

THE  
**Ecologist**

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RETHINKING BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

APRIL 2002



# Jungle fever

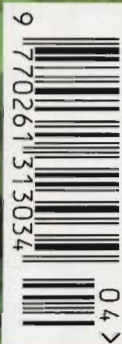
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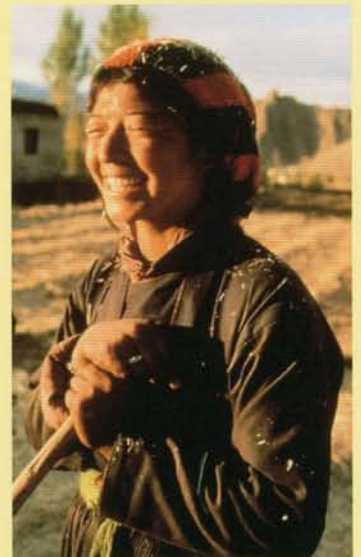
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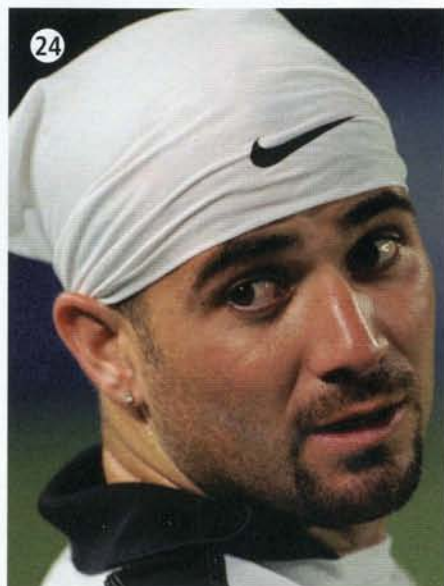
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**WHAT CHOICE DOES SHE HAVE IN CIVILISATION?** This girl is one of the Jarawa. For thousands of years they have thrived on a tiny cluster of islands in the Indian Ocean. Now all that is changing. The government of India, to which these islands belong, laid out a Master Plan for resettling the Jarawa in one place. Precisely the type of scheme which history has repeatedly proven to be disastrous. According to one expert unless the government changes its policies, the Jarawa "will end up as beggars, servants and prostitutes." Survival is urging India to let the Jarawa decide their own future. The essential first step: that they be secure in their ancestral lands. Call Survival on 020 7242 1441 or visit [www.survival-international.org](http://www.survival-international.org)

## Sea change

Before the close of the last millennium, you couldn't argue the case for climate change without being accused of having succumbed to history's call for pre-millennial blues. Now that the millennium has passed and signs of climatic instability increase, most climate sceptics have changed their tune. The climate is changing, they say, but mankind has nothing to do with it. The implication is that there is no point embarking on a solution.

Fortunately, the scientific establishment – which for so long denied climate change was happening – disagrees. The UN, the US National Academy of Scientists, most governments and the vast majority of independent scientists readily accept both that climate change is a reality, and that we are its cause. And it's not hard to see why. Over the past few months virtually every region of earth has experienced a climatic extreme.

Why then do some commentators continue to deny our role in the unfolding debacle? Certainly there are question marks – not least because mathematical models are incapable of fully understanding biological systems. But the bulk of evidence is more than compelling.

Even so, doubts exist. The debate has yet to be won. Surprising, really, as it's hard to understand why anyone would fight vigorously against preventative measures. What, after all, is the worst that could result from taking action and being wrong? We would have built an alternative energy infrastructure in the North, one that was clean and safe and used a small fraction of the money wasted on nuclear energy. We would have freed ourselves from dependence on the volatile oil nations. We would have ensured that our contributions to development in the Third World were spent not on corrupt oil projects as they are today, but on low-maintenance, clean and decentralised

energy systems. We would do all we could to cut the distance between consumer and producer. Just in terms of food, that would translate to fresher produce for the consumer, less transport emissions for the environment and more money for the long-suffering farmer. And we would do everything possible to reinvigorate local economies so that small industries could flourish and people could work closer to home, with all the benefits that would bring.

The result would be economic growth in the proper sense, with an explosion of small businesses. Because of the nature of those small businesses, there would be a corresponding rise in job availability. The effects would be economically and socially beneficial. The losers would be confined to the larger corporate structures that have benefited for far too long from government subsidies and biased policy to the detriment of more or less everything else.

The costs, say the apologists for the status quo, would be astronomical. But would they? Or would the same resources be merely shifted from one form of economic activity to another? All estimates point to massive medium-term savings from energy conservation and renewable energy. The costs of reconnecting food producers and consumers would be negative. Certainly the indirect subsidies that enable New Zealand butter to be sold more cheaply in the UK than British butter would need to be diverted initially so as to allow small producers operating within the local economy to get established. But then? All those unpopular food subsidies could be discarded in the name of free trade. This would happen in the context of a global market undistorted by lunatic subsidies political, financial and otherwise.

In other words, the cost of taking action to prevent climate change are not only negligible, they are the kinds of

steps we need to take in any case for a host of other reasons. We don't even need the excuse of climate change to push for local food economies, clean energy and energy conservation. The reality of climate change merely makes those needs more vital.

But what if we accepted that climate change is no consequence of our actions, and is, therefore, beyond control? The costs would be unthinkable. The insurers for the UN Environment Programme has estimated that losses worldwide linked to climate change could cost US \$304 billion annually in 50 years time. And the German Insurer, Munich-re says that damages will outstrip global assets by 2065 on current trends.

If any of the predictions on climate change are accurate, these estimates are probably far too low. A half-metre sea-level rise, for instance, would wipe out Holland. The idea that its 17 million inhabitants could be transferred smoothly to new homes elsewhere would be laughable, were it not a possibility.

And assuming we can deal with the hundreds of millions of environmental refugees predicted by the UN, what of the nuclear power plants that are sited on coasts? Moving them is not an option. Nor can we simply switch them off, unless we have had the foresight to relocate and treat the mountains of radioactive waste they generate. And how do we intend to grow food if half our good land is submerged, and the other half is busy adapting to harsh new ecological conditions?

The costs of getting it right are negative, and involve taking steps that are in any case necessary. The costs of getting it wrong are unimaginable, let alone unmanageable. Surely we can't wait for the sceptics to be persuaded, least of all those in the pay of the industries responsible. By then, we'll be far too busy to implement useful change.

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Please attach your name and postal address, even when sending by email.

The editor reserves the right to shorten or edit correspondence where necessary.

## Europe, what's at stake

In your February editorial (vol 32/1) you describe the way democracy in this country has been destroyed, and the threats from a European Union super state. But you offer no suggestion about defeating these threats.

In 1973 I read the Treaty of Rome against the background of politicians' promises about there being no loss of sovereignty. I therefore know they were lying in their teeth, and concluded they would be up to no good. I have campaigned against our membership of the EU ever since, and am still fighting. The fears I had in 1973 have been proven right over and over. Everyone knows about the things you described in your article. Much of our media promotes EU membership, just as they did in the 1970s. Unfortunately, anti-EU organisations have neither the professionalism, nor the tenacity or a tenacious leader to mount an effective campaign against our loss of sovereignty and democracy. Where are the leaders who will offer a solution?

**Nina Cooper, Malmesbury, Wiltshire, UK**

## Sustainable city greenwash

At Atlantis Ecological Community we are still trying to recover from seeing one of the most disgusting, polluted cities in the world – Bogotá, Colombia – listed in your 'Other worlds are possible' feature (vol 32/1).

The search for some good news on the planet has indeed reached rock bottom if you are reduced to mentioning this city in anything other than a disaster context. And displaying the name of the city's ex-mayor Enrique Peñalosa in a 'hero' role? Peñalosa is a vicious authoritarian, whose idea of clean streets meant getting the police to attack, beat up and arrest all the

poorest street sellers. His idea of ecology was to cut down thousands upon thousands of the city's beautiful old trees with the excuse that they were 'not native species'. And he promised never to institute another car-free day after commercial opposition to the one he did have.

Yes, the Sunday cycle-ways are a very welcome innovation, but have you ever tried breathing in Bogotá?

**Jenny James, Atlantis Ecological Community, Colombia**

## Missing the target

I was pleased to read Catherine Fulton's letter (vol 32/1) about your inclusion of the Countryside Alliance advertisement (vol 31/10) – not least because of the revealing response it elicited from you.

Yes, the debate on fox-hunting is highly polarised. This is because there is only one argument: the support or abjuration of cruelty.

I would have thought that in 'rethinking basic assumptions' *The Ecologist* would have made a point of familiarising itself with the strength of the worthy and determined ongoing campaigns against vivisection and factory farming. Instead you choose to have a pop at these campaigns because you perceive their efforts as being of little consequence. These are David and Goliath battles, and the campaigners' unswerving resolve should be commended. You also attack the anti-angling campaign for neglecting the bigger issues.

It is an unfortunate fact that certain groups that advocate conservation are often those that are most eager to violate animal life at the first opportunity.

It was interesting to note that recent issues of your magazine (vols 31/7

and 31/8) each carried a full-page advertisement for Compassion in World Farming. You wonder where the anti-cruelty campaign was when millions of farm animals were being butchered during the F&M crisis? Ask CIWF when you send them your next invoice.

**Gillian Williamson, Strathpeffer, Rossshire, UK**

## Morally bankrupt

As a long-term reader of *The Ecologist*, I would like to add my support to all your correspondents who wrote expressing their opposition to the advertisements from the Countryside Alliance which recently defiled your otherwise excellent journal (Letters, vol 32/2). Like them, I was appalled and staggered by your naive and ill-informed response to Catherine Fulton's letter in the previous edition (vol 32/1).

Especially disappointing was the fact that you succumbed to the same rhetorical tricks employed by the pro-hunting brigade to divert attention away from their barbaric activities: espousing the immoral and bankrupt argument that one wrong can be excused because of the presence of a great many others, and falsely equating an attack on hunting with an attack on 'rural people'.

**Terry Sessford, Wincanton, Somerset, UK**

## A singing Robin

Over the last 12 months nearly all my time has been taken up with fighting for vaccination when dealing with F&M, and demonstrating sustainable farming on the Countryside Restoration Trust's Lark Rise Farm in Cambridgeshire. In that period we had barn owls breeding at the farm for the first time in over 40 years. The owls have now joined the otters, skylarks, partridges, reed buntings, corn buntings and brown argus butterflies that are thriving under our farming system. At the same time our tenant farmer makes a profit.

It goes almost without saying that we cannot get Messrs Haskins, Whitty, Blair and Beckett near the place. But it has been a shock to read that some of your correspondents evidently regard

## STAN AT EASE by Stan Eales

## CAR CHAOS – EVERYTHING'S COMING TO A GRINDING HALT





## The importance of Porto Alegre

me as evil incarnate.

Apparently, my crime is that my views on hunting coincide almost entirely with the conclusions of the Burns inquiry into hunting with dogs.

Yes, as a private individual I do support country sports on conservation, cultural, libertarian and animal welfare grounds. So do numerous other conservationists, such as David Bellamy. We hear much about the economic evils of globalisation. The evils of cultural globalisation are just as bad. It seems to me that some of your readers want a homogenised, sanitised world – one polished with political correctness.

As someone who works on the land in the community where I was born, I really object to cultural colonialism.

Who do your 'outraged of Wales' expect to represent us? the NFU?

As to those mysteriously claiming that I was in favour of the apartheid regime in South Africa, I am totally puzzled. Yes I did accept a 'freebie' to the old South Africa, but I have also accepted freebies to the new South Africa, to Kenya, Zambia, Botswana, Tanzania, Swaziland, the US and Ireland. I am a trustee of both the Flower Valley Conservation Trust and the Wilderness Trust. Both are doing remarkable work in South Africa.

The vitriol has been odd. Most *Ecologist* readers I know have open minds. It must be a problem with the water in some parts of the country.

**Robin Page, Chairman, the Countryside Restoration Trust, UK**

### Protest priorities

Blood sports are, primarily, a moral issue. Environmentalists and conservationists are not, in my experience, noted for an uncompromising stance on issues of animal and human rights. Flexible is what the Greens, most kindly, could be called. And Friends of the Earth's lack of opposition to vivisection and water fluoridation is attributed to its (we are told) original backers in the anti-nuclear, petrochemical industry. Everyone has different friends.

*The Ecologist's* questioning of where the anti-cruelty campaign was during the F&M fiasco, shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the issues. These were animals which were due to be mistreated by the meat and milk industries and then killed anyway. What was the point of protesting against what was the lesser of two evils?

I would certainly like to see more support for anti-vivisection, but not by using terms such as torture. The vivisection industry can handle emotive animal rights arguments with ease.

In February the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre played host to a vast international gathering of dissidents opposed to the system we have been conditioned to call 'globalisation'. They brought with them the biggest menu of alternatives to global capitalism that has ever been cooked up in one place. You won't have read about this in the media, because nobody threw any bricks and no-one got shot. Instead, 60,000 people concentrated on proving – despite the constant claims of the corporations and their chums – that the 'anti-globalisation' movement (a term, by the way, rejected by almost everyone in attendance) is positively brimming with alternatives to the current world order.

This gathering was the second World Social Forum. It was timed to coincide with the annual World Economic Forum in New York, where this year the world's richest men were satisfyingly barricaded into their cocktail lounges by 15,000 protesters wielding banners that read 'You are all Enron, we are all Argentina!'

The delegates in Porto Alegre, who unlike their counterparts in New York didn't have to pay US \$25,000 each for the privilege of turning up, were forming what Noam Chomsky called 'the first real promise of a genuine International'. In over 1,000 conferences, workshops and seminars, some of the smartest thinkers in the movement laid out stalls groaning under new and challenging ideas. Representatives of NGOs and vast grassroots movements from hundreds of 'developing' countries talked about their work, made links, found common ground and discussed strategies for the future.

So what was on show? The manic diversity of the event – with participants from Oxfam to a ragbag of communist parties, and local anarchists to global market reformers – mirrored the diversity of this movement itself. Thankfully, no single political line is ever likely to emerge. Nonetheless, common themes did emerge around which this 'movement of movements' seems to be starting to unite.

One was the concept of 'global commons' – certain areas of life which are, or should be, public, common property, protected in

perpetuity from privatisation. Such areas include the world's genetic and biological heritage, basic needs like water, the atmosphere, public services, the airwaves and the land. From such general agreement came the launch of the Porto Alegre Treaty on the Genetic Commons. The agreement was put together by a coalition of scientists and advocacy groups, and was designed to ban biopiracy.

Other common themes emerged around the issues of global economics. Many people advocated the abolition of the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO, and a new charter for the radical reining in of corporations. Some of the most interesting proposals came from the International Forum on Globalisation, which proposed unifying global governance under a restructured UN, and creating an Organisation for Corporate Accountability. The latter would impose such tight rules on corporations that their lobbyists would turn white.

The concept of a 'Tobin tax' on international financial speculation is now so widely supported that some governments, most notably the French (who sent six ministers to Porto Alegre and only three to New York), are touting it as an answer to the instability of the global economy. Newer ideas were on show too. In Porto Alegre itself the city government has for 10 years been running a successful model of participatory budgeting. The city's population is given control over how resources are spent. It could work in your town.

All this, plus plans for radical land reform, the defence of 'food sovereignty', the localisation of democracy and war taxes. The list was too long for anyone to fully take in, and was evidence that the most exciting ideas about the future are now coming from this movement and not from the defenders of the status quo.

One man who seemed to recognise this was World Bank president James Wolfensohn, who tried to invite himself to Porto Alegre to explain to us why we should learn to love capitalism. The organisers turned him away. Now that's what I call progress.

**Paul Kingsnorth's book about the global resistance movement will be published by Simon and Schuster in spring 2003.**

Vivisection is medical and scientific fraud. That's what we concentrate on.

As for Robin Page, I have to emphasise that there is one issue upon which animal rights campaigners and their traditional sworn enemies must unite as one: – European Monetary Union. EMU and the

subsequent, inevitable political union will render all campaigners irrelevant. If we ever found anyone to pin down with our questions they would simply laugh into their Leffe or Liebfraumilch. Lose the euro campaign and nothing else matters.

**Pat Rattigan, Chesterfield, UK**

## Black-washing ecotourism

Having read your article on ecotourism (vol 32/2) I found myself wondering 'Is this another example of *The Ecologist's* holier-than-thou, "you-can-do-no-right" attitude?' True, ecotourism is not a word to be used lightly but, like everything in life, it's about attitude and dosage.

Stating that ecotourism itself degrades ecologically sensitive areas is surely too simplistic. If people can feel compassionate about a tribe, an animal or a nature reserve and their prospective destruction by oil drilling, surely it is because they have visited such places and understand what is at stake.

What's more, various campaigns currently being fought – as in Ecuador or Belize – have been brought to life and into the global arena because concerned ecotourism operators teamed up with the local population to formulate campaigns.

Ian Munt dubs eco-tourism 'ego-tourism'. He states that it is as much about confirming one's class identity, educational sophistication and disposable income. As always the 'chattering classes' are attacked.

Like organic food and environmentally friendly products, the rule of thumb for 'doing your bit' is that it costs more. Is it wrong to make the effort? Ecotourism provides people with an opportunity to travel in a way that minimises the travel industry's negative impacts and finances the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and the socio-economic development of populations living in or close to these areas.

Sophie Murray, London, UK

## Hacked off

Why is it that I have rarely read that while we all use a daily range of electronic machines, no advocates of sustainability

can conceive of a sustainable economy that could and should exist without such machinery?

Computers cannot be made or maintained except by a highly specialised workforce. Large corporations and huge capital investment are necessary. None of the spare parts are made locally.

What's more, a recent article in *The International Herald Tribune* warned of the computer mountains currently accumulating all over the world.

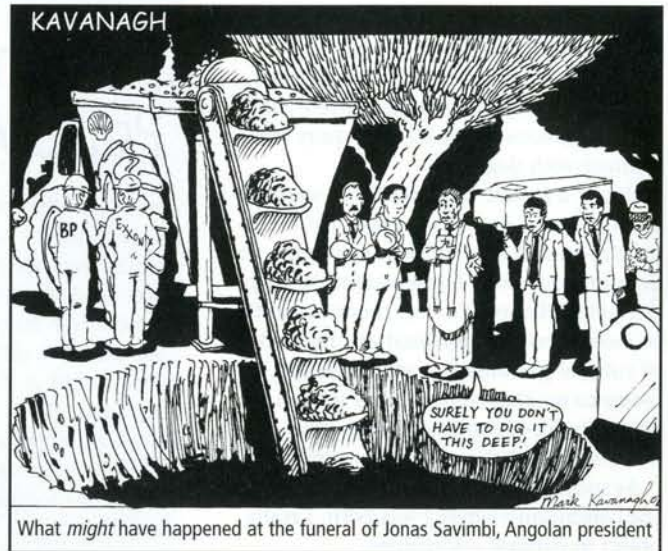
The paperless communication revolution is an empty promise. People still tend to print their increasing amount of email messages on paper made from trees. And given the toxic waste that computers harbour – in the form of lead, for example – and the lack of any effective regulation of them, such a paperless utopia could become a dangerous promise, too.

Why is it then that no mention is made of this by environmentally dedicated journalists? Computers crash and are hacked all the time yet we still and increasingly seem to believe in an illusion of their infallibility and unchallenged place in all our futures.

Graham Carey, Bingley, UK

## Conoco Responds

December/ January's *Ecologist* (vol 31/10) published an article by Stephanie Roth, 'Dying for our oil', in which Conoco Inc



What might have happened at the funeral of Jonas Savimbi, Angolan president

was prominently mentioned. Conoco appreciates this opportunity to correct the erroneous information presented in the story, and thereby offer an accurate account of the facts and circumstances surrounding the company's operations or, as in the present case, lack of operations in Irian Jaya.

Conoco is not currently drilling in Irian Jaya or West Papua, Indonesia, and hasn't since April 1998. The last Conoco operational base in Irian Jaya was closed on 29 August, 1998. No Conoco or Conoco Indonesia Inc employee made any visit related to active operations in Irian Jaya during 1999, 2000 or 2001.

The 1999, 2000 and 2001 budgets submitted by Conoco Indonesia Inc Ltd to Pertamina contained no funds for drilling operations in the Warim concession. Conoco never drilled for crude oil reserves in the Lorentz National Park. When the Warim concession was granted to Conoco in 1987, there was a small overlap of boundaries of what was then the Lorentz Nature Reserve along the extreme western edge of the concession. Conoco was aware of the overlap at the time. However, no wells were ever drilled in this area of the concession.

In 1997, The Indonesian Ministry of Forestry created the Lorentz National Park and extended the Park boundaries deeper into the Warim concession. In August 1998, the WWF notified Conoco of the extension of the park's boundaries. In November 1998, Conoco notified Pertamina that all future work programmes in the Warim concession would be delayed until the uncertainties about the overlap of the Lorentz National Park boundaries into the concession were resolved. In a November 2001 letter to Pertamina, Conoco again stated that it would not proceed with any further



## Open your eyes

Those of us who care passionately about the environment often try to console ourselves when faced with alarming evidence of environmental degradation. As precious species and habitats disappear on an almost daily basis, we tell ourselves that never before have so many humans cared in such altruistic ways about the future of the earth. We tell ourselves that technology which has got us into this mess may yet get us out of it. And we hope that the forces of globalisation currently plundering the world's resources could one day unite people across boundaries and oceans to save the planet.

More often though, consoling philosophies feel like empty words. If any country was going to turn these philosophies into a reality, it was the UK. The British government currently drapes itself in the rhetoric of sustainability – even setting up a 'sustainability commission' headed by Jonathan Porritt. Tony Blair says he wants the environment to be at the heart of government and that he intends to 'lead the way' at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. He even hints that the UK's co-operation with Bush in Afghanistan will eventually bring the US on board progressive global treaties.

The reality is a million miles away. The British countryside is being ravaged as swathes of south-east England disappear under concrete, and rural livelihoods collapse after the mishandling of foot and mouth disease.

Even after four and a half years in government, there's been no serious attempt by Labour to solve public transport – the key to reducing the tyranny of the car, stopping harmful road building and improving the quality of life. Some proposals, like those for a new airport on marshes in the Thames estuary or the Green Paper on planning, show complete disregard for the principle of protecting the countryside. As for global action on the environment, the British government seems more interested in global military alliance. It hasn't even done anything to stop the illegal importation of Brazilian mahogany.

When it comes to the crunch, environmental principles always fail under the relentless pressure of economic interests. Fundamentally, this government believes that economic development must be defended at all costs – including the cost to the earth itself. In this, it differs little from the governments and electorates of most developed countries. People still seem to believe that the earth's resources are infinitely available to supply that development.

However much we cling to consoling philosophies, it is obvious we will never be able to protect what's left of the world's fragile ecosystem without a fundamental change to this political and social consciousness.

Environmental arguments have to become as weighty and compelling as economic logic. There has to be a step change in how we talk about the land and our relationship with other species. We can no longer go on compromising with politicians and social theorists who believe environmental resources are infinite. Instead we need to start emphasising that land and water are scarce, and that environmental resources are finite. We have to start insisting that other species have as much right to exist as ourselves, and that the fragile ecosystem of the earth must be defended. We have to reject the suggestion that we have a right to exhaust the earth without putting anything back. We have to start talking about only taking up our fair share of nature's resources and the need to live lightly and equitably on this earth.

These kind of views can never be a 'tack-on' philosophy, leading to a bit of environmental protection here, a few 'renewables' there and the occasional 'nature reserve' thrown in for good measure. They have to be radical founding principles around which everything else shapes itself. This means abandoning some core social beliefs: that economic growth is a valid end in itself; that the expansion of our economy is good for poorer countries because of the filter-down effect; or that global companies have a right to flout environmental protection.

More radically, it would also mean re-examining some deeply held liberal views. Is it right, for instance, that population should be allowed to grow unchecked when the planet is already so stressed? Should we really be promoting 'modern' western solutions to Third World problems when we have such a poor environmental record and quality of life ourselves? Should we really feel 'guilty' about underdeveloped countries if, in spite of hardship, they have a better environment and quality of life? If we think we should intervene in the genocide of humans should we not view the genocide of animal species as equally serious?

Environmentalists will be as reluctant as anyone to ask these questions.

Guilt and political correctness is rampant among this movement. There's a hostility to anything which appears to deny 'undeveloped countries' their right to what western nations have. But the gains from such a consciousness shift can't be underrated. In a world divided by religions and which is beginning to show, as in the Middle East, the signs of conflicts over environmental resources, our only hope may be a shared ethic about our place on the earth.

Ros Coward

exploration programme in the Warim concession until such a time as the overlap of the Lorentz National Park boundaries into the concession area was resolved.

There were no protests against Conoco's drilling programme in the Warim concession. In all of our activities in the concession, we initially met with the leaders of the local indigenous people in the area. During these meetings our plans were reviewed, the tribal leaders' concerns were discussed and addressed and we were able to reach accord. Many of the local people were given temporary employment by Conoco during our operations. Protestors never occupied our drilling sites or equipment, and there were no incidents involving use of military force at our sites. All issues concerning the indigenous population during the programme were peaceably resolved through meetings of Conoco personnel and tribal leaders. Although Indonesian military command procedures required some personnel to be assigned to our field locations, Conoco treated the local population and its leaders with respect in dealing with their issues.

No villages were destroyed or disturbed by our operations. No river systems were polluted, and land restoration programmes were initiated to restore our drilling sites. Conoco's use of local personnel for temporary labour actually helped enhance the economic condition of the local villages, and Conoco enjoyed good relations with villages near our operations. To the extent that our operations impacted the environment, the drilling sites were cleaned up and re-forested with native plants and trees, according to a plan approved by the Indonesian government.

Conoco respects legitimate differences in positions, but only when based on accurate, factual information. We are considered a partner of choice by host governments worldwide, and an industry leader when it comes to safety and environmental performance. As such, we resolve to carefully protect this reputation, along with the integrity of our global operations.

**Carlton Adams, Senior Advisor, Corporate Public Affairs, Conoco Inc, Houston, Texas, US**

**Stephanie Roth, news and campaigns editor:**  
*I tried to get hold of Sem Karoba, global spokesman for the West Papuan Student Alliance and my source in West Papua, to clarify these points. I discovered that he has been given priority listing by Amnesty International as being in grave danger for his life. Amnesty understands that he is being held at Wamena Police Station, West Papua. For more information visit <http://www.koteka.net>*

## Tuning the tuna



CORBIS

In late December the US Coast Guard captured a giant Mexican trawler smuggling 10.5 tonnes of cocaine (estimated street value – \$500m) conveniently hidden under several tonnes of tuna. According to *Animal Welfare International Quarterly*, a large chunk of Latin America's tuna

fleet is owned by Mexican drug cartels – enabling them to both smuggle contraband and launder the proceeds. Among those owning major tuna fleets and canneries is the murderous Tijuana cartel. But with its close connections to powerful politicians, it has been left free to roam the seas. The US government refuses to acknowledge that Mexico's tuna industry is an important cover for drug trafficking, and prefers instead to concentrate on its infamous coca eradication programme ■

## Fishy loopholes

Until five years ago there were literally no tuna farms in the Mediterranean. Today farms are to be found in Spain, Italy, Malta, Croatia, France, Tunisia, Turkey and Algeria. Last year alone farms operating in the Mediterranean region – many of them subsidised by payments under the European Union's Common Fisheries Policy – produced 11,000 tonnes of tuna. Unlike aquaculture – where fish are bred and reared in captivity, however, all tuna farming uses fish captured in the wild. For example, French fleets currently supply 70 per cent of Spain's highly-prized 'farmed' blue-fin tuna, which are then fattened and exported.

According to WWF, some fish caught for farming are juveniles which have not reproduced in the wild. Thus the wild stocks of this already threatened species are further depleted. Nor does it stop there. Tuna farming is considered as a 'post-harvesting' practice and so falls outside the control of bodies like the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna, which recognise the need to conserve blue-fin tuna. What this means is that while bluefin tuna is already threatened by direct fishing in the Mediterranean, tuna farming avoids every current regional and international rule set up to conserve and manage the fishery. In light of this the WWF has warned that the massive expansion in tuna farming threatens to decimate the Mediterranean's already over-fished wild tuna. It is calling upon governments to take urgent action to close this loophole within European fisheries management while there is still time. Tuna sandwich anyone? ■

## El Niño resurrected?

While Indiana officials worried about the warm winter's effect on the state's maple syrup production and the associated fate of this year's two-day pancake breakfast, the US's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration warned that an El Niño weather system was likely to develop imminently in the tropical Pacific. The scientists said that sea-surface temperatures off the coasts of Ecuador and Peru were likely to increase over the next few weeks as part of the steady evolution toward El Niño conditions. A few weeks later the Australian Bureau of Meteorology (ABM) confirmed a sharp temperature

increase in the western and central equatorial Pacific, and that there was double the usual chance of an El Niño weather pattern developing. This was corroborated by Australian agency Csiro and various scientists working in Pacific locations ranging from Chile to the Philippines. Malaysian authorities were concerned that a possible drought might be hitting the country's palm oil industry. Thai rice farmers were told to be prepared for drought. And by late February, the UK was 'enjoying' spring-like temperatures. Meanwhile, *Environmental News Service* reported that Bolivia had been battered by the worst storm in 500 years. The tempest, which

brought the biggest floods and hail storms in the capital's history, claimed 48 lives and left 130 injured and 50 missing. Next door in Peru, the Peruvian Red Cross was on high alert after heavy rains and floods. The sad truth is that this may only be the start. According to the ABM, it is likely that any El Niño that does take place would develop between April and September. El Niños can affect weather patterns all around the world, and occur once every four to five years. A study released by Csiro in late February said that further increases in greenhouse emissions could trigger stronger El Niño patterns ■

## NOTES &

*'We have good reason to suspect that Autogen Ltd could be trying to circumvent the Tongan public's scrutiny by disguising its genetic research proposal as a public health programme funded by the Australian government.'*  
Lopeti Senituli, director of the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement

*'No nation should be a prison for its own people.'*  
US President George Bush

*'When the US provides 80 per cent of the arms for Turkey, for the express purpose of repression... that is my responsibility.'*  
Noam Chomsky

*'There exists a very close correlation that holds over a long period of time between human rights violations and US military aid and training. It's not that the US likes to torture people; it's that it basically doesn't care. For the US government, human rights violations are a secondary consequence.'*  
Chomsky again

*'Suppose the US really is trying to get rid of drugs in Colombia. Does Colombia then have the right to fumigate tobacco farms in Kentucky? They are producing a lethal substance far more dangerous than cocaine. More Colombians die from tobacco-related illnesses than Americans die from cocaine.'*  
...and again

*'President Bush must have his head in a bucket if he really thinks this plan is going to reduce climate change. We need absolute emission reduction, not targets arbitrarily linked to the US economy.'*  
Ute Collier of WWF

*'The vice president expressed the concern that a review of what happened on September 11 would take resources away from the war on terrorism.'*  
US senator Tom Daschle, explaining why Bush and Cheney had asked him to limit the congressional investigation into the events of 11 September.

## QUOTES

*Egypt has been awarded \$10 billion in loans and aid pledges over the next three years, twice as much as was offered to rebuild Afghanistan.*

*'Too much of global aid is used to sweeten commercial contracts or to purchase goods from donor countries.'*

Tony Blair talking about Africa (though not Tanzania, of course)

*'Governments will back companies to get contracts the whole time [otherwise] we will be in the absurd situation where governments don't have anything to do in promoting British business.'*

Tony Blair defending the deal with Mr Mittal

*'Globalisation – as an economic process – must be subject to the moral and ethical imperatives to which the international human rights instruments give legal expression.'*

Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human rights

*'Someone said to me that we must put a human face on globalisation. Well let's face it, I'm not that.'*

Mike Moore director general of the WTO

*'We're in danger of creating a world in which the US fights, the UN feeds and Europe funds.'*

Dominique Moisi, deputy director of the French Institute of International Relations

*'We can't reduce all the world's problems to the... fight against terrorism... nor count only on the predominance of military means to resolve them.'*

French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin

*'We believe in unilateralism. When the multilateral community does not agree with us [Washington will not] shrink from doing that which is right, which is in our interest, even if some friends disagree with us.'*

US Secretary of State Colin Powell

*'Gulliver can't go it alone, and I don't think it's helpful if we*

## WOOD'S TRUE PRICE

The tropical forest of Tesso Nilo on the Indonesian island of Sumatra is being devastated by being heavily logged for timber and pulp by small-scale illegal loggers and an international corporation. The logging is exacting a heavy cost on the forest's plant and animal life.

Tesso Nilo harbours the highest level of lowland forest plant biodiversity known to science. The forest contains up to 218 vascular plant species in any 200-square metre plot and is home to a wide range of wildlife including elephants, tigers, gibbons and tapirs.

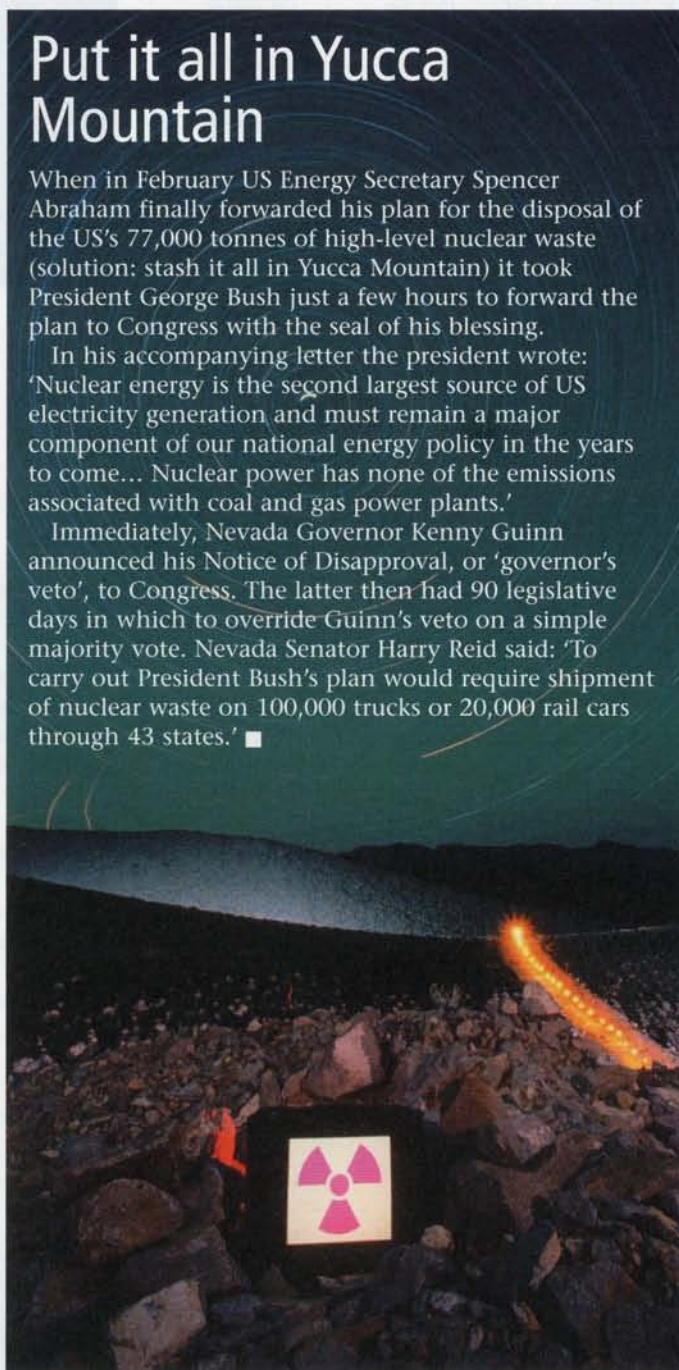
According to WWF, the forest could be destroyed in less than four years. The agency is therefore calling upon the Indonesian government to set Tesso Nilo aside as a protected area. WWF has also called on the key consumer countries, notably the G8 nations, to halt the international trade of illegal timber and to commit at June's G8 summit to purchasing timber from legal sources which originate from sustainably managed forests ■

## Put it all in Yucca Mountain

When in February US Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham finally forwarded his plan for the disposal of the US's 77,000 tonnes of high-level nuclear waste (solution: stash it all in Yucca Mountain) it took President George Bush just a few hours to forward the plan to Congress with the seal of his blessing.

In his accompanying letter the president wrote: 'Nuclear energy is the second largest source of US electricity generation and must remain a major component of our national energy policy in the years to come... Nuclear power has none of the emissions associated with coal and gas power plants.'

Immediately, Nevada Governor Kenny Guinn announced his Notice of Disapproval, or 'governor's veto', to Congress. The latter then had 90 legislative days in which to override Guinn's veto on a simple majority vote. Nevada Senator Harry Reid said: 'To carry out President Bush's plan would require shipment of nuclear waste on 100,000 trucks or 20,000 rail cars through 43 states.' ■



CORBIS

## Disarm in order to Rearm

On the one hand the Bush administration has announced its intention to reduce the number of the US's operationally deployed nuclear warheads and is considering a write-off of the debt owed by Russia in exchange for its destruction of cold war weapons. On the other, it is pushing ahead with the development of a new generation of nuclear weapons. To this end, the Nuclear Weapons Council – consisting of representatives from both the energy and defence departments – ordered a three-year study into development of a nuclear-tipped weapon which could penetrate hardened underground targets.

Meanwhile, so-called 'advanced warhead concept teams' were established to develop new warheads and warhead modifications at all three of the US's nuclear weapons laboratories.

According to *The Washington Post* both these initiatives were proposed in a study, *The Nuclear Posture Review*, directed by US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and approved by Bush.

Back in November Bush announced a cut in the number of warheads deployed from the current 6,000 to a maximum of 2,200. Instead of destroying the weapons, however, the Bush administration intends to put them into storage.

*The Nuclear Posture Review* calls for a new land-based intercontinental ballistic missile and a new submarine-launched ballistic missile. It also calls for the development of a plant to produce plutonium pits, and the modernisation and expansion of the Oak Ridge plant in Tennessee.

Although the US technically still supports the moratorium on underground tests, \$15m has already been allocated to preparing the Nevada test site for resumed testing within a year ■

*regard ourselves as so Liliputian that we can't say it.'*

Chris Patten EU International Relations Commissioner

*'Chris did manage to work himself up a bit last week. I shall have to have a word with him.'*

Colin Powell again

*'People say things. But the leaders I've talked to fully understand exactly what needs to happen.'*

US President George Bush

*'We know which nations fought with the Taliban and where their activities were financed from. Iraq is not on this list.'*

Russian President Vladimir Putin

*'Government officials, the Department of Defence, this secretary and the people that work with me tell the US and the people of the world the truth.'*

Donald Rumsfeld, US Defence Secretary

*'The Pentagon is developing plans to provide news items, possibly even false ones, to foreign media organisations as part of a new effort to influence public sentiment and policy makers in both friendly and unfriendly countries.'*

James Dao and Eric Schmitt, *The New York Times*

*'We see more signs every day indicating a recovery is under way.'*

Paul O'Neill, US Treasury Secretary

*'The case for a relapse is compelling... the consumer overspent... now it's payback time.'*

Stephen Roach, chief economist at Morgan Stanley Witter

## SURRENDER

Scientists at Canada's University of Guelph notified authorities in Ottawa that on 11 January GM piglets weighing about 20 kilograms were inadvertently turned into pelletised food and fed to chickens and turkeys on Ontario farms. The pigs were part of the university's much-touted 'environmentally beneficial' Enviropig research.

In response, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency called for a return of whatever feed was unused because its release 'violates safety procedures'.

Under Canadian law scientists are not obliged to tell government about their work if they think their research will not endanger the environment.

Although Canada's Ministry of the Environment is currently reviewing

procedures for GM research, documents uncovered by Greenpeace show that more than US \$3.3 million in federal funding has gone into promoting GM foods. Much of the cash went to supposedly neutral groups such as the Food Biotechnology Communications Network.

The US \$3.3 million figure does not include the US \$5.7 million sent from Industry Canada to industry lobby group BIOTECCanada ■



BBC WILDLIFE

## You've got to be choking

A new report focuses on the public health dangers of the Bush administration succeeding in its likely proposal to gut the Clean Air Act's new source review (NSR) programme. The NSR protects public health by requiring oil refineries and other industrial facilities to install modern pollution-control equipment when they make major pollution-increasing modifications to their facilities.

According to *Smokestack Rollback: how the Bush administration's Clean Air Act proposals will increase toxic refinery pollution and jeopardise public health*, the proposed changes to the NSR would allow the nation's oil giants to increase their emissions, with pollution

increasing by anything from two to 140 times, without having to install pollution controls.

The report highlights how the Bush proposal could open huge loopholes for polluting industries to avoid reducing emissions.

Specifically, it would raise the threshold for which modifications trigger the NSR, so that a facility could practically build a new unit without any air-pollution reduction requirements. Not only would this lead to more local toxic air pollution, it would also exacerbate regional smog problems and increase the negative health impacts of air pollution.

Download the report on [www.toxictwostep.org](http://www.toxictwostep.org) ■

## Solution or pollution?

Despite official assertions that the air around Ground Zero in New York is safe to breathe, many locals remain concerned about the health effects of toxins such as lead, benzene, PCBs and asbestos.

The cover story of *USA Today* on 7 February explained how residents and fire fighters have complained of tightness in their chests, bloody noses, coughs and other respiratory ailments.

Some community organisations have conducted their own tests, which suggest higher risks than officially acknowledged.

The logical conclusion seems to be to get rid of the rubble and quickly. But where will it go?

Well, according to German magazine *Der Spiegel*, Indian trade unions and environmentalists are currently protesting against the import of 70,000 tons of World Trade Centre rubble.

While India has no way of testing what environmentalist Ravi Agarwal terms 'highly

contaminated disaster rubbish' for toxic substances, New York does.

Whether this is enough of a reason to stop dumping the rubble in India, remains to be seen ■



REUTERS

## HOPING FOR A NOAH'S ARK?

Global sea levels will rise more by the end of this century than was predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2001, according to research by the University of Colorado/Boulder. The higher projection is due to a revised estimate of the ice melt from glaciers, says the university's geological sciences Emeritus Professor Mark Meier.

The new data shows that the world's glaciers and ice caps have exhibited significant ice loss in the 20th century. This loss has accelerated since 1988, and has contributed to at least 20 per cent of the observed rise in sea level.

The IPCC report might have underestimated the wastage of glaciers and ice caps around the world (excluding Greenland and Antarctica) for several

reasons. For one, the IPCC's latest predictions exclude increases in ice wastage since the late 1980s. In addition, recent data from the University of Alaska shows that huge glaciers on the west coast of Alaska and northern Canada are wasting rapidly.

Meier said that little data on the large, maritime glaciers in Alaska was available when IPCC made its predictions. The region is now the largest contributor to sea-level rise.

Meier has calculated that glacier melting could contribute 0.65 feet or more to sea level this century. He said: 'These estimates in sea-level rise may seem small, but a one-foot rise will typically cause a retreat of the shoreline of 100 feet or more... [This] would have substantial social and economic impacts.' ■

## KENYAN CORRUPTION

Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi has been exposed as one of the main beneficiaries of a controversial plan to cut down nearly 70,000 hectares of Kenya's remaining forest – much of it in the Mau forest homeland of Kenya's Ogiek tribe (see campaigns, vol.32/2). The news was revealed by documents leaked to Nairobi's *Daily Nation* newspaper. Among others named as owning large chunks of forest land are Kenya's present Environment Minister Joseph Kamotho, and former First Lady Mama Ngina Kenyatta.

## DAM BUSTING

In an unprecedented move various Belizean environmental and eco-tourism groups have gone to court to block the Chalillo Dam project (see campaigns, vol 30/6). Their suit challenges the Belizean government's conditional approval for the hydroelectric dam, on the grounds that it did not hold public hearings or consider expert recommendations as required under Belize law. The lawsuit also charges the dam's proponent and its partner – Canadian Fortis Inc and the Belize government, respectively, with breaking the country's environmental law by allowing preparatory work to start before the project's environmental review was completed. For updates and petition to Fortis Inc, visit <http://www.stopfortis.org>

## LOG OFF

In February Russian timber company Terneiles announced a two-year moratorium on logging in the Samarga watershed in the Russian Far East. The announcement follows a successful protest by Pacific Environment (see campaigns, vol 31/8).

## MONARCHS ALL BUT WIPED OUT

A severe winter storm in the Mexican state of Michoacán has killed as many as 250 million Monarch butterflies on their wintering grounds, reports IHT. Monarch butterfly biologist Dr Lincoln Brower estimates that 80 per cent of the El Rosario Monarch colony and 74 per cent of the Chincua colony could have died.

## DAM DISASTER

The gates of Portugal's giant Alqueva dam (see campaigns, vol 31/3 &

focus, vol 31/5) swung shut in February – the first move of what will eventually lead to western Europe's largest artificial lake.

## THE CAMERA NEVER LIES

Newmont Mining has been accused of bribing Peru's former intelligence chief Vladimiro Montesinos, so as to win an important stake in the Yanachocha mine – South America's largest gold mine. According to *Corporate Crime Reporter*, it is alleged that Newmont paid Montesinos millions of dollars in an extortion scheme to get a

## THE WORM HAS TURNED...

*The New Scientist* reports that UK scientists have found that microwave emissions from mobile phones increase fertility in worms.

## ...BUT NOT FIR ENOUGH

A 160-ft mobile phone mast disguised as a pine tree is transmitting calls near Lake Coeur d'Alene in Idaho. According to *USAToday*, the masts, pole and antennae are made of steel and the branches fibreglass so as to look like red fir and ponderosa pine.

favourable judgement on its bid for the mine. The lawsuit cites some of Montesinos's infamous video tapes, on one of which the then intelligence chief offers a Supreme Court judge a promotion in return for voting for Newmont.

## GRIM ARMS RACE LEGACY

According to a study published in *Science*, radioactive fallout from Soviet-era nuclear-weapons testing in Kazakhstan doubled the rate of genetic mutation among local people. DNA analysis from 40 families showed that people exposed to the fallout had a mutation rate twice as high as those living in similar but uncontaminated areas of Kazakhstan. Mutation rates declined after the 1963 test-ban treaty.

## FISH OUT OF WATER

The David Suzuki Foundation won a temporary injunction in February preventing the dumping of 1.6 million young salmon originating from Heritage Aquaculture fish farm on Vancouver Island. The young fish were carrying infectious hematopoietic necrosis, commonly known as sockeye disease – a virus that attacks fish kidneys and spleens.

## FIGHTING THE BIOPIRATES

China, Brazil, India, and nine other of the world's most biodiverse countries,

formally known as the Group of Allied Mega-Biodiverse Nations, signed an accord in February to fight biopiracy and press for rules protecting people's rights to genetic resources found on their land. The signatories pledged to press their cause at this summer's UN World Summit on Sustainable Development.

## SPRAYERS ANSWERED

Ecuadorian Indians living along the Colombian border announced a class action lawsuit in February against the US firm Dyn Corp for indiscriminate

herbicide spraying. Under a contract with the US State Department, Dyn Corp is responsible for spraying Round Up to eradicate coca crops in Colombia, Peru and Bolivia. The plaintiffs argue that the spraying is causing extensive harm to the environment and health of local inhabitants.

## RIP GCC

The Global Climate Coalition (GCC), the world's highest profile business group opposed to the UN Kyoto protocol on climate change, has closed after 13 years. Though mainly US-based, the body achieved world renown for its efforts to head off binding greenhouse gas emission cuts. According to the GCC website, the group has been 'deactivated' having 'served its purpose by contributing to a new national approach to global warming'. This approach translates as the US's decision to pull out of the Kyoto protocol.

## 'WRECKLESS' BEHAVIOUR

The Colorado senate approved a bill in February that would make 'wreckless' political statements a crime. According to *USAToday*, the bill is designed to stop anyone from making intentionally false statements to influence the outcome of a vote. Critics fear the bill violates the First Amendment of the US constitution.

*'In Lebanon, there was an agreement not to liquidate Yasser Arafat. In principle, I'm sorry that we didn't liquidate him.'*

Israel President Ariel Sharon

*'The personal attacks on me... may be highly effective in giving Israelis an excuse to ignore their own role in creating the current situation.'*

Yasser Arafat

*'No peace initiative could be expected from the Palestinians when their leader is weakened to the point of impotence.'*

Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General

*'Blair's mistake has always been that he wants everyone to love him... Robin Cook said the difference between [former Labour leader John] Smith and Blair was that Smith was a narrow river that ran deep and Blair a broad river that ran shallow. I thought that was an interesting analogy.'*

The UK government's Rural Recovery tsar Lord Haskins

*'We are urgently checking to see whether there are any more cases.'*

Elliott Morely, UK animal health minister, on discovering BSE food chain controls have failed for the third time this year

*'Given the unprecedented nature of the outbreak and the terrible problems people faced, in many ways [the government's actions were] a small triumph.'*

UK Environment Secretary Margaret Beckett on F&M

*'Either we do something now or in five years the fishing industry will be on its knees because there are no more fish.'*

Gregor Kreuzhuber, spokesman for EU fishing commissioner Franz Fischler

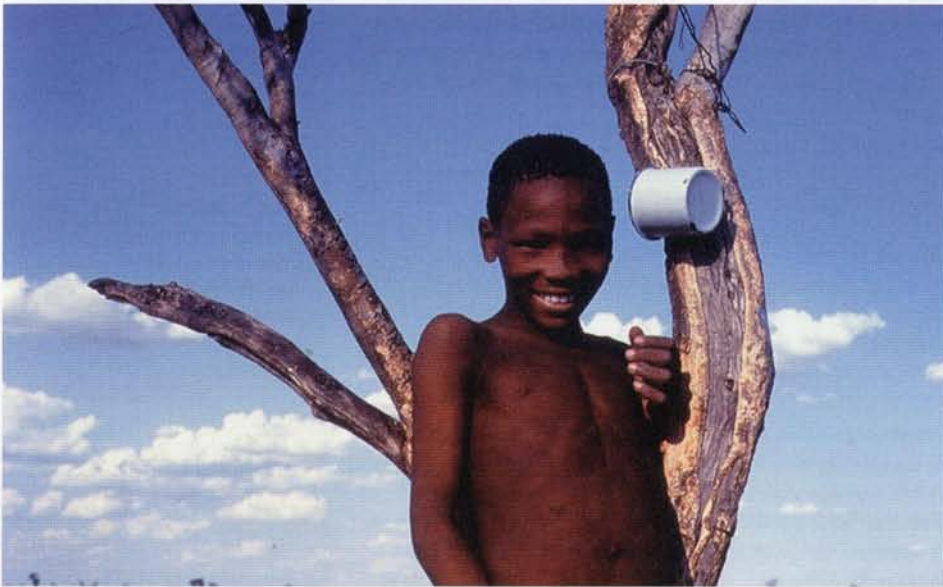
*According to the Institute of Cetacean Research, 220 tonnes of the 750 tonnes of whale meat on sale between July and August 2000 went unsold.*

*Interpol estimates the global illegal wildlife trade is worth \$5bn a year – the second largest illegal market after drugs.*

# campaigns

- Displacement of the Bushmen • Ilisu Dam II • Tourism danger in Caribbean wetlands
- Minerals exploitation in US parks • Australian logging expansion • The right kind of growth

## BOTSWANA Call from the wild



SURVIVAL

*'We know this land belonged to our great grandparents. But now, just because we are Bushmen, our land is being taken from us.'*

*Bushwoman, Gope, Botswana*

The Botswanan government has intensified its campaign to drive the Gana and Gwi Bushmen off their ancestral homeland in the country's Central Kalahari Game Reserve by cutting off all water supplies. The decision could spell the destruction of these tribes.

The Gana and the Gwi have lived for thousands of years on what is their ancestral land. In the 1960s this land was made into the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, with the explicit purpose of ensuring it as home for the Bushmen. The Bushmen own their land under international law, and have the right to remain on it and to decide for themselves how they wish to live.

However, over the last 16 years the Botswanan government has conducted a campaign of harassment to drive them out.

The authorities have tried to restrict the hunting on which the Bushmen depend for survival. Some of the Bushmen have even been tortured and imprisoned. Their homes have been bulldozed, and some have been trucked to bleak 'resettlement camps' where they cannot hunt and gather. One Bushman described the camps as

'a place of death'. Dependent on government handouts, the lives of the inhabitants are blighted by boredom, alcoholism and despair.

The government is currently trying to force the remaining Gana and Gwi into these camps by stopping water deliveries from the borehole. They are also removing its pump – despite having a legal obligation to provide water to the communities. The Bushmen have become dependent on these water supplies as cattle ranches have encroached on their lands, using up much of the water and drastically curtailing the Bushmen's ability to move over large areas of desert to find alternative sources.

The government claims it is stopping the services because they are too expensive. But in fact they only

cost about US\$3 per person per week. It has been suggested that the reserve's rich diamond deposits are the real reason behind the government's drive to get the Bushmen out. It also wants to open up the area to tourism. Certainly, underlying it all is the government's view of the Bushmen. The president himself has described them as 'Stone Age creatures', and other ministers have talked of their need to become 'civilised'.

Bushman tribes are the original inhabitants of southern Africa, where they have lived for at least 20,000 years. Today fewer than 100,000 survive – around half of whom are in Botswana. Of them all, the Gana and Gwi in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve are virtually unique in having maintained a largely self-sufficient life in which hunting is central.

make a  
difference

Please write a polite letter including these points:

- The Botswanan government is ignoring international law by failing to recognise the Gana and Gwi's ownership rights over the land they have traditionally lived on and used. They must be allowed to remain on this land.
- Services on which the Gana and Gwi Bushmen have become dependent should be maintained – the cost is not prohibitive and the European Union has offered to fund them.
- The Gana and Gwi Bushmen have the right to decide for themselves how they want to live – they are not 'primitive' simply because they are hunters.

Send your letter to: The Hon FG Mogae, President of the Republic, Private Bag 001, Gaborone, Botswana; Fax: + 267 356 086. Begin letters: 'Your Excellency'. Copy letters to: Mrs Margaret Nasha, Minister of Local Government, Lands and Housing, Private Bag 006, Gaborone, Botswana; Fax: + 267 352 382 or 384; and to: Survival International, 6 Charterhouse Buildings, London EC1M 7ET, UK; Fax: (+44) (0) 20 7687 8701. For more information, visit [www.survival-international.org](http://www.survival-international.org)

## TURKEY Sterling's Power

*Many of the issues raised with the Ilisu dam may also arise over the Yusufeli dam. The Export and Credit Guarantee Department and ministers must not only be even-handed as between the two projects, but be seen to be even-handed in view of the strong feeling we have heard in Turkey that Ilisu is a political football.*  
— House of Commons Select Committee on Trade and Industry

WWW.ALTERNATIVEAFRICA.COM

Ilisu may have been beaten, but with further dam projects proposed in Turkey, the campaign to enforce ethical and environmental accountability has far from ended. Likewise, the UK government, via the Export Credit Guarantee Department (ECGD), continues to support projects that fail to adhere to its own social and ecological conditions.

The engineering firm Amec is in the frame for £68 million worth of financial cover to build the 270m high Yusufeli Dam on the Coruh River in north-eastern Turkey.

Yusufeli lies in the middle of the Kaçkar and Altiparmak mountains. If the project goes ahead the dam will inundate the town and at least five other villages and their fields. Roughly 12,000 people will be affected and forced to resettle.

What's more, Yusufeli's famous Georgian church and settlements will be destroyed, and the area's wildlife – including red vultures, brown bears, wild boars, wolves, jackals and pine martens –



will inevitably suffer from the dam's environmental effects.

The project is made up of an international consortium of companies led by the French firm Spie Batignolle. Although the UK government refuses to release either the Environmental Impact Assessment or details of the resettlement programme, a letter from Amec to the chairman of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry speaks for itself.

The letter says: 'Kindly note that Spie is a major contracting group in France, and 41.6 per cent of the Spie group is owned by Amec...

We are seeking ECGD buyer credit support for up to US \$99 million (being approximately £68 million)... The ECGD has been provided with extensive information

that will be affected by the dam's construction... As you will see from the chronology of events, it has been a long and involved process to bring this project to point of financing... There is a risk that ECGD will be seen as the ECA that is most difficult to satisfy. As you may well be asked about Her Majesty's Government's support for projects in Turkey and dams in particular, we felt it important that you should be briefed about our opportunity.

'Further, as we discussed, the committee should also be briefed by the ECGD on its support for opportunities in this market and dams in particular.'

One final point. The recently appointed chair of ECGD's advisory committee is Liz Airey. She is also a non-executive director of Amec.

on the project, including a full environmental study.

'As you will be aware from the experience to date with the Ilisu Dam, the difficult area is the environmental requirements – principally resettlement of the people

make a difference

Please write to the Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, DTI, 1 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0ET. Point out that ECGD backing of the Yusufeli dam would run contrary to ECGD's business principles (see [www.ecgd.gov.uk](http://www.ecgd.gov.uk)), and that Liz Airey's presence on the advisory committee presents a serious conflict of interest.

Please copy your letters to: The Ilisu Dam Campaign, Box 210, 266 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DL, UK; email: [ilisu@gn.apc.org](mailto:ilisu@gn.apc.org). For more information and updates, please visit [www.ilisu.org.uk](http://www.ilisu.org.uk)

## PUERTO RICO ¡Qué Ricco!

One of Puerto Rico's last remaining wild areas, known as the Northeastern Ecological Corridor (NEC), is a 3,200-acre coastal region located between the municipalities of Luquillo and Fajardo. Home to over 40 endangered, threatened and endemic species, it remains one of Puerto Rico's last unprotected areas. Although Commonwealth of Puerto Rico authorities proposed to make it a nature reserve in 1992, the region was actually rezoned for tourist-residential development.

The NEC contains an extraordinary array of tropical wildlife – a rarity on this overdeveloped Caribbean island – including critical marine mammals, birds, snakes, sea turtles and plant species. Puerto Rico's only remaining coastal wetlands and mangroves are also in this region.

The NEC is threatened by the development of two massive resorts that would create more than 3,000 tourist-residential units and three golf courses. The construction of the Four Seasons and Marriott resorts would destroy forever wetlands, important watersheds and the natural integrity of the NEC. To stop this development, the Puerto Rican Environmental Quality Board must not

approve the San Miguel-Four Seasons Resort and the Dos Mares-JW Marriott Resort preliminary environmental impact statements (JCA-01-0330 (CT) and JCA-99-0015, respectively). To save the area from future developments, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico should support the designation of the NEC as a nature reserve – as was previously proposed by the government.

**make a difference** Urge the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico's Environmental Quality and Planning Board not to approve the preliminary environmental impact statements for the two resorts. Ask the commonwealth to support the designation of the NEC as a nature reserve. Write to: Esteban Mujica Cotto, President, Puerto Rican Environmental Quality Board; fax: + 1 787 754 8294; Dr Hermenegildo Ortiz, President, Puerto Rican Planning Board; fax: + 1 787 726 6083; and The Honourable Sila Maria Calderon, Governor, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; fax: + 1 787 724 5963. Please copy your faxes to: Iniciativa para un Desarrollo Sustentable; + 1 787 725 1730. For more information, including a sample letter, visit <http://actionnetwork.org/campaign/caribbean>

## USA Bleeding the land; part 1

Missouri's Mark Twain National Forest extends from the prairie lands along the Missouri River to the nation's most ancient mountains in the south. It is renowned for clear rivers and tree-covered hills. However, beneath the lush forests run veins of lead ore. In February the state's Forest Service recommended that the St Louis-based Doe Run Co be allowed to drill 1,000-ft holes – up to 232 of them –, to search for new lead deposits under the ridges and valleys of the forest. The work will take place over the next two years across an area of 8,756 acres.

Dig deeper. Some of the areas for drilling are close to the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, a network of protected rivers. Not only would drilling and the prospect of mining impact upon both forests and rivers, the area's porous limestone would also allow any mining contamination to pollute watersheds miles away. According to Missouri Attorney General Jay Nixon, 'mining could cause great damage to the watershed. These are the jewels of the Ozarks'.

With the Forest Service having granted permission to the US Bureau of Land Management to issue drilling permits to Doe Run, critics are now calling for a more complete study of the company's proposal – one that would consider the impact of mining. They argue that exploratory drilling by Doe Run will be followed by the expansion of mining and subsequent

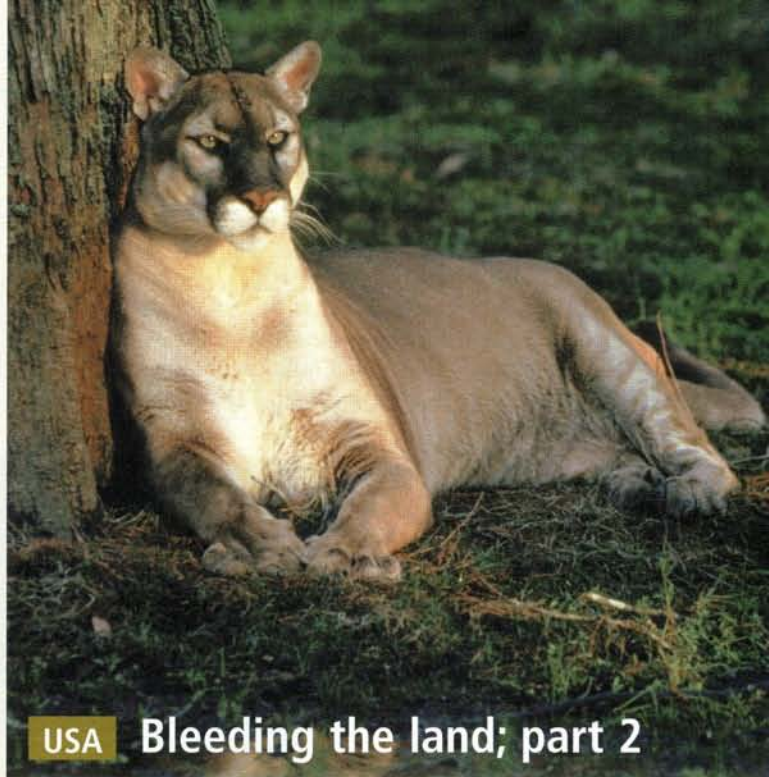
environmental damage. In a commentary in Missouri newspaper *The Post-Dispatch*, Doe Run spokeswoman Barbara Shepard said the company was motivated by 'one very simple yet vitally important reason: America needs lead'. She added that about 65 per cent of US lead comes from Doe Run mines.

Brenda Killen, who lives north of Viburnum – a town situated in the middle of the Mark Twain National Forest – said people throughout Missouri would be shocked to see some of the out-of-the-way Ozark valleys filled with hundreds of acres of mine waste containing lead, cadmium and arsenic.

Dale Brooks, who lives about 20 miles south of Viburnum, echoes Killen's view. 'This is more than an annoyance,' he said. His house faces the water, and his back yard opens into a small valley with a bubbling stream. 'It's been my dream all my life to live here,' he added. 'I fell in love with the solitude, the woods, the water, the trees. Now they want to take it away.'

Deeper still. There are also serious concerns about the effects of processing and transporting lead. Nearby Herculaneum in eastern Missouri is the site of the nation's largest and oldest lead smelter – owned by none other than Doe Run. The smelter emissions have been blamed for elevated lead levels among the town's children. About 100 families are currently being relocated while their property is cleaned under the supervision of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The final decision on exploratory drilling now rests with the US Bureau of Land Management. But Vince Vogt, an assistant field manager for the bureau, said it had collaborated with the Forest Service on the environmental assessment of Doe Run's exploration requests and that approval was nearly certain.



## USA Bleeding the land; part 2

The Big Cypress watershed, spanning 729,000 acres across southern Florida, was designated as the nation's first National Preserve in 1974 to ensure the conservation, protection, and preservation of the area. Comprising roughly 40 per cent of the Everglades, it is one of the most spectacular and biologically important ecosystems on the planet.

The preserve is home to the highly endangered Florida panther, of which only 50 remain. It also provides a much-needed dwelling for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker.

The trouble is this. When the National Park Service (NPS) purchased the Big Cypress lands, it failed to acquire the underlying mineral interests. The Collier Resources Company, who does own them, has now

petitioned NPS to move forward with a sweeping plan for oil and gas exploration.

NPS is considering approving the plan based on an abbreviated environmental assessment. If approved, the plan would allow the drilling of 14,700 wells using high-velocity seismic explosives. Eight miles of new roads would run directly through panther habitat and cross over the National Scenic Florida Trail. Acres and acres of wetlands would be filled and destroyed – surface water risks being contaminated by oil and gas spills, and fluid leaks from work site equipment. And the few remaining Florida panthers are likely to be driven from their protected habitat, while much of the vegetation would be cut down or driven over.

BBC WILD

CORBIS



**make a difference** Write to: Gale Norton, Secretary of the Interior, US Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20240, USA; and to: Ann Veneman, Secretary of Agriculture, Jamie L Whitten Federal Building, Room 200-A, 1400 Independence Avenue, Southwest, Washington, DC 20250, USA. Please copy letters to: The Missouri Coalition for the Environment, 6267 Delmar Boulevard, St Louis, Missouri 63130, USA; fax: + 1 314 727 1665; email: moenviron@moenviron.org. For more information, visit [www.moenviron.org](http://www.moenviron.org)

**make a difference** Write to the Secretary of the Department of Interior. Tell her that you oppose oil and gas exploration in the big Cypress National Preserve. Also, request that the department undertakes a full environmental impact statement before this project moves forward. Additionally, ask that the administration makes the acquisition of the oil, gas and mineral interests one of its top land acquisition priorities – so this problem can be permanently resolved. Write to: Gale Norton, Secretary of the Interior, Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC, 2040, USA; fax: + 1 202 208 6956. Please copy your letters to: Ellen Mongolis, The Wilderness Society, 1615 M St, NW, Washington, DC 20036, US; fax: + 1 202 429 3945. For more information and updates, visit [www.tws.org](http://www.tws.org)

## AUSTRALIA Tree burning

Australian Silicon P/L has proposed the building of a charcoal factory near the coastal village of Mossy Point, between Bateman's Bay and Moruya on the south coast of New South Wales (NSW) in Australia. The factory would be part of a three-site silicon plant project for Lithgow.

The plan has been met with strong regional opposition. More than a dozen public meetings have been held, with gatherings of up to 600 people shouting their disapproval. A rally across the bridge at Bateman's Bay, attracted 2,500 people.

Indicating the enormous level of community engagement in this issue, the environmental impact statement (EIS) released last November received a record number of individual public submissions (over 1,500, and only 15 in favour).

The factory will consume 200,000 tonnes of native forests from the southern region of NSW each year – more than doubling the existing industry.

With the backing of State Forests of NSW – the state body responsible for looking after NSW's forests, the public forests have been offered to the charcoal plant with no detailed ecological or economic assessment of the impact of this logging expansion.

The 'official' line is that the charcoal plant would only use 'waste' from the forests. This 'waste' lie was illustrated in the EIS when the State Forests' assessment of the source of the extra 200,000 tonnes of wood re-categorised whole forests as waste ('residue'). In other words, living trees were made available for charcoal.

With the factory will come heavy truck traffic, and there

are serious concerns about the environmental impact of the plant. The coastal communities of Broulee and Mossy Point – just three kilometres from the five retorts – will suffer from the plant's impact on the air and water, as will the protected coastal wetland of this pristine region.

State premier Bob Carr recently acknowledged the importance of forests, saying 'the beautiful south coast, there is nothing like it ... the last coastal wilderness in NSW'. In view of Carr's government's decision to site a major heavy industrial plant in the area, and one so utterly incompatible with the natural environment, his words have something of a hollow ring.



## key websites

### Funny if it didn't hurt...

- 1 [www.whitehouse.org](http://www.whitehouse.org)  
A favourite of the moment
- 2 [www.toostupidtobe.com](http://www.toostupidtobe.com)  
Also a favourite
- 3 [www.smirkingchimp.com](http://www.smirkingchimp.com)  
And another favourite
- 4 [www.thesmokinggun.com](http://www.thesmokinggun.com)  
Definitely a favourite
- 5 [www.scn.org/newspeak](http://www.scn.org/newspeak)  
Cerebral, humorous commentary, excellent links
- 6 [www.savingsandclone.com](http://www.savingsandclone.com)  
Gotta see it to believe it – all major credit cards accepted

### and 7 online campaigns

- 1 [www.bankwatch.org](http://www.bankwatch.org)  
NGO sign-on campaign to reform the European Investment Bank
- 2 [www.stopholnam.com](http://www.stopholnam.com)  
Give what would become the world's largest cement kiln a well-aimed kick
- 3 <http://act.greenpeace.org>  
Sign on and receive some of the very best online campaigns
- 4 [www.grainsofsand.org.uk](http://www.grainsofsand.org.uk)  
Tales of an extraordinary project in the Indian Ocean that might just help save coral reefs from obliteration – give your support
- 5 [www.SaveNingalooReef.org](http://www.SaveNingalooReef.org)  
In the heart of Australia's Ningaloo Reef, developers plan to build a resort and marina, that would affect turtle nesting grounds, dugongs, whales and whale sharks, and cause pollution and erosion
- 6 [www.mcsuk.org](http://www.mcsuk.org)  
'The Good Fish Guide' – check out why the survival of some popular fish species is endangered
- 7 [www.wwf.org.uk/whocares](http://www.wwf.org.uk/whocares)  
For all those who do care if it warms up a couple of degrees

Please send your campaigns to Jeremy Smith at the address at the front of the magazine.

Write to: The Hon Bob Carr, MP, Premier of NSW, Level 40, Governor Macquarie Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia; email: [bob.carr@www.nsw.gov.au](mailto:bob.carr@www.nsw.gov.au); fax: + 61 2 9228 3935. Please copy your letters to: Charcoalition, c/o The Coastwatchers Association Inc, PO Box 521, Batemans Bay, NSW 2536, Australia; email: [charcoalition@yahoo.com.au](mailto:charcoalition@yahoo.com.au). For more information and updates, visit [www.charcoalition.forests.org.au](http://www.charcoalition.forests.org.au)

make a difference

## USA Saving California's old-growth trees

The Citizens' Campaign for Old Growth Preservation (CFOG) was formed expressly to place an initiative on the November 2002 state-wide ballot in California that would call for the permanent preservation of the state's old-growth trees on non-federal land. An old-growth tree is any tree that existed when California became a state in 1850. Trees must also meet minimum diameters. In order to get this on the ballot, 420,000 signatures need to be collected by April 18, 2002. Please visit [www.ancienttrees.org](http://www.ancienttrees.org) for information on how to sign on.



## Should the UN actively embrace the

AZIZ AHAMED AND ANDREW SIMMS DEBATE THE



**Aziz Ahamed**, chief, Engineering and Environmental Services Section, Division of Operational Support at the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

'In a context of ever-shrinking budgets and growing donor fatigue, UNHCR has to focus its priorities upon those clearly within the international refugee definition.'

## Dear Andrew

People leave their homes – and often their homelands – for many different reasons. Some seek a better life or economic opportunities. Some are forced to flee from armed conflict, human rights abuses and persecution. Others are driven from their homes by natural disasters or environmental degradation. And still others may leave for a combination of reasons. The UN refugee agency was created by the international community to act on behalf of a narrowly defined subset among these masses of people on the move: refugees – people forced to flee across an international border because of a well-founded fear of persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group.

The primary responsibility for safeguarding the rights of citizens falls on national governments. When a government fails to safeguard or actively violates these rights – and so fails to provide its citizens with national protection – UNHCR and the international community must step in to provide international protection. It is this need for international protection from persecution that differentiates between refugees and people leaving their homes for other reasons.

Refugees cannot turn to their own government for protection, often because the government itself is the source of the persecution. Refugees, therefore, need international protection to ensure their legal status and basic rights, to prevent their forced return to a place where their lives or freedom would be threatened and, eventually, to identify lasting solutions to their plight.

People on the move for environmental reasons, however, will in most cases still have the protection of their own government as their first line of defence. Often, they remain within their own country, becoming displaced from their homes, but not crossing international boundaries. The international community can – and often does – help, but the primary responsibility for their well-being and safety remains with the national government. Since victims of environmental disaster do not usually fear persecution, signatories of the Refugee Convention are not legally required to acknowledge them as refugees, nor to offer them protection and asylum.

In sum, refugees require protection from persecution, which falls under the mandate of UNHCR. People displaced because of environmental disasters require emergency, humanitarian and development

assistance to rehabilitate their surroundings and to rebuild or re-establish their lives elsewhere. The two groups are distinct with different needs.

There are, however, certain similarities between refugees and environmental migrants. The most obvious is the forced nature of their movements. Refugees have no choice but to flee their homes. In some cases, victims of environmental disasters may also be forced to leave by circumstances beyond their control. Both groups also often need material assistance and permission to live somewhere other than their traditional homes.

The scope of environmentally-related displacement is large and growing. According to the International Federation of the Red Cross, an estimated 25 million people are displaced by environmental causes, compared to the world's 12 million refugees from persecution. It is the poor – traditionally reliant on agriculture for subsistence and income – who are most often forced to leave their homes for ecological reasons. Many migrate to cities in search of greater and more reliable economic opportunities, ultimately putting more stress on the surrounding natural resources. Future environmental impacts from natural and human activities such as deforestation, loss of farmland topsoil, water deficits, land shortages, ozone depletion and rising sea levels will certainly cause the number of such migrants to increase. As the numbers grow and ecological conditions worsen, the international community must be prepared to address root causes and assist displaced populations.

UNHCR, with its clearly defined mandate to help victims of persecution, is bound by guidance from its governing body and the UN General Assembly. Both bodies are comprised of member states of the UN. In a context of ever-shrinking budgets and growing donor fatigue, UNHCR has to focus its priorities upon those clearly within the international refugee definition. Involvement in situations or with groups of people beyond UNHCR's mandate becomes an option only when authorised by the General Assembly, in co-ordination with other agencies and when additional resources are available.

However, these constraints do not mean that UNHCR does not have an interest in environmental migration or contributions to make. Environment is one of UNHCR's policy priorities, and the agency has long worked to mitigate and repair the environmental damage caused by refugee flows. UNHCR has

# concept of environmental refugees?

ROLE OF THE UN HIGH COMMISSION FOR REFUGEES.



**Andrew Simms** is policy director at the New Economics Foundation in London, and is writing a book on ecological debt to be published later this year.

'Pollution and environmental degradation do not respect national boundaries. It is illogical to expect environmental refugees to do so either.'

experience in managing large-scale displacement and is present in regions where migration due to environmental degradation is likely to occur. Particularly when there are some similarities between this type of displacement and refugee movements, UNHCR's expertise and experience can contribute to alleviating suffering.

In the context of cooperation among organisations and governments responding to ecologically-induced population movements, UNHCR can help to raise awareness of the issues and plan joint responses to crises. However, the UN refugee agency must also maintain a clear focus on the victims of persecution whom it was created to protect and help. The scope and cross-cutting nature of environmental displacement means that it can only be addressed adequately through collective action by affected communities, governments and national and international agencies together.

**Aziz Ahamed**

## Dear Aziz

You seem to be playing the opposite of the children's game pass the parcel. In that game, when the music stops everybody wants to be holding the parcel. In the newer game of environmental refugees, you seem to be afraid that the music might stop when you are holding the problem. How unfortunate, in that case, that you state clearly that the UNHCR must step in to provide international protection for refugees when national governments fail.

Your arguments against giving environmental refugees greater legal status and protection are few and strike me as confused. You imply that UNHCR is too poor and that, anyway, the refugees are the job of national governments. At the same time you say that environmental refugees are a bigger problem than their conventional counterparts, and yet they are somehow less deserving. To borrow a distinction often used to market fizzy drinks, you imply that they are 'refugees lite' measured against the classic variety.

First, it is a sad reality that most parts of the UN system are under-funded. Ironically this is the fault of wealthy industrialised countries for either not raising or meeting their contributions. These are also the countries most responsible for major problems like climate change that drive the growth of environmental refugees. By the same analysis, the countries that are

least responsible for creating the problems, suffer from them most.

But complaining about UNHCR's poverty is to put your head in the sand. It will not make the problem go away. It is also not an argument on the merits of whether environmental refugees should deserve greater status and protection.

Secondly, you are trying to give national governments the burden of a problem that is inherently international.

Have you ever tried stopping a hurricane force wind at the borders of a small poor country and explaining that a) its citizens use so few fossil fuels that they cannot possibly be held responsible for the increasingly frequent and intense weather associated with climate change; that b) its government has no resources to manage environmental refugees anyway; and that c) perhaps the hurricane would like to change direction and head for north America where, per capita, some of the biggest polluters live and the government refuses to participate meaningfully in international climate negotiations? Pollution and environmental degradation do not respect national boundaries. It is illogical to expect environmental refugees to do so either.

Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries in the world, expects to have around 20 million such refugees in coming years as a consequence of global warming. Their environment minister asked if Europe would be happy to take them because there was nowhere else for them to go in Bangladesh.

**Andrew Simms**

## Dear Andrew

It is true that poor countries facing environmental disasters confront a heavy burden and often need help to meet the needs of affected people.

International disaster relief and UN agencies, such as the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Red Cross, CARE International and many others, do step in to help when calamity strikes. UNHCR also assists in international efforts in some cases – most recently following the volcanic eruption in Goma.

This international help, however, does not take the place of national governments in their responsibility towards their citizens. National governments must protect their populations: this responsibility is central

to state sovereignty. Even if people cross a border, international protection through asylum is only required when they have a well-founded fear of persecution. Certainly, surviving a hurricane provokes understandable fears, but these are not fears of persecution (intentional harm directed against a particular group), nor are they due to a lack of national protection. Some of the very examples you mention, such as Bangladesh actively approaching other countries to find solutions for its citizens, are examples of a national government assuming and practising its responsibilities of national protection.

You seem to indicate that the primary reason for considering environmental migrants as refugees would be to force wealthy countries to 'pay' for their overconsumption of natural resources and to make them accept their obligations to poorer nations. According to your argument, the driving force behind including these people as refugees is not that they need legal protection and status (since they remain citizens of their own homelands), but rather to force policy changes in the developed world. Asylum is a measure to protect people from persecution, not a political tool or punishment against states.

We might also look at how to prevent the two types of displacement. Refugees need their own governments to stop abusing human rights and persecuting citizens. Environmental migrants, according to your reasoning, need wealthy countries to reduce fossil fuel consumption and halt actions that cause environmental degradation. The two situations are quite different, and the preventive actions needed are also very different. Lumping both groups together under the same heading would further cloud the issues, and could undermine efforts to help and protect either group and to address the root causes of either type of displacement.

Global migration is highly complex, with numerous environmental, social and economic factors contributing to population movements. Environmental migrants may leave their homes for a combination of reasons, including economic opportunity, soil contamination, loss of land due to rising sea levels and so on. While environmental migrants are not defined as refugees per se, they are not excluded from refugee status if they also fear persecution. Indeed, environmental and economic factors are often present alongside a fear of persecution.

Given this complexity, it is even more important to be clear in distinguishing among different migratory populations, the particular reasons for their movement and the solutions and prevention each group requires. In practice, the distinction between economic migrants, environmental migrants, and refugees may sometimes be difficult to establish, but it is fundamental nonetheless: a migrant enjoys the protection of his or her home government; a refugee does not.

People fleeing environmental disaster need help, and their national governments need support. However, the way forward is not to muddy an already complicated issue, but rather to find appropriate responses for the particular needs of each group.

**Aziz**

## Dear Aziz

I think you are still in denial. At any point in time, written law is like a still photograph of endlessly moving events. It

describes a moment extracted from a constantly shifting consensus. You are holding on to current legalistic definitions like an old, sepia-toned photograph. Your argument may have something to do with the law as it is. But it has nothing to do with natural justice or the real world as people live it.

The question is, should environmental refugees be guaranteed some kind of international status and protection? I believe they must. Firstly, because they are a global problem that needs a global solution. Secondly, because without it there will be unacceptable and avoidable suffering.

It is true to say that there are a range of agencies, UNHCR included, that step in when calamity strikes. But, working for UNHCR, you also know that disaster relief is almost always grossly inadequate. It is also often late and badly organised.

Of course national governments should do everything in their power to protect their citizens. But it is just a convenient fiction to fall back on state sovereignty as an excuse for inaction by the international community. Things have changed since the formation of the UN and the triumph of the nation state. Globalisation and growing awareness of interdependence now define international relations.

In this modern world state sovereignty is already constrained, and conveniently ignored when it is in the interests of the powerful. Any developing country working within a World Bank/International Monetary Fund structural adjustment programme has its freedom to make policy and allocate resources compromised. Other constraining obligations backed by punitive powers are placed on the nation state by world trade agreements. Therefore, the rights of capital and goods to move freely and safely across national borders are increasingly protected by international agreements. No comparable effort is going to protect the rights of people who *have to* move across borders, whatever the need driving them. We need a new status for environmental refugees precisely because rules should be there to protect the powerless from the powerful. If UNHCR is not their champion, who will be?

Let me keep to my earlier example of climate change. More than any other single issue, it is likely to fuel the growth of environmental refugees. You quibble about persecution. But don't you think that being forced to live in worsening poverty on land that without warning could flood or turn to dust is a form of persecution? Whether deliberately or due to sins of omission, these consequences are the result of economic and political decisions. The same thing is happening on a global level today that has been practised by every malign governing elite or colonial power in history: the poorest are left on the marginal land to survive as best they can.

Numerous poor countries already cannot afford to meet the basic needs of their people. How can you possibly argue that it is the primary responsibility of such states to clear up a problem that they had almost nothing to do with creating? Only by giving environmental refugees explicit international status will their recognition and protection be guaranteed by the international community. Otherwise they will be condemned by a global problem to a national economic and geographical lottery and to the patchwork availability of resources and the application of immigration policies.

'Lumping refugees and environmental migrants together under the same heading would further cloud the issues, and could undermine efforts to help and protect either group and to address the root causes of either type of displacement.'

**Aziz Ahamed**

'Only by giving environmental refugees explicit international status will their protection be guaranteed by the international community. Otherwise, they will be condemned by a global problem to a national economic and geographical lottery.'

**Andrew Simms**

It is bizarre that you should pick on the Bangladesh example. The point was precisely that Bangladesh could neither afford, nor find the space for, the scale of expected displacement. Aziz, I have some questions for you.

Do you think that current national immigration policies are even remotely capable of dealing with the number of potential environmental refugees? Is it right that while some states are far more responsible for creating problems like climate change, all states should bare equal responsibility for dealing with their displaced people? In reality of course, in terms of numbers of displaced people, the burden will actually fall much more heavily on countries and regions least responsible for creating the problem.

What do you propose should happen in the likely event of whole nations becoming uninhabitable? Should they have new sovereign lands carved out for them in other states? Without proper environmental refugee status do you picture a world agreeing to create lots of new little Israels for the environmentally displaced? Or should they become the first true World Citizens? And, if there is no state left, how can the state protect its citizens?

Whatever course of action, you cannot simply pretend that nothing is happening. When it comes to environmental refugees, the situation is not normal. So, your response cannot be business-as-usual.

**Andrew**

## Dear Andrew

You are shifting the goalposts. The question was whether environmentally displaced people should receive refugee status. You are now asking whether they need some kind of international status. This is a very different question that goes well beyond the scope of UNHCR. The problem of environmental displacement is extensive and requires international attention. It cannot, however, best be addressed through the refugee definition.

You may think my insistence on this definition is quibbling with legalisms. For millions of victims of persecution, it is a crucial distinction. That the definition remains clear and strong is vital for the protection of many more people who may face future persecution. It was established to address a very specific problem that needs a specific solution. Dilute it, and no one is protected.

You ask whether living on environmentally threatened land is persecution. There is an important distinction between intentional harm directed at a specific group and the unintended consequences of poor planning or implementation of policies. If a government uses or takes advantage of the environment as a tool to harm a religious minority, for example, it may be persecution. In the vast majority of cases, however, this has not occurred.

You imply that granting asylum to environmentally displaced people would shift the burden to developed countries. Yet among existing refugees, the burden actually falls very heavily on developing nations. Over 3.4 million of the world's 12 million refugees are in Africa. Another 4 million are in Iran and Pakistan alone. Refugee status would not necessarily mean that all – or even most – environmentally displaced people could move to rich nations.

Taking your example of an entire state disappearing, while this is a possibility, the example is extreme and, to my knowledge, unprecedented. Such a disaster would be

tragic, but it would not be persecution. While those affected would not be refugees, their legal status would obviously need to be clarified to avoid their becoming stateless. UNHCR has played an increasingly active role in the effort to reduce and prevent statelessness. Fortunately, in contrast to an emergency like a hurricane, this situation offers governments decades of prior notice to find answers.

If we look at the original question – whether environmentally displaced people are refugees – the answer in general is no. If, however, we look at your new, broader question – whether they need some kind of status – the answer may in some cases be yes. UNHCR cannot on its own exceed the mandate set by UN member states. But we do have experience grappling with population movements that could contribute to help governments and the many other international community stakeholders find appropriate responses to new and distinct problems.

**Aziz**

## Dear Aziz

It is not me shifting the goalposts, it's an abused and unstable global environment. But, I'm glad that you accept that the environment can be used as a tool to harm people, and that this can be termed 'persecution'.

This means that UNHCR has already actively embraced the concept of environmental refugees, which was our question to debate. Thank you, it's good to finish our correspondence on a positive note.

All that's left to discuss is when that harm can be called intentional. Harm is surely caused intentionally when a set of policies is pursued in full knowledge of their damaging consequences. The causes and consequences of climate change – who is responsible and who gets hurt – are now sufficiently well understood. According to the British government, current US energy plans will increase their greenhouse emissions 25 per cent by 2010. This is intentional behaviour that will result in environmental persecution and environmental refugees.

This is not about 'dilution'. You cannot sacrifice green refugee Peter to save conventional refugee Paul. Your tone suggests that UNHCR is desperate to wriggle out of its responsibilities on a technicality. That's understandable. It's not your fault that this huge problem has arisen. But you cannot escape the fact that you are the international agency with responsibility for dealing with it.

Plainly you can't do it alone. This is a global security issue, the UN Security Council will probably have to get involved. Why doesn't UNHCR follow the lead taken by former US ambassador to the UN Richard Holbrook in putting HIV/AIDS before the Security Council – the first health issue it considered – and invite it to address environmental refugees.

You are right that because of their global distribution, the burden of handling environmental refugees will fall unfairly on poorer countries. For this reason, recognising and dealing with the crisis needs to be part of a wider global settlement that shifts significant new and appropriate resources from the north to the south. You are suffering from the Chinese curse of living in interesting times. It is time to get interested.

**Andrew**

# profile

Solomon Hughes  
brings us up to date on  
Douglas Hurd's career

Former UK cabinet minister Douglas Hurd's days of power and influence may seem to be over, but in reality the man with the Mr Whippy hairstyle is still a very popular political flavour. For Hurd, who held a number of cabinet posts under Margaret Thatcher and John Major, continues to help develop policies that are released on the world at large. Seated on several corporate boards, he is now a leading campaigner for the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), the pro-privatisation treaty overseen by the WTO.

Born in 1930, Hurd came from a line of Tory lords. Moving up through the British establishment and Conservative Party he became researcher to British prime minister Edward Heath, and then an MP in 1974.

In 1979 Thatcher's government and Hurd's ministerial career began. A Foreign Office minister and later foreign secretary, Hurd batted for business. An early duty was proving Britain had no beef with the authoritarian Saudi regime – as long as oil flowed west and arms flowed east. In 1980 British TV broadcast a documentary, 'Death of a Princess'. The film accurately described the public execution of a member of the Saudi royal family for adultery. It enraged the Saudi monarchy, whom Hurd had to reassure that Britain had no objection to the beheading of adulteresses. Trade kept flowing. The minister's main memory of grovelling in the desert is that his trousers let him down. His diary reads: '28 July 1980: my zip breaks at crucial moment. My suit is old, tight and shiny. Prince Saud is tall, quick with a touch of creativeness.'

Elsewhere in the Middle East, Hurd's government sold arms to Saddam Hussein. But Hurd was the foreign secretary who went to war with Iraq when the regime threatened oil supplies.

As foreign secretary Hurd also made a special contribution to overseas development with the Pergau Dam affair. Malaysia agreed to buy £1.3 billion worth of British weapons in return for £234 million in aid. The aid was to be used to pay British firms building a hydroelectric dam in the country. Hurd overruled his senior civil servant, and authorised the deal. The World Development Movement later took him to court. The judicial review found his decision 'fatally flawed'.

At the Home Office Hurd showed that

market 'liberalisation' meant less civil liberties. He met anti-nuclear protests at Greenham Common, strikes by miners and printers, or gatherings at Stonehenge in two ways: with a draconian Criminal Justice Bill and by arming police with plastic bullets and CS gas.

In 1995 Hurd resigned as Foreign Secretary to become deputy chairman of NatWest Markets. From minister to banker there were continuities. As minister Hurd was accused of failing to stand up to Slobodan Milosevic during the Balkan crisis. As banker in 1996 he arranged £1 billion loan for Serbian privatisation, which shored up Milosevic and earned NatWest £10 million.

Then in 1997 he joined the Financial Leaders Group, an offshoot of the American Coalition of Service Industries (CSI). The CSI was instrumental in creating GATS. By forcing nations to open up their public sectors to competition, GATS creates huge new markets for the CSI's member firms.

Hurd also became chairman of British Invisibles, the business lobby since renamed International Financial Services London (IFSL). IFSL runs the shadowy LOTIS committee, which lobbies tirelessly for GATS – a function also performed by PR firm Edelman, for whom Hurd is an international adviser.

In 1998 Hurd attended the WTO ministerial meeting in Geneva. He subsequently reported back to Labour ministers Gordon Brown, Ian McCartney and Helen Liddell, the latter thanking him 'and his industry colleagues for their enormous help during the negotiations'.

Hurd praised GATS at conference after conference. He was keynote speaker at a 1998 conference at Oxford's Ditchley Park centre, to 'discuss and prepare for the Services 2000 negotiations in the WTO'. The conference, backed by multinationals like the Chubb Corporation, vowed: 'The Services 2000 negotiations... should ensure the application of GATS principles to public procurement of services'. This means public procurement – like health or education services, must rely on private firms. In 1999 he spoke at the pro-GATS 'World Services Congress' and chaired another conference – 'How to open services markets worldwide' – with Labour trade minister Patricia Hewitt as grateful speaker.

His final triumph has been to privatise himself. He is available for hire from Celebrity Speakers of Buckinghamshire.

*Solomon Hughes is a freelance journalist.*



## THE CANCER INDUSTRY

DR PETER MANSFIELD SAYS FOOD, NOT CHARITY, WILL STOP CANCER.

According to a current TV advertisement, the Imperial Cancer Fund and the Cancer Research Campaign have combined into one organisation, Cancer Research UK – 'the greatest threat to cancer ever'. The memories this news stirs are rather vague, woven as they are through the best part of 20 years. Forgive me if I do not recall all the names involved: put it down to forgetfulness.

Many years ago I had a neighbour called Brenda Kidman. She was the first journalist to speak openly in any medium about the experience of cancer. Her original medium was radio, but in 1983 she made a television series for the BBC called *A Gentle Way With Cancer*. I have the book of the series by me now.

The programmes had a huge impact. They introduced to the world the Bristol Cancer Help Centre and its founding director Dr Alec Forbes. So powerful was the message of the series that a tidal wave of benefactors shifted their patronage from the conventional cancer charities towards Bristol.

This did not please the directors of those charities. They tried to obtain a court injunction to stop the series midway. Instead, the BBC allowed a panel discussion with Brenda and a doctor on one side, and about six heads of cancer charities on the other. By way of restoring balance, it was the latter who did most of the talking.

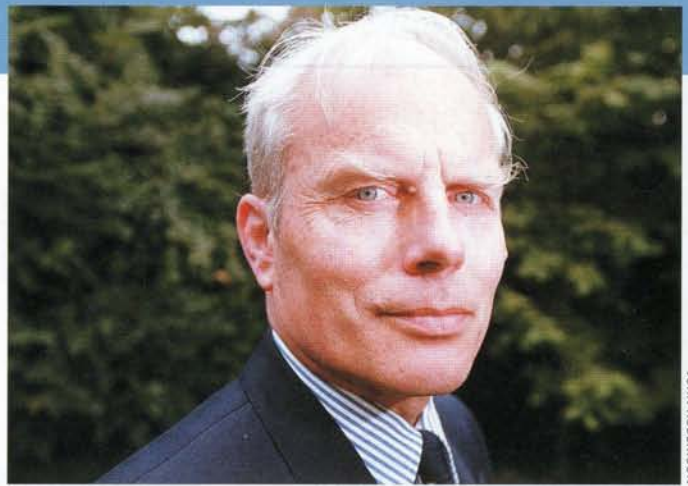
The debate made little difference to progress at Bristol over the next decade or so. The centre moved to splendid premises in the city's Cornwallis Grove, and won the patronage of Prince Charles who opened the new centre. This was about the same time that, as president of the British Medical Association, the prince first made waves by coming out in favour of complementary medicine.

So it must have been with horror that the heads of these same cancer charities viewed the prospect of a re-run of Kidman's series about 10 years later. This time they were ready, however. The series was upstaged by the release of the results of a study which was supposed to show that breast cancer victims who went to Bristol died faster than those who didn't.

I was due on my regular slot with BBC Radio Humberside that morning, and the presenter from Hull broke the news to me on air. 'That's not possible', was my instinctive response. And it wasn't possible. Almost nobody goes to Bristol without having had everything available in the way of cancer treatment previously. The Bristol patients were the sickest of the sick. It had been a sore point with Forbes, who wanted orthodox treatment and Bristol care to run simultaneously. It might not always achieve a spectacular cure, but nothing done at Bristol would ever possibly have harmed anyone.

I do despair, regularly, at how gullible Middle England can be in situations like this. The series disappeared from sight, but the effect on Bristol was far worse. The hospital's medical director resigned. Patients fled, funds drained away and the cancer centre was nearly closed. This went on for years – long after the study was discredited and one of its authors had committed suicide. As damage limitation by the status quo, it was a huge and abiding success.

I do not know any of the directors of cancer charities



JOHN ROBERTSON

personally, and have no idea what their motives actually are. I do know that their employees work tirelessly at the leading edge of science, trying to identify the cellular basis of cancer and the elusive magic bullet that will stop it for good. Their work must be very costly and highly vulnerable to any shift in the giving habits of regular donors to charity.

But that, surely, is only half their dilemma. Suppose – just suppose – that their efforts were rewarded with complete success. Wouldn't that be an even bigger threat, at least in the short term? Cancer research institutes would no longer be needed. Of course, the experts who work in them would be free to turn their expertise to the next most urgent issue – heart disease, arthritis or Alzheimer's disease, say. And the charitable public would quite quickly recast their priorities so that funds would follow them. They could even occupy the same buildings, run by the same directors.

So why would anyone want to rubbish Bristol? What need is there of 'balance'? Surely, not just to protect a pharmaceutical company's interest to invent something it could patent and license as a medicine to cure us all. It baffles me.

But then, I voted with my feet quite a long time ago. It always seemed to me that cancer is, above all else, a disease to be prevented. I went to a lot of trouble to find out how the ordinary citizen might achieve that. I have been known to drive 200 miles each way for a weekday evening lecture, just to get the chance of hearing world experts express their views on the subject. Quite remarkably, these doctors all agreed about something.

Pollution, they said, is bad but, for the present, unavoidable. The biggest single threat to cancer, on the other hand, is good food. We even know what it is in food that matters most – anti-oxidants. Usually brightly coloured, these are the ingredients that protect our tissues from harm. They do our damage limitation, mopping up free radicals – the high-energy chemical splinters released by pollution hits. And they need to be in food, or as similar to it as possible. Pure anti-oxidants tested in Irish studies of human pre-cancers did not work. Food-based versions did.

So I, like many others, have for many years now been nudging anyone who will listen towards eating mostly the sort of food that is loaded with anti-oxidants. Their colourful display is attractive, and their variety legion. It is hard to imagine that they could ever be boring. They could, over the years, put a safe distance between all of us and most forms of illness – not just cancer. And you don't have to pay a prescription charge for them.

Could it possibly be as simple as that? Not quite, but almost. It isn't life that's perverse, but us that make it so.

*Dr Peter Mansfield was threatened with losing his medical licence in 2001 because he continued to allow patients to choose three separate injections rather than the controversial MMR vaccine.*

# Putting the boot in

BY SHARON BEDER

Nike spends more money on advertising and promoting the reputation of its products than most other companies in the world – \$1.13 billion in 1998. Celebrities, such as Tiger Woods, Michael Jordan, Andre Agassi, John McEnroe, Monica Seles and Carl Lewis are paid huge sums of money for their association with the company's products. In 1998, for example, Nike paid Tiger Woods \$28 million and Michael Jordan \$45 million.<sup>1</sup>

Contrast these vast sums with the money Nike spends on philanthropy in the countries where its products are made. In Indonesia, for example, it has spent \$100,000 since 1998 on continuing education programmes for Nike workers and \$150,000 on small loans to unemployed and disadvantaged people.<sup>2</sup>

These payments are also dwarfed by the amount the company spends on strategic philanthropy and cause-related marketing in the US. It gives millions of dollars to US schools and universities for sports equipment and scholarships.<sup>3</sup> It has also donated millions to children's television and to the Boys and Girls Club of America,<sup>4</sup> as well as giving excess inventory, sample products and used office equipment to charities.<sup>5</sup>

## NET PROFITS

Increasingly companies such as Nike are using the internet to provide information that defines themselves and to profess a social conscience. A survey by UK consultancy SustainAbility of 150 company websites worldwide found that over half communicated something about their environmental performance.<sup>56</sup> Nike has a whole section of its website devoted to responsibility, with sub-sections on labour, global community, environment and diversity.<sup>57</sup> In April 2000, Nike CEO Phil Knight announced the company would be publishing the results of monitoring of its contract factories by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) on its website. However, while Nike now has the results of 53 North American factories under the title of 'Transparency 101', only three factories in other countries are featured.<sup>58</sup>

Following years of criticism over its poor labour and environmental standards, Nike claims to have cleaned up its act, even signing onto the Global Compact to prove it. But the truth is rather different, and the company's recent behaviour is a textbook study in greenwash.

## Sole Provider

At the 1997 meeting of Business for Social Responsibility a Nike representative showed a video of happy workers in a Vietnamese factory. 'Unfortunately for Nike, two days later – while the conference was still going on – a story appeared on the front page of *The New York Times* about conditions in Vietnamese Nike plants where workers were being exposed to carcinogens at 177 times safe levels, and were being paid just \$10 for a 65-hour work week (far longer than the local law [allowed]).<sup>6</sup>

Nike now embraces the rhetoric of environmental responsibility – including what it calls the 'triple bottom line'.<sup>7</sup> This approach supplements the financial/economic bottom line with a stated concern for environmental and social responsibilities. To this end the company is making efforts to recycle excess rubber from factories, converting to water-based solvents and recycling used shoes. It has developed a tank top made of 75 per cent recycled plastic and the T-shirts it sells in the US contain 3 per cent organic cotton. It promised to be able to make 90 per cent of its shoes without toxic glues, cleaners and solvents by 2001. As a result it was chosen as one of the companies to be included in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index.<sup>8</sup> However, despite these environmental improvements, Nike's reputation in the areas of social responsibility and human rights has continued to come under attack.

## Heal or Heel?

Nike does not manufacture its own products. It only designs and markets them. About 550,000 workers are employed in 700 factories in 50 countries to make Nike products, the majority in Asia.<sup>9</sup> The contractors tend to pay close to the minimum wage.<sup>10</sup> This cheap labour enables Nike to spend a great deal on design and marketing, pay large executive salaries, maintain large profits, and still keep the cost of the shoes affordable to the middle classes in affluent countries. Shoes that cost \$16.75 to manufacture are sold for around \$100 in the US.<sup>11</sup>

Since Nike spends so much on marketing and so little on the product itself, it is clear that the reputation of its brand is all-important. The writer Naomi Klein has noted: 'In many ways branding is the Achilles heel of the corporate world. The more these companies shift to being all about brand meaning and brand image, the more





vulnerable they are to attacks on image.<sup>12</sup> So Nike was in trouble when its contractors were accused of manufacturing Nike products in sweatshop conditions, using child labour, paying less than the minimum wage, enforcing overtime, subjecting employees to verbal abuse and sexual harassment, and running factories like prison camps.<sup>13</sup>

In 1991 the UK's Thames TV, *The Economist* and Knight Ridder reported on conditions in Nike factories in Indonesia. US television network CBC reported in 1993 that workers suffered physical and sexual abuse on top of their low wages and an exhausting quota system. It reported that Nike workers in Vietnam earned an average of 20 US cents per hour, and were subject to physical punishments such as being hit on the head by supervisors and being forced to kneel on the ground with their hands in the air for periods of time. *The New York Times*, *The International Herald Tribune* and *The Economist* also reported on Nike's Asian factories in 1993. Further bad press in 1994 included investigative reports in *The Rolling Stone*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Chicago Tribune* and a book by Donald Katz called *Just Do It*.<sup>14</sup>

By 1997 Nike had become a symbol of sweatshop labour in the Third World and was the target of several protests outside store openings and by students against their universities' links with the company. In October 1997 anti-Nike rallies were held in 50 US cities and 11 other countries.<sup>15</sup>

All the while Nike continued to defend its wage levels with commissioned studies<sup>16</sup> and rhetoric. CEO Phil Knight claimed that working conditions in Asian factories had improved drastically since Nike had begun business 25 years before. He said that if a shoe factory worker had gone to sleep just 10 years earlier and woken up in the late 1990s they would have thought that they had 'died and gone to heaven'.<sup>17</sup>

By 1998, however, the damage to Nike's reputation was beginning to be felt in the account books. Share prices

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■ were dropping and sales were weak.<sup>18</sup> Knight admitted: 'The Nike product has become synonymous with slave wages, forced overtime and arbitrary abuse'.<sup>19</sup> To counter this Nike poured its marketing expertise into its own corporate reputation and sought to portray a caring company that was concerned about working conditions in its contractors' factories. It hired a former Microsoft executive to be vice president for corporate and social responsibility, and expanded its corporate responsibility division to 70 people.<sup>20</sup>

This public relations campaign also included upgrading its own code of conduct and participating in a range of coalitions. These included the Global Alliance for Workers and Communities (aimed at helping workers in Third World shoe and clothing factories)<sup>21</sup> and other business coalitions with a stated social responsibility agenda like the aforementioned Business for Social Responsibility.<sup>22</sup> The company, however, continued to oppose labour and human rights linkages to trade agreements.<sup>23</sup>

## Stitched in time

In response to the ongoing criticism, Nike formulated a code of conduct for its contractors. The code, first formulated in 1992 and amended in 1997 and 1998, is supposed to apply in all factories producing Nike products. It includes recommendations for minimum wages (as set in the host country), maximum mandatory working hours of 60 per week, a minimum age for workers of 16 years old, a ban on forced labour and minimum safety and environmental standards.<sup>24</sup>

Nike also repeatedly referred to its membership of the Fair Labor Association (FLA), which was set up in 1998 with the help of the White House, the US Department of Labor and the apparel industry – purportedly to safeguard working conditions in factories contracted to US companies.<sup>25</sup> Although a number of NGOs were involved in the FLA's formation, two unions, a department store and the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility pulled out because

they disagreed with the final agreement and were concerned that the FLA was little more than a public relations exercise.<sup>26</sup>

The FLA has a voluntary code of conduct and member companies can attach a 'No Sweat' label to their goods.<sup>27</sup> The code says that companies will pay the minimum wage or prevailing industry wage of the country in which they are operating, but makes no provision that

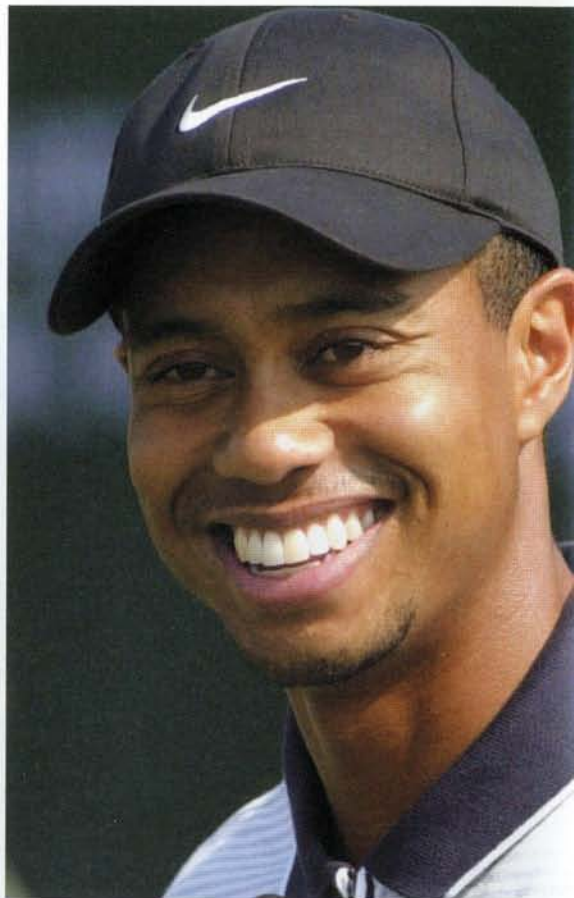
'In one year Nike paid Michael Jordan as much to pitch their shoes as 35,000 Vietnamese were paid to make them'

companies should pay a wage that workers can live on. Since many poor countries compete for international investment by keeping the minimum wage low, the minimum wage is often below a subsistence income, especially for supporting a family.<sup>28</sup>

The code limits mandatory overtime so workers cannot be made to work more than 60 hours a week. However, a compulsory 60-hour week is excessive and there are no limits on voluntary overtime above and beyond this. Furthermore, the very low wages ensure that workers need to work overtime in order to earn enough to live on.<sup>29</sup>

The code gives very limited support for the right of workers to organise in unions. It merely says that corporations will not 'affirmatively seek the assistance of state authorities to prevent workers from exercising these rights'. According to Alan Howard from the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE), this means 'you can let the army into the factory to put down a strike, as long as you don't pick up the phone and call them'.<sup>30</sup>

As Medea Benjamin of Global Exchange has pointed out, according to this agreement companies could still pay their workers 20 cents an hour, coerce

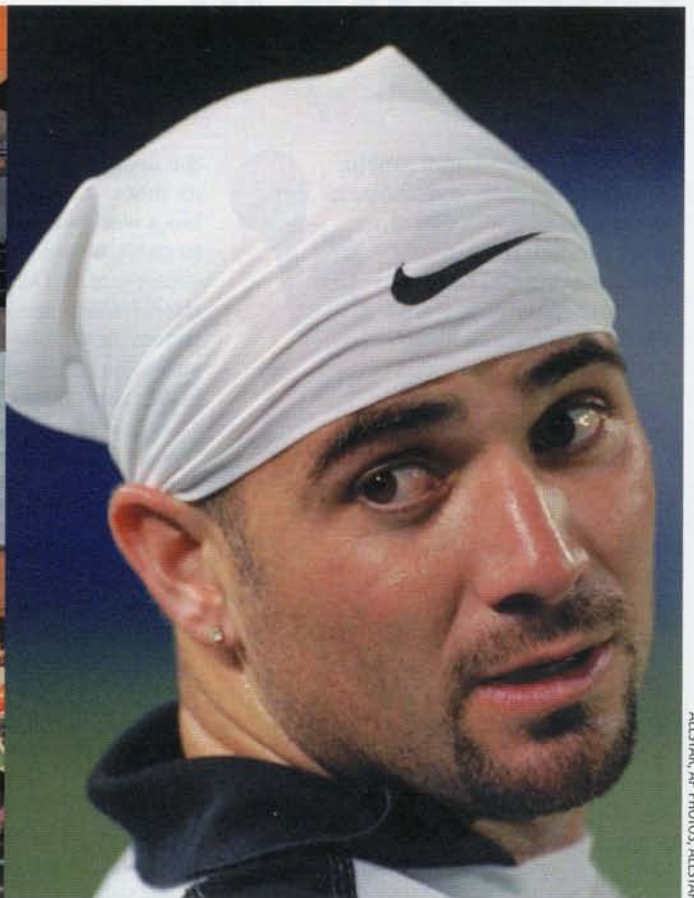


them into countless hours of 'voluntary overtime', use accounting firms that have no connection to workers as their external monitors and be rewarded for this behavior with a 'no sweatshop' seal of approval.<sup>31</sup>

For companies like Nike, whose financial bottom line does not allow it to deal with the deep-seated causes of its poor reputation, the UN now offers additional support to bolster their reputations. In 1999 the UN sponsored a partnership with corporations centered on a code of principles entitled the Global Compact.<sup>32</sup> The compact commits corporations who sign up to uphold nine human rights principles. These include the right to join unions, the elimination of child labour and the development of environmentally-friendly technologies.<sup>33</sup>

However, critics argue that the compact is merely a means by which companies that have been accused of human rights violations can 'win UN endorsement and use the UN emblem to give their corporate activities a branding makeover, while doing nothing of substance to clean up the conditions in their factories and industrial sites'.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, the compact is voluntary and has no monitoring or enforcement mechanisms. All that is required of



ALLSTAR/AP PHOTOS; ALLSTAR

**Easy for Tiger:** Despite the endorsement of Nike products by wholesome sports stars like Tiger Woods (left) and Andre Agassi (right), the protests against the grim conditions in the company's contractor factories go on.

companies is that they place information on a UN website about the steps that they are taking to improve working conditions and reduce environmental degradation. Joshua Karliner, executive director of the Transnational Resource and Action Center, says: 'It allows companies like Nike... to wrap themselves in the UN flag without any binding commitment to change.'<sup>35</sup>

#### Lace affair

In order for its code and internet pronouncements to have credibility, Nike needed to have them endorsed by parties that are seen to be independent and to have integrity. The UN is just one of many organisations and individuals that have filled this role. A number of other NGOs have also participated in the compact, so adding to its credibility. These include Amnesty International, the World Wide Fund for Nature and labour organisations such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. However, this is no guarantee that the material posted on the website will be more than empty rhetoric, as these organisations are not expected to do any monitoring of the claims made.<sup>36</sup>

In 1997 Nike paid former UN ambassador Andrew Young to visit its contractors' factories in Asia and report on working conditions in the hope that he would provide a much needed independent endorsement. However, human rights groups criticised his tour as a public relations sham.<sup>37</sup> The company also gave handpicked students and journalists tours of selected factories.

Nike's attempt at getting the endorsement of NGOs and unions for the FLA agreement was similarly unsuccessful. It therefore encouraged many university administrations to join the FLA so as to give it credibility. Well over 100 did so, but student activists remained concerned about the involvement of companies like Nike and the effectiveness of the monitoring process. In response they formed their own alliance together with unions and human rights groups in October 1999 – the Workers' Rights Consortium (WRC).<sup>38</sup>

The WRC promotes a 'living wage' rather than a minimum wage – that is, that workers be paid enough to meet their basic needs of food, clothing and shelter and be allowed a little extra for discretionary spending.<sup>39</sup> Phil Knight

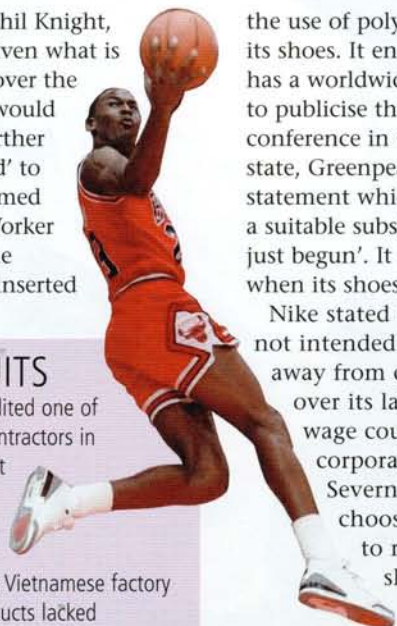
has called the requirement for companies to pay a living wage 'unrealistic',<sup>40</sup> but Benjamin estimated in 1998 that if Nike doubled the wages of workers in its Indonesian factories from 10 cents per hour to 20, it would only cost an extra \$20 million a year. This is what Nike spends on sponsoring the Brazilian football team, and is less than 3 per cent of the company's annual advertising budget.<sup>41</sup>

Nike has 'partnerships' with over 200 tertiary US colleges and universities,<sup>42</sup> many of which involve cause-related marketing deals providing them with a financial reason for supporting the company. Increasingly, however, under pressure from student activists, universities have been joining up with the WRC rather than the FLA. To the dismay of Nike, some 50 universities have joined up so far,<sup>43</sup> thus undermining the credibility of the FLA.

The company has retaliated against some of the universities that have joined the WRC. It has withdrawn from a contract to supply hockey equipment to Rhode Island's Brown University and has also withdrawn \$8m in funding from Michigan University after the latter joined the WRC.<sup>44</sup> When the University

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of Oregon joined, Phil Knight, who had personally given what is his *alma mater* \$50m over the years, announced he would not be making any further donations 'of any kind' to the university. He claimed that 'by joining the Worker Rights Consortium, the University of Oregon inserted



ALLSTAR

## TRACKING SUITS

When Ernst & Young audited one of Nike's Vietnamese subcontractors in 1997, a copy of the audit was leaked to *The New York Times*, which reported that the auditor had found that a Vietnamese factory manufacturing Nike products lacked adequate safety equipment and training, and exposed workers to hazardous chemicals, noise, heat and dust. 77 per cent of workers suffered respiratory problems. Also, the factory management encouraged up to 700 hours of overtime per year in a country where the legal limit was 200 hours.<sup>59</sup> Despite these findings and the violations of Vietnamese labour and environmental laws, Ernst & Young concluded that the factory complied with the Nike code of conduct.<sup>60</sup> The leaking of the report and a critique of it by the Transnational Research and Action Centre 'generated a series of scathing articles and columns on the business pages and sports pages of newspapers across the US and around the world.'<sup>61</sup> Nike now uses Pricewaterhouse Coopers as its auditor.

the use of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) from its shoes. It enrolled Greenpeace, which has a worldwide campaign against PVC, to publicise the promise. In a press conference in Oregon, Nike's home state, Greenpeace read a Nike company statement which said that the search for a suitable substitute for PVC had 'barely just begun'. It was unable to predict when its shoes would be PVC-free.<sup>47</sup>

Nike stated that the 'action was not intended to divert attention away from criticism it [had] received over its labour practices in low-wage countries'.<sup>48</sup> Nike director of corporate responsibility Sarah Severn stated that it did not choose to publicise its decision to remove PVC from its shoes because it would have been accused of greenwashing.<sup>49</sup>

Apparently, Nike believed that if Greenpeace did the PR for it the greenwashing label would not be used. Severn was speaking at a Greenpeace Business and the Environment conference in Sydney in July 2000 at which Nike had been invited to be present as a model of corporate environmental progress and responsibility.

## Swoosh or Shush

Recent surveys continue to find that workers making Nike products suffer inadequate wages, abusive treatment and excessive work hours as well as intimidation if they try to form unions. Huge disparities remain. Chinese workers receive about \$1.50 per pair of shoes that sell for \$80-\$120.<sup>50</sup> The rewards for those who manufacture the products (an average of \$786 per year in Indonesia)<sup>51</sup> are minute compared with the remuneration for those who endorse them. 'In one year, Nike paid Michael Jordan [pictured above] as much (about \$25m) to pitch the shoes as its subcontractors paid 35,000 Vietnamese to make them.'<sup>52</sup> Nike

executives are also very well paid. Knight is a billionaire, one of the richest men in the world, who in the year ending 31 May 2000 earned a salary of \$1.2m and a bonus of \$1.3m – up 26 per cent on the previous year.<sup>53</sup>

Community Aid Abroad in Australia points out: 'As the company with the largest profit margins Nike could more easily afford to ensure decent pay and conditions in its suppliers' factories.'<sup>54</sup> Instead Vietnamese workers making Nike products earned less than half of what other foreign companies (apart from Reebok) pay their least skilled factory workers in Vietnam.<sup>55</sup>

Nike's response to all the criticisms directed at it has been largely superficial. It has employed reputation management rather than instigated real reforms that addressed the underlying issues. It is the appearance of social and environmental responsibility that Nike has aimed for, and it has employed the classic public relations tactics of codes and pledges with third-party endorsements to achieve this.

## Just Do it

Reputation is more important than ever to sales, shareholder value and attracting employees. And corporate responsibility is an increasingly vital element of reputation. But this does not mean that we can depend on the enlightened self-interest of corporate management and boards of directors to ensure that human rights and the environment are safeguarded.

It is for this reason that community groups that concentrate their efforts on consumer boycotts, shareholder activism and partnerships with business will often only be able to achieve superficial reforms rather than fundamental change. Real long-term change will involve the cultivation of grassroots power to oppose the muscle of companies whose fundamental products or ways of doing business need to be changed ■

References on page 66

itself into the new global economy where I make my living, and it inserted itself on the wrong side, fumbling a teachable moment'.<sup>45</sup>

Nike's efforts to boost its reputation and get third-party endorsement have been more successful in the environmental area. In 1998 Nike joined 20 other major US companies that committed themselves to no longer using or selling wood and paper products made from 'old growth' forests. The agreement was negotiated by a coalition of environmental groups including Greenpeace, the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Rainforest Action Network.<sup>46</sup>

In 1998 Nike promised to phase out

**SHARON BEDER** is author of *Global Spin: The Corporate Assault On Environmentalism*, which will be published in a revised edition by Green Books in April 2002, priced £12.95. Readers may purchase it free of postage by calling 01803 863260 and mentioning *The Ecologist*

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# When cheap isn't cheerful

BY PETER BUNYARD

As government and farmers rethink the UK's agricultural future, it's time to bring the argument back to that fundamental sticking point: the cost of food.

**W**e hear it over and over again: the UK's farmers will have to compete on the global market if they are to survive. And that, by the British government's book, means bigger holdings, fewer farmers and greater intensification. In short, the globalisation of rural Britain and with it the final nails in the coffin of a way of life that for more than 100 generations has forged the country's landscape and wildlife habitat as we have come to know and love it.

In fact British farming, post-BSE and now post-F&M, is at a watershed. Either, we destroy the past by selling ourselves to the notion that the only way farmers can make a living is through crop monocultures and feedlot husbandry for livestock achieved through inputs of chemicals and imported fodder. Or we reinvent the past by going back to a

modern version of mixed farming, in which crop rotations and livestock are integrated into a sustainable cycle of harvesting and replenishment.

Of course, if we did our sums correctly we would know that the high yields of intensive farming come at a cost of soil degradation, carbon loss into the atmosphere, pesticide and fertiliser run-off into our waterways and, most pernicious of all, food products that are positively unhealthy (*The Ecologist*, Vol 31/5). As Professor Jules Pretty of the University of Essex has shown us, the external costs of intensive farming in the UK amount to as much as £208 per hectare. The water companies, for instance, pay as much as £135 million a year to get drinking water down to European Union pesticide levels. All in all we may be paying as much as £2 billion a year for the environmental



and health costs of UK agriculture. The irony is that not only does the farmer go scot-free, but he and his colleagues receive up to £3 billion per year in direct subsidies.

The problem is not just that the British government is promoting the intensification of agriculture. It is doing so with the understanding that the main players of the future will no longer be conventional landowners but agribusinesses linked directly to multinational food corporations. This is not just true of the UK, but of the US and, increasingly, the rest of the world too. The extent of the danger to sustainable farming is evident in a recent report, *Consolidation in Food Retailing and Dairy: implications for farmers and consumers*, prepared by scientists at the University of Missouri's Department of Rural Sociology. The report shows how restructuring has resulted in six global food enterprises spreading themselves downwards and sideways to achieve a domain that stretches right around the planet.

Events in the US and Europe from 1997 to the present day, show the degree to which the large stores are gaining ground through consolidation and buying into every aspect of food production.

In 1997 the top five US food retailers had about one quarter of the country's market. Today those same companies – Kroger, Albertson's, Wal-Mart, Safeway and Ahold USA, a subsidiary of Dutch firm Royal Ahold – account for 42 per cent of that market. This has come about largely as a result of recent acquisitions.

Increasingly, the supermarkets are seeking control over producers through binding contracts and agreements. They seek to source their merchandise from a handful of producers. Kroger, for example, obtains its beef ready-packed from Cargill, while Ahold USA's Stop and Shop outlets obtain their dairy foods from Suiza Foods. Wal-Mart, a more recent entry into the food-retailing business, gets its ready-packed meats from IBP, Farmland and Smithfield.

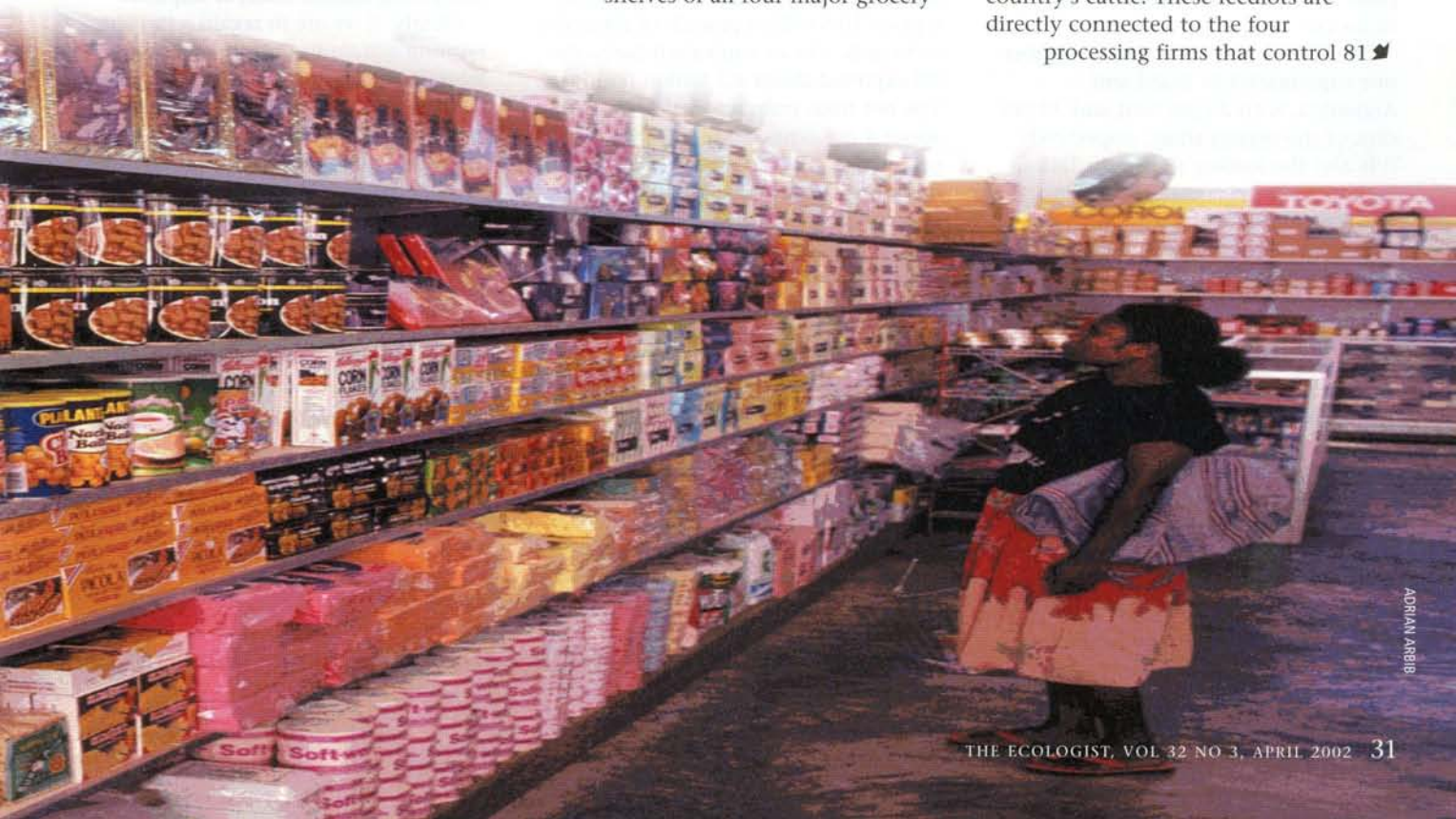
As the supermarket companies tighten their grip on food retailing, so they are forcing the producer to comply with their specific requirements. As the University of Missouri report points out, between 50 and 75 per cent of large retailers' total net profit comes not from the actual sale of produce, but from fees demanded of producers for presentation space, for the display itself and 'pay-to-stay' fees and failure fees. According to *The Tampa Tribune*, \$50,000 would place one jar of speciality pickles on the shelves of all four major grocery

chains in Tampa, Florida. Producers are, in effect, paying for the privilege of having their goods sold.

In a world awash with producers looking for outlets, it's very much win-win for the supermarkets. As the University of Missouri report says, 'most producers now see the retail firms as their consumer'. Inevitably, those producers and small processors who either do not wish or are unable to comply with the supermarkets will find themselves increasingly cut out of the main retailing market.

Constantly battling to expand their interests at the expense of each other through the price war, the big retailers need a global market for purchasing their goods. Here we have a classic situation in which producers who apply strict environmental and health standards are likely to lose out to those who do not. Some economists now question whether, in the light of globalisation, the US needs its farmers. The same also applies to the UK.

Vertical and horizontal consolidation of food retailers in the US has led to the four largest firms sharing the production and processing of as much as half of the country's broiler, turkey and egg sales. And today 20 feedlots in the whole of the US are involved in the production of 50 per cent of all the country's cattle. These feedlots are directly connected to the four processing firms that control 81%



ADRIAN ARBIB

# SUPERMARKETS

per cent of beef processing in the US.

The potential rewards for the supermarkets in their attempts to outdo each other are staggering. In 1999, the US's leading supermarket Kroger acquired Fred Meyer – giving it coast-to-coast coverage. The Ohio-based Kroger now receives 10 cents in every dollar spent in supermarkets across the country.

In terms of food retailing Wal-Mart was nowhere in 1993. Since then it has become second only to Kroger. It was one of the first retailers to use case-ready beef and pork in its stores. Wal-Mart now has a strong presence in Germany and the UK through the acquisition of Wertkauf and Spar Handels and Asda, respectively. Asda now has 14.2 per cent of the UK's food market – practically equal to Sainsbury's market share. Wal-Mart also operates in Argentina, Brazil, Canada and Mexico, and has joint ventures in China and Korea.

Wal-Mart's aggressive expansion into Europe and elsewhere is now being countered by the merger of other major players. In France Carrefour and Promodes have joined forces to become the second largest retailer in the world. *Business Week* (31 August, 1999) observed: 'As Europe's new top dog, Carrefour can use its buying clout to extract deeper discounts from suppliers, undercutting rivals, and accelerating a push towards consolidation in the industry.'

The French giant is now the number-one supermarket in Brazil and Argentina, with 20 per cent and 30 per cent of the market share, respectively. It is also the leading retailer in Taiwan, France, Spain, Portugal, Greece and Belgium. Not to be outdone, Dutch company Ahold has begun acquiring smaller retailers in Europe. It has 28 per cent of the market share in the Netherlands, while its sales in Latin America generate some \$4.5 billion a year. It is also now operating in eastern Europe as well as Scandinavia and in China.

Through its cooperatives, the dairy industry in the US was until recently fairly immune to supermarket control. But, as in the UK with the demise of the Milk Marketing Board, that is all changing. In the US Suiza Foods is the largest milk processor and leading manufacturer and distributor of dairy



Angry farmers protest against supermarket chains by dumping tons of fruit and vegetables on the streets of Aix-en-Provence, southern France.

AP PHOTOS

products. Since 1996 it has bought 39 dairies across the US, as well as Spain's fourth largest dairy – Leche Celta. And through Horizon Organic, in which it has a 13.8 per cent share, it is now entering the UK market.

Farmers are definitely losing out as a result of such mergers in the dairy industry. The University of Missouri report states: '[In 2000] the US imported enough cheese and dairy ingredients to replace 10.6 billion pounds of domestic farm milk. On an equivalent basis, the US exported about 4.3 billion pounds. The net trade imbalance was equal to about 4 per cent of total US production... The pattern is clear – dairy imports are larger than exports and are growing much faster...'

'...Regardless of how we measure the nebulous concept of efficiency, the US is not the low-cost producer of milk in the world. If the dairy lobby is successful in opening up global trade at WTO, we will find most of the remaining 90,000 US dairy farms exiting [the market] rapidly.'

If farmers are to survive the flood of cheap imported foods they will undoubtedly need to create new, alternative markets where the public

will have access to good local food. One solution is to 'go organic'. Sales of organic food are now generating \$5 billion in the US, and these sales are growing by 20 per cent a year. Local production of organic foods may partially solve the problem of price, but the major retailers are already major players in the organic market. Yet again farmers will find themselves competing against cheaper imports.

Clearly, if we are to regain a healthy farming system in the UK – with all the attendant benefits to landscape, soil, drinking water, wildlife and health – we, as the ultimate consumer, must come to appreciate the full implications of cheap food in the supermarkets. The best way we can support sustainable farming and the people who practise it is by insisting on purchasing locally grown food as much as possible. Such local connections between the production and purchase of food will have the salutary effects of keeping land in the hands of farmers rather than agribusinesses, and will enable farmers to move away from the highly industrialised, intensive agriculture that has proved to be so destructive in its use of resources.

**PETER BUNYARD** is science editor of *The Ecologist*.

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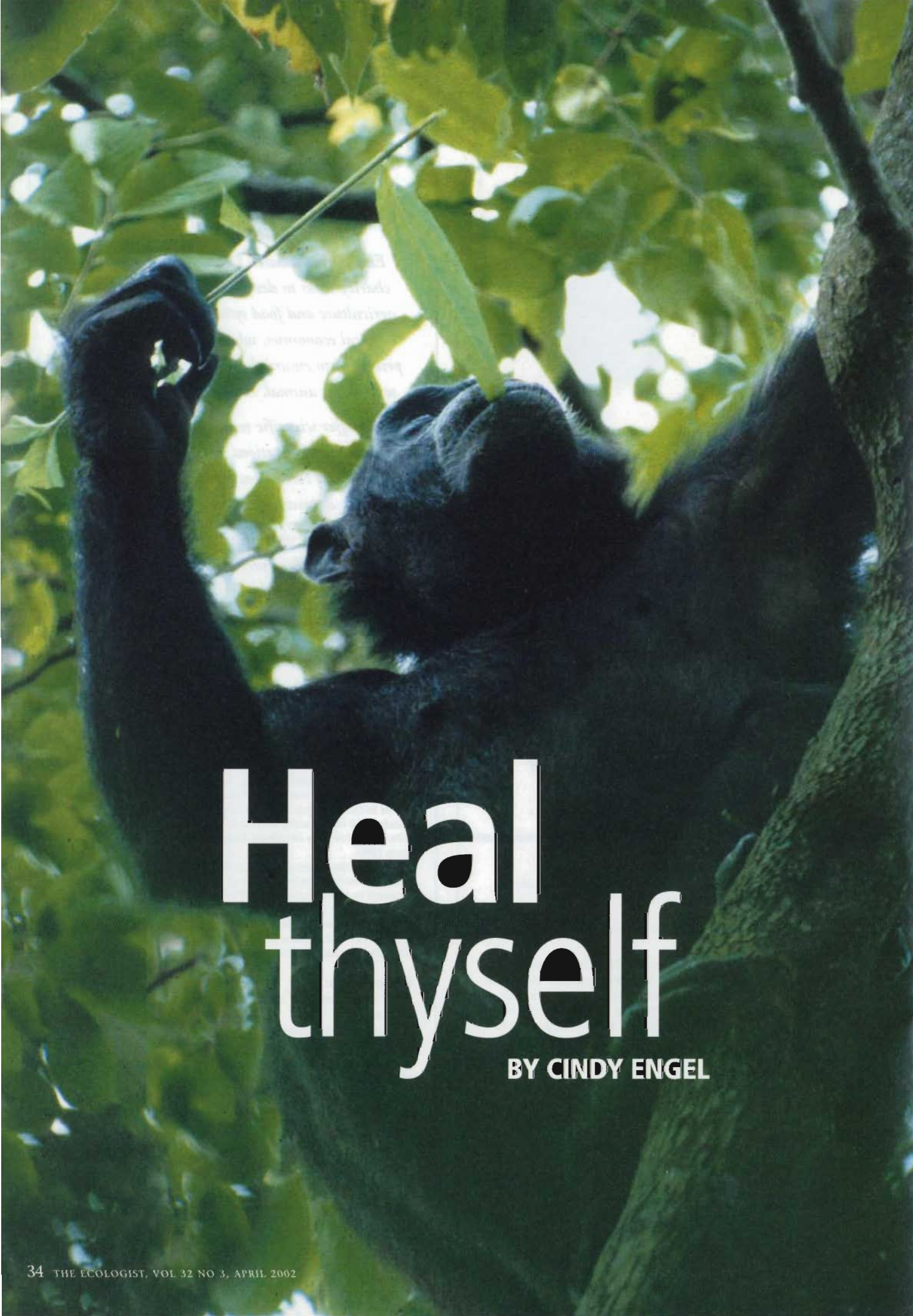
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A photograph of a sloth hanging from a tree branch. The sloth is dark brown and is holding a long, thin green leaf in its mouth. The background is filled with green leaves, creating a dense, natural setting. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the sloth's fur and the vibrant green of the leaves.

# Heal thysel

BY CINDY ENGEL

From dentistry to self-medication, we're only just discovering how much animals enhance and protect their own health. So, what are the ecological implications?

Early one morning in 1972 primatologist Richard Wrangham was transfixed as he watched a chimpanzee in Gombe, Tanzania, carefully assess a leaf with its mouth, pick the leaf, fold it concertina-fashion and swallow it whole. Over the next few years Wrangham saw such leaf swallowing several times – usually in the mornings, and found folded leaves entire on the forest floor which had apparently passed through the gut of chimpanzees undigested. When he tried swallowing one of these leaves himself, Wrangham found the practice disgusting. It was akin to swallowing folded sand-paper. Why would chimpanzees do this to themselves – and on empty stomachs?

Years of research by Wrangham revealed that chimpanzees only ever swallowed rough, hairy leaves. The leaves act as a scour, scraping through the gut any loose intestinal parasites. An individual ape may swallow anywhere from one to 56 such leaves in one bout. Although it is extremely rare behaviour, it is more common at the beginning of the rainy season when worm infestation is greatest. In nearly all instances of leaf swallowing, clear indications of worm infestation have been evident. The apes appear to gain immediate relief from the pain of parasite infection. To date, chimpanzees, bonobos and gorillas throughout Africa have been seen to swallow at least 34 different species of bristly, hairy leaves. The behaviour demonstrably reduces both nodule worm and tapeworm infestations.<sup>1</sup>

It has been observed that chimpanzees also employ chemical medicines for dealing with the discomfort of intestinal parasites. Michael Huffman of Kyoto University has noticed that chimpanzees suffering from diarrhoea, lethargy, weight loss and nematode infection suck the bitter pith of *vernonia amygdalina*. The plant is so toxic it is called 'goat killer' by local people. It is this same toxicity which is harmful to parasites, and is used by local herbalists in the treatment of intestinal parasites and stomach aches. Laboratory tests show the bitter-pith contains numerous anthelmintic, antiamebic, antitumour and antibiotic compounds. Although 'bitter-pith chewing' is extremely rare, sick chimpanzees recover within 20 and 24 hours of deploying the habit, and show a corresponding drop in the numbers of parasite eggs in their faeces.

Huffman was intrigued as to why the chimpanzees carefully discarded all but the inner pith of this plant. He discovered that the discarded parts killed browsing

goats. It appeared that the wild chimpanzees had not only found a medicine that would help them feel better, but that they also knew how to avoid the more deadly parts of that plant. Huffman concluded that the animals clearly had a better understanding of their local 'pharmacy' than domestic animals.<sup>2</sup>


#### Nature's medicine cupboard

Herbalists have long known that many of the defensive compounds found inside plants make effective herbal cures. For them the natural environment provides a seemingly endless supply of potential medicines. However, the idea that animals might also use herbs (or anything else) to self-medicate has until recently been dismissed as romantic and anthropomorphic.

However, as the examples above suggest, scientists from a range of disciplines are now discovering that animals do use plant defences to their own advantage. Not only that, but animals use many other natural resources for healthcare too.<sup>3</sup>

This desire and effort to self-medicate makes a very important point about animals' attitude to living: namely, that they are concerned about the *quality* of life. This is not, perhaps, quite what the owners of the vast factory farms would want to hear. However, the fact remains that an animal has to survive in as healthy a condition as possible in order to successfully compete with others and to avoid predators. The result is a world full of animals actively avoiding, preventing and curing injury, disease, parasite infection, poisoning, stress and pain.

Animals need no conscious understanding of their actions. The degree of their awareness and/or intention will vary according to the neurological complexity of each species – just as it does for other behaviours. They need simply to link action with consequence – to feel the *effects* of their actions and make an association. This is something even the simplest organism can do.

Insects, for example, make good use of plants' defences against fungal and bacterial attack. Gall wasps choose to lay their eggs near those oak leaves which have the highest tannin concentrations. They thus gain protection from infection for their own emerging larvae.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, when egg-laying the spotted cucumber beetle leaves its host corn plant and seeks out squash, gourd, or cucumber plants so as to harvest their bitter defensive compounds or cucurbitacins, 

# ANIMAL SELF-MEDICATION

which it then passes to its own eggs. The eggs and hatchling larvae are thereby protected from both predators and soil fungi.<sup>5</sup>

Even attempts at biological pest control in agriculture are thwarted by an insect's ability to utilise plant defences. Efforts to kill the tobacco hornworm, an insect that feeds specifically on solanum plants like tobacco and tomato, by spraying the plants with a lethal bacterium (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) are undermined by the hornworm's consumption of large amounts of the plant's antibacterial alkaloid nicotine. Importantly, this suggests that our attempts to deter herbivorous insect pests by breeding plants containing greater concentrations of toxic compounds may be fundamentally flawed and even counterproductive, as the toxins can actually be used to the pest's advantage.<sup>6</sup>

The woolly bear caterpillar of the tiger moth is parasitised by tachinid flies, which inject their eggs into the unlucky caterpillars. The fly larvae develop inside the caterpillar's abdomen, feeding off its fat reserves

and eventually taking up the whole body cavity. Finally, the larvae emerge by making a hole in the caterpillar's cuticle wall. When studied under laboratory conditions most caterpillars, quite understandably, die from this experience. But when Rick Karban and his colleagues at University California Davis observed caterpillars in outdoor field cages, they noticed that the survival rate of parasitised caterpillars was far higher.

Given a choice of plants, healthy caterpillars preferred to feed on lupine, while parasitised caterpillars preferred to feed on hemlock. Put simply, whether they were infected by parasites or not affected their choice of diet, and the change in diet improved their chances of survival. Although hemlock (known to contain at least eight alkaloids) does not kill the parasite, it somehow helps the caterpillar survive the infection. What this clearly demonstrates is the importance of studying animals



HELEGA GWINNER

under natural conditions where they are able to make health-enhancing dietary choices.<sup>7</sup>

Some birds use herbs to enhance the health of their chicks. During nesting time male European starlings collect a selection of aromatic herbs to bring back to the nest. In north America, starlings preferentially select wild carrot, yarrow, agrimony, elm-leaved and rough golden rod and fleabane even when they are not the most common plants nearby. The most obvious characteristic of these herbs is that they are all highly aromatic. They also contain greater concentrations of more volatile oils than aromatic plants close at hand which are not selected.

Back at the nest the fresh herbs are woven into the nest matrix and topped up even as the chicks are hatching. The benefits of these herbs to the chicks are clear. Chicks in herb nests have a significantly greater chance of surviving into the next season than chicks in nests from which the herbs have been removed.<sup>8</sup>

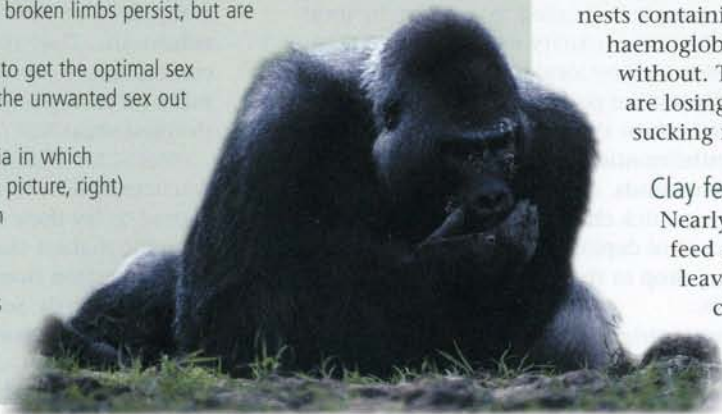
The chicks don't eat or actively rub against these pungent herbs. What is thought to happen is that the leaves' volatile oils fumigate the nest. When the herbs are removed from nests chicks suffer a greater degree of mite infestation. More specifically, chicks in nests containing wild carrot have higher haemoglobin levels than those without. This again suggests they are losing less blood to blood-sucking mites.

## Clay feats

Nearly all vertebrates that feed on fruits, seeds and leaves also eat clay. Elephants clear and mine huge areas of forest to feed on the clay subsoils below. In Africa

## BOX1: TASTES OF THEIR OWN MEDICINE

- Elephants bury their dead and attempt to bury the dead of other species too
- Tortoises mine for calcium to keep their carapaces in good order
- Chimpanzees can become depressed if they don't get enough social support at times of weaning or bereavement
- Rats self-medicate morphine against emotional stress but not against physical pain
- Chimpanzees will readily take bitter medicines when sick but avoid them when well
- Wild animals return repeatedly to get high on natural plant intoxicants
- Like us, wild animals readily succumb to the easy life if given the opportunity: junk-food monkeys, garbage-can bears and bin-raiding foxes suffer the same diseases of modern life as humans
- Monkeys steal charcoal from kilns to eat and detoxify their diet of poisonous leaves
- Rumours of elephant graveyards, lemming suicides and goats and birds making 'plaster casts' of clay over broken limbs persist, but are unrecorded by science
- Parent zebra finches are so determined to get the optimal sex ratio of their brood that they will push the unwanted sex out of the nest to its death
- Gorillas in captivity get a form of bulimia in which they vomit and re-ingest their food (see picture, right)
- In laboratory tests mice treat their own malarial symptoms by self-medicating with quinine, and parrots avoid being poisoned by consuming clay that binds to toxins and prevents them entering the blood



BBC WILD

chimpanzees, rhinoceroses, giraffes, and buffalo feed on the clay-rich soil of termite mounds. In Peru up to 900 parrots from 21 species and 100 large macaws gather each day to feed on the riverbanks of Madre de Dios, biting off and swallowing thumb-sized chunks of orange clay.<sup>9</sup>

Clays can bind mycotoxins (fungal toxins), endotoxins (internal toxins secreted by pathogens), man-made toxic chemicals, bacteria and viruses. They also protect the lining of the gut, act as an antacid and absorb excess fluids – thereby curbing diarrhoea. They are, in other words, naturally occurring multi-purpose medicines.

In 1999 the hypothesis that animals eat clay in order to deactivate poisons was tested experimentally by James Gilardi and a team of scientists at University California Davis. First, they established that seeds eaten by macaws contain toxic plant alkaloids. Then they fed one group of macaws a mixture of a harmless plant alkaloid (quinidine) plus clay. A second group of macaws was fed just the quinidine without any clay. Several hours later the macaws that had eaten the quinidine with clay had 60 per cent less alkaloid in their blood than the control group. Clay was indeed shown to prevent the movement of plant alkaloids into the blood.

What surprised the scientists was that the clay remained in the gut of the macaws for over 12 hours, meaning that a single bout of clay-eating or geophagy could protect the birds for quite some time. The scientists suspect that as well as preventing plant toxins entering the blood, clay also lines the gut and protects it from the caustic chemical erosion caused by seed toxins. As macaws have no diarrhoeic response to toxins, the consumption of clay may be an essential part of their diet – allowing them to successfully utilise foods that other animals are unable to tolerate.<sup>10</sup>

### Healthy minds

Perhaps most amazingly of all, animals also self-medicate psychological ills. Laboratory experiments show that mice actively self-medicate feelings of anxiety. In one example one group of mice received electric shocks to the feet ('acute physical stress') while another group was forced to witness another mouse getting a foot shock ('acute emotional stress'). Both groups of mice had free access to morphine, which induces an indifference to pain rather than blocking the sensation. Only the mice exposed to emotional stress self-administered the

## BOX 2: IMPLICATIONS OF ANIMAL SELF-MEDICATION

### CONSERVATION

- Habitat conservation should include the availability of 'medicines' as well as nutrients
- Reintroduction programmes should consider the need for animals to learn about their natural health-maintenance strategies in the environment to which they will be expected to survive
- Captive breeding programmes may need to allow animals access to their health-maintenance substrates/ strategies as reproduction is often linked to chemical ecology
- Areas of unmanaged wilderness can be seen as potential libraries of information for sustainable health strategies/ substrates
- Biodiversity is important for sustaining animal health, as we do not yet know the needs of each species in this regard

### FARMING

- Pest control may be achieved by sabotaging the pest's natural methods of health maintenance
- Livestock health may be enhanced by allowing animals self-administrative access to their most important 'medicines'
- Welfare of livestock can be greatly improved by allowing animals self-administrative access to substances that moderate stress and pain
- Simple, cheap, home-grown remedies reduce farmers' over-reliance on drug-based health management
- Biodiversity of pastures is vital to livestock health as 'medicines' may be rare or rarely used plant species; the meaning of 'free range' needs to cover access to natural medicinal compounds
- The distinction between nutrition and medicine in livestock husbandry needs to be addressed
- The attitude towards 'toxic' plants and 'weeds' needs to be addressed – some are medicinal

### LESSONS FOR HUMAN HEALTH

- Health is interdependent with environment
- Prevention is better than cure
- Unprocessed natural food (eg, fruit, vegetable, game or free-range products) is the best means of acquiring the biodiversity advantages of plant medicinal compounds in our diet

morphine.<sup>11</sup> A similar pattern is seen with emotionally stressed rats and cocaine self-administration.<sup>12</sup>

Scientists in the Ukraine observed stressed rats learning to self-administer strobe lighting at frequencies that changed electrical activity in the brain and thus soothed heart rhythm and lowered blood pressure. The rats thereby ingeniously calmed themselves down, and reduced the likelihood of heart attack.<sup>13</sup> A feeling of anxiety is clearly unpleasant, and it is surely the animal's desire to feel better that drives this kind of self-modulation.

### Pecking order

The welfare of intensively-farmed animals is a contentious issue. Any objective measure of their suffering is useful in the debate. A team of veterinary scientists at Bristol University has used chickens' ability to self-medicate as proof that they suffer pain.

In today's industrial farms broiler chickens are artificially selected to grow extremely quickly. Food is turned into meat at the expense of bone growth. The birds' legs are, therefore, not strong enough to support their weight. The chickens frequently suffer broken leg

bones, yet receive no analgesics. Lame birds go off their food and remain still – unwilling to walk even to the water trough. However, month-old birds can rapidly learn to select feed which contains the analgesic carprofen. The amount of painkiller the birds eat increases with the severity of lameness. Carprofen tastes slightly peppery and can cause gastrointestinal upset. Healthy birds tend to avoid the drugged feed, which suggests that they find it unpleasant – a further indicator that the lame birds prefer the distasteful food for its analgesic properties.<sup>14</sup>

Animals don't limit their healthcare resources to chemical and physical materials in their environment. They also use each other. When seriously wounded, group-living blue tangs (Caribbean coral fish), like many mammals, leave the group and stop feeding. At the same time, they increase their visits to 'cleaner stations', where they allow wrasse fish to feed off dead and infected tissue. After the injury is completely covered by a scab the coral fish resume normal feeding and reduce their visits to the cleaners. Researchers are confident that the help they get is beneficial, as even after deep wounding

# ANIMAL SELF-MEDICATION

of subcutaneous tissue there are no visible signs of scarring.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, elephants frequently cover or pack the wounds of other elephants with mud, and will pull out spears and darts with their trunks.<sup>16</sup>

Unsurprisingly, primates practise what we might consider more 'advanced' medicine. For example, one captive capuchin monkey called Alice was wounded by other monkeys so badly that she required stitches. She groomed the area intensively for days. This was not unusual in itself, but she then took a stick, and chewed one end of it to make a brush for applying syrup (supplied as food) to the wound area. She did not use tools to groom any other part of her body. Nor did she apply any substance other than syrup. Syrup, a strong sugar solution, is antibacterial (strong sugar solutions explode bacterial cells) and an excellent ointment for soothing wounds. Honey, a natural correlate of sugar, is commonly used in traditional medicine for the same purpose. It is recommended by western medics as a first-aid treatment for wounds.

Alice has never applied syrup to her body at any other time, but only when wounded. A few years later Alice's infant received a severe wound to the head from other monkeys. Alice not only licked and groomed the wound. She also made a tool for applying syrup to the wound – just as she had done for herself years before.<sup>17</sup>

Chimpanzees even practise rudimentary dentistry. One captive chimpanzee was observed carefully inspecting the mouth of another. It then wrenched out a rotten tooth with a simple wooden lever she had made herself.<sup>18</sup> As a consequence, anthropologists have proposed that there are evolutionary continuities from animal to human medicine.<sup>19</sup>

It is evident from these and the many other examples that have accrued over the past two decades that animals use chemical, physical and social elements of their environment in ways that enhance both their own health and that of their offspring. Animal self-



Not as sick as a parrot: Chestnut-fronted macaw at a clay lick, Madre de Dios, Peru

medication would seem, therefore, to be an integral part of ecological dynamics. This concept of animals actively managing their health contrasts strongly with the commonly held perception of animals passively enduring the ravages of pathogens, poisons and injuries that come their way and relying exclusively on their immune responses.

Acknowledging the importance of animal self-medication to animal health will affect the way we approach aspects of conservation, livestock farming, pest control, pet and zoo animal husbandry and animal and even human health research (see Box 2 on page 37). However, it is clear that we need a better understanding of the processes involved before we are able to apply such knowledge. We should be cautious of attempting to apply our limited knowledge too soon.

It may not be wise to simply take what we see animals using in the wild and force it on them in captivity. Under free-ranging management systems cattle, for example, dig down and lick at

clay sub-soils. In the laboratory clay successfully binds and deactivates many of the pathogens that affect bovine health (bovine coronavirus and rotavirus, for example). Clay also increases feed-conversion efficiency by up to 20 per cent by reducing gastrointestinal problems in cattle. But although clay sounds wonderful, the answer is not necessarily to include it in cattle feed. Like all good things, clay can be harmful in excess or when administered inappropriately.<sup>20</sup>

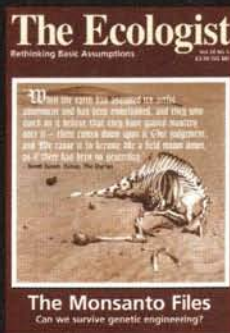
Understanding animal self-medication requires a completely new perspective – interactive health management. This means that it may be better to provide clay for individual cattle to use as and when required. This is not the same as allowing sick animals to 'fend for themselves', which is tantamount to neglect.

Clearly more research is urgently needed. By understanding the greater complexity of each species' interactive health-management strategies, a truly sustainable animal healthcare programme could be within reach ■

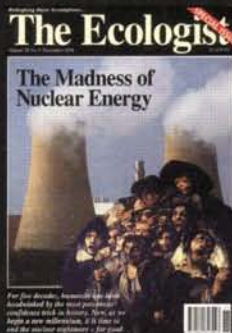
**CINDY ENGEL PhD** is author of *Wild Health: how animals keep themselves well and what we can learn from them* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, ISBN 7249 4658).

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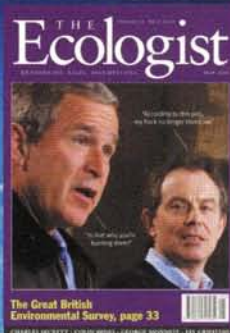
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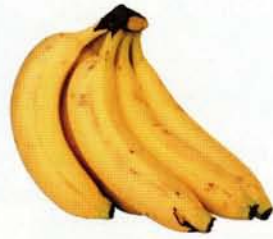
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# An unappeeling industry

BY JEREMY SMITH



Fairtrade fortnight may recently have finished, but the wider battle lasts all year. To demonstrate the need for more Fairtrade awareness, we reveal some unpleasant truths about the banana industry.

**101** uses for a banana: number 73. Peel banana. Eat yellow white flesh. Lie skin on windowsill of bedroom and allow to dry. Wait several days. Take newly dried banana and attempt to smoke in vainglorious teenage-style attempt to get high. Fail. Every time. Curse Donovan for not including clearer instructions in 1960s dopey hit

*Mellow Yellow.*

Number 74. Become one of world's top tennis players. Wow crowd with daring glimpses of torso as one changes heavily branded cotton shirt. Chomp bananas in ostentatiously simian fashion between sets to restore lost energy. Leave skins for ball boy to dry later.

Number 75. Stand for 11-12 hours a day sweating in tropical heat, wearing ill-fitting rubber gloves and rubber apron, hands sunk constantly in a chemical-filled tank. Scrub pesticide-covered bananas to remove toxic residues before the fruit arrives on western supermarket shelves...

It's all a question of perspective. As we amble down the strip-lit hedgerows of the supermarket aisle, those gleaming yellow bananas stand out – their unblemished skins a symbol of purity, health and energy. We too can have that torso.

Unlike Maria. When her baby was born, his head was four times bigger than his body. Her husband Juan, a Costa Rican banana plantation worker, had routinely handled the highly toxic and now banned chemical DBCP during the course of his work. 'I couldn't even hold him because it seemed to make things worse,' Maria says, looking at her deformed child. 'It's the worst thing that can happen to anyone.

There are no words to tell what life is like.' It's doubtful Maria knows what Wimbledon is.

A tragic exception perhaps? The result of one careless worker not following

stringent safety precautions? If only. A 1999 study by the National University of Costa Rica found that women working in packing plants for the country's banana industry suffer double the average rate of leukaemia and birth defects. And 20 per cent of male banana workers in the country have been left sterile. Could it possibly have something to do with the amount of pesticides they unwittingly consume during the course of their work – eight times the global average at a staggering 4kg per person, per year?

## Yellow peril

There are thousands of people toiling in conditions like these across the globe. As a result, bananas remain the world's most popular fruit with over 86 million tonnes of them produced annually. The European Union is the world's biggest importer, with its average citizen eating around 10kg a year – that's two and a half times as much as your average Costa Rican consumes in pesticide. In the UK the banana has been the most popular fruit since 1998, when it overtook the apple. Annual sales of around £750m make the banana the third most popular product sold through major supermarkets. It is outsold only by those other two essentials of modern life, petrol and lottery tickets. Yellow gold, black gold, fools' gold.

In short, it's a very big business and, like all big businesses in today's global economy, it is dominated by giant multinationals. Three are particularly prominent – Chiquita, Dole and Del Monte, who between them control

approximately 60 per cent of the world market. Until the 1990s these three banana behemoths were making huge profits. However, over the last decade, the shape of the world food industry has changed. The power and profits now ripen in the hands of the giant supermarkets.

The chain of banana production now looks something like this. Too many bananas are being produced for export. So the price paid to producers has collapsed, even though when we go shopping we are still paying the same price. Meanwhile the supermarkets' 'quality' means they insist upon large, blemish-free bananas, which in turn means even more dependence on the sort of chemicals mentioned above. The fact that this has nothing to do with actually producing the best tasting banana seems to have somehow passed the retailers by.

In response to this power shift the big banana companies have done the only thing they know how – reduce the wages and benefits of plantation workers. Many of those who have attempted to join independent trade unions in order to fight for a fairer deal have been persecuted. As a result, a Costa Rican banana worker who earned an already paltry \$250 a month in 1993, was earning just \$187 by 1997. By 2001, many workers' wages had sunk as low as \$160.

As their wages went down, so did workers' rights, with women suffering most. Describing working conditions on Latin American banana plantations in 1998, Gilbert Bermudez Umaña, a

## THE SHADY BUNCH

**Del Monte** – In Guatemala on 13 October 1999, the day before the local union was due to take strike action against a programme of enforced cuts, a group of armed men forced the union's leaders to call off the strike and resign from their positions. They were made to flee to Guatemala City or risk losing their lives. In autumn of the same year the company sacked nearly 5,000 plantation workers in Costa Rica overnight, then offered to re-hire them on much lower wages and with many less benefits.

**Dole** – Is the last remaining corporate defendant in a lawsuit filed on behalf of 26,000 banana workers worldwide who claim they were sterilised through exposure to the highly dangerous pesticide DBCP. It has been alleged that: 'After there was virtually indisputable evidence that DBCP had sterilised men in every plant [where] it had been manufactured in the US, and after the product was banned, Dole decided to use [it] without telling its workers or providing them with any more protection than is afforded by a T-shirt.'

**Chiquita** – In its former incarnation as the United Fruit Company its behaviour in Latin America gave the world the term 'Banana Republic'. In its most recent corporate responsibility report, even the company admits that it was known in the past as the 'octopus'. However, there are encouraging signs that it is changing (possibly because of it being on the brink of bankruptcy). Last June the company signed a workers' rights framework agreement with the Coordination of Latin American Banana Workers' Unions and the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations.

**Noboa** – The Noboa group is a huge private conglomerate based in Ecuador, which publishes no accounts. On 25 February 2002, 1,400 workers went on strike, fed up with exploitation which included very low wages and non-payment of overtime. They have since formed the first banana workers' union in Ecuador since the 1970s.

**Fyffes** – known as 'the Coca Cola of the banana industry' because it tries to have as few direct employees as possible. Wages and living conditions for the Central American migrant workers are some of the worst in the industry.

former plantation worker and now deputy co-ordinator of the Coordination of Latin American Banana Workers' Unions, wrote: 'Women are constantly exposed to sexual harassment by their supervisors, even by their own male colleagues. The woman worker has to put up with the attitude of her superiors for fear of being left without work. Several labour rights relating to women workers are not respected in many banana companies, such as the right to maternity leave and to regular healthcare. They are also not allowed to freely join a trade union. If a woman does manage to join the union, she will suffer persecution in the form of, for example, being assigned heavier or worse-paid jobs.'

### Top banana

However, thankfully there is now a way to combat this dangerous race to the bottom. It comes in the shape of the Fairtrade banana, which is raising standards, wages and welfare as fast as you or I can buy it. It is a little less shiny, costs a fraction more, but tastes a whole lot better for all concerned.

Arturo Jiménez Gómez used to work for Chiquita, but 20 years ago the

company pulled out of the part of Costa Rica in which he worked. In order to survive he and his co-workers founded a co-operative, which they called Coopetrabatur. After many years, Coopetrabatur achieved Fairtrade registration. It is now the major supplier of Fairtrade bananas to Europe.

The benefits to the co-operative's workers and their community are instantly apparent. Since it began operating along Fairtrade principles, Coopetrabatur has stopped using paraquat and other herbicides, reduced chemical fertilisers, started recycling all plastic waste, cleared up a toxic rubbish pit and begun replanting trees along local canals.

Where in the past workers who attempted to unionise would be blacklisted, threatened and on occasion even killed, the co-operative is well-run, open and democratic. Recently wages have risen considerably. Furthermore, because the Fairtrade price covers not

only increased salaries, but also a 'social premium' which is set aside for community projects, workers have been able to afford repairs to their housing, and to employ the service of an agronomist and five environmental specialists.

Elia Ruth Zúñiga, who works in the co-operative's packing plant, explains the benefits: 'With Fairtrade our salary has greatly increased, so that we have a better life for our families. We have water, we have electricity and we have a house given to us by the company. Everything here was in a bad way due to contamination. Rivers didn't have any fish. Due to chemicals we were losing everything. Water was really contaminated. Now it's different. We don't use chemicals.' Elia has one wish, so that the situation can

continue to improve. She says:

'I would like the markets to get bigger in Europe. That would be great for us.'

If the market for Fairtrade bananas continues to grow, the benefits will grow too.

More producers, seeing what has happened at co-operatives like Coopetrabatur, will be encouraged to follow suit. As the workforce grows, so too can the number of products available. Multinational corporations will be further moved to adopt similar principles in order to regain lost market share. Governments, always happier following a trend than setting one, will be encouraged to clean up their own act and urge those they deal with to do likewise. But most importantly, the many thousands of people around the world working in near slave-like conditions will be given the opportunity, like Arturo, 'to dream of being free, to dream of being looked upon as a human being, not an object'.

One day, maybe, Fairtrade will last longer than a fortnight ■

**JEREMY SMITH** is assistant editor of *The Ecologist*.

[www.theecologist.org](http://www.theecologist.org)

# MEDIA WATCH

To start their new monthly column, David Edwards and David Cromwell expose the corporate agenda dictating BBC policy.

One consequence of the Martin Sixsmith-Jo Moore-Stephen Byers farce is the way that it shows just how closely knit government, the mass media and big business are in the UK.

Prior to taking up his appointment as director of communications at the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, Sixsmith worked for the former corporate giant GEC Marconi. Previously he worked for the former social security minister Harriet Harman. And before that he was, of course, a BBC correspondent in Brussels, Geneva, eastern Europe, Moscow and Washington.

In an honest society, the existence of such rapidly revolving doors between government, big business and the 'free press' would give rise to serious concern about just how independent, neutral and fair our media system is. But we do not live in an honest society in the UK.

Up until 31 January anyone concerned about the erosion of press freedom in the UK might have thought of complaining to former Press Complaints Commission (PCC) chairman Lord Wakeham. Margaret Thatcher's one-time energy secretary might well have been rather busy, however. Wakeham was, after all, director of 16 companies, including the Bristol & West building society, Rothschilds Bank, warship manufacturer Vosper Thornycroft and Enron. (Incidentally, as Energy Secretary in 1990, Wakeham helped privatise the UK electricity industry and gave consent for the defunct US energy company to build Britain's largest private power plant.)

In 1997 and 1998, Wakeham had two meetings with Enron executives in which he suggested how the company could obtain favourable press coverage. According to an Enron executive, the meetings paid off: 'It did have some effect. The type of stories that started to come out changed.'

Alternatively, our complainant could have gone straight to the top and the chairman of the BBC, for example. Alas BBC chairmen are themselves traditionally appointed by government ministers. In 1980, George Howard, a

friend of the then Home Secretary Willie Whitelaw, was appointed BBC chairman – specifically because Margaret Thatcher was opposed to the Liberal Mark Bonham-Carter being promoted as vice-chairman. In 1983 Howard was succeeded by Stuart Young, whose brother Lord Young joined Thatcher's cabinet the following year. Young was followed in 1986 by Marmaduke Hussey, who the then-Tory party chairman Norman Tebbit said was appointed 'to get in there [the BBC] and sort the place out, and in days not months.'

The BBC's new chairman Gavyn Davies was touted in 1997 as the next Governor of the Bank of England. Until joining the BBC, Davies, who is estimated to have a personal fortune of £150 million, was chief economist of global bank Goldman Sachs. Davies's predecessor, Sir Christopher Bland, left the BBC to become chairman of British Telecom. Feeling dizzy yet?

Both Davies and BBC director-general Greg Dyke are not just Labour supporters but have given money to the party. In Davies's case the links are even more intimate: his wife runs Gordon Brown's office; his children served as pageboy and bridesmaid at Gordon Brown's wedding; and Tony Blair has stayed at the Davies holiday home. As *Observer* columnist Richard Ingrams has written: 'It would be hard to find a better example of a Tony crony.'

But inversely just as the BBC is something of a fiefdom for the government of the day, so the current administration is packed with journalists. In Downing Street there is Alastair Campbell (*Mirror*), Phil Bassett (*Times* and *Financial Times*), David Bradshaw (*Mirror*), Andrew Adonis (*Observer*) and Fiona Millar (*Express*). At the foreign office John Williams (*Mirror*) is in charge of media issues and is aided by David Shaw (London's *Evening Standard*). Sheree Dodd of the *Mirror* is senior spin doctor at the Department for Work and Pensions. Peter Hooley (*Express*) is senior press officer at Defra, the food and environment department, and Sian Jarvis

(*GMTV*) is director of communications at the Department of Health. Peter McMahon (*Mirror*, *Scotsman*), meanwhile, worked for ex-First Minister Henry McLeish at the Scottish Office.

We at *Media Lens* believe that these links between big business, big-business media, and big-business-friendly governments and political parties are now so intimate and thoroughgoing that the mass-media system constitutes a form of revolving-door totalitarianism. State-corporate unfriendly facts, views, thinkers and writers are subject to a *de facto* ban and kept far from public view. We will present some of the more shocking examples of this silent suppression to *Ecologist* readers in the months to come.

We offered essentially this view –

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'One of the problems with the corporate mass-media system is that it is made up of big businesses'

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previously described as 'total bollocks' by Jon Snow of Channel 4 news, and as 'anti-journalistic' by the BBC's Andrew Marr – to Richard Sambrook, director of news at the BBC. We suggested to him that BBC reporting was profoundly distorted by its lack of independence from government influence and ideology – particularly where foreign policy was concerned. We argued that the BBC's (and ITN's) scandalous lack of coverage of the mass deaths of Afghan refugees during the US's current offensive has added great strength to the argument that our 'free press' is a sham.

Sambrook was kind enough to respond thus: 'I totally reject your assertion that our coverage is determined by our support of western institutions of power. From early in the conflict we have resisted any pressure from Downing Street about how to cover the story. We made our independence clear, publicly stating that "we believe that the

provision of independent and impartial news is a fundamental part of a free society and the democratic process"... I can assure you that we do not make editorial decisions on the basis of what will please the government.<sup>4</sup>

It's easy to imagine that this view must be true, if only because everyone seems to agree with it. Certainly, an opposing view is unlikely ever to be heard. Also, it seems likely to be true because Sambrook is a highly respected and powerful authority figure. We've been trained to trust authority. Alas, it is not true. Instead, overall, BBC performance (like that of the mass media generally) constitutes a form of sophisticated state-corporate propaganda which promotes powerful interests.

John Pilger explains the reality: '[The BBC's] terms of reference are so narrow and so integrated into a consensus view, the prevailing wisdom, the establishment view – whatever you want to call it –, that it is a form of propaganda. If you turn on the BBC television news, the way the news agendas are presented is something that is simply an extension... of an established, an almost accredited point of view.'<sup>5</sup>

The myth of BBC objectivity is exposed by the briefest of glances at the historical record. Leaked minutes of one of the BBC's weekly Review Board meetings during the Falklands war show that BBC executives directed that the weight of the corporation's news coverage should be concerned 'primarily with government statements of policy'. An impartial style was felt to be 'an unnecessary irritation'.<sup>6</sup>

BBC correspondent John Simpson was initially promoted with spectacular speed to political editor and, in 1980, to presenter of *The Nine O'Clock News*. *The Guardian's* Oliver Burkeman notes that Simpson's rise came to an end when he compiled a report on the Falklands war which appeared to suggest that UK foreign policy had invited the Argentinean invasion: 'Downing Street made calls,' Burkeman wrote. 'Three days later he was taken off the air. It was 1988 before he returned from the wilderness to a role as a foreign affairs specialist.'<sup>7</sup>

In 1997, the BBC's *Newsnight* editor Peter Horrocks also hinted at how the BBC shackles public debate within narrow limits. Horrocks said: 'Our job should not be to quarrel with the purpose of policy, but to question its implementation.'<sup>8</sup>

One of the problems with the

corporate mass-media system is that it is made up of big businesses. As anyone who has worked for a big corporation know the number-one rule is not to criticise the business in front of customers. After all, media businesses do not spend millions honing and enhancing their brand name and logos only to hand airspace, cyberspace or newsprint over for someone to expose the extent to which these companies are betraying the public. *Media Lens*

has personal experience of the extent to which the media are reluctant to allow contributors to communicate their criticisms to the public.

Following the screening of *The Dispossessed*, a BBC *Correspondent* documentary on the plight of Afghan refugees (BBC2, 20 January, 2002), *Media Lens* responded to an invitation at the end of the programme to post emails to its director.

This is what we sent: 'I was deeply impressed by the courage and compassion of your film. It was extremely heartening to see the people of Afghanistan, including the Taliban, presented as human beings...

'On 9 January, *The Guardian* reported that 100 refugees were dying every day at Maslakh refugee camp, west of Herat... *The Guardian* reported that starving and dying villagers in Bonavash were eating grass in a desperate attempt to survive. Yet there have been literally no reports on any of this on the BBC or ITN News so far this year.

'I noticed in the invitation to submit questions to you that the BBC talked of the war in the simple past tense, even though bombing is continuing. Apart from your film, there has been very little coverage of the suffering of the Afghan people – a tiny percentage of that afforded to the US victims of 11 September. The suffering of the Afghan people is a terrible tragedy.



'Sincerest thanks for the humanity of your film. Let's hope it helps bring some relief to the people you met.'<sup>9</sup>

Note that the email was not black and white. It challenged the BBC's overall performance, but also complimented the film. The implied criticism, however, was apparently too much to tolerate for the BBC editors.

This is the version of our email that appeared on the *Correspondent* website: 'I was deeply impressed by the courage and compassion of your film. It was extremely heartening to see the people of Afghanistan, including the Taliban, presented as human beings. The suffering of the Afghan people is a terrible tragedy. Sincerest thanks for the humanity of your film. Let's hope it helps bring some relief to the people you met.'<sup>10</sup>

This is a microcosm of mass media performance in the 21st century. On issue after issue, the first email is, as it were, replaced by the second. This is what 'freedom of information' means in a world dominated by massive corporations and state power. After polite complaints from *Media Lens* to the site and to Richard Sambrook, the email was eventually restored (approximately) to its original form by 25 January.

*David Cromwell and David Edwards are co-editors of media watchdog Media Lens. Sign up for free Media Alerts at [www.medialens.org](http://www.medialens.org)*



## BOMBING AFGHANISTAN... TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**William Blum** wonders what Washington's 'war against terrorism' will achieve apart from the extension of the US military's presence across the globe.

There was surprisingly little protest in the US against its government's bombing of Afghanistan. This was in part a measure of how the events of 11 September overwhelmed people, as well as a result of the suddenly expanded police powers that decreed zero tolerance toward non-believers. It was also due to the fact that many people felt that whatever horrors the bombs were causing, they were getting rid of some really nasty anti-US terrorists.

Let's have a closer look at that. Thousands of non-combatants were killed in Afghanistan by US bombs. This was besides the many others labeled 'terrorists' solely because of who they were thought to be associating with or in which community they were found when the bombs fell. And the daily counts of Afghan fatalities don't include those who died later from their bomb injuries, or because hospitals were bombed or because access to food was shut down. Nor do they include those who died from cold and hunger after becoming refugees because their homes were destroyed. The final body count will also ignore the inevitable victims of cluster bombs-turned-landmines and those who will die more slowly from depleted-uranium-caused sicknesses.

It is eminently safe to say that the total of innocent Afghan victims has by now easily exceeded the 3,000 who died in the US on 11 September.

This is the height of irony. It also creates new landmarks for international law, justice and humanity.

But apart from the statistics for fatalities, there is this question: how many of the victims ever took part in a terrorist act against the US?

We'll never know for sure, but a modest guess would be a number in the very low single digits. Terrorist acts don't happen very often after all, and are usually carried out by a handful of men. Of all those killed by the US in Afghanistan, were any of them among those few handfuls of terrorists who

were responsible for the events of 11 September – most of whom either died in the act or were already in prison?

According to the video of a post-11 September Osama bin Laden presented to the world by the US government, he himself didn't find out the exact date of the attack until five days before it took place. And in the video bin Laden said that many, probably most, of the hijackers did not know they were part of a suicide mission until they were preparing to board the planes. This is a conclusion the FBI also came to before the video was found. So, it seems exceedingly few other people were in on the suicide-hijacking plot. Perhaps the number could be counted on the fingers of one hand – even by a person missing some of those fingers.

Keep in mind as well that, whatever one thinks of the appalling society the Taliban created, they had not really been associated with terrorist acts. Nor can the masses of Taliban supporters be held responsible if their leader – one person – allowed foreign terrorists into the country, any more than an American would want to be held accountable for all the anti-Castro and other Latin American terrorists living in Miami with Washington's blessing. Most of the foreigners had probably come to Afghanistan to help the Taliban in their civil war, nothing the US government should be concerned about. Might some of them thereafter have been up to no good? Quite possibly. But which ones? Preventive execution is a questionable enough concept, but what the US carried out was random preventive execution – bombing to whom it may concern.

If the US bombing campaign was designed to kill the actual perpetrators of the 11 September events, it was a fool's mission – a violent fool.

To put it another way, if Timothy McVeigh, perpetrator of the terrible bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995, had not been

quickly caught, would the US have bombed the state of Michigan or any of the other places McVeigh called home? No, they would have instituted a mammoth manhunt until they found him and brought him before a court of law.

None of those killed by the US bombings were ever charged with a crime, much less convicted of one. Large numbers of men were taken into custody in Afghanistan, or abducted to Cuba without benefit of habeas corpus or the advantage of prisoner-of-war status. They were then badly beaten, kept in cages, and subjected to assorted other indignities. Add all that to the wholly questionable legality of the US bombing itself, and we can state that several nails have been hammered by the US government into the coffin of international law and the United Nations. And, perhaps most harmful of all, the bombing has undoubtedly served as a recruitment campaign for a new generation of terrorists throughout the Muslim world. Can Americans now feel nice and safe?

But that question is secondary. Washington's war on terrorism is primarily a euphemism for extending US control in the world.

Following its bombing of Iraq, the US wound up with military bases in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar. Following its bombing of Yugoslavia, the US wound up with military bases in Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, Hungary, Bosnia and Croatia.

Following its bombing of Afghanistan, Washington appears on course to wind up with military bases in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and perhaps elsewhere in the region.

Thus does the empire grow.

*William Blum is the author of 'Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower'. <<http://members.aol.com/superogue/homepage.htm>>*



## WHAT DID THE ROMANS EVER DO FOR US?

Chris Floyd draws some uncomfortable imperial parallels.

*Germania Magna. 19 October, 8 AD.*

Brother, greetings from the River Elbe. While tonight you recline on soft couches with your friends, feasting, drinking and talking rot, we poor soldiers shiver in our tents – eating hard bread and sharpening our blades for tomorrow's battle. Even now your arm encircles a tender waist. Is it still Livilla, or has Agrippina remounted the throne?

Such lusty campaigners! Yet my only company is cold bronze, a flickering lamp, and the ugly mug of Brutus – the slave father sent with his last dispatch.

But in truth, brother, I would not change places with you tonight. Our fight tomorrow is a noble one, an act of justice that will bring fresh glory to Rome. We strike at the barbarians who devastated Noviomagus in the late summer; a murderous raid across the Rhine, on our own territory, leaving thousands dead – an affront to Roman power that cannot go unanswered. We have pursued these beasts deep into their own lair. Now they are cornered. Tomorrow they will pay for their evil.

So much for them. Now, brother, I hear disturbing news – your continuing acquaintance with those so-called 'republicans' who snipe and peep and whisper their calumnies against the great Emperor Augustus. I know the type well. Indeed, in my own youth I was given to much the same tomfoolery, duped by tales of 'ancient liberties lost' and fearsome rants against 'tyranny'.

But you are now reaching an age when you must put aside this kind of sentimentality, and recognise that the measures taken by our *imperator* have in fact saved the Republic from its own worst excesses.

Where is this 'tyranny'? You are in Rome. Look around. What do you see? The old forms and formalities are still observed. Indeed, more strictly than ever. The Senate still meets, debates, makes policy. The assemblies still hold their elections. The praetors still exercise

their constitutional powers. Political factions still jostle for primacy. Poets and playwrights still revel in decadence. Courts are still filled with wrangling lawyers chewing over every jot and tittle. Tyranny should present a more placid face, should it not? The bumptious course of our public life should be smoothed and flattened by the iron hand of the autocrat. But as you see, it is not so.

Yes, brother Quintus, I know the whispers. I know Augustus has taken on many of the burdens of state once dispersed among several hands. But note well: at each stage these powers have been granted by the Senate, ratified by law – all in the best Roman tradition. And note too: this accumulation of powers is *temporary*. They were given to Augustus in a time of crisis, when, through his wisdom and *auctoritas* – his moral authority, he delivered the commonwealth from chaos and preserved our way of life from those who would destroy it. Once we are past these dangerous shoals, the concentration of powers will end. Never fear.

So yes, to preserve our 'ancient liberties' we must relinquish them, in part and for a time. Perhaps this paradox is hard to fathom there in the bustle and comfort of Rome. But for us on the frontier, its truth stands out in stark relief. We are here to carry on that work of preservation, to save our way of life and pass it down to our posterity. I want my son to fish in the peaceful waters on our estate as I did – listening to the learned slaves reciting Virgil, Seneca, Homer and Livy. He should never know want or fear or threat or hunger – those ravaging wolves which sprang from the chaos Augustus has mastered and which these barbarians, in their envy and ignorance, would unleash upon us again.

How many generations have shed their blood to bring us to this pinnacle of civilisation! Yet your whispering

friends speak of violent conquest, and 'oppression' of other peoples. They would have us still in mud huts, trembling by the Tiber. Yes, we project our dominance. Because we *must*. First and foremost, to preserve our patrimony as is right and just. But also to bring enlightenment to the dark places of the earth. Why else has Fortune favoured us, above all nations in the history of the world except to carry out this divine mission? I am proud to play my small part in such noble endeavours. I hope that you too, dear Quintus, will come to know this pride as well.

The night grows thin. Dawn draws near. I must finish this tomorrow – if Jupiter and Minerva, deities of our house, see fit to bring me through.

*Afghanistan. 20 October, 2001.*

The US employs ground troops for the first time in Afghanistan – 'the graveyard of empires'. The Pentagon hails the operation a success, but *The Guardian* writes: 'In reality it went badly wrong, [the fighting] seriously injuring troops and prompting a review of ground tactics.'

Speaking that day, President Bush comments: 'In the struggle of freedom against fear the outcome is certain. We speak for the common hopes of mankind – to live as we choose, to follow our faith, to build better lives for all who follow us. These hopes have carried us a long way, bringing progress and prosperity to millions. And they carry us forward to even greater achievement. Now is the time to act boldly, to build and defend an age of liberty.'

Four months later the fighting continues. Many thousands of Afghan civilians have died. There are plans to widen the conflict to engulf other countries in the 'axis of evil'. Osama bin Laden, however, remains at large.

*Chris Floyd is a columnist for the St Petersburg Times.*



## FROM THE BOVINE TO THE RIDICULOUS

**Devinder Sharma** compares the life of the western cow with that of the Third World farmer. Inequalities abound.

It is a strange world. It is also an unequal world, and perhaps the most debasing and demeaning of all this world's inequalities is the manner in which even the cattle of the rich nations are pampered to the cost of several hundred million farmers in developing countries.

It certainly is a great cultural shock for any visitor from the rich and industrialised countries to see stray cattle on Indian roads. Outside India's metropolitan cities you will invariably see a hard-working farmer toiling in his crop field with a mud-plastered house in the background. In addition to the smiling farmer, you are likely to see his wife – clad in a ghagra-choli, cutting the grass and tending the cows.

This is the Third World farmer, who on average owns not more than two acres of land and still continues to feed himself and his family of five, year after year. He lives under a thatched or a tin roof, and has never had the luxury of central heating or air-conditioning. In fact, a majority of these small farmers do not even have electric fans, have little or no sanitation facilities and have never received any government support in the form of subsidies.

Now consider the western farm. Amid sprawling crop fields, whether in the US, the European Union or Australia, you are likely to see a cattle farm. The cattle are well-fed and huge, with big dangling udders. Take a peep inside the cattle sheds, and you will see a well-designed concrete structure fitted with tube lights, fans and showers. At most places, especially in the US and the European Union, these barns are centrally heated. Computer chips worn around the cows' necks enable feeding machines to meet the exact nutritional requirement of each animal. And on average each cow gets about 25 acres of land for its feed and nutritional needs – enough to enable 10 farming families from the Third World to earn their livelihood.

The inequality between the man and the beast doesn't end here. For the amount of subsidies a cow in the developed world receives is almost twice the annual income of an average Third World farmer.

In the European Union, for instance, the annual support for an estimated 300 million dairy cattle in the year 2000 was to the tune of 2,735 million euros for milk and milk products and another 4,465 million euros for beef and veal. Much of the support is in the form of direct payment to farmers and falls within the purview of the WTO's 'green box' and 'blue box' stipulations. These are the subsidies that have got to be reduced under the phase-out of market distorting support mechanisms. In the Third World, however, the WTO deems that all subsidies provided to farmers – the indirect as well as the direct – are considered to be market-distorting and must, therefore, be removed or drastically pruned.

In the dairy sector, the aggregate of subsidies as a percentage of the value of the milk produced is measured in terms of a Producer Subsidy Equivalent (PSE). In 1997, the PSE index stood at 82 per cent in Japan, 59 per cent in Canada, 54 per cent in the European Union, 47 per cent in the US and 23 per cent in Australia. Such has been the high level of protection provided to milk producers by the developed countries that even with the stipulated reduction in subsidies, the EU and the US will continue to flood and dump its highly subsidised milk and milk powder on the Third World.

In the meantime, while dairy subsidies continue on the upswing, the PSE index indicates that farmers in India and in most developing countries were negatively taxed all these years. For India, which alone has a quarter of the world's farming population, the PSE index stood at minus 2.33 per cent in 1997. And in Colombia the figure was minus 60 per cent.

Still more shocking and shameful is the fact that while the world makes no effort to feed the estimated 800 million people – living almost entirely in the Third World – who go to bed hungry every night, no effort is spared to feed the cattle in the rich western countries. The system introduced in 1992 of direct payments to farmers in the European Union has led to an increase in the consumption of cereals in Europe from 134.8 million tonnes in 1993 to 178.2 million tonnes in 2000. This growth has largely resulted from the increased use of EU-produced cereals for animal feed. Even though the feeding of cereals to animals and those animals' subsequent slaughter for human consumption requires six times more grains than would be needed for the world's average human dietary intake, there is no regret.

The number of cattle that are reared in such conditions in the rich and industrialised countries (including the OECD countries – the world's richest trading block) does not exceed 1.5 billion. Coincidentally, the number of small farmers who live in penury and are faced with further marginalisation does not exceed 1.5 billion either. The clash of civilisation, therefore, is too apparent, too loud and clear. Under such circumstances, to be amused at the abundance of stray cattle on Indian roads is a folly. When the conflict for survival between western farmers and their Third World counterparts reaches such extremes, the latter's cattle pay a price. It should be no wonder, then, that it is not unusual to find in India stray cattle battling for life with over 20 tonnes of polythene in their stomachs.

But then, with apologies and due respect to George Orwell, all animals are equal but some are more equal than even humans.

*Devinder Sharma is a New Delhi-based food and trade policy analyst. Responses can be emailed to: dsharma@ndf.vsnl.net.in*

## THE WAR AGAINST TOXICS

NEW PHILIPPINES ALLIANCE 'UP AGAINST TOXICS!' IS TARGETING HAZARDOUS WASTES LEFT BEHIND ON FORMER US MILITARY BASES. IT IS DEMANDING THE CLEAN-UP OF THE BASES AND MEDICAL ATTENTION FOR THE VICTIMS, MANY OF WHOM ARE CHILDREN. **RACHEL ANNE CALABIA** REPORTS.

The names Fe del Mundo and Ian Castro may not ring a bell right now. But just like six-year-old Crizel Valencia, who died last year, Fe and Ian are among the countless children who have become victims of the toxic waste contamination in the Filipino province of Pampanga. Their stories were told by their mothers at the recent launch of UP Against Toxics! – a new multi-sector alliance formed in response to the toxic and hazardous wastes left by the US in their former military bases in the Philippines.

'We used to live in San Joaquin before we moved to CABCOM, where I gave birth to Ian,' recounts Jennifer Castro. CABCOM was set up as an evacuation centre for people displaced by the 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo.

The centre is located on the contaminated site of a motor pool of the US military's former Clark Air Base. 'I did not feel anything unusual during my pregnancy,' Jennifer Castro adds, 'but when Ian was almost one I wondered why Ian wasn't learning how to walk. Up to now he cannot talk. He only makes noises. And he cannot stand without help.'

The Castros took their son to hospital, where they were told he needed hospitalisation. Unlike his relatively healthy older brother Joshua, two-year-old Ian's growth is severely stunted and his limbs are weak due to a blood infection.

Malou del Mundo and her family live in Mabalacat – a town neighbouring the Clark Air Base site. She has a similar story to tell about her youngest child, 12-year-old Fe. 'Eight months ago, she started having stomach pains,' Malou Del Mundo says. 'We thought it was just worms. She could not eat and she was always scratching. We brought her to the health centre where we were told to give her vitamins.'

Fe, however, did not respond to supplements, and started having difficulty coping at school due to her mysterious illness. The Del Mundos hopped from one hospital to another, until they were told that Fe's liver was enlarged.

After further testing in Manila, Fe was finally diagnosed with cancer. The family, who sold its belongings to pay for a few sessions of chemotherapy for their daughter, are now at their wits' end as to how to find money for her treatment.

### Toxic legacy

Cabcom and Mabalacat are just two locations within the range of the 14 reported contaminated areas in Pampanga, which include the hospital compound, landfill, motor pool, and waste water treatment plant of former US military bases.

These sites have been proven to harbour hazardous waste such as asbestos, arsenic, lead, benzene, polychlorinated biphenyl and polyaromatic hydrocarbon. Due to improper disposal, these elements have found their way into the ground water, causing serious illnesses and deaths.

University of the Philippines professor Dr Romy Quijano is a member of Health Alliance for Democracy (HAD), an organisation of concerned medical practitioners. The professor says: 'Other doctors in the country say there is no scientific proof

of toxic waste contamination at the former US bases. [But] it was US government officials themselves who admitted that the site is contaminated [and that this] was the reason for several cases of cancer, leukaemia and other diseases.'

At least nine environmental studies of Clark Air Base and the US military's old Subic Naval Base have been conducted since 1986. The evidence of contamination is conclusive. Yet the toxic legacy US remains unresolved, as Washington refuses to take legal responsibility for the clean-up of the area. The Filipino government's refusal to apply political pressure on Washington doesn't help much.

UP Against Toxics! convenor Enteng Bautista says: 'More than 10 years have passed but the US military toxics and other hazardous wastes have yet to be cleaned up, or the affected communities rehabilitated. What's worse is that the toxic wastes may have spread outside Clark after the discovery of a high incidence of mortality and toxic-related illnesses in [other Clark resettlement community] Madapdap and CABCOM.'

### Hypocritical stance

In its declaration of unity UP Against Toxics! demanded the clean-up of the former bases and medical attention for the victims of the pollution. The alliance also expressed its opposition to the Philippines government's sanctioning of the use of Filipino land in the US-led war against Afghanistan.

Professor Isagani Tapang, national chair of progressive scientists' organisation Agham, denounced the alleged use of anthrax by the US's enemies but also warned against the US using the Philippines as a pit stop in its transportation of biological and chemical weapons to Afghanistan. Professor Tapang says: '[Philippines president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo] should have thought several times before offering to open the country to the re-entry of these unwanted visitors with dangerous cargo.'

'Does Arroyo, in her support of the US, also find the Filipino toxic waste victims less worthy of attention and concern than the World Trade Centre victims? How can she turn a blind eye to the toxic waste victims' clamour for justice when she zealously joins the US government's so-called war on terror?'

Dr Quijano quips: 'GMA [the president's initials] must stand for "Gloria Maka-Amerikano".' The moniker will stand as long as the president fails to prove she cares for the welfare of toxic waste victims such as Fe del Mundo and Ian Castro.

*Rachel Anne Calabia is a correspondent for IBON Features, from which the above article has been reprinted on the Third World Network.*



SIBRO

# NEW DEVELOPMENT PLANS THREATEN MEXICO'S BAJA PENINSULA

A RECENT ENVIRONMENTAL VICTORY IN MEXICO MAY SOON BE OVERSHADOWED BY A FAR MORE WORRYING DEVELOPMENT ON THE SAME PENINSULA, WRITES **DICK RUSSELL**.



CORBIS

On March 2, 2000, the then president of Mexico Ernesto Zedillo made the startling announcement that he was cancelling plans to build the world's largest industrial salt works in the vicinity of the San Ignacio Lagoon on the Pacific coast of Baja California. Termination of the proposed US \$120 million enterprise represented a huge victory for conservationists. The latter had fought a five-year campaign to stop Mexico and its development partner – Japan's Mitsubishi Corporation – from invading the last pristine nursery area of the California grey whale. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the lagoon is also a critical habitat for the near-extinct prong-horned antelope and an important ecosystem for marine turtles, bottlenose dolphins and numerous bird species.

Three months later opposition leader Vicente Fox was elected to the Mexican presidency, ending seven decades of domination by the country's Institutional Revolutionary Party. Close Fox adviser and anti-salt works campaigner Andrés Rosental commented that the large numbers of Mexican people who had signed petitions against the salt works had represented 'a strong, pent-up desire by civil society to participate in decisions like San Ignacio – the first indication of what later became a groundswell of the anti-establishment vote to elect Fox'.

But the Fox ascendancy has done little to improve Mexico's environment. In fact, new development proposals threaten the 800-mile Baja peninsula and its vaunted grey whales with impacts far greater than the scuttled salt works. Fox has proposed an initial US \$20-million government investment toward a US \$1.6 billion 'nautical ladder' of new marinas and infrastructure to entice US boat owners into Baja's Sea of Cortez – a region the late Jacques Cousteau called the 'aquarium of the world'. At the same time five Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) terminals are being targeted for Baja's Pacific coastline by US energy companies intent on creating pipelines to California while simultaneously avoiding US regulatory hurdles.

## An 'ecocidal project'

The renowned Mexican poet and environmentalist Homero Aridjis has described the nautical ladder as 'an ecocidal project'. He pointed out that highly flammable and 'extremely risky' LNG plants have never before been built along North America's west coast. (Baja is especially vulnerable to tropical storms). 'Is this how Mexico is to become a power on the world scene, sacrificing its natural environment?' Aridjis asked in Mexico City's *Reforma* newspaper, adding that 'the

government learned nothing' from the popular opposition to the salt works.

The nautical ladder idea was originally conceived 20 years ago when mega-resorts in Los Cabos and Cancún were built. Only under former Coca-Cola executive Fox and his director of tourism John McCarthy has it resurfaced. McCarthy, the 46-year-old son of English immigrants, became head of Mexico's FONATUR agency after serving as president of Houston-based Raintree Resorts International – a self-described 'developer, marketer and operator of luxury vacation ownership resorts across North America'. McCarthy's stated priority is to revise Mexican policy so as to allow more casinos.

McCarthy has forecast that within 15 years the ladder will bring 5,400,000 'nautical tourists' a year to the Sea of Cortez. That includes nearly 75,000 private boat owners – roughly 10 times the current port traffic. Richard Spindler, publisher of a US sailing magazine, is one person who believes the Mexicans' plans are wildly over-ambitious. 'I think they're misreading the market terribly,' Spindler says. 'Fifty thousand boats would empty every marina in the state of California.' Nevertheless, the idea is to space the 10 marinas – with their accompanying dozens of hotels and 30-plus golf courses – about 120 nautical miles apart.

The first phase in the development is the creation of a trans-peninsular 'dry canal' or 'land bridge' about halfway down the Baja peninsula. It would enable 55-ft boats to take a 70-mile short cut between the Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Cortez. Stage one is already underway with dredging operations aimed at linking the Pacific fishing village of Santa Rosalillita with the town of Bahía de Los Angeles. Santa Rosalillita is a world-class surfing spot. The Bahía is home to dozens of blue whales, humpbacks, orcas, sperm whales and sea lions. Surrounded by desert, the Bahía has barely enough water for its existing 800 residents. How it will supply the water for an anticipated 12,000 new hotel rooms is anybody's guess.

Mexico's Environment Secretary Victor Lichtinger maintains that such 'low-impact development' will generate the revenue to preserve what is 'probably the richest sea in the world in biodiversity'. That's hardly the way one of Mexico's leading marine biologists sees it. 'The idea that this would help whale conservation as well as other marine fauna is just crazy,' says the scientist, who requested anonymity. 'Boat traffic is a problem already for the vaquita [an endangered porpoise], and for all large whales that come to Baja. What worries me most is the lack of a serious development plan, which one could analyse to properly evaluate the impacts.'

Once called a maritime Serengeti, the Sea of Cortez has in recent years been devastated by overfishing. A massive influx of sport-fishing vessels would only exacerbate the situation. More marinas, of course, will also bring greater pollution. Dr Wallace J Nichols of the California-based WILDCOAST conservation group believes that already-endangered sea turtles – including the green, hawksbill, loggerhead, olive ridley and leatherback species will be particularly affected by the development.

'I was shocked when I first saw the nautical ladder proposal,' Nichols says. 'They were sticking marinas in all of our sea turtle monitoring sites. The turtles prefer protected, quiet bays, which are also good for marinas. We're talking not about nesting beaches, but nurseries where turtles eat and grow. The turtles have enough problems already, as

fishermen's bycatch and illegal direct take. This could put them over the edge, forever.'

Another fear is that once underway the nautical ladder could become yet another of the never-finished tourist developments that scar the Mexican landscape. In Baja, for example, Puerto Escondido has remained since 1988 a wasteland of half-completed condominiums, pavement and cement covering what was once among the region's most biologically productive areas. Alternatively, as Homero Aridjis and WILDCOAST Director Dr Serge Dedina hypothesised in *The San Diego Union-Tribune* in December, might the nautical ladder be 'a clever publicly financed land grab that promises to enrich a small cadre of public officials and private investors'?

The project could also boost the burgeoning Baja drug trade, by providing better transportation infrastructure and money laundering opportunities. Seaborne traffickers heading north for the US are increasingly utilising the small Baja fishing villages as refueling stops – often exchanging illicit substances for supplies. Residents of some impoverished towns in the region say that the drugs influx is destroying their communities.

### Throwing fuel on the fire

One of the marinas would be built in the same location – Punta Abreojos, just north of San Ignacio Lagoon, in the grey whale migration corridor – where the defunct salt project would have placed a mile-long concrete pier. Further up the Pacific coastline, a similar-sized pier for one of the proposed LNG terminals would also obstruct the path of migrating mother greys and their calves. Arriving tankers would pose the greatest potential impact and would, in all likelihood, alter the whales' migration pattern.

According to the US Federal Energy Regulatory Commission there are several major safety concerns relating to LNG. It is more hazardous than plain natural gas, as it squeezes the equivalent of 619 cubic feet of gas into a single cubic foot of space. Spillage from a storage tank can ignite and create an unusually hot fire and thermal radiation. The danger zone of a flammable vapour plume could extend to a radius 4,000 feet in diameter. A tanker spill on the water could cause a vapour plume capable of traveling up to two miles, creating a fire risk for anything in its path. Then there are toxic air emissions.

Yet Sempra Energy, Marathon Petroleum, Royal Dutch/Shell and a consortium of El Paso Corporation and Phillips Petroleum have each made announcements of intent to build LNG terminals in northern Baja. Some are floating designs, some land-based. Each carries a price-tag upwards of US \$300 million. The first plant up and running would enjoy a significant market advantage.

The LNG plans all followed in the wake of President Bush's first foreign foray when, shortly after the US Supreme Court handed him the presidency, he visited President Fox to press for greater opportunities in Mexico for US energy companies. Bush used the electricity shortages and rolling blackouts in California as justification for encouraging investment. As it happened, the Baja peninsula was also in a natural-gas crisis at the time – paying prices up to four times higher than the rest of Mexico due to a price cap that excluded Baja. 'Any gas down in Mexico that improves the Mexican situation will help the US,' Bush said in February 2001.

Northern Baja had already been transformed over the past three decades into one of the world's manufacturing

hot spots with the arrival of foreign-owned *maquiladoras*. Now power companies began lining up to build generating plants, 'leading', as the Associated Press reported 'to charges that Mexico's border areas are once again bearing the brunt of US environmental burdens'. Last May, Mexican Energy Secretary Ernesto Martens stated that his country would not set any limit on the number of power plants in Baja that could supply electricity for consumption north of the border.

Two of the potential LNG terminal builders are the very same companies implicated in creating California's energy problems in the first place. As reported by *The New York Times* in June, California utility regulators accused the El Paso Corporation of using its control of a large natural gas pipeline into the state to inflate prices artificially. Between them El Paso and Southern California Gas (a unit of Sempra) were responsible for US \$3.7 billion of excess prices for energy over a year-long period. El Paso said its share of those profits was US \$184 million, the rest going to other firms with which it had entered into 'hedging transactions' intended to limit El Paso's exposure should gas prices fall. About half of those transactions were with the now-bankrupt Enron.

So far in Baja no LNG permits have been issued. In fact, in October the municipal government of Rosarito denied a land-use application from the Houston-based El Paso Corporation for the 100-acre site it had acquired to build upon. 'It's the location that's the problem,' said Rosarito mayor Silvano Abarca Macklis. 'It's good for [the company], but not for the people.' Residents of the Bajamar resort community, just north of Ensenada, are also said to be unhappy about LNG plants being considered there by Sempra and Royal Dutch/Shell.

Curiously, as Homero Aridjis has noted, 'Sempra is the company that sponsored the [IMAX] film *Ocean Oasis*, whose narrator and adviser is Exequiel Ezcurra, the present president of the [Mexican] National Institute of Ecology... – the authority which will give the green light to the [LNG] plant's environmental impact study'.

As with the fight against the salt factory, it is Aridjis whose voice is sounding the alarm. If the Baja peninsula is not to fall victim to a development frenzy then the Mexican founder and president of the *Grupo de los Cien* (Group of 100) will soon have to gather international allies. One is again likely to be the US Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), which spearheaded the campaign against the Mitsubishi salt works. As Joel Reynolds, senior attorney and director of the organisation's Marine Mammal Protection Project, says: 'The Baja peninsula is going to become an increasing focus for development over the next 50 years. Its strategic location, the historic absence of development and the economic needs of the population will make the region attractive – whether [to] the tourist industry or the natural gas industry.'

'What I would hope to see is leadership from the Mexican government in terms of a transparent and open process, significant public participation and an objective, thoughtful disclosure of impacts and alternatives. NRDC has a history of working with environmental and community organisations in Baja to protect natural resources, and we are following very closely this latest generation of development proposals.'

*Dick Russell is a longtime environmental journalist, whose most recent book is *Eye of the Whale* (Simon & Schuster, 2001)*

## BRAZIL'S BATTLE OF THE BEANS

SUE BRANFORD LOOKS BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE GM BATTLE CURRENTLY BEING WAGED IN BRAZIL.

Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso has launched an all-out drive to get the cultivation and production of genetically-modified products authorised in his country over the next few weeks. For the past three years a highly successful campaign organised by environmentalists and consumer organisations has blocked the progress of GM food in Brazil. Cardoso, who has been in power since 1994, leaves office in December. It is clearly his intention to sort out this contentious issue before the country gets engulfed in almost certainly acrimonious campaigning for October's elections.

Monsanto, the huge biotechnology company that leads the world's production of GM seeds, has been lobbying the Brazilian government with growing urgency. The company has long been frustrated by the ban in Brazil of its GM soya beans known as Round-Up Ready. In mid-January Anthony Harrington, who was US ambassador in Brazil until 2001 and is now a Monsanto adviser, flew to Brasilia and held a private meeting with Cardoso. Since then the president has shown uncharacteristically decisive action.

A few days after his Harrington meeting Cardoso called together all the ministers and top government advisers connected with the GM debate, and told them in no uncertain terms that he would no longer tolerate public wrangling over the issue. The main target of this dressing down was Brazil's environment minister Jose Sarney Filho. The latter has openly aligned himself with the environmentalists. He has stated that he does not believe GM crops should be planted in Brazil until meticulous studies have been carried out into the impact of these products on the country's delicate ecosystems and the health of its population. Cardoso imposed what amounted to a gagging order on Sarney Filho, and since the meeting the environment minister has duly refused to talk to the press.

After the crack down on his ministers, Cardoso turned his attention to Brazil's Congress. After close consultation with the government, the head of the lower chamber's special commission on GM foods federal deputy Confúcio Moura tried to steamroll through his report. The report calls for the immediate authorisation of GM products in Brazil. Moura arranged for the commission to vote on his report on 19 February, the day that Congress resumed after a long Carnival break – always the most difficult time of the year for popular movements to get their supporters mobilised. In what was clearly a carefully planned manoeuvre to prevent debate, Moura said that he would not accept any amendments.

Remarkably, the environmentalists are still holding out. The 19 February vote was postponed for fortuitous technical reasons. A second attempt at a vote on 27 February was also frustrated when a group of vociferous anti-GM demonstrators including members of Brazil's militant Landless Movement occupied the public gallery. The protestors made so much noise by blowing whistles and shouting slogans that the session had to be suspended. However, as the commission is



REUTERS

President Fernando Henrique Cardoso

packed with government supporters, it seems only a matter of time before Moura's report is finally approved.

That, however, will not necessarily be the end of the matter. Once the report is passed by the commission, it will have to be approved first by a plenary session of the lower chamber and then by the Senate. With their allies in Congress, the campaigners believe they have a chance of getting the final vote delayed until the end of the year. And with a new president taking over in January 2003, the balance of forces may change.

Arcane as the details of this tortuous congressional battle may seem, the outcome is important for the whole world. Brazil, the world's second largest exporter of soya beans, is the only large producer that can guarantee, at no additional cost, a GM-free product. If Brazil bows to Monsanto's pressure and authorises GM products, no country in the world will be able to satisfy the demand of the huge number of ordinary Asian and European consumers for beef from cattle fed on non-GM fodder, and biscuits, soups and cakes made from GM-free soya flour. Of course, non-GM products would still be available but only as a 'niche' market – with the consumer paying a sizeable premium for the non-GM product. This is precisely what the multinationals want.

What alarms many Brazilians is Cardoso's apparent failure to grasp the huge commercial advantage that his country is already gaining from being the only important producer of non-GM crops. Over the last two years, Brazil's share of the world soya market has grown from 24 to 30 per cent, as importers eagerly seek out non-GM product. Simultaneously, the share going to the US, with its largely GM crop, has declined from 57 to 46 per cent. If China, already the main world importer, resists US pressure and continues to demand non-GM crops, Brazil's prospects for soya and other non-GM crops are dazzling.

The loser in such a scenario would be Monsanto. Last year the company opened a US\$550 million factory in the north east of Brazil to produce Round-Up, a pesticide specially developed for Round Up Ready soya. Monsanto is currently in the absurd situation of supplying Brazilian-sourced Round-Up to soya farmers in Argentina and Paraguay (and possibly to the US planes spraying a special, reinforced version on coca crops in Colombia) without being able to sell it, officially at least, to farmers for use on Round-Up Ready in the country where the pesticide is manufactured.

Sue Branford is a journalist and author. Her new book, *Cutting the Wire – a history of the landless movement in Brazil*, co-authored with Jan Rocha (Latin American bureau) is published this year.

## PUTTING THE WIND UP NUCLEAR POWER

PETER BUNYARD ARGUES A DEFINITIVE CASE FOR WIND POWER.

In 1981 the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) decided that Luxulyan in Cornwall might be a good place to build a nuclear power station. Never mind that Luxulyan was blessed with some of the finest granite in the world, granite that not only graced the ancient local church but also London's Embankment and would henceforth be out of public access. Never mind too that the plant would consume a quarter of all its generated power simply getting cooling water pumped up from the sea nine miles away. And never mind that *The Ecologist*, years ahead of the Government, had shown just how much nuclear power cost in conventional economic terms – irrespective of the additional expenses of decommissioning, taking proper provision to prevent accidents and dealing satisfactorily with nuclear waste.

Locals soon made their opposition to a Luxulyan nuclear generator clear. They prevented access to one of the farms at the centre of the site so as to stop the CEGB test-drilling. After six months of occupation, many injunctions and a high court hearing in which the CEGB accused the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary of dereliction of duty in not arresting the protesters, the CEGB went ahead with the drilling only to abandon the project in order to concentrate on the upcoming Sizewell B public inquiry.

But all the nonsense in Cornwall had a salutary effect. Peter Edwards, a successful dairy farmer at Delabole, decided it just wasn't enough to be critical of nuclear power. A viable, environmentally-sound alternative had to be put in place. And in north Cornwall, with its sparse trees bent double in the stone hedges, what better alternative than wind – especially with the the considerable technological advances made in Denmark.

Initially the economics did not look good. Edwards all but abandoned the idea. But then in 1991 the Government simultaneously introduced the fossil-fuel levy on fossil-fuel generating plants and the non-fossil-fuel obligation (NFFO). The latter was introduced to facilitate the production of at least 20 per cent of the UK's electricity from non-fossil-fuel sources. In 1991, however, nuclear power was generating 20 per cent of the CEGB's production. With privatisation of the industry imminent, the NFFO was little more than a straight subsidy for an industry that had all already mopped up more government support than any other in history.

Nevertheless, under NFFO contracts wind-generation could now command some financial backing. By December 1991 Edwards had 10 Vesta 400 kilowatt turbines up and running on his farm. The entire scheme took just months to put in place. The machines were sited in farm hedgerows – thus minimising land loss, and were plugged into the local Delabole 11,000-volt substation. Such 'embedded generation' has one great advantage: providing power to the local neighbourhood it avoids the substantial distribution losses that go with distantly connected power stations. ■



CORBIS

■ A decade on, Britain's first ever wind farm has been a great success, achieving everything and more that was originally anticipated. From the start the farm had its detractors. But Peter says: 'Because we delivered our electricity locally we immediately improved the quality of supply around Delabole. We evened out those fluctuations that have been a curse of electricity supply throughout Cornwall – not least because the bulk of our electricity [has come] from the Hinkley Point nuclear power stations more than 150 miles away. It's rather like a blood transfusion into an extremity where the bleeding is occurring. You balance out the loss. The local voltage is now much more stable. Cornwall now has six wind farms, enough to supply some 27,000 households. Whether locals know it or not, the quality of their electricity has gone up substantially.'

'And now that we have 10 years of records carefully analysed by the Energy Technology Study Unit (ETSU) and the Department of Trade and Industry, we have discovered benefits from wind generation that we barely suspected. People, some of whom should know better, are quick to say that wind is fickle and fails just when you most need it. At a Renewable Power Association (RPA) meeting in London last January Nick Simpson of regulator Ofgem said that if we put too much reliance on wind he'd hate to think what would happen on a cold, frosty, still day around Christmas when all the world would be watching TV.'

'Such critics fail to understand that when we most need energy is when wind blows. In our part of the UK 60 per cent of annual generation is between October and March. Wind generation and demand go together. In winter when the wind blows, the chill factor goes up and so does the need for electricity. In summer just when everyone is returning home for their tea in the early evening, that's when the onshore winds obligingly come into play.'

Wind power in Britain has not had an easy ride, even when the NFFO subsidy was at its best in the first years of the fossil-fuel levy. To begin with Edwards and the nuclear industry were receiving as much as 11.5 pence per unit of power generated. Today he receives 2.2 pence per unit, and

that includes the Climate Change Levy subsidy for renewables of 0.43 pence per unit. A prime reason for the slow progress has been the public opposition to the turbines. They have been accused of being unsightly and noisy and of causing TV interference. Some people have even come up with the absurd statement that the machines consume more power than they deliver.

By the end of 1992 seven wind farms with a capacity of around 22 megawatts got off the ground. In 1993 the generating capacity increased by around 100 MW, with the introduction of 10 new farms. Some of these new farms were big, like the 103-turbine farm in Powys. Subsequent new capacity amounted to 23 MW in 1994, 45 MW in 1995, 75 MW in 1996, 52 MW in 1997, just 14 MW – including a 1 MW machine in County Antrim – in 1998, and 20 MW in 1999. A spate of new ventures in 2000 generated 64 MW of new capacity. But in 2001 just three new projects came to fruition, amounting to 28 MW. One of last year's new farms, however, had nine turbines capable of generating 15 MW on their own. The latest machines are, therefore, four times more powerful than those at Delabole, and are far more efficient in terms of economy of scale.

But while Tony Blair says he wants the UK to be at 'the forefront of the coming green industrial revolution', in 2001 his Energy Department came up with the New Energy Trading Arrangement (NETA). For wind-farm generators with a fluctuating output, NETA has been catastrophic. Its prime intention was to make generating prices transparent and therefore cheaper for the consumer. NETA demands that the generator predicts four and a half hours in advance the exact amount of power it is going to produce. Strict financial penalties are imposed for those who get their figures even marginally wrong. Unfortunately, it is virtually impossible for wind-farm generators to judge output to that precision.

Wind-farm generators with fluctuating output have, therefore, seen the value of their electricity plummet by about a quarter – even when the climate change levy is included. Although the wind has remained as strong as

ever, output from such producers fell by 14 per cent as a direct consequence of NETA. According to David Byers, chief executive of the RPA, the Government instructed Ofgem to reform the electricity industry three years ago with the explicit intention of promoting renewable electricity. But instead, NETA has resulted in higher risks, greater costs and much lower revenues for Britain's renewable sector.

NETA advocates 'balancing and settlement charges' to overcome the 'unpredictability' of supply from small, widely dispersed generators. The net result is to produce a two-tier pricing structure in which the large generators that can churn out a constant, steady supply come out the winners. That apparently reasonable approach has brought about a nonsensical situation in which the larger companies use fossil-fuel plants to guarantee steady output and gain the premium prices. The result is a double whammy, whereby the renewable sector is forced both to under-produce and to bring about 'load spill' and wasted generation in conventional thermal plants. All of this defeats the Government's declared intention to comply with the Kyoto Protocol and reduce levels of carbon emissions.

Part of the UK's problem with energy production comes down to the fact that we have a consumer society which believes in switching on whenever it wants, without the slightest regard for constraint. The general trend is to favour high consumption in terms of cheaper electricity. If, on the other hand, consumers paid heavily for any electricity over and above some pre-determined threshold, then they would surely think carefully about leaving appliances switched on when no longer in use. Such a system would in a stroke lead to a smoothing out of the demand curve and would reduce the need for such a wide margin in surplus capacity.

Peter Edwards, in common with other RPA members, is scornful of NETA's argument for the need to mark down the electricity from the renewables as somehow being less valuable than that from large thermal generating systems. On the contrary, he says: 'Our electricity comes on strongest in the winter months when demand goes up. If anything, it should be marked up and not down. And we have got so much surplus generating capacity in this country – more than 20 per cent, plus the 2 gigawatt Channel cable to France –, that it's unbelievably easy for those who run the grid to smooth out the fluctuations in supply from small generators such as ourselves.'

Currently, wind power supplies approximately 0.4 per cent of UK energy demand. The Government's targets for renewable production as a proportion of all power are 10% for 2010 and 20% for 2020. It has indicated that it expects wind power to provide the energy for at least half of these renewable quotas.

According to Nick Goodhall, chief executive of the 181-company strong British Wind Energy Association, the Government is being far too coy. Denmark already generates 18 per cent of its electricity from wind, and British wind companies are gearing up to generate at least that proportion of UK electricity within 20 years. There is, therefore, scope for other renewable sources to add to the mix and take it well above the 20 per cent total expected by the Government for the renewables.

Certainly, wind is good business for the Danes. The industry in Denmark employs 16,000 people. In the year 2000 the amount of energy produced by Danish wind turbines reached

more than 2 GW. That is equal to the output of two large nuclear power plants.

This year should be good for wind projects in the UK too. Just under 200 MW worth of capacity is confirmed for construction in Britain. Other projects are also in the pipeline. These include plans for the world's largest wind farm with a capacity of 600 MW on the Isle of Lewis. The plans have been approved by locals, and this one project alone would meet nearly 0.5 per cent of the UK's electricity needs.

And Ecogen, which began in Cornwall in the early 1990s, has won its battle to challenge the Government's decision to reject the proposed 80 MW Kielder wind farm in Northumbria. The project had been rejected because of a Ministry of Defence claim that the turbines would endanger national security by imposing a threat to the RAF's low-flying aircraft. But with wind turbines going up across northern Europe, including at offshore sites, the RAF had better start living with the new technology just as it has had to with the far more ubiquitous power pylons.

And while the squabble goes on over the price of wind-generated electricity, the true value of such a renewable form of power appears to have been largely overlooked. A European Union study, which took into account the external costs of electricity generation, found that coal was up to 120 times more expensive than wind. The study, which involved research groups in the different member states, found that the external costs of coal – even disregarding those of global warming – amounted to as much as 2 per cent of the European Union's gross domestic product. 'Such costs,' says the report, 'have to be covered by society at large, since they are not included in the bills which electricity consumers pay.'

According to the Commission, if the external costs of electricity generation were to be made explicit, the price of electricity produced by coal- and oil-fired plants would double. Generation from natural gas would subsequently increase by 30 per cent.

Peter Edwards' Vesta wind machines have proved remarkably reliable. They have been available for 98.5 per cent of the past 10 years, with a load factor of about 30 per cent. This is consistent with other wind farms. Edwards has had two major lightning strikes, each of which destroyed the blades of the affected turbine. The lightning turns the moisture inside the blades into steam, which then bursts the blades' structure. There is no option but to fit new ones. But this problem too will soon become a thing of the past, with the latest machines having far better systems for avoiding lightning damage.

And what about the future? Would Edwards risk erecting new turbines to replace the current 10? He certainly would, perhaps putting up six Vesta turbines with an 850-KW capacity each, and hence more than doubling the potential yield of his current machines. After 10 years in the business Edwards's faith in the renewables is undimmed. On the contrary, he believes that the mix of different renewables in the UK will totally transform the country's energy scene over the coming decades. And if you want a glimpse of the possible energy future, then you could do little better than visit the UK's first ever wind farm in Cornwall and take a look around the Gaia Energy Centre with its excellent exhibits and presentations.

*Peter Bunyard is science editor of The Ecologist.*

# Reviews

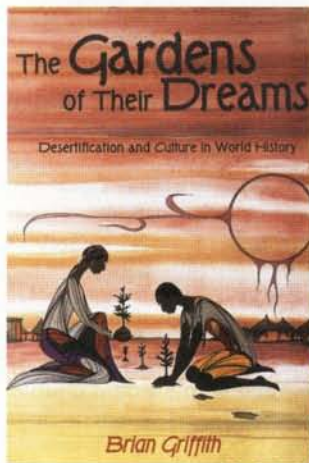
Send your suggestions for *Ecologist* reviews to  
Jeremy Smith at [jeremy@theecologist.org](mailto:jeremy@theecologist.org)

**This month:** **The Gardens of their Dreams** Brian Griffith • **Sustainable Education** Stephen Sterling • **Fateful Harvest** Duff Wilson • **San Francisco Beat** David Meltzer • **The Atlas of Endangered Species** Richard Mackay • **Earthshock** Andrew Robinson • **The Green Mantle** Michael Jordan • **An Evergreen Island** Frontyard Films

## THE GARDENS OF THEIR DREAMS

### DESERTIFICATION & CULTURE IN WORLD HISTORY

by Brian Griffith  
FERNWOOD PUBLISHING/ZED  
BOOKS 2001/£16.99/\$29.95  
ISBN: 1-85649-800-X



One of the most serious and least discussed threats to human survival is the current rapid global desertification of farmland. As an aid worker in India and Africa Brian Griffith saw rushing rivers and full wells dry to nothing in summer, and was reduced to digging in the sand for scoops of water. He experienced a fear unlike any he had known, as he wondered: 'What if tomorrow even this trickle was gone?' That fear led him to explore what causes farmland to become desert. The result is this compelling, elegiac history of cultures that have created deserts. It shows the remarkably consistent social conditions that encourage the process.

With desertification now threatening 90 per cent of the world's prime farmland and ancient aquifers and great rivers dwindling, it is often assumed the causes lie purely in global warming or modern agrochemicals.

Griffith goes deeper and, using historic examples to suggest a recurring pattern in which farming practices are shaped by social and religious attitudes.

According to Griffith, aggressive and authoritarian cultures, with major inequalities of class and gender, have repeatedly destroyed the soil and starved themselves to death. On his

evidence, modern agriculture is merely

taking 100 years to cause the devastation that it used to take over 500 years to accomplish.

His exploration of these links takes him from the verdant North Africa of the Stone Age, through the history of India, China and ancient Europe, to a modern African community that is pushing back the desert by planting

'Again and again harmonious sustainable communities have been destroyed by authoritarian ones in which people have sought to subjugate nature and each other'

trees. Significantly, women are involved in this tree-planting project. For his research shows that where people are respected, regardless of class or gender, they tend to cherish the natural world.

For example, 5,000 years ago the Thar desert, which has now consumed much of Rajahstan and Gujarat, was once farmland where Dravidian villagers worshipped the great earth mother, using sacred sex to arouse her. Living in harmony with nature, they used more than 2,500 medicinal plants and grew up to 400,000 varieties of rice – each in its appropriate micro-climate. 'The farmers viewed their land, trees and animals almost like family,' Griffith writes. '...The sense that one life was separate from another was presumed to be an illusion – selfhood was to grow outward until it might encompass the universe of forests, villages, rivers and ponds.'

Yet when, in about 2500 BC, the Harappan empire overwhelmed the Dravidians – introducing uniformity, efficiency, irrigation, monoculture and grid-like brick-built settlements – the land began to die. Gradually, irrigation made the land saline, the denatured soil was carried into the rivers, and those silted-up rivers flooded the towns. Agricultural collapse undermined the



empire and, as desperate and hungry people used up the last vegetation, the Great Desert of India was born.

Griffith shows that the Harappan example was just one of many empires to have been destroyed by authoritarian agriculture.

However, Griffith neither attacks governance nor glorifies peasant agriculture per se. For example, he describes how China, has alternated between sustainability and 'dark ages', and says that Chinese farmers, working land with perilously little rain, raised sustainable farming to its apogee and made land fertile by careful attention to nature. This sustainability went hand in hand with religious, political and philosophical cultures that respected nature. Daoists, for example called shrines 'kuan' – meaning 'to look and to see', and referred to 'nature – mother of everything'. Likewise, philosophers of the Song dynasty saw 'the entire universe as a single organism' – anticipating today's research on a universal field.

What emerges clearly from this book is that agricultural practices reveal the core values of a society and that, over millennia, desertification is as cyclical as the seasons. Again and again harmonious, sustainable communities have been destroyed or ousted by authoritarian and destructive ones in which people have sought to subjugate nature just as they subjugated each other. Thus, the desert has expanded – creating a struggle to survive which fostered still further environmental damage, emigration, religious excess and racial conflict. This is the pattern we are seeing in many countries today.

The book is a fascinating read and covers a vast sweep of time and place. Yet what I longed to learn was what triggers people to reverse this destruction – even if only partially. It would also have been a richer, more focused book had the author given less space to the Middle East. It would have been good to have had more detail on the societies and cultures which have had long periods of sustainable agriculture – thus fleshing out the interplay between agriculture and the arts of those societies. The poetry and culture of the Daoists, for example, are barely hinted at, and the Song philosophers' concept of the universe is quoted without any discussion of how their ideas sprang from, or influenced, sustainable farming. Other disappointing gaps include the desertification of Australia, Israel's reclamation of the desert since 1945 and the global level of desertification today.



## EKO KIDS

Many ecologically concerned parents are struggling successfully to raise similarly aware children. This is commonly in spite rather than because of the contribution that mainstream Western education makes to their noble task. What is needed is an all-encompassing educational vision that embraces environmental sustainability as its core intrinsic principle. Stephen Sterling's new book, *Sustainable Education: Re-Visioning Learning and Change* (Green Books 2001 £5/\$10.95 ISBN 1-870098-99-4) responds admirably to this need – outlining a philosophical rationale for education, which, one hopes, might eventually become mainstream, unexceptional thinking.

The book offers both a cogent critique of Western 'technocratic' education systems, and a vision of a post-materialist 'sustainability' paradigm that already has practical precursors worldwide. Sterling argues that environmental awareness in education must be more than a 'bolted-on' sub-discipline of a modernity which commonly neutralises the radical cutting edge of progressive innovations, while leaving the core 'values' of consumerist materialism intact.

For the author, 'sustainable education is... a potential confluence of many streams of thinking and practice... The contributions of figures such as Montessori, Steiner, Dewey, Rogers and Freire need to be acknowledged. The confluence... may... [happen] under the label of

Even so, by reminding us of how political, social and religious attitudes shape agriculture – and of how resulting deserts shape societies –, Griffith provides a valuable context within which to re-assess the underlying causes of today's global desertification, and a window on the future should we fail to halt it.

Summing up what it is like to live with desertification, Griffith writes: 'The people of deserts are among the most



"sustainable education", or under something else not yet articulated. Whatever may happen, there is a changing mood towards a more integrative style of education.'

Perhaps what we need is the plurality of 'holistic' educational movements worldwide to start working together, to find a unified and consensually arrived-at educational vision that's impossible for policy-making movers and shakers to ignore. This book could form a manifesto for such a global initiative, and is unreservedly recommended to all those educationalists and parents who are working towards finding a better way for our children – one that lies beyond a soulless modernity and its unsustainable consumerism.

*Reviewer Richard House is a writer and early-years Steiner Waldorf teacher, who last summer co-founded the WASTE (Welfare Action for Surviving Teachers and Ex-teachers) website, where a longer review of this book can be found.*

tragic in history... seldom able to make their barren lands support them. Their history was often violent, with cutthroat competition for the means of life. Any of us could have been born in their places.'

Perhaps we have been.

*Reviewer Moyra Bremner is a broadcaster and science writer. UK readers can obtain a copy of The Gardens of Their Dreams at the special price of £14.00 (inc. p&p) by calling 020 7837 8466.*

# Sick Century



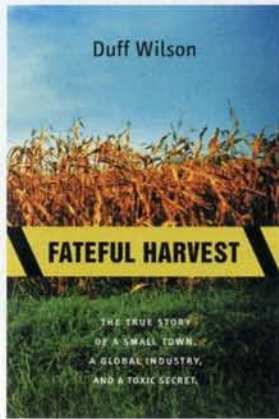
## FATEFUL HARVEST

THE TRUE STORY OF A SMALL TOWN, A GLOBAL INDUSTRY AND A TOXIC SECRET

by Duff Wilson

HARPER COLLINS 2001/£18.00/\$26.00

ISBN: 0060193697



One might imagine that disguising highly toxic industrial waste as fertiliser and selling it to unsuspecting farmers would be a serious criminal offence, but in the US it has instead been a rather profitable industry. As a result, millions of Americans have been consuming food adulterated with a cocktail of cancer-causing substances for a generation, while big business has pushed up profit levels by avoiding landfill charges.

This extraordinary tale of corporate greed was unearthed by a most unlikely character – a senior US air force officer's daughter who was elected in 1993 as mayor in a sleepy north-west US farming town. Patty Martin's dogged investigation of local crop failures and dodgy land deals took her on a journey to the underbelly of corporate America. In the process many of her illusions about the supposed Land of the Free were shattered.

Under fire from big business, Martin eventually turned to investigative journalist Duff Wilson. The latter brought the scandal to the US's attention in a series of articles in *The Seattle Times*. His subsequent book *Fateful Harvest* lays out the huge scale of the problem and the continued failure to address adequately the toxic by-product of the American dream.

Under the heading of 'The Magic Silo' Wilson explains how industry saved a fortune by turning 120 million pounds of hazardous waste into fertiliser each year. As one of the fertiliser dealers ingenuously admitted: 'When it goes

## THE SECRET OF GUANTANAMO

THE PENTAGON RECENTLY ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR A 'MISINFORMATION' DIRECTORATE. WHAT'S NEW? THEY'VE BEEN DOING IT FOR YEARS.

Images of chained and hooded prisoners from Afghanistan at the Guantanamo US military base have shocked global public opinion. Yet Guantanamo – a heavily fortified enclave on the island of Cuba – hides a yet more shocking secret about US foreign policy. As the Pentagon prepares a new 'disinformation' strategy to shape world opinion, it is a story that needs to be told.

1962 documents<sup>1</sup> freshly declassified by the Assassinations Records Review Board reveal earlier US plans to create 'pretexts [to] provide justification for military intervention in Cuba' by placing the US 'in the position of suffering justifiable grievances'.

First, 'a series of well co-ordinated incidents [would] be planned to take place in and around Guantanamo to give genuine appearance of being done by hostile Cuban forces'. These would include landing 'friendly' Cubans in uniform to stage 'attacks' on the US base, capturing 'saboteurs' inside the base and blowing up ammunition. US aircraft would be set on fire, mortar shells would be lobbed into the base from outside the perimeter fence, US ships would be 'sabotaged' in the harbour and mock funerals would be conducted for the 'victims'.

Next the US would stage the 'shooting down' of an American civil aircraft in international airspace, and concoct hard 'evidence' to 'prove' the Cubans were responsible. A chartered plane full of students on their way to Central America would be swapped with a 'double' belonging to the CIA. The declassified documents state: 'At a designated time the duplicate would be substituted for the actual civil aircraft and would be loaded with the selected passengers, all boarded under carefully prepared aliases.'

The two planes would rendez-vous south of Florida. From there 'the passenger-carrying aircraft [would] descend to minimum altitude and go directly into an auxiliary field at Eglin Air Force Base where arrangements will have been made to evacuate the passengers...' The CIA drone would then 'continue to fly the filed flight plan. When over Cuba the drone [would] begin transmitting on the international distress frequency a Mayday message stating [it] is under

attack by Cuban MIG aircraft. The transmission [would] be interrupted by the destruction of the aircraft which [would] be triggered by radio signal' to allow 'radio stations in the western hemisphere to tell the US what has happened to the aircraft instead of the US trying to "sell" the incident'.

The Americans would also make it appear that Cuban MIGs had destroyed a US Air Force F-101 aircraft over international waters in an unprovoked attack. A 'pre-briefed pilot... would broadcast that he had been jumped by MIGs and was going down. No other calls would be made. The pilot would then fly directly west at extremely low altitude and land at a secure base...

'The aircraft would be met by the proper people, quickly stored and given a new tail number. The pilot who had performed the mission under an alias, would resume his proper identity and return to his normal place of business. The pilot and aircraft would then have disappeared.

'At precisely the same time that the aircraft was presumably shot down a submarine or small surface craft would disburse F-101 parts, parachute, etc, at approximately 15 to 20 miles off the Cuban coast and depart... Search ships and aircraft could be dispatched and parts of aircraft found.'

Once the necessary international outrage had been created, the US would 'commence large-scale military operations'.

The plan was approved by US Defense Secretary Robert McNamara.

Now McNamara's latest successor Donald Rumsfeld plans to create a new 'misinformation' directorate operating from within the Pentagon. The Office for Strategic Influence will feed false information to the press in different countries around the world, including nations in western Europe, Asia and the Middle East to help the US achieve its foreign policy objectives.

You have been warned...

**Eduardo Gonçalves is a Portuguese investigative journalist.**

References on page 66.

into our silo, it's a hazardous waste. When it comes out of the silo, it's no longer regulated. The exact same material. Don't ask me why.' This loophole allowed industry to sidestep landfill charges – which have risen

10-fold in the past decade, and make huge savings, while fertiliser companies were paid to use material that contained dangerous toxins.

But *Fateful Harvest* is more than just another exposé of corporate greed. It is

a deeply personal story. Writing in a charming homespun style, Wilson never loses sight of the courage and sacrifice shown by Martin and the poor farmers who rallied to her cause.

Facing enormous pressure in a small town dominated by the fertiliser industry, Martin continued to plug away for years – even though regulators and politicians were unwilling to take the issue seriously. Despite his supposedly green credentials, vice-president Al Gore repeatedly ignored her pleas for support. The US's Environmental Protection Agency only took action when an official confused Martin with senator Patty Murray, and sent in a crack team to investigate.

Martin was, however, supported by a number of farmers whose livelihoods were hit by the fertiliser giants. Dennis DeYoung's farm thrived until 1985, when he suffered his first crop failure. At first he assumed it was due to bad luck, rather than bad fertiliser. But his luck never changed, his savings disappeared and his debts mounted up. Under financial pressure he agreed to lease a plot of land to a friend from church, who, in turn, had agreed to allow fertiliser company Cenex to dump leftover fertiliser there. When Cenex had finished with the land, even the weeds struggled to survive. It was only later that DeYoung realised the company had wrecked his land with a mix of highly toxic chemicals.

Worryingly, this is not a story about one bad business apple but, rather, a symbol of an endemic problem of lax regulation and corporate greed.

Nor is it a crisis confined to the US. According to Wilson, while regulation is tighter in the European Union fertiliser samples from the UK and Germany also show toxic chemical traces.

What lies behind this scandal is the reluctance of industry to clean up its act. Instead, in an Orwellian masterstroke the dumping of waste into fertiliser was classified in the US as recycling. And while US firms may lead the world in such sophistry, UK companies are not far behind. Using toxic waste from the Edmonton waste incinerator to make breeze blocks and road-building materials has also been described as recycling.

Where *Fateful Harvest* succeeds is in bringing such shadowy practices to the light they demand.

Reviewer **David Waller** is a freelance journalist who has written for *Private Eye* and *The Observer*.

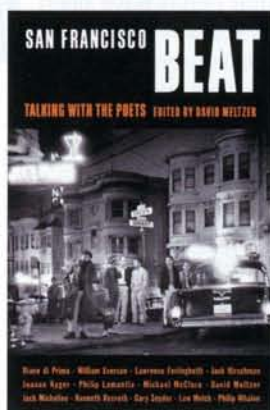
## SAN FRANCISCO BEAT

### TALKING WITH THE POETS

Edited by David Meltzer

CITY LIGHTS BOOKS 2001/£16.99/

\$19.95 ISBN: 0-87286-379-4



In the 1950s a group of non-conformist poets changed the US forever. Congregating in smoky San Francisco bars, discussing Buddhism, anarchy and revolution, they succeeded in dragging poetry to the forefront of the public eye, re-cladding its fusty image with cool, and shouting it aloud in the face of the establishment. Some of those men, notably Jack Kerouac, Alan Ginsberg, and William Burroughs, have since become cultural icons. Subsequent generations of malcontents have appropriated them as their chosen symbols of rebellion – fuelling the demand for a whole industry of glossy 'Beat' publications.

*San Francisco Beat*, however, is by no means just one more tome in the vast library of work on the Beats. Since these interviews are written by David Meltzer, himself a well-known poet and an undisputed member of the Beats' inner circle, they have none of the formality or reverence found in so much 'Beat' literature. Rather, Meltzer is talking with old friends about battles first fought as young men and still raging 30 years on.

But what, one might ask, is the relevance of the Beat Generation today? Are they merely figures from a bygone literary movement, idolised primarily for their rebellion against convention, and only secondly for their message? For Meltzer, at least, that is definitely not the case.

The Beats arose from a US gripped by a cold war mentality, terrified by the prospect of the nuclear bomb and sinking rapidly into mass conformism. When Ginsberg's *Howl* was first printed, his publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti was arrested and tried for publishing obscene material. Ferlinghetti responded by announcing: 'It is not the poet but what he observes which is revealed as obscene. The great obscene wastes of *Howl* are the sad wastes of the mechanised world, lost among atom bombs and insane nationalisms.'

It is sentences like this that make us realise that all that has changed since the 1950s is that our chance to make a difference must now be accomplished in a shorter space of time. The

Beats saw what was happening 50 years ago, and tried to affect a change. It is for this reason that their work is not just as relevant today as it was 40 years ago, but is more so.

In his first interview with Meltzer, conducted in 1969, Ferlinghetti predicted 'an enormous ecological catastrophe or eco-catastrophe, within 10 years'. Michael McClure echoes these sentiments, referring to the Beats as 'the first literary wing of the environmental movement'. After all Gary Snyder was offering sustainable alternatives to Western ideologies based on Buddhist and Native American mythology as far back as the 1950s.

What this book demonstrates most aptly then, is that poetry can have a power above and beyond the sum of its parts. Meltzer eloquently explains this when he asks one of his interviewees: 'Can the poem say the unsayable?' Philip Lamatia replies: 'Isn't this what poets have always aspired to? Seemingly failing in the attempt, but finally achieving a miracle in words.'

Those who are still alive continue the fight with humour, with intellectual subversion and with courage. Neither have they remained fixed in the modes of thought by which they first made themselves heard all those years ago. Their rebellion and relevance has not been dulled by age. In this collection Snyder (71) discusses the intellectual possibilities of the internet, Ferlinghetti (80) casts judgement on 'the autumn of our civilisation', and McClure (68) quotes Alfred North Whitehead when he declares: 'It is

'The obscene wastes of *Howl*  
are the sad wastes of the  
mechanised world, lost among  
bombs and insane nationalisms'

the business of the future to be dangerous.'

*San Francisco Beat* is a reminder why these poets continue to be read, a paean to their genius, an epitaph to some of them and a sounding board for others. But mostly, it shows us that a protest can be effective if voiced by one, but if voiced by many it can be profound.

Though what the Beats stood for is encapsulated in their many books, it is hard to gauge the full extent of their achievements, because they are still achieving. What can be said, however, is that in their merging of political dissent with art, they reached an audience infinitely bigger than they would have done had they stuck merely to politics. This tells us that while politics is inherently divisive, poetry is universal. Perhaps it points, too, to the direction we all must turn if we are to reach people, real people, before it is too late.

Reviewer **Piers Moore Ede** is a freelance journalist and the author of two novels.

# ROUND UP READER

As a work of reference, *The Atlas of Endangered Species* by Richard Mackay (Earthscan 2002 £11.99 ISBN

1-85383-874-8) is highly engaging. Its 120 pages are filled with pictures, maps and graphics that bring

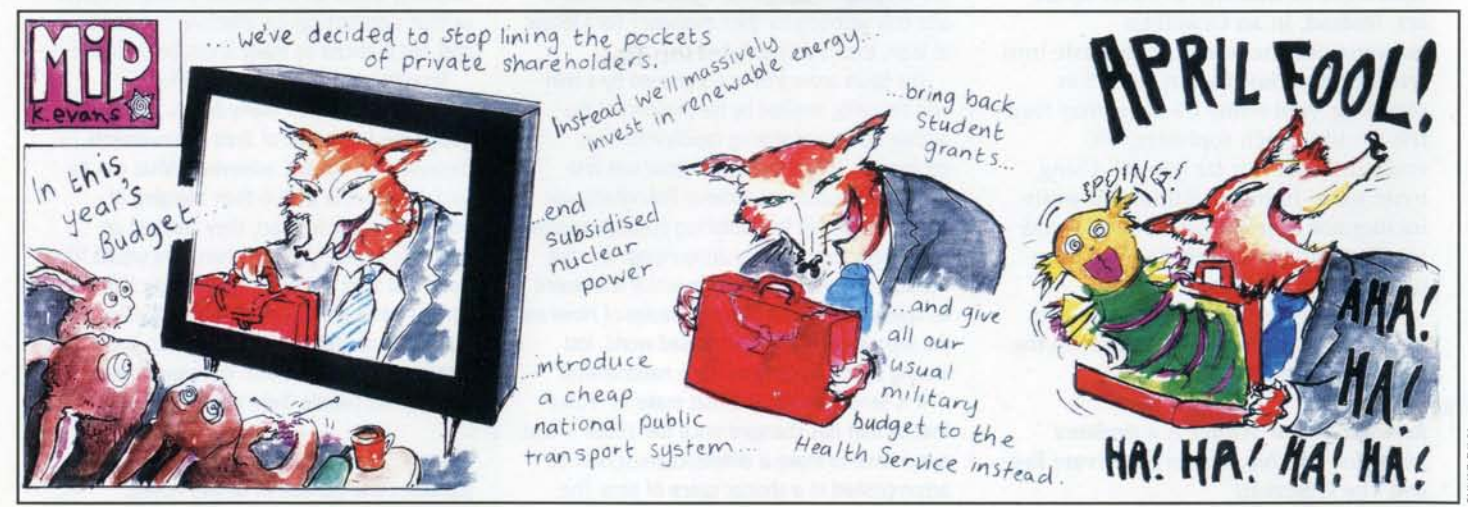
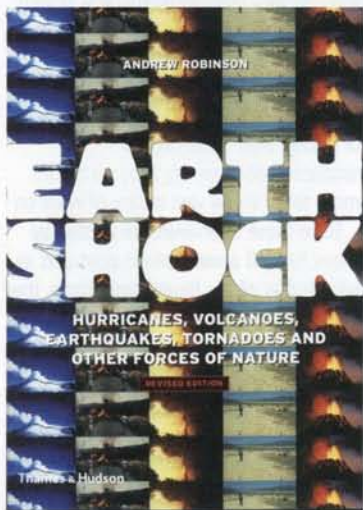
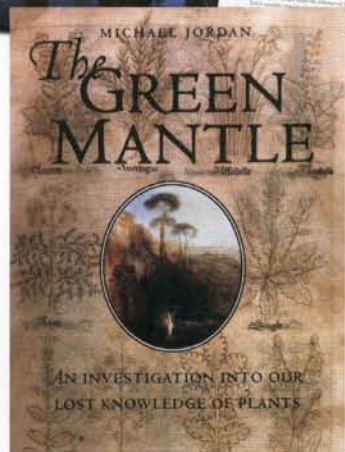
each extinction also represents the loss of irreplaceable genetic information, including beneficial characteristics that could have been bred into domestic crops and livestock. Chemicals produced naturally are also used to develop pharmaceuticals.' It makes one wonder where his sympathies really lie.

Equally exhaustive and well illustrated is *EarthShock – hurricanes, volcanoes, earthquakes, tornadoes and other forces of nature* by Andrew Robinson (Thames and Hudson, revised edition 2002 £14.95 ISBN 0-500-28304-4). But thankfully, Robinson's analysis is more profound. In his conclusion he calls on humanity 'to develop new insights that embed mind in nature... forcing us to accept that we have an unprecedented responsibility'. The book's pictures

alone, whether they are of pendulous tornado clouds swelling over the US Midwest or windswept sand dunes swallowing up plantations in Egypt, instill the wonder, humility and, yes, reverence that a reawakening of such a responsibility demands.

Another book that could reawaken us to our forgotten connections with nature is *The Green Mantle – an investigation into our lost knowledge of plants* by Michael Jordan (Cassell & Co 2001 £20.00 ISBN 0-304-35589-5). Spanning millennia and civilisations, this book is a wondrous journey through our relationship with the plants around us. From the legends of the Mesopotamian Tree of Life and the Green Man to the uses of plants by both shamans and herbalists, this is a truly mind-expanding read.

immediately home the ever-increasing crisis of extinction. However, much of its analysis is both facile and dangerous. Only with a wholly amoral and utilitarian world view can genetic manipulation really be seen as 'a development that may lead to the most rapid period of hominoid evolution yet witnessed'. More worryingly, Mackay gives a dangerously anthropocentric view of the world as a resource when he answers his own question in the book's introduction – 'why should conserving biodiversity matter?'. He writes: 'Apart from aesthetic loss,



# Rohe Deal – The corruption of Barcelona

*Gaudí may be the first name that comes to mind when one thinks of Barcelona and architecture but, writes George Marshall, beyond his pretty facades another artist has had a far more profound and damaging influence on the city's architecture.*

The Barcelona Pavilion by Mies Van de Rohe is an outstanding work of art, the culmination of a series of daring experiments in the 1920s that defined the modern architectural form. It is an icon, so much so that 60 years after it was demolished it was reverently reconstructed for design pilgrims.

Read from the perspective of 21st century environmental collapse, however, the Barcelona Pavilion is more of a tombstone than a milestone. It marks the point where architects rejected a rich design tradition that respected the local environment and embraced instead an anti-environmental aesthetic that could not function without vast inputs of energy.

This was quite an achievement in a city blessed with the perfect climate for low-energy design. Most of the year the average temperature is a blissful 18–22°C. In the winter there is abundant sunshine to offset the cold. Only for one month does the summer temperature become uncomfortable, and even then it stays well within the bounds of human tolerance.

The traditional architecture of Barcelona responds to this local climate with four strategies. Firstly, the buildings have a high thermal mass – their thick masonry and brick walls respond slowly to changes in temperature and level out variations between night and day. Secondly, all buildings have external shutters with which the occupants can choose between a wide range of settings for sun, shade, light and privacy. It is a technology so simple that we easily overlook its effectiveness and flexibility.

All avenues are lined with deciduous trees – another simple yet extremely effective strategy. In winter they are leafless, and the avenues are bathed in sunlight. In summer they shade both the street and the first four floors of the buildings that face it. Finally, almost all apartment houses have central courtyards and air shafts. These draw hot air out of the core of the building and encourage the movement of air through the rooms.

For 1,000 years Catalan builders perfected these simple rules. Gaudí's,

Domenèch's, and Puig's glorious Art Nouveau buildings define the postcard image of Barcelona. They may have called their movement 'modernisme', yet – however inventive their experiments with ornament and colour, however bizarre the facade and roofline – they always remained deeply respectful of local traditions and materials.

But then in 1929 real modernism landed in Barcelona. The reason that Van de Rohe's pavilion still looks like the cutting edge of the modern age and makes 'modernisme' look positively medieval is that its starting point, its entire motivating spirit, is the deconstruction of traditional form. The walls and roof are so abstracted that the pavilion no longer resembles a building at all. It is an arrangement of planes, floating and sliding past each other like Zeppelins in the night. There is not a single local material in it. It was built instead out of Roman travertine, Alpine marble and Algerian onyx. It is the new aesthetic of the global economy, dependent on a transport infrastructure of railways and shipping lines.

But when traditional form was rejected, so was everything that made a building function in Barcelona's climate – the shutters, the thermal mass, the planting. There is not so much as a shrub to block the pavilion's pure lines. The disastrous implications of this were not immediately apparent because the pavilion was not really a building at all – it was open on three sides, a fancy shed for an international exhibition. Nonetheless, the pavilion reconstruction, obsessively faithful though it otherwise is, had to add air conditioning to the adjoining service room when it was reincarnated as a souvenir shop (Van de Rohe keyring anyone?). Presumably, in 1928 no one cared that the staff were passing out with heat stroke as they laid out the canapés.

Not until 1958 was there a major attempt to build a Miesian office block in Barcelona. The College of Catalan and Balearic Architecture confronts the cathedral with a two-storey concrete



CORBIS

podium decorated with blown-up back-of-a- napkin scribbles by Picasso (proving just how lazy and complacent the artist finally became). From it rise 10 storeys of sealed glass facing defiantly due south. So severe was the overheating that within 10 years the entire facade had to be rebuilt with blinds and half the amount of glazing.

Every major figure in the post-war Catalan architectural scene had a hand in the design of the college. Throughout the 1960s the same woeful design was repeated across Barcelona. Every street was graced with a sealed glass office block, its facade cluttered with extra air-conditioning units. So much for elegant simplicity.

In the 1980s high-profile international architects came to town. The Olympic Village has glass boxes by Kurokawa and Bruce Graham that look in no way different from anything they ever built in Japan or Chicago. Ricardo Bofill built the airport terminal as a shiny black glass box with his usual cod classical trimmings. Richard Meier built a Museum of Modern Art that looks like everything else he has ever designed (offset grid, lots of glass, a white box with a wobbly bit tagged on the side). Meier's museum recently appeared in adverts for cold sore lotion, shown on British television at the same time as car adverts starring the Van de Rohe pavilion. Although 60 years separate them, both buildings are apt backdrops for the products of transnational corporations. They too are the result of a universal design solution which pays no attention to place, history, or environmental function, and an industrial culture that generates needs where none previously existed and replaces autonomy with needless consumption.

*George Marshall works for Rising Tide ([www.risingtide.org](http://www.risingtide.org)), a national grassroots network campaigning against climate change.*

# Magazine Rack

Worthwhile reads you won't find in the shops



**CLAMOR** is a dynamic bi-monthly for all those who feel that the mainstream media doesn't reflect reality. It campaigns for social change through the active creation of political and cultural alternatives.

**Clamor, c/o BigTop Newsstand Services, 2729 Mission Street, Suite 201, San Francisco - CA 94110-3131, USA; tel: +1 415 643 0161 or visit [www.clamormagazine.org](http://www.clamormagazine.org)**

**GENETIX UPDATE** is the quarterly newsletter of the Genetic Engineering Network. Life wouldn't be the same without it - all the great GM warriors under one roof and the contributions are simply the best.

**Genetix Update, c/o ToGG, PO Box 77, Totnes, Devon TQ9 5ZL, UK; tel: +44 (0) 1803 840098 or visit [www.togg.org.uk](http://www.togg.org.uk)**

**SPLICE** is a small and strong bi-monthly all to do with genetics. Its latest edition features a great account of a farmer whose soya was contaminated by GM crops,

losing him his business with Japan. The 'news, rules and regulations' section is a reliable companion.

**Splice, c/o Genetics Forum, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF, UK; tel: +44 (0)20 7837 9229 or visit [www.geneticsforum.org.uk](http://www.geneticsforum.org.uk)**

**CORPORATE EUROPE OBSERVER** is the quarterly newsletter published by the Corporate Europe Observatory

(CEO). The latest issue contains a detailed piece on the Industry's Rio+10 Strategy, CEO's reply to Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt's 'Paradox of Anti-Globalisation' and two thoughtful articles on the political manoeuvrings behind the Kyoto Protocol.

**Corporate Europe Observatory, Paulus Potterstraat 20, 1071 DA Amsterdam, the Netherlands; tel: +31 20 612 7023 or visit [www.xs4all.nl/~ceo](http://www.xs4all.nl/~ceo)**

**ISLAND EYE** is a small monthly alternative look at what's happening on the Isle of Wight. Brace yourself for a great read into all the sleaze council members have been up to in order to make way for ever more roads and mega-ferry terminals. The cover of a recent issue, depicting a bunch of councillors, led to the magazine's withdrawal from supermarkets and newsagents - long live free speech!

**Island Eye Ltd, PO box 95, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO32 6WA, UK; tel: +44 (0) 1983 296110 or email: [angela.hewitt@btclick.com](mailto:angela.hewitt@btclick.com)**



## AN EVERGREEN ISLAND

FRONTYARD FILMS • [cavadini@tpgi.com.au](mailto:cavadini@tpgi.com.au)

In 1965 Conzinc Rio Tinto of Australia (CRA) located a huge copper-ore deposit in the Panguna valley on the island of Bougainville. Part of the Solomon Islands, and under the authority of Papua New Guinea from 1975 when the latter won independence from Australia, the island lies 700km east of Papua New Guinea proper. In 1972 through its subsidiary Bougainville Copper Party Limited, CRA began commercial exploitation of the copper reserves. This was hugely successful and profitable for CRA and Papua New Guinea, but devastating for the peoples, lands and rivers of Bougainville.

Villagers were forced to relocate. Over a billion tonnes of poisonous tailings were dumped in the Jaba and Kawerong rivers. River fish, animals and coastal marine life were poisoned, died or disappeared along with forests and food gardens. The mine created a huge crater, half a kilometre deep and two kilometres wide. Green mountains turned to barren rock. The Jaba river valley became a moonscape. Local communities were showered in dust containing toxic heavy metals and had to drink from polluted water.

After 17 years of patient petitions and lobbying for better environmental controls, a fairer deal and compensation from CRA and the Papua New Guinea government in Port Moresby, the people of Bougainville closed the mine. The Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) blew up the mine's power supply, and Bougainville was at war with Port Moresby. From May 1989 until the present the mine has stayed shut.

*An Evergreen Island* is a bittersweet film. Watching it, it is impossible to forget the scale of the suffering in Bougainville, where up to 20,000 people (out of a population of around 200,000) died during the war - many from preventable diseases like TB, whooping cough and malaria or during childbirth.

In April 1990 Port Moresby imposed a land, sea and military blockade around Bougainville. It aimed to make life even harder for Bougainvilleans so they would turn against the pro-independence BRA and the Panguna mine could reopen. All government and social services were suspended, schools closed and medical staff left Bougainville. For nine years the blockade kept journalists out, along with food, medical supplies, fuel and humanitarian assistance.

Without modern arms, the BRA used waterpipes to build guns which could fire faster than the automatic weaponry of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF). In return, the Australian-supported and armed PNGDF strafed villages with helicopter gunships, and tortured and killed the Bougainvillean people. But communities in the BRA-controlled areas - over 80 per cent of the Bougainville mainland - showed incredible

determination and ingenuity using local materials and nature itself to solve complex problems.

The Bougainvilleans built and maintained indigenous health and education services without outside assistance. A system of schools and training colleges was set up. Houses, schools and clinics were built from local timbers, vines and foliage. And nails were made from cutting up cyclone fencing. The Pidgin term the local chiefs used to describe this indigenous inventiveness was *mekim na savvy* - 'learning by doing'.

Without diesel, Bougainvilleans discovered a new, truly revolutionary use for coconuts. The oil was fermented in upturned fridges discarded at the beginning of the crisis, boiled and used as fuel for generators and the specially-adapted four-wheel drives needed to cross the rugged terrain. Young people driven from their studies by the crisis combined technical and indigenous know-how and sheer genius to customise available bits of machinery like truck gearboxes to make small hydroelectric power installations on the fast-flowing rivers of their lands. The abandoned mine became a hardware supermarket for spare parts, which were salvaged, carried across the island and put to new uses. And solar energy was harnessed to charge batteries for two-way radios and satellite phones - the latter being important links with the outside world. As a Bougainvillean woman comments at the start of the film: 'The war was like a university - it made us creative. We thought for ourselves and we discovered alternative ways to survive.'

This film is more than just a tale of survival on a troubled tropical paradise. It is about community and self-determination. And after many years, communities across the country are finally confronting the painful task of reconciling with their wartime enemies. In late August, after three years of an often fragile ceasefire, a pact was signed which will deliver a greater amount of autonomy to Bougainville. This includes a disarmament agreement, the drawing up of a new Bougainville constitution and plans for a referendum on independence. Legislation to make the constitutional amendments necessary for the agreement's implementation went to Papua New Guinea's parliament for a first reading in December.

This film speaks to us all. It says there are alternatives but no blueprints. If we could harness just some of the same courage, resourcefulness and vision as the people of Bougainville we would be well on the way to a brighter future.

Perhaps we need a global dose of *mekim na savvy*.

Reviewer **Aziz Choudry** is an activist and author from Aotearoa, New Zealand. A different version of this review first appeared on [www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org).

CHRIS



## Word unheard spends April with the fools

Perhaps nowhere is the construction of society and its language by the powerful more apparent than in our response to, and treatment of, madness. When humans were essentially rural creatures, people whose minds worked otherwise from the social norm – whatever that might have been – were still members of society. The ‘village idiot’ was still explicitly a part of the village. Indeed, in Shakespeare’s plays the Fool (from the Latin ‘follis’ meaning ‘bellows’ – full of hot air, perhaps) was often possessed of an understanding absent in the other characters.

Only later was the fool silenced – made ‘dumb’. Michel Foucault has shown how the exclusion of the mad took place at the same time as the formation of the great cities that accompanied European empire building. As citizens became civilised inside city walls there was no place for those who did not contribute to the society’s economic progress, and so, whether they were sick, insane or destitute, they were shut up inside the first asylums. In *Madness and Civilisation* Foucault quotes from a royal edict that established the Hôpital General in France. The institution’s purpose was not medical but to house ‘a population without resources, without social moorings, a class rejected or rendered mobile by new economic developments’.

The most famous of the new asylums in London was the Hospital of Saint Mary of Bethlehem, popularly known as ‘Bedlam’. When society ‘sectioned’ off the insane, it objectified them, and so made them a subject for medical inspection and macabre voyeurism. A regular entertainment was to take a trip to the local asylum to gawk at those enclosed within. And, as with Guy the Gorilla or Chi Chi the Panda, the crowds would soon develop a particular favourite, known as the Tom Fool and chosen for the bizarre character of his mania (his ‘tomfoolery’).

Society may have called its favourite madman Tom, but it has long associated madness with the feminine and, by extension, her proximity to nature. The root of the word ‘hysterical’ is ‘hysterus’, meaning ‘womb’. The origin of



THE ART ARCHIVE

## Philanthropy or Villain-trophy?

Every month, *The Ecologist* keeps you updated on what corporate responsibility really means. This month, we look at a strange chemistry between the US national parks and... Unilever

The US is proud of its national parks. Old Faithful steaming away as the sun sets on Yellowstone, and the Stars and Stripes fluttering above Fort McHenry National Monument are images to stir the American soul. For the last four years one of the National Park Foundation’s partners has tapped this enthusiasm with its ‘Your Picture of America’ photo contest. The partner is that famed lover of open spaces, Unilever. The contest is part of a \$10m seven-year investment by Unilever in the US national parks.

Unilever’s website proudly proclaims: ‘We are publicly committed to contributing to sustainable development and are a signatory to the United Nations Global Compact.’

However, referring to the compact, Corporate Watch’s Kenny Bruno writes: ‘Unilever has violated Principle 7, “support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges”, Principle 8, “undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility”, and Principle 9 “promote the diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies”, at their thermometer factory in Kodaikanal in India.’

The incident Bruno refers to took place in March 2001, when residents of Kodaikanal, a southern Indian hill station

‘lunatic’ is ‘luna’, ‘the moon’. The link between lunar and menstrual cycles is apparent. Since men understood neither, they attached the stigma of madness to both.

In our specialised and increasingly urbanised society, labels for different forms of madness continue to grow. So too does the increasing feeling of alienation in society, to the point that writers such as Erich Fromm

discovered a dump site with toxic mercury-laced waste from a thermometer factory run by Unilever’s Indian subsidiary Hindustan Lever. The 7.4-ton stockpile of crushed mercury-containing glass was found in torn sacks, spilling onto the ground in a busy scrapyard located near a school in a sensitive watershed forest.

At first company officials denied and downplayed the site. They then refused to engage researchers in dialogue about the issue. Subsequent worker testimonies revealed that staff had not been informed about mercury’s toxicity – to which they had been exposed without appropriate protective gear.

As it says on the Unilever website, ‘relationships are strongest when built on trust’.

Furthermore, when workers demanded the company hand over their health records, provide financial compensation and implement a long-term plan for health monitoring and remediation, Unilever refused to comply. Instead, it ordered workers to relocate to a Unilever factory more than 1,000 miles away in Kandla, Gujarat. Anyone who did not do so within the stipulated time was threatened with loss of pay.

As the company’s website also says: ‘Our success is built upon the way we respond to local needs. We know that this approach works only if we are truly part of the local culture.’

and RD Laing have argued that it is not so much the individual who is insane as the society. In today’s self-destructive world, it is perhaps the ‘mad’, those unable to fit in, who are the most healthy.

As Laing wrote in *The Politics of Experience*: ‘Social adaptation to a dysfunctional society may be very dangerous. The perfectly adjusted bomber pilot may be a greater threat to species survival than the hospitalised schizophrenic deluded that the bomb is inside him.’



# THE Exchange

The Exchange is a noticeboard for environmental and ethical services and needs, open to all. Entries are FREE for individuals and NGOs, charities and campaign groups. For businesses and educational institutions, the cost is £54 per listing, including a year's free subscription to the magazine. Repeat listings are £20 per issue, £10 extra for a boxed ad. Please send entries – no more than 40 words long – together with cheques where necessary made payable to *The Ecologist*, to Sally Snow, The Ecologist, Unit 18, Chelsea Wharf, 15 Lots Road, London SW10 0QJ, or email [sally@theecologist.org](mailto:sally@theecologist.org). For more information, call Sally on +44 (0)20 7351 3578. Free listings are allocated first-come first-served, and we reserve the right to refuse any entry. *The Ecologist* does not necessarily endorse the products, organisations or services listed.

## APPEALS

**The Centre for Alternative Technology** (CAT) invites gardeners to join the fight against slug damage by sending their own favourite **anti-slug strategies**. The best slime fighters will be published in CAT's *Little Book of Slugs* (out this autumn) and on [www.ihateslugs.com](http://www.ihateslugs.com). Contact Allan Shepherd, CAT, Machynlleth, Powys, UK SY20 9AZ; telephone 01654 705980; email: [catpub@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:catpub@globalnet.co.uk)

16 June, Richmond, UK  
The Environment Trust, BTCV and Thames Landscape Strategy are seeking **sponsorship and participants for their four-mile Jubilee Walk**. Attractions include children's entertainment, live music and country crafts. Please contact Ruth Darby, at the Environment Trust for Richmond upon Thames, telephone 020 8891 5455 or email [etrut@netscape.online.co.uk](mailto:etrut@netscape.online.co.uk) for more information.

**Community Conservation and Development Initiative** is a non-profit organisation involved in environmental conservation looking to produce environmental education packs for young people. It needs info on rainwater harvesting, composting and waste disposal. If you can help, contact: [ccdi@hyperia.com](mailto:ccdi@hyperia.com)

**Self-funding MSC student** seeks finance for field work research into Costa Rican rural women's participation in the sustainable development process.  
email: [helentemple@yahoo.com](mailto:helentemple@yahoo.com)

## CALL FOR PAPERS

13-14 February 2003, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. **Expo 2003: Energy, Water and Waste – Central and Eastern Europe**. Bringing the energy, water/waste industry together to demonstrate the needs of these most important economic sectors in relation to the EU. Visit [www.ewexpo.com](http://www.ewexpo.com)

13-15 May 2003, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.  
**Sustain: The World Sustainable Energy**

**Exhibition and Conference**. Bringing the renewable and clean energy industry together to demonstrate the role of renewables as an efficient, secure and competitive energy source. Visit [www.sustain2003.com](http://www.sustain2003.com)

## CAMPAIGNS

**Save our World**. You can still sign up to our **on-line Petition** to the US Congress to make real and radical reductions in greenhouse gases. It runs up till the time of the Summit, and is unaltered since its inception in October 2000 – notwithstanding all the changes that have occurred since that time.  
For this and our latest news, visit [www.save-our-world.org.uk](http://www.save-our-world.org.uk)

Fort Greely, Alaska, USA.  
Last July the Bush Administration declared its intention to deploy a 'rudimentary' **national missile defence system at Fort Greely** as early as 2004. Construction is due to start this April. Visit [www.acq.osd.mil/bmdo/bmdolink/html/testbed.html](http://www.acq.osd.mil/bmdo/bmdolink/html/testbed.html) and [www.ciw.org/nmd/fortgreeley.html](http://www.ciw.org/nmd/fortgreeley.html)

22-28 April, UK  
**Real Nappy Week**. Focussing attention on the environmental effects of nappies and promoting a fair choice. For more information, telephone 020 7481 9004, or visit [www.wen.org.uk](http://www.wen.org.uk) **Real nappies don't cost the earth – anything else is just rubbish!**

Native American tribes from Minnesota, Wisconsin and Canada who have cultivated *Manoamin* (wild rice) for thousands of years, have started a dialogue on **how to protect wild rice as an indigenous resource**. Your support will be critical in protecting wild rice from corporate takeover. Contact the White Earth Land Recovery Project and let them know you are willing to provide whatever help necessary to protect *Manoamin*. White Earth Land Recovery Project (WELRP), 32022 East Round Lake Road, Ponsford, Minnesota 56575, USA; telephone: +1 888 779 3577; email: [welrp@unitelc.com](mailto:welrp@unitelc.com)

**Baby Milk Action** Visit our website [www.babymilkaction.org/](http://www.babymilkaction.org/) for updates on our campaigns.

YOU CAN NOW ORDER PUBLICATIONS AND MERCHANDISE ONLINE. Baby Milk Action is the UK member of the International Baby Food Action Network – IBFAN – [www.ibfan.org/](http://www.ibfan.org/) Baby Milk Action, 23 St. Andrew's Street, Cambridge, UK, CB2 3AX.

**UK contact numbers**. Tel: 01223 464420; Fax: 01223 464417. **International contact numbers**. Tel: +44 1223 464420; Fax: +44 1223 464417.

Visit [www.warmwell.com](http://www.warmwell.com) to read about the latest issues concerning **Foot and Mouth** disease. If we were to have another outbreak, the same unnecessary and illegal mass slaughter would begin again. There are better alternatives...

## COURSES

5-7 April, Aberystwyth, Wales.  
**Introduction to Renewable Energy Weekend Course** at the University of Wales.  
The course will give an overview of the technology of renewable energy and outline the basic principles of small-scale wind power, solar electricity, and microhydro-power and their applications for homes, businesses and farms. For more information, telephone 01974 821 564 or visit [www.greendragonenergy.co.uk](http://www.greendragonenergy.co.uk)

## DIARY DATES

26 March, London, UK  
**How will Climate Change affect us all?** Is it too late to halt climate change, if indeed change is taking place? Speakers: Charles Secrett, Dr Richard D North, Prof David Simon, St James's Church, Piccadilly. For more details, visit [www.global-development-forum.org](http://www.global-development-forum.org)

25 March-1 April, The Hague, The Netherlands.  
**Easter March against nuclear weapons**. There is a website announcing the actions, but it is only in Dutch  
<http://vredesite.nl/paasmars2002>. If you want information in English, email [bernard@motherearth.org](mailto:bernard@motherearth.org)

25-27 March, Cirencester, UK  
Women's Food and Farming Union National Conference **'Opportunities for Local Sourcing'**. Come and meet with like-minded producers, marketers, service industries and retailers, and get to understand the benefits of local sourcing. Visit [www.wfu.org.uk](http://www.wfu.org.uk)

25 March-5 April, New York, USA  
**3rd Preparatory Session for the 2002 Word Summit on Sustainable Development**. UN Headquarters, New York. Expected to produce a first draft of a 'review' document and elements of the Summit Programme. Contact Andrey Vasilyev, +1 212 963 5949 or visit [www.johannesburgsummit.org](http://www.johannesburgsummit.org)

30 March, London, UK.  
**CND March** – end terrorism, abolish nuclear

weapons. Contact CND on : + 44 (0)20 7700 2393 or visit [www.cnduk.org](http://www.cnduk.org)

30 March, Tokyo, JAPAN  
Aoyama Gakuin University, near Shibuya. International Green Network's annual forum, entitled **Towards a Green Transformation of Culture**. For more information visit [www.net-ibaraki.ne.jp/aboys](http://www.net-ibaraki.ne.jp/aboys)

30 March-5 April, Findhorn, UK  
**Restore the Earth! Conference** jointly hosted by Trees for Life and The Findhorn Foundation, dedicated to highlighting and catalysing positive steps to return the planet to sound ecological health. Visit [www.findhorn.org/restore](http://www.findhorn.org/restore) for more information.

1 April, Japan  
**Birth of Mizuho – the world's largest private bank.**

3-4 April, Laguna, The Philippines.  
The International Alliance Against Agrochem TNCs and the Resistance and Solidarity Against Agrochem TNCs are staging a **protest and series of activities** on IRRI's 42nd anniversary. For more information, contact the IAAATNCs Secretariat; telephone: + 632 433 7208; fax: + 632 922 0977; email: [kmp@quickweb.com.ph](mailto:kmp@quickweb.com.ph)

4 April **Sustainable Cities: The EU Experience**. European policy experts discuss initiatives for Planning for Traffic, Transport and Air Quality at the Congress Centre London. Contact Gemma, telephone 020 7407 6269.

5-7 April, Massachusetts, USA  
**From Abortion Rights to Social Justice: Building the Movement for Reproductive Freedom**. Hampshire College, Amherst. For more information about the conference, contact: Civil Liberties & Public Policy Program 413.559.5416, Hampshire College, Amherst, MA 01002, USA; email: [clpp@hampshire.edu](mailto:clpp@hampshire.edu); fax: +1 413 559 6045.

6-19 April 2002, EUROPE  
**Resistance is Fertile!** In April 2002, the UN circus of government delegates, technical experts and business lobbyists will be contemplating the state of the world's bio-diversity resources over *hors d'oeuvres* at the sixth meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The CBD will soon have two legally binding international protocols – the Bio-safety Protocol and 'The Law of the Seed' (International Undertaking). Neither has the power to stop the spread of GMOs, protect farmers' rights or stop finite resources from being plundered for profit – once again demonstrating the UN's lack of political will and power.

**Another reality is possible!**  
During these weeks, other voices will call for radical change in agriculture and international trade, for reclaiming our genetic resources (free the seed!), against GMOs and patents on life and against the corporate control of food

**envocare** the information web site that promotes care of the environment

Would you like to improve the environment without a lot of fuss?  
Visit the site designed to provide the information:

[www.envocare.co.uk](http://www.envocare.co.uk)

Hundreds of descriptions, tips, suggestions and links are provided on a diverse range of subjects including:

- Recycling • Care with Hazardous Waste • Recycling and Buying PCs & Cartridges • Electrical & Electronic Equipment
- Ethical Financial Investment • Composting Organic Waste
- Climate Change & Kyoto • Alternative & Renewable Energy
- Environmental Educational Courses • And There's More

The site offers serious commentaries on selected topics. There's space for news and contributor's articles and loads of photo backgrounds to download. You can send virtual cards and obtain help on buying reference texts. And there's still more.

and agriculture.

To find out more about **Resistance is Fertile!** email [rif@gn.apc.org](mailto:rif@gn.apc.org) or write to: rif, c/o ASEED Europe, PO Box 92066, 1090AB, Amsterdam, The Netherlands or visit: [www.resistanceisfertile.org](http://www.resistanceisfertile.org)

7 April, Global.  
World Health Day. Visit [www.who.org](http://www.who.org)

7-12 April, Melbourne, Australia.  
World Water Congress. For more information, visit [www.enviroaust.net](http://www.enviroaust.net) or telephone + 61 2 9410 1302.

8-20 April, Cape Town, South Africa  
**Workshop on Alternative Ways to Combat Desertification.** Contact Roben Penny, fax: +27 21 7881285; email: [robenpen@jaywalk.com](mailto:robenpen@jaywalk.com)

8-9 April **International Conference On Climate Change and the Built Environment.** Tyndell Centre North, UMIST, Manchester. For more information, contact Dr Andy Wright by telephone on 0161 200 5791, or email [andy.wright@umist.ac.uk](mailto:andy.wright@umist.ac.uk) To register, contact Susan Stubbs by telephone on 0161 200 3700 or email [s.stubbs@umist.ac.uk](mailto:s.stubbs@umist.ac.uk)

19 April **Towards a Sustainable Hydrogen Future.** The Science Museum, London, UK. Contact: Claire Bower 020 7324 3602 or email [generation@forumforthefuture.org.uk](mailto:generation@forumforthefuture.org.uk)

8-26 April, The Hague, The Netherlands  
**Sixth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity/Cartagena.** Contact: CBD Secretariat, Montreal, Canada. Tel: +1 514 288 2220 or visit: [www.biodiv.org](http://www.biodiv.org)

11-12 April, Stockholm, Sweden  
**Workshop on Transmission Networks for Offshore Wind Farms.** Contact: Thomas Achkerman, Royal Institute of Technology; fax: + 46 8 7674152; email: [thomasackerman@iee.org](mailto:thomasackerman@iee.org)

12-15 April, Washington DC, USA.  
**World Bank Action Summit 2002.** It's time to get the World Bank out of oil, gas and mining, and the World Bank Action Summit 2002 aims to do just that. For more information see [www.ssc.org](http://www.ssc.org) or [www.seen.org](http://www.seen.org)

16-24 April, Europe  
**Action Week Against Racism**  
Visit [www.unitedagainstracism.org](http://www.unitedagainstracism.org) or telephone + 31 20 683 4778.

17 April, Hereford, UK  
Schumacher Lecture, **Small is Beautiful – A Local World?** By Herbert Girardet, chairman of the Schumacher Society. Bishops Palace, Hereford, 7.30pm. Entrance free, but please note there is limited space. Telephone Mike Court on 01600 890483.

17-19 April, Washington DC, USA.  
**'The Future of Wealth on Earth: Opportunities and Risks for Investors, Corporations and Activists in a Changing Global Climate'**. Visit [www.ceres.org](http://www.ceres.org)

18-20 April, Beijing, China.  
China Business Summit 2002.  
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19-22 April 2002. Washington DC, USA.  
**Columbia Mobilisation and Stop the War!** A weekend of demonstrations, skill sharing, street theatre, lobbying, workshops and rallies will culminate with a massive non-violent direct

action on Monday, April 22. For more information, visit [www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org)

20 April, Washington DC, USA.  
Green Party of the United States – **March on Washington.** Visit: [www.gp-us.org/911](http://www.gp-us.org/911)

21 April  
**First round of presidential elections in France.**

21-22 April, Washington DC, USA  
IMF Headquarters/ World Bank Group.  
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26-28 April, Minnesota, USA.  
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**ReVisioning: Building Community for a Sustainable Future.**  
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David C Korten. For information, email [revisoning@yahoo.com](mailto:revisoning@yahoo.com) or telephone Sue Ann Martinson on + 1 612 827 1894.

27 April 2002, London, UK.  
10th Anniversary Conference of Scientists for Global Responsibility. **Can scientists be trusted?** Contact: SGR, PO Box 473, Folkestone, UK; email: [sgr@gn.apc.org](mailto:sgr@gn.apc.org)

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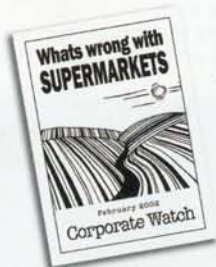
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