perhaps surprising in India with its well-known tradition of recycling, in which nothing is wasted and everything is valued. It is a tradition that, though changing, is still strong. All over the country, material objects like bottles are cleaned out and reused many times in many different ways and if they break, they will be mended.

NON-DEGRADABLE PLASTIC bags are poisoning and clogging up India's towns and cities. But solutions are hard to come by – largely due to the political influence of India's plastics industry.

Even plastic is often recycled – so-called 'plastic mechanics' visit people's houses to repair broken plastics by the simple process of heat fusion. And when the material is threadbare, and completely beyond repair, it is often picked up by human scavengers known as ragpickers – 60 per cent of whom are children, 30 per cent women and only 10 per cent men (mainly old and disabled)

'Material waste has only recently become a feature of Indian life – and it was the advent of non-biodegradable plastic that largely created it.'

– who pick and sort waste with their bare hands and then sell it on for whatever they can get.

The Indian government and the plastics industry claim that India has the highest rate of plastic recovery in the world – between 40 per cent and 80 per cent of all plastics produced. But be this as it may, the waste problem remains; and mainly for the simple reason that the ragpickers don't collect plastic bags, for simple reasons of economics. Although plastic fetches about 12 rupees per kilo in the waste market, it takes between 450 and 800 flimsy polythene bags to make up a kilo – and if they are soiled the price drops. This makes them an extremely unattractive economic proposition for even the most destitute ragpicker.

So, the plastic carrier bag increasingly clogs up the streets, gutters and countryside of India. In the words of one Delhi environmentalist: 'omnipresent, the plastic carry bag has strewn itself everywhere. In gardens, parks, drains, garbage dumps, on branches of trees and even in bird nests, it can be found to exist, propagating almost like a life form'.

In the towns, cities and tourist centres,

the plastic bag problem has become a plague; and attempts to cure it have begun to spring up. The initial campaign against plastic began in the hill station of Simla, in the state of Himachal Pradesh. Previously a retreat for the colonial British, Simla is now a popular holiday venue for the metropolitan middle classes escaping the heat of the plains. The population rises 100 per cent or more in the summer months, and with it arrives plastic rubbish. As a direct result of this, in July 1996, the Himachal state government passed India's first Non-Biodegradable Waste Act.

But it wasn't as good as it sounded, for the Act didn't ban the use of plastic bags in Simla, it merely banned the 'haphazard discarding' of non-biodegradable waste. Further legislation was passed which taxed local production of plastic bags, to discourage their use in favour of paper or jute bags. But the lack of nationwide action meant that, to avoid the tax, plastic bags were simply manufactured in Delhi or elsewhere and then transported to Himachal. The people of Simla are now much more aware of the plastics problem – but the problem is still with them.

In wealthy Goa, meanwhile, the problem is not only plastic bags but also plastic mineral water bottles, carried everywhere by foreign tourists fearful of waterborne diseases. With no collection system, mountains of empty plastic bottles pile up in sand dunes behind its white sand beaches. In January 1998, Goa passed a similar act to that of Himachal Pradesh, but it has never been seriously implemented. Lack of funds to purchase the dustbins and lack of suitable dumping sites are quoted as the main hurdles faced by the local bodies.

Other states have also tried to tame the plastic bag. Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir and the autonomous Ladakh Hill Development Council have all instituted 'bans' on the use of plastic bags, with varying degrees of success.

ENTER THE PLASTICS TASK FORCE

But it became increasingly clear that such a national problem requires a national solution. So, a 16-member National Plastics Waste Management Task Force (NPWMTF) was convened in May 1996 by the Ministry

of Environment and Forests (MoEF). It met eight times behind closed doors to find a solution to the problems of plastic waste.

At the first meeting, it was quite reasonably proposed that the plastics industry should take responsibility for its waste. Dr Dilip Biswas, its chairman, recommended the adoption of a 'buy-back' system as a pilot project in major cities. Buy-back or take-back, through deposits and refunds, is a system that has existed successfully for years in India with glass bottles. The price charged by the retailer for each bottle includes a deposit refunded when the bottle is returned. Used bottles are collected, cleaned, disinfected, refilled with the same product and returned to the trading point. It is an effective circular system, using the same transport system for collection as delivery.

But the Task Force rejected the idea, and the minutes of the meetings, which I have obtained, revealed how the plastics industry simply refused to accept any responsibility for the waste it produced. Instead, it continued to place the onus of waste management on the shoulders of local authorities and consumers. Its logic was stunning. 'Due to the fact that plastics are used with consumer comfort in view,' industry representatives

said to the Task Force, 'it is also the responsibility of the consumer to ensure that plastic products being used by them are recycled.' In other words, the industry was not prepared to countenance measures that would increase its costs or reduce its sales – and take-back could do both.

How did this happen? Quite simply the political influence of the plastics industry in India is vast and deeply suspect. For example, before the Lucknow cow raised the issue of plastic bag litter to a spiritual level (the cow being holy to Hindus), the biggest public furore over plastic happened in Mumbai,

the industrial centre of India where most of the plastics industry is headquartered. In 1998, the June monsoon rains flooded the city. Millions of plastic bags clogged the underground drainage system and made the floods much worse than they would otherwise have been. The Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) responded immediately, passing a resolution to place a ban on plastics. But then, the very next day, the mayor, having entertained a delegation from the plastics industry, suddenly retracted the ban.

'Any decision taken in a hurry,' he explained, 'would adversely affect a large number of workers in the plastics industry.'

The employment argument is often used by the Indian plastics industry to justify the status quo. But as Dr Asad Rahmani, direc-

tion' to the plastic bag problem. Taking advice from the Plastics Task Force, the plastics problem was redefined: the problem now was that plastic bag waste was too thin for the ragpicker to collect and recycle. Therefore the solution was simple: plastic bags should be made thicker. The government promptly passed a 'notification', to be implemented in all states. Only bags at least 20 microns thick could now be manufactured.

For the plastics industry, this 'solution' is perfect. The ragpickers, in theory, will now collect the bags for recycling, so the public eyesore will be removed. This in turn will remove the plastics industry's image problem. And, crucially, more plastics will be needed – so more will be produced, to the industry's great pleasure. As a result, there

will also be more resource use, more pollution – and probably more waste.

In Uttar Pradesh (UP), meanwhile, the plastics industry reacted swiftly to news about cows being killed by plastic bags. On 17 April the president of the UP Plastic Product Association (UPPPA) said that the issue was political propaganda and an attempt by the government to deflect public attention from the inefficiency of the state government and the municipal



tor of the Bombay Natural History Society, put it, 'the plastics industry, a fairly strong lobby, is trying hard to raise objections (to a ban). But I find their talk of putting people out of employment if the bag industry is sealed off, pure humbug. There are thousands who make a living out of drug peddling, but that does not mean that drug peddling should be allowed to continue and flourish'.

CROOKED SOLUTIONS

It was in this context, that the government of India proposed its first 'nationwide solu-

corporations.

The issue of the cow was not addressed but the holy Hindu cow might have the last laugh. Despite the UPPPA's opposition and intransigence, in July this year the state government of Uttar Pradesh banned plastic bags.

Whether this legislation will ever be fully implemented remains to be seen.

*Robert Edwards worked as a toxics campaigner in India for Greenpeace International. His book **Life in Plastic** is published by Other India Press. www.lifeinplastic.com*



MARK LYNAS

TOO HOT FOR HEIDI

THE ALPS ARE MELTING. AS MARK LYNAS REPORTS, THERE'S FAR MORE AT STAKE THAN JUST PRETTY LANDSCAPES.

'THE VALLEY LAY far below bathed in the morning sun. In front of her rose a broad snow-field, high against the dark-blue sky... Heidi had never felt so happy in her life before.'

If she returned now to her beloved Alps, Heidi would probably burst into tears. Since this classic children's book was first published in 1881, glaciers in the Alps have changed almost beyond recognition. Due to the impact of climate change, minimum temperatures have shot up two degrees in just a hundred years. And as a direct result, many of Heidi's pristine snowfields have been reduced to bare rock and gravel.

As the Alps are the most exhaustively studied mountain range in the world, scientific evidence of warming there is not hard to find. In total over half the entire glacier mass in Western Europe's highest mountain chain has gone since records began in about 1850. At least 100 Alpine glaciers have disappeared completely. And if current warming trends continue, in another few short decades the once mighty Alpine glaciers will be reduced to icy rumps – clinging only to the highest peaks.

At the end of the 19th century, when Heidi's creator Johanna Spyri was alive, Switzerland was becoming a popular tourist destination. The mountains were already criss-crossed with steam railways – purpose-built to shuttle top-hatted 19th century visitors (many of them British) up to the high valleys. Trains would stop

THE MINIMISING OF mountain glaciers through global warming could have long-term consequences for the world's water supply.

along the way at small stations, for the ladies and gentlemen on board to disembark and take tea.

Morteratsch station, close to St Moritz in the south-east of the country, was one such stopping-point. But it also had a particular attraction. Only a couple of hundred yards from the building lay the tongue of a huge glacier, which swept majestically down from the soaring 4,000-metre ice peaks of the Bernina range. Strolling up to the glacier edge, Victorian visitors could peer in amazement into deep-blue caves, or paddle in the freezing meltwater which surged from under the ice.

Morteratsch is well worth visiting today. The little station building is still there, and tourist trains still trundle by almost hourly. In fact, there's just one thing missing – the glacier. To reach the Morteratsch glacier now, you have to walk for over a mile up the valley. This is Switzerland's climate trail – a half-hour walk through over a century of global warming. And every half-kilometre or so, a green signpost reminds you how long the glacier's been gone from that spot.

The Alps are not unique. From the Andes to the Himalayas the story is the same – glaciers are not only melting, but at

an accelerating rate. What's special about the Alps is how far back the records go, and how minutely studied the changes have been. As a result, academics at Swiss universities are among the world's best-qualified to assess long-term trends in mountain climatology.

One of these is Professor Martin Beniston, Director of Geography at the University of Fribourg. He tells a story of a small glacier near Mont Blanc – a favourite field trip destination. In the last decade he's visited the site with each year's students – and watched it gradually disappear in front of his eyes. Now, he says, 'it's almost like a mini-desert – because no vegetation has caught up'. According to Beniston, the two-degree rise in minimum temperatures in the Alpine region is enough to cause a 300-metre rise in freezing levels. And that means certain death for lower-elevation glaciers.

The melting of mountain ice is more than just an aesthetic concern. Glaciers and snowfields are essential stores of water – which keep rivers running and fields irrigated through the long, dry summer. With a near-Mediterranean climate exacerbated by the rain-shadow of the highest peaks, southern Swiss cantons like Valais are some of the driest areas in Western Europe. Without the summer-long trickle of meltwater, agriculture would become nearly impossible. That spells the end of centuries of tinkling cowbells, haymaking and fine

cheeses – and ruin for many Alpine communities.

Like ripples on a lake, the effects will also be felt much further afield. The Alps feed Europe's major rivers, and with less snow and ice at their source the 'flow of the Rhine and the Rhone would be very different from what we have today', says Professor Beniston. If river levels sink too low, barges could be grounded and agriculture thrown into chaos.

Even so, the shock felt by Europe will be small compared to the catastrophe which is set to engulf tropical regions. In the Indian subcontinent the Indus, Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers provide water for a tenth of all humanity. And unlike temperate European rivers, which can rely on year-round rainfall, up to 70 per cent of their dry-season flow is supplied by Himalayan ice fields.

But these glaciers are already receding by roughly 20 metres per year. One study suggests that they could be four-fifths gone by 2035. That would mean an initial increase in river flow to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh – followed by a massive drop. Once these rivers become seasonal, the ecological basis for a thousand years of civilisation in the subcontinent will collapse.

Back in the Alps, scientists have also begun to pinpoint other issues of concern. An expert in plant ecology, Dr Felix Kienast at the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research in Zurich reports that one study on the Italian side of the Alps has shown that 'warmth-demanding species are moving in – quite drastically'. Treelines are moving up the slopes as temperature zones rise – an upwards migration of 150 metres 'is expected and observed in certain places', says Kienast.

According to one painstaking study, carried out at 26 summits over 3,000 metres in 1992, some species are migrating upwards by 4 metres per decade. The conclusion reached by the scientists – principally Professor Georg Grabherr of the University of Vienna – was that 'global warming is already having a significant effect on Alpine plant ecology' and that in future the warming 'may cause disastrous extinctions in these environments'.

But – worrying as these trends might be – they are likely to be many times worse in the lowlands. For whilst mountain species have to migrate at most a couple of hundred metres over many years to keep pace with their preferred temperature zone, lowland species must cope with a latitudinal shift in temperature. In the northern hemisphere, for example, plants may have to migrate hundreds of miles to the north as

temperatures rise. Those that fail – either because they can't adapt fast enough, or because humans have destroyed the habitat they need to move through – will face extinction.

And once again these effects are hitting hardest precisely where people are least able to cope. Dr Kienast points to marginal areas like the Sahelian zone of North Africa, where rising temperatures and decreasing rainfall are turning vast areas into desert. 'I think we should worry most about ecosystems in parts of the world like Africa – not here in Europe,' says Kienast. 'This is a North-South issue, and ironically we're the lucky ones.'

This unfortunate conclusion is a recurring theme in most of the studies of climatological impacts in Switzerland. One very detailed examination has been carried out. Commissioned by the Swiss government and obscurely titled 'NRP 31', it is based on meticulous research. Some of its conclusions were indeed worrying. For example, the authors found that the recent

'Morteratsch is well worth visiting today. The little station building is still there, and tourist trains still trundle by almost hourly. In fact, there's just one thing missing – the glacier.'

lack of winter snow in the lowlands was 'unique over long periods of time', as was 'the complete absence of cold anomalies [extreme cold events] in all seasons over the past 60 or 70 years'.

But according to Dr Kienast, the publication of NRP 31 actually reduced the political pressure for action on climate change. 'The whole exercise of NRP 31 clearly showed that in this part of the world there are not such drastic changes to be expected,' he says. One of NRP 31's two lead authors, Dr Stephan Bader of the Swiss Meteorological Office, supports this view.

'In the past there were periods when they had real problems with floods and things like that,' he says. 'As for right now, we still can't see anything – we can't measure any real impacts and say for certain that it's climate change.' He flicks through pages of graphs – one shows that precipitation patterns have altered little through the century. Another shows that average wind speeds in storms have actually declined in recent decades. Although 1999 was one of the warmest years ever – confirming the global

trend – a rare July cold snap had just dumped a metre of snow in some parts of the mountains.

But changes are happening, and in some parts of the country efforts are already being made to adapt. The town of Pontresina, back near Morteratsch in the country's south-east Engadine region, is embarking on a project to construct a giant 15-metre-high wall to protect against falling rocks and mud from the slopes above – expected to be loosened as permafrost thaws out. In Valais, the village of Saas Baalen has been forced to drain a glacial lake high above it – following fears that meltwater could eventually burst out and surge down the valley in a deadly mudflow. Some cable-car stations will have to be resited as the mountainsides they are fixed to begin to crumble. And plans are even being made to move some of the lower-level ski stations uphill.

But Switzerland is a rich country. Some small adjustments may be needed – even to the lucrative tourist industry – but it can cope. When NRP 31 was concluded in March 1998, policy-makers across Europe must have breathed a sigh of relief. Business could go on pretty much as usual, and Switzerland's Kyoto target of only an 8 per cent reduction of CO₂ emissions would seem less miserly.

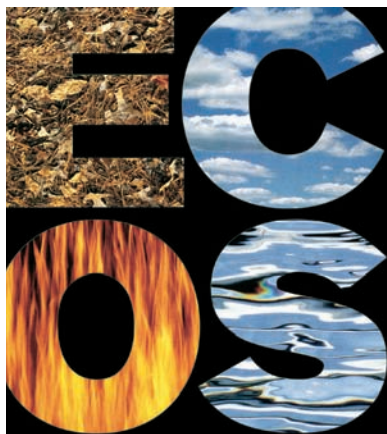
So Europe's in the clear. Scientists may disagree on the specifics, but – barring a major event like the stopping of the Gulf Stream – the lives of some of the world's richest and most privileged citizens can continue without major disruption for up to another five decades. What happens after then is anyone's guess – but 50 years is a long time in politics.

But hang on a minute. Haven't we forgotten something? Ten million people now need food aid because of drought in the Horn of Africa. This is the same drought which is now affecting a broad swathe of the Earth stretching from North Africa via the Middle East to much of central Asia. For four-fifths of humanity, the 'wait and see' approach has already run its course.

However, with oil and car corporations, as well as rich-world politicians all joining forces to oppose action on climate change, the outlook is grim. As the rich mobilise to protect their privileges, the poor face starvation and chaos.

It may be getting warmer in the North, but the South – as they say in Texas – 'sure as hell is gonna fry'.

Mark Lynas is based at Corporate Watch. For more information contact Corporate Watch at 16b Cherwell St, Oxford OX4 1BG, UK or visit their website www.corporatewatch.org



WINNER OF
FOUR MAJOR
NATIONAL
AWARDS

Odourless Solvent Free Organic Paints

The world's only range of solvent-free
paints and varnishes

**84 co-ordinated colours • Free brochure & colour
card • Colour matching service • 2 day delivery**

Most gloss paints AND emulsion paints contain toxic solvents
which can cause asthma, allergies & chemical sensitivities.
ECOS is made with NO solvent – literally a breath of fresh air!

What other people say about ECOS

...A joy to use – Homes & Gardens
...Brilliant Buy – Best new products, Ideal Home
...A delight to use – C. G. Northants
...Pleasant to use and fast drying – M. S. London

LAKELAND paints

www.ecospaints.com

Tel: 01539 732866

Are your savings as ecological as you are?



the Ecology...

... enables you to invest in a sustainable future. We use
the money deposited by our members to provide mortgage
finance to support, among other things, organic farming,
ecological and fairtrade enterprises, housing co-operatives
and housing associations. We also grant mortgages across
the UK for the renovation of run-down and derelict
properties (a form of recycling) and for the construction of
new energy and resource efficient houses.

**Put your money to work for a sustainable future. Phone now
for details of our savings or mortgages, or see our website.**

0845 674 5566

Ref: Ecologist, FREEPOST
18 Station Road, Cross Hills
Keighley BD20 5BR
www.ecology.co.uk



**YOUR HOME IS AT RISK IF YOU DO NOT KEEP UP REPAYMENTS ON A
MORTGAGE OR OTHER LOAN SECURED ON IT**

Further details and written quotations on request. All mortgages subject to status,
first charge on the property and satisfactory valuation.

FREE TRIAL ISSUE GREEN WORLD



Radical campaigning magazine of the Greens

UK Greens are making a real difference

Recent election successes
have placed members of the
Green Party at all levels of
government where they are
helping to get Green policies
implemented and promoting
sustainability and social
justice.

Green World documents the
exploits of the Green Party's
crusaders who now have
members in the European
and Scottish Parliaments,
the House of Lords, the
London Assembly and over
40 Councillors on Principal
Authorities, some holding the
balance of power.

Greens across the divide



**News, views, campaigns,
features, letters, events..**

Apply for a free copy now!

Name _____
Address _____

GREEN WORLD, 49 YORK RD, ALDERSHOT, HANTS GU11 3JQ

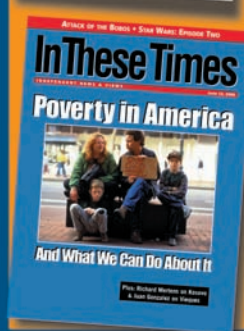
NEVER NEEDED MORE THAN IT IS TODAY.

—NOAM CHOMSKY



In These Times is a rare beacon of
truth-telling amid that swamp of
political propaganda known as the
media. It delivers the hard news one
might expect from a free press. It
explains the subtext for the continuing
scandal of our decayed democracy.
Read it—you will be regularly shocked
by what the other journals leave out.

—WILLIAM GREIDER



**THE MOST CREATIVE AND
CHALLENGING NEWS MAGAZINE
ON THE AMERICAN LEFT.**
—CORNEL WEST

For the past 23 years, **In These Times** has
been the premier newsmagazine on the
left, covering foreign policy, the
environment and labor. We've won
numerous awards from Project Censored,
including first place in 1997 and 1998 for
the most under-reported stories of the year.
Start your subscription today and find out
what you've been missing.

**Become an In These Times
subscriber today!**

Right now a
1-year, 24-issue
subscription is only

\$19.95

That's \$17 off the regular subscription price!

**Subscribe on the Web at
www.inthesetimes.com**

or call
1 (800) 827-0270

for credit card orders

Mention code AECOL to get this great deal!

STOP YOUR WINE-ING

THE INCREASING POPULARITY OF PLASTIC WINE-BOTTLE STOPPERS IS THREATENING THE UNIQUE CORK FORESTS OF PORTUGAL, SAYS TOM BRUCE-GARDYNE.

EVERY DAY FOR the last few months, the forests of Portugal and southern Spain have echoed with the sound of chopping wood as gangs of cork strippers bring this year's harvest to a close. This corner of Western Europe provides 80 per cent of the world's cork, and the traditional methods used to strip it have barely changed. With a special axe called a machado, a cork stripper makes a series of neat vertical cuts in the trunk, taking care not to swing too deep and kill the tree. The two-inch-thick bark is then gently prised away, leaving the tree naked from the waist down, with its upper branches untouched. Slowly the bark grows back, and after nine years the whole process begins again.

The harvested cork is used in everything from gasketing materials to shoe soles, but its primary role has always been keeping wine and air apart. It is wine producers who provide the cork farmers with the majority of their income. In 1999, according to government figures, bottle stoppers accounted for 71 per cent of cork exports by value. And as the world's biggest producer, the Portuguese cork industry is vital to the country's economy, earning 740 million euro in foreign sales last year and employing an estimated 500,000 people.

Since the first factories began punching corks 200 years ago, the cork and wine trades have gone hand in hand. But lately the relationship has been showing signs of strain, especially in the UK where supermarkets are losing patience with natural cork's occasional imperfections. They claim the level of cork-taint, caused by a rogue chemical compound known as TCA, is unacceptable, and are moving swiftly towards synthetic stoppers. And this could spell the end for the cork forests of Portugal.

The first reliable plastic cork was invented in 1992 by the American company Supremecorq, which now supplies over



FOR 200 YEARS, the wine and cork trades have gone hand in hand. But the rise and rise of new plastic bottle stoppers is threatening the traditional cork with extinction. With it will go vast hectares of unique Portuguese cork forest, and the wildlife they contain.

400 wineries worldwide. Today, its patented 'thermoplastic stopper' is being chased by seven plastic look-a-likes in the race to plug the 15 billion wine bottles produced each year. So far, plastic manufacturers have an estimated 2 per cent of the total, but this is set to rise exponentially. The only barrier, as they see it, is a vague, sentimental attachment among consumers towards natural cork. In the UK, having convinced the big buyers who control 75 per cent of the market, this is beginning to erode fast. Already a quarter of the wines sold by Tesco and Asda/Wal-Mart are bottled under plastic, and their main rivals are not far behind.

Having spent the last 20 years studying the cork forests, wildlife biologist Dr Luis Palma is in no doubt about the threat to the environment if cork loses the battle against plastic, for Portugal's 720,000 hectares of cork forests – a third of the world's total – support a fragile, biodiverse ecosystem. 'The value of the forests will diminish and there will be irresistible economic pressure for them to

be replaced,' he says. 'It is hard to see anything that could replace cork that would be environmentally sustainable given the poor soil and harsh climate.' And the forests also support other aspects of the local economy. 'On a small patch of cork land a farmer can raise a herd of goats, a few cows and some pigs to forage for acorns and graze beneath the trees,' explains Helena Freitas, President of Portugal's oldest conservation group, the Liga para a Protecção da Natureza.

EPHRAIM/ISTOCK

So are there any alternatives? A Portuguese government scheme to convert the land to cereals after the war was abandoned as a disaster when it was realised the soil was simply not strong enough to support this type of monoculture. At present, cork's most serious rival is Eucalyptus, a fast-growing cash-crop for the paper industry whose total plantings have tripled since the seventies to just under 700,000 hectares. Eucalyptus acts like a sponge, choking off the water supply to other plants, leaving the ground between the trees barren. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is deeply concerned about the consequences for a variety of native species and migrating birds such as the Blackcap and Common Crane. And there's also the risk of serious soil erosion leading to possible desertification.

Back in the UK the debate over cork has grown increasingly bitter with some supermarkets claiming that up to one bottle in every 12 is corked, a figure vehemently denied by the cork industry. While millions of pounds are being spent on trying to stamp out TCA, the producers of plastic corks say they just want a share of the market and are not out to replace anyone. But that may not be the way it turns out.

Tom Bruce-Gardyne is a freelance environmental journalist.

SINKING KYOTO

THE CLINTON-GORE ADMINISTRATION IS DOING ITS BEST TO TORPEDO GLOBAL EFFORTS AT REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS. SIMON RETALLACK REPORTS.

IT IS HARD to think of a better sign that global warming is actually happening than the sighting this summer of open water at the North Pole for the first time in human history. It is particularly perverse, therefore, that at this very moment the reckless demands of the United States and a group of other industrialised countries threaten to gut of all value the only international framework that exists to help address the problem.

The Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change was agreed by governments in 1997. It contains legally binding targets for industrialised countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by a collective total of 5.2 per cent below 1990 levels by 2012. Given that emission reductions of 60–80 per cent are needed now to stabilise atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations at non-catastrophic levels, the Kyoto target – though important as a first step – is spectacularly unambitious and could easily be met, with sufficient political will, by the rapid implementation of domestic measures.

However, a small number of governments led by the US insisted at Kyoto that the new Protocol include a series of mechanisms that would provide them with ‘flexibility’ in achieving their targets, or they would withhold their consent. Fatally, the governments of the rest of the world acquiesced, enabling the US and the so-called ‘Umbrella Group’ of countries, which includes Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand, to spend the last three years postponing action while devising loopholes in the rules of the Protocol and its ‘flexible mechanisms’ to enable them to avoid making any real cuts in emissions.

The loopholes that would do the most damage to the environmental integrity of the Kyoto Protocol are related to the use of ‘sinks’ – forestry and agricultural

THE OPERATING RULES of the Kyoto Protocol are being finalised in November. There is a real danger that, if the US gets its way, its integrity could be undermined.

activities that absorb carbon dioxide (the main greenhouse gas). Under the Kyoto Protocol’s ‘flexibility’ rules, every tonne of carbon dioxide absorbed from the atmosphere by such sinks permits a country to emit an additional tonne of carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels.

In order to be able to claim that more of their emissions have been cut without actually having to reduce them at their source, the US and its allies are attempting to make the definition of what exactly

counts as a sink activity as broad as possible.

To be included would be the domestic planting of forests – where a forest, according to an Australian proposal, could be defined as anything that is made of wood and is more than 25cm or one foot high. Aside from the outrageousness of this definition, any strategy that depends on trees or soils to permanently reduce emissions will be highly unreliable, as carbon dioxide absorption is hard to measure and because trees fall victim to fire and rot as temperatures rise, releasing carbon dioxide back into the atmosphere in the process.

Even more damaging would be the inclusion of ‘additional’ sink activities – which the US has proposed should include forest management practices that already take place and would continue to do so regardless of the Kyoto Protocol, thus providing no additional benefits in terms of emission reductions.

If only the second of these proposals were to be adopted, the US would be able to claim that at least half of the total amount of emissions it is obliged to cut by 2012 had been absorbed by domestic forestry activities without having to do anything new, let alone make any reductions in industrial emissions at their source. The consequences for climate change prevention would be devastating. In the words of Nathalie Eddy, the international co-ordinator of Climate Action Network, ‘if the US is able to meet a huge chunk of its target by business-as-usual forestry activities at home, the Protocol is worth close to nothing’.

In an equally, if not more damaging move, the US, with the support of most Latin American countries, is demanding that the same rules apply to the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The CDM is another of Kyoto’s ‘flexible mechanisms’. It allows industrial countries to fund projects in developing countries and



Rising levels: forestry activities could be the loopholes that ruin the Kyoto Protocol.

PANOS

claim credit for the emissions that are supposed to have been avoided there as a result. If sink activities are permitted in the CDM – a proposition even more fraught with problems in developing countries where monitoring and the critically important participation of local people is extremely hard to ensure – then such a vast supply of credits would be available that there would be virtually no incentive for domestic emission reductions whatsoever.

Because the US and the Umbrella Group want unrestricted use of the CDM, not only could sink activities be funded in developing countries in exchange for credits, but so too could the construction of nuclear power stations, large-scale hydroelectric dams and even some nominally ‘clean’ coal-fired power plants. As Kalee Kreider, climate change campaigns director of the US-based National Environmental Trust, explains, ‘the CDM has become a potential grab-bag for dirty industries that want to dump old technologies in developing countries’. The CDM’s original purpose – to facilitate the transfer of renewable and energy efficiency technologies to developing countries – could thus be subverted and the spread of dangerous and polluting industries effectively subsidised.

Worse as far as the climate is concerned is another ploy of the US and the Umbrella Group designed to let them off the hook of making real emissions reductions. They are demanding that there should be no constraints placed on ‘emissions trading’ – another ‘flexible mechanism’ by which industrialised countries have the right to buy the unused emissions allocations of other industrialised countries and have them counted towards their own targets.

Uncontrolled use of emissions trading would be highly detrimental to global emission reduction efforts because some industrialised countries such as Russia and Ukraine have vast emission allocations as a result of securing an emission allowance in Kyoto for 2012 that is the same as 1990, a year which preceded a massive plunge in the former Soviet countries’ actual emissions following the collapse of their economies. They now, therefore, have a significant surplus that they are highly unlikely to need and which they can sell as ‘hot air’ credits to the highest bidder. If they do so, global emissions will end up being higher than they would otherwise have been, with clear climatic consequences.

The environmental integrity of the Kyoto Protocol will be further undermined if the US and the Umbrella Group succeed in establishing a compliance system that would allow them to ‘borrow’ emissions

allocations from the future in order to avoid making cuts now. More damage will be caused if the same governments succeed in their goal of manipulating the accounting and liability rules of the agreement to make it hard to establish whether real reductions in emissions have been achieved and, if not, who should be held accountable.

The collective impact of these gaping loopholes will be to eliminate the need for

‘It is as if Noah in his ark, in the interests of appeasing the two hippos on board, had suddenly decided to drill holes in the hull below the waterline.’

countries to make real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Indeed, Greenpeace International has calculated that if the US and its allies in the Umbrella Group succeed in inserting all of their loopholes into the Kyoto Protocol, far from reducing the emissions of the largest industrialised countries which are members of the OECD by an average of 7 per cent by 2012 as the Protocol is supposed to do, it will enable their emissions to increase by 15 per cent. ‘If these loopholes are in there,’ confirms Francis MacGuire, climate campaign co-ordinator of Friends of the Earth International, ‘it’ll be business as usual.’

It should be the cause of screaming headlines across the world. With breathtaking hypocrisy, the Clinton-Gore Administration is leading attempts to sabotage the only global agreement that exists to deal with probably the most important problem facing humanity this century. The seriously flawed excuse that it gives for this bankrupt strategy is that it is the only way to keep US industry and the senators’ industry funds ‘on board’.

A more suicidal approach would be hard to imagine. It is as if Noah in his ark, the flood waters rising around him, with no land in sight, and with the burden of saving the fruits of God’s creation on his shoulders, had suddenly decided, in the interests of appeasing the two hippos on board who were agitating to wallow in a little water, to drill holes in the hull below the waterline.

Yet, at this point in time, such madness looks set to prevail. The operating rules of the Kyoto Protocol must be finalised in The Hague in the Netherlands between 13 and 24 November if the whole agreement is not to collapse, giving the Clinton-Gore Administration the opportunity to hold the negotiations hostage until its demands are met.

The outcome of the last preparatory meeting of negotiators in Lyon, France, in September does not bode well. The only block of countries capable in theory of preventing US destruction of the agreement – the EU – has provided only weak and disorganised resistance. According to Bill Hare, Greenpeace International’s climate policy director, there was ‘virtually no progress’ in eliminating any of the key loopholes in Lyon. In fact US negotiators, Hare claims, were ‘putting new proposals on the table that were worse than before’, in response to which the EU ‘failed to have a strategy’.

A deal may be hard to strike at all in The Hague given the patchy progress made in Lyon in boiling down hundreds of pages of negotiating text, and the possibility that former oil man George W Bush – whose opposition to the Kyoto Protocol is on the record – may be elected US president just five days before the conference opens.

With the US making unacceptable demands when it might not even ratify the agreement, the EU has nothing to lose, and a lot to gain, by ending its policy of appeasement and toughening up its act by insisting that the rules of the Kyoto Protocol have the utmost environmental integrity. That means that it must, above all, push for a narrow definition of domestic sink activities, in which natural carbon sequestration and all ‘additional activities’ are rejected, and insist on the exclusion of sink activities altogether from the CDM, together with all nuclear, large hydro and ‘clean’ coal projects. The EU must also refuse to back down on its (hitherto weakly made) demand that at least 50 per cent of countries’ emission reduction targets be met through domestic action. Only thus will an agreement emerge which achieves real and permanent reductions in emissions.

For that to stand a chance of happening, environmental organisations know that they must improve their act rapidly to explain to the public and the media what is at stake and encourage people to make their voices heard, including at the vital talks in The Hague itself. A large dose of reality must be injected into these surreal discussions if the Kyoto Protocol and global efforts to prevent climate change are not to be sunk for good.

Simon Retallack is managing editor of The Ecologist special issues. He has recently completed a report on the environmental impact of globalisation for the International Forum on Globalisation in San Francisco.

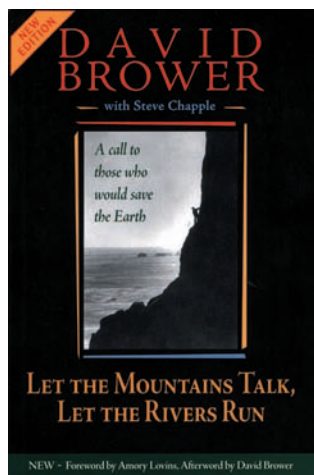
Visit www.climatevoice.org to send an email message to world leaders telling them to turn down the heat at The Hague.



REVIEWS

LET THE MOUNTAINS TALK, LET THE RIVERS RUN

By David Brower (with Steve Chapple)
NEW SOCIETY PUBLISHERS 2000
JON CARPENTER (DISTRIBUTOR)
£11.99



A commentator once described Henry David Thoreau as a 'nature boy'. A phrase that first glance appears condescending in fact perfectly distils the attitude and disposition of one of the 19th century's most enlightened thinkers. David Brower quotes Thoreau frequently in his book *Let the Mountains Talk, Let the Rivers Run* and the label of 'nature boy' could equally as well be applied to him. This is a man, now in his eighties, whose childlike reverence before nature's awe and majesty finds expression on almost every page of this book of his thoughts and memoirs.

A lifetime of environmental activism, whether at the helm of the Sierra Club or as founder of Friends of the Earth and the Earth Island Institute was clearly inspired less by abstract ideas than by the sheer joy of walking among basking seals in the Galapagos, scaling a mountain in the Sierra Nevada, or simply gazing at butterflies. Above all it is wilderness that has touched Brower and formed the central thrust of his ecological awareness and thinking: namely, that the 'wilderness experience,' so important to him, must be preserved for future generations through the restoration and protection of the natural world. Outstanding natural havens, as well as rivers, forests, wetlands, deserts and endangered species, all demand immediate regeneration and protection.

Brower points to the successes of Yosemite, Yellowstone Park and the Redwoods National Park as examples of what can be

achieved through will and inspiration. Such chunks of wilderness should, says Brower, not only be expanded and defended but linked by wildlife corridors allowing the free movement of plants and animals that do not respect synthetic borders. Boundaries should be placed around cities instead, preventing the otherwise inevitable depletion of precious natural habitats.

It is Brower's deep and inspiring conviction that the earth can be healed, that we are bright enough to 'build back'; to restore rivers dammed, forests cut, seas polluted and ozone depleted. In order to do so the environmental movement has to be inventive, courageous and inspiring, he says. It has to tap into and move the huge potential constituency of environmentally conscious consumers, 'those who like to eat and breathe well'.

Brower cites Sam La Budde's secretly filmed video images of dolphin slaughter on tuna boats as an example of media manipulation that caused huge changes in consumer buying habits forcing giant food companies to change their fishing tactics. He recounts how Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* awoke the world to the dangers of DDT and led to its banning in the US. These are individuals who made a massive difference. Communities too can pull together and radically change their environment. At Auroville in Tamil Nadu a collection of like-minded determined people turned a desert into a fertile community through the great skill and care of a tree-planting programme.

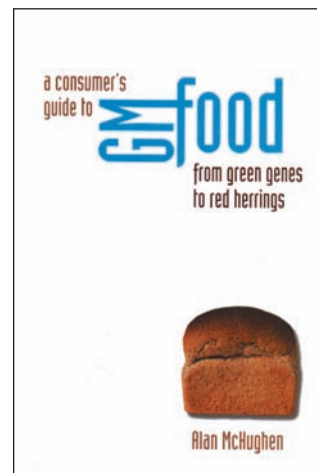
Sensible and workable alternatives that can save the planet are there to be used: kenaf, the wood pulp substitute for paper, and physicist Amory Lovins' ultra-light and efficient Hypercar, are only two of many he mentions. Brower sees the necessity for a World Ecological Bank (WEB) devoted to restoring and preserving the world's eco-capital. Through WEB nations could nominate for preservation areas of outstanding significance in other countries (such as the forests of Siberia) – the relevant country would be compensated for loss of extractive revenues (logging etc) by the bank.

While most find electric pylons an eyesore, for Brower even a climber's expansion bolt left in the mountain is offensive – an 'ego-bolt', as he calls it. He is undoubtedly a purist, but he writes from the heart in an informal style that welcomes the reader as a close friend. Despair is not a word in his vocabulary, so for those of us who find these times desperate his words bring great comfort.

Ed Metcalfe

A CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO GM FOOD FROM GREEN GENES TO RED HERRINGS

Alan McHughen
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS 2000/£9.99



McHughen has chosen an ambiguous title, *A Consumer's Guide to GM Food*, but on which side of the fence does he reside? The blurb on the back cover tells us that McHughen is a 'public-sector educator, scientist and consumer advocate'. But it takes a few pages before his true expertise is revealed. He is a geneticist, working on GM linseed. And he makes only feeble attempts to disguise his true feelings on GM food. This book is nothing but a long, unreferenced, dull trail through the industrial agriculture agenda.

The lack of references is a serious shortcoming. There are many sweeping statements that appear without the slightest support. He refers to 'recent surveys' that go to support particular points he makes.

As you move through the book you can almost hear him say: 'Trust me, I'm a scientist,' but his use of language blows any hint of impartiality away. While the US has been happy to eat GM food for many years, he questions: 'Why does the UK lack a legitimate GM foods debate?' He suggests that, 'Opponents to GM put forward untenable pseudo-scientific assertions, then run away, unwilling or unable to defend their positions' while introducing us to 'some mistakes made by proponent companies, especially in their approach to marketing GM technology'. There are 'superb scientists developing creative ideas... on a shoestring budget'. So make no mistakes, this is a very direct assault on the anti-GM movement.

There is much to be said against this book,

even the pro-biotech *New Scientist* described it as 'dull'. But it does act as a biotech textbook, and as such, a useful tool for anyone wanting to learn more about the technology. However, that comes with the caveat that the reader remains aware of the message the author is pushing. Interestingly, McHughen lets slip some of the reality of this 'precise' and 'exact' science. Describing the technique for getting altered DNA into a cell, we are told that: 'What happens... is a mystery,' and he goes on to explain that, 'somehow, the foreign DNA is inserted into the cell DNA... Exactly how this occurs is uncertain'.

It is not clear whether McHughen is just an unwitting dupe in the corporate gameplan, or whether he is one of its architects. He quite rightly states that: 'No one, not even the avaricious multinational, wants to be

'Make no mistake, this is a very direct assault on the anti-GM movement. It is not clear whether McHughen is just an unwitting dupe in the corporate gameplan, or whether he is one of its architects. He quite rightly states that: 'No one, not even the avaricious multinational, wants to be responsible (ie legally liable) for poisoning unsuspecting consumers.'
On A CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO GM FOOD

responsible (ie legally liable) for poisoning unsuspecting consumers.' But he is using this statement to persuade us that, despite the absence of any controlled feeding experiments, we should trust the biotech corporations that their food is safe. Well of course they don't want to be legally liable. As we can see through the history of the very companies that are now engineering our diets, they have run from the legal liability of poisoning people and the land for decades. Just look into the archives of Monsanto to see how they twisted and turned to avoid the responsibility for destroying thousands of lives with Agent Orange. And for further evidence of the corporate attitude, look no further than the tobacco industry's strenuous denials of involvement in wholesale slaughter.

I do agree with McHughen that it is absurd

to complain about the potential health impacts of GM food while smoking. It has to be sensible to remove the obvious and proven threats to health. But that in no way diminishes the criticisms directed at a GM industry seemingly hell-bent on dumping new and unquantified risks on the battered environment and a reluctant public.

One of the most infuriating characteristics

of this book is the way in which McHughen raises straw man after straw man, and then, in displays of breathtaking intellectual might, he knocks them down, in the process claiming yet more victories for his own particular agenda. But he tackles non-issues. He enters into tortuous semantics arguing that we cannot prove food is safe.

Yes, we know that arsenic is a poison and

SEX, SPIRIT & COMMUNITY

By Mark Josephs-Serra

JON CARPENTER 2000/£9.95

Mark Josephs-Serra wants community. Not just neighbourhood watch and a chair on the local road-traffic committee, but wholesale, supportive, share-and-share-alike community. And as a society, he thinks we are ripe for it. In his book *Sex, Spirit and Community* he explains why, suggesting that the increasing number of people hopping on the spiritual growth bandwagon, coupled with an expanded political awareness, makes for a society eager for change. We want to live in a more meaningful, harmonious world. However, without any community to speak of, we've got nowhere to go: nowhere to put all this new-found awareness. It is not simply that we miss the supportive communal structures that we have enjoyed as a species throughout time, but that without them, our zest for change is ineffective. In a group we can pool our energy and become forceful, whilst as individuals our power is scattered. So, as far as Josephs-Serra can work out, we need community, not just on an emotional, but a political level.

However, we can't simply return to the type of community we knew before the industrial revolution, where people had no choice but to bind together on the land on which they were born, sharing the same soil and beliefs. Today that wouldn't work because we are too individualistic; we have passed through an age in which fundamental societal notions, like religion, have been pushed off their pedestals. As beings, we have learnt to question authority, to value the supremacy of the self, so community today must respect that individualism. Likewise, community must also be able to address our sense of the sacred in life, the mystery of death, the sanctity of long-term relationships, the beauty in nature. For Josephs-Serra, a community that could satisfy all these

needs would be truly 'holistic'.

He speaks from experience. In 1994 he set up Balance, a 'holistic

community' based in rural Devon. However, community as Josephs-Serra envisages it can only work when the participants are prepared to live in one place for the rest of their lives. For many people that isn't desirable. The other problem is that although it might be possible to till the soil together in rural Devon, it's a different story in inner-city London. There's no need to dismiss an idea because it doesn't seem practical. Change only happens when you give it a try. However, if *Sex, Spirit and Community* is supposed to inspire people to set up small-scale communities, practical issues should have been addressed. For example, it would have been interesting to read more about Balance. How many people are involved? What kind of teething problems did they have? Do they have their own currency or share resources at all? Details like this would have been illuminating. Instead, the tone of the book is entirely theoretical, with much of its focus centred on Josephs-Serra's own existential journey; his life as a Hindu monk, the re-emergence of his will, his struggles with 80s materialism and the difficulties of long-term relationship. He shows us his heart: the poems and diary notes he has written for the last 30 years. As a result the book is more a scrap-book of his personal reflections than a thorough exploration of the concept of community.

Lucinda Labes



■ we know that 'pure' water contains arsenic. But this revelation cannot be used to justify adding unknown risks to those we are already exposed to. We know how much arsenic it takes to kill someone, but there have been no studies to indicate that GM food is free from risk.

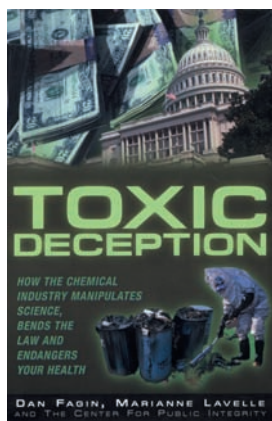
Maybe it is an attempt to endear himself to the audience, but I found the repeated use of the rather less than specific terms did nothing to lend authority. For example, 'successful DNA [sic] is still a very inefficient process, as only one in a zillion cells is successfully transformed in any attempt'.

This book is rather like the British Government. It strives to give the impression of balance, it claims to be seeking a fair and just 'third way' between the polemical participants in the current debate. But just as 'New Labour' offers nothing but soft focus conservatism, McHughen's book, when the surface is scratched away, reads like nothing but a biotech industry PR manual.

Hugh Warwick

TOXIC DECEPTION **HOW THE CHEMICAL INDUSTRY** **MANIPULATES SCIENCE, BENDS THE** **LAW AND ENDANGERS YOUR HEALTH**

by Don Fagin, Marianne Lavelle and the
Center for Public Integrity
COMMON COURAGE PRESS/\$17.95



In case you ever entertained any doubts as to the veracity of the adage 'Truth is stranger than fiction', this scary but well-documented account will quickly dispel them. If *Toxic Deception* were fiction, the book would be dismissed out of hand as totally unrealistic. But the long sub-title could just as well be replaced with another truism: 'Money Talks'. And if that's true, the chemical giants are in the same league as the Greek orator

Demosthenos, only – instead of having pebbles in their mouth – they have a legion of well-paid lawyers, lobbyists and scientists in their pockets, tilting the odds heavily in their favour. To name just one example from the chapter aptly named 'Science for Sale': of some 1,400 'weed scientists' (experts on herbicides) in the United States, only 75 work for government agencies, while the vast majority toil in the fertile fields of the chemical industry.

'If the shocking truths revealed in *Toxic Deception* are representative of the extent to which American democracy has degenerated, some ancient Athenians must be turning over in their graves. In the authors' words: 'chemical manufacturers have learned that they can keep dangerous products on the market as long as they stay in control through every stage of the [regulating] process, [and] more often than not [they] succeed brilliantly.'

On TOXIC DECEPTION

One reason why the chemical companies – many of them transnationals with worldwide sales – have been so successful in defending their contaminated turf, is the emasculated laws governing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). While the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) – which was able to keep such lethal drugs as thalidomide out of the US market – is empowered to outlaw any pharmaceutical product that has not been proven safe for the consumer, the EPA has no such authority. Before prescribing or restricting the use of any chemical compound, the agency must prove beyond any doubt that the product is not just harmful, but that its negatives outweigh its positive values! This apples and oranges approach obviously makes no sense; how many extra bushels of corn does it take to make up for each new case of cancer caused by a certain pesticide?

Moreover, of some 70,000 new chemicals introduced since WWII, the EPA's 20,000

employees have to date only tested a handful. The bulk of the research upon which their decisions are founded is conducted either by the chemical companies or by 'independent' or university labs – most of whom depend for their funding on the largesse of the same corporations which nominally are the object of their scrutiny, but usually end up as its beneficiaries.

In chapters with the telling titles 'Making Friends in High Places' and 'Keeping the Watchdogs on a Short Leash', the authors reveal some interesting statistics from documents obtained under the Freedom of Informations Act:

From 1980 to 1995 contributions to congressional candidates from just 12 chemical companies – including Dow, Hoechst, ICI and Monsanto – and their employees totalled almost \$9 million.

Between 1990-95, a total of 136 government employees – mostly lawyers and lobbyists – were given jobs by chemical companies. Their number included two dozen top-ranking EPA executives, five assistant or deputy agriculture secretaries (ministers), four members of Congress, six White House staff members, and the chairman of the Consumer Product Safety Commission. You don't have to be a cynic to assume that they all got a nice raise.

In just three years, 1993-95, ranking EPA employees were treated to no less than 168 junkets at a cost of \$135,000, paid for by industry front groups opposing the regulation of alachlor, atrazine, formaldehyde, and perchloroethylene – not coincidentally the four chemical compounds that were among the biggest money-makers of the industry, and upon which the authors have focused their keen investigative efforts. Not wanting to pre-empt their eye-opening exposé, I shall limit my litany of examples relating to the aforementioned chemicals to just four: one in each category.

The weedkiller atrazine was synthesized in 1955 by Geigy SA and hailed as the second coming of DDT, another miracle compound discovered by the Swiss chemical company – though this time the inventor did not win a Nobel prize for his creation. By 1996 the annual profit from its sale in the US alone was \$90 million. While evidence of its toxicity was rapidly accumulating, it was not until 1984 that EPA took note of its cancer-causing properties, and it is still the most widely used herbicide in the United States.

As successful as atrazine was for Geigy, Monsanto's rival product alachlor was an even greater gold mine, with 1996 sales totalling \$320 million. By the mid 1980s, EPA

had classified it as 'a probable human carcinogen' and was pushing for an immediate ban on its use – as Canada had already done. But under sustained pressure from Monsanto and its political cronies, EPA rescinded its decision, and to this day alachlor is used by tens of thousands of farmers in more than 60 countries.

Most of the billions of pounds of formaldehyde produced every year go into the manufacture of such wood products as particle boards and veneers. It is a petroleum by-product made by DuPont, Georgia-Pacific and a dozen other companies, and while it is harmless at low levels, it sickens people continually exposed to its toxic fumes in today's well-insulated homes and office buildings.

Ever since the 1920s it has been known that formaldehyde gas can be highly toxic, yet it was not until 50 years later that the problem gained public attention, and in 1995 Du Pont was fined a whopping \$115 million for a 'clear pattern of concealment and misrepresentation' in deliberately downplaying the potentially lethal consequences of overexposure to its fumes.

Chemical giants Dow and ICI are the leading manufacturers of a cleaning agent known as perchloroethylene (perc for short), which in high doses was classified as a carcinogen by the EPA back in 1970. Nevertheless, perc is still being used by 85 per cent of the 30,000 dry cleaners in the US despite the availability of other, non-hazardous cleaning methods. According to (the prestigious) Consumer Reports, people who regularly wear dry-cleaned clothes have a 1 in 6,700 risk of getting cancer – a much higher rate than the 1 in 100,000 risk posed by Alar, the apple pesticide banned in 1989.

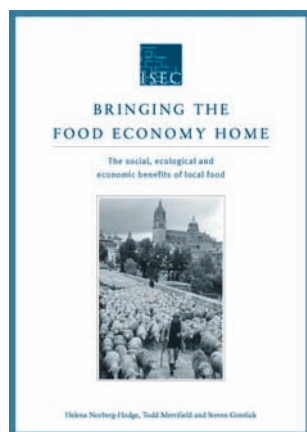
As the EPA has drily noted, the \$6 billion dry cleaning industry is one of the largest users of chemicals in regular contact with the public.

If foot-dragging were an Olympic event, the EPA would be a dead cert to win the gold. And if the shocking truths revealed in *Toxic Deception* are representative of the extent to which American democracy has degenerated, some ancient Athenians must be turning over in their graves. When the dollar rules, 'plutocracy' better describes the prevailing political system. In the authors' words: 'chemical manufacturers have learned that they can keep dangerous products on the market as long as they stay in control through every stage of the [regulating] process, [and] more often than not [they] succeed brilliantly.'

Gard Binney

BRINGING THE FOOD ECONOMY HOME

By Helena Norberg-Hodge, Todd Merrifield and Steven Gorelick
ISEC 2000/£5.50



Most environmentalists probably 'know' instinctively that, when it comes to food, certain things are good and certain things are bad. Amongst the list of good things, the production of food locally – as near as possible to the place of sale and consumption – probably features pretty high on the list. Amongst the bad things, conversely, the global transportation of foods, at great environmental and social cost, which can just as easily be grown next door is probably a strong bet too. But is this really true, or is it just an instinctive assumption? What are the real costs and benefits of the local versus the global food economy? And, if we want to, how can we get from there to here?

This new report, produced by the International Society for Ecology and Culture, which has long campaigned on these issues, fills a lot of these gaps. It is one of the most authoritative reports on this subject, and it clearly and concisely lays out the case against the global agricultural economy as it currently operates. It also, crucially, suggests some practical solutions for promoting local production and realigning the currently unfair and often destructive global food economy. 'Counting all the people negatively affected by the global food system,' Peter Rosset is quoted as saying on the first page, 'we really are the majority of the people in the world.' Look at the facts and figures behind the usually hidden food industry – all well-displayed and explained in this report – and you begin to see how true this is. Did you know, for example, that a typical plate of food in the US today has travelled on average 1,500

miles from source to table? Or that a cattle feedlot with 20,000 cows produces as much sewage as a town of 320,000 people? Or that roughly 75 per cent of the money spent at a McDonald's is immediately sucked out of the local economy? Or that, largely due to the corporatisation and globalisation of food, approximately 75 per cent of the world's agricultural diversity has been lost in the last century? There are many more such figures

'Did you know that a typical plate of food in the US today has travelled 1,500 miles? Or that a cattle feedlot with 20,000 cows produces as much sewage as a town of 320,000 people?'
On BRINGING THE FOOD ECONOMY HOME

and facts in this report, all wrapped up in distinctive chapters, focusing clearly on such angles as the ecology of food marketing, food and health, food security and global food economics.

Much of it is depressing stuff. Fortunately, though, the report focuses on solutions as well as problems – though it's a shame there was not slightly more on the positive way forward; even with the inclusion of chapter eight, 'Shifting Direction', more than three-quarters of the report still focuses on bad news.

But this is a quibble. For there are practical suggestions for reforming world trade rules in the WTO, removing hidden subsidies for transport and infrastructure, implementing local and national food regulations designed to promote local food and make the global food industry pay the true ecological and social costs of its activities, and rebuilding local food connections in ways as diverse as farmers' markets, box schemes and local food co-ops.

In a world in which global trade is accepted as a panacea for all the world's problems, the issues raised in this report are clearly vital for the future of us all.

Peter Kane

Ecologist readers can order *Bringing the Food Economy Home* at the special discount price of £4.50. In addition, ISEC's report *From the Ground Up: Rethinking Industrial Agriculture*, normally £12.95, is available at just £6.50. For further details, and to order, call ISEC on +44 (0)1803 868 650.

New Books from Earthscan Publications



Natural Capitalism

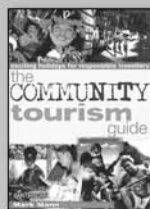
New in Paperback

The Next Industrial Revolution

Paul Hawken, Amory B. Lovins and L. Hunter Lovins

'There is a new book out I commend to you called Natural Capitalism...This is a huge deal'
President Clinton

P b • £ 1 2 . 9 9 • 1 8 5 3 8 3 7 6 3 6



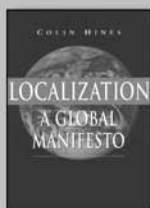
The Community Tourism Guide

Exciting Holidays for Responsible Travellers

Mark Mann for Tourism Concern

'groundbreaking...manages to educate and inform without being patronising.'
The Ecologist

P b • £ 9 . 9 9 • 1 8 5 3 8 3 6 8 1 8



Localization

A Global Manifesto

Colin Hines

'What we need is an irresistible alternative to galvanise opposition to globalization. Colin Hines has got one - the refocusing of the global economy around local markets'
Anita Roddick

P b • £ 1 0 . 9 9 • 1 8 5 3 8 3 6 1 2 5

Future Positive

New in Paperback

International Co-operation in the 21st Century

Michael Edwards

'Mike Edwards' vision of the importance of co-operation and its enormous potential is powerful and persuasive. It is particularly refreshing to read a book which sets out how such changes might be achieved and which is fundamentally optimistic that they can be'
David Bryer, Director, Oxfam

P b • £ 1 2 . 9 9 • 1 8 5 3 8 3 7 4 0 7

Global Environment Outlook 2000

United Nations Environment Programme

'The most authoritative summing up of the environmental situation for the new millennium'
The Independent

P b • £ 2 0 . 0 0 • 1 8 5 3 8 3 5 8 8 9

A Community Manifesto

Chris Wright

'Brings a freshness of perception, which crystalizes much of current thinking and feeling'
Gabriel Channon, Community Development Foundation

P b • £ 1 2 . 5 0 • 1 8 5 3 8 3 7 3 4 2

Order these books online at www.earthscan.co.uk

Earthscan Publications 120 Pentoville Road London N1 9BR Fax - +44(0)20 7278 1142 earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk

Is Your Career Sustainable?

As the leading Recruitment Consultants to the U.K. Environmental Industry, Evergreen Resources has established a reputation for providing a first class service to all sectors. Recognising the value brought to their operation, clients call on us to provide high calibre, specialist permanent and contract staff from virtually all environmental backgrounds.

The growth of exciting niche markets has boosted demand for creative thinking, business minded, technically-gifted people to work with the top names in Environmental and Management Consulting, developing existing audit and reporting operations, adding value to the bottom line and the team. The following requirements reflect these growth areas and a paradigm shift in the way companies view their relationship to business, social and environmental performance. It is time for *you* to consider *your* future.

Management Consultant

London

Superb package

Our client, Management Consultants providing environment related services, have vacancies for individuals with demonstrable consulting capability and potential to contribute rapidly to project management, client management and new business development. Training and experience in technical/environmental areas or in business risk or social/economic/accounting areas would be useful, as would genuine experience in sustainable development strategy and implementation. Ref.6743.

Management Consultant

London

Superb package

Our client, Management Consultants, provide information and advice to blue chip clients on air emissions trading and climate change. They are interested in hearing from all candidates with genuine experience in climate related matters from either the public or private sector. Commercial awareness, entrepreneurial flare and a genuine flexibility to apply skills and experience across a range of services and client sectors are essential. Ref.6816.

Social Auditing Consultant

London

Superb package

Our client is a leading environmental consultancy with an ever increasing workload in sustainability. A particular requirement is for individuals who can demonstrate 2-5 years genuine experience of social impact assessment, social auditing (SA8000), ethical trading, social strategies and social reporting. Alongside this you will have a flair for business development, strong interpersonal skills and solid project management skills. Ref.6823.

For further information, or to apply for any of these positions, please send in a CV, preferably by email, enclosing your salary and locational requirements to the following address:-

**The Professionals'
Choice**

The Barn, Bartons Lane, Old Basing, Basingstoke, Hants. RG24 8AE
Tel:- (01256)314 620 Fax:- (01256)314 629 email to Admin@evergreen.org.uk

More jobs at <http://www.evergreen.org.uk>

Evergreen Resources



Page 25 *Get Out of Africa*

- 1 *The Economist* May 11 2000 The Heart of the Matter.
- 2 *New Internationalist* August 2000 Africa united: not hopeless, not helpless.
- 3 Susan E. Rice, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Address before the Meridian International Center/Smithsonian Institution Forum, "Today's Africa: Transformation of a Continent" Washington, DC, October 13, 1998, Released by the Bureau of African Affairs, October 13, 1998.
- 4 *ibid.*
- 5 Lionel Jospin, Rabat, Morocco, 17 December 1997.
- 6 *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1961), pp. xi-xiv.
- 7 *ibid.*

Page 30 *Buying up Britain*

- 1 Verdict, cited in *The Guardian*, 20th December 1999.
- 2 Keynote Ltd, 1997. Retailing in the UK.
- 3 Research by Verdict, cited in Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, October 1998. *The Impact of Large Foodstores on Market Towns and District Centres*. The Stationery Office, London.
- 4 Keynote Ltd, 1998. *Supermarkets and Superstores*.
- 5 Keynote Ltd, 1997. *Retailing in the UK*.
- 6 Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, October 1998. *The Impact of Large Foodstores on Market Towns and District Centres*. The Stationery Office, London.
- 7 Sam Porter, Paul Raistrick, January 1998. *The Impact of Out-of-Centre Food Superstores on Local Retail Employment*. The National Retail Planning Forum, c/o Corporate Analysis, Boots Company PLC, Nottingham.
- 8 As above.
- 9 Letter from Emma Hallett, *New Economics Foundation*, April 1998.
- 10 Government Statistical Service. National Travel Survey, 1989/91; National Travel Survey, 1994/96.
- 11 Hugh Raven, Tim Lang and Caroline Dumonteil, 1995. *Off Our Trolleys?* Institute for Public Policy Research, London.
- 12 *The Observer*, 26th July 1998.
- 13 As above.
- 14 Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1998. *A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone*. The Stationery Office, London.
- 15 John Breach, 29th July 1998. Press Release. *Pollution: Time to Turn the Smoglight on the Multiples, and Gasp*. The British Independent Fruit Growers' Association.
- 16 Angela Paxton, 1994. *The Food Miles Report: The Dangers of Long Distance Food Transport*. The SAFE Alliance, London.
- 17 As above.
- 18 *Freight magazine*, December 1999, April 1998, March 1998. Published by the Freight Transport Association. Global Transport, Spring 1997.
- 19 *Mail on Sunday*, 12th May 1996.
- 20 *The Guardian*, 28th October 1993.
- 21 Tesco, Summer 1998. *Clubcard Magazine*.
- 22 Caroline Cranbrook, 1997. *The Rural Economy and Supermarkets*. Great Glemham Farms, Suffolk.

- 23 The Grower, 23rd October 1997, cited in Shayne Mitchell, 1998. *Checking Out the Supermarkets: Competition in Retailing*. Published by Colin Breed MP, House of Commons.
- 24 John Cleland, Director of Produce, Meat, Poultry and Fish, Asda. 13th October 1998. Letter to Suppliers.
- 25 Panorama, 23rd November 1998.
- 26 As above.
- 27 Safeway, 5th November 1999. *Good News from Safeway*.
- 28 *Daily Mail*, August 23rd 1999.
- 29 Paul Dobson, Michael Waterson and Alex Chu, September 1998. *The Welfare Consequences of the Exercise of Buyer Power*. Office of Fair Trading, Research Paper 16.
- 30 Simon Gibbs (Planning Inspector), 22nd April 1998. Appeals by Tesco Stores Ltd and Railtrack plc: Report of Public Inquiry.
- 31 Department of the Environment, 1996. *Planning Policy Guidance 6: Town Centres and Retail Developments*.
- 32 Ann Robinson, BRC Director General. In *Annual Review 1998, The British Retail Consortium*.
- 33 The British Retail Consortium. *Annual Review 1998*.
- 34 As above.
- 35 As above.
- 36 Ann Robinson, BRC Director General. In *Annual Review 1998, The British Retail Consortium*.
- 37 T. Marsden and N. Wrigley, 1995. 'Regulation, retailing and consumption', Planning & Environment Volume 27.
- 38 *The Sunday Times*, 4th October 1998.
- 39 Shayne Mitchell, 1998. *Checking Out the Supermarkets: Competition in Retailing*. Published by Colin Breed MP, House of Commons.
- 40 John Bridgeman, quoted in *The Grocer*, 1st August 1998.
- 41 *The Times*, 20th October 1999.
- 42 *The Independent*, 8th December 1999.
- 43 Competition Commission, 31st January 2000. *Summary for Consultation of Issues Raised*. <http://www.competition-commission.gov.uk/o4issues.htm>.
- 44 Ian MacDougall, Williams de Broe. Quoted in *The Guardian*. 2nd February 2000.

Page 34 *Shadows in the Kingdom of Light*

- 1 Ravina Aggarwal, 'From Utopia to Heterotopia - towards an anthropology of Ladakh', in *Recent Research on Ladakh*, Shri Jainendra Press, Delhi, 1993
- 2 Tsering Norboo and Tsering Morup, 'Culture, Health and Illness in Ladakh,' in *ibid*
- 3 Ali Mohamad Rather, 'Discrimination in Ladakhi Society', in op cit 3

Page 51 *Doctor's Handwriting*

- 1 Cancer, 1965; 18: 1250; Cancer, 1989; 63: 2114.
- 2 Proc Natl Acad Scien, 1978; 75: 4538-42.

THE CROW

THE CROW family: collectors of fascinating trinkets, portents of doom; symbols of spirituality, emissaries across the flood. And if THE CROW should make wing to the rooky wood, then the world will be turned on its head. To see which way the wind blows, keep your eye on THE CROW.

FLORIDA'S KISS OF DEATH

THE CROW has noticed that diverting nature from its original course never pays in the end.

The majestic Kissimmee River in central Florida runs south from a lake of the same name to the State's largest body of fresh water, Lake Okeechobee — a distance of some 56 miles as The Crow flies. The problem with the Kissimmee, according to those who know these things, was that it used to be a very fickle river: it meandered all over the landscape, rendering the surrounding countryside pretty worthless to 'real estate developers' — a breed well represented in this, the fastest-growing of the 50 United States.

Enter the US Army Corps of Engineers (ACE), with a brilliant solution: let us realign this rambunctious river and make hundreds of additional square miles of land available to that band of ever-hungry speculators. Now, the ACE engineers may be bird brains, but they are no Crows. They started to dig a 56-mile channel in a straight line, like a platoon on parade, from point K to point O, a project that would take ten years to complete and cost the taxpayer several billion dollars.

These are the same aspiring Archimedes's who had already made a futile attempt at containing the mighty Mississippi behind a series of levees, and who, a few years later, wanted to dig another canal in Florida, this one connecting the Atlantic with the Gulf of Mexico, right across the middle of the state. Fortunately, this particular scheme was nipped in the bud by ecologically savvy politicians, who realised that it would effectively cut off the flow of water to the southern end of the peninsula and the Everglades National Park. The Park is one of the United States' few remaining wildlife sanctuaries, and just about the only part of Florida that — so far — has been kept safe from this kind of 'development'.

Being a branch of the US Army, ACE formally answers to the Pentagon top brass, for whom a few billion dollars is chump change. For this is the same defence department that, to date, has spent upwards of \$30 billion on a harebrained strategic scheme known as 'Star Wars' and intended to intercept long-range ballistic missiles launched from the Soviet Union. So it is perhaps time for the Joint Chiefs to appraise Ronald Reagan, the former movie actor, corporate shill and US President, of the fact that the Evil Empire is now defunct. For Star Wars was the brainchild of the president who wouldn't make a move without first consulting wife Nancy's court astrologer.

But to get back to terra firma — or a close approximation thereof: the army engineers' tinkering with the natural flow of the Kissimmee River had the effect of converting it into a giant ditch, surrounded by a series of stagnant pools that soon spelled death to the previously abundant wildlife. The ducks took wing, the multi-hued wading birds waddled off, and the once ubiquitous bass abandoned their breeding grounds in the former river basin — much to the dismay of hunters and sport fishermen.

However, the real killer — the unforeseen side-effect of man's intervention that finally made him rethink the whole crazy idea — was the fact that Lake Okeechobee, Florida's largest fresh water reservoir, was rapidly being polluted by phosphorous fertilizer run-off and cow manure. This was the catalyst which finally convinced state legislators that maybe Mother Nature knows best after all.

As a result of this belated, though welcome, epiphany, the Florida Water Management Agency has now launched an

'All over the planet, we can see the disastrous effect of our amateurish attempts at rearranging nature to suit our fleeting fancies'

equally ambitious programme to restore the Kissimmee to its original leisurely course — replete with marsh grasses, wildlife (hopefully) and other natural filtration agents — as part of a 10-year, \$10 billion plan to save what's left of the Everglades. And who has been entrusted with the job? You guessed it: the original perps — the Army Corps of Engineers!

If the kiss of death administered, *cosa nostra* style, to the Kissimmee, were an isolated incident, it might not be worthy of mention in the pages of *The Ecologist*. But it is symptomatic of a much larger phenomenon: our obeisance to the totem of technology. It seems odd that human beings — many of whom proclaim faith in an all-wise, omnipotent creator — would presume to improve upon His handiwork. And yet.

And yet, all over the planet, we can see the disastrous effect of our amateurish attempts at rearranging nature to suit our fleeting fancies: from the basin of China's Yellow River, where millions have succumbed to man-made floods, to Egypt's Aswan dam, which has effectively put an end to the millennial deposit of sediments in the Nile delta, and to North America's once mighty Colorado River, whose life-giving flow into the Gulf of California has been reduced to a sickly trickle. This is what you get if you try to play God with things you don't understand: a great big mess, and an almighty bill.

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

Lannan Prize for Cultural Freedom

2000



photo by Claudia Andujar

Claudia Andujar

ARTIST, HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATE, WITNESS

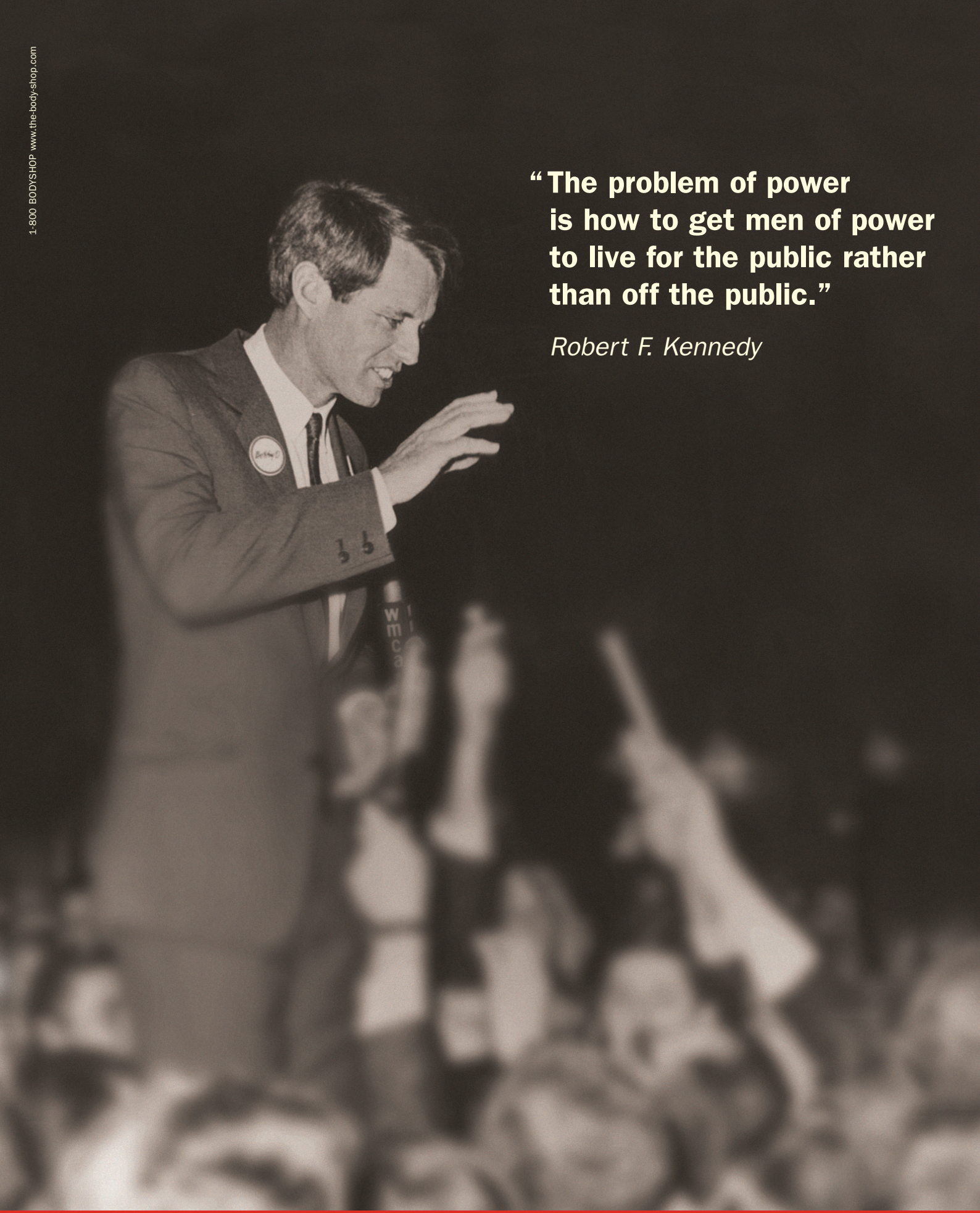
Claudia Andujar is a photographer and founding member of the CCPY, *Comissão Pró-Yanomami* in Brazil. She has dedicated her life to protecting the freedom, culture, and land rights of the Yanomami people.

Lannan Foundation's *Prize for Cultural Freedom* was established in 1999 to recognize people whose extraordinary and courageous work celebrates the human right to freedom of imagination, inquiry, and expression. Cultural freedom is the right of individuals and communities to define and protect valued and diverse ways of life currently threatened by globalization.



Claudia Andujar

The ancestral wisdom of the Yanomami people concerns everyone interested in preserving the well-being and balance of the Amazon's ecosystem and therefore the whole planet.



**“The problem of power
is how to get men of power
to live for the public rather
than off the public.”**

Robert F. Kennedy

You make the men of power. Use your vote wisely.

 **THE BODY SHOP®**