

THE VOLUME 32 NO 6 £3.50  
**Ecologist**  
RETHINKING BASIC ASSUMPTIONS JULY/AUGUST 2002

# GOLD DIGGERS

VAST LAKES FILLED WITH CYANIDE,  
ENTIRE VILLAGES SUBMERGED,  
MINING COMPANIES RUN BY  
HEROIN DEALERS...

...HOW MUCH DO THOSE  
EARRINGS REALLY COST?

## CANCER

New evidence points the  
finger at pollution

## OXFAM

Will its new campaign  
save the world?

## TONY BLAIR

For PM read GM

## IBERIAN LYNX

On the brink of extinction

## ANTI-GLOBALISATION

Alive and kicking

## BIOLOGICAL WARFARE

Illegal US weapons plan

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Japan's latest dirty tricks

**PLUS**

AA GILL: 'Why I love roads'



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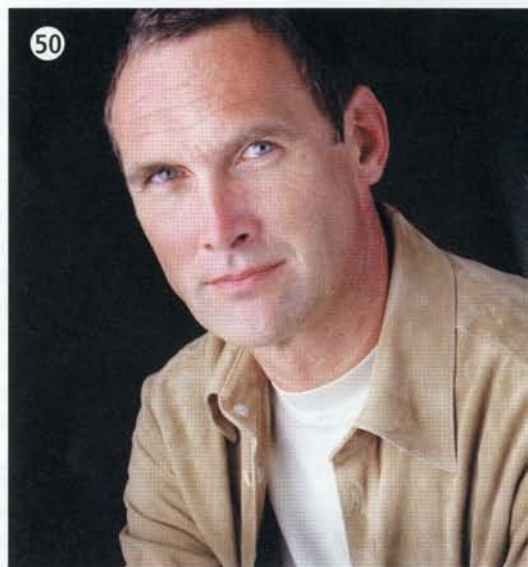
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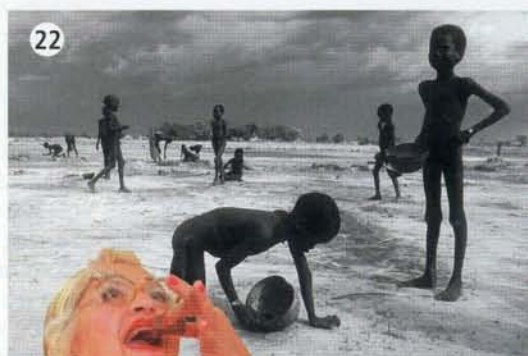
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I was at a restaurant last year with some friends when all of a sudden a Hungarian trickster called Merlin the Almost Magnificent appeared at our table and began a

routine involving cards, hats and everything else. He was very good, we applauded, but then he stayed too long. Too long not because his tricks worsened, but because his act was unsustainable. His Hungarian accent gave way to a Spanish one, then Italian, then a mixture of the lot before finally sliding into pure, unmistakable Australian. He was a fraud, albeit a very funny one. Reading Mr Blair's speech to the Royal Society last week reminded me of Merlin. He's got a good act, but it doesn't last.

The speech was on science and was prompted, Mr Blair said, by a group of Bangalore academics who accused him of lacking 'the political will to stand up for proper science'. The current opposition to biotechnology, he said, was the work of a small group of anti-science campaigners ideologically opposed to science period. What was needed was 'informed debate'.

But what Mr Blair failed to acknowledge was that the most disturbing case against GM is being made not by Luddites, but by scientists themselves.

## Scientists oppose GM

Only last month 450 scientists from 50 countries signed a statement calling for a complete moratorium on the environmental release of GM crops. And English Nature, the government's own conservation agency, has warned that herbicide-resistance genes from different GM varieties of oilseed rape were combining in stray crops in Canada and producing 'superweeds'. It also warns that dangerous chemicals are going to have to be used to combat the superweeds. The Royal Society, meanwhile, has said that GM baby foods might lead to a dramatic rise in allergies, and that unexpected shifts in oestrogen levels in GM soya-based infant feed might affect sexual development of children.

These people are hardly captains of the anti-science brigade. The fact is, if GM is roundly unpopular it's not because environmentalists have seized control of food policy. It's because the Establishment listens to the wrong science. As a result, the public remains unconvinced. You only have to look at the Food Standards Agency's attack on organic food after testing just three random carrots to know that the government is not a good judge of science.

'There is only a small band of people who genuinely want to stifle informed debate,' pontificated Mr Blair. A fair point had he been challenging the organisation he was addressing.

Not only has the Royal Society been accused by the editor of *The Lancet* of trying to prevent publication of Professor Arpad Pusztai's research into the dangers of GM (it was accused of threatening Pusztai with the loss of his job). It also endlessly seeks to control UK media coverage of GM.

Mr Blair's comments might also have carried more weight had he been referring to the European Commission, which tried to stifle a report into the dangers GM crops pose to organic agriculture.

## Biotechnology is BIG business

'Informed debate' and 'proper science' are not the guiding influences behind UK biotechnology policy. If Mr Blair has found 'no serious evidence of health risks' with GM crops, it is because he hasn't been looking for them. Instead Mr Blair has chosen to side with big business. Lord Sainsbury, the UK Science Minister who has given £9m to New Labour, is himself one of the biggest shareholders in GM stocks in the UK. His pro-biotech policies have boosted his own worth by many millions of pounds. Industry links with Mr Blair's government don't end there. Rural Recovery Co-ordinator (and Northern Foods chair) Lord Haskins, biotech enthusiast, and avid supporter of industrial farming, announced recently that organic farming 'would lead to economic and political collapse in much of the developing world'. The science Mr Blair favours is corporate science, and the corporations are bending over backwards to ensure their science prevails. Monsanto, for instance, puts a lot of effort into injecting 'tame' scientists onto supposedly independent scientific panels. It has, if you believe its own internal reports, achieved great success.

Mr Blair's science is anything but 'proper'. The same applies to the strategy he and his business associates have adopted to push GM technology. The first indication of impropriety came with last year's news that Advanta Seeds had mistakenly sold British farmers GM oilseed. The company informed the government of its error. But for inexplicable reasons the government failed to inform farmers until a month later, by which time they had already planted their crop.

Why did the government wait so long? Was it a mistake? If Don Westfall – vice-president of biotech consultancy Promar International – is sincere, the mistake was more likely to have been deliberate. 'The hope of the industry,' Westfall explained, 'is that over time the market is so flooded [with GM] that there's nothing you can do about it. You just sort of surrender.' As if to justify Westfall's optimism, a leaked report arrived at Friends of the Earth's UK headquarters last month which showed the

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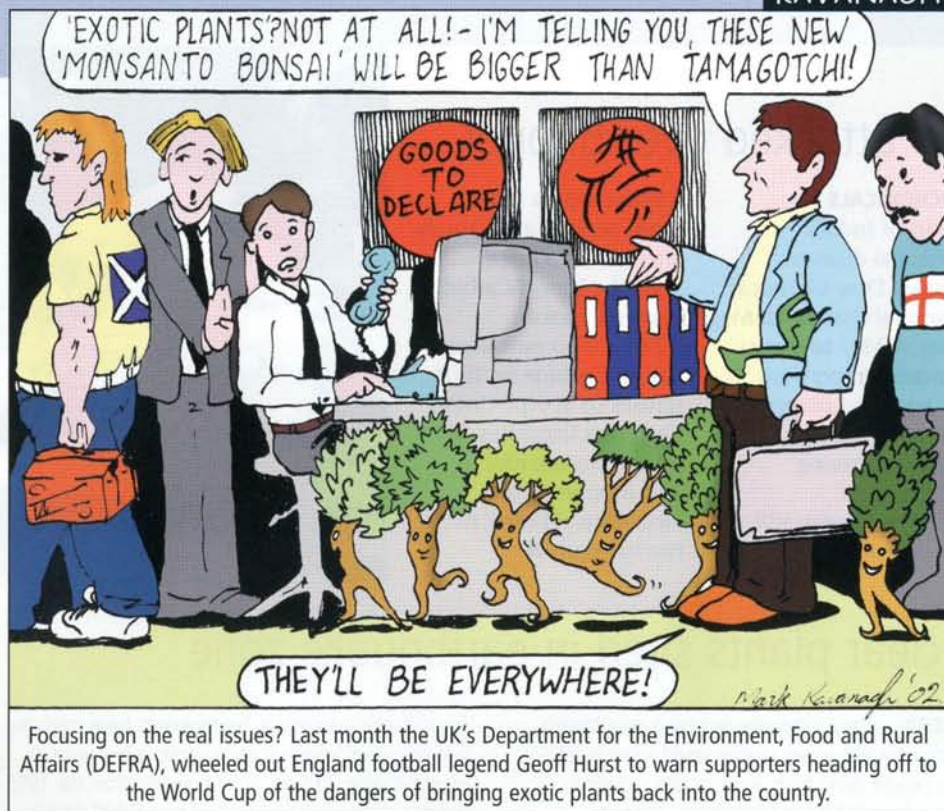
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Focusing on the real issues? Last month the UK's Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), wheeled out England football legend Geoff Hurst to warn supporters heading off to the World Cup of the dangers of bringing exotic plants back into the country.

government intends to remove the only basis through which consumers can prevent the commercialisation of GM crops – health grounds.

### Why GM PM?

But why, flirtation with business aside, is Mr Blair so determined on this issue? 'I want to reach my judgements after I have the facts, and not before,' he preached to the Royal Society. 'Responsible science and responsible policy making operate on the precautionary principle,' he added. This simply doesn't add up. When the Advanta Seeds mix-up was discovered, the government's immediate response was to declare that it was 'not a safety issue'. How could it know? The seeds had never been properly tested.

The more charitably-minded might attribute Mr Blair's obsession with GM to a genuine belief in what he is told by the biotech industry. If so, he should consider the facts, and not swallow unthinkingly the two most commonly used plugs for GM. These are:

#### Myth one: GM will alleviate world hunger:

Novartis Seeds head Steve Smith admitted as much at a Norfolk meeting, saying: 'If anyone tells you that GM is going to feed the world tell them that it is not'.

#### Myth two: GM will reduce the need for agricultural chemicals:

In the UK alone, the vast majority of GM test trials are for herbicide-tolerant crops designed to increase – not decrease – the use of pesticides. Furthermore, scientists are concerned that the emergence of superweeds will dramatically increase the need for agricultural chemicals.

In truth, GM is a nightmare technology. It is inherently unsafe – not least because it is

inherently unpredictable. And, as Dr Venter – the professor behind the human genome project – has explained, 'the notion that one gene equals one disease, or that one gene produces one key protein, is flying out of the window'. So, if we don't need it and increasing numbers of people around the world don't want it, the question remains – why the determination to push forward with GM?

The answer can be found in Mr Blair's science speech. He is a technological fundamentalist. He is a computer trained to interpret problems in such a way as to justify solutions that already fit with his high-tech agenda. His answer to systemic problems – to symptoms arising from the collapse of biological systems – is always technological. Listen to the excited confidence with which he predicts that 'with a DNA-sequencing machine and a computer, doctors could pinpoint flawed genes and predict what diseases you are likely to develop years in advance of any symptoms – and how to help you avoid them'. It's not in his nature to get excited about finding the cause of suffering, still less so to imagine that technology may fail.

And as a fanatic, Mr Blair cannot maintain neutrality. He simply hears what doesn't compromise his faith. So when he angrily accuses environmentalists of undermining reason with emotion, he selects arguments that could not be more emotive or less substantiated. Describing advocates of precaution as anti-science is like describing anti-McDonald's campaigners as being anti-food. Unfortunately, he just doesn't see the contradictions.

Or does he? ■

ZAC GOLDSMITH

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## 20 per cent of drugs unsafe

**DRUGS** – Some 20 per cent of all new US drugs are found to have serious or life-threatening side effects that were either unknown or not disclosed when the drug was approved. The findings, published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* last month, found that half of these side effects are detected within seven years of a drug being introduced.

‘Twenty million patients – almost 10 per cent of the US population – were exposed to five drugs withdrawn from the market between September 1997 and September 1998,’ said the study’s co-author Dr Paul Allen of Cambridge Hospital and Harvard Medical School. ‘Yet the drug companies push the public and doctors to use new drugs that are more profitable but also more dangerous.’

Another of the study’s authors, Dr Sidney Wolfe of health research group Public Citizen, said the findings made a strong case for the adoption of a precautionary principle when choosing whether to adopt new drugs. ‘For many years,’ Wolfe said, ‘we have recommended doctors and patients not to use new drugs until they have been on the market for five years. This study provides more evidence for this approach.’ ■

## Dow attacked over Bhopal

**PETROCHEMICALS** – Survivors of India’s 1984 Bhopal disaster challenged Dow Chemical at its annual shareholder meeting in May to clean up contamination from the disaster and properly compensate victims for their continuing hardships.

One person a day still dies as a result of the

disaster, which killed 8,000 people immediately after the poison gas leak from the Union Carbide pesticide factory.

Dow, who purchased Union Carbide in 2001, refuses to accept Union Carbide’s liabilities for environmental and human rights violations relating to the incident ■



CORBIS

## Nuclear plants sited in earthquake zone

**NUCLEAR** – Any earthquake occurring near Japan’s Hamaoka nuclear power station could result in 21.6 million people dying from acute or late radiation effects, a lawsuit filed in April claims. The suit, undertaken by more than 1,000 plaintiffs against Chubu Electric Power Company, is calling for all four Hamaoka reactors to be shut down on safety grounds.

The plaintiffs’ main cause for concern is that the Hamaoka plants are sited in the middle of the intraplate earthquake-prone region where the ‘Great

Tokai’ quake is expected. Seismologists have predicted that the Great Tokai will occur within a few years. It could be some 30 times more powerful than the 1995 Hanshin earthquake which killed over 5,000 people.

According to a simulation performed by Kyoto University, if Hamaoka 2, 3 and 4 suffered simultaneous major accidents because of such a quake, and the correct evacuations were not carried out, 17 per cent of the entire Japanese population could be killed ■

## Human cloning patented

**BIOTECH** – A patent has been granted on human reproductive cloning and any ‘products’ created by that process, claims Patent Watch. Owned by the University of Missouri, with financial interest shared by biotech company Biotransplant Inc, US patent 6,211,429 is applicable to human reproductive cloning.

‘This is not a slippery slope,’ commented Patent Watch executive director Andrew Kimbrell. ‘Rather

this is an ethical and legal free-for-fall. The US Patent Office has become a ghoulish human body shop allowing researchers and corporations to patent human body parts, cloning processes and even human life forms.’

Patent Watch also revealed that it had uncovered three further pending patents that cover cloned human embryos and foetuses. For further information, visit: [www.icta.org](http://www.icta.org) ■

## Logging halted

**DEFORESTATION** – On 7 May the Supreme Court of India ordered that all logging of forests on India’s Andaman Islands should cease immediately.

In addition, the court ordered the closure of the Andaman Trunk Road and the removal of settlers from tribal reserves. Thereby, the court removed three of the biggest threats facing the islands’ isolated Jarawa tribe (see campaigns 31/10). Visit: [www.survival-international.org](http://www.survival-international.org) ■



## STAN AT EASE by Stan Eales

### INSULATED

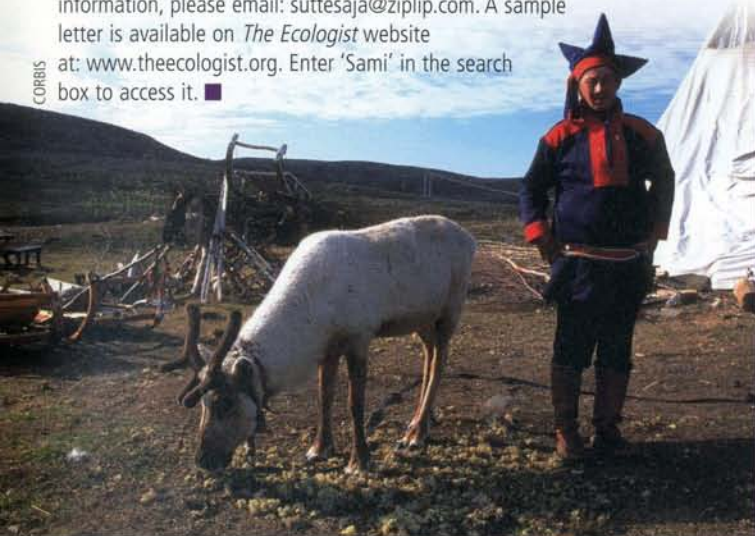


## Ancient spring threatened

**WATER WARS** – One of the most sacred sites of northern Finland's indigenous Sami people is at risk from plans to market the site's spring water for international export. Suttasaja, which means 'stream that does not freeze over' in the Sami language, is the largest natural spring in Finland and the place where the Sami traditionally cleansed themselves before ascending the sacred mountain Ailegas.

Plundering the spring's water is also projected to affect the Teno/Tana watershed, through which one of Europe's finest Atlantic salmon rivers runs. But at a recent hearing the project's leader admitted that international pressure could force the abandonment of the venture. Please help by writing to: Aulis Nordberg, Chair of the Executive Committee, PL 41, Municipality of Utsjoki, 99980 Utsjoki, Finland. Email: [aulis.nordberg@utsjoki.fi](mailto:aulis.nordberg@utsjoki.fi). For more information, please email: [suttasaja@ziplip.com](mailto:suttasaja@ziplip.com). A sample letter is available on *The Ecologist* website at: [www.theecologist.org](http://www.theecologist.org). Enter 'Sami' in the search box to access it. ■

CORBIS



## Globe warmed by aeroplanes

**GLOBAL WARMING** – Aeroplane vapour trails – the thin white clouds left by high-flying jets – substantially alter the atmosphere's heat balance, it was announced at an American Meteorological Society conference in May.

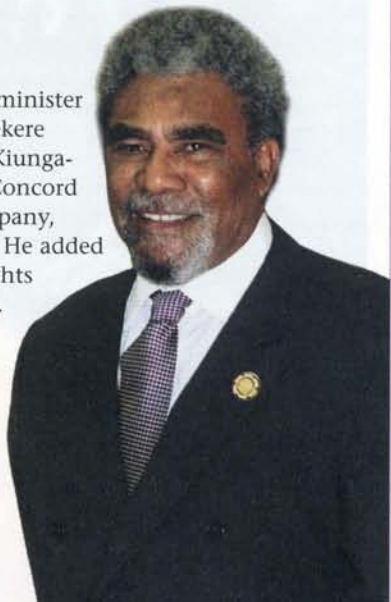
Climatologists from the University of Wisconsin

compared US temperatures in the three days following 11 September (when all flights across the the country were grounded) with days of normal flight patterns. They showed that temperatures fluctuated by an extra 1.2° centigrade when there were no planes in the air ■

## 'Stop logging'

**DEFORESTATION** – The prime minister of Papua New Guinea, Sir Mekere Morauta, has declared: 'The Kiunga-Aiambak project, involving Concord Pacific and a landowner company, should never have occurred.' He added that allegations of human rights abuses would be investigated. Joining Greenpeace activists in condemning the logging project in his country, he has now called for it to be stopped.

See: [www.greenpeace.org](http://www.greenpeace.org) ■



REUTERS

# Ros COWARD



## Who do we think we are?

The German government has just enshrined in law the state's obligation to protect the natural foundations of life for animals as well as humans. At the same time, Harvard professor Steven Wise has been pressing for US law to recognise the personhood and rights of species including dolphins, gorillas and chimps. Environmentalists may think these are positive developments marking an improvement in how we regard other species. But I am far from convinced.

My unease is partly because animal rights creates insoluble intellectual conundrums. Steven Wise's propositions expose some of the pitfalls. He draws a distinction between higher and lower species. According to Wise, the former are entitled, like ourselves, to rights. The lower are not. But isn't this arbitrary – elevating certain preferred animals to proto-human status and excluding others? Even the more militant 'rights-for-all-animals' position runs into difficulties. Must we never tread on ants? Why should we observe animals' rights when animals don't protect each other in nature? Should we prosecute lions for chasing antelopes? The only way to avoid these absurdities is to make personal moral decisions never to harm any creature.

### 'Surely, no one has rights if they jeopardise other species and the future?'

And the notion of human rights itself? This belongs to a pre-ecological way of thinking and implies a sense of human entitlement to the planet. This is not to disagree with a society enshrining the right to life, freedom from torture, freedoms of worship and fundamental equalities. But these are the rights of a peaceful democratic society, not some absolute planetary entitlement.

When it comes to improving the way we behave to each other and towards the planet, human rights legislation hasn't achieved much. Genocide still exists, as does torture and warfare. Human rights expresses an aspiration but not a means of enforcement. Even, or especially, those who are most committed to human rights implicitly recognise this. That's why they are constantly trying to extend human rights, adding more and more categories: children, sexual minorities, animals. But if human rights legislation hasn't stopped genocide in the Balkans, will animal rights stop the genocide of non-human species?

Of course, I recognise the ideological function of human rights in preventing the dehumanisation (whether through slavery or discrimination on the grounds of sex, race or creed) practised by some regimes. So, perhaps there would be similar propaganda gains if animals were recognised as suffering pain and having an entitlement to life. But endlessly extending the notion of rights isn't the most effective way of protecting the natural world. We are now at a point in history where we know human freedoms and entitlements are undermining the capacity of the planet to sustain life. Surely, no one has rights if they jeopardise other species and the future?

You only have to look at how human rights legislation has been used in Europe to see that it is by no means an unequivocal force for progress when it comes to the environment. Within six months of the UK passing the Human Rights Act the act was used to undermine planning restrictions in an environmentally sensitive area. The Duffy family built a huge house in the New Forest which was twice the size permitted by the local authority for the prime beauty spot. When the council ordered the house's demolition the human rights legislation blocked the decision. Demolition would violate the Duffy's right to a private and family life.

So when it comes to conflict with the environment the individualism and the utilitarian notions of nature at the heart of human rights surfaces. Humans will get put first even if on paper pigs and pigeons also have rights. Our relationship with nature won't be improved by endlessly extending an ineffectual model of rights. What is needed is an almost opposite process, one which recognises the limits of our entitlement in relation to the natural environment and other species. As members of democratic society we should enjoy rights, but as species we should accept a humbler place. Our entitlement to have is no greater than our responsibility to give back.

## Nuclear power plants shut...

**CANCER** – Local infant deaths and childhood cancer rates have dropped dramatically following the closure of eight US nuclear power plants. According to a report published in *Archives of Environmental Health*, there has been a 17.4 per cent fall in infant mortality in counties lying up to 40 miles downwind of nuclear reactors in the two years following the reactors' closure. Over the same period, the national decline was just 6.4 per cent.

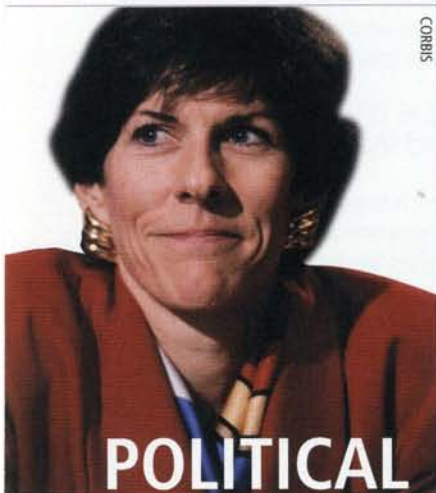
Furthermore, in three of the eight areas analysed, cancer rates among children under five declined by 25 per cent in the seven years following reactor closure. Nationally, there was a 0.3 per cent increase. 'We finally have reliable peer-reviewed accurate data attaching nuclear power plants to death and injury in the host communities,' commented New York State Assemblyman Richard Brodsky. 'This is a sobering and significant study, and we all need to take it seriously.' ■

## Waste used as fertiliser

**POLLUTION** – Toxic waste is being unwittingly spread onto root vegetables by Australian farmers, according to an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Waste from China and other countries is being imported and used as a raw material by Australian fertiliser manufacturers and distributors. Products are showing heavy-metal levels up to 110,000 times higher than those which prompt New South Wales consumer warnings ■

## Jellyfish numbers surge

**FISHERIES** – Rapidly increasing jellyfish populations are raising concerns about the health of marine ecosystems. Scientists say they could be the result of over-fishing and pesticide run-off from intensive agriculture. Populations have grown so large that they have clogged the water intakes at Japanese nuclear power plants and sunk 500-pound fishing nets near France ■



COVER

## TotalFinaElf facing court action

**HUMAN RIGHTS** – A landmark lawsuit has been filed against the oil multinational TotalFinaElf, accusing the company of being an accomplice to crimes against humanity.

The case, which is the first of its kind, alleges that TotalFinaElf and its chief executive Thierry Desmaret helped the Myanmar military to commit human rights abuses. Lawyer Alexi Deswaef said: 'When TotalFinaElf built their pipeline, they gave financial and logistical aid to the military regime – including military personnel who were present at the site of the pipeline, who had to free the zone, and [who] used the local population for forced labour.' ■

## POLITICAL NOMINATION OF THE MONTH

LINDA FISHER (above), has been nominated by the White House for the second-ranking job at the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Fisher, who has worked for the EPA for 10 years, is head of the biotech giant Monsanto's Washington lobbying office ■

## EU study leaks a GM truth

**GM** – Farmers would face higher and, in some cases, unsustainable production costs if the large-scale cultivation of GM crops went ahead in Europe. The finding was made in a secret EU study leaked to Greenpeace.

*Co-existence in European Agriculture* predicts that farming costs would rise by between nine and 41 per cent as a result of the commercialisation of GM

oilseed rape, maize and potatoes. Accompanying the study was a letter to the European Commission from Barry McSweeney, the director general of the EU Joint Research Centre.

McSweeney stated: 'Given the sensitivity of the issue, I would suggest that the report be kept for internal use within the European Commission only.'

See: [www.greenpeace.org](http://www.greenpeace.org) ■

## Success at last

**OIL** – Occidental Petroleum announced in May that it plans to return to the Colombian government its controversial oil concession in the country's Siriri region. Occidental's activities in the area had threatened the existence of the indigenous U'wa people on whose traditional territory the concession is sited.

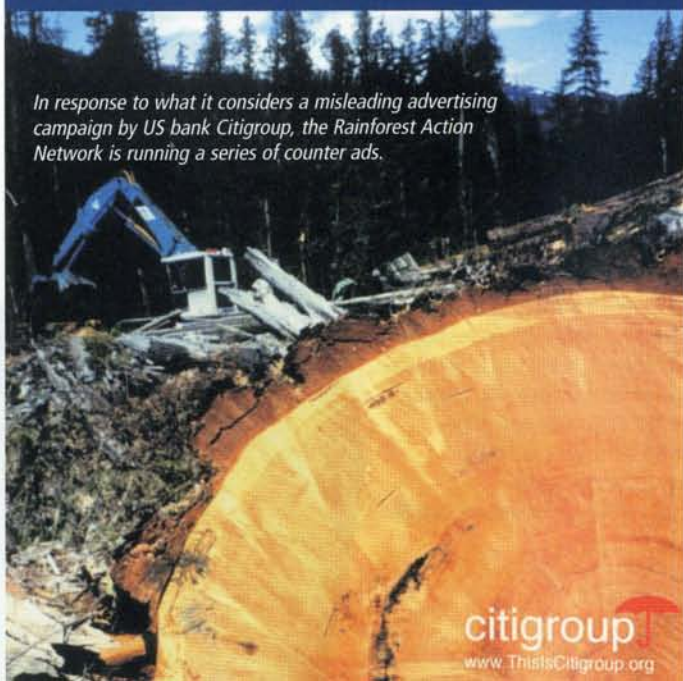
The U'wa's campaign to protect their people and land from the violence and environmental destruction that accompanies oil projects in Colombia has created an ongoing public relations nightmare for Occidental. Peaceful resistance by the indigenous people has often been countered with violent repression, resulting on one occasion in the death of three children when the military broke up a peaceful U'wa blockade. See: [www.amazonwatch.org](http://www.amazonwatch.org) ■

A trillion dollars in assets.  
And just as many ways to wreck the Earth.

This is Citigroup.

As a top financial backer of the logging industry, Citigroup directly contributes to biodiversity loss.

In response to what it considers a misleading advertising campaign by US bank Citigroup, the Rainforest Action Network is running a series of counter ads.



**citigroup**  
[www.ThisIsCitigroup.org](http://www.ThisIsCitigroup.org)

## Learn from Canada's mistakes

**TRIBAL** – The worldwide campaign for the Kalahari bushmen continues to spread ('Land rights, land wrongs' Vol 32/4). The president of the Innu nation, a Canadian indigenous people, has written an article in a Botswanan newspaper urging the country 'to learn from Canada's mistakes and end the misguided policy of trying to forcibly integrate



the bushmen into your cultural mainstream. Canada has shown the world this doesn't work'. See: [www.survival-international.org](http://www.survival-international.org) ■

## Exxon investors demand change

**ENERGY** – A broad coalition of ExxonMobil investors has won more votes than ever before for a resolution asking the multinational to adopt a renewable energy resources plan. Although the resolution was not passed at the company's May AGM, it was approved by the holders of 20.3 per cent of current shares, representing over \$55 billion worth of stock. The level of support was more than twice the 8.9 per cent the same resolution achieved in 2001. Peter Altman, national co-ordinator of Campaign ExxonMobil, which worked with the investors coalition on the resolution, said: 'Mainstream investors are questioning whether ExxonMobil is really protecting shareholder value with its isolated position on renewable energy and global

warming. For the first time mainstream investors are saying that they need to see the rationale behind the company's strategy of saying 'just trust us and don't ask questions' isn't going to work anymore.'

Chris Doran, of NGO PressurePoint commented: 'Most US consumers don't see the human and ecological consequences of our cheap gasoline, natural gas and coal. But to the international community representatives who are here in Dallas to tell their stories, those consequences are a painful fact of day to day life.'

'By uniting against the excesses of ExxonMobil, we take a stand against unbridled corporate power, the subversion of democracy, human rights abuses, and the attempted ecocide of our planet.' ■

## US abandons another treaty

**WAR** – The Bush administration has 'unsigned' the 1998 Rome Statute to establish the International Criminal Court (ICC). The statute is due to take formal effect on 1 July. The ICC treaty, which was signed by previous US president Bill Clinton along with 140 other countries, is an agreement to create the world's first permanent tribunal to prosecute war crimes, genocide and other crimes against humanity. In a simple three-sentence letter to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, US Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton stated that the US 'has no legal obligations arising from its signature [to the treaty] on 31 December, 2000'. See: [www.humanrightswatch.org](http://www.humanrightswatch.org) ■

# Eduardo GONÇALVES



## Europe's only endemic 'tiger' is down to its last 150

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) published a report in mid-May predicting that there could be massive destruction of wildlife habitats over the next 30 years. It warned that as many as one quarter of the world's mammals face extinction.

Some of the broadsheet media dutifully reported the story. One newspaper illustrated it with a Siberian Tiger. Others looked at Amur leopards and cheetahs. No-one (including UNEP itself) mentioned the most explosive issue of all. Yet it is Europe's – and possibly the world's – most serious conservation crisis.

One of the planet's most biodiverse and threatened ecosystems exists in western Europe. So does the world's most endangered big cat.

**'Left unprotected, the Iberian Lynx will be the first feline extinction since the prehistoric era's sabre-toothed tiger.'**

The Iberian Lynx, of which tiny colonies struggle for survival in the hills of southern Spain and Portugal, is on its own in the World Conservation Union's (IUCN) 'category one' list of critically endangered felines. Yet the Iberian Lynx has never been bred in captivity, it has not enjoyed concerted conservation programmes, and it does not have a network of protected reserves established for it.

The lynx's habitats of Mediterranean maquis have been destroyed at an alarming rate. There have been no big land purchases to save the maquis, or any petitions against the clearances.

And left unprotected, the Iberian Lynx will be – I am told – the first feline extinction since the prehistoric era's sabre-toothed tiger.

So you would expect alarm bells to be ringing in the corridors of power, crisis committees to be sitting in capital cities, and the high-profile campaign groups to be flexing their muscles and preparing massive publicity and fund-raising campaigns.

Tragically, you would be wrong.

In the run-up to this year's Earth Summit in Johannesburg, no-one has breathed the words 'Iberian Lynx' or 'Mediterranean maquis'. Europe's only endemic 'tiger' is down to its last 150 – half the figure of just two years ago. Yet the silence is deafening.

Saving the lynx is not rocket science. But it is politically inconvenient.

Saving the lynx would mean roads which would otherwise bring big bucks to construction companies would not be built. It would mean that dams for irrigating golf courses and tourist resorts would remain on the drawing board. And it would mean that agri-businesses would not convert natural vegetation to intensive farming to suit the interests of big consumer chains.

At Johannesburg, we can expect to see the big international agencies, campaign groups and western governments to pile on the pressure on 'developing nations' so they stop uncontrolled 'development' and habitat destruction and preserve endangered species.

There will be media stories and publicity drives all about the exotic elsewhere, the fantastic faraway. There will be revelations about the big business interests at work in the logging industry. And there will be dramatic insights into the traditional sustainable farming practices under threat from Third World industries.

But don't expect a mention of the state-owned logging industries that have destroyed much of the Iberian peninsula's wilderness. Or of the traditional sustainable practices of southern Europe's farmers which are being subsidised out of existence by the Common Agricultural Policy.

Only by hiding the truth about its own acts and omissions can Western leaders and mainstream conservationists hope to convince the developing world that the latter must preserve its wildlife and wilderness while similar resources are destroyed in the West.

# ECOLOGIST WORLD NEWS

The *Ecologist* is now published in several countries, covering environmental stories from Brazil to Delhi. Starting this month, *The Ecologist's* national editors bring local reports from across the globe.



## BRAZIL – Bringing food home

Although the cultivation of GM crops has been illegal in Brazil since 1998, it is well known that Monsanto's Roundup Ready Soy is being widely grown. The practice seems to be part of a strategy by multinationals to undermine the people's and government's rights over their land. Since the seeds are being cultivated in an irregular way, no one has control over them. Consequently, farmers' livelihoods, consumers' health and, most importantly of all, the genetic bio-diversity of the Brazilian ecosystem are all in danger. In contrast, organisations including the Brazilian *Ecologist* have been promoting an alternative



organic certification system, whereby consumers buy directly from farmers. This has established a co-operative relationship between grower and consumer – renewing the values of fair trade and reliable food sources. As official certification is not required, both rich and poor now have access to assured organic food.



## INDIA – How free is free India?

While creating a façade of affluence and prosperity among the upper echelons of Indian society, trade liberalisation is destroying the livelihoods of small producers. Two million weavers in Andhra Pradesh, for instance, lost their livelihoods when their exports were forced to compete in a free market. Now 200,000 producers of the regional snack Bikaneri Bhujia are threatened by competition from PepsiCo. New power plants, dams and chemical industries are bypassing Environmental Impact Assessments. And in the sector of natural resources, a major conflict has emerged between corporations and communities over control of land, water and bio-diversity.

Globalisation directly contradicts the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, who advocated an alternative path of development for India, warning that the country should not take to industrialism after the manner of the West. As Gandhi said: 'If an entire nation of 300 million took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts.' India's population now stands at over one billion.

## SPAIN – Dammed if we do

The economic formula of excess is being presented in Spain as the only way forward: consumption, big infrastructure, innovative technology, development. Anything alternative is labelled old or 'Third Worldish'.

A case in point is the government's plan to divert the water from the River Ebro to other regions in Spain. The National Hydrological Plan (PHN) has outraged Spain's environmental community and mobilised local populations against it. The PHN benefits big multinationals (in which certain politicians have direct as well as indirect interests), and will have serious environmental, social and economic consequences. There are alternatives to meeting Spain's water demand, but they are not as beneficial to big business and, as such, aren't taken into consideration.



## NEW ZEALAND – Waste not wanted

On 1 March, New Zealand became the first country in the world to adopt a national zero-waste strategy. The plan, *Towards Zero Waste and a Sustainable New Zealand*, has the following stated strategy:

'Global citizenship – We must take responsibility for the global consequences of our waste.

'Stewardship – We're all responsible for looking after our environment.

'Extended producer responsibility – Those who make goods and deliver services should bear some responsibility for them, and any waste they produce, throughout a product's entire life-cycle.

'Full-cost pricing – The environmental effects of making, distributing, using and disposing of goods and



services must be properly costed and charged where they occur.

'Life-cycle principle – Things should be designed, made and managed so all their environmental effects are accounted for and minimised until the end of their lives.

'Precautionary principle – lack of scientific certainty must never be used as a reason for ignoring serious environmental risk.'

# UP FROM THE STREETS

The anti-globalisation movement is truly global, and numbers millions. Paul Kingsnorth reports monthly, first-hand, on the grassroots initiatives that drive the movement, and prove to politicians, commentators and the press, that it is not just a ramshackle gang of middle class kids rampaging through the streets complaining about corporate logos.



## ARGENTINA – local politics

In Argentina, it seems, some lessons have been learned. While the government struggles to get back into the good books of the bankers and the US Treasury, many Argentine citizens have other ideas.

John Jordan and Jennifer Whitney, two activists who have recently returned from Argentina, have documented what they saw there in a new pamphlet – *Que Se Vayan Todos: Argentina's popular rebellion*.

The most exciting story is the growth of neighbourhood assemblies – spontaneous, organised gatherings of local people getting together to do for themselves what the government and the corporations have failed to do. There are over 200 of

them in Buenos Aires alone. They make decisions on local issues – ranging from healthcare to postal services to taxation – by way of real, street-level debates focused on people's needs.

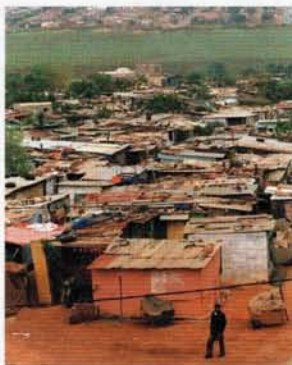
The people of Argentina, say Jordan and Whitney, are rediscovering direct democracy and local economic control. The pair quote an assembly member, an accountant, who explains the assemblies' appeal: 'People reject the political parties. To get out of this crisis requires real politics. These meetings of common people on the street are the fundamental form of politics.' Not quite what the IMF had in mind.

For free copies of *Que Se Vayan Todos*, email Jordan at [artactivism@gn.apc.org](mailto:artactivism@gn.apc.org).

## PERU – keeping power public

Looking over their shoulders at the state of Argentina, the people of Peru have taken to the streets to try and avoid the same fate. In mid-May, mass demonstrations occurred against government plans to privatise electricity in the south of the country. The people – 55 per cent of whom live on the equivalent of US\$1.25 a day, and half of whom are unemployed – can see what is coming: price rises, cut-offs and big profits for foreign investors. Peru's president says the popular protests are 'undemocratic' – a word that was curiously absent from his vocabulary when the unelected IMF demanded that he sell off public services in the first place.

## SOUTH AFRICA – SECC's appeal



AP PHOTOS

The people of South Africa could tell the Peruvians something about privatised electricity. In Soweto, as I reported in February ('Making connections in South Africa', vol 32/1), those who cannot afford to pay the rising electricity bills caused by preparations for privatisation – and since Soweto has 70 per cent unemployment, that's most people – are being cut off.

The Sowetans responded by forming the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC) to illegally reconnect people. The SECC is now taking its battle out of the townships and onto the national stage. It says that a new academic report supports its claims that the

government's pro-globalisation policies are making people's lives worse. The report claims that the ANC's neo-liberal policies have led to 10 million South Africans having their electricity cut off, a further 10 million losing their water and over two million being evicted from their homes for non-payment of higher rents.

But the government – itself brought to power by decades of mass resistance – has had enough. In April, when the SECC and the Johannesburg Anti-Privatisation Forum went to demonstrate outside the home of Johannesburg mayor Amos Masondo, the police arrested 50 protesters, including a five-year-old boy.

After messages of support for the demonstrators from as far afield as Mauritius and Nepal, the 50 were given bail. Those who were still ANC members publicly burned their party cards and vowed to keep protesting until the government starts listening to its people rather than the World Bank.

## The YES Men vs the WTO

On a lighter note, the best culture jammers in the world have struck again. The Yes Men, a shadowy bunch of anti-growth troublemakers, sprung to life in 2000, when they set up a website ([www.gatt.org](http://www.gatt.org)) which is such a close parody of the official WTO site that they were contacted by a conference of international lawyers and asked to give an official talk. The Yes Men sent along a fake WTO representative, 'Dr Andreas Bichlbauer', who explained to the stony-faced lawyers that the WTO viewed the Italian siesta as a barrier to trade, and supported plans to allow citizens to auction their votes to the highest corporate bidder.

The lawyers had no idea they were listening to an imposter. Neither did a group of textile manufacturers, who invited the 'WTO' to talk to them last year in Finland. The Yes Men's WTO man 'Hank Hardy Unruh' explained that the US Civil War had been a waste of time and resources. According to economic logic, slavery would eventually have been replaced anyway by the cheaper system of sweatshop labour that we have today. 'Unruh' also explained that Gandhi's ideal of village self-sufficiency was an unacceptable protectionist measure.

Now the Yes Men/WTO nexus has announced the winding-up of the WTO, and its replacement with a 'trade regulation organisation' based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The real WTO is furious, and has placed a message on its website ([www.wto.org](http://www.wto.org)) warning of the Yes Men's activities. The Yes Men, meanwhile, hope to continue their speaking tours. 'We think the ethical thing to do,' they say, 'is to represent the WTO more honestly than they represent themselves.'

Paul Kingsnorth is currently writing a book on the worldwide anti-globalisation movement, to be published by Simon and Schuster in spring 2003



# Digest

Focusing on magazines, websites and newsletters that the mainstream often ignores.

## TECHNOFIXATED

There's no need to change our polluting ways. Technology has all the solutions. They just might be very, very expensive.

### Nº 1. SPACE MIRRORS

Worried about global warming? Don't be. New space mirrors will allow us to carry on burning up the planet while keeping us safe by reflecting those harmful solar rays back out into space. All we have to do is stick 390,000km<sup>2</sup> of solar sails in orbit (non-Keplerian orbits, of course). Then just sit back and fiddle the burning hole in your bank balance as the mirrors intercept roughly 25 per cent of the earth's sunlight, offset global warming and provide enough electricity for the whole planet. At an estimated once in a lifetime price of \$200 trillion, you'd be a fool to miss it.

## JUNK FOOD WARS OVER LABELLING

Obese Americans seeking compensation from a US food manufacturer are causing concern in the food and restaurant business, writes the *Fresh Produce Journal*.

A \$50 million class-action lawsuit has been launched against Robert's American Gourmet Foods, after consumer Meredith Berkman noticed the fat content in its low-fat puffed rice snack Pirate's Booty had more than doubled.

Berkman had given the product to her two-year-old daughter, and was alarmed the so-called healthy snack was on a par with junk food.

Now, the civil action is seeking damages for consumers who have piled on the pounds because of mis-labelled fat content in foods. Berkman is seeking compensation for 'emotional distress and nutritional damage'. She said: 'To me, this is about truth in labelling, which can be a life-and-death issue. I have always said that if we win, any damages will go to charity.'

Mike Burita, of food industry lobby the Center for Consumer Freedom, fears the case will spark a spate of similar lawsuits against food manufacturers which could rival those against tobacco companies. 'These actions are precursors of things to come,' Burita said.

WWW.FRESHINFO.COM

## ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER LOOMS IN AFGHANISTAN

As the US-led campaign continues in Afghanistan, the extremely fragile state of the country's environment is being ignored. So writes Michael Kamber in *Mother Jones*.

In ravaged Kabul, 'where most homes lack electricity, the only fuel available is wood cut from the surrounding hillsides... The interiors of the dilapidated concrete homes – and presumably the lungs of their inhabitants – are covered with soot'.

Kamber quotes Abdul Wajid Adil, of the Society for Afghanistan's Viable Environment, as saying that the country's forests could soon 'all be gone'.

And while environmentalists say that 15 per cent of a country needs to be forested to sustain topsoil and air quality, just two per cent of Afghanistan's land – down from 33 per cent in 1979 – may be forested.

A 'timber mafia' is also smuggling logged wood out of the country into Pakistan. Topsoil disappears with the trees. Agriculture – already disrupted by the migration of refugees – deteriorates further. The refugees' return, Kamber writes, may only exacerbate the crisis.

Returning refugees are likely to converge upon Afghanistan's cities. This would compound air pollution and sanitation problems. Kamber compares Kabul's air quality to air-pollution basket case Mexico City.

But Kamber reports that

environmentalists are 'searching for a silver lining among the ruins'. The landmines and dormant bombs may indirectly protect Afghanistan's endangered fauna. 'Landmines tend to keep people out of areas,' says Joshua



REUTERS

Ginsberg of the Wildlife Conservation Society. 'That can be good for animals.'

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's legendary Caspian tiger and Siberian Crane have almost certainly disappeared. Some bears and 'fewer than 100' snow leopards may remain. The animals provided food and income during years of warfare – snow leopard pelts fetching 'thousands of dollars on the black market'.

Forced out of the country by the Taliban in the 1990s, the environmental agencies are now returning. But, Kamber concludes, they are unlikely to achieve much while stability remains such a distant prospect.

## WAL-MART AND THE DEAD PEASANTS

Back in 1994, Wal-Mart launched a programme promising its employees a \$5,000 death benefit. The company was so determined its workers should take advantage of the programme that it threatened any who turned it down with the forfeiture of their health insurance. What Wal-Mart did not tell its employees was that it had taken out life insurance policies on them – with it as the beneficiary.

Now, lawyers in Texas are mounting a class-action suit against Wal-Mart to reclaim the benefits – as much as \$64,000 apiece – for the estates of dead employees. Life insurance policies for employees, sometimes referred to as 'dead-peasant policies', are not uncommon among large US corporations, who use them as a tax dodge. The policies are legal in many states, but not in Texas. According to the *Houston Chronicle*, five to six million corporate serfs have life insurance policies held on them by Fortune 500 magnates. Wal-Mart holds some 350,000 of these policies.

TAKEN FROM *IN THESE TIMES*, 27 MAY 2002

Over the last six years, approximately 25,000 people have died from acts of terrorism worldwide.

Over that same period, 52 million people – about 24,000 per day – have died from preventable hunger.

## CLONER DEFECTS

'There is abundant evidence that cloning can and does go wrong, and no justification for believing that this will not happen with humans.'

Ian Wilmut, co-creator of Dolly the sheep. Wilmut published a review of all the world's cloned animals last month. The review suggested that every single one of them is genetically and physically defective. Or in other words, more anti-science emotionally driven ranting.



**SHEEP:** clones often oversized or have deformities of the heart and lungs

**MICE:** placentas up to four times normal size

**CATTLE:** many cloned embryos aborted

**HUMANS:** unknown defects kill embryos; none known to have grown larger than six cells

**ALL SPECIES:** chromosome damage leads to premature ageing and random genetic defects.

## CONTRACT KILLERS

Many of the US government's largest contractors have repeatedly broken the law or engaged in unethical conduct, but are never even temporarily suspended – let alone debarred – from gaining additional government contracts. So found a report published by the Project on Government

Oversight. Although 16 of the top 43 contractors have been convicted of a total of 28 criminal violations since 1990, and four of the top 10 have at least two criminal convictions, only one of the 43 has had sanctions imposed upon it preventing it from securing government contracts.

Contractor	Number of violations and alleged violations	Total fines, penalties and settlements	FY1999 contract awards
General Electric	63	\$982,859,555	\$1.6 billion
Lockheed Martin	63	\$231,872,404	\$19 billion
Boeing	36	\$357,973,000	\$14.2 billion
Raytheon	24	\$128,652,919	\$7.8 billion
Northrop Grumman	21	\$87,876,581	\$3.5 billion
Fluor	19	\$70,016,614	\$1.1 billion
United Technologies	18	\$389,484,000	\$2.7 billion
TRW	16	\$389,484,000	\$2.5 billion
AT&T	14	\$16,090,000	\$673 million
Unisys	12	\$182,245,692	\$635 million

TAKEN FROM *CORPORATE CRIME REPORTER*, 13 MAY 2002

## GLOBAL WARMING – IT'S COOL TO BE HOT

What's the hippest ecological threat to be allied to this year? In the constant search for respectability allied to profitability, writes the *LA Times*, climate change is definitely this season's in campaign. Gone are last year's fake furs, according to saleswoman Ellie Perkins, if you really want to turn heads at the next corporate bash 'global warming is an icebreaker'.

As a case in point, this month ice cream

manufacturer Ben and Jerry's launches its 'One Sweet Whirled' flavour as part of a climate change awareness campaign.

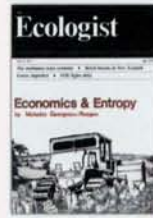
An executive at an unnamed multibillion dollar paper company set to launch a product with a 'save the planet' sales pitch summed it up thus: 'Recycling is passé. Toxics are passé. But global warming is different – it's the hottest issue, no pun intended.'

ADAPTED FROM THE *LA TIMES*, 27 APRIL 2002

# Highs and Lows

Looking back at 32 years of *The Ecologist's* analysis of the real state of the world.

## 30 years ago



The answer to the question 'when do the costs of growth in GNP outweigh the benefits?' is contained in the question itself. Yet we continue to count the real costs as benefits, and, since the net benefit of growth can

never be negative with this *Alice in Wonderland* accounting system, the rule becomes 'grow forever' – or at least until it kills you. Then count your funeral expenses as further growth. This is terminal hyper-growthmania. Is the water table failing? Dig deeper wells, build bigger pumps, and up goes GNP! Soil depleted? Produce more fertiliser, etc... The growth paradigm has outlived its usefulness. It is a senile ideology that should be unceremoniously retired into the history of economic doctrines.

From 'The stationary-state economy' by Herman E Daly, Vol 2/7, July 1972

## 20 years ago



In many areas of science which become the subject of public debate, many of the experts who defend positions agreeable to powerful organisations do not behave in the manner normally expected of an objective scholar. The experts often

trade on their status rather than maintaining the standards of behaviour normally expected of experts. They do not respond to the arguments of opponents. Their points may be irrelevant or inaccurate.

They claim objectivity but present value-laden arguments. And their expertise is largely irrelevant to the broad issues at stake.

From 'The naked expert' by Brian Martin, vol 12/4, July/August 1982

## 10 years ago



It is a mistake to see acts of resistance solely as the province of the politically active. As an Ethiopian proverb has it, 'when the great lord passes, the wise peasant bows deeply and silently farts'.

From special issue

'Whose Common Future?' by *The Ecologist* editors Vol 22/4, July/August 1992



**DELIA WITH THE DEVIL**

Cookery writer Delia Smith has thrown in her lot with McDonald's, declaring that she ate there on the way to a football match. In an interview on BBC Radio Five Live, the woman who was once the UK's most famous chef called the multinational 'an acceptable standard of fast food'.

More remarkably, Smith, a director of Norwich City Football Club, said: 'Before McDonald's there was nowhere for a quick meal except the dreaded motorway service station, or country pubs which are very hit and miss.'

Unfortunately for Smith, Norwich City narrowly missed promotion to the Premier League last month. It would have been interesting to see who its sponsors would have been had it not missed this golden opportunity.

Not content with praising McDonald's for its culinary skills, Smith also found time to put in a good word for the much-maligned supermarkets.

As she sees it, the great thing about supermarkets is that they allow people to 'shop around the world'.

## Does Delia know that McDonald's...

...receives between 1,500 and 2,750 customer complaints of food poisoning a year – including a serious outbreak of E. coli 0157 poisoning in 1991?

...has been legally proven to exploit children by using them as more susceptible targets for advertising who then pressure their parents into going into restaurants?

...considers the dumping of waste 'to be a benefit – otherwise you will end up with lots of vast, empty gravel pits all over the country'?

## Mysterious deaths of 11 bioscientists

It's a tale only the best conspiracy theorist could dream up, writes *The Toronto Globe and Mail*. Eleven microbiologists mysteriously dead over the span of just five months. Some of them world leaders in developing weapons-grade biological plagues. Others the best in figuring out how to stop millions from dying because of biological weapons. Still others, experts in the theory of bioterrorism.

### Statistically, what are the chances?

Throw in a few Russian defectors, some nervy US biotech companies, a deranged assassin or two, a bit of Elvis, a couple of Satanists, a subtle hint of espionage, a big whack of imagination, and the plot is complete – if a bit reminiscent of James Bond.

Who	when	expert in...	died...
Benito Que	12/11/2001	infectious disease	beaten in Miami parking lot
Don C Wiley	16/11/2001	plagues	fell off bridge in Memphis
Vladimir Pasechnik	21/11/2001	bio-warfare	stroke
Robert M Schwarz	10/12/2001	pathogenic micro-organisms	stabbed, three Satanists arrested
Nguyen Van Set	14/12/2001	discovery of strain of mousepox	in nitrogen-filled airlock
Victor Korshunov	9/2/2002	intestinal bacteria	head smashed
Ian Langford	14/2/2002	environmental risks	wedged half naked under chair
Tanya Holzmayer	8/2/2002	human molecular structure	shot by colleague Guyang Huang
Guyang Huang	9/2/2002	microbiology	shot himself
David Wynn-Williams	24/3/2002	microbes and outer space	road accident
Steve Mostow	25/3/2002	bio-terrorism	crashed small plane

EXTRACTED FROM *THE TORONTO GLOBE AND MAIL*, 4 MAY 2002

## OBITUARY

### UNWRITTEN HERO – JOSÉ LUTZENBERGER

José Lutzenberger, outspoken pioneer of the Brazilian environment movement, has died in his hometown of Porto Alegre, Brazil, aged 75. Loved by thousands of people worldwide, José was a practical scientist with a passion for life, outraged by injustice of any kind and a brilliant orator. In 1950, with a degree in chemical engineering, and a PhD from the University of Louisiana, he headed for Germany to work for BASF Chemicals. When BASF began making pesticides, José resigned and headed back to Brazil. In 1971, he founded Agapan, Brazil's first green non-governmental organisation. The NGO quickly made a name for itself by leading a public campaign against a Norwegian woodpulp factory responsible for polluting Porto Alegre. The campaign successfully forced the company to sell up to a Brazilian one, and the pollution stopped. In 1988 he was awarded the Right Livelihood Award, one of over 80 awards he received for his tireless campaigning. In 1990 he was appointed Brazilian environment minister. Initial successes – he managed to persuade President

Collor to recognise and protect the land of the Yanomami Indians in the Northern Amazon – soon gave way to disillusionment. He resigned. Back in the trenches, where he thrived, he made a passionate speech at the alternative Rio summit, warning of the dangers of the transnational biotechnology corporations. José devoted the remainder of his life to promoting sustainable agriculture and denouncing modern farming methods. In his words 'The modern farmer is only a tractor driver or a poison sprayer. He is only a tiny cog in an enormous and highly complicated techno-bureaucratic structure that begins in the oilfields, goes through the whole huge chemical and agribusiness industry, and ends up in the supermarkets'. He is survived by two daughters, and hundreds of devoted friends.



"I can't believe what I'm reading - every page grabs my attention. Every article is relevant. You've done a tremendous job in making accessible some of the most censored stories in the British media. I want to congratulate you from the bottom of my heart on the content, style, design and relevancy." Anita Roddick

## 6 reasons to visit the new *Ecologist* website www.theecologist.org

Biotechnology	Brands	Campaign	Cancer	Climate	Cloning	Community	Corporations
Dams	Debt	Democracy	Development	Economy	Energy	Environment	Ethical
EU	Extinction	Farming	Food	Forests	GATS	Global warming	Globalisation
GM	Green	Greenwash	Health	IMF	Indigenous	Legislation	Localisation
Multinational	NAFTA	Nature	NGO's	Nuclear	Organic	PATENTS	Philosophy
Political	Pollution	Population	Poverty	Radiation	Recycle	Social	Supermarket
Sustainability	Technology	Toxic	Trade	Transport	Tribe	TRIPS	Vegetarianism
Waste	Water			World bank			WTO

### 1 SEARCH THE ARCHIVE

Our archive already features almost every article published in the magazine over the last two years. We are continuing to add articles all the time, keeping you up to date and taking you back into the magazine's 31-year history.

The Archive can be easily and quickly searched in two ways:

- Clicking on a **KEY CATEGORY**, eg Cancer. This will call up all the articles in the archive that have Cancer as a main theme.
- Using the search facility. Type in the title/author/subject you are interested in and press **SEARCH**. This will bring up all articles mentioning the chosen keyword/s.

### 2 HAVE YOUR SAY

Each and every article, debate, campaign and hot topic featured on the website can be discussed online. Select **CLICK HERE** to have your say and you will be connected to the discussion board where you can comment on what you've read or maybe what you'd like to have read! Either way, get on line and have your say!

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The Exchange is a noticeboard for environmental and ethical services, products and needs. Website entries are FREE, so if you have a need for writers; a call for papers; a campaign to support; volunteers to recruit; events to fill; projects to fund; eco-products to buy or sell; courses to attend; publications to read; places to visit; organisations to join; websites to visit; and vacancies to fill... log on to *The Ecologist* website, click on **THE EXCHANGE** button, and complete the online form. We will then post your listing.

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If you want to be kept informed of what's happening in the world of *The Ecologist* then subscribe online to receive our regular email newsletter, guaranteed to keep you abreast of the latest worldwide environmental stories and campaigns to support.

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- Help spread the word, and increase people's awareness of a campaign, by clicking on the **EMAIL** button and forwarding the campaign to a friend, colleague, or whoever else you think should know what's going on.

DATE	SUBJECT
31/10/2001	Is FTSE4Good just stock market capitalism dressed in green?
31/10/2001	ECGD and contamination of the Black Sea
31/10/2001	Draining the Rio Grande to water Malaga
31/10/2001	Protect Victoria's threatened woodlands
31/10/2001	The danger of hydro
31/10/2001	What if the World Trade Centre had been a nuclear power station?
31/10/2001	Europe: a new 'big idea'
31/10/2001	Education: on the ropes

### 6 DEBATE HOT TOPICS

Whether it be a feature in this month's magazine, a paper that no-one else dare publish, or just an issue that has to be discussed, Hot Topics ensures that the issues that matter get heard, and get discussed.

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#### Call For Papers/Writers

##### Air Pollution 2002

International conference on Modelling, Monitoring and Management of Air Pollution. Segovia, Spain. Paper deadline: 5 February 2002. Conference date: 1-3 July 2002. Website: www.wessex.ac.uk/conferences/2002/air02/index.html

##### Brownfields 2002

International conference on Prevention, Assessment, Rehabilitation and Development of Brownfields Sites. Cadiz, Spain. Paper deadline: 23 April. Conference date: 2-4 September. Website: www.wessex.ac.uk/conferences/2002/brownfields02/index.html

#### Draining the Rio Grande to water Malaga



Guaro is a small village 24km north of Malaga. Situated east of Sierra de las Nieves in mountainous countryside, its fertile plains are of great agricultural importance. Famous for its almonds, Guaro also boasts olive, citrus and avocado trees, all watered by the nearby Rio Grande.

All this is set to change. Malaga's ever growing tourist industry and golf courses need more and more water. While Madrid and Bilbao need an average 280 litres of water per inhabitant per day, Malaga's per capita consumption is 480 litres per day. Currently there are about 40 golf courses on the Costa del Sol, with 12 more coming. With each square metre using up about 7 litres of water per day, an average sized course needs a lot to drink.

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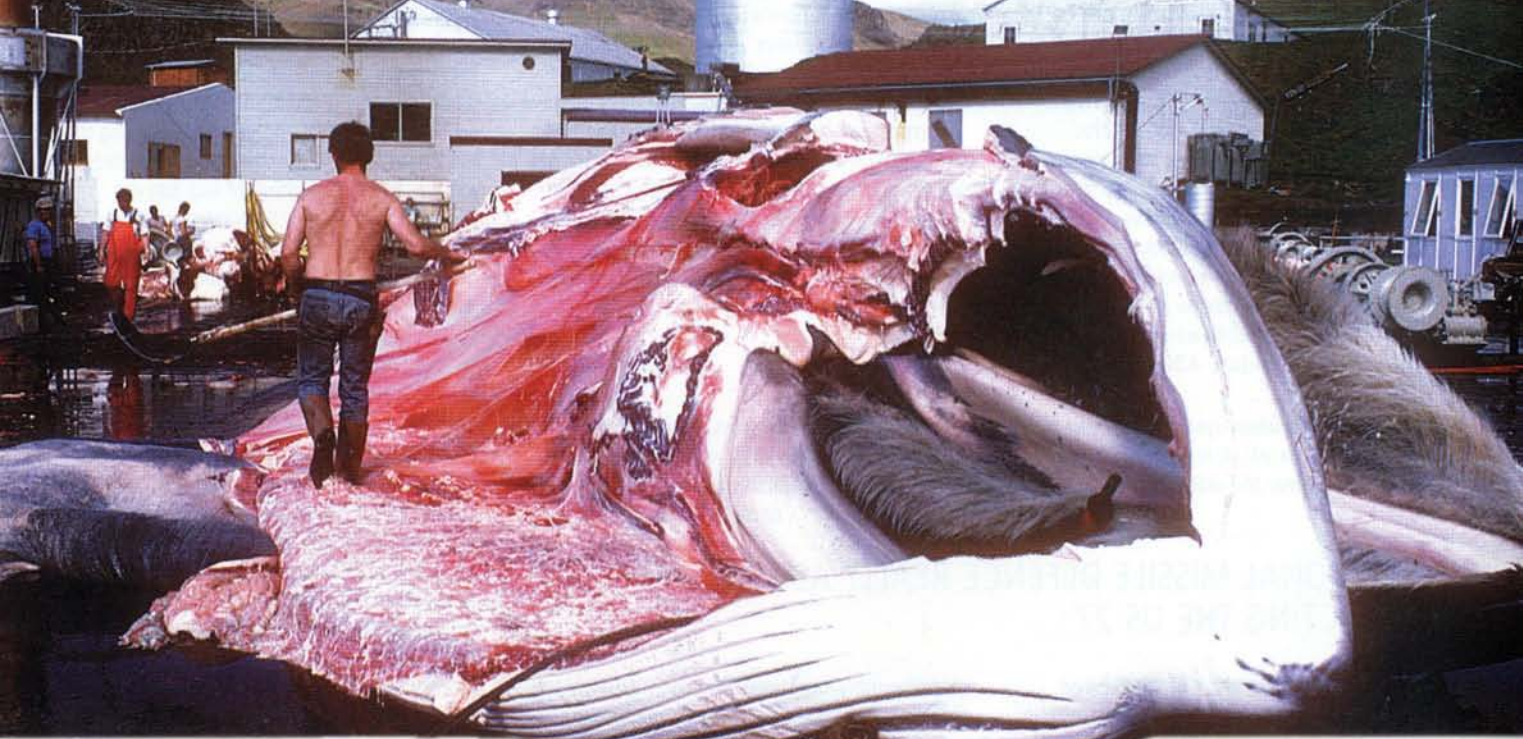
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# Whale nation



**DICK RUSSELL** reports from the latest International Whaling Commission meeting in Japan, revealing a litany of dirty tricks, hidden agendas and horse trading by the host nation.

**A**s delegates from 45 member nations gathered in Shimonoseki, Japan, for May's 54th annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), grim portents were in the air. In Tokyo, a crowd estimated at 600 people had marched through the government district, waving banners and shouting, 'we'll eat whale'. In Shimonoseki itself, a port city of some 250,000 people nestled amid low hills nearly 500 miles southwest of Tokyo, there had been festivals offering free fried whale meat. To the thundering of traditional drums, vendors sold T-shirts bearing cartoons of bloated, burping whales – the supposed culprits responsible for depleting the oceans of fish. To anyone familiar with Shimonoseki's status as the 'whaling capital' of Japan, such propaganda

would have come as no surprise. It is, after all, the place from where Japan's whaling fleet set sail for the Antarctic and north Pacific.

The day before the meeting's opening, a caravan of 160 vehicles descended on Shimonoseki. Many bore the symbol of the rising sun emblazoned on their sides. They resembled battle wagons more than anything else.

They had assembled from all over Japan – busloads of men in matching blue and green uniforms, with loudspeakers blaring fervent and near-deafening messages. They shouted anti-US slogans and calls to resume commercial whaling of the *kujira*. As the sinister cavalcade passed in a six-kilometre procession through the city, citizens gathered on bridges to watch. The street adjoining the conference centre was cordoned off by dozens of police.

Who were the demonstrators? 'Since the cold war ended,' explained Tokyo TV journalist Teddy Jimbo, 'the rightists in Japan have been seeking an agenda. The whale issue is both emotional and nationalistic – Japan versus the West.'

## No scientific evidence

What was about to transpire in Shimonoseki was a high-stakes chess game with the whales as pawns. It would prove to be the most dramatic and divisive meeting in the IWC's history. It would undermine the organisation to such an extent that its very survival as a viable entity now seems at stake. That is precisely what Japan and its allies were hoping for.

With perhaps 1,000 participants, NGOs, and media representatives present, Japan's minister of agriculture and fisheries rose to give the meeting's welcoming statement. His image projected on a large screen, Tsutomu Takebe offered Japan's justification for its expanded 'research' whaling: it was necessary to collect data on the interaction between whales and fish. Japanese scientists claim that cetaceans consume between 300 million and 500 million tons of marine resources annually. That is three to five times the amount of fish eaten by humans. They maintain that the 'resurgent' whales – out-competing humans for a dwindling amount of fish – need to be 'culled'.

Worst of all from a Japanese perspective, they say the whales are threatening the country's sushi supply by devouring the fatty tuna's resource – the shrimp-like krill.

But, as US IWC delegate Rolland Schmitt has said: 'There is no scientific evidence to show that whales are causing a decline in fish stocks.' Most of the large whale species eat plankton and krill. Other predatory fish consume vastly greater amounts of commercially valuable fish than marine mammals. And tropical tuna fisheries don't occur where whales are feeding. The real problems are over-capacity of the global fishing fleet and human greed.

### Buying friends

Japan's first ploy in its campaign at Shimonoseki was to push for Iceland's bid to rejoin the IWC as a voting member. A former whaling nation, Iceland quit the organisation in 1991 because it opposed the commercial whaling moratorium. If Iceland rejoined, the pro-whaling forces would have another country in their voting bloc. Iceland's attempt fell five votes shy. But Japan's camp included a number of small island nations, whose votes Japan was accused of buying.

Outside the conference centre, Greenpeace members had dressed themselves up as Masayuki Komatsu – a senior official of the Fisheries Agency of Japan. They depicted Komatsu tempting developing nations with gold in exchange for their votes.

Japan touted itself as the world's largest donor, providing foreign aid to about 150 countries. In an IWC press release, the Japanese Fisheries Agency sought to show that those aid recipients included several countries that oppose Japan's position on whaling. This is true but also misleading, because only a handful of those countries receive the direct fisheries aid grants that Japan has been giving to countries voting with it at the IWC. Japanese IWC delegate Minouri Morimoto conceded that Japan had proffered some £400 million of fisheries aid moneys to eight developing nations over the past decade. Six of the recipients in 2001 – Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, St Lucia, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and the Solomon Islands – were all active supporters of Japan at Shimonoseki. All seemed to vote whichever way Japan wanted them to. As did new IWC members Benin, Gabon, Mongolia and the South Pacific island nation Palau. The Caribbean countries were

particularly loquacious, prompting one observer to suggest that they were 'paid by the word'.

### A poor start

Still, in the first days of the convention, Japan's plans didn't go too well. While Iceland staged a theatrical walk-out, Japan was defeated in its ongoing campaign for secret ballots. Most significantly, it failed in a fresh attempt to secure approval for four of its coastal communities to take 50 minke whales a year. This commercial quota is something Japan has sought for years. It would represent a first step in undermining the moratorium. Every year so far it has failed to garner the three-quarter IWC majority necessary. But this year, Japan had something up its sleeve. The fact was, as Komatsu openly admitted, the four communities planned to kill and sell those 50 minke whales no matter what the IWC said. When asked what would really satisfy Japan, Komatsu flatly stated that it was ultimately looking to catch 'thousands and thousands' of whales. A minke whale, the meat of which is a delicacy in Japan on a par with the finest tuna, will sell for the yen equivalent of \$30,000 to \$40,000.

If one follows this tuna money to its source, you will arrive in Tokyo at the Institute for Cetacean Research (ICR). The ICR receives a \$73 million-a-year subsidy from the fisheries ministry. It oversees a 200-employee whaling fleet owned by the Kyodo Senpaku conglomerate, which makes annual hunts to the Antarctic and north Pacific. The ICR also manages Japan's coastal minke whaling, and the annual slaughter of 22,000 small dolphins and whales outside the IWC's purview. In often brutal near-shore hunts, the latter animals are herded into pens and clubbed to death.

The ICR recoups about half of its subsidy by selling whale meat around Japan. The label of 'whale', however, is often a misnomer. Japanese government surveys in 1999 and 2000 found that just over half of such products were minke whale. The remaining samples consisted of meat from dolphins, porpoises or pilot whales.

Despite the government's pro-whaling subsidies and lobbying, the popularity of whale meat in Japan is plummeting. One reason for this is the fact that Japan is a particularly heavy consumer of agricultural chemicals, and the global leader in production of dioxins. When the London-based Environmental

## THE IWC – WHAT DIFFERENCE HAS IT MADE?

The IWC was established after WWII through a multilateral treaty designed to regulate the rampant 'harvesting' which had driven many whale species to near-extinction. For its first several decades, the commission proved ineffectual in curtailing the catches. In 1961 the largest ever annual catch of whales was recorded, with over 66,000 slaughtered worldwide. But by 1970 the US had listed eight whale species as endangered, and, with the advent of Greenpeace and other environmental groups which highlighted the whales' plight, a worldwide moratorium on commercial whaling was approved by an IWC vote in the early 1980s.

Japan and Norway continued to hunt, however. They used a regulatory loophole allowing nations to issue themselves special permits to continue killing whales for 'scientific purposes'. The IWC has passed 19 resolutions urging the Japanese government not to issue such permits, but the requests have been ignored. Norway self-allocates a quota of 674 minke whales to hunt in the north Atlantic. But now it says it can't afford to store all the boxes of packed meat, and it has announced an export agreement with Japan. This violates an international accord banning trade in whale products. Japan's hunting of more than 5,000 minke whales in the 14 years since the moratorium has mostly occurred in the southern Pacific – despite that area's designation in 1994 as a whale sanctuary. In the north Pacific, Japan not only pursues minke whales but – again without IWC approval – has expanded its range to start hunting Bryde's whales, sperm whales and, most recently, sei whales. The World Conservation Union has listed sei whales as an endangered species since 1975.

While Japan argues that it hunts whales so it can study their migration patterns, population trends and diet, it has ended up selling much of the meat to markets and restaurants. It is also legitimate in Japan to sell the 1,000-odd minke whales which get trapped each year in coastal fishing nets. US threats of potential economic sanctions against Japan have proved ineffective. So has a recent and unprecedented diplomatic complaint signed by 18 nations demanding Japan abandon its expanded hunts.

Investigation Agency conducted some product analysis in the country last year, all 17 small cetacean samples exceeded Japan's health standards for mercury. Many also contained high levels of PCBs and pesticides, including DDT and Dieldrin. Eminent whale scientist Roger Payne has warned that the highest concentration of endocrine-disrupting compounds ever found in any animal

# WHALING

It came from a minke whale that Japanese officials had recently presented for a free tasting. Fears about such contamination have caused several large supermarket chains in Japan to quit stocking whale meat on their shelves.

In 2001, 30 per cent of the minke whale supplies in Japan went unpurchased. It was the first year that wholesale markets did not sell out. Beyond worries about contaminated food, the fact is that most Japanese today much prefer burgers and fries to the whale products which in 1960 constituted more than a quarter of all meat consumed in the country. Last December a Japanese government poll indicated that over 87 per cent of respondents had eaten whale meat. But a later survey by the newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* found that only four per cent said they sometimes ate whale, 53 per cent did 'a long time ago', and 33 per cent never had.

## The real agenda

What then is behind Japan's fervent push to revive commercial whaling? The WWF's Richard Mott says: 'Whaling is a vestigial economic enterprise, heavily subsidised – a very odd industry to be getting this kind of protection and a level of government

fealty that would be the envy of any Fortune 500 company. But power in Japan is so decentralised. The Fisheries Ministry is a fiefdom being driven by the ICR. There is no engaged citizenry or Prime Minister, but rather a political system that can be commandeered by special economic interests.'

In the case of this year's IWC meeting, that system was commandeered by the highly ambitious Komatsu. Ever since the IWC began, quotas for hunting bowhead whales had been set aside to meet the subsistence needs of aboriginal peoples – primarily, the Eskimos of northern Alaska and Russia's impoverished Chukotka peninsula.

In retaliation for the IWC's rejection of its coastal whalers' commercial quota, Japan and its allies raised the 'double-standard' flag. Didn't the Japanese 'small coastal villages' have the same needs as these aboriginal people? In a word, no. Japan's villagers were already making considerable sums from selling – without the IWC's imprimatur – minke whale and other whale products. They were scarcely facing starvation as the Chukotkans could do over the course of an Arctic winter. But, as Mexico's IWC delegate Andres Rozental pointed out: 'The IWC opened this Pandora's box in 1997 by bunching the Russians'

## PRO-WHALING

Antigua and Barbuda  
Benin • People's Republic of  
China • Dominica • Gabon  
Grenada • Republic of Guinea  
Japan • Mongolia • Morocco  
Norway • Oman • Palau • Panama  
Russian Federation • St Kitts and  
Nevis • St. Lucia • St Vincent  
and Grenadines •  
Solomon Island

customary aboriginal quota for gray whales in with the US Makah tribe's request.'

What had happened was this. The Makah, a Native American tribe in north-western Washington State,

had expressed the desire to start whaling again after a 70-year hiatus. It cited a treaty signed in 1855 with the US government. The Makah asserted a 'cultural need' in line with the IWC's aboriginal subsistence clause. The US, perhaps fearful of a court challenge over the 1855 treaty rights claim, backed the Makah's request. No real need was sanctioned, but the Makah were allotted a subsistence quota (with no sale permitted) of no more than 20 grey whales over the ensuing five-year period.

In 1999, the tribe harpooned and shot its first (and, so far, only) whale in waters near their reservation. Little was said publicly about a memorandum of the US National Marine Fisheries Service from 1995, which noted that the Makah had 'started discussions with Japan and Norway about selling their whale products to both countries'. Behind the scenes, Japan had been very much involved in prodding the Makah to proceed. Clearly Japan hoped to compromise the US's strong position against commercial whaling.

'That's where the market haggling started,' says Rozental. 'The minute you open new categories of exceptions to the moratorium, others will try to do it.'

The first to do so was, of course, Japan.

So, at Shimonoseki, Komatsu sought to block consensus on the aboriginal bowhead quotas. The IWC recessed for the first of what would be several rounds of private negotiating sessions. UK IWC delegate Elliot Morley described the events as 'a deliberate attempt to wreck the IWC', and the organisation's 'worst crisis in many years'. Morley explained that if Japan succeeded in blocking the bowhead quota, the Russians might have no other choice but to give one to the Chukotkan natives anyway. Thus the



IWC's credibility would be undermined further.

### Lofty ambitions

Outside the convention hall, Komatsu was mobbed by the Japanese media as if he was a rock star. His tough stance was gaining him something of a hero's status, especially among Japanese nationalists. Rumour had it that he would soon leave the Fisheries Agency and run for political office. The Caribbean countries stood staunchly with Japan, allegedly because they wanted to bargain for a higher aboriginal quota on humpback whales for one of their own – St Vincent and the Grenadines. A deal was agreed between the IWC and St Vincent and the Grenadines. The island nation was given its requested 20 whales over a five-year period – despite its having flouted IWC standards in the past by killing female whales with calves.

Yet, in spite of such horse-trading, each time the commissioners reconvened thinking they could achieve consensus, Komatsu stood in their way. 'Our hostage' – meaning the minke whale – 'is dead, theirs' – the bowhead – 'is still alive', he told the press. Twice Komatsu pushed the bowhead quota to a ballot. Even Norway and, eventually, St Vincent approved it. The second time the measure failed by a single vote, with 13 nations still holding out against granting the aboriginal quota. Despite reported diplomatic manoeuvring at levels much higher than the IWC, Japan's Fisheries Agency would not be moved.



Inside the hall, bitterness and resentment prevailed over the bowhead quota outcome.

The UK delegate, 'disgusted' with the 'cant and hypocrisy', asked: 'What honour is left in this organisation?' It was, several nations commented, 'a black day for the IWC'. The Russians added: 'Today, we have seen a political game. But we are not playing.' But Japan's Caribbean allies defended themselves, claiming they had been 'bombed by calls putting pressure on' them. As Dominica's commissioner said: 'Our motto is, "all shall eat". But Japan must get its quota also.'

At a press conference, US delegate Rolland Schmitt expressed dismay. 'This is the most unjust, unkind, unfair vote ever taken in the 56-year history of the IWC,' he said. 'To deny people the right to feed their families... Eskimos are calling to ask why. We will leave no stone unturned to change this tragic situation.'

### A dangerous game

Many observers believe that Japan was attempting to tarnish the IWC as 'dysfunctional' (Komatsu's phrase) prior to its participation at November's biannual meeting of the UN's Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), in Santiago, Chile. At the last two CITES meetings, Japan and Norway have introduced resolutions to have minke whales removed from the endangered list. This would open the door to their being sold again. As Andy Ottaway of Brighton's Campaign Whale organisation, noted: 'CITES' down-listing of any whales would make the IWC irrelevant.' The gray whale and sperm whale are also among the leading 'candidates' whose recovery might be deemed strong enough for down-listing.

At CITES Japan's backers will include the International Wildlife Management Consortium (IWMC). This group is part of the so-called 'sustainable' or 'wise' use movement. It promotes 'free trade' of elephant ivory, hawksbill turtle leather and whale products – all in the name of conservation. The IWMC is headed by Eugene Lapointe, a French Canadian who was secretary-general of CITES between 1982 and 1990. Lapointe was removed

from his post by the UN for campaigning against a ban on ivory trade

which CITES member nations adopted in 1989.

He later received a settlement based on a three-member CITES board's decision which concluded his dismissal had been 'arbitrary and capricious'. Today, five of the nine officers in his organisation are former CITES employees.

Lapointe says his funding comes from Japan, Norway, China, Canada and 'two small European countries'.

Joji Morishita, a colleague of Komatsu, was asked by the *New York Times* why Japan would subject itself to 'growing international opprobrium' for the sake of a near-defunct whaling industry. Morishita replied that Japan's fight is about 'principle'. He said: 'For many people in Japan, the IWC is a prototype for bad precedents that might cause trouble in other international organisations.' Like CITES, perhaps. Or, as US IWC delegate Robert Brownell says: 'Japan's ultimate fear is that if they give up on whaling we'll take tuna away from them tomorrow.'

What the events of Shimonoseki mean for the future of the IWC is uncertain. There is no doubt that Komatsu and company systematically worked to sabotage the organisation. That anything got accomplished at all was nothing short of miraculous. The likelihood is, an interim gathering will be convened sometime within the next six months to try once again to resolve the aboriginal bowhead matter. The quotas provided in 1998 don't expire until the end of the year. In the course of blocking them beyond that, Japan lost one long-standing ally – Russia. The Russians' native spokesman Vladimir Ytylin described what happened as 'colonialism – divide and conquer'. It was a sad situation: a poker hand Japan refused to fold – certainly, to its detriment in terms of world opinion. Or perhaps it was a surreal form of kabuki theatre, where nothing is ever quite what it appears to be on the surface. Ultimately, the question is: what now stands between the whales and yet another potential human onslaught?

**DICK RUSSELL is a journalist specialising in marine issues**





MARVEL OF FOUR SEASONS



RED SAILS



ROYAL OAKLEAF



RED RAGE



COSMO



RED MAJESTIC



ROMANCE



ROUGE D'HIVER



AETHNA



SAMANTHA



KALURA



RED OAKLEAF



SIERRA



WALDEMAN GREEN



RED BATAVIAN CARDINA



SANGRIA



TANGO



REDINA



LOLLO ROSSA



VULCAN RED LEAF



LITTLE GEM



BLACK SIMPSON



WINTER DENSITY



AUDRAN



PERILLA

Benjamin Couvra

# LETTUCE

## *The illusion of choice*



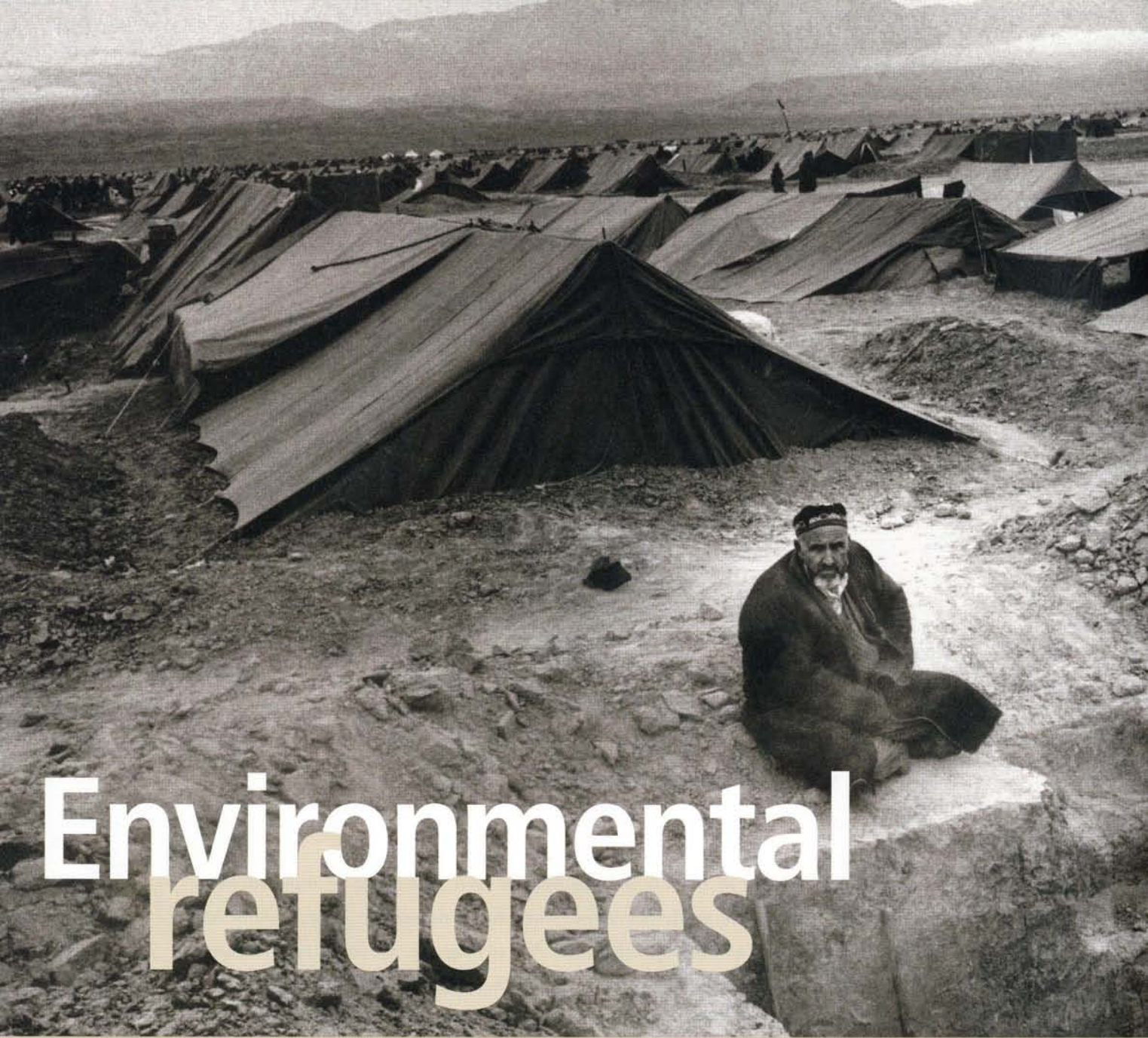
ICEBERG

VARIETIES LOST FROM 1903 TO 1983: 92.8 PERCENT

*Most lettuce produced in the US is head lettuce, such as iceberg — indestructible cannonballs that can be easily harvested, transported across the globe, remain on shelves for weeks, and still look ‘presentable’. Not so long ago, the tastes and textures of thousands of lettuce varieties were available. Their savoury flavors were nuanced combinations of sweet, bitter, nutty, piquant, anise, grassy or citrus. Their leaves varied from long or lacy, ribbed or sleek, to frilly or fan-shaped. This wonderful diversity, developed over millennia by our forebears, is our agricultural heritage. Its sacrifice to the dictates of mechanised efficiency is a crime against nature and the destruction of a public trust. Would we ever allow the entire body of English literature to be destroyed and lost forever, save for a single best-seller?*



Excerpted from *Fatal Harvest: the tragedy of industrial agriculture*, edited by Andrew Kimbrell, published by the Foundation for Deep Ecology, distributed by Island Press, [www.islandpress.org](http://www.islandpress.org).



# Environmental refugees

**By 2050, climate change and environmental degradation could create 150 million environmental refugees.**

**As MARK TOWNSEND reports, it is a problem which the UN and Western governments are doing their best to ignore.**

**M**arat Fomenko casts one final gaze over the bleak landscape. It is littered with fragments of abandoned machinery and the rusted hulks of disused ships.

Across the plain is Kazakhstan's once-famous fishing port of Aralsk, and, beyond that, a huge, dried rubbish-strewn sand pit.

It has been 25 years since Marat could see the receding Aral Sea – once the lifeblood of the region and the fourth biggest lake in the world –

from his home.

The former fisherman motions to his wife Malika and their kids. The bags are packed. It is time to finally escape.

Marat's livelihood literally drained away from the moment the rivers that fed the Aral Sea were diverted to irrigate the pesticide-soaked cotton fields upstream in Uzbekistan.

The Fomenko family are heading to the Kazakh capital of Astana, joining the throng in search of a better life. They will never return to their dying homeland, the vanishing sea of which

has triggered ecological disaster and a 30-fold increase in disease.

His son has contracted tuberculosis and Marat hopes the city will offer improved facilities.

Hope is all the Fomenko family have. They and 25 million others worldwide who have been forced to forever abandon their lands through a complex myriad of causes involving flooding, drought, soil erosion, deforestation, earthquakes, nuclear accidents and toxic spills.

These are the planet's environmental refugees. You may not have heard of them. Certainly, they are ignored by the world's politicians. And yet, experts argue, this rapidly swelling band of disparate, disenfranchised and displaced families constitutes one of the biggest crises facing humankind.



SHIBU

They are a huge, forgotten army of people whose numbers, according to conservative estimates, soar by 5,000 a day. Yet they are shunned by the international community, whose policies ensure they are deprived of not only basic rights, but actual recognition.

All corners of the globe are affected. There are vast swathes of land where the environment has become so degraded it can no longer support life. Each region of the world experiences its own specific agonies.

Just over 4,000 miles south of the shrinking Aral, Big Business is playing its part in this unfolding catastrophe.

Deep in Nigeria's Niger Delta lies the deserted home of Karalolo Atu. Three years ago Karalolo was forced from her ancestral kingdom of Ogoniland, and, along with thousands of others, she fled

to the nearby settlement of Port Harcourt.

Quite simply Karalolo's local environment had collapsed. An alliance between oil giant Shell and corrupt, violent regimes had fuelled a complete breakdown of the fragile delta ecosystem.

Shell's unswerving search for fresh oil reserves had led to hundreds of oil spills. Water systems and soil were left heavily polluted, and precious farmland was rendered unusable.

Mother of four Karalolo cannot contemplate going back to her ruined

homeland. Although millions of environmental refugees are displaced within the same country, the vast majority never return home because in most cases nothing is or *can be* done to reverse the damage.

### Climate change

But the growing nightmare that will transform the surge of environmental refugees into a problem of unimaginable dimensions is, unquestionably, climate change.

Just ask farmer Paani Talake from the tiny island state of Tuvalu in the South Pacific. His thatched family home is literally going down in history.

Whereas Marat's problem is a shrinking sea, Paani's is altogether different. For the latter there will soon be nothing left but sea.

Already the lowland coconut plantation farmlands of Tuvalu are being swamped by the rising sea. Nearby islets have vanished forever, while the invisible creep of saltwater contaminates precious drinking supplies and stunts crop growth. Next year Paani and his young family will abandon their homeland and take advantage of a gracious offer of a new start from the government of New Zealand.

Paani has little choice. Within as little as 50 years Tuvalu is projected to slide beneath the encroaching waters – a high-profile victim of the industrial excesses of the West. All that will be left of Tuvalu will be its status as a graphic footnote to

mankind's folly in experimenting with the atmosphere.

But what of the millions of others in low-lying countries who may soon join the flow of environmental refugees? Where will they be offered a new start?

Under official predictions, their islands and coastlines will soon start sliding into the rising tide as climate change propels the planet into a new stratosphere of

catastrophe. Ever greater numbers will be forced to scratch harder for a living on less and less land – land which is already struggling to

They are a huge, forgotten army of people whose numbers, according to conservative estimates, soar by 5,000 a day

sustain current demands.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's forecast of a one-metre sea-level rise this century poses one of the largest dilemmas yet to face the human race. The prospect is particularly bleak given the fact that half the planet's people are already crowded into coastal zones. Some 10 million of these people are at constant risk of flooding.

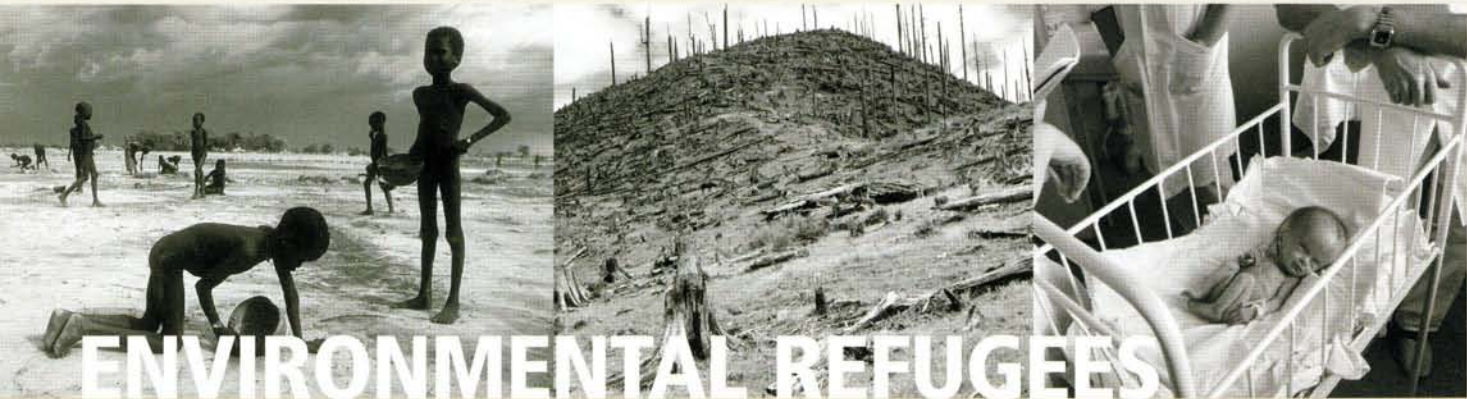
In Bangladesh alone a one-metre rise would uproot 20 million people. Then there are the vast rice-growing river floodplains of Thailand, Indonesia and India, among others.

Even the rich world must pay a price. There are devastating implications for nations such as Holland and Denmark, with the possibility of huge population shifts and waves of environmental refugees moving onto already cramped lands.

Such massive migration will be accompanied by the stench of sickness. Mosquito-borne diseases are expected to increase 100-fold in temperate regions. Malaria has already quadrupled in the last five years.

Incredibly, politicians have chosen to ignore the impending crisis, refusing to accept the likes of Paani, Marat and Karalolo are the refugees they most unequivocally are.

Even the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), established in 1950 in response to the mass-displacement of Europeans in WWII, has conspicuously failed to



# ENVIRONMENTAL REFUGEES

STILL PICTURES

address the problem. The UNHCR refuses to update its legal framework in line with the planet's rapidly deteriorating environment. As for a tangible solution, forget it.

Instead the agency clings onto the politically narrow, outdated definition of refugees, which stipulates that people should only be considered as such if their flight is due to 'a well-founded fear of persecution' on grounds such as race and religion.

But doesn't an environment which has become so degraded that it no longer offers the basic building blocks of life – namely, food and water – persecute?

The upshot is that at least 25 million refugees (though the true total is likely to be far higher) are not afforded basic rights.

These people's plight was similarly glossed over by the UK's Refugee Week in June. Refugee Week preferred to concentrate on Britain's asylum seekers. It overlooked figures from the Red Cross which show that more than half – 58 per cent – of the world's 43 million refugees are in fact environmentally displaced. In other words, almost one in every 250 persons on our planet.

All future trends point to an acute escalation of environmentally-driven human migration. Dr Norman Myers, a visiting fellow at Oxford University, believes that climate change and environmental degradation will create 150 million environmental refugees by 2050.

Klaus Topfer, chief executive of the United Nations Environment Programme, says that the swollen ranks of environmental refugees could double to 50 million in just eight years time. That is an increase of 8,500 a day.

But even Topfer may as well be whispering in the wind.

## The politics of environmental refugees

Asylum is a topic that carries the power to make and brake politicians. Just look at the improbable success of Jean-Marie Le Pen in France. But despite asylum issues dominating both the media and politics, the actual role of the world's degraded environment as a factor in human migration is being conveniently ignored. Thus politicians and media magnates can continue labelling environmental

In the 15 minutes it takes you to read this article, the world will gain another 2,600 mouths to feed

refugees as 'bogus'. So, refugee policy is concocted in seeming oblivion to the problem of environmental refugees, and Western governments are allowed to act as if 10s of millions of legitimate migrants do not exist.

That is why the British Home Secretary David Blunkett's recently-published White Paper on immigration and asylum failed to concern itself with environmental refugees. Blunkett preferred to pander to the whims of Fortress Europe instead. A mature analysis into why people are migrating in the first place never takes place.

It is almost as if the unfolding problem is too big to comprehend. It is easier and cheaper to ditch the 3,500-year-old tradition of affording succour to refugees, and to systematically deny the likes of the Fomenko family the right to a better life.

Wendy Williams, population movement advisor for the International Red Cross, is under no illusion that politicians are purposefully avoiding

the repercussions of environmental collapse in order to keep numbers of 'legitimate' refugees down.

'If politicians relaxed migrations laws,' Williams says, 'it would probably be their death knell. We need to raise awareness that these people simply cannot survive off the land anymore, and that they don't want to leave their homes in the first place.'

For all the bluster, Britain's 'refugee crisis' remains piffling compared to the size of the true environmental problem.

If global trends for environmental refugees were applied to the UK, there would be around 250,000 people – the equivalent of the population of Sunderland – thus affected in this country. That is three times the record number of asylum applicants for a single year in Britain.

Green MEP for London Jean Lambert is one of the few politicians in the West who admits to being intensely worried about the problem. In May she unveiled a detailed report into the environmental refugee crisis. The report outlined her concerns that a serious debate has yet to commence on the unfolding crisis.

Lambert is flabbergasted that the issue of finding new homes for 10s of millions of people in the near future is not even worthy of peripheral concern.

## The UNHCR

Just how low a priority the issue is can be illustrated by the fact that the annual budget of the UNHCR is a mere £843m. That is less than the military expenditures of world governments in a single day. It is arguably barely enough to cope with the demands of conventionally 'persecuted' migrants.

Of the UNHCR money, a fraction so tiny it cannot be easily broken down is offered to environmental refugees.

There are no publicised plans to increase help to these migrants, even though they constitute the majority of the world's displaced. The British government alone spends almost the same amount – £835m – handling asylum seekers in this country.

The irony is that the developing world continues to be hit hardest by environmental degradation and human-driven climate change. That suffering seems to be in direct disproportion to the developing world's responsibility for climate change. After all, the US alone spews out 25 per cent of greenhouse gases on behalf of just four per cent of the world's population.

From the terrorised perspective of the Paani family's thatched roof, the US's refusal to cooperate with the Kyoto Protocol must seem grotesquely indifferent to say the least.

### Driven from their land

Even when climate change is removed from the frame the picture remains grim. Soaring population growth and devastated, exhausted environments are creating immense suffering and massive migration on their own.

A whistle-stop tour of the world makes disquieting reading.

Mexico, the Ivory Coast and the Phillipines could all lose the bulk of their forests within half a lifetime. In the same short timescale Ethiopia, El Salvador and Nepal could lose most of their farmland topsoil.

Globally, one in three people face acute water shortages as water use is expected to increase by 40 per cent over the next 20 years. Many of these people will be forced from their homes to seek clean water supplies elsewhere. Countries like Jordan, Egypt and Pakistan will be particularly affected. India's breadbasket – the huge agricultural plains of the Punjab – is already more than half eroded.

And almost overnight an abundance of land in countries like Kenya and Costa Rica has been dramatically transformed into acute land shortage through rapid urbanisation.

Each of these factors independently could trigger extraordinary numbers of environmental refugees. And all the time the pressures are growing.

In the 15 minutes it takes you to read this article, the world will gain another 2,600 mouths to feed; 97 of every 100 will be born into a country where finances are stretched, food and water is insufficient and where creaking, chaotic cities are groaning under the weight of incoming migrants. These cities are mostly poised on the brink of natural disaster: 40 of the world's 50 fastest-growing cities are stranded within earthquake zones.

## Does an environment which has become so degraded that it no longer offers the basic building blocks of life – namely, food and water – persecute?

Once again we come back to climate change. Four years ago the world saw the birth of the 'super-disaster'. For the first time in history more people were being displaced because of environmental reasons than war. A report from the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies warned that the number of people they had helped after major floods, droughts and earthquakes had increased from 500,000 to five and a

half million in just six years. A UN survey estimates that around a third of the world's total land is in the process of becoming infertile. While massive man-made projects like China's Three Gorges dam are driving more than one million people from their homes. Other studies predict that 100 million of 135 million people living in areas of desertification will be displaced in the next 20 years.

These are just some of the complex, alarming web of factors powering this new wave of refugees. It is a complexity that will prove taxing for politicians. But, unless they start attempting to solve it, it will store up even greater problems for the future.

### Solutions?

Measures need to be introduced to ensure Paani's fate is not repeated across the world.

Putting the brakes on climate change will only be achieved by reducing greenhouse emissions by 90 per cent (not 10 or 20 per cent) within a decade.

One interesting development that could hold huge ramifications for Western governments is the threat by Paani's prime minister to take legal action against polluter states for greenhouse gas emissions.

But first we need a definition of refugees that includes those displaced for environmental reasons.

Redefining state responsibility for environmental refugees is another must – a tough choice for leaders who must start reacting to the fact that people are being pushed from their homes and not pulled by the bright lights of the West.

### Running out of time

The problem is growing daily. An action plan is needed. Finding new homes for 125 million people in a few decades will test even the most committed.

As it stands the world is not prepared to deal with these implications. It is barely aware of the impending crisis. Disaster awaits, only a dramatic upsurge in political will can prevent tens of millions of people from experiencing the same desperate fate as the families of Paani, Matra and Karalolo ■

**MARK TOWNSEND** is an award-winning environmental journalist

### DROWNING BY NUMBERS: THE CONSEQUENCES OF RISING SEA LEVELS AND SUBSIDENCE

- ✦ In China, the city of Shanghai could be entirely flooded. The government calculates that 30 million of its people could be displaced by global warming.
- ✦ With a forecast of 142 million people inhabiting coastal India by 2050, India's flood-zone refugees could total anything between 20 and 60 million.
- ✦ Seven per cent of Bangladesh could be permanently lost, with an estimated 15 million people being displaced.
- ✦ By 2050 Egypt is expected to lose between 12 and 15 per cent of its arable land, with a possible 14 million people being displaced. Egypt already imports well over half its food.
- ✦ Other delta areas at risk include Indonesia, Thailand, Mozambique, Gambia and Senegal.
- ✦ Island states at risk include the Maldives, Kiribati, the Marshalls and dozens of Caribbean states. Around 1 million people are likely to have to evacuate permanently.

Source: N. Myers, 'Environmental Refugees in a Globally Warmed World', *BioScience*, Vol 43/11, December 1993.

# Of mines AND MEN

**A plan to build Europe's biggest open-cast mine in a beautiful Romanian valley will destroy several villages, displace thousands of people and put many more at risk from cyanide poisoning. BY STEPHANIE ROTH**

**W**e walk in silence, save for the hum of an occasional bee. It's a little early in the year for the bees, but perhaps they were encouraged by the warm spring air. Retired gold miner Zeno Cornea leads me past flocks of wiry sheep tended by ageing shepherds, and beyond a crystalline lake. We continue ever upwards until at last we reach the top. Once there, Cornea beckons to me. 'Thirty years ago,' he explains – his face etched by years of back-breaking work, 'there was an old Dacian town – just there. It stood on a hill looking down onto the valley.' He sweeps his hand in front of him, arcing out the shape of the hill. 'Then Ceaucescu came.' All that remains of the hilltop town is the deep lifeless scar of an open-pit gold mine. The only sign of life is an outsized tractor seemingly abandoned at the centre of this man-made void.

Carefully, Cornea unfolds a large piece of paper from his pocket. 'This arrived through my door 10 days ago,' he explains. 'It's a public consultation announcement from the Rosia Montana Gold Corporation (RMGC). Everyone in the valley received one.' He turns it over, revealing on the underside a map of the area through which we have been walking. It's title states blankly: 'Industrial Development Zone'.

'Look,' Cornea says, pointing out again into the idyllic valley that fills our view. 'Can you see the villages of Cetate and Cirmic?' He directs my gaze towards two picture postcard villages. 'This is where they are on the map.' Blots of

pink, purple and green indicate the different stages of the gold mine's development. There are no signs on the map of the villages, though. In their place are the words 'Cariera Cetate' and 'Cariera Cirmic'. 'Cariera' is Romanian for 'Quarry'

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**In 2000, 100 tonnes of cyanide leaked into the river Tisza... Enough, taken in pill form, to kill a billion people.**

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As we continue our walk, Cornea tells me how the valley has been protected by an official governmental decree since April 2000. Winding our way along narrow roads, he occasionally points out places that we pass. 'This is where they are going to keep part of the sterile. We are now approaching what will become the tailing management facility with the cyanide lake and dam.' For the moment, the 'tailing management facility' is a sun-drenched valley dotted with haystacks.

### **Lethal precedent**

Cyanide is used in gold mining to extract the metal from its ore. In January 2000, 100,000 tonnes of water leaked from a gold-mine lake near Baia Mare into the river Tisza. The water contained 100 tonnes of cyanide – enough to kill one billion people if taken in pill form. At the time, George Monbiot wrote: 'When birds fly over the water, they

drop dead'. Nearly all the fish in the river Tisza were killed. Ground water, drinking water and, in some places, the very air were rendered poisonous. Vast tracts of farmland were left ruined.

The disaster has been described as Europe's worst after Chernobyl. For the people of Arbud, a sleepy town of 13,000 inhabitants, it is not just a memory. It has become a warning. Cornea's map shows a huge mining dam situated a short way upstream of Arbud.

The river runs down from the dam right through the centre of the town. 'Just imagine,' Cornea exclaims, 'a dam 180 metres high, with a lake submerging 600 hectares' – the lake at Baia Mare only covered 90 hectares – 'and filled with 250 million tonnes of water. Cyanide escapes into groundwater all the time.

How do you "control" a spill? And what about condensation? The lake won't be covered; it's all in an open environment. The rain here is acidic enough to form hydrogen cyanide nitrogen when it falls onto the lake. How many Baia Mares will it take?'

It gets worse. Cyanide also extracts other metals from their ores – arsenic, lead, uranium, mercury, iron, nickel, cadmium... At Baia Mare, the spill contained 20,000 tonnes of lead and zinc. Cornea shakes his head and looks out onto the road. 'It's madness,' he despairs. 'Because of what happened at Baia Mare, countries like the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Greece and Turkey have either outlawed the use of cyanide or are calling for it to be banned... And what's happening here, in the very country where the Baia Mare disaster happened? Companies employing the cyanide leaching method get the red-carpet treatment.'

In this part of north-western Romania, whole villages will have to be resettled to make way for Europe's biggest open-cast mine. Gabriel Resources, the company in charge, claims it is adhering to the World Bank's Forced Resettlement Directive. But, Cornea comments pointedly, no one has asked the people of the village of Rosia Montana if they actually want to leave their homes. Nor, Cornea adds, have they asked 'if we are willing for our churches and cemeteries to be excavated and bulldozed over to become a cyanide lake or an open-pit gold mine'.

### Cyanide is genocide

Back in Cîrnic, Cernea takes me to meet Aurel Manta and his wife, the local historian. Until his retirement a year ago, Aurel was chief of the original mine's geological service. Zeno David, president of the local campaign opposing the forced resettlement scheduled to make way for the new mining development, joins us. Over several glasses of Palinka, a lethal schnapps-like spirit I learn how Gabriel Resources has no mining experience yet plans to go ahead with such a crazy project anyway; and of how Gabriel chairman Frank Timis has two convictions for possessing heroin with intent to sell.

Eventually David gets onto his favourite subject – the local mayor. 'Our mayor is a man called Virgil Naritsa, a vet,' David begins. The others sit back smiling; they know the story only too well. 'He is also a successful businessman with several shops. Two years ago, although he only represented a small unknown party, he was elected. Why? Because his message was clear – "no to the gold project". As soon as he was elected, he changed his mind. Eleven members of the council approved a new land-use plan to allow mining without the prerequisite public consultation. Even the regional prefect has confirmed that this is illegal, and the land-use plan is therefore invalid.

'Then, in early April, RMGC announced a four-day public

consultation – one day for each region to be affected. I think they hoped no one would show up, and they could tick that off as some sort of approval. Well, we showed them differently, didn't we?' Aurel Manta laughs into his glass.

'The first consultation,' David continues 'took place at the town hall in Rosia Montana. We worked solidly for three days. We emptied our wives' laundry cupboards, taking all the sheets we could get. The children brought pens and watercolours. We had two messages. First, that we want a truly democratic referendum – one for every affected village. Second, that cyanide equals genocide.

We did a good job. Some of us organised whistles and plastic trumpets.

## The mining company has no mining experience, but its chairman has two convictions for possessing heroin with intent to sell

Others were in charge of organising transportation to Rosia Montana. Some alerted friends and relatives. Nicoletta, the storekeeper's daughter was on the phone talking to the press.' More palinka is passed round. David leans back, grinning.

'Then came the day. It was raining. A storm was brewing. "It's a good sign," I said to myself. The school bus arrived, it didn't break down and we arrived right on time. The town hall was packed with discontented farmers and outside stood the wives, young men and children – carrying banners and shouting to their hearts' content. Even toothless old Mircea was happy – we gave him one of those plastic trumpets.' Everyone breaks into laughter.

'Inside the town hall sat the RMGC delegation. They'd come all the way from Canada to perch upon this

podium. Mike Steyn, the general manager, was there. You should have seen their faces. We took them completely by surprise. It was heaven. While the delegation was trying to start the consultation, Vup from Bucium pulled out an old battered suitcase on which we had written the words "adios" and "bon voyage".

He made his way to Mr Steyn, held the suitcase right under his nose and said: "I will never leave, so as I won't need to pack my suitcase you can have mine". That's when hell broke loose. Under a storm of whistling and shouting, RMGC cancelled the consultation. Mr Steyn left diplomatically but obviously in a hurry. He would have forgotten our present, but fortunately Vup caught his sleeve.'

This was the first demonstration of its kind in Romania, and it has set an important precedent. After it had finished the protesters took all the banners to their fellow campaigners in Abrud, where the next day's consultation was scheduled. The same happened again. After that RMGC cancelled the rest of the consultation period.

His story finished, David leans back, empties his palkina and sighs. 'We just hope they got the message and won't come up with a new brainwashing device to buy public opinion,' he says. 'We told them exactly what we think.'

For the first time Mrs Manta speaks. 'Look at this place,' she says in a gentle, yet resolute tone. 'This is where I was born. So were my parents and grandparents and great grandparents. I built the local museum. This is an area of immense archeological importance protected by law. We don't want to leave. The project is simply mad. Just imagine the breathtaking scale of the cyanide that will be employed. According to all the laws of the universe this project should not be allowed to go ahead.' ■

**STEPHANIE ROTH is the former news editor of *The Ecologist***

Genetic modification is being sold to us as a great benefit to mankind. Yet there is probably no field of science with such a poor record on transparency, ethics and legislation. GMWatch is brought to you monthly by Jonathan Mathews, co-founder of the Norfolk Genetic Information Network ([www.ngin.org.uk](http://www.ngin.org.uk))



## Washington's illegal biological weapons plan

US Navy and Air Force biotechnology labs are proposing to develop offensive biological weapons, says The Sunshine Project.

The weapons – GM microbes that attack items such as fuel, plastics and asphalt in order to 'degrade the enemy' – would violate both US and international law.

At the same time, the Bush administration is aggressively accusing other countries of developing biological weapons, but has rejected a legally binding system of UN inspections of suspected biological weapons facilities.

Bush seems impervious to the irony that the strain of anthrax sent through the US mail has been traced to labs owned not by Saddam Hussein but the US military – the US Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick, Maryland.

Meanwhile, the US National Academy of Sciences is refusing to release dozens of reports on GM weapons development, even though the documents are supposed to be public records. (To find out more, visit: [www.sunshine-project.org](http://www.sunshine-project.org).)

## GM concerns don't count

The Bush administration is ruthlessly exploiting the tragedy of 11 September by presenting contentious issues through the prism of its war on terrorism.

Language doesn't come more loaded than that of Condoleezza Rice, George Bush's national security adviser, who said: 'When people are trying to kill you and when they attack because they hate freedom, other disputes – from Frankenfood to bananas, and even important issues like the environment – suddenly look a bit different.'

## Biotech subsidies expose free trade myth

The US's one-sided vision of 'free trade' has never been more evident than in its use of the WTO to force open foreign markets, while simultaneously resorting to tax dollars to subsidise its tottering GM crop industry.

The new Farm Security Act will whack up US agricultural subsidies by a massive 80 per cent over the next few years. This will help protect US farmers from the market failure of GM crops. Non-GM farmers like those in Brazil, who have been greatly increasing their market share because of consumer concerns over the

GM-contaminated US soy crop, are now expected to have to abandon soy for rice.

US taxpayers will also have to stump up a 'rapid response' fund of US \$6 million per year for five years to compensate US exporters 'harmed by unwarranted and arbitrary trade barriers' due to 'marketing of biotechnology products', food safety, etc.

In a related move, the Bush administration has requested an increase in the budget of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to 'help developing countries adopt biotechnology'.



CORBIS

## Editorially modified facts

Thirteen of the largest newspapers and magazines in the US have almost shut out criticism of GM food and crops from their opinion pages, according to a new report by the Institute for Food and Development Policy (Food First).

The report found an overwhelming bias in favour of GM foods not just on editorial pages, but also on op-ed pages – a forum usually reserved for a variety of opinions.

The report also found that the arguments presented in support of GM crops were identical to those used by the biotechnology industry in its advertising campaigns. (To find out more, visit: <http://www.foodfirst.org>.)

## RESPONSE (OF A KIND)

Monsanto PR firm the Bivings Group statement on *The Ecologist* story 'Amazing disgrace' (vol 32/4) – 'This author and publication have a long history of making these types of baseless claims. The claims made in the story are false. From our perspective, this piece merits no further discussion.'

## But **not** from our perspective...

### Dr Frankenstein and Mr Hyde

A recent article in Monsanto's home town rag, the *St Louis Post-Dispatch*, provides an interesting profile of the 'new' Monsanto corporation evolving under chief executive Hendrik Verfaillie. Unlike his predecessor, Bob Shapiro, Monsanto's current boss is thought 'not likely to get hit in the face with flying pies'. 'He's not an innately controversial guy,' Verfaillie's chief of staff explains. 'I've never seen him be anything other than totally respectful to people inside and outside the company.'

The article also details Verfaillie's 'new Monsanto pledge', which commits those working for the company to 'act with integrity, courage, respect,

candour, honesty, humility and consistency'.

Nobody reading this puff piece could possibly have guessed that while preparing her copy the *Post-Dispatch* reporter had been sent *The Ecologist's* GMWatch article 'Amazing disgrace' (see above), which detailed the dirty tricks campaign run by Monsanto's PR company against the corporation's critics. Far from being a new broom, Verfaillie has been with Monsanto since 1976. He has been its CEO for the last two years – exactly the period in which the campaign of character assassination has been in full swing.

Hmmm... That powerful odour of scorched underclothing couldn't be proceeding from Hendrik Verfaillie, could it? (For the latest news on Monsanto's dirty tricks campaign, visit: [http://ngin.tripod.com/deceit\\_index.html](http://ngin.tripod.com/deceit_index.html).)



## Terrorists in our midst

An article in *USA Today* asserts that 'anti-biotech extremists' are part of a 'growing wave of domestic terrorism'. The people we need to worry about, it argues, are not just al-Qa'ida but 'the middle-class kids down the street'.

All music to the ears, no doubt, of the Royal Society's Professor Anthony Trewavas. He once advised US scientists to contact right-wing senator Jesse Helms and sound the alarm 'that a subversive organisation directed from Europe is attempting to destroy US agriculture and farming'. (For more on Professor Trewavas, visit: <http://ngin.tripod.com/trewavas.htm>.)

In a world where the mainstream media outlets are increasingly owned by multinational corporations, criticism of the free market system that supports them can be hard to find.

## OF BIG CATS AND LITTLE MINDS – THE MEDIA AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Last month The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) released Global Environmental Outlook 3 (GEO-3), its latest report on the state of the world's environment. This was a significant document, though not for the reasons the mainstream media chose to focus upon. 'A quarter of mammals faced with extinction' was the most common headline. While the death of such a vast proportion of mammals is undoubtedly newsworthy, what these stories lacked was any serious systemic analysis of why so many are at risk. Yet the very structure of the 450-page report itself made it clear what UNEP thinks is to blame.

Looking ahead 30 years, the report presented not one scenario, but four – each depending on what was the driving force in the world's future. Those four forces were – the market, security, policy and sustainability. In an interview with *The Ecologist*, the head of UNEP Klaus Topfer stated: 'it is a clear signal that market forces alone cannot solve the problems, but only increase them'.

One might think that when the head of UNEP says we can no longer allow markets to rule, it would be big news. Yet scan the UK press over the following days, and with the exception of *The Guardian*, no other paper made serious reference to these four contrasting scenarios. Polar bears were going to die, they said, but they ducked away from pointing the finger of blame at the market.

However, this blindness was nothing

compared to what happened on BBC2's *Newsnight*. It presented the environmental debate as a boxing match, with Topfer in one corner representing 'the environmentalist'. Topfer may be the head of UNEP, but he is still very much an institutional environmentalist, believing the solutions lie in such misinformed schemes as voluntary codes of conduct for multinational corporations that run Third World utilities. The idea that maybe they shouldn't run them at all is not on his agenda.

Topfer, however, was not the problem so much as his opponent in the other corner – Bjorn Lomborg. Lomborg, author of the controversial book *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, believes we should not focus on global warming, as solving it would be too expensive.

By presenting these two as representatives of the two sides of the environmental debate, *Newsnight* was wrong on several counts.

- It gave unwarranted credibility to a contrarian whose views have been rubbished by several respected journals and scientists.
- By framing the debate in such a way, it denied the existence of the many opposing voices (ourselves included) who agree with neither party.
- By choosing the agitprop Lomborg, it furthered the descent of television news, where commentators are chosen not for the validity of their opinions, but merely for their entertainment value ■

## 'SCIENCE' AND THE MEDIA

In the days leading up to the screening of the GM drama *Fields of Gold* on the BBC, the press was awash with stories rubbishing the apparent lack of science behind the plot, which revolved around the health risks from contaminated GM crops. The source for much of the criticism was the biotech-industry-supported lobby group Science Media Centre (SMC). The SMC claims to be 'an independent venture working to promote the voices, stories and views of the scientific community to the news media when science is in the headlines.' In reality it's a Lord-Sainsbury-backed project which has such well known GM proponents as Professor Chris Leaver, Professor Sir John Krebs, The Baroness Greenfield and Lord Robert Winston on its board. In short, quite apart from taking money from biotech companies it represents one very narrow part of the science community ■

## UNFAIR COMMENTS

The US news is biased towards comments from white, male Republicans, a study shows.

92 per cent of all US sources interviewed were white, 85 per cent were male and, where party affiliation was identifiable, 75 per cent were Republican, according to a study undertaken for Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting of ABC World News Tonight, CBS Evening News and NBC Nightly News in the year 2001. Big business was also overrepresented. Despite the loss of 2.4 million jobs in the US last year, corporate representatives appeared almost 35 times more often than those from unions.

## RATHER SURPRISING

'Limiting access, limiting information to cover the backsides of those who are in charge of the war, is extremely dangerous and cannot and should not be accepted. And I am sorry to say that, up to and including the moment of this interview, that overwhelmingly it has been accepted by the American people. And the current administration revels in that, they relish that, and they take refuge in that.' So spoke veteran US news anchorman Dan Rather in an interview with the BBC's *Newsnight*. An amazing turnaround, from a man who, appearing on the David Letterman show on 17 September 2001, was moved to comment: 'George Bush is the president. He makes the decisions... wherever he wants me to line up, just tell me where.' It was a different Rather that appeared in chastened mood on *Newsnight*. 'It is an obscene comparison – you know I am not sure I like it,' he commented to the BBC. 'But you know there was a time in South Africa that people would put flaming tyres around people's necks if they dissented. And in some ways the fear is that you will be necklaced here, you will have a flaming tyre of lack of patriotism put around your neck,' he said. 'Now it is that fear that keeps journalists from asking the toughest of the tough questions.' ■

## LETTUCE PRAY

ENERGY HEALING IS READILY DISMISSED AS NEW-AGE MUMBO JUMBO. BUT AN EXPERIMENT WITH LETTUCE SEEDS HAS ADDED WEIGHT TO THE GROWING BODY OF SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE IN ITS FAVOUR.



HAZEL COURTENEY IS AN AWARD-WINNING ALTERNATIVE HEALTH JOURNALIST.

In the first scientific study of its kind, a UK scientist has shown that when lettuce seeds are given energy healing prior to planting, they become more resistant to fungal growth, without the need for spraying with chemical-based fungicides.

Before you dismiss this concept consider the Department of the Environment's assessment that every year non-organic British farmers use 21,000 tonnes of pesticides, insecticides, growth regulators and fungicides (many of which are listed by international authorities as possible carcinogens) over our fruits, vegetables and grains. And the London-based charity Pesticide Action Network warns that – with an average of 11 applications each year – more pesticides are applied to lettuces than any other vegetable crop.

Dr Serena Roney-Dougal, a parapsychologist based at a Glastonbury research centre, shared her findings with other scientists at a recent conference in Cambridge. She said: 'Unfortunately, due to fungal disease, insects and weeds, organic producers can experience 30 to 40 per cent less yields than conventional farmers. Because I have always been keen to help organic producers become more competitive, we have experimented in the laboratory for almost 30 years with various healing methods and seeds with varying degrees of success.'

'After meeting Geoff Boltwood – a local healer who had already participated in scientific experiments in which he achieved a significant success rate healing seeds that had been deliberately poisoned, I decided to undertake controlled scientific trials with him last year.'

Roney-Dougal set up her experiment at a local organic farm. She chose lettuces because they are sown every

fortnight from March until July. This meant she could do eight tightly controlled trials. Only healthy, organic seeds were used for the experiments, and no one working with the plants knew which seeds had been enhanced by the healer.

Now based at The Hale Clinic in London, Boltwood recalls being 'asked if I could enhance the seeds to make them more resistant to insects, pests, fungal disease and so on. The seeds were in sealed containers and I placed my hands near the jars and visualised the seeds becoming even stronger, and repelling any problems. I projected this picture and a feeling of perfect plants into a ball of energy that passed through my hands into the seeds' energy fields'.

Following the harvest the results were sent for independent computer analysis.

### People still think you need to be religious to receive or give healing-type prayers

The plants enhanced by Boltwood were found to have significantly less fungal damage. 'Although the study is being repeated this season, these initial results are very exciting indeed,' commented Roney-Dougal.

'As organic farming requires more labour and is, therefore, more expensive than intensively farmed produce, this study could help them become more competitive. Therefore, this research has enormous implications for the future of farming. It also shows that we have a practical application for a procedure that some people have considered at best non-existent and at worst evil.'

Boltwood is only too aware of this attitude. 'I have been able to give healing since the age of six, but my parents were very protective of my abilities and they were only discussed inside our close family,' he says. 'When I began healing full time 32 years ago at the age of 22 most people were still sceptical. But today there are many scientific studies to show that healing works, and people are becoming less cynical. Some people still think you need to be religious to receive or give

healing or healing-type prayers. But anyone can learn to heal.

'I believe that all positive thoughts, whether they come from a healer or from a person praying, are just as effective. Two years ago research from the University of Maryland's School of Medicine showed that cardiac patients who received distant healing without their knowledge, recovered more quickly than those who received no healing. Thoughts travel.'

Boltwood claims to be able to see the energy fields around virtually everything – from animals, plants and seeds to food and even rocks. These fields can normally only be seen through Kirlean photography. He feels that healers simply pulse positive coherent energy into the patient's energy field, thus encouraging the body to heal itself.

'In the case of the healthy lettuce seeds,' he explains, 'I simply tried to make them even healthier, and when a plant or a person is healthier, their natural immunity to

repel negative influences – be it fungal disease or whatever – is increased.'

Roger Coghill, a bio-electromagnetics research scientist based in Gwent, says that science is beginning to back up what Boltwood has known intuitively for years. 'It is vital for people to grasp that we are electrical beings in a physical shell,' says Coghill. 'Every one of us generates an electric field that is as unique to each individual as their DNA. Food also emits a frequency. And if you eat a food that emits a frequency that is not compatible with your own, eventually negative symptoms will arise. Also, if we become ill our field's characteristics change. Healers' electric fields appear to be different in character, and they seem more easily able to transfer a correcting electronic frequency into the patient's, plant's or animal's energy field. Also, some healers are evidently more powerful than others.'

Roney-Dougal concludes: 'These trials add to the growing body of evidence that through healing we have the possibility to help ourselves and the environment, and make our food healthier without the need for tonnes of chemicals.' ■

# Doctor's Handwriting

Columnist **Peter Mansfield** resigned as a GP following attacks on his stance against the MMR vaccine. He now runs GoodHealthkeeping. The practice aims not just to cure illnesses, but to educate people how to avoid becoming ill in the first place.



## WHY IS BAD HEARING SO WIDESPREAD AT THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH?

If rare expertise really was priceless, there would be endless openings for specialists in listening. Take doctors. If they listened as they were supposed to, my time would be my own.

I recently suggested to a regulator that the health service would be improved by the provision of health advisers. The regulator asked what I meant by 'medical advice'. But I hadn't said a word about anything 'medical'.

Careful listeners like Ann B would get the point immediately. After six months of correspondence with one of our great corporate institutions about the mismatch between my telephone service and its charges, she sorted the problem in six hours. Whatever they pay you, Ann, it isn't enough.

Our medical civil servants are especially apt to turn down the volume on their headsets. Selective deafness seems to be a basic qualification for the job. Public health specialist Dr Eileen Rubery is now a senior research fellow at the Judge Institute of Management Studies at Cambridge University. But, as a senior civil servant, in 1994 she chaired the previous government's pro-MMR campaign. Dr Rubery still believes in MMR, but acknowledges that many parents do not want it. So, she urges health ministers to be pragmatic and offer the vaccines singly too. Some protection is obviously better than none. We should not need a public health specialist to work that out. But the Department of Health, which employs several such specialists, chooses to

ignore Dr Rubery. A spokesman for the department said its position on the safety of MMR, and its refusal to allow single jabs on the NHS, was unchanged. Government health advisers are concerned that parents who choose single jabs may fail to get 'the full course of six'.

What six? Most of these government advisers must have children over 14 who received the measles vaccine singly. They only had it once. Girls used to have rubella at 12, with no follow-up. One shot of either of these single vaccines – and I quote the Department of Health's own 1988 publication *Immunisation Against Infectious Disease* – gave 95% coverage (herd immunity) and lasted for 15 years. That's about as good as it gets.

The second dose was not about single vaccines. It was invented to make good the lesser efficiency of MMR, admitted in the 1996 edition of the same Department of Health publication. Parents who choose to vaccinate singly need only do it once.

National vaccination rates have fallen to 84 per cent – the level at which epidemics become a serious risk. In London uptake has plummeted to around 75 per cent. So far this year 124 measles cases have been confirmed in England and Wales. That compares with 74 for the whole of last year. All the victims have fought the disease off successfully. But, from what I heard of the Streatham outbreak, some of those victims had received the MMR. That selective deafness, again.

## Cancer genes kicked into touch

Doctors have always had favourite ways to explain the unexplained, be it rheumatics or brain tumours. Bad vapours, for example, gave way to germs. And in the 1960s the fashionable explanation for chronic inflammation was auto-immunity. Then genes moved in, despite the fact that their influence could seldom be shown to be large.

Well, now it's the environment – at least where cancer is concerned. A very large recent Swedish study – 10 million people over a 70-year period – finds very few cancers to which genes contribute very much. Conversely, environmental factors account for most causative influences – 75 per cent or more – in most cancers. Leukaemia and stomach cancer are 99 per cent environmental, lung and lymphoma 90 per cent, breast and testicle 75 per cent. The exception was thyroid cancer, which is 53 per cent genetic.

We shan't hear this trumpeted about too much, of course. It puts the onus of prevention on polluters. But it also gives you the initiative. You can't do much about your genes, but you can do a lot to reduce the impact of pollutants on your body.

The key is anti-oxidant foods and nutrients. They mop up pollutants and limit the damage they cause. Their anti-oxidant property accounts for the bright colours of vegetables and fruits, and for the reputations of vitamins A and C. In my experience these vitamins work best when they are taken in a food-like form. Indeed, in some recent Irish studies of a pre-cancerous bowel condition, only food-like anti-oxidants worked at all. This is bad news for the sponsor of the study – a manufacturer of pure vitamins.

## Big Brother is watching you

On 21 May a major constitutional infringement went through parliament without debate. The Secretary of State for Health engineered new regulations that permit him to demand access to personal medical records, whenever he deems it to be 'in the public interest'. Adverse reactions to medicines and vaccines, vaccination programmes and cancer records are all specifically included. But anything would qualify if the secretary of state said so.

1984 made 'Big Brother' a catch phrase. We thought Orwell had been exaggerating. He got the year wrong, that's all.

## ... and into the deep fat fryer

If you're a sucker for deep-fried snacks and French fries, beware. Acrylamide is an industrial chemical which is known to cause genetic mutations. The WHO has, therefore, set a maximum permissible concentration for it in drinking water.

Swedish scientists recently discovered, however, that appreciable amounts of acrylamide are formed during the deep-frying of a number of carbohydrate foods. The concentration in crisps can be 500 times the WHO maximum for water. French fries sold in two fast-food chains were found to be 100 times over the WHO maximum.

The team was so alarmed that it released its findings to the press before attempting to publish them, which will take months. The Food Standards Agency has responded with an investigation of its own. It couldn't help breaking into one of its mantras, though. The agency said: 'There is (at present) no need for people to change their diets.' No? I thought we were supposed to avoid all that processed, superheated fat in any case.



## DEFOREST THE AMAZON – DESTROY THE WORLD by Peter Bunyard



AT A RECENT CLIMATE CONFERENCE IN PANAMA, THE ECOLOGIST'S SCIENCE EDITOR PETER BUNYARD LEARNT THAT THE WORLD MAY BE SERIOUSLY UNDERESTIMATING THE DAMAGE THAT DEFORESTING THE AMAZON CAN CAUSE.

**I**n its entirety the Amazon Basin covers some seven million square kilometres. Representing at least 60 per cent of the world's remaining tropical rainforests, and with some 55,000 different plant species under its canopy, it is one of the world's largest and richest natural habitats.

Five million square kilometres of this vast ecosystem are found in Brazil. Now, aggressive development plans by the Brazilian government are putting them at risk. Furthermore, if the predictions made by the latest climate change model are correct, these plans have serious implications for the planet's climate.

By 1998, an area of forest the size of France (approximately 549,000 square kilometres) had already been cleared in the Brazilian Amazon. Ask one of the country's officials who is to blame for the deforestation, and they will most likely point their finger at the many landless peasants.

While it is true that this ever-growing mass of Brazil's dispossessed have been forced to clear forest in order to subsist, the real blame lies elsewhere. Between half to three-quarters of forest cleared to date has been caused by cattle ranchers who have been enriching themselves through tax breaks and advantageous land prices. To illustrate:

- In the decade to 1989, deforestation occurred at around 20,000 square kilometres a year;
- In 1990 the then Brazilian president Fernando Collor froze bank accounts. As a result, deforestation in 1990 dropped to only 11,000 square kilometres;
- In 1994, however, economic reforms resulted in a flush of money. The following year nearly 30,000 square kilometres of forest was felled – the worst performance to date. Although the rate has now fallen back to some 20,000 square kilometres a year, it still means the Brazilian Amazon suffers the highest rate of deforestation in the world.

## Future Forests?

The Brazilian government, under the gung-ho title 'Avança Brasil', intends to invest more than \$40 billion over the next five years in a host of vast projects in the Amazon region. These include:

- The construction and paving of highways;
- Building railways;
- Carving out industrial waterways for the export of millions of tonnes of soya;
- Laying gas lines; and
- The construction of 79 major hydroelectric dams that would result in 12 million hectares (the equivalent of half the UK's land mass) of Amazon forest being flooded.

All this is designed to facilitate new mining projects, timber extraction and major industrial agricultural schemes.

One such project is the new 1,000-kilometre BR-174 highway, stretching from Manaus to Boa Vista near the Venezuelan border. According to Brazil's president Fernando Henrique Cardoso, it will in one stroke 'double the nation's agriculture production'. To which he should have added that it will also lead to the clearing of six million hectares of forest, and that the agricultural production from the cleared land is unsustainable.

Bill Laurance, co-ordinator of the recent climate conference in Panama, warns that over the next 15 to 20 years Avança Brasil could accelerate the processes of Amazonian degradation to the point where more than 40 per cent of the forest will have vanished. Furthermore, because what remains will have become a fragmented patchwork, it will be vulnerable to further encroachment and degradation by fires and penetrating winds.

Even without Avança Brasil, if the current rates of deforestation are not reduced, a quarter of Brazil's Amazon forests will have disappeared by 2020.

## What better way to destroy Earth's climate?

In the 1980s, the Brazilian physicist Eneas Salati showed that rainfall in the Amazon has consequences that are felt across the globe. Whether it feeds into the Amazon, then flows out to the Atlantic; evaporates back into the air to be carried by the prevailing winds west to the Andes; or is carried south towards São Paulo and Rio Grande de Sul and on across the South Atlantic towards South Africa, recent studies suggest that no more than 20-30 per cent of the rainfall actually stays in the region. This global reach is called teleconnection ('tele' means 'far').

Thunderstorms are the key to teleconnection. Most thunderstorms occur in a narrow band around the equator, at a rate of 1,500-5,000 a day. As much as two thirds of the rainfall across the planet is affected by the formation of cumulonimbus and stratiform cloud systems in the tropics. Therefore, any changes in land use and in land cover in that region will dramatically affect the global climate.

To date, concerns about future climate change have been based almost exclusively on the predictions emerging from general circulation models (GCMs) like those used by the UK Meteorological Office's Hadley Centre. Climatologists who work with GCMs maintain that by smoothing out localised phenomena into a broad average, the picture emerging from their computer iterations correspond reasonably closely to reality.

Working from these models, there are sectors of industry keen to exploit the Amazon for its minerals, timber and agricultural potential who believe that conservation needs

will be satisfied if as little as 10 per cent is left.

However, another breed of climatologists hotly disputes this rationale. Their findings cast grave doubts both on the industrialists' beliefs and those conservationists who hope that species can be saved and biodiversity maintained by protecting considerably less than 50 per cent of the forest in fragments linked by interconnecting corridors.

Two such climatologists were present in Panama. Roni Avissar, professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Duke University, and Pedro Dias of the Institute of Astronomy, Geophysics and Atmospheric Sciences at the University of São Paulo.

Avissar and Dias work at the mesoscale ('meso' means middle, as opposed to macro or micro), using models that are capable of taking into account local phenomena such as cloud formation.

They are sceptical that even the best of today's GCMs can be relied upon to give an accurate prediction of future climate. According to Avissar, 'the modelling results obtained so far probably underestimate the real effects of landscape alterations locally, regionally and by teleconnection to other regions.'

When deforestation causes the clearings in the forest to increase significantly in size, says Avissar, and when the surrounding forest becomes fragmented, the system of cloud formation abruptly breaks down. To avoid this scenario, he reckons that forest cover needs to be 60 per cent or more overall and the clearings not much greater than 100 kilometres across.

**'Changes in land use, and in land cover over the humid tropics, are affecting climate simply by altering and transforming the dynamics of cloud formation. Put simply, no cloud formation, no rainfall, no more rainforest.'**

## The consequences

If Avissar's estimates are correct, the consequences for the Amazon Basin, Brazil's neighbours, and the world are huge. What is clear is that no one can say that 30 per cent deforestation is fine, or that 40 per cent is too much.

Nor can anyone predict with certainty what will happen to climate regionally in South America (or in the rest of the world), if large areas of the Amazon Basin are pushed into a state of desertification by over-zealous development. Whatever the exact figures, one thing is abundantly clear.

Everyone, from banks, aid agencies, developers to governments, needs to understand how vital the Amazon Basin is as a component of global climate.

Otherwise they stand to cut off rainfall to their neighbouring countries and cause global warming to sink vast tracts of the world's low-lying lands beneath the sea ■

## Is Oxfam right to insist that increased access to Northern



To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Unfortunately, Newton's law prevails in the increasingly silly debate on trade, poverty and inequality, with the two tribes of globalisers and anti-traders locked in a struggle of symbiotic irrelevance to the real world.

For the globalist Ayatollahs in the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO, the last 15 or 20 years of market-driven integration have been an unmitigated triumph, leading to less poverty and falling inequality. On the other side, 'radical' localisers see trade as an automatic route to rising

**If trade is to work for the poor, we need to challenge the power relations and vested interests that make markets work for the rich.**

**KEVIN WATKINS**  
IS SENIOR POLICY  
ADVISOR AT OXFAM  
UK AND LEAD AUTHOR  
OF *RIGGED RULES  
AND DOUBLE  
STANDARDS*, THE  
REPORT UPON WHICH  
OXFAM'S NEW 'MAKE  
TRADE FAIR'  
CAMPAIGN IS BASED

poverty. Their prescription: a retreat into autarchy, with countries closing their markets and shifting from international to local trade.

There are no shades of grey. When Oxfam campaigns for the IMF/World Bank to stop imposing import liberalisation on developing countries, it is condemned by globalisers for 'anti-market' behaviour. When we call for northern governments to open their markets to the poorest countries, we stand accused by anti-traders of neo-liberalism.

The real world is more prosaic. Trade *can* help reduce poverty, but this potential is not being realised. Instead, the expansion of trade has fuelled the widening of obscene inequalities.

Why is trade failing the poor? First, the system is rigged in favour of rich countries and transnational companies. WTO rules are being used to extend corporate control over seeds, to eliminate regulations on foreign investment and to open up new sectors – such as water and health – to privatisation. Loan conditions are forcing poor countries to open their markets at breakneck speed – destroying local industry and agriculture in the process. Meanwhile, the rich world preaches free trade but practices protectionism. Poor countries and people face tariffs in industrialised countries four times higher than those facing rich nations.

The second problem is that poor people are excluded from the potential benefits of trade. Skewed systems of asset distribution, a bias towards large-scale, capital-intensive agriculture, exploitative labour practices, unsustainable resource use, gender discrimination and exclusion from education all play a part.

But exports could provide poor countries and producers with access to larger markets, creating opportunities for income, employment and

investment. In East Asia, export dynamism has helped lift 400 million people out of poverty since the mid-1970s.

Anti-trade advocates cite exploitative labour practices as grounds for protectionism. Over one million Bangladesh women are employed producing garments for export. Many earn under \$1 a day. They are denied basic social insurance and trade union rights. Yet organisations representing these women are demanding more market access in the US and the EU. Employment in garments factories is preferred to street hawking or carrying bricks on building sites.

Export production can reinforce inequalities. When Brazil exports agricultural crops the benefits largely bypass the poor. But in Uganda and Vietnam, where smallholder production dominates, agricultural export growth in the 1990s contributed to rapid rural poverty reduction. Should Brazil withdraw from world trade? Not in the view of Lula da Silva and the Workers Party. They have combined commitment to radical land reforms with calls for improved access to US markets.

Production for trade can have a negative impact on the environment. In the Philippines, Oxfam is working with fishing communities whose livelihoods have been destroyed by intensive shrimp farming. Trade is also implicated in the environmental damage associated with haulage and aviation fuel.

These problems have to be addressed, but protectionism is not the answer. Witness the huge environmental costs associated with production in India's highly protected iron and steel industry, or the environmental havoc wrought by the Common Agricultural Policy. Surely, the challenge is to ensure that market prices reflect real environmental costs. Prohibitions on environmentally damaging exports, taxes on aviation fuels and haulage, and incentives for energy-efficient technologies all have a role to play. Perhaps the place to start is the rich world. With less than one fifth of the world's population it accounts for two thirds of energy used in transportation.

Making common cause with protectionist lobbies and right-wing populists to exclude poor countries from rich country markets in the interests of 'self-reliance' is a prescription for mass poverty and inequality. If trade is to work for the poor, we need to challenge the power relations and vested interests that make markets work for the rich. That means putting land redistribution, workers' rights, environmental sustainability and the curtailment of corporate power at the heart of the agenda.

# markets is a solution to the Third World's problems?



The central focus of Oxfam's new three-year trade campaign is increased market access to the North for exports from Southern countries. Who could be against offering poor people in the South a hand-up out of poverty by allowing them to sell goods to richer countries? Of course, this is not the only demand made by Oxfam for fairer trade. But it is the one that they lead with publicly. It thus gets the most coverage. Interestingly, it is also the demand that meets with the most support from the WTO, the EU and pro-free-traders like Britain's Development Minister Clare Short.

**The idea of prioritising increased self-reliance, rather than increased market-reliance, appears utterly absent from Oxfam's thinking. As are any radical alternatives to globalisation.**

**COLIN HINES**  
IS THE FORMER HEAD  
OF GREENPEACE'S  
INTERNATIONAL  
ECONOMICS UNIT AND  
AUTHOR OF  
*LOCALISATION – A  
GLOBAL MANIFESTO*

Beginning to smell a rat? So you should, because Oxfam's central call of 'complete market access to rich-country markets for low-income countries' fits in very nicely with the profit-maximising agenda of big business. This sector benefits when countries make their national priority the production of goods and services as cheaply as possible in ruthless competition with each other. It also has the additional attraction to these parties of squeezing out well-paid workers in the North.

But Oxfam is silent about the devastating effects on third-world exporters which would result from the South-South competition for the more open Northern markets it prioritises. Oxfam cites female textile workers in Bangladesh as an example of how its open-market approach could help people prosper from exports to rich countries. But Oxfam does not address what would happen to these women if China (which is expected in some quarters to take over between a half and 100 per cent of world textile exports) undercuts Bangladesh. China is an increasing threat to competing third-world exporters in a range of areas. These include India's software exports, Sri Lankan organic tea production, and textile exporters in general. This state of affairs can only worsen now that China is in the WTO and the adverse domestic effects of its increasing involvement with trade liberalisation are becoming clearer. Around a 100 million Chinese people are leaving rural areas and seeking urban work. They will be joined by the many 10s of millions who will be made redundant in Chinese industries that are unable to compete with foreign imports. This growing reserve of cheap labour queues for work at global rock-bottom wages.

Oxfam also fails to address the fact that depending on markets outside developing

countries' own borders, and therefore outside their control, is hardly likely to provide them with a secure future or a major route for escape from poverty. Indeed, in the past Oxfam has tirelessly documented how dependence on exports has in fact been a disaster for the poor in developing countries. Now, instead of drawing the conclusion that more control over the domestic economy is the best way to ensure poverty reduction, it calls for countries to increase dependence on exports.

And Oxfam's call for more open markets completely overlooks the implications for climate change. This is a huge oversight given the increase in long-distance trade that would occur if the North reduced domestic production, and imported cheaper goods from the South instead. Trade-related transportation is one of the fastest growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions and is, therefore, highly significant in terms of climate change.

The idea of prioritising increased self-reliance, rather than increased market-reliance, appears utterly absent from Oxfam's thinking. As are any proposals for a radical alternative to globalisation. One such alternative is localisation. It has the policy priorities of local production, and the rebuilding and re-diversification of local economies. It is the opposite of Oxfam's emphasis on the path of ruinous competition between countries seeking market access. With localisation, international trade would involve the exchange of what can't be obtained domestically – the original purpose of long-distance trade.

The most succinct Third-World criticism of Oxfam's approach that I remember was voiced in Seattle. A Northern development NGO member at a public meeting there asked whether the South's path to poverty alleviation lay in being granted maximum market access to the North. Sara Larrain, a Chilean grass-roots environmentalist who stood for president on a manifesto based on a two-year community consultation process, responded: 'Why is it that people from the North think exports benefit us? They are wrecking our environment and increasing inequality.' ■

## This debate is now online

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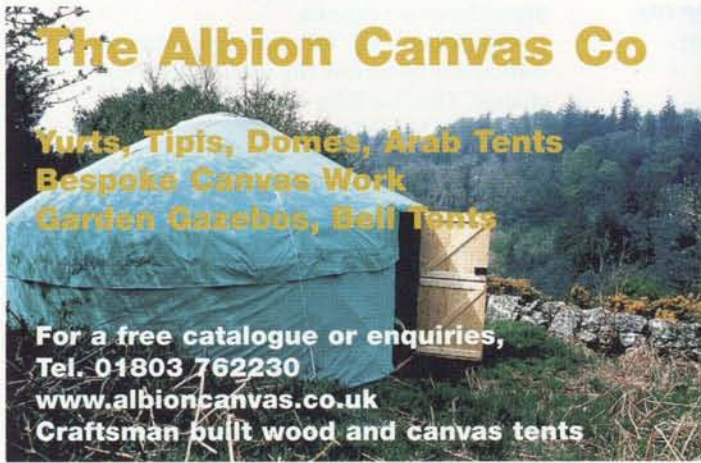
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# IT'S THE CORPORATE ECONOMY, STUPID

WHY, ASKS STEVE GORELICK, HAS EVERYONE IN THE MEDIA AND GOVERNMENT MADE SUCH A FUSS ABOUT ENRON WHEN THERE ARE FAR WORSE CORPORATE ABUSES THAT NEVER MAKE THE FRONT PAGE.



STEVE GORELICK IS AN ORGANIC FARMER AND DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR ECOLOGY AND CULTURE

Here in the US, the collapse of energy giant Enron has been like a tune you can't get out of your head. It has plenty of hooks – crestfallen employees, disgraced stock analysts, shredded documents and red-faced politicians. But a more important reason why it has colonised our minds is that the media has played it constantly, like a number-one song on a top-40 radio station. (Even its B-side, *The Ballad of Arthur Andersen*, might eventually top the news charts.)

However, at the same time as the public was being bombarded by stories about bad auditing and inflated share values, it was being kept in the dark about far more serious crimes. Take GM giant Monsanto, for example. It has recently been tried in Alabama for dumping tonnes of deadly PCBs in the poor community of Anniston and then trying to cover its tracks.

In March a jury found the company guilty of every count levelled against it. Monsanto's crimes included negligence, suppression of the truth, and conduct 'so outrageous in character and extreme in degree as to go beyond all possible bounds of decency'; conduct, in fact, that is 'atrocious and utterly intolerable

in civilised society'. By comparison, Enron's book-juggling is the moral equivalent of shoplifting.

Perhaps there was a brief article about the Anniston case buried in *The New York Times*. There may have been some 20-second sound bite on the nightly news. If so, I missed them both. There was certainly nothing to match the wall-to-wall coverage of Enron. The government easily matched this bias: a dozen different congressional committees have been investigating the Enron collapse, but not one is looking into Monsanto's actions.

How to account for this singular focus? Simple. While Monsanto's crimes were directed at the environment and people (poor people at that), Enron's undermined confidence in the stock market – thereby threatening the

local craftspeople and artisans.

Like people and the environment, those local economies can be – and systematically are – sacrificed for the good of the corporate-led economy.

The fact is, it wasn't Enron's criminal behaviour that attracted so much attention. It was the destabilising effect those crimes had on the stock market and the economy. Corporations and the people who run them can do just about anything with impunity, so long as they don't rock the economic boat. Just look at Jack Welch, departing CEO of General Electric. Over the years Welch laid off so many workers that he was given the nickname 'Neutron Jack' after the bomb that kills people but leaves buildings intact. His final days at GE were spent trying to evade responsibility for the 1.3 million pounds of PCBs the company

dumped into the Hudson River.

Is Welch vilified? Hardly. His company was immensely profitable and its stock soared with Welch at the helm. He is widely regarded as a hero, the 'model CEO'. His self-

congratulatory memoir topped the business best-seller lists for months.

Given the primacy of the corporate economy, it isn't surprising that every post-Enron reform floated so far has been designed to do little more than raise people's comfort levels about their stock market investments. But one of the proposals, if fully enacted, might actually do some good. It would require 'truth in accounting' and 'full disclosure' from corporations – an idea I fully support.

## Monsanto was found guilty of conduct that is 'atrocious and utterly intolerable in civilised society'

economy. The media's choice of what to cover merely reflected the sad truth that absolutely nothing in this country is more sacred than the economy. When push comes to shove – people and the environment be damned –, it's the economy, stupid, that matters.

And not just any economy. The economy that counts is the one that is run by and for huge corporations. There is no particular concern about the fate of local economies that support small farmers, locally-owned businesses,

**But by 'full disclosure' I don't just mean revealing money laundering and shady partnerships. I mean:**

- Annual reports from agribusinesses like Cargill would explain the connection between their booming profits and the rapidly declining fortunes of small farmers;
- Pesticide manufacturers would be required to calculate the costs of their toxic agrochemicals on human health, with tables cross-referencing exposure categories (production worker, farmworker, consumer) with types of illness (cancers, reproductive disorders, birth defects, and so on);
- All polluting companies would be required to indicate how many billions of dollars in environmental costs they shift from their expense sheets onto that of the public and future generations;
- The oil, coal, and auto industries should reveal how much they spend each year to keep the US from doing anything about global warming;
- calculations should include separate figures not just for campaign contributions and lobbying expenses, but also for funding of flimsy 'scientific studies', greenwashing campaigns and phoney grassroots organisations; annual reports might include a graph of rising sea levels; allowing investors to determine whether company resources are being allocated efficiently;
- Mega-stores like Wal-Mart would have to disclose how many small, locally-owned businesses they destroy during the year (charts might compare this year's toll with last year's performance); and the fair-market value of 'free trade' agreements, which enable their stores to carry goods produced by the lowest-paid, least-protected workers in the world, would also be reported.

## IS NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENCE REALLY ABOUT PROTECTING THE US?

In its analysis of the threats posed to the US following 11 September, the recently published *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment: North America* reported these telling facts: 'The scope of protective measures required to upgrade US security can be gauged from the following statistics. The US has 301 ports of entry, 20,000 miles of border, 340,000 vehicle border crossings, 58,000 cargo deliveries and 770,000 hazardous-material shipments each day, 420 commercial

airports, 103 nuclear power plants, 2,800 other power plants, 168,000 water companies, 190,000 miles of natural gas pipelines, 9,500 companies licensed to use explosives and 600,000 bridges. Over 1.3 million people enter the US every day, while only two per cent of cargo shipments are inspected. All of the above are areas that comprise potential terrorist targets and opportunities.'

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*'The public education system in America is one of the most important foundations of our democracy. After all, it is where children from all over America learn to be responsible citizens, and learn to have the skills necessary to take advantage of our fantastic opportunistic society.'*

GEORGE W BUSH, 1 MAY 2002

## IS NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENCE REALLY ABOUT PROTECTING THE US 2?

Now consider the case of Lockheed Martin, the biggest defence contractor in the US, and this quote from the World Policy Institute.

'In all, eight current policy makers had direct or indirect ties to the firm before joining the administration. Officials with indirect connections to the company include Vice President Dick Cheney – whose wife Lynne Cheney served on the Lockheed Martin board from 1994 to January 2001, accumulating more than \$500,000 in deferred directors' fees in the process; and Deputy National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, who worked at Shea and Gardner – the powerhouse Washington DC law firm that

represents Lockheed Martin (along with numerous other corporate clients).

Bush appointees with more direct links to the firm include Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs Otto Reich, who worked as a paid lobbyist for Lockheed Martin when the company was seeking a reversal of the US ban on the sale of high-tech weapons to Latin America; and Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta and Deputy Transportation Secretary Michael Jackson, both of whom served as vice-presidents at Lockheed Martin prior to joining the administration.'

[WWW.WORLDPOLICY.ORG](http://WWW.WORLDPOLICY.ORG)

## Wonder

'I look forward to a renewal of a world of wonder. As children, the truly great moments in our lives were those when we watched the evening sky or wandered across a meadow to wade in a nearby creek – the moments when we were outside playing games or learning the languages of the flowers and trees, the birds, the insects, the butterflies. In this way we learned something of the numinous world present throughout our natural surroundings, the world beyond human explanation, the world that we can express in our mythic stories of spirit presences.

'This was the world of play and delight and laughter, the world of poetry and story-telling, of music and dance and freedom. It was the world of heroic tales, of Cinderella, of her slipper and the prince, of Robin Hood – his taking from the rich and giving to the poor. It was a sacred world, a world that could not be bought or sold, could not be made by humans. It was the world that brought us into being, nourished, educated us, guided and healed us, and in the end brought us safely through the turmoil and struggle of this earthly existence into an abiding and serene world beyond what we could find elsewhere.

'The main difficulty in human affairs in these opening years of the 21st century seems to be the loss of our sense of wonder, our sense of the sacred, our sense of play and laughter, our inability to respond to the dawn or sunset, the loss of our vision of the stars. One of the most exquisite words in the human vocabulary is 'wonderful' – the word we use when we speak of those we love or when we describe an exciting moment in our lives. So, now my hope is that the wonder we experienced in childhood will return to quiet our restless souls in this new age of anxiety that has descended upon us.'

THOMAS BERRY, WRITING IN *ORION*

## vital signs: eating

- More than a billion people in the world are overweight.
- 27 per cent of the US adult population is obese, compared to 15 per cent in 1980.
- Americans consume more than 53 teaspoons of added sugars each day.
- 25 per cent of Americans take no exercise whatsoever.
- US healthcare costs associated with individuals' being overweight are estimated at \$118 billion a year (27 times the annual GDP of Somalia – the world's 'hungriest country' as rated by the UN)

TAKEN FROM *VITAL SIGNS 2001-2002* (PUBLISHED BY EARTHSCAN)  
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CORBIS



# ARGENTINA AND THE IMF – THE ART OF FALLING APART

by Ben Blackwell



ARGENTINA'S RECENT COLLAPSE INTO FINANCIAL RUIN AND NEAR ANARCHY IS PERHAPS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISASTER IN THE IMF'S LONG HISTORY OF REFORM AND RUIN. BEN BLACKWELL REPORTS FROM BUENOS AIRES.

Throughout the 1990s Argentina was held up by establishment commentators as a poster child for IMF-sponsored reforms. It was even touted as a model for other 'emerging market' economies like Mexico. The regime of former president Carlos Menem pegged the Argentine peso to the US dollar, lowered import tariffs, abolished restrictions on capital flows and privatised the majority of government-owned assets.

The result was euphoria, at least among establishment columnists and economic analysts. For Argentina's population, however, the consequences were more uneven.

The strong peso and a massive expansion of personal debt allowed a consumer boom for the middle classes, who sated themselves on televisions, hi-fis and the expensive four-wheel-drive cars that invaded Argentina's once peaceful beaches in the 1990s. This ensured the so-called 'liquifier' vote for Menem, whereby people voted for the status quo because they were heavily indebted in dollar-denominated quotas after buying consumer goods or apartments, and were worried about the possibility of devaluation under another government.

The consumption boom, however, was built on sand. The strong peso depended not on the productivity of the Argentine economy, but on a doubling of the country's foreign debt to around \$145 billion by the end of 2001, and the constant sale of state assets. By the end of the 1990s, the foreign money had run out, Argentine industry and exports had been priced out of the market by the strong peso, and Argentina was finding it near impossible to meet around \$19 billion dollars annually in interest payments on the foreign debt alone.

The response of the IMF was to grant successive 'aid' packages, while insisting that Argentina reduced its government deficit by cutting spending. This was always a dubious proposition, given that the government deficit was due, to a large degree, to ever-greater foreign debt payments.

In the event, spending cuts pushed the economy deeper into recession and thus reduced tax collection rates. This further increased the fiscal deficit, and provoked fresh IMF demands for spending cuts.

Neo-Keynesian economist Paul Krugman has described the behaviour of the IMF as similar to that of 'medieval doctors who insisted on bleeding their patients, and repeated the



procedure when the bleeding made them sicker'.

The result was a collapse of what was left of Argentine industry, unemployment levels of 25 per cent, and, eventually, the political explosion of December. The crisis included 10 days which saw three presidents leave office – two of them as a result of mass mobilisations and street fighting, and all to the deafening sound of hundreds of thousands of middle class Argentines banging cooking pots from their balconies. The first of these presidents, Fernando de La Rúa, left the Rosada presidential palace in a helicopter on the afternoon of 20 December. The day before he had launched a state of siege and a quixotic wave of police repression which left 27 people dead. The third, Adolfo Rodríguez Saá, flew back to his province after 10 days of extravagant promises and ill-considered appointments, and 24 hours of street protests during which demonstrators

entered and burned parts of Argentina's Congress.

In the meantime, Argentina finally declared default on its foreign debt and devalued the peso after 10 years of 'convertibility'. One product of the default was that, for the first time in years, nobody paid much attention to Argentina's 'country risk' (as defined by the JP Morgan Emerging Markets Bond Index) or to the recommendations of self-appointed 'credit-rating' agencies such as Standard and Poors. A majority of Argentines interviewed in February responded that they did not think that the country should accept any further 'aid' from the IMF. Argentina was effectively on its own.

The period immediately after the fall of Rodríguez Saá saw the appointment of two more interim presidents. Congressmen and senators from the discredited Radical and Peronist parties closed ranks around the second – Eduardo Duhalde, who seems determined to stay in power until late 2003. This is despite his having minimal support among the Argentine public.

Although the level of anger towards the IMF and other financial institutions runs high, the Duhalde regime has shown that it is prepared to pay almost any price in order to reach a new agreement with the fund.

Given the cold wind currently blowing from Washington, this has not proven easy. US President George Bush has repeatedly stated that giving more money to Argentina in the current context would be 'the worse thing we could do'. Bush has attributed responsibility for the crisis with Buenos Aires, ✎

## 50 years is more than enough

Argentina is only the latest in a long line of countries to have been decimated by supposed 'aid' from the IMF and World Bank. Africa has been feeling its devastating effects for a long time.

- Of \$2.9 billion provided by the World Bank's soft-loan arm – the International Development Association – to the world's poorest countries, fully two-thirds (\$1.9 billion) was spent on repaying past World Bank loans. A good bit of the remaining third went to the IMF.
- The external debt burden of sub-Saharan Africa has increased by nearly 400% since 1980, when the IMF and World Bank began imposing structural adjustment programmes.
- External debt per capita for the region (not including South Africa) is \$365, while GNP per capita is just \$308.
- Africa spends four times more on debt interest payments than on healthcare. In the mid-1990s, Uganda spent \$3 on health for every \$17 it paid in debt service. Most of the latter went to multilateral lending institutions.
- In Mozambique the IMF and World Bank ordered the removal of an export tax on cashew nuts. 10,000 adults, mostly women, lost their jobs in cashew nut-processing factories. Most of the processing work shifted to India, where child labourers shell the nuts at home.
- When the World Bank mandated that Kenya impose charges of US\$2.15 for STD clinic services, attendance fell by up to 60 percent. In 1981, there were 10,000 people for every doctor in Kenya. By 1994 that ratio had gone up to nearly 22,000.
- In 1999, Tanzania introduced primary school fees as part of the heavily indebted poor countries' debt relief agreement. According to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania, less than half of the projected revenue from school fees has been collected because families simply cannot pay. All that user fees have succeeded in doing is reducing the access of school to the poor.
- A 1994 internal review found that between 1986 and 1993, 15 per cent of World Bank lending was directed to projects forcibly which forcibly displaced two million people. In response, the bank closed or cancelled 22 of these projects, leaving 632,000 people in the lurch. In contrast, in 1995 only 14 per cent of the bank's outstanding loan portfolio was directed towards the bank-defined sectors of 'education' and 'population, health and nutrition'.

All data compiled from the website of the 50 Years Is Enough campaign ([www.50years.org](http://www.50years.org)).

and not the programmes which Washington supported in the 1990s. US Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neil and Anne Krueger, the US's top representative in the IMF, have taken an equally hard line.

Despite a plea for 'the understanding and collaboration of the international community,' Duhalde got the cold shoulder from Bush and other US officials at a recent conference on finance for poor countries in Monterrey, Mexico. Bush declined to meet with Duhalde, and said that Argentina is 'going to have to make some tough calls'. O'Neill said: 'We should not be the endless source of funds.' He then added: 'We detest the social disorder.'

*The Wall Street Journal* summed up the drift of opinion in US financial circles in an editorial in which it declared: 'A country behaving like Argentina doesn't deserve even the hope of international aid. It deserves to be ostracised from capital markets of all kinds, private and official. If Argentina wants to go the way of Haiti, that is its own business. But until it once again honours property rights and the rule of law, Argentina deserves to be treated like any other banana republic.'

The IMF is represented in Argentina by the LSE-trained economist Anoop Singh. Known as 'Mr No' because of his inscrutability and hard line during his interventions in Indonesia at the time of 1997's Asian crisis, Singh has made a series of demands which appear to many in Duhalde's own party as suicidal.

One is the demand that Argentina abolishes the 14 different types of provincial bonds – a kind of pseudo money used to pay most government workers.

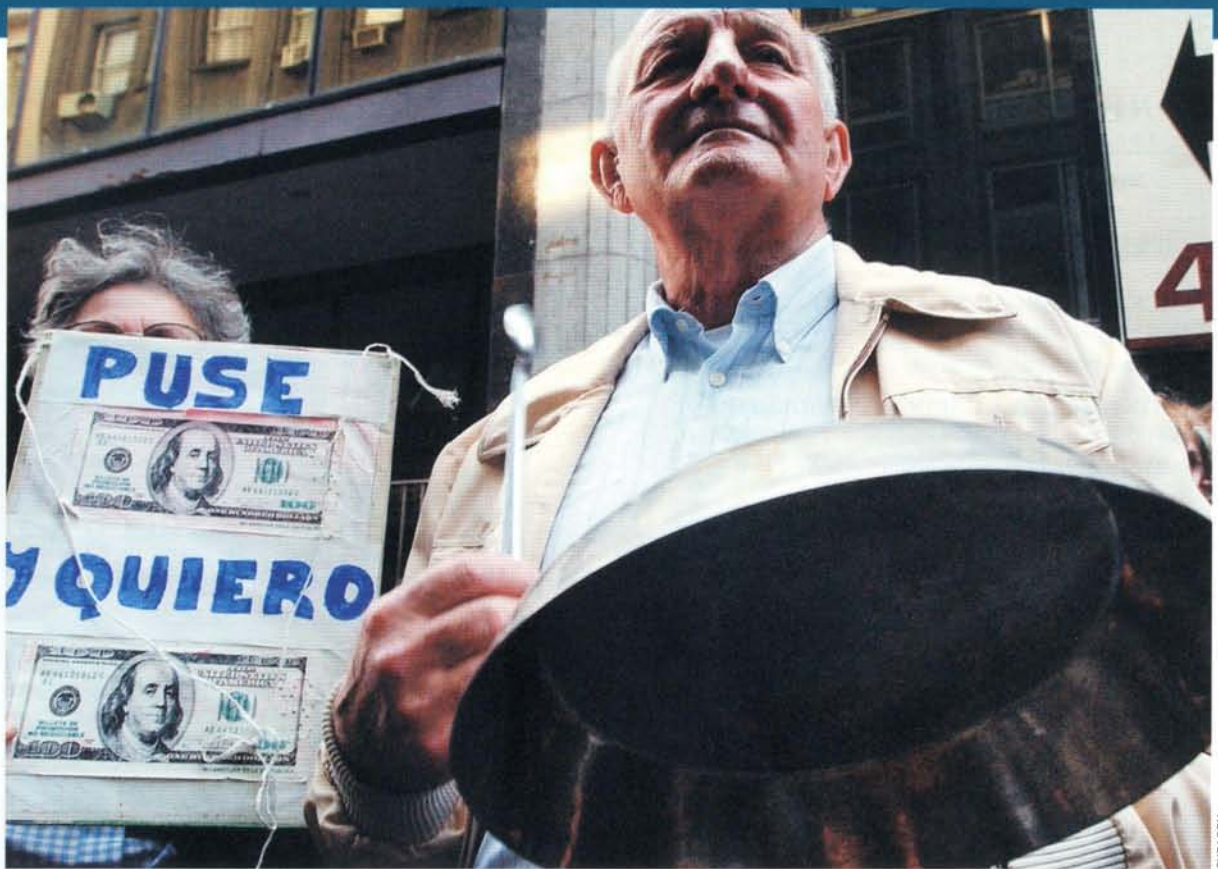
During a recent meeting with Singh, provincial governors – in the main part Peronists – attempted to put a classic

'On the streets, there is visceral hatred for all politicians. They are routinely insulted and physically attacked. Most have stopped going out in public. Buenos Aires mayor Aníbal Ibarra shaved off his beard to avoid recognition. Former "super-president" Domingo Cavallo – currently under arrest for an arms-smuggling scandal – for months employed a decoy in a Cavallo mask.'

'squeeze' on Mr No. If Argentina were to implement such measures, the governors told Singh, the country's regional capitals would be likely to burn, and the governors themselves would in all probability end up on the end of a rope. Singh, reportedly, remained impassive.

Other demands, such as requiring that Argentina no longer intervenes in the foreign exchange market to support the peso, are also likely to spell the demise of the Duhalde regime. A hyper-inflationary spiral would almost certainly ensue if the peso were to sink still lower against the dollar.

Despite there being almost complete control over congress by his own Peronist party, Duhalde has found it almost impossible to force through the legislation required to comply with the fund's demand. The timetable for an agreement has been pushed back time and time again.



**Buenos Aires:**  
A depositor  
protesting against  
Argentina's banking  
reforms

REUTERS

In the meantime, Argentina's economy continues to shed around 80,000 jobs per month. It showed a 20 per cent decline in industrial production during the first quarter of this year. And large sections of society find themselves outside of the monetary economy altogether. They rely on 'swap clubs', dense social and family networks and self-sufficiency to survive.

While Duhalde concentrates on patching up his relations with the IMF, the strongest sentiment expressed on the streets is a visceral hatred for all politicians – particularly those associated with De La Rúa and Menem. Politicians are routinely insulted – and sometimes attacked physically – on the streets, in restaurants, on aeroplanes and even on the golf course.

Most politicians have stopped going out in public at all. They spend large amounts of time in the countryside, in neighbouring Uruguay or in Miami. Or they take elaborate security measures. Menem no longer visits Buenos Aires at all. The city's mayor, Aires Aníbal Ibarra, has shaved off his beard in order to avoid recognition. While former 'super-minister' Domingo Cavallo – currently under arrest for an arms-smuggling scandal – for months employed a decoy in a Cavallo mask.

The country's key institutions have fared little better. The Supreme Court, the two houses of congress, health and social security services, and the main trade union federations are seen as little more than criminal conspiracies. The electoral process is dismissed as a bad joke. Already, in the October congressional and gubernatorial elections, a record 22 per cent of the voting public cast blank votes or abstained. Many inserted photos of Osama bin Laden or white powder (to represent anthrax) in the voting envelopes.

At the same time, there are signs of a wholly new type of democratic impulse. It is one, however, which does not present easy solutions.

Within weeks of the 19-20 December de La Rúa crisis, hundreds of neighbourhood assemblies had sprung up in Buenos Aires and many towns and cities in the interior.

According to a survey carried out by the daily newspaper *Página 12*, more than a third of the 3 million inhabitants of the federalised capital have taken part in some sort of protest since December. The neighbourhood assemblies are often noisy and chaotic. Sometimes they degenerate into acrimonious rows between the myriad groups of Argentina's fractious left. In many of Argentina's barrios, however, the assemblies have played a unique and novel role in reconstructing Argentina's badly-mauled social fabric. Some say they have helped construct a new type of political subjectivity that does not depend on the principle of representative democracy.

In many areas the assemblies carry out communal buying of essential goods, run crèches, maintain canteens in schools, prevent evictions of non-paying tenants or mortgage holders, negotiate with electricity and gas companies and even run embryonic vegetable gardens in public parks. They also, of course, organise a never-ending series of protests and political debates.

But what kind of future does the movement have? Practically the only slogan that unites all the members of the assemblies is 'que se vayan todos' – 'all the politicians have to go'. Beyond this, there is an almost uniform hostility to all the organs of government – including local councils, to all political organisations based on hierarchy, and to the principle of representative government.

Many question the ability of the assemblies to maintain a constant level of mobilisation; the assemblies are faced, after all, with a wall of institutional support for Duhalde. And people point to the fact that if the government is overthrown again nobody has any idea what would replace it. Many sections of society, especially outside of the politicised capital, have assumed a cautious attitude of 'wait and see'.

What seems clear, however, is that large sections of society see their future outside of the framework of the international financial institutions and are prepared to experiment with new forms of social organisation, thus making the politicians' slow creep back to 'normality' an uphill task ■

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# One small step


compiled by Sarah Hulme


In this era of globalisation and giant multinational corporations, our individual actions can often seem little more than futile gestures. But in a consumerist world, it is often only when we change our habits that those who depend on our purchases for their profits respond.


## Energy


We are all responsible for global warming. Yet, considering the enormity of the problem and our own relatively tiny role in it, it is hard to imagine that any of us can make a difference individually. However, one quarter of the UK's overall CO<sub>2</sub> emissions come from our homes, and every year an average household produces six tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. If – one by one – we make the changes, the cumulative effects will be enormous. Find out more about energy saving from the Energy Saving Trust at [www.saveenergy.co.uk](http://www.saveenergy.co.uk) (0845 727 7200) or from Energy Efficiency at [www.energy-efficiency.gov.uk](http://www.energy-efficiency.gov.uk) (0800 585 794).

 **A pot for one.** When you boil the kettle, only fill it with the amount of water you need. Not only will the kettle take a fraction of the time to boil, but if everybody in the UK did this for just one day the amount of energy saved would be enough to light every street lamp in the country the following night.

 **Switch off.** Would you sit at home and watch the blank screen of your television? You might as well if you put your set on standby. TVs in the UK use £50m worth of electricity per year just while they're on standby. For VCRs it's an even more staggering £113m. If the light's on, your electricity bill is increasing. And so is unnecessary pollution. If everyone switched off their TVs at night, it could save enough energy to power a town the size of Basingstoke.

 **Iron out any creases.** When you've finally reached the bottom of the pile of ironing and have one item left, turn off your iron. There's still plenty of heat left to iron a shirt perfectly well.

 **Bright idea.** One unit of electricity supplied to a customer can provide the same amount of light for 10 hours or 40 hours, simply depending on the type of bulb you use. Compact fluorescent light bulbs use 70 per cent less electricity than traditional incandescent or halogen bulbs and last 10 times longer. If every household in the UK swapped to energy-efficient bulbs it would save enough energy to power the lighting used in two million homes for a year. People are put off because the bulbs cost up to £10 each to buy. But over their 10,000-hour lifetime an 11-watt bulb saves £35 and a 20-watt bulb saves £57.

 **Share and share alike.** Is that old carpet steamer still under the stairs gathering dust? Is the garden completely out of control, but you can't afford a lawn mower? Forming a tool-pool is not only a great way of saving energy, it can also create links with the people around you – building strong networks of support within a local



community. To find out more about organising a tool-pool, contact LETSLINK UK on 020 7607 7852 or visit its website at [www.letslinkuk.org](http://www.letslinkuk.org).

 **Be alternative.** Switching to local renewable energy might be easier and cheaper than you think. There are all sorts of small-scale systems that you can use in your home, including solar panels, solar water-heaters and wind generators. The initial pay-out is made up for in the long run as your bills come down to little or nothing. For information, see the Centre for Alternative Energy website at [www.cat.org.uk](http://www.cat.org.uk) (01654 702 400) and the National Energy Foundation site at [www.greenenergy.org.uk](http://www.greenenergy.org.uk) (0800 138 0889). The British Wind Energy Association can provide information about domestic wind turbines: telephone 020 7689 1960 or visit its website at [www.bwea.com](http://www.bwea.com).

 **Go Green.** Some electricity suppliers are much greener than others. By switching your supplier to one whose credentials you can trust you send a clear message to those lagging behind. The three best options in the UK are Unit[e], Ecotricity and Juice – the latter being a service from Npower in partnership with Greenpeace. All three guarantee that the energy you use will be sourced from renewable supplies. For details about Unit[e], visit [www.unit-energy.co.uk](http://www.unit-energy.co.uk) or phone 0845 601 1410; for Ecotricity, visit [www.ecotricity.co.uk](http://www.ecotricity.co.uk) or phone 01453 756 111; and for Juice, see [www.npower.com/juice](http://www.npower.com/juice) or phone 0800 389 2388. In addition, Friends of the Earth has published a free leaflet – 'Guide to Buying Green Energy'. It lists the mainstream suppliers in terms of their 'greenness', allowing you to select a source of energy that is more environmentally-friendly. This kind of action will ultimately shift the whole industry in a green direction – one that is not necessarily at a greater cost to you. For information, call 020 7490 1555 or visit [www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/issues/green\\_energy](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/issues/green_energy)

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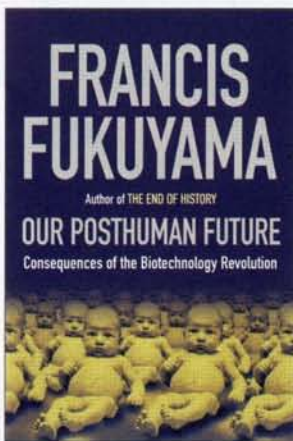
# Reviews

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

**This month:** **Our Posthuman Future** Francis Fukuyama • **Some Assembly Required** Michael Sorkin  
**Battling Big Business** Edited by Eveline Lubbers • **Arctic Refuge** Compiled by Hank Lentfer and Carolyn Servid  
**Infinite Tropics** Edited by Andrew Berry • **Epicurean Simplicity** Stephanie Mills

## OUR POSTHUMAN FUTURE

by Francis Fukuyama  
PROFILE BOOKS 2002/£17.99  
ISBN: 1861972970



Francis Fukuyama's skill in choosing attention-grabbing topics and titles invites suspicion that *Our Posthuman Future's* foray into biotechnology is mere opportunism. Yet, face to face, the diminutive, casually dressed author of international bestsellers such as *The End of History* seems not only sincere but courageous. As a third-generation Japanese-US son of a protestant minister, the application of biotechnology to human beings is clearly a matter of conscience for him. Though undocinaire on abortion, Fukuyama believes human cloning would set society on a perilous slope towards 'designer' babies, dehumanisation and damaged democracy.

In *Our Posthuman Future* Fukuyama roundly rejects the defeatist view that every technological opportunity must inevitably be taken. He opposes non-therapeutic work in reproductive biotechnology, and says the days for advisory bio-ethics commissions are over. We must, he says, 'move from thinking to acting, from

recommending to legislating'. He calls for an outright ban on cloning, and would give regulatory institutions 'real enforcement powers'. For laws, Fukuyama insists, are society's benchmarks, and the fact that scientists may secretly clone human beings should no more prevent laws against the practice than the existence of murderers should cause us to legalise homicide. The stance puts Fukuyama in the no-man's land between the 'anti-abortion, anti-cloning lobby' and the laissez faire 'new-equals-good' groups. No comfortable location.

Every stand against the devaluing of our innate, unique humanity, and against biotechnology misuse, deserves applause. Yet, though I approve of Fukuyama's stand, and much else in his work, this book does not compel applause. He has written fine essays on the topic, and, as the stretched essay which it is, *Our Posthuman Future* has moments of excellence. However, laid end to end, these moments would barely make a pamphlet.

Moreover, for a book on a global topic written for an international audience, it is unduly US-centric and surprisingly naive. For example, Fukuyama says globalisation shows that humanity is moving beyond violence to peaceful co-operation. He describes 'a world order in which mankind's largest in-groups no longer violently compete with one another for dominance but trade peaceably'. So, what did he think the protesters were saying at Seattle?

However, the surprise is not just that Fukuyama, a former deputy director for European political-military affairs for the US State Department, doesn't grasp the basics of globalisation. Nor is it that, lacking relevant facts, he

pads the book out with tedious quasi-intellectual posturing. The surprise is that, as a member of Bush's Council on Bioethics, he seems to know so little about biotechnology that he omits many of the issues which are absolutely central to the threat of a 'post-human future'. Had he not done so, there would have been no need for the padding.

Cross-species gene transfer is a pillar of biotechnology. Yet, in writing about the social dangers of inserting 'enhancing' genes into human eggs Fukuyama ignores genes from non-human species. And, as I pointed out in my own book, prospective parents may one day be offered them. For example, if a single transferable gene allows lizards to re-grow their tails, would giving a child a similar ability to re-grow tissue after an accident be a blessing? Or would the price of being a tiny bit lizard be too high?

Fukuyama equally overlooks the insertion of human genes into animals so as to create creatures competent of



the bodies of people with transplanted baboon hearts were found to have undergone subtle changes towards 'baboonisation'

working for humans as semi-slaves. Another post-human prospect seriously discussed by geneticists.

Even more surprisingly, he seems to know nothing about engineering animals with human genes in order to make them suitable organ 'donors'. Yet xenotransplants raise questions and dangers central to his topic. For not only is the genetic integrity of the animal violated by human genes, but the physical 'humanness' of organ recipients may also be compromised in ways we don't yet understand. On autopsy, for example, the bodies of people with transplanted baboon hearts were found to have undergone subtle changes towards 'baboonisation'.

Moreover, Swiss research shows that biochemical messages from the heart affect the emotional biochemistry of the brain. People sometimes seem to acquire the memories and tastes of those whose hearts they receive. So, recipients of animal hearts might well become rather different people.

Fukuyama might also have speculated on the fact that animals with human genes and humans with animal organs are ideal environments for animal viruses to evolve an ability to infect people. The huge and potentially hugely lucrative demand for organs, and the money to be made from drugs designed to prevent organ rejection and animal diseases adapting to humans mean that there is pressure to push forward this area of biotechnology.

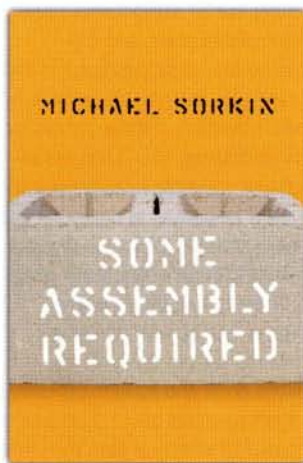
So, that's a post-human problem that could soon affect us all. Hopefully, however, we won't be culled if we get foot and mouth.

To omit these aspects of biotechnology in a book with such a title is to write *Hamlet* without the Prince and *Tristan* without Isolde. So should we cheer that someone so close to the US president has the courage to oppose cloning? Or should we lament that an author of such influence didn't do his own research and hasn't grasped the whole story, thereby wasting an opportunity and creating a book which is a fragment of what it could have been?

Surely the latter. For, incomplete information prevents informed debate, and in our celebrity-driven age many readers will assume Fukuyama has given them the whole picture. What's more, his naivety in this field means that, though he writes eloquently on the complex interactions of human

## SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

by Michael Sorkin  
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
PRESS 2001/£16.50/\$19.95  
ISBN: 0816634831



Be wary of witty academics. An academic who is caustic, sarcastic or ironic can be incisive and entertaining. But a wit is a show-off seeking approval for their own cleverness. Sorkin's 'wit', greatly praised by his reviewers, is actually an intellectual gabbiness scattered with pop culture references. Sorkin, no doubt, would like us to think of his prose style as a warp-factor-five challenge to the mimetic uber-aesthetic of Disnoïd modernism.

It's a shame really, for when he is lucid and is not disappearing up his own sub-clauses Sorkin is a writer of intelligence and insight. His real strength is as a critic of late modern urbanism. His excellent essay '11 tasks for urban design' lays out the values that are important – neighbourhood, locality, sustainability, containment of the urban edge, public space – and promotes them with a non-compromising vigour. He recognises that ecology poses a challenge not merely to the form of the built environment, but to the way we *think* about our relation to it. Thus he speaks passionately of re-establishing a bio-regional design culture, and draws on the

genes, he wrongly assumes that interactions of similar complexity cannot exist in plants. As a result, he fails to realise the inherent unpredictability and instability of crop engineering and blithely endorses it. Had Fukuyama known the scientific facts, a man of his courage would surely have opposed engineered crops. This book could then have helped to influence US opinion. That could have been invaluable in helping to avoid

notion of 'climax' ecosystems to describe the beautiful logic of urban forms which are generated from specific local circumstances.

When fighting the good fight, Sorkin's peculiar style provides plenty of material to support our prejudices as he viciously puts the boot into anyone who gets in his way: modernism (Philip Johnson is a 'bionic ex-fascist'); post-modernism ('knocked-off cardboard *belle époque* crap'); and the dead end of new urbanism ('Prozac halcyon... engineered demographic sterility').

His travel pieces are engaging and informative. He is full of praise for Amsterdam ('a high point in the architecture of neighbourliness'). But he still finds time to see lessons in less obvious models: the 'tremendous success' of the medieval urban pattern of Cairo, or the 'democratic' cacophony of old Delhi.

Unfortunately Sorkin is prepared to sacrifice all his principles when he speaks of individual architects. Like all critics he is in the thrall of the 'genius' form-makers. Chandigarh, a hideous and inappropriate concrete city in India with a handful of stunning buildings, is instantly praiseworthy because it comes from the sacred pen of Le Corbusier. The Pompidou Centre in Paris – Piano and Rogers' violent insertion into the 'climax' Parisian urban form – is 'galvanising' and 'joyful'. Sorkin's virtually unreadable hagiograph of Frank Gehry concludes that the Guggenheim in Bilbao is 'simply beautiful, full of genius, a masterpiece'.

In fact, even by Sorkin's own standards the Pompidou is an environmental and urban disaster – an energy-guzzling, windowless box with no respect for locality or external life. Such buildings may thrill us as individual monuments, but they teach us nothing useful. When we praise them we help generate a new unsustainable aesthetic that will be blindly reproduced in every city, and will lead to the impoverished sameness condemned elsewhere in Sorkin's book. As an ex-New Yorker all I can say is 'HELLO Michael! Anyone in there, or is your eco-thing just schtick?'

Reviewer **George Marshall** works as a climate change campaigner for *Rising Tide* ([www.risingtide.org.uk](http://www.risingtide.org.uk))

the impending post-human future of global desertification and water shortage that threatens the continued existence of humanity in any form. It is a crisis which engineered crops are daily hastening.

**Moyra Bremner** is the author of *GE: Genetic Engineering and You*. UK readers can purchase the book at the special price of £6 (inc P&P) by calling *The Ecologist* on 020 7351 3578.

# Magazine Rack

**YOUR FUTURE** offers down-to-earth, practical advice for flummoxed graduates who want a career with a conscience. It includes some excellent advice – not only about jobs, but also on interview techniques, internships and survival on starter wages.



**Your Future, People and Planet**, 51 Union Street, Oxford OX4 1JP; tel: +44 (0) 1865 245 678; email: [ethicalcareers@peopleandplanet.org](mailto:ethicalcareers@peopleandplanet.org)



**EXTRA!** Taking more of a newsletter form, *Extra!* is the publication of the media-watch group FAIR. By its own statement, it strongly supports the break-up of dominant media conglomerates that bias and censor their own reporting. Accordingly, *Extra!* articles blow the whistle on current media brainwashing campaigns. This month's issue contains Noam Chomsky's views on how the 'war on terror' should be responsibly reported.

**FAIR/Extra!**, 112 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001; tel: (00 1) 212 633 6700; email: [fair@fair.org](mailto:fair@fair.org)



**GLOBAL OUTLOOK's** debut issue focuses on issues relating to 11 September. It includes an Osama bin Laden profile, a piece on Bush's Afghanistan oil interests, and debates on anti-terrorism legislation and civil liberty. Its

interest is in a peaceful solution, and the final words come from Guatemalan Nobel Peace laureate Rigoberta Menchu. Vital reading for a fully-informed outlook on events of the past year. **Global Outlook**, RR #2, Shanty Bay, Ontario, Canada L0L 2L0; tel: (00 1) 888 713 8500; email: [editor@globaloutlook.ca](mailto:editor@globaloutlook.ca)

## FARM ASSURANCE SCHEMES & ANIMAL WELFARE

is a study of assurance schemes which allow some of the most intensive forms of factory farming to supply supermarket chains with cheap produce. The study questions whether these schemes are achieving their stated aim of ensuring high welfare standards for animals, or whether they are simply providing a glossy 'best practice' profile for systems which have inherent welfare problems.

**Compassion in World Farming Trust**, 5a Charles Street, Petersfield, Hampshire GU32 3EH; tel: +44 (0) 1730 268 070; email: [compassion@ciwf.co.uk](mailto:compassion@ciwf.co.uk)



Compiled by Sarah Hulme

## BATTLING BIG BUSINESS

### COUNTERING GREENWASH, INFILTRATION AND OTHER FORMS OF CORPORATE BULLYING

Edited by Eveline Lubbers  
GREEN BOOKS 2002/£10.95  
ISBN: 190399814X

Conspiracy theories are an occupational hazard for environmental campaigners, and it is important not to be too suspicious. But it is also important to make sure that you are suspicious enough. This new collection of essays edited by Eveline Lubbers (co-founder of a Dutch-based bureau investigating corporate intelligence and PR strategies) could help us all to draw that line.

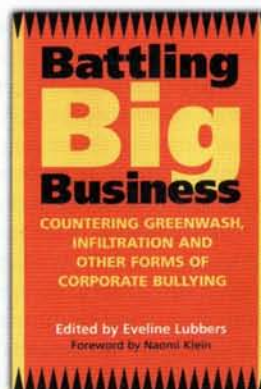
Andrew Rowell's chapter, 'Dialogue: divide and rule', is particularly instructive about what really happens when corporations engage environmentalists in 'stakeholder dialogue'. I have always viewed the procedure as an opportunity for the great and powerful to consult the furry woodland creatures about their quaint beliefs before pursuing whatever path the profit motive dictates. Largely a waste of time, in other words. The truth, as Rowell describes it, is far more sinister.

During the course of the dialogue process, the corporation – which is ostensibly 'discovering our views' – is actually dividing the environmentalists taking part into four categories: radicals, opportunists, idealists and realists. It then adopts

different strategies with each group, so as to cause dissension between them and thus neuter the threat they represent. 'The goal is to isolate the radicals, "cultivate" the idealists and "educate" them into becoming realists, then co-opt the realists into agreeing with the industry.'

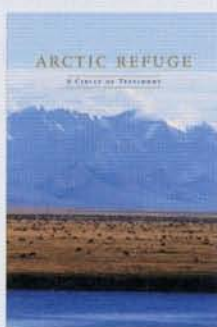
If, as the content of this book makes clear, we live in an information age, isn't it time we had information crimes? (Granted, we'd have to be able to define and punish such crimes in ways that would avoid an Orwellian dystopia.) For what else can it be but a crime when the Global Climate Coalition – an organisation set up by the fossil-fuel companies specifically to spread disinformation about the greatest threat to humanity – can wave away climate change as 'nothing but soundbite politics'?

Reviewer **Molly Scott Cato** works for Green Audit



## ARCTIC REFUGE A CIRCLE OF TESTIMONY

Compiled by Hank Lentfer and Carolyn Servid  
MILKWEED EDITIONS 2001/\$14.00  
ISBN: 1571312641



Compiled in response to the threat of oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge,

this collection is a call to arms to preserve one of the last true wildernesses. Emotive testimonies, conjuring up powerful mental images of a pristine wilderness, cannot fail to touch the dark reaches of even the most profit-driven executive's soul.

The native Gwich'in tribespeople's harmonious existence in the refuge from time immemorial contrasts starkly with the quick-fix mentality of petroleum-addicted modern man. Charles Konisberg artfully refutes the argument for the necessity of energy supplies – pointing out that understanding, not energy, is in short supply. And Allen Smith catches the very essence of the short-sightedness of

a decision to drill in the refuge: 'To make such a sacrifice of the best of our wild heritage for so little oil makes as much sense as burning a van Gogh to heat your home.'

The book is a valuable treasure trove of spiritual, environmental and historical wisdom beyond the issue at stake. Wendell Berry, for example, discusses policies which go beyond the issue of preserving the wilderness and which concern the conservation of resources per se. Many of the writers raise intriguing evolutionary questions regarding man's loss of recognition of his place in the natural order. As Scott Russell Sanders points out: 'We did not make the earth... We are guests here, and are answerable to a reality that is deeper and older and more sacred than our own will.'

Reviewer **Caroline Driver** is a freelance journalist.

## INFINITE TROPICS

### AN ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE ANTHOLOGY

Edited by Andrew Berry  
VERSO 2001/£19/\$27  
ISBN: 1859846521

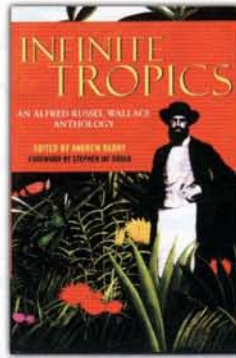
Until now, the name Alfred Wallace has been used only by academics or in the context of the famous letter in which he announced to Darwin his co-discovery of the theory of natural selection. One can only imagine Darwin's face as he sat at the breakfast table, learning that an almost identical idea to his own had been independently devised by an unknown Welsh scientist.

Wallace's letter spurred Darwin towards the hasty publication of *The Origin of the Species* – a work which earned its author his place in the history books, and changed our whole conception of history. Wallace, however, has all but faded from memory – mentioned only in passing as an 'also-ran.' Berry's anthology seeks to rectify this lapse by including a broad spectrum of Wallace's work. The book carves a well-selected path through Wallace's life – neither tending towards academia, nor indulging in the undemanding, facile

prose which seems to have become the fashion when introducing great men of science to a mass audience. Berry lets the work speak for itself, and includes both Wallace's three great articles and lesser-known works in which the scientist professes his absolute faith in the presence of a contactable spirit world.

*Infinite Tropics* shows us that Wallace was anything but an 'also-ran'. He was one of the great scientists of his century, an intrepid traveller, and a fine social commentator, who also forayed into pacifism, imperialism, land nationalism and female suffrage. As Berry notes, Wallace remained 'an anti-establishment firebrand right up to his death shortly before his 91st birthday'.

Reviewer **Piers Moore Ede** is a freelance journalist



## EPICUREAN SIMPLICITY

By Stephanie Mills  
ISLAND PRESS 2002/£13.59  
ISBN: 1559636890

Sometimes the endless apocalyptic facts that weigh down much environmental literature can be off-putting, to say the least. Statistical malaise, if such a condition exists, can set in – inuring us to the undeniable seriousness of the latest million deaths by chemical acronym. We yearn to be reminded not of the wrongs of which we are only too aware, but rather of the beauty that makes it worth going on. At such moments, *Epicurean Simplicity* – the latest, beautiful book by leading US environmental writer Stephanie Mills – may make the perfect tonic.

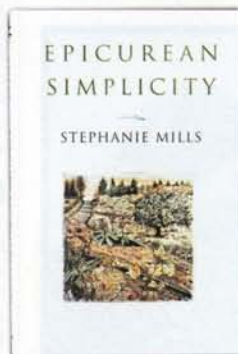
Mills lives alone, and this journal of a year spent at her home in the Upper Midwest of the US reads as a modern-day accompaniment to Thoreau's *Walden*. It is replete with the same fastidious detailings of everyday habits and activities. Mills's book, however, is inevitably informed by the painful knowledge of having lived through the devastation wreaked throughout the second half of the 20th century.

Her aim, as stated in the title, is to reclaim and celebrate the true meaning of epicureanism. Thanks to wilful misreading by the early

Christian church, Mills explains, the word is conventionally seen as a synonym for licentiousness and high living. In truth, Epicurus believed that true pleasure comes through lack of pain, and that the simpler one's life and the freer one is of the cares and impediments of materialism – or in this day, consumerism – the happier one truly is.

The result is a deeply personal celebration of 'the good things in life', and a reminder that the ease industrialised modernity promises does not equate to contentment. Furthermore, as well as not really bringing us lasting happiness, industrialised modernity is causing misery and devastation to the planet and the majority of its inhabitants. The solution Mills offers, however, is neither one of intangible international treaties, nor of monkish austerity. As she writes towards the end of the book, 'if we live simply, attentively, and gratefully, it will go better'.

Reviewer **Jeremy Smith** is the assistant editor of *The Ecologist*.



## Web Rack

Prime Minister Blair recently attacked animal rights protesters and anti-GM campaigners for being 'anti-science'. But, as Friends of the Earth director Charles Secrett commented, the government 'is confusing science with the commercial development of technology'. Dr Doug Parr, chief scientist for Greenpeace, added: 'The British are not anti-science but simply pro-democracy. All of the new technologies that Blair promotes are entirely controlled by private enterprise, and are released into the world without any form of democratic mandate or public consultation.'

So, in an effort to further science, the following websites provide the scientific reasons against vivisection and biotechnology.



### www.buav.org

The website of the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection reveals that in 2000 a staggering 2,714,726 experiments were conducted on 2,642,993 animals in the UK. Since 1990 the number of experiments on genetically manipulated animals in Britain has risen by 1,106%. The union campaigns actively to end animal experimentation, and the website features information on how to get involved.

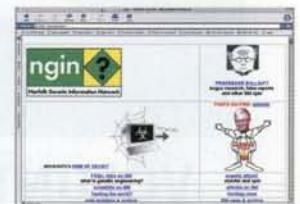
### www.eurosolve.com/charity/bava

The British Anti-Vivisection Association is an organisation trying to expose the uselessness and counter-productiveness of animal experimentation in regards to human health. The article 'Animal Experimentation: no lie can live forever' exposes the truth behind the fallacious assumptions upon which vivisection is based. BAVA, PO Box 73, Chesterfield S41 0YZ; email: bava@esmail.net



### www.ngin.org.uk

More than just a plug for one of our authors, the Norfolk Genetic Information Network's site really does have it all: archives of articles exposing fraudulent science, corporate dirty dealings and government connections; background information on biotechnology; and corporate profiles of the worst offenders.



...And in the interests of democracy...

www.huntingdon.com The website of Huntingdon Life Sciences.

www.monsanto.com The name says it all.

# THE Exchange

AN ENVIRONMENTAL AND ETHICAL NOTICEBOARD OPEN TO ALL.

The Exchange is a noticeboard for environmental and ethical services and needs, open to all. Reach 100,000 people with your ethical and ecologically-sound products and projects for just 70p per word plus VAT (33 per cent DISCOUNT when you book three consecutive adverts). The next two copy dates are 19 July and 24 August. Please send entries together with a cheque made payable to *The Ecologist* for the amount due to: Sally Snow, *The Ecologist*, Unit 18 Chelsea Wharf, 15 Lots Road, London SW10 0JQ. For more information, call Sally on +44 (0)20 7351 3578, or email [sally@theecologist.org](mailto:sally@theecologist.org). We have a limited amount of space for free listings from NGOs, charities and individuals allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Please email these to Sally Snow at the address above. We reserve the right to refuse any entry. *The Ecologist* does not necessarily endorse the products, organisations or services listed.

## APPEALS

**Don't trash your old PCs** – recycle them instead. Visit [www.computer-aid.org](http://www.computer-aid.org) to see how you can help both the environment and disadvantaged young people in the UK and developing countries.

**Uncaged Campaigns.** Please take some time out this summer to help with our annual London-wide street collection. Last year's collection was a great success – both in terms of raising much needed funds and in spreading the message throughout the capital. Uncaged Campaigns, St Matthew's House, 45 Carver Street, Sheffield S1 4FT. Tel: +44 (0)114 2722220; email: [info@uncaged.co.uk](mailto:info@uncaged.co.uk) website: [www.uncaged.co.uk](http://www.uncaged.co.uk) and [www.xenodiaries.org](http://www.xenodiaries.org)

**The Rhino Cycle.** Saturday 6 July. A 70-mile cycle marathon from Greenwich to Lympne in Kent. Save the Rhino International and Howletts and Port Lympne Wild Animal Parks are seeking 700 cyclists to participate in the event. For more information, contact us on 020 7357 7474 or email [events@savetherhino.org](mailto:events@savetherhino.org). Please visit our website [www.savetherhino.org](http://www.savetherhino.org) for more information on our work and/or to make a donation.

**Positive Community Spirit Trust.** We are working on an ECOLOGICAL BOARD GAME. Is there one in existence? If not, and you are interested in producing one with us, please contact Jim Phillips at Box 58, Radlett, Herts WD7 9BF; email: [phillipsj@trendm.co.uk](mailto:phillipsj@trendm.co.uk)

## CALL FOR PAPERS

**Ireland's new environmental magazine** is looking for sponsorship and participants for the 'Rocky Road Picture and Word Competition 2002: the Celtic Tiger Years'. Entries, consisting of a short article and a photograph, to be received by 1 September 2002. Contact Anne Ruimy, *Rocky Road* magazine, Mullagh, Co. Clare, Ireland; telephone +353 (0)65 708 7144; e-mail: [editor@rockyroadmagazine.com](mailto:editor@rockyroadmagazine.com) or visit [www.rockyroadmagazine.com](http://www.rockyroadmagazine.com) for more information.

**WWF proudly presents the BEMAs!** WWF is delighted to present this year's **British Environment and Media Awards**, which have been created by Media Natura. The awards' gala dinner and presentation will take place at Vinopolis, London, on Wednesday 23 October 2002. The closing date for entries is **30 July 2002**. Short-listed entries will be notified by 27 September 2002. For further

information, visit the BEMAs website at: [www.bemas.org.uk](http://www.bemas.org.uk)

**ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT 2003.** First International Conference Sustainable Energy, Planning & Technology in Relationship to the Environment. For further information, visit: [www.wessex.ac.uk/conferences/2003/energy03/index.html](http://www.wessex.ac.uk/conferences/2003/energy03/index.html)

**ECOSUD 2003.** Fourth International Conference on Ecosystems and Sustainable Development [www.wessex.ac.uk/conferences/2003/ecosud03/index.html](http://www.wessex.ac.uk/conferences/2003/ecosud03/index.html)

## SUSTAINABLE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT 2003

International Conference on Sustainable Planning & Development [www.wessex.ac.uk/conferences/2003/planning03/index.html](http://www.wessex.ac.uk/conferences/2003/planning03/index.html)

**The International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability** – an exciting new cross-disciplinary, peer-reviewed journal, dedicated to advancing understanding of sustainability in agricultural and food systems. It is committed to clear and consistent use of language and logic, and the employment of appropriate evidence to substantiate empirical statements. First issue: Spring 2003. Contact: The chief editor, Jules Pretty, *The International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability*, c/o Channel View Publications, Frankfurt Lodge, Clevedon Hall, Victoria Rd, Clevedon BS21 7HH. Visit the website at: [www.channelviewpublications.com](http://www.channelviewpublications.com)

## CAMPAIGNS

The export of live animals from the UK has begun again following EU clearance after foot and mouth disease. **Farmed Animal Action** campaigns against cruelty and abuse to farmed animals, supports farmed animal sanctuaries and promotes a cruelty-free lifestyle. Log on to our website to find out about the live export campaign and more at: [www.farmedanimalaction.co.uk](http://www.farmedanimalaction.co.uk)

## Say No to Hinkley Campaign!

11 July, 7.30pm, Princess Hall, Princess St, Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset. Chris Busby will reveal the results of **The Burnham Cancer Survey** – the doorstep survey run by Parents Concerned About Hinkley. Contacts: Jim Duffy by telephone on 01984 632109, or by email at [stophinkley@aol.com](mailto:stophinkley@aol.com); Treasurer and Membership Secretary Val Davey by telephone on 01460 240241. Visit [www.stophinkley.org](http://www.stophinkley.org)

## COURSES

15–21 September, 2002, Schumacher College, Devon, UK

**THE ZEN OF COOKING: At Home in the Kitchen** – with Ed Brown (who has practised Zen and cooking for over 35 years) and Julia Ponsoby, author of *Gaia's Kitchen, the Schumacher College Cookbook*. For more

information, please contact: The administrator, Schumacher College, Dartington, Devon TQ9 6EA; Tel: 01803 865934; Fax: 01803 866899; email: [schumcoll@gp.apc.org](mailto:schumcoll@gp.apc.org), or visit: [www.gp.apc.org/schumachercollege](http://www.gp.apc.org/schumachercollege)

**Permaculture for Beginners.** Capel Manor College, Enfield, Middlesex, Saturday 3 August 2002. This one-day workshop will introduce the ideas, principles, ethics and design process of permaculture. Course fees are £70 for Thrive members and £99 for non-members. For further details of the course and Thrive's work, contact Sue Twigg on 0118 988 5688; email [susant@thrive.org.uk](mailto:susant@thrive.org.uk) or visit [www.thrive.org.uk](http://www.thrive.org.uk)

Oxford University Department for Continuing Education **Environmental Conservation**. Join the part-time diploma, or the advanced diploma, course for people interested in landscape and wildlife conservation. Two Saturdays in July, then starts September 2002. Visit [www.conted.ox.ac.uk](http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk) or telephone 01865 270 369 for details.

## Salisbury Homeopathic College.

Study this wonderful system of holistic medicine on our four-year part-time course. An enthusiastic and passionate workers' co-operative providing you with a sound homeopathic education. For a prospectus and information, telephone the registrar on 01722 504746, or email: [marcus@thc.org.uk](mailto:marcus@thc.org.uk)

## FOR SALE

**Andalucia.** Alpujarras region, near Orgiva. Traditional stone house, 106m<sup>2</sup>; sympathetically refurbished, three bedrooms, large kitchen, open fire, roof terrace and patios. 1,000m<sup>2</sup> land. Fruit and olive trees. Beautiful setting. Contact: [liana3@tiscali.es](mailto:liana3@tiscali.es)

## HOLIDAYS

**Andalucia, southern Spain.** Share life in a working village in the mountains 20km from the sea. Views, walking, wildlife, wine, organic produce in season. Self-catering apartment with beams and fireplace. Two-four people. From £100 p.w. Telephone 01202 431867.

## RESOURCES

**If you need someone to translate** material on social, political, labour and environmental issues from Portuguese, Spanish or French into English, contact me. Chris Whitehouse, 47 Hackford Road, London SW9 0RE; telephone: 020 7735 3237; email: [chris.whitehouse1@virgin.net](mailto:chris.whitehouse1@virgin.net)

## SITUATIONS WANTED

**Geographer** (34, MA, Univ. of London, PhD, Honolulu and more). Climate, ocean, energy, water. Impact assessment, field



## VOLUNTEERS WANTED

To work as an intern at  
*The Ecologist*, please email:  
[sally@theecologist.org](mailto:sally@theecologist.org)

studies, sustainable development. Six published books, etc. Ideally seeks field opportunity, also projects/ contracts. Available worldwide. Anything goes. Email [Stefan@mindquest.de](mailto:Stefan@mindquest.de)

#### SITUATIONS VACANT

**The ApprenticeMaster Alliance** is a free online scheme linking up 'apprentices' – those wishing to learn a skill – with 'masters' who are willing to teach and share. The directory of masters at [www.apprentice.org.uk](http://www.apprentice.org.uk) lists hundreds of apprenticeships from bookbinding to web design.

**Maintenance Team Leader needed at Wynstones School.** Skills in building and

carpentry required. Experience of general maintenance important. Ability to have an over-view, to plan, budget, prioritise and co-ordinate a team. Staff discounts for children's education at Wynstones available.

To start ASAP, apply to: The Administrator, Wynstones School, Church Lane, Whaddon, Gloucester GL4 0UF, UK. Tel: 01452 429220; fax: 01452 429221; Email: [info@wynstones.com](mailto:info@wynstones.com)

**Friends of Ishmael** seek others in UK wishing to create tribal alternatives and earn a tribal living to share ideas, projects and support. Contact [stephanevans@yahoo.com](mailto:stephanevans@yahoo.com)

#### VISIT

**Earth's General Store**, Edmonton, Canada. Established in 1991 to offer the people of Edmonton information and products to help them reduce their impact on the environment and society. Stockist of all the best ecological magazines and so much more. Telephone 001 780 439 8725.

**Gallery Oldham**, Greaves Street, Oldham OL1 1AL. 'Sussed: Making Connections Between our World and our Lives'. Paintings, photographs, sculptures and precious objects. Interactive CD-ROM game with dilemmas and challenges.

#### VOLUNTEERS

**Looking for volunteer work** in Latin America (especially Cuba) from January-May 2003. Interested in environment, social movements, politics, culture, alternative living. Any suggestions? Please email [u2snoop@hotmail.com](mailto:u2snoop@hotmail.com)

**Global Vision International** promotes sustainable solutions for a rapidly changing world by matching you, the general public, with international environmentalists, researchers and pioneering educators. Full international support structure. Training centres in the UK, US and South Africa. From three weeks to 12 months. No experience necessary. Email: [info@gvi.co.uk](mailto:info@gvi.co.uk)

## Ecologist DIARY DATES

### JULY

**5-6 JULY, CARMARTHENSHIRE, WALES, UK**

**Ecobuilding Summit and Workshops.** Absorbing workshops, trade stands. £70 per person. Telephone Ali Poole on 01453 833773, or email [alipoole@cs.com](mailto:alipoole@cs.com).

**6 JULY, SHEFFIELD, UK**

**While Stocks Last? Christians, Consumerism and Creation.** University of Sheffield, 10.30am-5.30pm. Speakers include Rt Hon John Gummer, MP. Visit: [Christian-ecology.org.uk](http://Christian-ecology.org.uk) for more information.

**12-22 JULY, DARTINGTON, DEVON, UK**

**The 11th annual Ways With Words Literature Festival** at Dartington Hall. For 10 days in summer, authors and readers from around the UK will gather in south Devon for one of the country's most eagerly anticipated celebrations of literature. Over 100 events in one of the most beautiful venues in the land. Visit our website at [www.wayswithwords.co.uk](http://www.wayswithwords.co.uk) or phone for a copy of the programme on 01803 867311.

**13-14 JULY, GATESHEAD, UK**

**Chopwell Forest Festival**, High Spen, Tyne & Wear. 1-5pm Saturday, 10am-5pm Sunday. Fun activities for all, and information on vital projects such as 'Trees of Time and Place' and 'Woodland Wildflowers'. Telephone 01434 220242.

**17-21 JULY, DEVON, UK**

**Buddhafield.** Total numbers are limited and advance booking strongly recommended. For more information, contact [info@buddhafield.com](mailto:info@buddhafield.com) or visit [www.buddhafield.com](http://www.buddhafield.com).

**18 JULY, LONDON, UK**

**Borders Bookshop**, Oxford Street, 6.30pm. Rory Spowers, Zac Goldsmith and Herbert Girardet will be discussing the history of environmentalism and

answering questions on ecological issues raised in Rory Spower's new book *Rising Tides*.

**18-21 JULY, DORSET, UK**

**Larmer Tree Festival**, overlooking Cranborne Chase. FREE campsite, children's area, Global Bazaar and over 50 bands on four stages. Visit: [www.larmertree.demon.co.uk/home.html](http://www.larmertree.demon.co.uk/home.html)

**20-28 JULY, WHITSTABLE, KENT, UK**

**Whitstable Oyster Festival.** Music, workshops, oysters for sale, boats in the harbour and trips on a sailing barge. For details, contact the festival office on 01227 265666.

**25-29 JULY, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN**

**The Environmental Consequences of the Vietnam War.** For further details, visit: [www.nnn.se](http://www.nnn.se).

**27-28 JULY, SOUTHPORT, UK**

**The Healing Arts: a festival of complementary natural and alternative health for body, mind and spirit.** The Floral Hall, 10am-5pm. Admission £2. Telephone 01704 500036 for advance tickets.

**27 JULY, LAMPETER, UK**

**Nature and the Virgin Mary: perspectives from theology and human ecology.** University of Wales, Lampeter. Fee for the day, including lunch: £20. To offer a paper or reserve a place, please contact: Dr Sarah Jane Boss, Centre for Marian Studies, 12 Grange Road, Cambridge CB3 9DX; tel: 01223 741057; email: [sjb@cam.ac.uk](mailto:sjb@cam.ac.uk).

**ONGOING, EAST LONDON, UK**

**New Economics Foundation presents 'ANTI-APATHY'**, a new bi-monthly social, political and environmental awareness event at the Spitz in East London. The aim is to inspire individuals to get more proactively involved in finding solutions to the problems of globalisation through spoken word, film and music. For more information, email: [cynidi@rhoades.com](mailto:cynidi@rhoades.com).

**28 JULY, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, UK**

**Ludlow Green Fair** – celebrating practical green alternatives, ideas and lifestyle. Stalls galore, green products and technology, kids stuff, talks, veggie catering. For details, phone 01584 856376 or email [Savoir-Faire@freenet.co.uk](mailto:Savoir-Faire@freenet.co.uk).

### AUGUST

**1-4 AUGUST, GLOUCESTERSHIRE, UK**

**Fourth Resurgence Summer Camp.** If you like the magazine you will love this mix of informed discussions, stimulating talks, music and many creative, relaxing and enjoyable activities. For information, send an SAE to Veronica Revill at Green and Away, PO Box 40, Malvern, Worcs WR14 1YS; telephone: 0870 460 1198; email: [info@greenandaway.org](mailto:info@greenandaway.org). Or visit the website at: [www.greenandaway.org](http://www.greenandaway.org).

**3-4 AUGUST, MERSEYSIDE, UK**

**The Woodvale Rally** (RAF Woodvale Base, on the A545 near Southport), 9am – 6pm. Wide variety of subjects to interest every family member of all ages – from model aeroplanes to concerts, and complementary and alternative health products to children's attractions.

**10-24 AUGUST, KERRY, IRELAND**

**Ecotopia** is a gathering of people to build a sustainable community, engage in workshops and discussions on environmental and social issues and live close to nature. For further information, see the website at: [www.ecotopia2002.org](http://www.ecotopia2002.org) or telephone +353 87 7732508.

**12-16 AUGUST, MILKOW POLAND**

**Come to the 12th Neo-Humanist Ecology Festival.** Workshops and practical experience in organic farming, economic alternatives, meditation and more. For information,

[ecofest@webintuitions.com](http://ecofest@webintuitions.com), or: [www.ru.org/ecofest/](http://www.ru.org/ecofest/).

**22-26 AUGUST, NORTH OF ENGLAND, UK**

**Northern Green Gathering.** Workshops, campaigns, sustainable energy, children's area, vegi/vegan cafés, stalls, healing, camping. For more information, visit: [www.ngg.org.uk](http://www.ngg.org.uk).

### SEPTEMBER

**6-8 SEPTEMBER, POWYS, WALES**

**A Climate for Change.** Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth, Powys. Telephone 01654 705952 for more information.

**10-13 SEPTEMBER, HARROGATE, UK**

**Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Annual Conference.** Book before 28 June and save over 40 per cent on conference tickets. For further information, visit: [www.cieh.org](http://www.cieh.org).

**18-21 SEPTEMBER, EDINBURGH, UK**

**Genetic Engineering and the Intrinsic Value and Integrity of Animals and Plants.** Workshop at the Royal Botanic Garden. Organised by the International Forum for Genetic Engineering. Limited space, so booking deadline is 16 August. For details, visit [www.anth.org/igene](http://www.anth.org/igene).

**SEPTEMBER 20-22, TEXAS, USA**

**Texas Renewable Energy Roundup Green Living and Sustainability Fair.** Marktplatz, downtown Fredericksburg, Texas. Explore the latest innovations in renewable resources, organic growing, green building techniques, use and recovery. More information available at: [www.RenewableEnergyRoundup.com](http://www.RenewableEnergyRoundup.com)

### OCTOBER

**17 OCTOBER, SAN FRANCISCO, USA**

**Future 500 Awards Dinner.** See: [www.globalfutures.org](http://www.globalfutures.org).



# A A Gill

## 'WHY I LOVE ROADS'

One of the great sites of England is the beginnings of Oxfordshire as it appears through white cliffs. Every time I see it, it catches my throat, pricks the eye. It's just beautiful. The whole arable-dappled, cloud-pied copse- and spire-studded shire landscape of England stretches ahead of you in that crumpled patchwork counterpane. It is so weightily, effortlessly evocative. It's a moment. Sadly, it's not a moment open to everyone. Not all of us can share in this particular Grade One listed panorama. You need a car to see it. It only pans out if you are moving at 70 miles an hour (40 is too slow, 90 you aren't looking at the view). Indeed, this is a vista that was invented by the car. It wouldn't exist without the M40. The cliffs are the cutting this beautiful road cleaves through.

There are other roads that similarly act as stage directions that invent and animate landscape. The magical northern end of the A1 that bucks and heaves along the Northumbrian coast. The first gear funicular of Sutton Bank in North Yorkshire. The biker's favourite switchback up to the heights of Abraham in Derbyshire. The long curl of motorway into Bristol overlooking the suspension bridge.

Oh, there are so many roads. You probably have your own favourite. Except you probably don't. You hate roads, don't you. On sight, in principle, you have an automatic head-shake reaction to roads. Just say no. Sign the petition.

But I bet you like footpaths. I bet your buttocks clench at rights of way. I have no doubt that if some rich, thoughtless bastard tried to bury an ancient and unused boggy bridleway you'd be there with a Day-Glo rucksack and a spaniel-eared Aztec pompom hat, flicking V-signs, trudging it to make a point. And you don't see the contradiction. The irony. If they called the M1 'the Ancient Drovers' Way to South Yorkshire' you'd be all confused.

Listen. The reason you don't like roads is because you don't really understand them. You haven't thought them through. You're too earthbound, too literal, too... How to put this kindly? ...Too reactionary. You never get beyond the smoke, tar and squashed hedgehogs.

Of course, on the surface, roads are just beautiful. Their engineering is magnificent. From the Icknield Way to the M1, they are the greatest man-made objects in this country. It's only because they lie flat that they aren't sites of awed pilgrimage.

Roads are static, yet have millions of moving parts. They are complex and they are simple. They start here and go there. They're the original A to B. They are also aesthetically beautiful. Aesthetics is, after all, the man-made system of harmony and design we impose upon the earth: the curve of a motorway, the cantilever of a flyover, the cat's eyes gleaming a parabola in the dark, a sunken lane, a goat path hugging the contour of a hill, slick cobbles, footworn slabs.

All roads have an intrinsic beauty, but their real beauty, their real substance, is

You hate roads don't you. On sight, in principle, you have an automatic headshake reaction. Just say no. Sign the petition.

metaphysical. The road is the great simile of everything we are, have been, and will be. We start to make tracks as soon as we can walk. The history of our species is marked by the distance we've travelled, the roads we make. Lines chose to name our species *thinking man*, but he could just have easily called us *homo navi* – road-building man.

Roads are the oldest things that we have. This globe is criss-crossed with routes that are more ancient than any building, written language, religion or memory. They're our story. Road has a strange and comforting dichotomy. It's didactic, prescriptive. It makes you go where it goes. But it is also freedom and choice.

To hit the road is the definition of self-determination. There's no getting around this. Roads are the lines on which individual freedom is written. Blocking roads, stopping roads, humping them, prohibiting them, stipulating their use is straightforwardly totalitarian. However benign, however heartfelt and well-meaning your motive. The road block is the first thought and act of dictatorship.

The right to the open road is everybody's, even if that means in practice a 12-mile traffic jam. That's also a personal liberty and a personal choice.

Oh, I can hear you sigh, 'this is so annoying. This is so naive. We aren't against all roads, just some roads and unnecessary journeys. We aren't against the cycle path to school or the converted railway line to the organic farm shop. We are just against the European highway and another lane on the M25'.

Well, I'm sorry, that won't do. You can't pick and choose. The hunter's track leads inexorably to the grand trunk road and on to the silk route, and from there to the Hanger Lane Gyrotory System. You can't take lengths of road out of the world any more than you can take threads out of lace or words out of the *Declaration of Human Rights*.

If you believe in one road you believe in all roads. It's not for you to choose who has the right to use them.

No one can say that this journey is more valuable than that, because that's the thing with journeys: we never know where they're going to end, or what they'll discover. And you know there are going to be more journeys and more roads, because that's what we do as a species. That's how we are. We're inquisitive, questioning, restless thinking man. We have maps in our heads and make journeys.

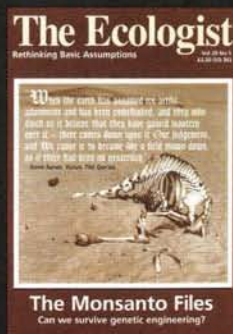
And actually, it isn't that bad. How much of this crowded, most automotive island do you think has been handed over to roads. Take a guess. You're wrong. It is two per cent. That's it. That's all. That's less than is taken up by Cheshire.

But still, that's not really my point. What I mind is your inability to see the romance of roads. You can find some mystical, whole-earth-spirit doggerel in dolphin twittering. You can believe that the cure for everything is going to be found up a tree in the Amazon. You're even hopelessly romantic enough to trust that there is a question for which the answer is 'a bicycle'.

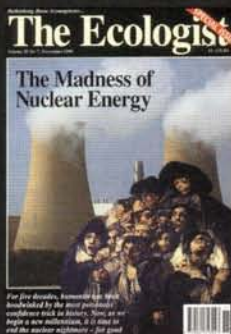
What you resolutely won't see is that the great artisan, hand-made, unique, Homeric, lyrical saga of our species is rapped out a million million times a day on a motorway ■

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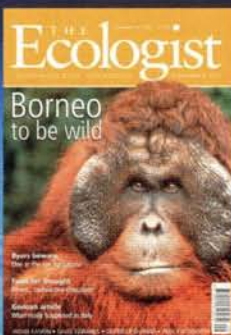
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