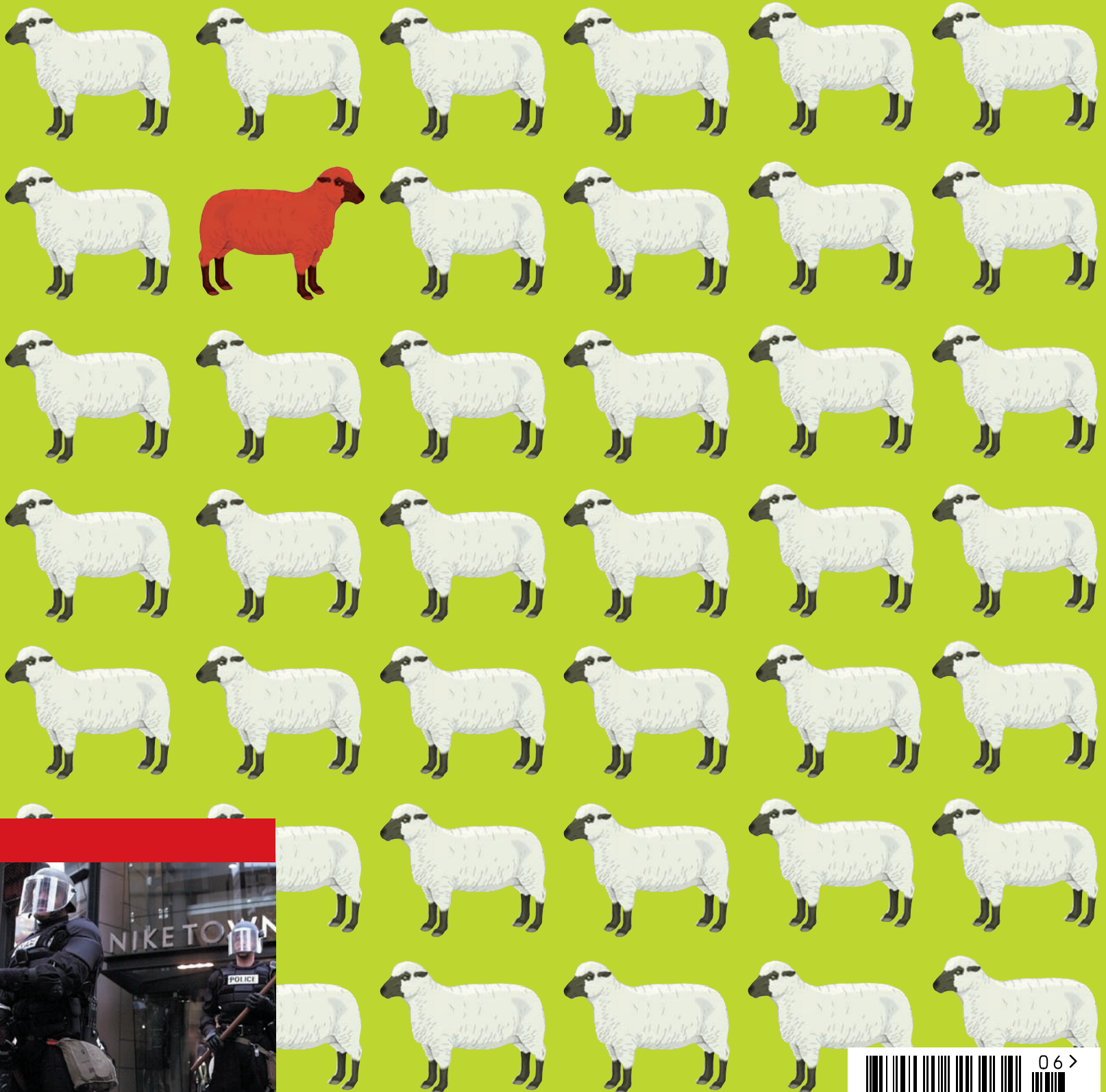


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Trading places

Though it's difficult to predict an exact agenda for the upcoming WTO meeting in Cancun, Mexico, we can assume that it will involve extending still more powers to the multinationals. For that reason, people from around the world will unite in opposition to it.

But on the question of alternatives there is a deep divide. Is the global industrial economy inherently flawed, or can poor nations, given fair conditions, trade their way to prosperity?

It's hard to see how the latter could be possible. Massive material consumption in the North has been possible because of our historic ability to plunder colonies in the South. Even if it were desirable, it would be mathematically impossible for the Third World to emulate us.

But physical constraints aside, is it wise to equate consumption with wealth? Analysts often point to the high consumption levels of rich nations as proof of their unfair advantage. But if developed-country citizens consume too much, it is because they live with a system that requires them to. When local production is undermined and basic goods are shipped thousands of miles northerners cannot (unless they are rich or ascetic) be anything other than rampant consumers. Does that make them better off?

It's a big assumption to make, particularly in the light of what we know to be true – that multinational corporations are profiting at the expense of everything else (both in the North and South), and that the very nature of industrialisation turns luxuries like cars into necessities. To pitch 'rich' countries against poor countries is to ignore the fact that people everywhere

(and their environments) are being undermined by large, mobile corporations.

Very few people argue that the global economy has been a resounding success. And no doubt its rules could be made fairer. It's absurd that developing countries should be expected to abandon protections for their fledgling industries while developed countries build barriers of their own. And for countries whose people have already been pushed into overcrowded cities, and have lost their diverse food-producing base and been made dependent on the volatile commodity markets relocating large factories, for example, would provide some short-term relief.

But it would also cause massive vulnerability. Markets fluctuate, factories move.

So the question is: can the global economy be maintained on a fair and ecological basis? George Monbiot (page 42) believes it can – with fundamental reform through an international institution.

Companies could

then be forced to behave well in host countries, and the indirect costs of their business – so often shouldered by taxpayers and the environment – could be fully internalised.

But the problem with global institutions has always been that they are more effectively lobbied by big business than local communities. They are invariably coopted by vested interest. Were a new institution to take fair-trade considerations seriously, what would be the chances of it being respected by the US or European Community?

Even so, if such an institution were initiated (and respected) its effect would be



radical re-localisation of global economic activity – exactly as proposed by localists everywhere. Without infrastructural support and direct subsidies, a company like Walmart would not be able to justify sourcing food from sites thousands of miles away. The global economic landscape would be altered, ending in a stroke the advantage big business enjoys over smaller operators.

The effect of a genuine fair trade organisation would, therefore, be a world where trade comes second. That means a return to the human scale – the only hedge we have against continuing corporate power and ecological destabilisation. In other words, such an institution – if it were possible – would logically lead to the end of the global economy as we know it.

So in real terms, the issue is not about ends but means. At what level should we pursue re-localisation? If we start at the top, we are advocating the replacement of one massive centralised authority with another form of massive centralised authority – with all the risks that entails. It would require persuading the entire establishment to radically alter its priorities.

On the other hand, if we start somewhere in between – with loose international coalitions between nations of similar status, with individual countries actively re-localising their food economies and strengthening their local communities – we would see a process of gradual independence from the corporate monolith that is undermining developing nations... without needing the corporations' prior approval.



See George Monbiot's article on page 42

OIL SLIPS

David Fleming's otherwise informative article ('The wages of denial', April 2003), was marred by his misleading conclusions that US Middle East policy is motivated out of self-defence.

If the US actually cared about access to oil there are more diplomatic ways of going about securing it than through a genocidal war. Fleming's understanding of the causes of the war is very narrow indeed, ignoring how the US aided and abetted Iraq in its quest for nuclear weapons (which it does not have, and which the UN inspectors could have insured they would never get). And his assessment of Arab hostility to the 'Washington consensus' ignores the Euro-American colonial legacy in the Middle East, and the Israelis' role in exacerbating things with their nuclear arsenal.

Middle Eastern countries would be happy to supply the world with oil (for a fair price that could benefit their general populations) if the rest of the world (led by the US) would stop aiding dictators and monarchs who undermine democracy.

Richard Wilcox, Tokyo

WWF RESPONDS

Your article on WWF and Lafarge ('WWF pockets quarry-firm millions', April 2003) had some inaccuracies that need clarification. WWF has always been and remains opposed to the Harris super-quarry. WWF supports Friends of the Earth (FoE) and the Link Quarry Group in their opposition to the Harris scheme, and maintains vigorous opposition to this development. WWF has been urging Lafarge to drop the Harris super-quarry for some time, both via the campaign in Scotland and within the context of the fund's global partnership with Lafarge.

WWF believes that engagement with large companies in sensitive sectors plays an important role in securing environmental protection, and the relationship with Lafarge demonstrates that our independence is not compromised by our public opposition to the super-quarry. Through our corporate engagement Lafarge has committed to reducing its CO₂ emissions by 10 per cent

below 1990 levels by 2010. This is a more ambitious target than that made by industrialised countries under the Kyoto Protocol (around 5 per cent). Lafarge is also developing social and environmental guidelines for the ecological rehabilitation of quarries.

Robert Napier, WWF-UK chief executive

GM FUNDAMENTALISTS

Re' 'Strange bedfellows' (April 2003). I've known Royal Society president Bob May for years as a colleague working, like me, on animal population dynamics (ie, whales and fish). I took issue with him about his comments

that opponents of GM were 'fundamentalists'.

Although one must not put too much weight on the role of individuals, May's 'trajectory' is interesting.

As science

adviser to 10 Downing Street he was influential in getting the Blair government to be pro-GM.

Then when he was elected president of the Royal Society I'm certain he influenced the society to move to a pro-GM position. With Blair's help, he then elected himself to the House of Lords, and I am certain that he will now influence Parliament. Watch out for it.

I have no idea why May is engaged in this. He used to be, I thought, a serious, cautious, brilliant thinker.

Sidney J Holt, Crickhowell, Wales

YELLOW PERIL

There appears to be a serious problem with the recycling of the *Yellow Pages*, caused by the directory's dye. I understand the processors will allow a contamination level of only 5 per cent so that local recycling of the *Yellow Pages* has for the time being been suspended.

The colour yellow is clearly a big factor in the commercial success of this important directory. Bearing in mind that the polluter should pay for any consequent environmental damage, then it should be possible to focus the company's attention on this serious problem, and to persuade it to fund appropriate research directed to its solution.

PC Meyer, Berhamsted UK



NATURE'S BOUNTY

In 'For the love of larks' (April 2003) Malcolm Tait could have mentioned, in addition to Milton, Shelley and Edward Thomas on the lark, the following lines from Shakespeare's 'Sonnet 29':

'Haply I think on thee, and then my state,/ Like to the lark at break of day arising/ From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;/ For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings/ That then I scorn to change my state with kings.'

Tait's sense of the English heritage that is bound up in its natural world is perfectly captured by Shakespeare here. He weaves the natural and the human worlds spontaneously together. Obliteration of nature also obliterates cultural wealth and memory.

To change our thoughts though to the humble sparrow, has *The Ecologist* heard that the microwaves of mobile phones may be the cause of their apparently mysterious and rapid decline? A follow-up on this would be helpful. Here in South Africa, too, sparrow numbers have declined at the same time as cell phones have increased. Though sparrows are an invasive alien species here, they are minimally disruptive. Their decline is also a cultural loss.

Jim Phelps, Empangeni, South Africa

GHOST SHIPS

Just before the recent war in Iraq it was widely reported via various news media that three large ships were seen leaving Basra with no apparent destination. Reports in newspapers and on television stated that the vessels were circling seemingly pointlessly in the Indian Ocean.

After several days of such reports, mention of these ships completely disappeared from the news media.

What happened?

Did they contain the much-vaunted weapons of mass destruction? Were they scuttled; or were they sunk by the coalition's submarines? Why did they suddenly disappear from our awareness?

David Marsh, London, UK

SOCIETY, MEDIA & CULTURE

GLOBAL WORMING: Why do we dispose of organic waste in landfill sites? Shouldn't we – individuals, councils and businesses – all be using worms to compost it? By Jane Crawford

Compost is a natural, organic matter that is broken down into a nutrient-rich soil conditioner. It is made from organic waste such as garden and kitchen scraps, and is used to improve soil fertility and structure. It is a natural, organic matter that is broken down into a nutrient-rich soil conditioner. It is made from organic waste such as garden and kitchen scraps, and is used to improve soil fertility and structure.

COMMUNITY WORKS

Composting is a natural, organic matter that is broken down into a nutrient-rich soil conditioner. It is made from organic waste such as garden and kitchen scraps, and is used to improve soil fertility and structure.

WORM COMPOSTING

Worm composting is a natural, organic matter that is broken down into a nutrient-rich soil conditioner. It is made from organic waste such as garden and kitchen scraps, and is used to improve soil fertility and structure.

AT HOME

Composting is a natural, organic matter that is broken down into a nutrient-rich soil conditioner. It is made from organic waste such as garden and kitchen scraps, and is used to improve soil fertility and structure.

INDUSTRIAL WASTE

Composting is a natural, organic matter that is broken down into a nutrient-rich soil conditioner. It is made from organic waste such as garden and kitchen scraps, and is used to improve soil fertility and structure.



WORM REGARDS

The great thing about worms is that they offer a way of dealing with materials that are difficult to compost as they attract rats and flies. Much of the waste that people put out in their dustbins and black bags contains food waste; it is so valuable to be able to deal with it usefully in situ. However, 'Global worming' (April 2003) tells us not to put meat scraps, oily food and milk products in our wormeries. I'm sorry, but this is not right. Jack Temple, who wrote the Soil Association's first guide to worm farming, states: 'Unless your kitchen scraps contain some protein in the form of cheese, meat, bread or waste milk, then it is desirable to supplement your worms' diet with well wetted chicken mash or similar.'

Most of the information that you see on composting contains a list of what you can compost and another list of what you cannot compost. In fact, everything that once lived (well, recently – so not coal, which has become mineralised) can be composted or fed to worms.

Councils that promote wormeries and compost bins at subsidised rates get enormous amounts of queries relating to the worms. I believe this is because people confuse the keeping and feeding of worms (worm farming) with composting. Worms can only deal with relatively small amounts of food at a time, and if you go piling on too much stuff, especially fresh greens, wormeries will overheat. The article tells us to put grass cuttings in wormeries. Grass

cuttings are probably the one thing that should be left out as they heat up so readily and worms like it cool; they will desperately try to escape if they get too hot. Also, fresh greens are mostly water and a huge amount of liquid is released as they decompose; if you don't keep the tap at the bottom of the wormery open or let the liquid seep away then the container will fill up and the worms will drown – and it will stink to high heaven.

Nicky Scott, chairman, Community Composting Network, UK

HEALTH SERVICE?

In 1950 the NHS cost £300m. The service's founders expected the cost to decline as the public, increasingly exposed to 'the wonders of modern medicine', became healthier.

But the nation's health has deteriorated remorselessly since day one of the NHS. We now have: a completely out-of-control epidemic of chronic, degenerative and, above all, iatrogenic disease – with 30,000 diseases and rising; a cancer rate of 40 per cent and rising; and childhood disease rates – physical, mental and emotional – spiralling upwards. NHS spending has increased 10-fold in real terms, and the magic one-billion-prescriptions-per-year figure is due this year or next.

Where did our elected officials get the idea that a successful nationalised facility could be built on a basis of pharmaceuticals, radiation, invasive tests and conveyor-belt surgery?

Pat Rattigan, by email

DUMPING CIVILISATION

The looting of the Iraqi National Museum did not distress me. It is clear that our planet can no longer tolerate our civilisation. We shall inevitably continue to degrade both planet and civilisation until we come up to date as a species – and dump the past, as considerably as we can. Great ruins will survive in the cities for a time, but much of the stuff in museums (like much of the knowledge in universities) will spread about. What really has to be dumped if our species is to pull out of its present tailspin is our attachment to the ideas of who we are, what is worthwhile, where we fit in, and what we must preserve at all costs. We are a clever and intelligent primate species, whose present ways of life and thought are making life hell for ourselves, and threatening both our own survival and much related life on earth.

Hugh Sacker, Knockandarragh, Eire

AGENT GREEN

US Vietnam War veterans and Vietnamese citizens are still paying the price for the use of Agent Orange – the chemical agent that the US government assured everybody was safe.

Now US drug warriors are using a biological agent on Colombia's rainforest, and threatening the forest's entire eco-system. If these drug warriors are so certain that Agent Green is so safe, please let them subject their families to it.

Kirk Muse, Arizona

CORRECTIONS

In 'More than honey' (May 2003) we gave the old website address for Bees for Development. The organisation's new website is at: www.beesfordevelopment.org

In the article 'Greening cities' (April 2003) we said that John Larimer is the current mayor, and the 'architect' of the sustainable urban planning in, the city of Curitiba. In fact, Cassio Taniguchi is the city's current mayor, and former mayor Jaime Lerner is responsible for the city's green redevelopment.



US Bechtel, the construction giant notorious for its Third World privatisation activities and far-reaching political connections, has won a contract worth up to \$680m to rebuild the roads, schools, sewers and hospitals of Iraq.

Bechtel has contributed \$1.3m to US electoral candidates in the last three years. Riley Bechtel, the firm's chairman and CEO, was recently appointed to George Bush's export council. Board member George Shultz was secretary of state in the Reagan administration. Caspar Weinberger, Reagan's secretary of defense in 1980, is a former Bechtel director, vice president and general counsel.

Bechtel is also well-connected to USAID, the government organisation responsible for allotting the contracts to rebuild Iraq. USAID director Andrew Natsios briefly ran Boston's 'Big Dig', a mammoth project involving Bechtel and another construction firm. Massachusetts politicians have blamed Bechtel and its partner for allowing costs to balloon on the \$14.6 billion scheme.

This is not the first time Bechtel has profited from conflict with Iraq. Following the first Gulf War, the company was one of several employed to put out and clean up Kuwaiti oil fires and spills. Once the fires were extinguished, Bechtel repaired the Kuwaiti oil industry's damaged pipelines, production sites and shipping terminals. Many Kuwaitis were convinced Bechtel had paid off their royal family to win the contract, an allegation the firm denies. Although Bechtel won't declare how much it made from the Kuwaiti work, it is estimated to have been around \$2 billion.

Furthermore, a new report by US think-tank the Institute for Policy Studies, *Crude Vision: how oil interests obscured US government focus on chemical weapons use by Saddam Hussein*, reveals that in the 1980s Donald Rumsfeld and other Reagan officials lobbied to win Bechtel the contract for the \$1 billion Aqaba oil pipeline from Iraq to Jordan. Iraq was using chemical weapons against Iran at the time.

US Four US state and city treasuries, with aggregate investments worth approximately \$130 billion, have expressed concern about the threat of climate change to long-term investments.

The officials highlighted several risks ranging from damage caused by global warming to future potential regulatory

scenarios and possible legal liabilities for heavy emitters of greenhouse gases.

A record 31 global warming resolutions were filed in the US against 27 companies this year, primarily against firms involved in heavily emitting sectors such as the auto industry, electricity provision, manufacturing and oil and gas.

UK Anti-vivisection group Uncaged has won the right to publish documents detailing harrowing experiments involving the transplant of GM pig organs into 500 higher primates. The group had been fighting Novartis in a bid to overturn an injunction that had banned publication of documents leaked from the drug giant, many of which had first been published in September 2000.

In April, London's High Court ratified an out-of-court settlement allowing Uncaged to publish over 1,000 pages of the documents, including a second batch of documents leaked in October 2002 from the Home Office.

The documents related to research conducted by Cambridge-based biotech firm Imutran Ltd at the laboratories of Huntingdon Life Sciences. Imutran, later bought by Novartis in 1996, had hyped pig organs as an imminent solution to transplant waiting lists.

The leaked documents reveal the severe suffering the laboratory animals experienced as scientists failed to overcome the complex barriers to cross-species transplants. Some of the research had been personally approved by Home Office ministers, who later blocked an inquiry into the affair.

Read the report and extensive commentary at: www.xenodiaries.org

US Shareholders at Coca-Cola's AGM in April urged the company to use its influence in Colombia to encourage greater protection of human rights. They also called for Coca-Cola to pay its executives less and to stop sponsoring the US's National Public Radio. Coke's chairman and CEO Douglas Daft, who earned \$5.5m in bonuses and salary last year, said he would consider the matter of executive pay. However, shareholders voted down the other two proposals by wide margins.

UK The UK's first community-managed wind turbine started turning at Wales's Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) last month. The turbine, funded and owned entirely by local people, will supply all its power to CAT. Half the power will be used by the centre, and the rest will be sold on to the National Grid. Shareholders will be rewarded with a financial dividend on their investment and the knowledge that their money will prevent the release of 70 tonnes of CO₂ into the atmosphere each year.

UK Over 1,000 dolphins are reported to have been washed up dead on the shores of England and France this year, as a result of pelagic (mid-water) trawl fisheries. Pelagic trawl methods include pair trawling, in which a vast net is pulled between two boats. Studies show that dolphins are often trapped in the nets, and suffer horrible injuries before they die. The Whale and

Dolphin Conservation Society fears the real dolphin death toll this year may be as high as 10,000.

Please send a polite email in protest to Franz Fischler, European commissioner for agriculture, rural development and fisheries, at: kabinett-fischler@cec.eu.int.

For more information, visit: www.wdcs.org



'You're free. And freedom is beautiful. And, you know, it'll take time to restore chaos and order... order out of chaos. But we will.'

George W addresses Iraq, April 13

'The point that genetic engineering merely extends conventional breeding will not do. GM and other biotechnologies take us into the age of the "designer" organism. They were declared to be "biologically impossible" until about 10 years before they became reality. Nowadays, nothing that does not break the laws of physics can be considered biologically impossible. If people in high places cannot see this requires a new mandate, they should not be in charge of political strategy.'

Colin Tudge, visiting research fellow at the Centre for Philosophy of Natural and Social Science

'The farm-scale results will represent the most comprehensive study of the environmental impact of GM crops. As an industry, we are willing to accept Lord May's challenge to "take note of any negative results", and support his challenge to all in the debate to be equally willing to accept all aspects of these results.'

Dr Paul Rylott, acting chairman, the Agricultural Biotechnology Council

'The trials are an exercise in self-justification by an industry and government backed into a corner by a citizenry that doesn't like being patronised by advocates for GM crops.'

Charlie Kronick, Greenpeace

'It was a glorious picture that had a lot of people watching, and a lot of advertisers excited. But it wasn't journalism, because I'm not sure Americans are hesitant to fight another war; it looked to them like a terrific endeavour.'

MSNBC reporter Ashleigh Banfield on the TV war, 28 April



RUSSIA The concrete shield built to stop radiation escaping from the Chernobyl nuclear power station is collapsing and needs urgent reinforcement, Russia's atomic energy minister declared in April. 'We can see a situation where the roof could fall in, or rather the supports that hold up the roof could fall down,' commented Alexander Romyantsev, adding that the concrete itself was leaking radiation.

US DuPont withheld from the US government an internal study linking a toxic chemical in Teflon to human birth defects, an advocacy group has charged. US research body the Environmental Working Group (EWG) claimed that DuPont, the second largest chemical company in the US, did not release a 1981 internal document showing the risks of perfluorooctanoic acid (C8) – a chemical used in the manufacture of Teflon.

The EWG said that Teflon's 1981 study found detectable levels of C8 in the blood levels of seven women who worked at the company's Teflon plant in West Virginia.

WORLD The World Bank's policies for mining, oil and gas projects are failing, a confidential internal study says. Although a few countries have generated higher incomes by exploiting such resources, the report by the bank's Operations Evaluation Department says that resource-rich developing nations that follow World Bank programmes are 'more often associated with poor economic performance'.

US Licensed to Kill, Inc, (LTK) publicly announced its incorporation in March with the launch of the company's website www.licensedtokill.biz.

The company's articles of incorporation define LTK's purpose as: 'The manufacture and marketing of tobacco products in a way that each year kills over 400,000 Americans and 4.5 million other persons worldwide.'

LTK is a project of corporate

accountability group Essential Action. It is designed to draw attention to the assistance governments give to the formation and operation of tobacco companies, and to the true nature of the industry.

Elsewhere, an Illinois judge has found that Philip Morris deceived smokers into thinking 'light cigarettes' were safer than regular cigarettes, and ordered the company to pay damages of \$10.1 billion.

BURMA Oil multinational Unocal should face trial over allegations it was complicit in human rights abuses during the construction of a 39-mile natural gas pipeline in Burma, a court has ruled. The suit filed by Burmese refugees alleges Unocal was aware of, and took no steps to prevent, the Burmese military from raping, murdering, and enslaving villagers within the vicinity of the pipeline.



CANADA The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) has demanded a full investigation into a court's dismissal of charges against the Tecum Sea – a Bahamian-registered tanker accused of dumping oil near Newfoundland's Cape St Mary's Ecological Reserve in September 2002. Kim Elmslie, the IFAW's Emergency Relief representative, said: 'This appeared to be an open-and-shut case. I was stunned to learn that the charges were dismissed.' In early September 2002 a satellite spotted an oil slick almost 116 kilometres long. The Tecum Sea was the only ship in the area at the time.

For more, visit: www.ifaw.org

UK For all its talk of being committed to a 'green' future, oil giant Shell is still putting short-term profit before people and the environment, a new report says. *Failing the Challenge: the other Shell report* mimics Shell's own social and environmental reports, and has been jointly produced by Friends of the Earth and a coalition of community groups. It contains first-hand testimonies from communities living next door to Shell sites in the US, the Philippines, South Africa, Nigeria, Argentina and China, and catalogues the environmental damage and health problems these communities face.

The report also shows how inadequate current UK company law is in protecting local people and the environment from firms that profit at the expense of people's health and the natural world.

Friends of the Earth International vice-chair Tony Juniper said: 'Eight years ago we congratulated Shell on its commitment towards sustainable development. Despite the fine words in mountains of glossy brochures, however, it is clear that the company continues to profit at the expense of people and the environment. Shell must start putting substance before message and spin, and address the concerns of local people in all of the countries where it works – not just in the glare of publicity, but everyday, everywhere.'

For more details, visit: www.foe.org; The report is available online at: www.foei.org/media/2003/0423.html



GREENLAND The traditional Inuit diet now contains 'unacceptable levels' of man-made environmental toxins, according to a new report. The traditional local diet of polar bears, seals and whales had been considered one of the healthiest on the planet, yet the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) concludes that Greenlanders should now consider changing their eating habits so as to avoid possible health effects like reduced fertility, genetic damage and deformities in children.

Greenlanders' diet traditionally protected them from ailments associated with industrialised societies. A quarter of a century ago diabetes was almost non-existent in Greenland. Today, the number of diabetics there is three times the level in Denmark. As Greenland generates no pollution of note, it follows that the Inuits are being affected by toxins produced by industrialised nations elsewhere in the world.

Visit: www.amap.no/



US Children with far less lead in their blood than is allowed by current US guidelines show impaired intelligence levels, and much of the damage seems to occur at very low levels of lead exposure, a report published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* claims.

The current US recommended limit for lead exposure is 10 microgrammes of lead per decilitre of blood. Researchers have calculated that as lead levels increase from one to 10 microgrammes, children's IQs fall by an average of 7.4 points. This is a far more precipitous decline than the researchers had seen at higher lead levels.

Most of children's exposure to lead comes from deteriorating paint in older homes.

PERU In April communities in the northern Peruvian region Cajamarca denounced mining company Minera Yanacocha's final assessment of a June 2000 mercury spill, claiming it fails to address the spill's impacts on their health.

Meanwhile, Minera intends to expand mining operations to a mountain that is the main water source for the region's capital, also called Cajamarca.

VIETNAM The US military sprayed twice as much herbicide on Vietnam during the war there than was previously estimated, according to a study published in the journal *Nature*. Relying on previously unexamined military documents and new assessments of dioxin concentrations, the study found that an additional 1.8 million gallons of toxic herbicides – mostly Monsanto's Agent Orange – were used by the US armed forces.

Around 14 per cent of Vietnam's forests were destroyed during the war, and the herbicides have been blamed for birth defects and illnesses in both Vietnamese citizens and US veterans. The US compensates its veterans for diseases associated with the spraying of herbicides in Vietnam, but continues to refuse to recompense the Vietnamese.

In June 2000, 151 kilograms of mercury fell off a truck coming from the Yanacocha mine, which is one of the largest gold mines in the world.

Local people didn't know what the substance was and picked it up to take it home. Many fell ill, but to date the corporation has failed to provide affected people with treatment.

GREECE The streets of Athens are being 'sanitised' by poisoning large numbers of stray cats and dogs in anticipation of visitors to the 2004 Olympic Games. Athens is home to 30,000 to 50,000 abandoned dogs and even more cats. In January, representatives of international animal protection organisations met with Greek officials to submit humane reform proposals that stipulated a low-cost neutering drive. In spite of this, the poisonings continue.

Please email:
prime minister Costas Simitis at: Mail@primeminister.gr;
minister of agriculture George Drys at: ax2u025@minagric.gr;
Athens Olympic Committee director Gianna Daskalaki at: MKandred@athens2004



GREENLAND Three killer whales (orcas) were killed in violation of international law in an unregulated rifle hunt in Greenland last month, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS) says. Several more whales were wounded, but the exact number and their fate is unknown.

Orcas are highly intelligent animals that live in complex and distinct social groups. Calves learn to be fully functional from older whales, and the death or removal of one of these elders could have a disastrous impact on other individuals and the group as a whole.

For more information or to protest against this and other unregulated Greenland whale hunts, visit the WDCS website at: www.wdcs.org.

Stricter environmental rules for EU electronics

Rules to be adopted this year will require all electronics manufacturers doing business in EU countries to eliminate the use of lead, mercury and other heavy metals from their products, and to pay for the recycling of their goods at the end of their useful lives.

Bangladesh at risk

Climate change could increase flooding by 40 per cent in Bangladesh, according to a report in the *New Scientist* last month.

Waste not, want not

A grocery chain in Virginia is converting its left-over food waste to compost. Ukrop's Super Markets Inc now saves \$30 for each ton of food waste that does not go to landfill, while also profiting from selling the compost to customers. Are you listening, Tesco?

After the gold rush

California has adopted tough rules that the mining industry says will virtually eliminate large-scale gold mines in California. The regulations require mining companies to refill new open-pit metal mines when they're depleted, and to flatten mine waste piles back so the landscape resembles its pre-mined state.

Australian ecosystems in peril

Thousands of Australian mammals, reptiles and bird species face extinction as landclearing gains pace, according to a leaked Australian government report. The federal biodiversity audit said 2,891 Australian ecosystems were at risk, with many beyond rescue.

EU exit to be made 'illegal'

A clause in the draft of the proposed European Union constitution would make it illegal for any country to leave the EU without the approval of two thirds of member states.

Security conscious?

The Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant in New Hampshire was locked down in March and the FBI called in after a 'potential intruder' appeared on an electronic monitoring device at the facility. A member of security later told the FBI he saw 'a large bird (probably a wild turkey) with approximately a four-foot wing span fly across the road in front of him'.

Massive support for renewables in Europe

Some 69 per cent of EU citizens support more renewable energy research, according to an international survey. The support for extra research in rival energy sectors is 13 per cent for gas, 20 per cent for nuclear, 6 per cent for oil and 5 per cent for coal, according to the Eurobarometer survey. For more info, visit: www.ewea.com

Move over Two Jags

Canada's minister for natural resources, one of the cabinet ministers responsible for implementing the Kyoto agreement in Canada, has admitted that he owns two sports-utility vehicles.

Africa looks to geothermal energy

A group of 10 African nations is collaborating to increase their combined geothermal power generation to 1,000 megawatts by 2020. The UN Environment Programme estimates that together Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia could produce up to 7,000 megawatts of electricity geothermally.

Toxic toys

Toy maker Playmobil is set to launch a new addition to its range of plastic figures, *The Independent* reported recently, 'chemical-attack' workers dressed in full protective outfits.

Multinationals face air pollution fines worth \$700m

Two firms have agreed to pay \$700m to settle charges that they violated the US Clean Air Act. Archer Daniels Midland Co, the US's biggest ethanol producer, and Alcoa Inc, the world's largest aluminum producer, also agreed to upgrade some of their facilities so as to reduce future pollution.

Record fine for repeat offender

US The US Environment Protection Agency has fined the Colonial Pipeline Company \$34m. That's the largest civil penalty ever made by the agency. Colonial was fined for seven spills that released 1.45 million gallons of oil along a 5,500-mile underground pipeline it owns. The largest spill, in South Carolina in 1996, released almost 1 million gallons of oil into the Reedy River and killed 35,000 fish.

US Drug makers Bayer AG and GlaxoSmithKline have agreed to pay the largest Medicaid fraud settlements ever. Bayer will pay more than \$250m, and Glaxo almost \$88m after failing to give the US government health insurance programme the lowest price charged to customers. In the US companies are legally required to report all prices and to pay Medicaid a rebate if they charge anyone less than they do the government.

Both firms offered discounts to Kaiser Permanente – the US's largest health maintenance organisation – for their drugs. The drugs were then relabelled, which allowed Bayer and GlaxoSmithKline to avoid reporting the low prices and get out of paying millions of dollars in rebates to Medicaid.

Elsewhere, Tap Pharmaceutical Products Inc, Pfizer and Bristol-Myers Squibb have reached separate agreements to settle multi-million-dollar complaints with the US government. Attorneys general from 47 states are investigating whether Pfizer illegally marketed the epilepsy drug Neurontin.

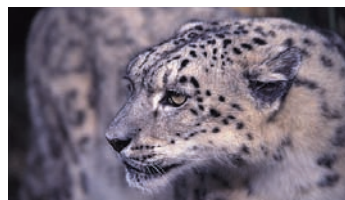


KAZAKHSTAN Mobil Oil is being investigated by the US government over allegations the company bribed Kazakhstan officials in return for access to oil concessions. James Giffen, an oil consultant and the chairman of Mercator Bank, has been charged

with bribing two Kazakhstan officials with \$78m to secure six deals. The deals include the acquisition of a 25 per cent share in the \$1.05-billion Tigriz concession. Mobil paid Mercator some \$58m to negotiate the Tigriz contract.

BRAZIL A massive chemical spill cut off the supply of clean water to some 600,000 people in three states near Rio de Janeiro in April. A reservoir at a pulp and paper factory leaked 320 million gallons of caustic soda and chlorine into the Paraiba do Sul River. Scientists say it could take as many as 15 years for local ecosystems to recover. The pulp factory was shut down and fined nearly \$15m.

KASHMIR Since the partition of Pakistan and India in 1947, forest cover in the Pakistan-controlled portion of Kashmir has diminished by two thirds, often because of illegal logging. Snow leopard populations have shrunk dramatically, migratory birds have stopped returning to the region, and animals including black bears, ibex, striped hyenas, and lynx are also at risk.



GHANA Mining companies including US firm Newmont are urging Ghana's government to permit mining in the country's protected forest reserves, despite decades of environmental and human rights abuses in the Ghanaian mining industry. Human rights, environmental and labour organisations have denounced a pattern of abuse that includes burning villages, illegal detention, rape, intimidation and dog attacks. In recent years, disastrous cyanide spills have killed all life in several of Ghana's river systems and marshlands, contaminating drinking water and agricultural lands for thousands of villagers in the process.

Decades of forest degradation have left less than 2 per cent of Ghana's native tree cover intact. The remaining savannah and moist tropical forests are globally significant for their biological diversity, and include over 700 types of tropical trees. The forests provide critical habitats for many endangered species, including 34 plant species, 13 mammals, 23 butterflies and eight birds.

REQUESTED ACTION: Please write polite letters to Ghanaian government officials and to the Newmont CEO. Urge these organisations to respect Ghanaian laws prohibiting mining in forest reserves so as to protect globally significant biological diversity, conserve freshwater resources and prevent toxic contamination of water and agricultural lands.

His Excellency John Agyekum Kufuor, President, Republic of Ghana, PO Box 1627, Castle Osu, Accra, Ghana; Fax: +233-21-663044 or 660246

Mrs Cecilia Bannerman, Minister of Mines, PO Box T40, Accra, Ghana; Fax: +233 21 666801

Wayne W Murdy, CEO, Newmont Mining Corporation, 1700 Lincoln Street, Denver, Colorado, US 80203. Fax: +303 837-6100

For more information, see: www.wacam.org or www.moles.org

JAPAN Japan is opposing new proposals to increase corporate liability for oil spills, leaked documents reveal. The documents, passed to Friends of the Earth, reveal that some G8 countries are proposing strengthening the ineffectual liability regime that has allowed oil multinationals to get away with recent disasters such as the Erika and Prestige oil tanker spills. But Japan is opposing the new proposals. Both the Erika and the Prestige oil tankers were originally manufactured in the country.

The Japanese government is seeking to weaken every commitment the G8 environment ministers intend to make on maritime transport. It even refuses to ban single-hulled tankers carrying heavy fuel oil from its ports.

For more information, visit: www.foe.org



JAPAN Japan's infamous 'drive hunt' season has ended without a single dolphin being killed in the dolphin-fishing village of Futo. This happy development is largely thanks to the establishment of dolphin watching as a viable source of alternative income for local communities.

Drive hunts have been taking place throughout Japan for many decades. During the hunts dolphins are rounded up out at sea and driven towards the shore, where a bay is netted off and the animals trapped inside. Once trapped, the dolphins are either slaughtered or removed from the nets alive for sale to marine parks and aquariums.

But in September 2002, fisherman Izumi Ishii organised the first commercial whale and dolphin watching trip from Futo. Ishii's trips have since become a huge success. The lives of 600 dolphins, the quota set by the Japanese authorities for the 2002/03 hunting season, have, therefore, been saved.

For more information, contact: www.wdcs.org

FRANCE Alfred Sirven, a former executive of French oil firm TotalFina told a Paris court last month that much of the \$50m he illicitly withdrew in cash between 1990 and 1996 was used to fund French and foreign politicians.

The fraud was conducted in the manner 'of a second-rate thriller', the court's president said. An Elf employee codenamed

'Oscar' would bring the cash in plastic bags to the oil giant's offices. He would hand the money over after having identified himself by showing a stamp or metro ticket.

Both Sirven and former Elf president Loik Le Floch-Prigent are already in jail, following separate convictions in 2001 for using gifts to try to influence French foreign policy.

US The New York State Supreme Court has sued a subsidiary of Dow Chemical over claims made about one of its pesticides. As part of a 1994 agreement, Dow AgroSciences LLC was supposed to stop making claims that Dursban was 'safe'.

Dursban, which is regularly used in homes to kill termites, contains chlorpyrifos. Yet, despite the documented toxicity of chlorpyrifos, labels for Dursban continue to claim the safety of the product. Exposure to chlorpyrifos can lead to a range of symptoms, including excessive production of tears and saliva, uncontrolled urination, weakness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, headaches, confusion and dizziness. Tremors, convulsions or respiratory paralysis may occur at higher doses, and sometimes lead to coma and death.

For more information on chlorpyrifos, visit: www.panna.org/resources/documents/factsChlorpyrifos.dv.html

UK At British American Tobacco's AGM last month the firm's deputy chairman Ken Clarke MP and other board members were repeatedly questioned over the human rights record of their government business partners in Burma. Clarke admitted he agreed with Burma Campaign UK about the nature of the regime in Burma, but said he had no problem working with it. Burma Campaign UK director John Jackson said: 'The only bottom line for Ken Clarke and BAT is if it's legal and makes a profit then they'll do it.'

For more information, contact Burma Campaign UK at Bickerton House, 25/27 Bickerton Road, London N19 5JT; tel: 00 44 (0)20 7281 7377; visit: www.burmacampaign.org.uk



UK Marta Hinestroza, the lawyer representing farming communities displaced by BP's activities in Colombia, demanded compensation from the company at its AGM last month. BP subsidiaries in Colombia have been involved in the construction and management of the Ocesa oil pipeline across the eastern Andes. Local people have lost land and livelihoods, and residents campaigning for justice have been repeatedly threatened by paramilitaries. Yet the company still refuses to offer appropriate compensation. Ms Hinestroza has received so many death threats for her work that she fled the country and now has received refugee status in Britain.

For more information, visit: www.colombiasolidarity.org.uk/

INDONESIA US-controlled mining firm Freeport-McMoran has admitted paying the Indonesian national military an estimated \$5.6 million in 2002 for 'security purposes'. In a recently disclosed report to the US Security Exchange Commission, Freeport-McMoran also said it paid the military \$4.7m for the employment of over 2,000 'Indonesian government security personnel' in 2001, and an additional \$400,000 in 2002 for 'associated infrastructure' in Indonesia.

For more information, visit: www.moles.org

Milking it

SWITZERLAND The colonisation of space by advertising continues unabated. Swiss firms can now advertise their goods on... the sides of cows. The Cow Placard Company uses car paints for its designs. Elsewhere, 20 US police departments have purchased squad cars for just \$1 each. The cars are so cheap because they are covered with ads. If you see any similar examples of advertising creep, please email them to: jeremy@theecologist.org

Earth Day Greenwash

US Every year the US celebrates Earth Day on April 22. And every year more and more companies try to get in on the act. This year activities in Houston were paid for by Waste Management, which owns 293 landfills and has been held responsible for many hazardous waste sites. In Tucson the event was sponsored by Raytheon Missile Systems for the ninth consecutive year.

Nestlé 'dis'honoured

UK Nestlé received an award as the UK's 'least ethical company' at the Ethical Consumer World 2003 exhibition last month. 'This award is an acknowledgement of the success of campaigners in exposing corporate malpractice, but also of the shocking failure of Nestlé to abide by minimum standards in a host of areas,' said Baby Milk Action's Mike Brady.

Chemical Industry splashes out on image

US The American Chemistry Council, the group which lobbies on behalf of the US chemicals industry, is to spend \$50m on advertising 'to improve public perception of the contribution of chemicals in improving consumers' lives', *Advertising Age* reports.

Shock and trademark

US The US Patent and Trademark office has received more than a dozen applications for use of the phrase 'Shock and Awe' in connection with products and services ranging from fireworks, lingerie and baby toys, to shampoo and consulting services.

War sauce

US The latest press release from US company French's Mustard has assured worried consumers that 'the only thing French about French's mustard is the name!'

Biotechnology epitomises the issues and struggles defining today's world. Corporate corruption, weak science, false claims to help the poor – they're all linked to GM. *The Ecologist*, in association with industry watchdog the Norfolk Genetic Engineering Network, reports on the key GM events and trends.

GM Politics & Propaganda

US opposes right to food

UN A UN resolution espousing the right to food has been passed with 51 nations in favour and one against. The country against was the US, which used the vote as an opportunity to attack the UN's special rapporteur on the right to food Jean Zeigler. A US representative said his delegation could not support the resolution or endorse the work of the special rapporteur. The representative said Zeigler should instead be reprimanded for abusing his mandate. Last year Zeigler said: 'There is absolutely no justification to produce GM food except the profit motive and [to perpetuate] the domination of the multinational corporations.'

Netherlands a 'soft touch'

NETHERLANDS Friends of the Earth has called on the European Commission to investigate the Dutch government's favourable opinion on Monsanto's January application for a new GM oilseed

rape. FoE claims Monsanto's scientific assessment of the GM crop was so poor that it is questionable whether it meets basic legal requirements. Even the UK government criticised the application. In the light of this, FoE is concerned that eight out of 10 GM food applications since 1998 have been made through the Netherlands. The figures suggest biotech firms think the Netherlands is a 'soft touch'.

Member states flout EU rules

EU 12 of the EU's 15 countries face court action for failing to implement new regulations on testing and monitoring GM foods, the European Commission said last month. The commission, the EU's executive arm, said France, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Austria and Finland had missed an October 2002 deadline to enact the new EU rules, which member states agreed in 2001.

Organic farmers at risk

EU Organic and conventional farmers face 'considerable economic damage' or even loss of organic certification after the European Parliament rejected proposals to limit GM seed contamination to the minimum level 'possible'. Instead the parliament accepted amendments proposed by Tory MEP and seed farmer Robert Sturdy that defined the EU's GM-contamination restriction as the lowest level 'practical'. Sturdy's definition could make 'GM-free' labels effectively meaningless.

Blair adviser attacks Labour public debate 'fix'

UK Sir Tom Blundell, appointed by Tony Blair to chair the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution in 1998 and professor of biochemistry at Cambridge University, has condemned ministerial efforts to mount an independent scientific review of GM technology as 'artificial'.

Monsanto investors face catastrophic risk

US 'The risk of heavy financial losses due to genetic pollution or technology failure coupled with market rejection of GE foods make Monsanto a poor investment,' a report by investment adviser Innovest Strategic Value Advisors has said. Referring to the StarLink corn contamination scandal in 2000 (in which drugs firm Aventis lost \$1 billion) Innovest estimated that Monsanto's financial fallout from a similar scenario could be \$3.83 liability per share. It also gave Monsanto the lowest possible environmental and strategic management rating. Monsanto lost not only \$1.7 billion in 2002, but also its CEO, who has still not been replaced.

The report can be downloaded from www.greenpeace.org/monsantoinvestor

Multinationals' generosity unconvincing

AFRICA Monsanto, DuPont, Syngenta and Dow AgroSciences have agreed to share their technology for free with African scientists. They will donate patent rights, seed varieties and other aid to help African agricultural scientists via a new Kenya-based organisation called the African Agricultural Technology Foundation. Consumers International is sceptical about the firms' motives, however. The firms acknowledge they hope to 'create new markets in Africa'. Sharing patents and seeds would be the perfect way to force GM in through the back door; and contamination of non-GM varieties would achieve a fait accompli before anyone knew it had happened.

Cargill man to rebuild Iraq farming

IRAQ Cargill's Daniel Amstutz has been chosen to lead the US Government's agriculture reconstruction efforts in Iraq. Cargill is the largest privately owned company in the world.

GM Food & Safety

Meat and milk of clones coming soon

JAPAN Tokyo-based group 'No! GMO Campaign' has urged the country's health ministry to ban the retailing of meat and milk obtained from cloned cows. The request was made in response to a recent report from Japan's health ministry study group that declared that meat and milk products from cloned cows are safe for consumption by humans.

Food giant wants tougher rules on pharma crops

US Kraft Foods CEO Betsy Holden told an agricultural forum that biopharmaceutical crops pose a threat to the food supply and require stricter regulation. Kraft spokesman Michael Mudd said that if the federal government refuses to outlaw pharmaceutical crops or to ban their planting in farm states Kraft 'wants there to be every regulation possible so co-mingling will not happen'.

GM would destroy UK organic farms

UK A scientific commission has revealed that cultivating GM crops could wipe out all the UK's 4,000 organic farmers, as well as the UK organic manufacturing and export sector. Documents from the government advisory body the Agriculture, Environment and Biotechnology Commission suggest the spread of pollen from GM crops would mean certified produce would be forever tainted.

GM Science & Technology

Long-term DNA warning

UK Oxford University DNA expert professor Alan Cooper has warned against farming GM crops and animals after research revealed DNA has persisted in some soils for 400,000 years. GM supporters have always claimed DNA degrades rapidly. Professor Cooper says the new evidence raises serious questions

over what would happen to GM crop and animal DNA in the longer term.

GM wheat at least five years away

SWITZERLAND Agribusiness giant Syngenta has said it doesn't expect to market GM wheat for at least five years. 'That is the

minimum – that's how long it would take to have something that is seen to work in practice,' said Syngenta chairman Heinz Imhof. The firm has also abandoned plans to start Germany's first trials of GM wheat after the trials site was sabotaged by Greenpeace in April. Syngenta said the trials would be moved to countries like France or the UK.

For more on these and other stories, and for background information and exposés of all GM issues, go to www.ngin.org.uk

As the precision bombs hit the hospitals, markets and schools of Iraq, Western ideology was revealed for what it is – clumsy, greedy and crass

One of the greatest strengths of the Western ideology has always been its declaration that no such thing exists. Through the years when Communist dogma demanded its tribute of human flesh, the power of the West lay precisely in its claim to have abjured ideology in favour of what works.

‘We,’ the story went, ‘are adaptable, pragmatic and undogmatic; we celebrate pluralism and diversity. We have no wish to impose upon people the revelations of scripture – either religious or secular.’ In the wake of the war on Iraq this appears as mendacious as the ideological ornamentation that for so long adorned the fictions of socialism.

Until now, this non-ideology had been the most successful quasi-religious cult in history. It has made converts everywhere. Few have been able to resist its seductive teachings, which tell not of monsters to be slain and obstacles to overcome but of an easy passage into the garden of earthly delights. The Western way of wealth has been presented as a severely practical process – a consequence of precise and rigorously formulated steps. This is a vision to appeal to technocrats and administrators, to politicians and bureaucrats.

Imagine the men from the World Bank arriving in a Third World country in their sharp suits, with their rimless glasses and concentrated stares. For Third World observers of such obvious wealth and power, these emissaries’ blueprints, their structural adjustment programmes, their projects of



liberalisation, privatisation and opening up the dark lands of poverty to the light and freedom of capital must seem so sensible.

Who, then, could resist the sobriety and seriousness of the plans for double-digit growth, investment in infrastructure and construction projects, for defence and armaments, for palaces of production and an accelerated facility for exporting the

natural advantages of their country?

Within a matter of days, the signatures are dry, the professionals have moved in, and the secrets of wealth creation have been whispered in the ears of the elite. And after a celebratory banquet in the Hilton, the delegation takes its blueprint for perpetual prosperity to the next capital city.

What a happy marriage this system provided, of myth and magic blended with science – all presented under the banner of a globalisation that was as benign as it was inevitable. It was a force of nature, irresistible, irreversible.

What a pity then to have wrecked it in a few days with our weapons of mass destruction. For the ideology of Western universalism lies shattered like Saddam’s palaces. The war in Iraq has exposed the nature of the liberation that the peoples of the world must prepare for: they are going to be liberated, not merely – or even primarily – from tyranny and poverty, but from their own sense of identity.

This war has made manifest the destruction that the Western project inflicts upon all other cultures, civilisations, faiths and belief systems. They will be dismantled, laid waste, as Iraq has been laid waste, so that on the empty barren emplacements (like the effaced cities of Ur and Babylon) new structures may be made in the image of the invaders.

The daisy cutters and bunker busters, the bombs and missiles are precursors of a bogus humanitarianism, behind which lucrative oil and reconstruction

contracts are distributed. And the psyche and sensibility of the people of other cultures will be re-shaped to fit the products and fantasies of the transnationals. And this will be called freedom.

Jeremy Seabrook is the author of *Freedom Unfinished: fundamentalism and popular resistance in Bangladesh today* (Zed Books)



REUTERS

A world driven by economic imperatives leaves little room for beauty

Some years ago an art professor asked me: ‘Is there anything art can’t do today, anything that is taboo?’ Having recently seen a performance in which a naked man, in the name of art, rolled around in green dye and onto a relief map of Africa (all very nicely done), I couldn’t imagine any limits, and said so.

It was a test; I had failed. I knew as soon as I could think clearly that serious contemporary art had at least one taboo – beauty. It was unmentionable, relegated to describing bodies and sunsets and weather and golf shots. It had become an advertising tool, was no longer something anyone discussed seriously, no longer anything any educated individual wanted – the excuse being that standards of beauty are entirely subjective, and thus any attempt to define beauty is an effort to establish an elitist and, therefore, exclusionary position.

Today beauty is actively spurned. Aggressive anti-beauty (the harsh, ugly,

coarse, foul and frightening) is sought out and has become its own aesthetic. It represents not rebellion – as its adherents assume – but accommodation to the ugliness of the modern world.

In *Modern Painters*, the 19th-century critic John Ruskin proposed a link between beauty and a

god-created universe of perfect forms; 'theoria', he called it. But the ugliness of Victorian industrialisation was asserting itself even as he wrote, and the

energy Ruskin applied to defining beauty sounds almost defensive in that light. 'The idea of the "machine in the garden" – of a childhood paradise polluted and rendered noxious by economic imperatives and mechanical intrusions – was at the core of all Ruskin's thinking,' wrote the late critic Peter Fuller.

Ruskin was not alone in noting the way the accumulating debris of the nascent consumer age was cluttering the 19th-century landscape and littering its city streets. The designer and conservationist William Morris found it a 'shoddy age', in which the mechanisation and division of labour was producing ugly and lifeless goods. 'Shoddy is king,' he said. 'From the statesman to the shoemaker, all is shoddy.' For Morris, the machine, the utilitarian model and the division of labour had sucked the life from workers, craftsmen, art and architecture until 'the dull squalor of civilisation had settled down on the world'. As a result, little of what was new was worth looking at and blindness had increased. Eyes unaccustomed to beauty could no longer see it; nor could they recognise ugliness.

To right these wrongs, Morris told the students of the Birmingham School of Art in 1894, individuals needed to be taught to see again. They would have to want to include art and beauty in their lives until it was 'something which they can no more... do without than water or lighting'. There was no excuse for the prevailing state of things. 'We must not be able to plead poverty or necessity, as we do now, as an excuse for ugliness or dirt.'

Morris was hopeful that the situation



might change, but he underestimated the lure of abundant cheap consumer goods and the irresistible draw of economy and efficiency. There was no place for beauty in the economic equations of modern commerce and industry, for society had entered an age when what couldn't be counted didn't count.

Nothing improved. Indeed, nothing had changed by the period following WWI – the period in which DH Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

is set. Describing the blighted, industrialised Midlands, Lawrence wrote: 'It was as if dismal had soaked through and throughout everything. The utter negation of natural beauty, the utter negation of the gladness of life, the utter absence of the instinct for shapely beauty which every bird and beast has, the utter death of the human intuitive faculty was appalling... What could possibly become of such people?'

What indeed? They could, having lost the intuitive faculty, dismiss it as irrelevant. They could, having denied the connection between beauty and spirit, ignore it. They could, blinded by ugliness, pretend that seeing wasn't essential. They could rewrite the definitions. But the longings were still there and mindless acquisitiveness would not fill the void.

In the US there is hardly a stretch of land that isn't marred by utility poles, no vista that is not cluttered with commercial signs. To enter a town is to be accosted by the ubiquitous advertising of the global marketplace, a shrieking sameness that has invaded without consideration of any needs other than its own. The suburbs of England are only a little better, condemned as they too often are to the sameness of a utilitarian vision that cares little for place or tradition. The pavement is cracked, the litter blows, the plants look dead, the grey man scurries to his miserable hole. Was beauty dismissed from our lives, or did it flee? And if it fled, can we bring it out of hiding?

Nicols Fox is the author of *Against The Machine: the hidden Luddite tradition in literature, art and individual lives* (Island Press)

Rejoice in the irrepressible and uncontrollable resurgence of carnival

We protested with shoogling samba bands, big-eared-Blair and Bush-death masks, costumes and props, banners, shouting and songs. We, the people, in our millions, from London to San Francisco, joined in a series of festive demonstrations against the war in a way very different from the dour, dutiful demonstrations of the 1970s and 1980s.

Carnivals are one example of what I'd call the 'politics of time'. They reverse the norm, inverting the established status quo in the spirit of the 'lords of misrule' who traditionally toppled the conventional rulers during the midwinter festival. The powers-that-be have always been nervous about that subversive beastie carnival; consider the UK's (black) Notting Hill Carnival, which has been so jumpily and aggressively controlled by (white) police.

Britain once had hundreds of carnivals: blessing-of-the-mead days, hare-pie-

scrambling days, mischief nights and cakes-and-ale ceremonies, hobby-horse days, horn-dance days and cock-squailing days – each area tootling to its own festive tune. Many of these carnivals served an important political purpose, upholding common people's rights – rights of access, land use, gleaning or wood gathering. The common people had a common time for celebrating common rights on common land. But these customs were effectively crushed by one thing: enclosure. Once the literal commons were stolen, the metaphoric common time disappeared.

Carnivals were vulgar: drunken, and rude. The Victorian middle classes hated them. Just as land was literally fenced off and enclosed, so the spirit of carnival time was fenced in by Victorian morality. The gloriously sexual shenanigans of May Day – the phallic pole planted in 'mother' earth,

and the Green Man's 'horn' – were infantilised to express innocence, of all things. For carnival was vulgar in two senses; it was both rude and of the common people. It simply would not do.

Carnivals have long been used to encourage fertility – of humans, animals and plants. There were ancient festivals of swings in parts of Asia that used see-saws to encourage crops to grow high, and countless cultures have believed that crops would not ripen without seasonal festivals; the earth itself needs carnival. But Christianity sniffed out the earthy politics of carnival. Missionaries outlawed the Native American potlatches, and banned traditional festivals from Burma to Borneo. In Australia, Aboriginal peoples had held corroborees – festivals vital for the life of the land and which 'sustained' the dreamtime – but these were forbidden by both church and state. Christianity destroyed what earth-based festivals it could, tried to co-opt those it could not – tried to turn festival into pageantry that exaggerated the powers of priests.

And pageantry waxes strong today. Think Royal Mayor's Show, openings of Parliament or Bush's cheer-leading in the US. Militaristic and hierarchical, frequently royalist,

nationalist and church-based, pageantry is the enemy of carnival time. Aboriginal Australians bitterly resented the pageantry of the Australian



bicentennial, of being asked to applaud the invasion of their land and their dreamtime. Carnival reverses hierarchy, mocking those in power. Pageantry exaggerates social dominance; servile to genealogy, its coats of arms are all snob-rampant. Pageant is ceremony organised from the top down, rather than the 'bottoms-up' celebration of carnival; it is based in capital cities not localities. The history of pageantry coincides with the creation of the first towns; nature has no place in it. Carnival means dancing and vitality. Pageantry's movements are slow, lifeless and stiff, its procession stately, its pages and ladies in waiting. Nobody dances in pageants. No one waits at carnivals. Pageantry abhors spontaneity and accident. Carnival is buoyant, funny,

spontaneous. We the vulgar are removed from pageantry, for rudeness is its arch-enemy; all rise for Queen Betty, no bawdy bint she, enthroned in a bottomless pomp that precludes saucy remarks. Well, up yer bum, says one of the traditional May Day dancers – the Betty or Betsy – the man-dressed-as-woman, a transvestite fertility symbol, Queen Betty's antithesis; while the Fool, holding a bladder on a stick, rudely prods the backsides of gentility. All rise to pump pump out of court.

Where is the spirit of carnival, the fool, the Betty and the Green Horn? Alive and irrepressibly well. Political carnival on behalf of the dispossessed, against those in power, has erupted in the last few years. No puritans, ancient or modern, have stamped it out. Christianity has not managed it, nor the Criminal Justice Bill. No police force has extinguished it, nor has pageantry suffocated it. For in the enormous early Reclaim the Streets parties protesting the enclosure of the public commons of the streets, the anti-enclosure politics of The Land is Ours, the road protesters' flame-throwing May Days, the many carnivalesque protests against the WTO, the protesters championing the cause of peasants, farmers and commoners across

the southern world, and the recent protests against the war in Iraq there have been 'uprisings' from the 'grass roots' – a resurgence of an ancient swing.

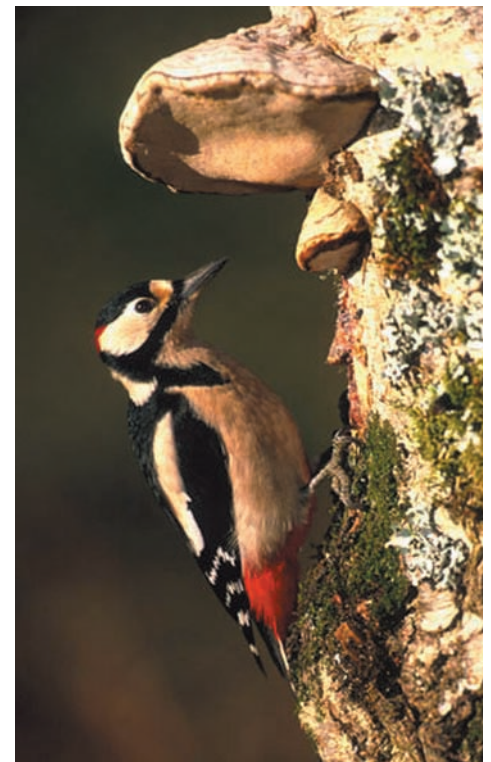
In the US, the Christian right has been buying for war. The protests there have been jocular but shrewd: 'Who would Jesus bomb?' There has been an outpouring of political carnival against those in power: the funny and blunt rebellions of the common people against the pageantry of leaders, rude commoners pooh-pooing the poodling Blair; one woman's placard in London said: 'The only Bush I trust is my own.' Carnival resurges, profoundly political, streamer-fluttering and transformative; vulgar, mercurial, raucous, loud, rude as hell with bells on, with knobs on, and big ones. Big time. Gusto. Give me excess of it.

Jay Griffiths is the author of *Pip Pip: a sideways look at time* (Flamingo, £7.99)

Could evolution lead to the realisation of a violent avian vengeance?

Down at your local pop 'n' popcorn cinematastic multiplex, summer has begun. The first of the seasonal blockbusters has hit town, and – surprise, surprise – it's actually quite good. *X-Men 2* (it's a sequel; the clue is in the title) is one of a recent spate of comic-strip adaptations about superheroes and their superfoes, but this one goes a little further. The basic story is that mankind is mutating; the X gene is providing its bearers with remarkable powers such as the ability to manipulate weather patterns, or pop lethal six-inch claws out the backs of their hands. Just like the rest of the human race, mutants tend to be forces for good and bad, but in *X-Men 2* the mutants' enemy is unmutated mankind itself. Homo sapiens versus homo superior: the former fearing and detesting the latter for its likely future domination because it is better fitted for survival. Nice premise.

I was thinking about this the other day while wandering through a beechy wood near my home, when I spotted a small corpse near the roadside. We're all only too familiar with the usual roadkill victims – hedgehogs, badgers, pigeons



and blackbirds – but this was one I'd never seen before: a woodpecker.

Woodpeckers are extraordinary birds. The great spotted variety drums in spring as a territorial and bonding sign, its chiselled beak rat-a-tat-tatting against tree trunks at about 15 beats per second. With that same power tool, it drives into the bough for beetles, which it flicks out with its elongated, sticky tongue. Then there's the work it does on its nest, which it spends around two to three weeks hacking out. If you or I had a bill and tried these tricks, we'd break our puny necks, or give ourselves brain damage.

But not the woodpecker.

The bird is able to bypass the potential trauma thanks to a system of



muscular support structures at the back of its neck, a brain cavity packed with spongy shock-absorbent bone, another cavity, also shock-absorbent, in which its tongue sits coiled up, and its ability to hammer at a completely straight angle so that all these counterbalances align. This means that with every single ram of their heads woodpeckers can withstand the equivalent of 250 times the gravitational force felt by astronauts as they sit in their launching rockets.

Unsurprisingly, the woodpecker is one of the creatures most often used by creationists as an example of proof of design rather than evolution. 'If the bird did not have such a complex internal structure,' they argue, 'it would not be able to hammer at all. So if it had never hammered, how could it have evolved such a system that caters so completely for this ability? It must have been designed to hammer.'

Hmm. Most birds peck at something – whether it be insects off a branch, nuts in a bag or grain from the ground. That those which slowly mutated more capable systems for absorbing the force of these blows should then go on to more ambitious pecking, until they graduated to full woodpecker status, makes better sense to me. That process is probably still continuing, which means that behavioural patterns are constantly changing.

I was considering this as I gazed at the small, perfect little creature at my feet –

its pied plumage so neat and its red skull patch still gleaming. I wondered whether, in some centuries' time, someone might come across a similar scene yet find it's the car that's lying in the ditch with the woodpecker sitting high in the tree nursing a bruise and pulling itself together. *Dendrocopos major* mutated into *dendrocopos superior*.

Fantasy, of course, but a nice one. Imagine if birds could gain revenge not just by crapping all over people's newly-washed cars, but by head-butting them out of the way. Beam the Beamer. Stitch that, Saab.

But if you lived in Japan, you might not find that funny. The jungle crow lives in inner Tokyo parks and gardens

and in recent years has started to take the offensive. New behavioural patterns are emerging. Over 1,000 crow attacks were reported last year, some of which drew blood. People have been knocked off their bicycles, while mothers snatch up their children and run when they hear the bird cawing above them. Push a bird too far – and the crows, after all, are only competing for space like everything else – and it begins to fight back.

Then there's the story of Harry – a Harris hawk that has spent the last 15 years being paraded in front of people at falconry exhibitions in Yorkshire. By March of this year, he'd had enough. Swooping low over the awed crowd at his umpteenth show, he decided to ignore the usual woollen rabbit he was meant to catch and snatched instead a ginger toupee from an aghast spectator's head. Coming on top of the puncturing of a bouncy castle and the wading around in an ice cream van's trays of finest vanilla Cornish, this final stunt earned Harry his pension. One bird does not a behavioural change make; but behavioural changes *do* have to start with one bird.

So perhaps it's not just *X-Men* that deserves a sequel. Maybe in these still evolving times someone should put their mind to a remake of a Hitchcock classic: *The Birds 2*; this time they're REALLY mad.

Malcolm Tait is former managing editor of *The Ecologist*

Africans are dying of Aids while drug companies reap billion-dollar profits

In Kenya, a country with a population of 30 million, one in six people is living with HIV and well over 500 die daily from Aids. Replicate these figures across Africa, factoring in the much worse epidemics in the south, the forgotten famines and extreme poverty, and you will get just a tiny idea of the extent of the continent's problems. You will also begin to understand why World Trade Organisation regulations that govern the trade in essential medicines and life-saving anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) are of such importance.

Cheaper drugs make a difference. In June 2002, the relief agencies ActionAid and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) imported \$10,000 worth of generic ARVs into Nairobi and distributed them through Kenya's Christian hospitals network. Generic drugs are cheaper copies of the patented medicines that are made and sold by multinational pharmaceutical companies such as GlaxoSmithKline and Roche. The immediate effect of the Action-Aid-MSF action was a fall in the cost of ARVs from 7,000 to 3,000 Kenyan shillings a month as pharmaceuticals dropped the prices of their patented drugs in order to compete.

Now even that small advance is at risk. At the end of 2005 any progress will come to a stop or even go into reverse when the latest WTO regulations come into effect. While patent rules allow developing countries to *import* cheaper generic medicines, from 2006 they will stop generic-drug producing countries such as India and Brazil from *exporting* them. The fear is that prices will rise as competition between generics and branded drugs is effectively ended.

The WTO ministerial meeting at Doha in November 2001 confirmed that patent rules should not prevent countries from taking measures to protect public health or promote access to medicines for all. In Doha ministers promised to correct the legal anomaly that would prevent countries from importing generic medicines. However, negotiations have reached a stalemate. Pharmaceutical lobbyists, backed by the US and other rich countries, are blocking agreement by arguing for tight

Sing a song of Esso

Anon

Sing a song of Esso
a packet full of lies
and oily greasy dollars
to help the climate fry
when the wallet opened
George Bush began to sing
"the planet may be burning
but I don't see a thing"

The boss is in the counting house
counting out his money
Bush is in the White House while
the weather's going funny
so let us now suggest to you
that when you see their logo,
do something for our planet Earth
and don't go buying Esso



Poems on the Underground

One of the 'Poems on the Underground' series of Greenpeace posters attacking George Bush and Oil Giant Esso that have recently appeared on London Underground Trains. For more on the Stop Esso campaign, visit www.greenpeace.org.uk

restrictions and by forcing countries to apply for permission from the WTO whenever they seek to import generics.

Africa cannot afford to pay the enormous costs involved in defeating the Aids epidemic. Yet it would be easy for the pharmaceutical firms to defray their costs. Currently, Africa constitutes only half of 1 per cent of the global pharmaceuticals market. Allowing the exportation of generics for a range of public health problems is hardly going to dent the drug firms' profit margins, but, so far, the signs of any movement by these firms are negligible.

Instead, millions of people will die before their time because their countries do not have the influence or wealth to keep them alive.

Dr Chris Ouma is ActionAid-Kenya's head of health programmes



If the US government is so keen to wipe out terrorism, why is it developing a secret agency with the express remit of provoking more terrorist acts?

Buried deep in the *LA Times* late last year, in an article by military analyst William Arkin, came a most startling revelation. US secretary of defence Donald Rumsfeld is developing a secret new agency whose explicit purpose is to ensure that there will be more terrorist attacks against the US people and civilisation at large.

According to a classified document prepared for Rumsfeld by his Defense Science Board, the new organisation – the Proactive, Preemptive Operations Group (P2OG) – will carry out secret missions designed to 'stimulate reactions' among terrorist groups, provoking them into committing violent acts that would then expose them to 'counterattack' by US forces.

In other words – and let's say this plainly, clearly and soberly so that no one can mistake the intention of Rumsfeld's plan – the US government is planning to use 'cover and deception' and secret military operations to provoke murderous terrorist attacks on innocent people. For P2OG is not designed solely to flush out terrorists and bring them to justice. No, it seems the P2s have bigger fish to fry. Once they have sparked terrorists into action, they can then take measures against the 'states/sub-state actors accountable' for

'harbouring' the Rumsfeld-roused gangs. What kind of measures exactly? The Pentagon programme makes it clear: 'Their sovereignty will be at risk.'

The Rumsfeld-Bush plan to employ murder and terrorism for political, financial and ideological gain does have historical roots. In 1963, the US's top military brass presented JFK with plans for Operation Northwoods, calling for a phoney terrorist campaign – complete with bombings, hijackings, plane crashes and dead Americans – to provide 'justification' for an invasion of Cuba, the Mafia-corporate fiefdom which had recently been lost to Castro.

Kennedy rejected the plan, and was killed a few months later. Now Rumsfeld has resurrected Northwoods, but on a far grander scale – with resources at his disposal undreamed of by those brass of yore, with no counterbalancing global rival to restrain him, and with an ignorant, corrupt president who has shown himself all too eager to embrace any means whatsoever that will augment the wealth and power of his own narrow, undemocratic, elitist clique.

Chris Floyd is a columnist for the *Moscow Times*

TIMBERKING • Weighing 39 tonnes and capable of clearing over a hectare of forest a day, the feller buncher has made industrial forestry possible on a scale never before seen. By Dan Box

Capable of using a saw with a 72-cm diameter, the Timberking TK1162 is the market-leading 'feller buncher'. The Timberking can cut and stack up to 15 tonnes of timber an hour. Typically, each tree weighs up to 0.5 tonnes, so the Timberking can fell around 75 in an hour. A man with a chain saw can hope to fell around half that.

Because they can work uninterrupted for hours on end, feller bunchers can process around 180 tonnes of wood in a day. That represents more than a hectare of forest.

To keep up with this rate of destruction, the entire forestry process has become industrialised. Mechanical harvesters follow feller bunchers to retrieve the timber, which is stacked along hundreds of metres of road. A fleet of lorries then carries this to the sawmill. To keep costs low, this rolling technology all descends at once; a vast swathe of forest is emptied in days.

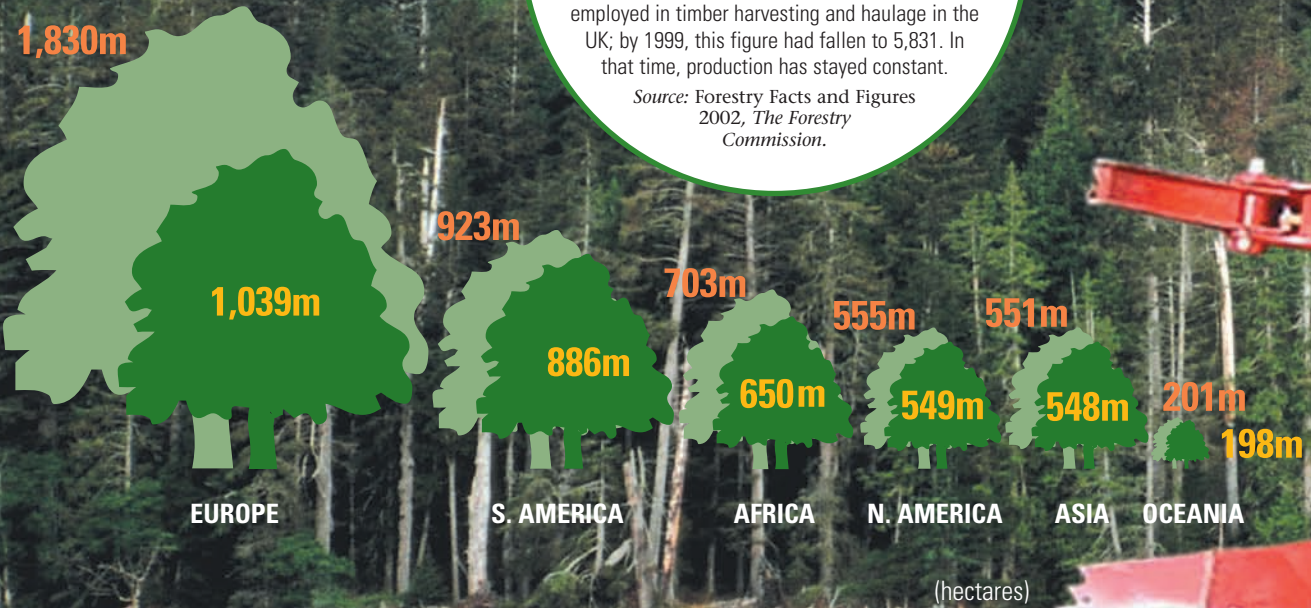
The land is then cleared and planted with a uniform crop of fast-growing conifers, which are themselves felled as soon as is practical. The conifers are planted in lines at uniform distances from each other so as to make it easier to harvest the trees. In the meantime, the feller bunchers continue onto the next stretch of woodland. They operate like combine harvesters, turning whole forests into uniform 'plots' for industrial agriculture.

There are around 350 harvesters and feller bunchers operating in Britain. In North America over twice this number were sold last year alone. Machinery market analyst Yengst Associates predicts that for feller bunchers 'the only direction both sales and production can go is upwards'.

LOSS OF TOPSOIL
Feller bunchers completely clear an area of trees. Where nothing remains to hold the nutrient-rich topsoil in place, rain washes it away leaving only poor soil to sustain future regrowth. As a result, rivers and streams become choked with sediment, which threatens local fish spawning grounds. Herbicides and fertilisers contained in the topsoil are also carried into streams, causing de-oxygenation of the water and fish deaths.

ENGINE
The Caterpillar 3306TA engine provides 270 horsepower at 1,800 RPM. It consumes around 13 gallons of diesel fuel per hour. Like other 'non-road' vehicles, feller bunchers use a diesel that is far more polluting than that used by cars and lorries.
In California (the site of vast commercial logging in the Sierra Nevada forests) the Air Resources Board estimates that diesel engine particulates are responsible for over 70 per cent of cancer risk from air pollution.

FELLER BUNCHERS COST JOBS
With a single operator, a feller buncher does the work of 10-15 men. The Timberking can be operated for 12 hours a day without let-up, and has 11 exterior lights so it can continue being used into the night.
Feller bunchers began to be used in Britain about 15 years ago. In 1986 there were 13,325 people employed in timber harvesting and haulage in the UK; by 1999, this figure had fallen to 5,831. In that time, production has stayed constant.
Source: Forestry Facts and Figures 2002, The Forestry Commission.



WEIGHT

The Timberking TK1162 weighs 39 tonnes. To keep up with the volume of wood it fells, a mechanical harvester has to carry the timber to the roadside. There, a fleet of lorries waits to carry the wood to sawmills. This machinery tears up the ground beneath it, causing serious soil rutting and compaction. Once disturbed, the topsoil is vulnerable to erosion.

MERCURY CONTAMINATION

Clear-cutting forests increases mercury contamination in nearby lakes. Mercury, a product of coal combustion and incinerators, is trapped by forests. When trees are cut, the Mercury is released into ground water. Canadian tests revealed mercury levels were up to 100 per cent higher in clear-cut watersheds than in lakes with no logging nearby.

Feller bunchers are used to clear vast areas of forest. Unlike an individual forester, who can walk among the trees and selectively harvest them, everything in the feller buncher's path is felled. This sudden loss destroys the habitats of local animal populations.

The land is burnt clear, or bulldozers move in to clear stumps and brush. In the process, a massive surge of CO₂ is released by organic matter decaying in the soil; the amount released is more than absorbed by trees during the first 10 years of their growth.

The cleared land is saturated with herbicides so quick-grow species of trees can be planted. In Tasmania napalm is used to clear the ground. In the US hexazinone is commonly used and stays in the soil for three years. Hexazinone exposure can cause permanent eye damage and has been shown to cause developmental defects in laboratory rats. Traces of the chemical have been found in the meat and milk of animals that have grazed on treated land.

Herbicide-treated land is then planted with fast-growing trees to provide the next harvest – usually of only one species. Such sterile crops of trees do not support biodiversity. A plantation forest has approximately 90-95 per cent less species than a natural forest.

Each year the feller bunchers move to new sites. Where successive plots of forest are clear cut, no trees remain at their borders to reseed them and protect young trees from the wind. Foresters increasingly rely on chemical fertilisers to encourage the regrowth of struggling trees.

After a decade or so, the feller bunchers return to the area of the first harvest. Recent tests in Europe show that young trees do not absorb as much CO₂ as mature forests. By never allowing the forests to mature, this process may contribute to the effects of global warming.

GLOBAL CLEARCUTTING

- Across the world, 21 acres of forest are cleared every minute.
- More than 1,250 acres are cleared every hour.
- Approximately 30,200 acres are cleared every day.
- 11 million acres are cleared every year.

Nature & Resources

The Wichí of Argentina believe aggression is the antithesis of humanity. So when the bulldozers arrived to destroy their forests, they 'fought' back with goodwill. Dr John Palmer reports



Leapfrogging

the law

The economic troubles in Argentina have been widely reported around the world. The impoverishment of the middle classes and the Argentines' growing cynicism about their politicians have been extensively written up. Less well covered in the news has been the effects of the crisis on Argentina's very poorest – people who live far from the eye of city-based reporters, the country's original inhabitants, a people despised and vilified as 'savages' by the settler population.

Indigenous hunter-gatherers originally, the Wichí live in northern Argentina's tropical lowlands, in the central area of what the Incas called the Chaco. To the north and south, the Wichí's homelands are bordered by the two rivers that cross the Chaco – the Pilcomayo and the Bermejo. Within this area, which is about half the size of England, there are approximately 50,000 Wichí people. The

Wichí are, therefore, one of the largest and most widespread indigenous groups of lowland South America. Traditionally, they live in clusters of relatively small, mobile, kin-based communities. They produce their food sustainably through seasonal hunting, gathering, gardening and fishing.

The Wichí are an unaggressive people. In fact, aggression is culturally disallowed by them; they see it as the antithesis of proper personhood and the undoing of human society. Instead, they value the spiritual aspect of human beings, which manifests itself in 'goodwill'. For the Wichí, goodwill is the essence of social life; it consolidates community relations and keeps the peace. A leader, whom the Wichí identify as the linchpin of collective life, should be a person of exemplary goodwill, should give without counting the cost and work selflessly on behalf of his (or sometimes her) dependents. The individual

and collective well-being of those dependents is the priority. The shaman, or spirit-healer – who may be either male or female – complements the leader, protecting community members against illness, which is understood as a spiritual affliction caused by a lack of goodwill in the group.

Besides these human resources – leaders and shamans – the Wichí have another resource that secures their physical and spiritual integrity. This is their land, particularly the forest that covers that land. The Wichí say that the forest is their 'source of life' and their 'protection'. It provides food, medicines and the materials on which their social life and material culture are founded. It is integral to their cosmology, and acts, in a very real sense, as a shelter – like the walls and roof of a house in which life can survive the rigours of an otherwise excruciating climate. South

America's highest temperatures (of over 40° centigrade) have been recorded in Wichí territory. Without the shade afforded by the forest only lizards would be able to survive the wilting heat of the sun, and without the forest to protect it the soil would be rapidly eroded by tropical rainstorms and strong winds.

The Chaco forest is very diverse in its composition and structure, ranging from a relatively high canopy with little undergrowth to a thick, thorny tangle of creepers, cacti and stocky tree trunks. By virtue of its impenetrability, it has hitherto shielded the Wichí from large-scale military campaigns, colonisation and extractive industries. But soldiers, settlers and timber merchants have been steadily advancing on the Wichí and their lands since the days of the Spanish empire. Given their aversion to aggression, the Wichí have not opposed this invasion, and have trusted in goodwill to prevail and prevent loss of life. Four centuries of ever-increasing contact, however, have taught them that their goodwill is not reciprocated. The outsiders have come in the interests of greed rather than goodwill. For the best part of 100 years, even the remotest regions in the Wichí's homelands have been appropriated by absentee land speculators or have been overrun by land-hungry frontiersmen. Today the Wichí's forests are lacerated with the scars of non-indigenous livestock-raising, logging and oil extraction.

Most recently, and most perniciously, a new attack has been launched against the Wichí and the lands on which they live: extensive clear-cut deforestation carried out on behalf of agribusiness. Having been looted of their commercially valuable hardwoods, the ancestral forests of the Wichí are now being bulldozed and reduced to ashes. Deforestation is a brutal act of machismo: laying the earth bare by strip-clearing its forest cover is like skinning an animal alive. If you bear in mind that deforestation is immediately followed by sowing the exposed soil with agricultural seeds, it begins to look like a form of rape: tearing the clothes off a

Chacolinks offers support for the oppressed indigenous peoples of northern Argentina. It aims to provide material assistance through small-scale projects set up to relieve poverty, and it lobbies for the upholding of indigenous land rights at both national and provincial levels of government. Chacolinks is focusing its efforts on the Wichí villages close to Tartagal in Salta province, especially Hoktek T'oi (Lapacho Mocho) and Holotaj (Pacará). It is providing fabrics and embroidery threads for the women of these communities, so they can hand-sew clothes that they can wear and sell. It has also sent educational material to these communities, is funding a clean water supply for the village of Hoktek T'oi, and has given financial support towards the building of a fence around the community.

For more information about Chacolinks, e-mail Clare Passingham at: passinc@surfaid.org

woman's body for the sake of forced insemination. Watching from the forest, the Wichí are forced to contemplate the ugly underside of Argentine nation-building – tractors hauling hardwood trunks out of the forest, industrial machinery obliterating the forest environment, low-flying light aircraft filling the air with agrochemicals. All the while, these activities inflict a lingering death on the indigenous inhabitants. The Wichí, like indigenous peoples throughout the world, are the sacrificial victims of so-called 'human evolution'. Collectively, they are like a foetus torn from the womb and slaughtered on the altar of material progress.

This evolutionary progress, however, is illicit; it is against the law. By 'illicit' I do not mean that it is done without official authorisation (though this is sometimes the case). Indeed, the region's provincial government is happy to issue deforestation permits; it considers them to be in the interests of the local economy. The permits are unlawful, for two reasons. First they ignore indigenous rights enshrined in Argentina's constitution and numerous national and provincial laws. Permission to clear the forests is granted without taking the Wichí into account, as though they were not there or did not exist. In law the Wichí are entitled to full ownership of their traditional territory.

The second reason the permits are unlawful is because they contravene the conservationist principles that inform Argentine environmental legislation. The Argentine legislature passes progressive laws, which the administration then famously disobeys. And if you take these

infringements to court, the judiciary finds in favour of the administration by arguing, typically, that indigenous and environmental rights are less important than rights to private property and development.

Further irregularities invariably occur in the deforestation operation itself. The regulations concerning the procedure that should be followed are routinely flouted. To give just one example, there is a regulation, never respected, which stipulates that strips of forest have to be left every 400 metres so as to prevent soil erosion. When the Wichí report such contraventions to the authorities, the bureaucratic state machinery grinds into action: inspections are carried out, the wrongdoings are recorded and... the matter stops there, irrespective of how many times a complaint is lodged. There is an undisguised symbiosis between government and capital investment, one that unabashedly condones the destruction of an ancient culture and an ancient ecosystem. This brazen disregard for legality on the part of judges, politicians and private enterprise is what the Wichí refer to as 'leapfrogging the law'.

So, what hope is there for the indigenous people of the Chaco, if Argentina continues to treat the fragile natural environment so recklessly and fails to heed the cries against this injustice? ■

Please write and protest against the destruction of the Wichí lands. Address your letters to Dr Juan Carlos Romero, and send them to him at: Gobernador de la Provincia de Salta, Gran Bourg, Avenida de los Incas s/n, 4400 Salta, Argentina; to fax them to Romero, dial: (00 +54) 387 436 0400

For more information and updates on the Wichí, visit the Chacolinks website at: www.chacolinks.org.uk

SEAHORSES • Bizarrely formed and practising one of nature's most mysterious parenting methods, the seahorse is the victim of an international trade that kills 20 million of them every year. By Davina Langdale

'Getting up at 4.30am isn't a whole lot of fun, and pulling on a wetsuit that's still rather damp and smelly from the day before is even less fun.' Oxford University research fellow Amanda Vincent has devoted over 10 years of research to the eccentrically beautiful seahorse. Her interest in the evolution of sex differences was piqued by the seahorse – the only species in the world in which the male becomes pregnant.

Seahorses have long been the stuff of myth and legend: a symbol of impudence to the Greek philosopher Plutarch; the miniature offspring of horse-sized parents that pulled Poseidon's chariot, according to Greek fishermen. Sadly the animal's unique physiology has also made it a popular feature in traditional Chinese medicine and a prize for aquarium collectors.

'I began to get frightened about what I perceived to be a really big trade in these animals. I looked around and found there was no data at all, no formal trade records and nobody knew anything about the trade,' says Vincent. That trade threatens the survival of all 35 of the world's seahorse species.

THREATS

● **Traditional Chinese medicine**

The number-one threat to seahorses. China imports 20 tonnes or 5-6 million of the animals annually. Seahorses are used to relieve a range of ailments and in virility treatment. The best quality seahorses sell for up to \$550 per pound. China's rapid economic growth has led to a 10-fold increase in the consumption of seahorses over the last 10 years.

● **The aquarium trade**

Seahorses fetch on average between \$15 and \$70. Hundreds of thousands of animals are captured for aquariums before they have had a chance to breed in the wild. Seahorses are notoriously difficult to keep as they require live brine shrimp for food and are prone to disease in contained environments. Even if they live long enough to breed the young rarely survive. Advertisements for 'captive-bred' seahorses usually signify that the pregnant male was caught in the wild and then gave birth in captivity.

● **The souvenir trade**

Each year, several hundred thousand seahorses are captured for souvenirs. Dried seahorses are popular curios in Asia and parts of Europe, and are fashioned into earrings, brooches and keychains.

● **Infant mortality**

Seahorses have a low reproduction rate due to their strict monogamy, and only two of the thousands of young that pairs typically produce ever reach maturity.

● **Vulnerable home ranges**

Seahorse home ranges measure 100 square metres for females and just one square metre for males, which sometimes cling to the same piece of seagrass for weeks. This makes them vulnerable to seine net fishing.

SEAHORSE NUMBERS

US\$1,200	cost per kilo of large bleached seahorses in Hong Kong
US\$2.80	cost per kilo of small seahorses in Taiwan
3,000	brine shrimp are consumed by a seahorse per day
250	seahorses to make up one kilo in the Philippines in 1993
300-450	seahorses to make up one kilo in the Philippines in 1995
US\$60-70	price for colourful seahorses for aquariums in Germany
50 per cent	decline in seahorse populations in the last decade
39	countries around the world trading in seahorses
35	species of seahorse exist around the world
1 foot	length of Pacific seahorse species <i>Hippocampus ingens</i>
100	size in square metres of the home range of a female seahorse
1	size in square metres of the home range of a male seahorse

FISHING METHODS

● **Unsustainable**

Current unsustainable methods of fishing for seahorses use hands, scoop nets or small seine nets that capture everything in their path. Seahorses are also a bycatch of trawl fishing; as many as 80 individuals can be caught in a single trawl.

● **Sustainable**

Amanda Vincent and Project Seahorse have introduced new sustainable methods in the Philippines. Grow-out cages are built by fishermen out of confiscated nets. Caught seahorses are placed in the cages for five months, in which time they grow and reproduce. When the young are released by the male they escape through the nets and repopulate wild regions.

Teaching fishermen to spare the male seahorses, at least until they have given birth, ensures that future generations have a chance of survival. An incentive of two or three pence is paid to the fishermen for each animal deposited.

For more information, visit: www.seahorse.mcgill.ca

Seahorses have been around for 40 million years and yet little is known about them. Their lifespans are unknown, as are their predators and their function in marine ecology. A species that has been part of the marine environment for such a long time must be fulfilling some role in the ecosystem. If seahorses are lost through exploitation by man who is to say there may not be wider repercussions in the marine environment?

Seahorses range in size from a quarter of an inch to a foot or more.

The male becomes pregnant when the female deposits her eggs into a pouch in his tail.

The male protects and nourishes the eggs for a period ranging from 10 days to six weeks before releasing hundreds of miniature seahorses.

Seahorses have no teeth and swallow their food whole.

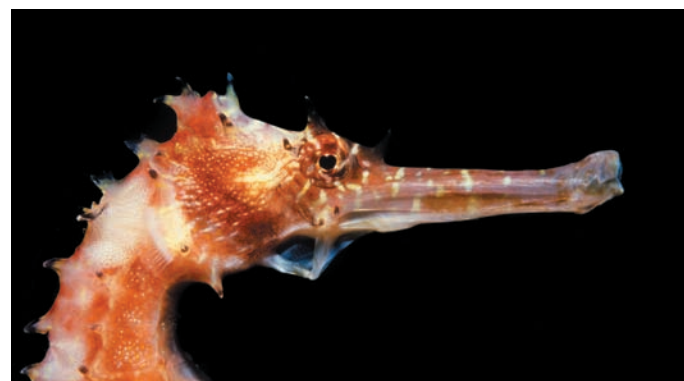
The coronet on each seahorse's head is nearly as distinctive as a human thumbprint.

Seahorses can change colour to match their background.

Seahorse mating dances can last for nine hours.

Seahorses can move their eyes independently of one another.

All 35 species of seahorse are listed as 'vulnerable' by the World Conservation Union. A species is listed as 'vulnerable' when there is a reduction in its population of 50 per cent over a 10-year period.



IMAGEQUEST 3D



Society, Media & Culture

In the 1960s psychologist Stanley Milgram tested a cross section of ordinary Americans to see if they'd administer potentially lethal electric shocks to a mild-mannered little man, sitting in an electric chair. The findings stunned the world. By Tom Stafford.

Would you kill

Yale University professor Stanley Milgram's 1960s' experiments were perhaps the most important ever performed in psychology. He was interested in 'the dilemma of obedience', in how ordinary people could be induced to abandon their moral instincts by malevolent authority. While Milgram was specifically motivated by a desire to understand the Nazis, his findings may just as easily explain our complacency about the injustices of the global economy.

The participants in Milgram's tests were recruited via a newspaper advertisement for 'an experiment on learning and memory' that promised \$4.50 for one hour's work. In the waiting room of Yale's psychology department they met, on separate occasions, another 'volunteer' (actually an actor) – a small, friendly, middle-aged man with glasses. Then the stern-looking experimenter would arrive and 'randomly' choose the actor to be the 'learner' and the real

volunteer to be the 'teacher'. The experimenter would tell the teacher that the experiment concerned the use of punishment on memory; electric shocks would be delivered to the learner every time he answered a question incorrectly.

The teacher was shown the electric shock apparatus: a generator with 30 switches labelled with voltages ranging from 15 to 450 volts. Each switch also had a written rating: the most innocuous voltage had the assessment 'slight shock';

300 he would shout in desperation that he would no longer provide answers (the experimenter would inform the teacher that no answer was a wrong answer). Beyond 315 volts the learner was silent.

Shocking results

The question Milgram sought to answer was very simple. What proportion of normal people would continue administering shocks up to the full lethal voltage? What proportion would act as if to kill an innocent person for no better reason than \$4.50 and that they were told to by a psychology professor? There was no compulsion on the participants to continue. They were not being coerced in any way except verbally. If they questioned the experimenter he would say that he accepted full responsibility for the experiment. If questioned further he simply said: 'You must go on.'

Before he released his results, Milgram asked a group of psychiatrists what proportion they thought would administer lethal dosages. What did these 'experts in people' think? They thought that only one person in a thousand – a 'psychotic minority' of 0.125 per cent – would deliver lethal shocks. The real proportion was 65 per cent.

The moral of Milgram's research is clear: we must beware evil systems more than we must beware evil men. We all contain the capacity to perform evil acts, and will disregard our moral instincts if put in situations that capitalise upon our normal human weaknesses.

To investigate how different factors influence people's behaviour Milgram implemented a number of variations to his experiment. He showed how important the proximity of the victim was to denial of responsibility; 'only' half as many people (still 30 per cent) would administer seemingly lethal shocks if the victim was in the same room. Another variation showed how being part of a group allowed even greater denial of responsibility; when the volunteer was part of a team of three ►

I for £3?

CORBIS

towards the other end of the scale there was the caution 'danger: severe shock'; the final two switches were labelled 'XXX'.

The experimenter and the teacher would strap the learner into the electric chair, which was partitioned from the main room. The experimenter would stand while the teacher sat in the main room by the shock generator. A row of lights indicated the learner's responses to the test questions.

The teacher would be told to

increase the voltage every time the learner answered incorrectly. The learner had a script that involved him getting questions wrong and performing set responses as the teacher moved up the voltage scale. At 75 volts the learner would begin to grunt with pain. At 120 he would start to shout that the shocks were becoming painful. At 150 he would cry out that he had enough of the experiment. His protestations would turn to agonised screams at 270 volts. At

with two additional actors primed to obey the experimenter until the bitter end, obedience was 93 per cent. (If the confederates refused to obey only 10 per cent of volunteers delivered the maximum shock.)

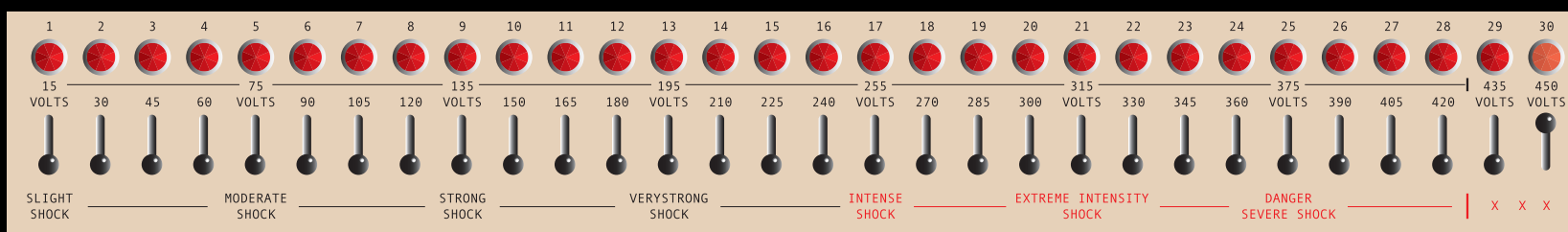
Any normal person in the experiment would have had doubts, but Milgram showed that people usually put such reservations aside if others conform. The 'dissenters' in

to assume unanimity even when it does not exist.'

People who appear to ignore dissent have been found to adopt minority opinions when asked for their views privately, later or in a different form. One experiment showing this asked groups to judge the colour of blue- and green-hued slides. Each group of six volunteers contained two plants who

affect people without them even realising it.

Subjects who were exposed to disobedience in Milgram's studies usually reported that they were not affected by the behaviour of the 'rebels'. They claimed they would have stopped administering shocks anyway. The results tell a different story: compliance with the experimenter's orders was 83



Q What proportion would act as if to kill an innocent person for no better reason than \$4.50 and that they were told to by a psychology professor?

A Experts thought that only one person in a thousand – a 'psychotic minority' of 0.125 per cent – would deliver lethal shocks. The real proportion was 65 per cent.

Milgram's experiment allowed the volunteers to realise that their doubts were legitimate. When people connect their doubts they begin to realise that they are right to worry and wrong to remain silent. This is why, in an age when an increasingly atomised society is fed by an increasingly concentrated media, forming ordinary, community-level, connections may be one of the most radical things you can do.

The importance of dissent

Professor Charlan Nemeth, of the University of California at Berkeley, has researched the effect of dissent on group decisions for 25 years. 'Dissent,' she says, 'even when wrong, stimulates the kinds of thinking that leads to better and more creative solutions. While people dislike the dissenter, and will give him/her no credit for the influence on their thinking, they are more likely to read more information on all sides of the issue.'

'They will use more strategies in solving problems and they come up with better solutions. When you have no dissent, there is a tendency to disregard opposing information, rush to judgment and

announced that they saw some of the blue slides as green. During the experiment there was a small but significant effect caused by this 'dissenting' minority; a small number of people were influenced to announce that they too saw some blues as green. But the most interesting effect was found after the end of the main experiment.

Afterwards, participants were asked in isolation to look at a continuous colour scale and judge where blue turned into green. Sure enough, all participants – even those who appeared not to have been influenced during the experiment – were more likely to judge borderline cases as green. The minority had altered people's perception, even if it hadn't immediately altered their behaviour.

Most psychologists interpret this kind of effect within the framework proposed by Serge Moscovici. Moscovici proposed that while majorities tend to influence people by compliance – immediate, public, conformity –, minorities tend to influence people by conversion – slow-acting changes on their private thinking. This influence of minority opinions may be so subtle as to

per cent higher when other people involved were obedient.

It looks like the task of the dissenting minority will always be a thankless one. Although it influences other people, it is seldom credited for doing so. We'll never know, for example, the extent to which the dedication of anti-war activists fundamentally altered the plans for the current Iraq campaign.

Conformity, on the other hand, is the dark side of human sociability. Just as it's natural for us to love, to share, to give support and to look to others for support, so it is also all too natural to take our lead from the majority, to act as others act, to remain silent when others remain silent. Research like Milgram's demonstrates just how powerful conformity can be. But the same research also contains seeds of hope: when conformity is the norm, the power rests with dissenting voices. So the moral is clear: although it can feel hopeless to be in the minority, you can have a powerful effect. But you'll never be thanked for it. ■

Tom Stafford is a final-year psychology PhD student at Sheffield University



From September 10–14, 2003 The World Trade Organisation meets in Cancun, Mexico, to resume global trade negotiations. This special report exposes the real agenda, makes clear what's at stake, suggests alternatives, and tells you what you can do to resist this corporate takeover of the world.

At Cancun, the West will be pushing a 'free' trade agenda that follows a formula genocidal empire-builders have employed for 6,000 years. By Derrick Jensen



Free Trade™

Free trade. So benign sounding a phrase. A concept whose principles no reasonable person would challenge. Trouble is, free trade as we know it – free trade as it is pushed by those who will mass at Cancun, Mexico, in September – is far from free. Think about it. If it truly was free, would they put sanctions on those who don't want to participate and use police to violently put down protests by those who oppose it? Free trade is really just a euphemism, like 'peacekeeping' or 'forest management', that hides a far uglier, more brutal reality. Free trade is a brand – Free Trade™, which sells a repackaged product no one in their right minds would buy if they knew what it really was.

So what is that product? The Prussian military theorist Karl von Clausewitz once wrote that war is the continuation of politics by other means. Similarly, free trade is the continuation of colonialism by other means. My dictionary defines colonialism as '(a) control by one power over a dependent area or people; (b) a policy advocating or based on such control'.

Whether we like it or not, the fact remains that the rich of the world still control the former colonies (although few are so impolite as to call them that anymore), because many of the colonial structures the rich nations built up were simply left in place after 'independence'. Corporate access to land, resources and

American Progress, John Gast, 1873. The symbol of 'manifest destiny' floats over the prairie, holding a school book and stringing out a coil of telegraph wire. Native Americans and bison scatter in front of her, and Western civilisation spreads in her wake

markets, debt peonage, tax structures favourable to the powerful, commodity pricing aimed at driving small producers off their land, the massive export of resources – these are all similar to procedures that existed hundreds of years ago. Only the names have changed. And in some countries, poverty is much worse than it was under direct colonial rule.

In the footsteps of the Nazis

It's a story as old as civilisation, about which the anthropologist Stanley Diamond said: 'Civilisation originates in conquest abroad and repression at home.' This will not be news to the citizens of Iraq, Afghanistan, Grenada, Panama, Palestine (and so on, ad nauseam), or the people 'at home' who've felt the pepper spray, batons and rubber bullets of cops whose job it is to protect those in power. These people understand that those at the centre of empire have always needed to import resources to maintain and expand their realm. That's why the trade our leaders will talk about and promote at Cancun is not and can never be 'free'; when the powerful need resources, trade that is purely voluntary for all concerned is never sufficiently reliable. That's why anytime some community sits on a resource needed by those in power, and chooses not to sell that resource (at a price convenient for the powerful), the people are killed, the community destroyed, the resource stolen.

Far-fetched? The architects of empire have been killing people and stealing resources – that is, expanding their region of control and exploitation – for some 6,000 years. At every step of the way, these *conquistadores* have not encountered vacant land but functioning human communities living in dynamic equilibrium with their landbases.

Psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton is probably the world's foremost authority on the psychology of genocide. In his extraordinary book *The Nazi Doctors*, Lifton showed that to commit a mass atrocity you first have to convince yourself that what you're doing is not an atrocity but instead beneficial. Thus the Nazis weren't committing genocide and murdering Jews, Gypsies, Slavs, Russians, and so on, they were 'purifying the Aryan race' and gaining *lebensraum* they needed to fulfil their destiny. Thus the Americans weren't committing genocide and murdering Indians, they were fulfilling their own 'manifest destiny' (gaining *lebensraum* for themselves). Similarly, those in power today aren't destroying communities and committing ecocide, they are 'growing the economy', 'developing natural resources', 'helping those in the Third World to develop their infrastructure', 'bringing to all the benefits of free-trade capitalism', (even if it is at the point of a gun). No longer is the choice being offered to the exploited 'Christianity or death?'. It has become free trade or death.

But wait a minute. How can I compare Free Trade™ to *lebensraum*? Isn't trade a good thing? Isn't free trade

just the untrammelled exchange of items for the benefit of all? Isn't that what happens when two kids trade baseball cards? 'I'll give you a Pedro Martinez for a Barry Bonds, straight up.'

Sure, free trade can be good – if all parties hold equal power. But negotiations aren't possible when one side holds a gun and the other does not (the technical term for this sort of exchange is robbery). That is how the 'civilised' were able to get the American Indians to sign treaties through which the latter gave up their land for a pence. The Indians knew that if they didn't sign they'd receive nothing but bullets and bayonets to their throats.

Privatising the air

The powerful have always recognised the impossibility of negotiations between parties of unequal power, and have done everything they can to magnify this disparity. Without access to land there can be no self-sufficiency. Land provides food, shelter, clothing. If you can force people to pay just so they can be alive on this earth (nowadays these payments are usually called rent or mortgage), you've forced them into the wage economy.

The same holds true for forcing people to pay for materials that the earth gives freely: the salmon, bison, huckleberries and willows, for example, that are central to the lives, cultures and communities not only of indigenous peoples but of all of us (even if we make believe this isn't the case). To force people to pay for things they need for survival is an atrocity – a community- and nature-destroying atrocity. To convince them to pay willingly is a scam. It also, as we see around us (or would had we not been brainwashed), causes people to forget that communities are even possible.

Just as those in power must control access to land, the same logic dictates they must destroy all stocks of wild foodstuffs. Why would I go to Safeway if I could catch wild salmon in the stream outside my door? The same is true, obviously, for everything that is wild and free, for everything that can meet our needs without us having to pay those in power. The push to privatise the world's water helps make sense of official apathy over the pollution of (free) water sources. You just watch: air will soon be privatised; I don't know how they'll do it, but they'll certainly find a way.

But the destruction of wild foodstuffs doesn't require some fiendishly clever plot on the part of the powerful. Far worse, it merely requires the reward and logic systems of civilisation to remain in place. And so long as the rest of us continue to buy into these systems, which value empire, Free Trade™, the centralisation of control and the production of things over life, so long will the world, which is our real and only home, continue to be destroyed, and so long will the noose that is empire continue to tighten around our throats ■

In September the World Trade Organisation will be holding its fifth ministerial conference in Cancun, Mexico. Simon Retallack explains what is at stake.

World sold (subject to negotiation)

In the aftermath of WWII, the world's governments, believing a world united in trade would also be one united in peace, sought to develop a vast global trading network. To this end

have traditionally been seen as the responsibility of national governments. Unlike the governments whose responsibilities it has assumed, however, the WTO is unelected, global in reach and run totally by and for the benefit of multinational corporations. Thus, the

organisation has ruled against every single

environmental law it has ever reviewed.

But even this was not enough for the corporations.

Ever since The WTO's first ministerial conference in Singapore in 1996,

they have lobbied to have regulations loosened ever further. At Singapore, at Geneva in 1998 and at Seattle in 1999 these efforts failed. Not only was there opposition on the streets, but also in the meetings from the governments of many developing countries.

At the WTO's fourth ministerial conference in Doha in November 2001, however, the corporations and industrialised country governments made a major advance. Using a variety of underhand tactics, they succeeded in launching a new round of trade negotiations that gave the green light to talks on creating new agreements.

From 10 to 14 September the WTO will meet for the fifth time in Cancun, Mexico. Outlined here are the key proposals for new agreements, the agreements that are currently under negotiation and a summary of the changes being demanded to previous trade round discussions.

they set up the Global Agreement on Trade and Tariffs

(GATT) – a set of rules for the regulation of trade.

As the years went on and global trade grew unimaginably large, GATT was continually modified and became increasingly complicated and unwieldy. The solution was to create a new organisation – one that would decide the rules under which all trade would be conducted, and which would have the power to enforce those rules and impose huge financial sanctions on nations that failed to comply. That organisation was the World Trade Organisation.

Whereas GATT dealt only with trade in tangible products such as bananas, cotton or steel, the WTO's remit is far broader; its powers extend over investment policy, patent law and the provision of services like healthcare and education – services that

The European Union, with the tacit support of the US, is calling for four new agreements – on investment, government procurement, competition and trade facilitation. They are all designed to facilitate the growth of the world's largest corporations. At Cancun, governments must decide whether or not to start negotiations on these issues. Negotiations would inevitably lead to new agreements.

1 New investment agreement

Multinational corporations need to open up markets for investment. High up on their agenda, therefore, is the new investment agreement, designed to force governments to:

- give corporations the automatic right to invest in any WTO-member country;
- stop introducing conditions on foreign investment, such as the need for firms to employ local labour or to respect local environmental laws;
- stop passing any law that could be interpreted as an 'appropriation' of foreign investment – ie, laws that might limit corporations' profits;
- stop favouring domestic companies; and
- give foreign corporations the right to sue governments directly for any breach of the agreement.

If the corporations succeed, all governments of WTO countries will be prevented from:

- passing or maintaining environmental or social laws which foreign corporations claim reduce their profits;
- banning corporations with bad social or environmental reputations from establishing themselves in their country;
- protecting and supporting local firms; and
- introducing financial measures to protect national currencies and avoid financial instability.

2 New government procurement agreement

Corporations want to take over the services currently controlled by countries' elected governments. The new government procurement agreement is designed to:

- require governments to make public all decisions relating to the awarding of contracts paid for with public money;
- make it compulsory for governments to give corporations the automatic right to compete for government contracts in every WTO country;
- ban conditions being imposed on the foreign

multinationals that compete for these contracts; and

- force governments to treat foreign corporations at least as favourably as domestic firms in the contract-awarding process.

Should negotiations on this agreement be initiated at Cancun, governments will no longer be allowed to give preference to local companies for the supply of goods and services. Nor will they be allowed to impose any requirements, such as the need to employ local people or use local and sustainably-sourced resources, on companies that win government contracts.

3 New competition agreement

As well as opening up markets across the world, the corporations also need to make sure no local firms stand in their way. Hence they are lobbying for a new competition agreement, which would:

- oblige governments to provide open competition for foreign firms in local markets by treating foreign companies at least as favourably as they treat domestic ones; and
- restrict the right of local firms to resort to practices that advantage them, such as protecting exclusive distribution networks that are often built up over many years.

If the corporations have their way, this agreement would remove any advantage held by domestic companies in their home markets, and, given the economic might of transnational corporations, drive local companies out of business.

4 New trade facilitation agreement

Finally, to make sure everything runs smoothly, the corporations want a new trade facilitation agreement. This would require governments to remove any remaining impediments to the physical trade in goods; it would, in other words, weaken legitimate customs controls. For example, regular physical examination of goods by officials so as to ensure payment of customs duties could be replaced with checks on only a small number of cases selected on a random basis. This would greatly increase the risk of duty avoidance.



As well as the four new agreements, there are three major agreements already being negotiated.

1 Trade in services

At Cancun, developing-country governments will be pressured to agree to open up more of their service sectors to foreign companies. This would:

- give foreign corporations the right to take over domestic services such as the provision of water, energy, transport, and, eventually, even health and education;
- limit the power of governments to regulate these services; and
- prevent governments from favouring local companies when deciding who should run these services.

If an agreement is reached, it would:

- increase the cost of essential services so that people might no longer be able to afford them; and
- restrict governments' ability to pass laws to redress any adverse social and environmental impacts attendant on the provision of services.

2 Market access for non-agricultural products

The US government is calling for the removal of all tariffs on imports of non-agricultural products. New Zealand's government is going one step further and calling for so-called 'non-tariff barriers' (any laws that restrict trade) to be removed too. Corporations want this to apply to wood, fish, water and other natural resources as well.

The removal of such barriers would:

- accelerate the collapse of domestic industries and increase unemployment in the developing world; and
- accelerate the pace at which natural resources are extracted, as they

would become cheaper to trade; this, in turn, would lead to even greater destruction of forests, fisheries and other natural resources.

3 Trade and environment

Sometimes the requirements of WTO agreements and multilateral environmental agreements like the Kyoto Protocol clash. At Cancun corporations want to clarify which have precedence in such situations, or rather, they want to make sure that WTO agreements do. The ramifications for the environment would be disastrous.

At Doha industrialised-country governments promised developing countries that they would agree so-far-undelivered reforms to the following existing WTO agreements:

1 Agreement on agriculture

Developing countries want to renegotiate an agreement on agriculture officially aimed at reducing subsidies to farmers and import tariffs on food in the industrialised world (developing countries have already made swingeing cuts in these areas). They argue that unless this agreement is changed, subsidised imports will continue to drive their farmers out of business while preventing them from exporting their products to markets in the industrialised world. However, European farmers are successfully lobbying EU governments to block any change to the system.

2 Agreement on intellectual property

Developing countries want to change the agreement on trade-related intellectual property rights (TRIPS) to enable developing countries that manufacture copied versions of life-saving patented drugs to export them cheaply to other developing countries from 2006. Lobbied by US pharmaceutical giants, the US government is leading efforts to block this request. If this situation remains unchanged, millions of people will die unnecessarily because of their inability to afford the high prices Western pharmaceutical companies charge for life-saving drugs. These drugs include anti-retrovirals needed to combat HIV/Aids.

3 Enforce special and differential responsibilities

Developing countries want to enforce the principle of 'special and differential responsibilities', which would allow them to protect their industries and farmers. Otherwise, the latter will continue to be driven out of business by cheap imports and widespread damage will be inflicted on Third World economies ■

Conclusion

Desperate to see the few agreements that work in their favour met, developing countries may give way to some of the industrialised world's demands to open up their markets. However, nothing is certain. Protest, petitioning and public outrage could make it increasingly difficult for agreement to be reached at Cancun and in the months that follow. The deadline set at Doha was January 2005. If nothing is finalised by then, it's back to the drawing board.

Simon Retallack is commissioning editor for The Ecologist

School dinners by McDonald's. Corporations taking countries to court because their environmental regulations are 'too tough'. The BBC sold to Rupert Murdoch. Paul Kingsnorth explains why we should be very worried by what is about to go on behind the closed doors of Cancun

Cancun:

why you should care

Half the point of the World Trade Organisation is that hardly anybody understands it. Its founding documents are hundreds of pages long, its committees and subcommittees proliferate endlessly, its language is obtuse, and the end result is that anyone who doesn't work there, study it for a living or have several years of hard graft as a trade lawyer behind them has a lot of trouble working out what the hell is going on. Modalities. Appellate bodies. Singapore issues. Built-in agendas. Single undertakings. Got it? No? Good.

Conveniently, this has meant that for the entire eight years of its existence most of us have had a hard

time working out what effect the WTO's corporate-led agreements will actually have on our lives – at least until it's too late. And there's no reason this should change now.

Thus it is that when we try to find out what decisions are actually likely to be made at the WTO's upcoming ministerial conference at Cancun – and what difference they are likely to make in the real world – the answer can seem as hard to fathom as the outcome of the WTO's recent ruling on 'anti-dumping duties on corrosion-resistant carbon-steel flat products from Japan' (pay attention at the back).

Nevertheless, if we persevere we can dimly make out – through the shifting fog of tariff preferences,

compliance rulings, technical co-operation and countervailing measures – the approach of a whole regiment of decisions and pre-decisions that, if they are made as planned at Cancun, will expand the project the WTO has been engaged in since it began life in 1995.

That project is to extend the organisation's remit far beyond trade to cover almost every aspect of the global economy and, in the process, create new rules that would tie the hands of governments and free those of corporations – effectively redistributing power from the elected to the unelected. And we can take more than an educated guess at what the effects of this would be on our everyday lives.



1

Would it bother you if corporations were given the legal right to sue your government for the inconvenience of having to abide by your country's laws? Would you mind if, faced with such pressure on a regular basis, your elected representatives started to water down or remove your environmental and social protection laws so as to keep multinational companies happy?

If so, then start worrying about the upcoming discussions at Cancun on the so-called 'new issues'. Led by the European Union, some governments want to begin discussions at Cancun about how to turn four new WTO subjects into international law. The topics themselves sound as numbingly dull and technical as most of the WTO's agenda: investment, competition, government procurement and trade facilitation. As ever, though, the language conceals the potentially enormous impact that these negotiations could have on people's lives.

Of these four topics, one in particular stands out: investment. That seemingly innocuous word could be used to justify a new WTO agreement that could prove more dangerous – and controversial – than anything yet seen. NGOs are already mobilising against this possibility; more than 40 of them from all over the world signed a statement in

March demanding that investment negotiations are not launched at Cancun. They, and many others, fear the rebirth of the notorious Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), a treaty that was drawn up by corporations and launched behind closed doors in the 1990s.

Had it gone ahead, the MAI would have allowed multinational corporations to sue national governments if the corporations felt they had been denied 'investor rights'. It would have gutted government control over where and when foreign companies invested in their countries. It would have banned governments from supporting local or national investment over that of multinationals. In short, it would have removed virtually all the power of elected local and national governments to control how multinationals invested and behaved in their countries.

Fortunately, the MAI was killed off in 1998 by an international NGO campaign sparked by a leak of a negotiating text of the treaty. But those corporations and governments that were pushing for the MAI in the 1990s are now using the WTO to try and put something similar into practice.

What would it mean if this were to happen? A good place to go to find out is Canada, one of the three countries, along with Mexico and the US, that are part of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). NAFTA contains Chapter 11 – a highly controversial 'investor rights' clause that is similar to the MAI proposals, and which may form

The US Clean Air Act

Following a challenge initiated by the governments of Venezuela and Brazil on behalf of their oil industries, the WTO ruled in January 1996 that regulations of the US Clean Air Act violated world trade rules.

The regulations in question required domestic and foreign gasoline refiners selling to the US market to make cleaner petrol in order to reduce health-threatening air pollution. Venezuelan and Brazilian refiners objected to the costs involved with upgrading their refineries to produce cleaner petrol.

The WTO panel and appellate body adjudicating the case ruled in the refiners' favour, finding that the US failed to prove it had used the 'least trade-restrictive' measures to enforce its standard. Because of the WTO ruling, the US Environmental Protection Agency has been forced to lower its standard and allow oil refiners to sell gasoline that is dirtier than the US 1990 industry average. Air quality has deteriorated as a result.

The US Endangered Species Act

In 1998 the WTO overturned a section of the US Endangered Species Act requiring all shrimp sold in the US to be harvested using relatively inexpensive turtle-excluder devices that reduce sea-turtle deaths (of which there were 150,000 in 1998) by as much as 97 per cent. The WTO argued that the regulations represented an unjustified discrimination against free trade. The US has changed its regulations to comply.

The EU beef-hormone ban

Since 1988 the EU has banned the sale and import of beef from cattle treated with artificial growth hormones, which EU studies show increase the risk of illness in both treated animals and in the humans who consume them. Even though the ban applies to domestic and foreign beef alike, a complaint from the US and Canada (the principal exporters of hormone-treated beef) led to two WTO panels ruling that the ban is illegal. The panels ruled that the ban had been taken in advance of scientific certainty – which is forbidden under provisions of the WTO's Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures; it would have to be lifted. After the EU refused to comply, the WTO granted the US permission to impose \$116.8m in retaliatory sanctions for each year that the ban is in place.



the basis of any new investment agreement at the WTO.

The premise of Chapter 11 is frighteningly simple: if a government prevents a foreign company from investing in its country, or if it changes any conditions affecting its investment once it has arrived, that company has the right to sue the government for 'compensation' for any lost or potential profits. The reason for the government's action doesn't matter; whether the government is trying to protect the environment, enforce labour or planning laws or promote local economies – even if it's all legal –, a company can sue. Chapter 11 is the first international agreement that allows corporations to sue governments. The MAI was supposed to be the second. The WTO may be about to claim that honour instead and take it global.

Does it matter? Ask the people of Canada, Mexico and the US. Chapter 11 has massively undermined their democratic rights, and has been used by foreign corporations to systematically undermine their national environmental and health regulations (see box opposite). Corporations there can now define environmental laws, health regulations and other limits on their investment activities as 'appropriation' of profits they might have made if those laws were not in place. By suing governments they can effectively demand payment for having to abide by the law. Any new investment law that comes out of the WTO may contain a similar clause; that's certainly what corporations want. The results of that happening would be disastrous. Corporations could sue our elected governments for daring to protect our countryside or for regulating what goes into our food and the quality of the air we breathe. Our governments would be faced with a choice: compensate the corporation, with our money, for the inconvenience of having to obey the law, or change the law until it suits the corporation.



How does your government spend your money? Who does it hire to clean your hospitals, cook your school dinners, build your roads, equip your police force? Does it give preference to local firms? Does it employ voluntary organisations? Does it source the things it buys from your own country, to help boost your economy? If so, it may not be allowed to do so for much longer – by order of the WTO.

Another of the 'new issues' being pushed in the run-up to Cancun is 'government procurement', which in English means 'the things your government buys, for public use'. At the moment, it's up to governments to decide how they spend tax-payers' money. Many of them spend it in ways that deliberately support native industries, traditions, companies and products. Fair enough, you might think; it's their money. But at Cancun, some governments are lobbying for the WTO to set up a new agreement on 'transparency in government

procurement'. Opponents of this proposal say it is the thin end of a wedge that would lead within a few years to new WTO rules to force governments to open up all their purchasing decisions to international competition.

Government procurement can amount to up to 12 per cent of a country's GDP. That's a huge market. Unsurprisingly, multinational corporations are eager to access this market by requiring governments to give them equal treatment in spending contracts.

When the UK's Department for Education and Skills decides who will be employed to run school canteens, for example, it wouldn't be allowed to simply choose a local firm; it would have to allow foreign corporations to bid for the contract. McDonald's in your nurseries, anyone? KFC school dinners? It already happens all over the US. Why not here? And why not Nike making police uniforms or Starbucks providing hospital meals? This is what corporations are aiming at. It's nothing at all to do with trade – it's about forcing corporate activity into ever more areas of our lives, whether we need it or not.



REUTERS

How do you feel about your public services? Would you like them to stay public? Or would you prefer it if they were forcibly prised open to foreign corporate competition by way of a new international law? All in the name of trade, of course.

The WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) would allow for the 'liberalisation' (ie, the deregulation and potential privatisation) of 'services'. It would apply to many key public services in countries with public healthcare, education, transport, welfare, water and energy systems. GATS was proposed when the WTO began life in 1994, and is due to be finalised by the end of 2004. In the meantime, negotiations on the final agreement are progressing in secret. They are due to be reviewed at Cancun, where the WTO will undertake a 'stock-taking' of GATS' progress. Governments and corporate lobbyists will undoubtedly use Cancun as an opportunity for some more arm-twisting on GATS.

They have a lot to win by doing so, for governments have recently been submitting to the WTO the list of services that they are willing to open up to foreign corporate competition – and the list of those services in other countries that their companies want to get their hands on. The EU recently submitted its own list of requests to the WTO. The list was promptly leaked to NGOs, and shows what you will have to contend with if you are the resident of any of the countries that Europe's multinational lobbyists have their beady eyes on. The EU wants its companies to be granted access to the water provision, telecommunications, energy and transport networks of 109 of the world's poorest countries.

The effects of this could be enormous. Imagine, for example, that you are a resident of the

Bolivian mountain city of Cochabamba. Imagine that you were one of the thousands of people who took to the streets there in early 2000 – protesting at the sell-off of your city's water system to the US multinational Bechtel, which raised your water bills by up to 300 per cent (and is now being paid by the US government to rebuild Iraq). Imagine that you had celebrated with the rest of the city after your protests had driven the corporation out and led to the water system being taken back into public ownership – an unprecedented reversal of a major privatisation. Now imagine how you would feel were you to learn that the EU has requested that the Bolivian government should open up all its water delivery systems to foreign corporate competition under GATS. If that were to happen, it would be enshrined in the text of an international treaty that your government, even if it wanted to, would have no power to reverse.

If you live in Europe and can't or won't imagine this, there are effects closer to home that you might like to consider. For, wherever you are, you're not safe from GATS; it is

European corporations, not European citizens, whose interests it promotes. If you live in Britain, for example, you might be interested in the list of your public services that other WTO members would like their corporations to mount a snatch-and-grab raid on. The list includes your postal service, your railways (as if privatisation hadn't 'improved' them enough already) and your public service broadcasting (otherwise known as the BBC, which Murdoch et al have been itching to get their hands on for years). Sweet dreams.

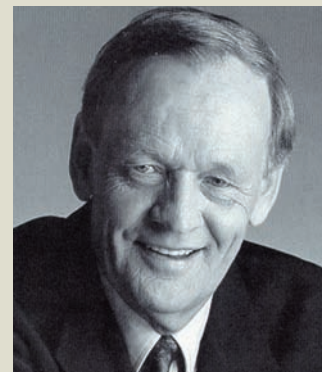
This is the story of Cancun – the story of a continuing power grab by private corporations operating under the fig leaf of the World Trade Organisation; a global colonisation of pretty much everything by profit-seeking private interests. And this is the key thing to grasp: this is not about 'trade' at all; it's about power and who gets it. Governments or corporations? Ordinary people or profiteers? The answers to those questions will affect all of our lives. ■

Paul Kingsnorth's book, *One No, Many Yeses: a journey to the heart of the global resistance movement*, is published by the Free Press, price £10. To find out more about the book, visit: www.paulkingsnorth.net

Chapter 11 has been successfully used by the US-based Ethyl Corporation to force the Canadian government to overturn a ban on the sale of Ethyl's gasoline additive MMT. The latter is banned in a number of other countries and was described by Canadian prime minister Jean Chretien (pictured) as a 'dangerous neurotoxin'. Using Chapter 11, Ethyl gave the Canadian government two choices: change the law, or get sued on the basis that it constituted an 'expropriation' of Ethyl's Canadian current and future investments. Chretien's government changed the law and provided Ethyl with \$13m and an apology in compensation. If you are a Canadian, you breathe in the results of this decision every time you cross the road.

Ethyl is not alone. US waste-disposal firm SD Myers also had its eye on Canada's strict waste and health-protection laws. The company produces PCBs, hazardous chemicals whose export had been banned by Canada in accordance with international law. Myers sued the Canadian government for \$50m, and won.

Another US company, Sun Belt Inc, is suing the government of British Columbia (BC) for banning the export of water from the province. The BC government has banned water exports for environmental reasons. Sun Belt is a water exporter and claims the elected government of BC is 'appropriating its assets'. It is seeking \$220m in damages. 'Because of NAFTA, we are now stakeholders in the national water policy in Canada,' explained Sun Belt's chief executive starkly.



Matilda Lee explains how democracy is bypassed as multinationals push changes in trade law through the labyrinthine corridors of the EU

Puppet show

CORBIS



Pascal Lamy is probably the most influential man you've never heard of. In many ways, he is the most powerful man in Europe – despite what certain bellicose prime ministers might care to believe. For Pascal Lamy is the EU trade commissioner and leader of the European Commission's Directorate General on Trade (DG Trade). And since the 1957 Treaty of Rome gave the European Commission exclusive powers to initiate European Community trade policies, and the sole 'external' voice to negotiate for the community on the global trading stage, that means that when Lamy speaks at the WTO he speaks for the whole of Europe – whether we have heard of him or not.

Understandably, the corporations and their lobbyists are very keen to win Lamy's favour. Unfortunately for the world, Lamy seems to feel the same way about them; he shares their desire to open up markets to the greatest extent possible and increase European industry's opportunities in world markets.

He also has an unparalleled flair for shrouding the EU's trade agenda in 'sustainable development' rhetoric. Like the corporations, he sees a new WTO trade round as the EU's 'number-one priority'. To make this seem more palatable to the outside world, he coined the phrase 'the Doha development round'. But for the many developing-country representatives, who remember being bullied into ensuring Lamy and co got what they wanted at Doha, it is the 'round of shame'.

Accuse Lamy of being a corporate stooge, however, and you'll get short shrift. He insists: 'Any suggestion that the commission has the intention to promote

or request the dismantling of public services in any sector [through] the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)... in any country... is based on speculation... not on fact.' Yet, the EU's recently leaked GATS requests call, for example, for 72 countries (including 14 Least Developed Countries) to liberalise the provision of their water services – all for the benefit of European water service companies.

He has also declared: 'Services are among those new areas of trade that, because they directly affect a society's preferences and way of life, quite rightly concern citizens and those who represent them.' But access to documents by MEPs – the only people European citizens have directly elected to represent them in Brussels – is practically impossible.

UK Green Party MEP Caroline Lucas says: 'Industry gets far greater access to the commission than the parliamentarians. Only under pressure would Lamy agree to show a small group of MEPs GATS documents. I had to sign a raft of papers saying that I would not share the information with anyone, keep the papers in a locked safe, refrain from copying or emailing them, and shred them after reading. Our idea of democratic scrutiny extends a bit further than this.'

Under the guise of openness, and to avoid 'debilitating critique' from civil society, Lamy has presided over the implementation of the so-called 'civil society dialogue' meetings that take place every two months and are attended by staff heads of DG Trade units. Lamy shows up for an hour every six months. Up to two thirds of the participants at the civil society dialogue meetings are industry lobbyists and consultants.

Rubber Stamping

Once Lamy and the commission, influenced by the corporate lobbyists, have decided what it wants, it sends a broad package of trade initiatives to the European Council of Ministers. The council, which in this case comprises the trade ministers of the 15 EU member countries (if it was discussing monetary policy, for example, it would comprise their financial ministers), then has to grant the commission a 'mandate' to negotiate at the WTO.

The commission's negotiating strategy is 'approved' and the nuts and bolts of each issue thrashed out by the hazy but powerful

Article 133 Committee. Appointed by the Council of Ministers and made up of high-ranking trade officials from the member states' trade and economics ministries, the committee meets every Friday.

If any member state had commitments to an 'ethical' or 'sustainable' trade agenda, it would be at the Article 133 Committee that they would be firing the alarm. They would rarely find much support, however. The Dutch trade minister, for example, was pressured by members of the Dutch parliament to keep water services out of GATS. In the face of opposition from France and Germany, his proposal didn't stand a chance. The two countries are home to Europe's biggest water corporations and, like Britain, insiders say, 'particularly effective in getting their points of view across when proposals are being drafted'.

Like Lamy, their objective is the expansion of free trade. UK secretary of state for trade and industry Patricia Hewitt has publicly defined her goal as 'opening up protected markets in developing countries'. A new WTO trade round, she says, 'is the best way of ensuring that our businesses can benefit from... future economic growth anywhere in the world'.

You may be wondering what influence the European electorate has over any of this. The answer is not a lot. At the end of each round of negotiations, any agreements made are sent back to the Council of Ministers. If – and only if – any of these final trade agreements involve the creation of new institutions, then they are sent to the European Parliament for its 'assent'.

Otherwise, the parliament has only a very limited 'consultative' role in trade negotiations. It is fighting to get explicit power to ratify all trade agreements, but in the meantime the current legal limbo and democratic deficit persist. And if a WTO trade agreement were to be voted on in the UK's House of Commons, Tony Blair would be supported by a majority of Labour MPs. So, party discipline, enforced by the whips, would ensure that any vote would be passed by a pliant majority.

This means that, one four-yearly vote aside, we the voters have no say over what is decided in Brussels. Which is just the way they want it.

Matilda Lee is a section editor of *The Ecologist*

Friends of the Earth International's Ronnie Hall introduces some of the biggest lobby groups working today

The American Chamber of Commerce

has an EU Committee whose purpose is to put the views of 'European companies of US parentage to EU institutions'. *The Economist* describes AmCham as 'the most effective lobbying force in town'. Its heavyweight members include AOL Time Warner, Boeing, Cargill, Chiquita, Coca Cola, ExxonMobil, Goldman Sachs, McDonald's, Microsoft, Monsanto, Nike, Syngenta and Walt Disney. AmCham is lobbying for the elimination of remaining trade barriers and for the liberalisation of trade in services.

The European Roundtable of Industrialists

includes 45 'captains' of European industry. It has been pushing since 1998 for a WTO investment agreement that would stop countries reversing investment liberalisation. Its members include British American Tobacco, Unilever, Siemens, Nokia, Nestlé, Bayer, Shell and BP.

The European Services Forum

is the umbrella organisation for Europe's largest service-sector corporations. It was created to 'advise EU negotiators on the key barriers and countries on which they should focus', and is the muscle behind the EU's aggressive promotion of GATS. ESF managing director Pascal Kerneis brags about being able to contact the European Commission every day. ESF has unparalleled access to all levels of EU policy making. Its members include Barclays Bank, British Telecom, Marks & Spencer, Accenture, Vivendi Environment and Suez.

The International Chamber of Commerce

describes itself as 'the world's only truly global business organisation'. Through its national committees, it offers its members 'direct access to national governments all over the world'. Members include British Aerospace, Coca Cola, Dow Chemical, ExxonMobil, Ford and General Motors. The ICC is lobbying for an investment agreement that would allow companies to sue governments directly if they pass any laws that the companies think are in breach of it.

Locked out of some meetings. Not even invited to others. And then all the decisions are made after you've left. It's all in a day's work for 'developing' World delegates at the WTO. By Mark Lynas



REUTERS

Playing dirty at the WTO

Yash Tandon approached the guard warily and asked permission to pass. Briefly consulting a list of names close to his chest, the security guard shook his head. Permission denied. Just then two other men approached and were waved quickly through. They cast cursory – almost derisory – backward glances at Tandon, who stood aside as they strode by.

A scene outside the VIP lounge of a posh nightclub? No – welcome to the 'green room' of the World Trade Organisation. Professor Tandon,

Pictured above: Former WTO director general Mike Moore and US trade representative Charlene Barshefsky at the WTO's ill-starred 1999 meeting in Seattle

director of an Africa-based academic institute, was an official Ugandan delegate to the fourth WTO ministerial conference in Doha, Qatar. And, as he was discovering, the WTO operates one rule for the rich and another for the poor.

On paper, the WTO is fully open and democratic. Its former director general Mike Moore once said: '[It's] the most democratic international body in existence today. The WTO is not imposed on countries... No country is forced to sign our agreements. Each and

every one of the WTO's rules is negotiated by member governments and agreed by consensus.'

But speaking more frankly on an earlier occasion, Moore made a stark admission. 'There is no denying,' he said, 'that some members are more equal than others when it comes to influence.' Moore had probably never spoken truer words. According to NGOs and many delegates from Southern countries, 'democracy' at the WTO has never been anything more than a shallow facade.

One of the most heavily-criticised aspects of the WTO process is the 'green room' system, where powerful members meet informally in closed groups to work out areas of agreement. Attendance, as professor Tandon and others found out, is by invitation only.

Speaking of one 'green room' meeting at Doha, Zimbabwean ambassador to the WTO Boniface Chidyausiku said: '[It was] operating like a mafia. [My minister] could not speak since he was not officially invited to the consultations. He could only give notes to his colleagues to intervene.' Several other African delegates simply gave up and went back to their hotels. 'You are representing a country and it is humiliating and ridiculous for you to hang around in the corridor,' said one.

The result of this approach is that by the time the whole conference convened to make its democratic 'consensus decision' everything had already been stitched up behind closed doors. The plenary meetings were little more than sideshows, where government ministers could make speeches and feel involved before rubber-stamping what had already been agreed elsewhere. Any country holding up progress was seen as a 'wrecker' and often simply ignored by the chair.

Green room meetings are not the only ones where attendance is by invitation only. Entire conferences (known as 'mini-

ministerials') have been held in which government ministers from a chosen few countries hammer out issues of agreement in advance. When one mini-ministerial was convened in Mexico, developing country delegates seeking invitations from the WTO secretariat were told that the Mexican government was the responsible party. The Mexican government denied having anything to do with the meeting apart from providing facilities. The Southern delegates were left bemused and, yet again, excluded.

Arm-twisting and bullying

Most delegates and government ministers from developing countries are well aware that WTO decisions on opening up trade to multinational corporations are not in their interests. Indeed, almost all low-income African and Asian countries arrived at the Doha conference aligned to negotiating blocs that were determined to stand their ground. Why then did they eventually buckle and sign up to a new trade round? The answer lies partly in the underhand tactics employed by the US and the European Union to forcibly extract the outcomes they wanted.

As Adriano Campolina Soares, head of ActionAid's international food and trade campaign and an observer in Doha, recalls, developing countries strenuously opposed the first draft of the ministerial

declaration presented to the conference. 'When the second draft came back, all their concerns had been ignored. In fact, the text was even worse – but now they accepted it. This shows how the WTO works; pressure had been put on these countries behind closed doors.'

This 'pressure' can take many forms. Powerful countries may threaten to cut aid budgets, or they might offer new cash as bribes. Pakistan, for instance, got its \$1 billion post-September 11 aid package from the US one day after the Doha conference had concluded. Tanzania, another compliant country, got a massive new World Bank/IMF debt-servicing deal a week after Doha. The threatened cancellation of preferential trade agreements – often crucial to developing country economies – was another favourite US/EU tactic. And once the Southern negotiating blocs were split, individual countries could be picked off one by one.

The Doha conference was held just two months after September 11, and the war on terrorism was a crucial bargaining chip. With the US trade representative Robert Zoellick insisting that a new trade round would help to stamp out terrorism, no countries wanted to be seen as opposing him. The British trade and industry secretary Patricia Hewitt took up the theme, saying the Doha agreement 'signals the determination of the world community to fight terror with trade, as well as arms'.

Another favourite tactic was direct lobbying by rich country representatives against 'difficult' Southern negotiators. Thanks to pressure from the US on his government back home, one ambassador in Doha was sacked before he had even unpacked his luggage. Many others found themselves on a US blacklist and soon lost their jobs.

As Fatoumata Jawara and Aileen Kwa point out in their forthcoming book *Behind the Scenes at the WTO*, the end result is 'to shift the decision-making process away from ►



the formal process, in which all countries are at least notionally equal, into the realm of bilateral horse-trading. Here, only the rich have any real leverage, while most developing countries are so desperate for trade opportunities, aid, debt reduction, etc, that they have little choice but to succumb'.

More basic financial concerns also weigh heavily on developing countries. The WTO holds over 1,000 meetings a year, many of them running simultaneously, and only nations which can afford to support large missions can represent themselves properly. At ministerial conferences the discrepancies can be even more extreme: the World Development Movement discovered that while the EU had 502 people on its delegations to the WTO meeting in Doha, the Maldives had two, and Haiti, the poorest country in the Western hemisphere, had no delegates at all.

One African delegate noted: 'They got the deals they wanted because of sheer fatigue on our part. They have big delegations and can stagger people. We don't. It is very difficult to go on negotiating day and night for several days without sleep.'

Many developing country negotiators also had linguistic problems that made it difficult to keep up with what was going on: green room negotiations were almost exclusively completed in English; even official documents would only be translated into French and Spanish – often much later than the English texts became available. Exhausted Southern delegates found themselves negotiating in the dark.

Dirty tricks

The powerful countries took great pains at the Doha ministerial meeting to limit discussion and set the agenda in advance. The draft declaration was presented at the ceremonial opening session where formal objections from developing countries were impossible to raise. The very next day the chair of the meeting, Qatari trade minister Youssef Hussain Kamal, caused derisive laughter when he mistakenly left his microphone switched on while discussing with Mike Moore how to stop the Indian delegation – one of the staunchest opponents of a new trade round – taking the floor.

At the end of the fifth day at Doha there was still no agreement, and many developing country delegates and ministers – booked on cheaper scheduled flights – began to leave. In their absence a decision was taken to extend the conference (without any discussion among the membership – a serious procedural omission), and the draft declaration was forced through a day after the meeting was originally supposed to have ended.

As Adriano Campolina Soares says: 'If the WTO keeps the same framework of decision-making, developing countries will never be able to defend their interests. The current framework just emphasises the arm-twisting environment. Despite the title 'development agenda', almost all the concerns of developing countries were systematically ignored by the WTO.'

John Hilary, trade policy adviser for Save the Children and another observer at Doha, has reached a similar conclusion. 'Bullying and blackmail have become an integral part of how the WTO works, as we saw all too clearly at the Doha ministerial,' he says. 'Time and again developing countries have been forced to abandon their negotiating positions as a result of economic, political and even personal threats to their delegates. The pretence that the WTO is an equal and democratic negotiating forum lost its credibility a long time ago.'

According to Hilary, things are likely to be just as bad at the upcoming WTO meeting in Cancun, Mexico. The powerful countries have already begun to hint at the pressure they will be putting on the South to sign up to yet more one-sided trade liberalisation. The EU has even stated openly that the WTO is not about philanthropy. Clearly, the desire of the EU and US to extract still further concessions from the world's poor continues unabated ■

Mark Lynas is a freelance writer. His book on the human impacts of climate change will be published by Flamingo later this year



scale up for trade justice

Friday 27 - Saturday 28 June 2003

24 HOURS FOR TRADE JUSTICE

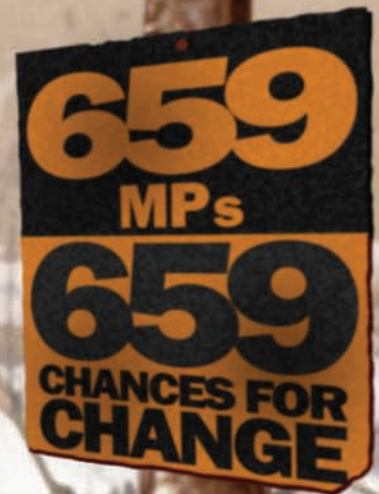
Lobby your local MP's surgery

WEIGH IN FOR TRADE JUSTICE

Be part of a huge, symbolic
action all over the UK

WRITE IN FOR TRADE JUSTICE

Join a mass letter writing
campaign targeting MPs



George Monbiot argues that fair trade is the answer to world poverty. He proposes a radical new system that would also rein in corporate power and protect labour rights and the environment



World ^{fair} Trade

Those who deny that trade is a means of redistributing wealth between nations are duty-bound to find another means to this end. For a start, redistribution is not going to happen through aid; even if the rich world was suddenly to start pouring money into the poor nations, this would merely trap them in patronage, dependency and blackmail. And theft and piracy may have served powerful countries well, but the poor are in no position to reciprocate.

Trade has, so far, proved ineffective in solving the problems faced by most nations. However, the answer to the iniquities of the existing trade regime is not no trade, but fair trade, which would permit the transfer of wealth from rich to poor without undermining the rights of workers and citizens or destroying the environment.

One rule for the rich...

The existing global trade regime forbids poor nations from following the path taken by the rich. With the exceptions of Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands, all the nations that have become independently wealthy did so with the help of a mechanism economists call

competition with the help of tariff barriers, other import restrictions and subsidies. They should be able to impose strict conditions upon foreign investors, insisting, for example, that companies can only enter their territory if they are prepared to leave behind more wealth than they extract. They should be allowed, in certain circumstances, to override intellectual property protections, to grant themselves the 'technology transfer' now denied by the trade rules to most poor nations.

Rich nations, on the other hand, should be required to pull down their barriers to trade. They should be permitted neither to subsidise their industries nor to impose tariffs on imports from other countries. Nations, in other words, should be forced gradually to lift their protections as they develop. So, the first function of what we might call the Fair Trade Organisation (FTO) would be to lay down the rules governing the protections and privileges permitted at different stages of development.

A fair-trade system should, or so we should hope, slowly push the world towards genuine free trade, which, when nations achieve a roughly similar economic status, is likely to be the most equitable means of governing nations' relationships with each

de Organisation

'infant industry protection': defending new sectors from foreign competition until they are big enough to compete on equal terms. The textile industry in Britain, for example, on which the Industrial Revolution was built, was nurtured and promoted by means of tariffs (or trade taxes) and the outright prohibition of competing goods. Between 1864 and 1913, the US, which now insists that no country can develop without free trade, was the most heavily protected nation on earth.

Throughout this period, it also had the fastest-growing economy. Only when these countries had established technological and commercial superiority did they suddenly discover the virtues of unimpeded competition.

For nations to develop in direct competition with countries with established industries is like learning to swim in a torrent: you are likely to be swept away and drowned long before you acquire the necessary expertise. Your competitors have experience, intellectual property rights, established marketing networks and economies of scale on their side; your infant industries have none of these advantages. It is all but impossible, in other words, for poor nations to extract money from the rich unless they can protect some key parts of their economies.

Clearly, nations that are currently poor should be permitted to defend certain industries from foreign

other. There is, of course, no single formula for development, but this system could provide a potent means by which the world could begin to move towards the economic equality that is an essential prerequisite for political equality. It would not, however, directly address some of the other critical problems that the people of poor nations confront – such as low labour standards, environmental destruction and the inordinate power of the corporations.

Firm but fair trade

Many campaigners in the rich world have suggested that the best way to raise standards is to discriminate, through tariffs or other measures, against imports from countries where workers or the environment are mistreated. This approach has also been advocated by trades unions seeking to protect their members' jobs from foreigners. Unsurprisingly, it is deeply resented by the very people it is supposed to help: the workers of the poor world.

If our purpose is to regulate international trade, then it surely makes sense to address the behaviour not of nation states but of the economic agents operating between them: the multinational corporations. We know that they move from nation to nation, seeking ever-lower standards; we must force them instead to ►

COMBIS



seek ever-higher ones.

If we oblige corporations to set high standards, by punishing them for the destruction, oppression or dispossession caused by the trade in which they engage, then the market begins to work for the poor. The people of the poor nations can then pursue the case for necessary changes in national legislation themselves; they would be aided by the contrast the new global trade rules establish between the standards the export industry has to set and the standards fixed by the domestic employers. Trade rules would then facilitate, rather than impose, domestic political change.

So a second function of the FTO could be to set the standards to which corporations wishing to trade internationally must conform. Many of these have already been devised by bodies such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the UN. The FTO would, in this respect, function as a licensing body: a company would not be permitted to trade between nations unless it could demonstrate that, at every stage of production, manufacture and distribution, its own operations and those of its suppliers and sub-contractors met the necessary standards.

If, for example, a food-processing company based in Switzerland wished to import cocoa from the Ivory Coast it would need to demonstrate that the plantations it bought from were not employing slaves, using banned pesticides, expanding into protected forests or failing to conform to whatever other standards the FTO set. The firm's performance would be assessed, at its own expense, by a monitoring company accredited to the organisation. There would be, in other words, no difference between this operation and the activities of the voluntary fair-trade movement today. In this case, however, fair trade is no longer voluntary, and it no longer depends on the whimsical attentions of the consumer. It is both mandatory and universal.

Full-cost accounting

There are a few standards we might wish to add to the lists compiled by the ILO and the UN. One of the prerequisites of justice, for example, is that producers and consumers should carry their own costs, rather than dumping them on other people. The monitoring firms deployed by the FTO could determine whether or not companies are paying a fair price for the resources they use. To qualify for a licence to trade, companies would, among other costs, have to buy enough of a nation's carbon quota (as calculated by the 'contraction and convergence' model for addressing climate change) to cover the fossil fuel they or their suppliers consume.

One of the many beneficial impacts of such full-cost accounting would be that everything that could be processed in the country of origin would be processed in the country of origin. No company would seek to export raw logs, bauxite, coffee beans or cotton, as it requires far more (costly) energy to transport these bulky resources from one place to another than would be involved in exporting the finished products such as furniture, aluminium pans, instant coffee and T-shirts (all currently manufactured on the other side of the world). Those nations which are, at present, locked into the export of raw materials would suddenly become the most favoured locations for manufacturing.

By such means corporations would slowly be turned into our slaves. Instead of driving down standards, they would be forced to raise them. Instead of draining wealth from the poor, they would be forced to return it. The companies that survived this system would be the ones which, like the fair-trade operators today, deliver benefits commensurate with those they receive.

Under this scheme export growth comes to measure something quite different to what it does today. At present it represents a mixture of gains and losses to national wellbeing, which are misleadingly compounded into a single figure. The loss of natural resources is added to the genuine addition of value provided by the application of labour. The FTO system would effectively separate these measures. The extraction and export of natural resources would in most cases be accounted as a loss to national economies. The application of human labour and the deployment of skill would be measured as a gain. Nations would be able to see immediately whether they were being enriched or impoverished through trade.

To introduce these measures in the face of the resistance of the world's most powerful governments and companies would require cruel and unusual methods. But the goal of mandatory and universal fair trade would permit the global economic levelling without which there can be no justice ■

George Monbiot is a columnist for *The Guardian*.

This article is based on his new book, *The Age of Consent: a manifesto for a new world order*, which is to be published by Flamingo on 16 June

Think small

Scale matters. A single painkiller can cure a headache, but swallow a whole bottle and it will kill you. Cut down a few trees and you can call it woodland management, but clear-fell a forest and an entire ecosystem is destroyed. These examples seem common sense. Clearly, whether something is beneficial or destructive can depend on the scale at which it happens. Why then, when we talk about business, is there an expectation that business takes place in a global marketplace?

Increasingly, the idea is backed by law. If a country is a member of the World Trade Organisation or the International Monetary Fund it has effectively signed away the freedom to choose what scale of economic organisation and what size of market are right for the different sectors of its economy. By joining either institution countries commit themselves to full integration into global markets for finance, goods and services. Recent years provide plenty of evidence about why this is a problem.

Global commodity markets display the downside of unmanageable 'bigness'. The poorest developing countries are often heavily dependent for their incomes on exporting just a handful of products such as coffee, cocoa, sugar and cotton to global markets. But over the last few decades, with nations following identical advice from organisations like the World Bank to export their way out of poverty, markets have been flooded, driving prices down. The value of all commodities, except fuel, has reduced in real terms by 50 per cent from 1980. Thus, Benin is dependent on cotton for 84 per cent of its exports, but cotton prices fell by 30 per cent over just two years to less than half of their 1995 levels. Similarly, and devastatingly for countries like Ethiopia, coffee prices in 2001 were less than 50 per cent of what they were in 1999.

The liberalisation of capital flows has also created the conditions for ever bigger and more damaging financial crashes. After

Mexico, Russia, Asia, the hedge fund crises, and the current US bubble economy, even conservative commentators now recognise the rising instability. At the same time, there has been massive centralisation of ownership and control among the financial and corporate players who control the markets.



Given such problems, how should we organise the backlash against bigness? The answer is localisation. It's the obvious counter-narrative to globalisation and means doing things at the most local level feasible.

It would be daft for every town to manufacture its own trains, for example, but it's perfectly sensible for every neighbourhood to have its own bakery (if only for the smell of baking). By trading as locally as possible you can improve trust, information flow, local control, business accountability and market efficiency. The US economist Herman Daly once described lorries carrying identical biscuits made in different places between far-flung European cities, and asked if it wouldn't be easier to simply exchange recipes.

Why trade? To get things we would otherwise be without and to earn money to buy other stuff that we think we need. Problems emerge, however, when we get a bad deal and the benefits of the trade are poorly shared. This happens when we are in a bad bargaining position. Poor countries, unless they are really big like China, are almost always in a bad position when they

trade with rich countries. Rich countries have economic, political and military power to negotiate with, and they use it, regularly.

Nobel-prize-winning economist Maurice Allais once declared that 'free trade' would bring general benefits only if carried out between regions at equal stages of development. He was politely ignored. But people around the world are coming to the conclusion that local needs should come before global markets. Farhad Mazhar from Bangladesh promotes a form of ecological farming called 'Nayakrishi' and says: 'I'm not against the market, or even international trade. It's just that trade should be non-exploitative, and local needs should come first. Now we've found that Nayakrishi agriculture is more economically viable than conventional modern farming, many households are beginning to go into cash crops for the market too.'

We need global rules for global players like the multinational corporations, and we need a radically different economic architecture to redistribute wealth at the macro level. But, ironically, probably the most important global rule we need is one that enshrines the freedom of local communities to choose their own economic development path – the very opposite of the principles pushed by the WTO and IMF.

We should be asking what is the optimum market size (socially, economically and environmentally) for all the things we need, and trading locally as much as it is possible. For too long our system has unquestioningly encouraged the economics of large and remote organisations. Localisation – or subsidiarity – promotes an economics of nearness on a human-scale. It would give people more control over their lives, and would be a way of saying that free trade should be exactly that – free and not compulsory.

Andrew Simms is policy director of the New Economics Foundation, which is the home of Local Works – the campaign for a local sustainability bill.

Return to Scale is a new collection of essays on localisation to be published in September to mark the 30th anniversary of the publication of EF Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*

Does it annoy you that the earth is being destroyed to benefit a tiny minority? Enough to do something about it? Derrick Jensen invites you to join him on the barricades

Your country needs you

If someone put a plastic bag over your head, or over the head of someone you love, and said they would give you money if you left it there, would you take the cash? If you said no, what would you do if he insisted at gunpoint? Would you still take the money? Or would you fight back? Before you make up your mind, read the following sentence.

The needs of the natural world are more important than the needs of the economic system.

That seems so self-evident I'm embarrassed to write it down, but it's a notion that entirely escapes our public (and private) discourse. I recently read a tiny article on page seven, I repeat SEVEN, of *The San Francisco Chronicle*. It stated that every single stream – every single stream – in the US is contaminated with toxic chemicals, and that one fifth of all animals and one sixth of all plants could become extinct within the next 30 years. (Given that every mother's milk is contaminated with toxic chemicals, why should we expect streams to be less endangered?) And on page one? A huge article waxing lyrical about Elvis memorabilia.

Think about it for a second: what is the real source of life? Of food, air, water? Is it the economic system? Of course not; it's the landbase.

Last week I learned that the air in Los Angeles is so toxic that children born there inhale more carcinogenic pollutants in the first two weeks of their lives than the US's Environmental Protection Agency (which routinely understates risks so as not to impede economic production) considers safe for a lifetime. In San Francisco it takes three weeks.

We're poisoning ourselves. Or more accurately, we're being poisoned by those in power, the people who make the rules, including the people who negotiate among themselves the best ways to remove barriers to their unbridled exploitation of our landbases, people like the delegates who will attend the WTO conference in

Cancun. They're killing us (and the world) as surely as if they put guns to our heads and pulled the triggers.

If I could say one thing to the Cancun delegates, as they hide behind their armoured policemen, it would be this: 'When he was on trial for his life in



Jerusalem, part of Nazi war criminal Adolph Eichmann's defence was that no one told him what he was doing was wrong. He was merely a bureaucrat implementing policies assigned from on high, making trains run on time, as it were. Of course the courts rejected his arguments, and rightly hanged him. I will not allow you that excuse. Your crime is even worse than Eichmann's; you're not merely following destructive policies, you're helping form them.'

And if I could say one thing to the police aiming their weapons at protesters, at the poor, it would be this: 'Point your guns in the opposite direction. You have far more in common with us than with those you're protecting, and you have more to fear from them. Fire your tear gas and rubber bullets at those who partition the planet, who try to tell us that everything can be bought and sold, everything belongs to those who have money, everything belongs to those in power, everything belongs to them. If you value your own life or the lives of your children, fire your bullets not at those who resist the destruction of our communities, of our world, but at those who formulate the rules by which this destruction is carried out.'

The powerful often con the rest of us into being proud of being 'good', defined (by them and us) as being subservient to their edicts. They con us into forgetting that the powerful legalise reprehensible activities that increase their power (eg, stealing land from indigenous people, invading countries with desired resources, debasing the landbase), and that they criminalise non-reprehensible activities that undercut their power. Last month, for instance, I read that people were being arrested in New York City just for pasting up pictures of Iraqi citizens – for humanising the US's latest targets, and that a law is being considered in Oregon that would mandate 25-year minimum jail terms for anti-war protesting.

After the powerful make the rules for maintaining and extending their power they then hire police and military to keep people in line.

When you take away the rhetoric of protecting and serving, the job of police and military personnel boils down to being muscle for enforcing the edicts of those in power.

That is what I would say to those police protecting the negotiators. And then I would say: 'Do not be a collaborator in the destruction of your own community. Join us. Fight for your own life, and for the lives of your loved ones. It's been done before. Come, join the protests.'

And I would say this: 'Any economic or social system that does not benefit natural communities is unsustainable, immoral and really stupid. Sustainability, morality, intelligence and justice require the dismantling of any such economic or social system – or, at the very least, disallowing it from damaging your landbase.'

And finally, I would return to this: 'If someone put a plastic bag over your head, or over the head of someone you love, and said he would give you money if you left it there, would you take it?

'And if you said no, what would you do if he insisted, even at gunpoint? Would you still take it? Or would you fight back?'

Derrick Jensen is an activist and author. His most recent book is *The Culture of Make Believe* (Context, 2002)

Cancun – what you can do

Your MP

To find out who it is and their contact details, see: www.locata.co.uk/commons
Send an email 'fax' to them at:
www.faxyourmp.com

The trade minister

Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt MP
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Email: hewittph@parliament.uk

The prime minister

Rt Hon Tony Blair MP
10 Downing Street, London SW1A 2AA
Fax: 020 7925 0918

EU trade commissioner Pascal Lamy

200 Rue de la Loi,
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium
Fax: +(00 32) 2298 1399
E-mail: Commissaire-Lamy@cec.eu.int

The following is a suggested letter (feel free to adapt and personalise it):

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am seriously concerned about your position on the WTO's fifth ministerial conference in Cancun in September and the Doha trade round generally.

I believe the UK government and the European Commission's support for negotiations to begin at Cancun on new WTO agreements – particularly on investment, competition and government procurement – is against the public interest.

I am opposed to the creation of agreements on these issues because they would expand corporate rights into areas that have nothing to do with trade while restricting the power of democratically-elected governments to protect the interests of citizens. Likewise, I am against the current negotiations on liberalising services.

Furthermore, I am opposed to proposals reduce import tariffs on natural resources such as wood, fish, water and fossil fuels, as they would harm the environment.

I therefore ask you to represent my views and oppose these proposals. I ask you to do everything you can to help ensure the Doha trade round is used to reform existing WTO agreements and to reduce the destructive social and environmental impact of the WTO and transnational corporations.

I look forward to a reply from you allaying my concerns. What you say and do will influence how I vote.

Yours faithfully

Take part in the Trade Justice Movement's mass lobby of Parliament on 28 June

For details, see: www.tradejusticemovement.org.uk

Support or take part in the campaigns of the following organisations:

Action Aid: www.actionaid.org

Christian Aid: www.christian-aid.org.uk/campaign

Friends of the Earth:
www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/global_trade

People and Planet: www.peopleandplanet.org

Tearfund: www.tearfund.org

World Development Movement: www.wdm.org.uk

War on Want: www.waronwant.org

Learn more from:

Corporate Europe Observatory:
www.corporateeurope.org

International Forum on Globalization: www.ifg.org

Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch:
www.citizen.org/trade

Third World Network: www.twinside.org.sg

Corpwatch: www.corpwatch.org

New Economics Foundation:
www.neweconomics.org

Bretton Woods Project www.brettonwoodsproject.org

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
www.iatp.org

Read the following books

The Case Against the Global Economy
Edited by Edward Goldsmith and Jerry Mander
(Earthscan, 2001)

When Corporations Ruled the World
David Korten (Earthscan, 1995)

Deglobalization
Walden Bello (Zed Books, 2002)

Blue Gold: the battle against corporate theft of the world's water
Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke (Earthscan, 2002)

Captive State
George Monbiot (Pan, 2000)

The Culture of Make Believe
Derrick Jensen (Context, 2002)

FLAGS OF CONVENIENCE • They're used by smugglers to traffic guns, drugs and people; they encourage environmental disasters like November's sinking of the Prestige oil tanker off Spain, and their number has risen from 11 to 29 since 1980. By Matilda Lee

Flags of convenience (FOCs) allow unscrupulous ship owners to avoid onerous international regulations.

In international law all ships must be listed in national shipping registries, vessels have to fly the flag of the country in which they are listed, and the individual states have the sole responsibility for regulating the ships' activities.

But FOC nations are countries that lack the resources or political will to properly regulate the ships on their registries.

The FOC system thrives because of a fiercely competitive shipping market in which ship owners look for the cheapest and least regulated ways of running their vessels.



CORBIS

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THEM?

Flags of convenience enable ship owners and shipping companies to sidestep legal constraints by:

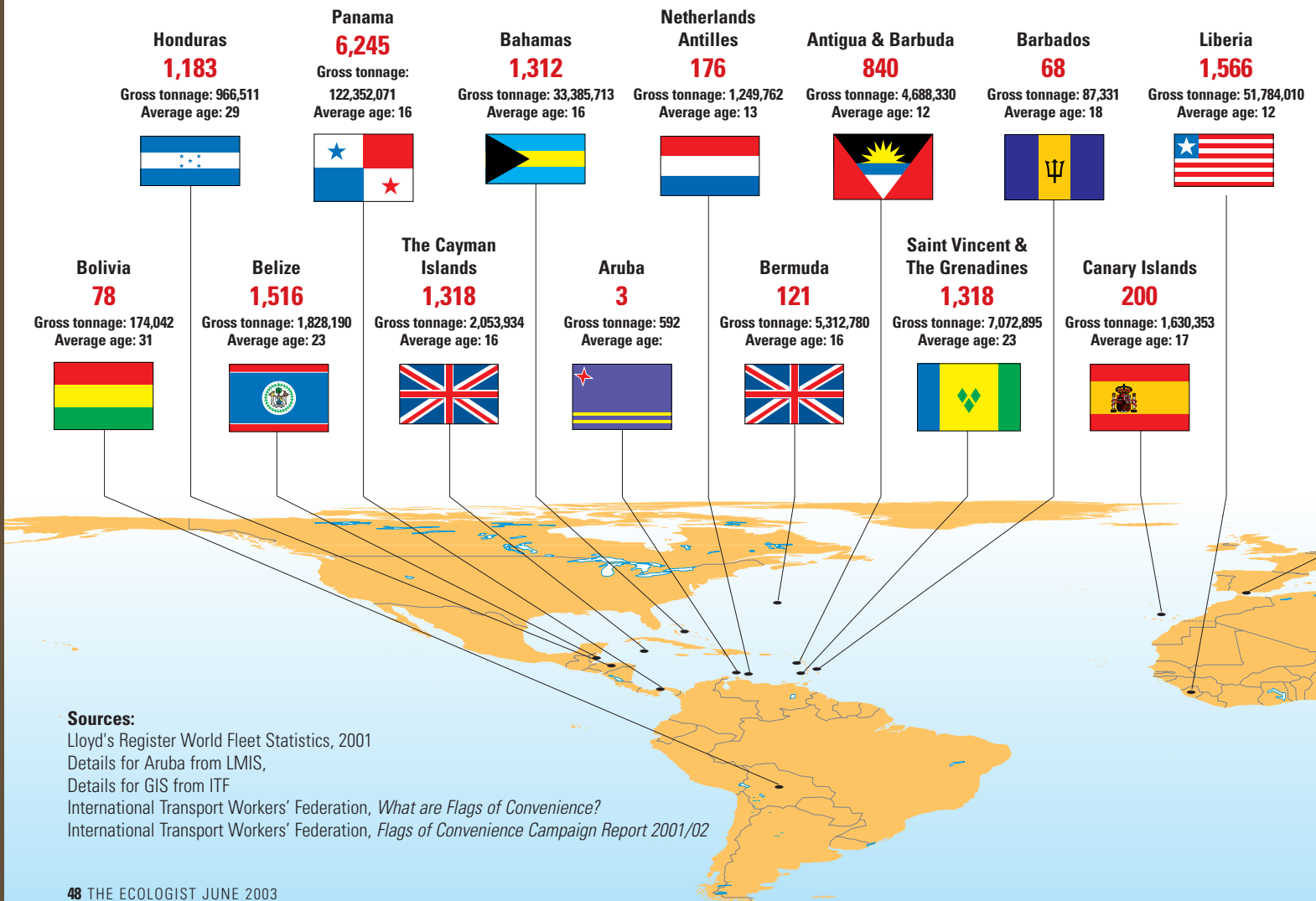
- making use of ageing, unsafe and deficient ships;
- adopting unfair and illegal labour practices;
- illegally fishing for endangered or overly-exploited fish stocks;
- carrying illegal goods – eg, hazardous waste and drugs; and
- Trafficking in humans and wildlife.

WHY ISN'T THE SYSTEM STOPPED?

FOCs are in direct contravention of article 91 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Seas, which states: 'There must exist a genuine link between the state and the ship.'

However, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), the UN body responsible for the international regulation of shipping, has so far been unable to enforce article 91. This is largely because the IMO is dominated by FOC nations.

Four of the five largest shipping registries by tonnage belong to FOC countries: Panama (122 million gross tonnes), Liberia (52 million tonnes), the Bahamas (33 million tonnes) and Malta (27 million tonnes). And financial contributions to the IMO are based on fleet tonnage, making Panama its biggest financial contributor.



SNAPSHOT OF WORST CASES

CAMBODIA Has a history of licensing people smugglers, drug runners and weapons traders. Until a few months ago vessels could be registered over the internet within 24 hours. Cambodian-flagged ship the So San was used in 2002 to transport Scud missiles from North Korea to Yemen. In May 2000, the Cambodian-flagged ship Benny 07 was found to be shipping 70 tonnes of big-eye tuna off the coast of Angola in violation of International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna regulations. And when French troops fired on and then boarded the Cambodia-listed Winner off the west coast of Africa on June 13, 2002, they found that the ship was laden with millions of dollars worth of cocaine.

Ahmad Yahya, of the Cambodian Ministry of Public Works and Transport, has said: 'We don't know or care who owns [Cambodia-listed ships] or whether they're doing "white" or "black" business... It is not our concern.' (*Fairplay*, 12 October 2000).

LIBERIA Has been the subject of UN Security Council sanctions because of its FOC record, but the Liberian registry remains a lucrative source of funds for the country's president Charles Taylor. Liberia has the second largest fleet in the world. The UN found in 2001 that money raised from the Liberian registry was used to buy illegal arms for use in Sierra Leone. The UN Sanctions Committee has recommended that the money Liberia raises from its registry should be audited in future so as to prevent it being spent on arms. Whether this is feasible in a country with no functioning judiciary is another matter.

THE BAHAMAS The Prestige – the ship that sank off Spain's Galician coast in November 2002 and is still spilling 77,000 tonnes of fuel oil – was registered with the Bahamas Maritime Authority (BMA). The BMA website states: 'It is the Bahamas' goal to become the world's largest shipping registry over the next decade, and ship owners of all nationalities are welcome to fly the Bahamas' flag.' The BMA says that the advantages of the Bahamas include 'a favourable business climate and world-class banking services', and that 'the operations and income associated with Bahamas-flag vessels are entirely tax-free'.

MALTA A haven for dirty and old oil ships. In 2000, 47 per cent of oil tankers detained as sub-standard during a concentrated inspection campaign were flying the Maltese flag. The inspections found ships that were corroding and cracking and lacking in stability and strength. The Erika, the tanker that in December 1999 broke up in the Bay of Biscay and spilt about 12,000 tonnes of heavy fuel oil that washed ashore on the coast of France, flew the Maltese flag. The ownership of the vessel was unknown until the owner voluntarily came forward at a later stage.

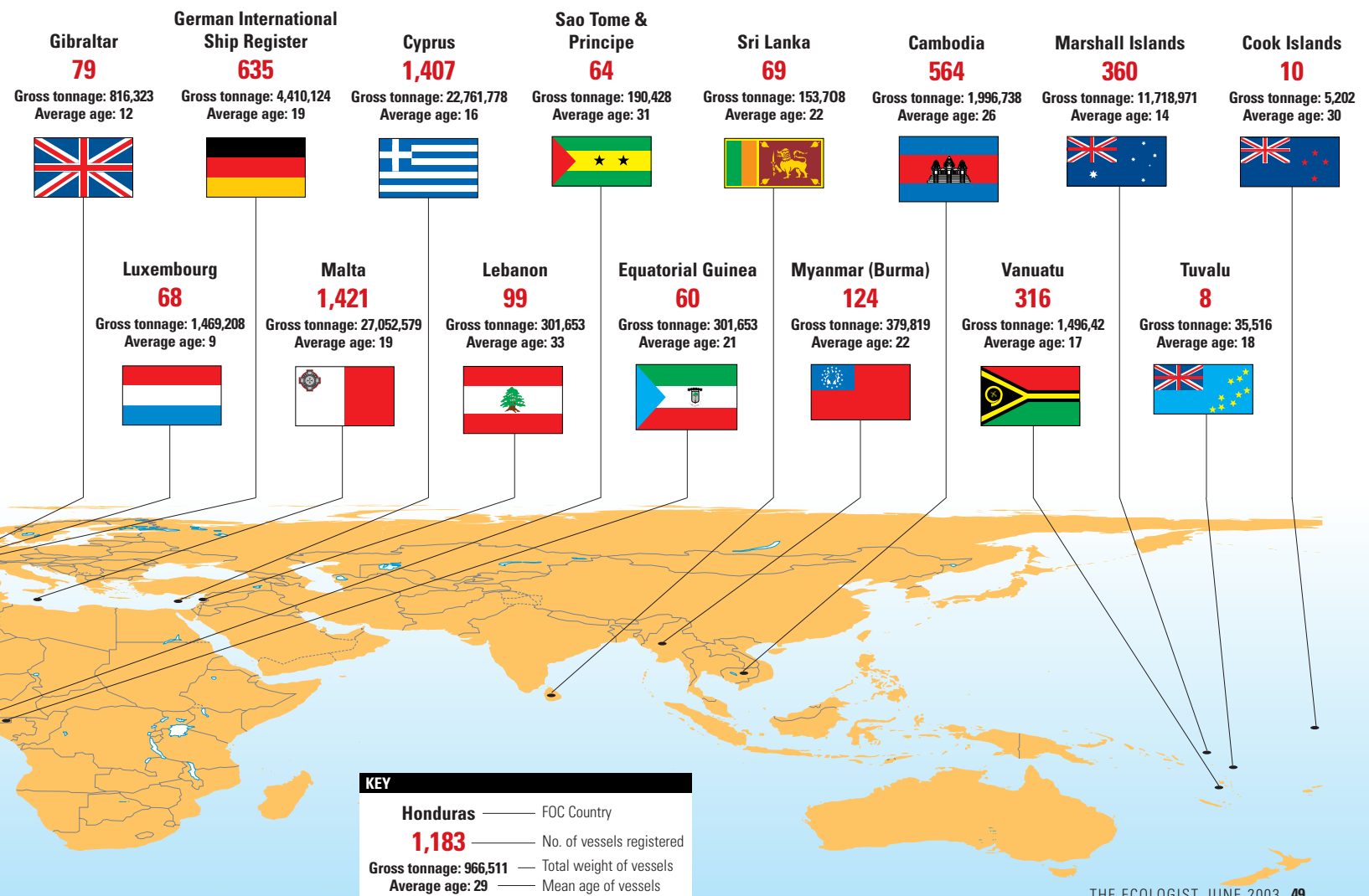
THE TRUE NATIONALITY OF THE TOP FIVE FOC FLEETS, 2001

FOC fleet owners by country	Nationality of ships listed in their registries				
	Panama	Liberia	Bahamas	Malta	Cyprus
1 Greece	11.7%	14.5%	19.1%	62.5%	71.3%
2 Japan	42.5%	7.0%	1.5%	1.0%	0.9%
3 US	1.8%	8.8%	24.4%	1.3%	0.1%
4 Hong Kong	10.1%	3.1%	1.8%	1.5%	0.1%
5 Norway	2.8%	8.2%	21.9%	9.0%	0.9%
6 China	5.5%	4.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.6%

Source: UNCTAD Review of Maritime Transport 2001

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

- The International Transport Workers' Federation has been running a 50-year campaign to eliminate the FOC system through the establishment of a regulatory framework for the shipping industry. See: www.itf.org.uk
- Greenpeace is leading a campaign for a new global agreement to eliminate the FOC practice, hold flag states responsible and accountable for enforcement of regulations, and give port states considerably more authority to inspect and detain sub-standard vessels. See: www.greenpeace.org



If you are one of the many millions of people who rely on vitamins and supplements to maintain their health and conquer illness, it's time for you to get active. The Ecologist explains why

Hidden Agenda

From vitamin C to echinacea, zinc tablets to St John's Wort – more and more people are taking vitamins and supplements. In part this trend reflects a growing interest in natural alternatives, but for many people it is a conscious effort to avoid being beholden to the multinational pharmaceutical industry and its 'cure-all' drugs – drugs that reap billions for the corporations and cost us our health.

Unfortunately, this trend has not gone unnoticed by the pharmaceuticals, which for the last few years have been quietly buying up vitamin manufacturers all over the world. By 1998, the drugs firms controlled 70 per cent of the market. So if you buy vitamins or minerals today, the chances are that your money is going right back to the very companies you are trying to avoid.

And worse still is that the remaining 30 per cent – the independent, innovative sector – of the vitamin market is under threat too. On 12 March 2002, the European Commission approved a directive, which if unchallenged will result in the elimination of all competition to the drug giants.

EU standardisation

The main reason given for this new piece of EU legislation is seemingly straightforward and relatively innocent. The market for vitamins and minerals is not the same in every country in Europe. In France and

Germany, for instance, no products containing more than the recommended daily allowance (RDA) of a substance may be sold without a pharmaceutical licence. The UK and the Netherlands, by contrast, do not restrict vitamin contents and are allowed to export vitamins and supplements throughout Europe without restrictions.

In its desire for a neat and tidy European superstate, Brussels has decided to remedy this inequality. Hence the passing of the Food Supplements Directive, which seeks to standardise laws governing vitamin supplements across the whole of Europe.

For the corporate supplement manufacturers, and the drug companies that own them, this is a major triumph. And the way it has been achieved, a piece of textbook corporate deception.

One such lobbyist is the US Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN). Made up of 120 dietary supplements companies, this 'vitamin trade association' is dominated by pharmaceutical companies like Bayer and Wyeth. These corporations pay anything from \$4,000 to \$125,000 per year for the CRN to lobby on their behalf.

But the biggest of all the industry's lobbyists is the International Alliance of Dietary Food Supplement Associations (IADSA), which represents 8500 companies and their 39 trade associations across 6 continents. The IADSA's chairman is Randy Dennin, who also happens to be a senior manager of Capsugel, now owned by Pfizer –

the largest pharmaceutical company in the world.

'They look so responsible that it's hard to pick holes in them, but they are controlled opposition groups. They torpedo the opposition,' says Frank Wiewal, one of the founders of People Against Cancer, which has lobbied against attempts to regulate dietary supplements in the US. By 'controlled opposition groups', Wiewal refers to organisations that go through the motions of defending a position or party while actually helping the interests of the opposition. He confirms: 'The drug companies are buying up the vitamin companies. It's all about big fish eating the little fish.'

The real effects of the European Commission's new directive are obvious. It will allow the drug giants to sell low-dose, low-efficacy products across Europe without having to reformulate them so as to comply with the requirements of individual countries. This means that products can be produced in bulk quantities at a cheaper cost and with greater profits. The 30 per cent of the vitamins industry that represents small manufacturers will simply not be able to compete.

The 'positive list'

The Food Supplements Directive centres on the use of a 'positive list' of permitted ingredients. Incredibly conservative, it lists only the oldest, most well-known vitamins and minerals for which RDAs have been established. Of these vitamins and minerals, the only ones to be approved by the EU's list are the cheapest forms – the ones that can be produced in great bulk. This is all good news for the giant drug companies. The only form of vitamin E on the list is the alpha tocopherol variant; none of the more readily absorbed, or bioavailable, mixed forms are included. Yet all vitamins and minerals come in a huge variety of formulations, both synthetic and natural, all of which the body absorbs to different degrees. Generally speaking, the synthetic forms have lower bioavailability.

Many other supplements, such as boron, sulphur and vanadium, may be banned outright. In total, the directive could lead to the banning of some 300 popular supplements that are currently on the British market. But intent on banning many naturally derived minerals, the European Commission has been less scrupulous about the ingredients that will be allowed in the supplement manufacturing process. The positive list includes a number of highly toxic substances, such as sodium fluoride – the toxic form of inorganic fluoride, which has been used as a rat poison – and sodium hydroxide – another name for caustic soda.

Another worrying section of the directive concerns the criteria for determining permitted levels of nutrients. These levels haven't been set yet, but many of the discussions demonstrate that the EU is likely to adopt extremely low upper limits – one to three times the RDA. For many supplements, this new ceiling could represent levels that are some 20 times lower than those currently sold in the UK.

Suppressing innovation

Any vitamin that is not on the positive list will be cleared off the shelves by August 2005 – unless the company marketing it applies for a licence. Such licences are so prohibitively expensive (the industry estimates that costs will typically be between £80,000 and £250,000 per ingredient) that it will be beyond the reach of all but the very largest vitamin firms.

The net effect of all this will be to kill future innovation. 'The positive list locks us into the state of nutrition we had in the 1950s forever,' says Dr Robert Verkerk, the executive director of the Alliance for Natural Health – a European alliance that is working to minimise the directive's impact. Verkerk adds: 'The development of any new vitamin products will be beyond the economic reach of any company besides the large pharmaceuticals; and the only way they will go ahead with bioavailable nutrients is after they've tampered with them and are able to patent them.'

The directive is also likely to cripple Europe's health food shops, as most of these businesses make their greatest margins on supplements and need a wide range of them to survive. According to Ralph Pike, director of the National ►

The Recommended Daily Allowances (RDAs) were formulated more than 50 years ago to boost British people's health. Although there are some small differences between the RDAs of the UK and other countries, they are all similar.

RDAs are derived from two sets of numbers: the quantity of nutrient required to maintain metabolic balance over time; and the quantity required to prevent the development of a deficiency disease – ie, a disease caused by a lack of a particular vitamin.

There are several problems with using a single yardstick for all individuals throughout Europe:

- Different cultural groups have different needs. It's impossible to compare the nutritional needs of people living in the Mediterranean with those living in northern Finland. The latter may, for example, have vastly higher needs for vitamin D supplements.
- Vitamin requirements vary according to the individual, depending on, for instance, height, weight, metabolism and absorption, genetics, state of health and specific health problems. Someone with multiple sclerosis would have a very high need for vitamin B12, whereas someone with heart disease or cancer would have a very high need for vitamin C.
- Eating habits can also affect vitamin absorption. Smoking, caffeine and alcohol all have an effect on nutritional needs. Drugs such as diuretics or even the Pill can also cause nutrient loss.
- People are biochemically individual. Dr Damien Downing, editor of *The Journal for Nutritional and Environmental Medicine*, unearthed one study showing that the requirement for vitamin C among a set of guinea pigs varied by as much as 2,000 per cent. Human beings could have an even wider variation.
- Nutrients in daily diets also vary enormously. You cannot compare the diet of the average British child with their counterpart in rural Italy or Greece. The latter are much more likely to live on a diet of fresh, unprocessed food.
- Preventing deficiency is not the same as preventing disease. Overwhelming scientific evidence demonstrates that high doses of a variety of supplements can prevent or treat disease. Many studies of vitamin C have shown that high doses can prolong life in cancer patients. When people are ill, their requirements for certain nutrients can rocket to hundreds or thousands of times the RDA. Cancer patients may require up to 20 grammes of vitamin C per day.

20th century industrial agriculture has created a food supply that is far less nutritious than it once was. Intensive farming, battery conditions for livestock and widespread processing have depleted food of many vital nutrients.

- In 1940 the UK's Medical Research Council produced a report entitled *The Chemical Composition of Food*. In 1991 it repeated its study. It examined 28 raw and 44 cooked vegetables, 17 fruits and 10 types of meat, poultry and game. The results showed: all vegetables had lost up to 75 per cent of nutrients such as magnesium; meats had about half their minerals; and fruits had lost about two-thirds. The authors concluded that you would have to eat 10 tomatoes in 1991 to obtain the same copper that one tomato would have yielded in 1940, and three oranges to get the same iron as 50 years ago.
- Comparing nutrient values in US Department of Agriculture handbooks with those of 25 years ago, US nutritionist Alex Jack found that vitamins have also dramatically declined in fruits and vegetables.
- Current fertiliser methods, which seed the soil with just a few minerals (ie – sodium, phosphorus and potassium), have drastically altered the ratios between minerals that naturally occur in food. In 1940, there was a two-to-one ratio between phosphorus and calcium; now it is one-to-one. Swedes, for instance, now contain 110 per cent of the phosphorus they once did. Because there are critical ratios of certain minerals in human physiology, these new ratios could have profound effects on our body's chemistry.

Association of Health Stores in England, up to a third of British health food retailers could go out of business if this directive is implemented in its current form.

Challenging the science

A number of groups challenge the science behind the directive, saying it ignores the breakthrough work in nutritional medicine, which uses high doses of vitamins to prevent and treat disease. British doctors including Patrick Kingsley, Damien Downing and the nearly 300 other members of the British Society for Allergy, Environmental and Nutritional Medicine routinely use high-dose supplements to treat everything from asthma to cancer. As Downing, the editor of *The Journal of Nutritional and Environmental Medicine*, says: 'There are several thousand valid scientific papers every year that demonstrate the importance and value of nutritional supplements to treat and prevent a wide range of diseases.' And Kingsley, who is world renowned for his successful treatment of multiple sclerosis and cancer, says that considerable scientific evidence proves RDA is not only inadequate for the average person; it is *totally inadequate* when they are unwell. 'The more unwell they are,' Kingsley says, 'the more of these nutrients they need to correct their unwell metabolism.' (See box on page 51.)

Because food is far less nutritious than it was 50 years ago, vitamins are now a virtual necessity – even for the healthy. The use of intensive farming, pesticides and fertilisers that lack many important minerals means that soil and the food grown in it are virtually depleted of most essential minerals (see box above).

Even healthy people can benefit from supplements, particularly when they are older. Kingsley says: 'Studies

in the US show that when so-called fit and healthy older people are given considerable doses of supplements they are healthier in every regard.' *The Journal of American Medical Association* has gone even further, advising all US doctors to prescribe them as necessary for human health. Ignoring all this, the Food Supplements Directive has made it illegal for any supplement manufacturer to say on its packaging that it is impossible to get all necessary nutrients from food.

Eliminating the competition

The EU is busy dismantling other forms of alternative medicine, too. The Traditional Herbal Medicinal Products Directive, which has undergone a first reading, seeks to force herbal medicines and possibly even substances like flower essences into regulatory procedures similar to those governing the pharmaceutical industry. Once again, many products could be effectively banned or – because the companies that produce them would not be able to afford the costly regulatory process – removed from the shelves. Most repugnant of all, however, animal testing could become a mandatory part of the process of testing these products.

Particularly at risk are blends of herbs with vitamins and minerals. The UK's Medicines Control Agency (MCA) argues that if the herbal ingredient of these products is at therapeutic levels then they should be classed as medicines requiring a full licence. The MCA has already removed a number of them from British health food stores' shelves. Vitamin manufacturers Solgar and Biocare have both been asked to remove or reformulate products, even though the directive has not even gone into law.

The first stages have also been completed on amendments to the European Pharmaceuticals Directive. And, although this amendment started life as a simple exercise in 'tidying up' drugs legislation, the pharmaceutical industry has used it as an excuse to create a far more elastic definition of a medicinal product.

If accepted as currently worded, the Pharmaceuticals Directive could allow regulators of medicines to insist that many food supplements are, legally, medicines; these products would need to be licensed as such – even if they are covered by other EU directives covering food products. Theoretically, Britain's MCA could end up regulating alternative medicines like homeopathy and aromatherapy. The Pharmaceuticals Directive would have supremacy over other European laws, and all manner of natural remedies could be classed as drugs subject to licensing, regulation and potential prohibition.

Falling in line

With a few exceptions, most supplement manufacturers – their eyes firmly on the euro signs of a Europe-wide market – have fallen quite easily into line. According to Ralph Pike, 80 per cent of the members of Britain's Health Food Manufacturers' Association are set to abandon any principle about high-dose supplements and



have thrown their support behind the new directives.

Christopher Whitehouse, an adviser to Holland and Barrett and the pharmaceutically-dominated CRN, recently gave a talk with the defeatist title 'Living with the Directive'. His clear message was 'seek to influence, but expect to comply' – a succinct way of saying 'it's a done deal'.

Besides the manufacturers, many alternative medicine professional associations either don't understand how their field is being dismantled or they have cowered into submission. The herbal societies, in the main, support the herbal legislation because they believe it will prevent many herbals from being sold in shops and it will force consumers to seek out the professionals. Many homeopathic organisations don't see what any of this has to do with them.

Last chance

They soon will. The pharmaceutical industry is the most profitable in the world. In 2000, the top 20 drug firms had a combined sale of £135 billion. In 2001, at a time when the average Fortune 500 company saw profits plummet by 53 per cent, the drug companies saw theirs soar by 33 per cent. With these directives, they are eliminating their biggest competition: preventive medicine. 'The simple fact is that the pharmaceuticals don't want people to get healthy,' says Lynne McTaggart, editor of *What Doctors Don't Tell You*. 'Degenerative disease is the single biggest money-spinner of all time.'

Once they have been agreed by the European Commission, all these directives must be adopted by all member states. As trade directives, there is, in theory, no

possibility of individual members opting out of them – an option that is available with other categories of directives such as taxation.

However, the Food Supplements Directive will not be ratified by the British Parliament until July, and companies will not be forced to comply until June 2005. Theoretically, there is still time for Parliament to influence legislation that clearly isn't the will of either British business or British consumers. Similar legislation in the US was defeated by a massive grassroots campaign. Currently, some 20 million Britons use some form of nutritional or natural medicine. London's International March for Health Freedom on 15 June (see box below) represents an opportunity for these people's voices to be heard ■

The International March For Health Freedom takes place in London on Sunday, 15 June. The march is being organised by the Health Freedom Movement (HFM), a non-profit organisation representing all consumers of natural medicines, and which is spearheaded by the consumer organisation What Doctors Don't Tell You.

The march will send a message to Parliament that we don't intend to allow the directives to be enacted in their current form. All British participants on the march should gather in the North Carriage of Hyde Park near Speaker's Corner at 11am. At 12 noon the march will set out for Trafalgar Square, where speakers will address the demonstrators.

It is vital that you, and everyone you know who cares about health freedom, march with us on 15 June. See the HFM website (www.healthfreedommovement.com) for details.

Find out your MP's position on the EU directives. They will have to vote to ratify the Food Supplements Directive in late July. You still have time to tell him that you won't support him if he votes in favour of it. Also write to manufacturers, telling them that you intend to boycott harmonised products.

FARMERS MARKETS • In 1996 there were no farmers' markets anywhere in the UK. Today they outnumber Asda stores. Dan Box celebrates their comeback and why we should all be using them.

While supermarkets spend millions on advertising to entice us into their stores, farmers' markets rely on the quality of the food they offer. They guarantee this quality by offering an alternative to the anonymity of supermarket shopping – everything on sale has been grown, reared, or produced by the stallholder – giving them a personal interest in every customer. You can touch and smell the fruit, ask how meat was reared and learn the best way to cook it.

All the food at a farmers market comes from within the county boundary, or 30 miles of each market. It is not transported hundreds of miles to distant supermarket distribution centres, then shunted back in lorries to each store. As a result, it needs less processing, less packaging and less chemical preservatives to survive long journeys.

By offering local varieties, farmers' markets also provide a link to the land and to the seasons – during the winter frost, fruit will be rare; in summer the stalls will overflow and prices tumble.



SAVING YOU MONEY

Prices in farmers' markets are 10-18 per cent lower than those in supermarkets, according to two independent surveys.

UK evidence shows that, for organic food, farmers' markets are much cheaper than supermarkets. A survey by the University of West England found that organic meat and poultry were 37 per cent more expensive at supermarkets and organic vegetables cost 33 per cent more.

GO SHOPPING

The National Association of Farmers' Markets works to promote and support farmers' markets, allowing them to expand and remain self-sustaining. The association grants accreditation only to those markets which comply to agreed criteria, guaranteeing food is locally supplied and sold by someone directly involved in its production.

To learn more, or find your nearest market, contact:

South Vaults, Green Park Station
Green Park Road, Bath, BA1 1JB
tel: 01225 787914, fax: 01225 460840
email: nafm@farmersmarkets.net
visit: www.farmersmarkets.net

FARMERS MARKETS IN NUMBERS

0	Number of UK farmers' markets in 1996
420	Number of UK farmers' markets today.
13	Number of farmers' markets in London.
125	Percentage increase in markets since 2000
£166 m	Total sales from UK farmers' markets
15 million	Number of visits to farmers' markets each year.
80	Percentage of neighbouring businesses who have seen a boost in trade following the establishment of a local market.
22	Percentage of their crop US farmers say would be wasted if farmers' markets were not available.
97	Percentage of US farmers who say that without farmers' markets they could not survive.
24,000	Number of people directly involved in preparing and selling food for Ontario, Canada's, 127 farmers' markets.
60	Percentage of farmers' markets which are now expanding in size

PROTECTING FARMERS

Fifty years ago farmers received 45-60 per cent of the money shoppers spent on food. Supermarkets' increasing power means that today they receive around 10 per cent.

As a result, the average annual income of a farmer in the UK has fallen to £11,200. Selling through a farmer's market can double this – average annual earnings of each stall-holder are around £8,700. At the top end of the scale, some farms earn up to £20,000 in extra income each year by selling at a market.

Markets allow the farmer to cut out the middleman. By saving on marketing, packaging and transportation, returns are generally 200-250 per cent higher than selling to a supermarket.

BENEFITING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Money spent at farmers' markets stays in the local economy. Circulated as local wages or spent on local products, every £10 spent on locally-produced food is worth £24 to the local area. In contrast, £10 spent at a supermarket generates just £14.

This is vital to encouraging regeneration in an area. 'In Cornwall, £500 million per year is spent on food. 75 per cent of that is imported from outside Cornwall,' says Roger Thompson, of Business in the Community in Cornwall. 'If we reduce that by just 1 per cent, we have invested £5 million in our local economy.'

Market day also brings people into the centre of their towns again. Around 50 per cent of those surveyed shopped at other local businesses on their way to or from the market. Stores in Winchester reported a 30 per cent increase in sales on market day.

The first UK farmers' market was set up in Bath in 1997. 1998 saw farmers' markets established in towns throughout the country including Bristol, Holmfirth and Lewes.

Twenty years ago, farmers' markets were unknown in Britain but were already popular in the US. Today there are over 3000 markets in the US, with an annual income over \$1bn.

In the days before supermarket distribution networks, Norfolk farmers used to walk their geese and turkeys to London. The journey was so long that the birds were given shoes or had their feet tarred - you can still see a pair of little leather shoes in Norwich Museum.

Asda, taken over last year by US giant Wal-Mart, started out in the 20s as a co-operative of Yorkshire farmers who got together to sell their meat and milk at local markets. Asda has recently been muscling in on farmers' markets, setting up its own in store car parks where local producers sell directly to customers, bypassing their hosts, the retailing middlemen.

A study in Sussex found that Lewes farmers' market provided locally grown fresh food which was affordable for families on low incomes. Farmers' markets in general can improve access to food for people on low incomes, the study found.

US farmers' markets have been successful in poor inner-cities that have no supermarket. According to the US Department of Agriculture: 'Direct markets provide access to fresh fruit and vegetables for consumers – especially minority consumers in the inner city – who would otherwise not be able to get fresh produce'.

...big business growth 1 per cent of UK businesses control over 86 per cent of all retail trade. Britain's 74,000 small retail businesses (with sales of less than £100,000 per annum) account for only 1 per cent of retail trade.

...steal time Including travelling and parking, the time it takes to shop at an out of town supermarket has gone up 40 per cent since 1970.

...increase air pollution Between 1985 and 2002 average distances travelled to shop, including for food, increased 57 per cent from 14 to 22 km.

...destroy variety 66 per cent of UK farmers say supermarket demands for conformity of size and appearance have led them to give up on productive varieties of fruit. Just three varieties account for 94 per cent of eating pears grown in the UK – we are missing out on the other 550 types of eating and cooking pears native to Britain.

...destroy local jobs The superstores own organisation – the National Retail Planning Forum – say 270 local jobs are lost each time a superstore opens.

...drive small farmers out of business 50,000 farmers are expected to quit between 2000-2005, squeezed by overseas competition and the supermarkets' oligopoly in the UK. 11 go out of business every day.

...cheat shoppers... Shoppers in a supermarket are charged around 30-35 pence for a pint of milk. The farmer is paid about 9p to produce it. Supermarkets pocket the difference.

...damage your health In a supermarket, processed sugary foods are cheaper per calorie than fresh food. While supermarket 'economy' lines claim to help everyone buy cheap healthy food, a survey of those offered by Britain's leading chains found most were fatty and sugary processed foods.

Every little helps ...

...waste food Supermarkets change packaging requirements and required standards of size and shape without warning farmers. 67 per cent of fruit growers have been forced to throw packaging away in the last year after supermarkets changed their specifications.

...lengthen traffic jams Food distribution now accounts for over a third of all UK road freight.

...wreck communities An out of town supermarket causes around £25,000 worth of congestion, pollution and associated damage to the local community each week.

...exacerbate climate change... The ingredients of a traditional meal bought from a supermarket may have cumulatively travelled 24,000 miles.

...spread disease Transporting live animals to the supermarkets' network of abattoirs spreads disease. Foot and Mouth created an estimated £9bn in losses, most felt by UK farms and small businesses.

...create landfill Supermarkets have persistently lobbied against returnable packaging and refused to stock it. One third of the 25 million tonnes of landfill produced in the UK is packaging.

...eradicate seasonality Supermarkets ignore the seasons. They provide apples in the spring and strawberries at Christmas. This is supermarket time; one, single year-round climate with air-conditioning and food that never changes.

...drive chemists out of business More than 600 local chemists will close over the next five years as supermarket pharmacies steal their business.

...increase your bills Supermarkets use artificial smells, lighting and product placement to make you buy products you don't need. 60 per cent of supermarket purchases are unplanned.

...con shoppers A 2001 Tesco loyalty scheme offering computers for schools meant shoppers had to spend about £220,000 for a computer worth less than £1,000.

...secure close political support Labour's Science minister is Lord Sainsbury. He is also the biggest donor to the party in its history.

...destroy the countryside Intensive farming costs the UK £1.5bn annually in damage to air, soil and water.

...disguise prices Supermarkets use 'loss leaders', kept at an artificially low price to give the impression that the whole store is cheap. Other foods can often be found more cheaply in independent shops. This is especially true of fruit and vegetables.

...keep wages low In 1999, Sainsbury's employed 30,000 full time students, almost 30 per cent of its total staff. Supermarkets use a starter rate for new employees while they undergo training. With the high turn over rate amongst students and no minimum wage for under 18s, this drastically reduces their wage bill.

...increase our power Supermarket sales have grown 30 per cent since 1995 and are expected to increase 16 per cent by 2005. The five major supermarkets control 88 per cent of the UK food market.

At Slow Food's international fair in Turin last year, organic delicacies included Irish wild salmon and moon-like rounds of Somerset cheddar made to a 13th century recipe. But the star of the show was a cheese brought over illegally by shepherds from Poland's Tatra Mountains. Hilary Davies reports

Ever since Romanian farmers brought dairy farming to southern Poland in the 14th century, shepherds in the Tatra Mountains have been making *Oscypek*. In their wooden huts they steam unpasteurised milk in wooden pails, mould the curds by hand and hang them up to smoke in the rafters above the fire.

Yet, because it is made of unpasteurised milk, it has been illegal to sell the cheese in Poland since the 1950s. You can only find it on the black market, at little makeshift stalls set up on street corners or in local markets. For 50 years, shepherds have been forced to sell their *Oscypek* while sitting on canvas fishing stools, with their cheeses spread out in front of them on collapsible plastic tables and up-turned boxes.

preponderance of fast-food culture. It emerged from protests against the opening of a McDonald's in Rome's Piazza d'Espagna.

Jacek himself lives in Poland's artistic and gourmet capital Krakow. Although Jacek knew from its outset that he wanted to take the Slow Food movement into Poland, he wasn't immediately sure quite where to start. That was until he discovered *Oscypek*. From then on his mission was clear.

Together with two Slow Food partners, Jacek hiked around the Tatra Mountains, tasting all the available samples of the cheese. Having selected the five best, the trio then had to check that all the ingredients were natural, establish the proper methods for making the cheese, and finally test the local soil and water for

Cheese smuggling

Increasingly though, even this uncertain trade is becoming difficult to sustain. As Poland's once empty shops have filled up with global alternatives, fewer and fewer people want the goods the shepherds produce – leather slippers, sheepskin rugs and homely woolly jumpers. Worse still, imports from New Zealand are squeezing Polish lamb out of the domestic meat market. As for their cheese, horror of horrors, Polish shops now sell imitation cheese with the same name. The mass-produced, vacuum-packed substitutes are often made of cows' milk, pasteurised and chemically smoked. They're about as similar to the real thing, as strawberry-flavoured chewing gum is to strawberries. But still – there they are, conveniently available off the shelf in every supermarket. After all, who has time to go out into the streets and find a cheese-selling shepherd?

Cheese hero

Meet Jacek Szklarek, president of Poland's branch of the Slow Food movement. As its name suggests, Slow Food was set up to counterbalance the increasing

purity. But at last, the authentic *Oscypek* could finally be included among Slow Food's 'presidia' – the list of products identified by the movement as worthy of protection and promotion.

Then there was the European Community to deal with. Most milk products in the European Community have to be made out of pasteurised milk in stainless steel containers. But thanks in part to Slow Food activists exceptions are now made for registered 'regional products'. Together with a local museum, Jacek gathered the necessary historical evidence for *Oscypek* to be registered. By EU law, Polish shepherds are now free to make and sell their cheeses.

But nothing in bureaucratic Poland is quite that simple. Despite the EU's go-ahead, Polish regulations are still confusing. A law passed in October means that unpasteurised milk can at last be sold in Poland again. But an endless dispute over what is and what isn't 'running water', together with bureaucratic bickering over whether it's sanitarly acceptable for *Oscypek* to be made in smoky wooden huts rather than tiled rooms, mean the livelihood of many shepherds still hangs in the balance.



The situation is 'completely absurd,' says Jacek. 'The cheese-makers are forward-looking, practical and prepared to take any steps necessary to bring *Oscypek* into the market.' If only the authorities would make up their minds. Under the guidance of supportive local expert Henryk Stanik, the cheese-makers have even built wells and tapped local springs to comply with Polish legislation on running water. Yet still the officials argue. And the frustrated shepherds can do nothing but wait.

Cheese luggage

Last September the shepherds applied to the Polish authorities for the right to transport their cheeses as commercial samples; they wanted to exhibit them at Slow Food's *Salone del Gusto* the following month. When the application was blocked by the jealousy of one of Stanik's professional rivals, the shepherds had simply had enough. Determined to get to the food fair by hook or by crook, they hid their cheeses in their bags and, since they couldn't afford to fly, set out on the two-day bus ride to Turin. It was worth it; in Italy the cheeses were a huge success.

'We sold most of them on the first day,' Jacek remembers, 'and at 10 euros.' This was already a triumph for the shepherds, whose cheeses barely fetch the equivalent of four euros on the Polish streets. But it got even better. 'When we saw how quickly they were going,' Jacek explains, 'we raised the price. And it was a good thing, because on the second day of the two-day fair there were queues for our stall before we'd even opened. The cheese was all snapped up, and even after it was gone the customers just refused to believe it. People were sure we must have more hidden somewhere, and they kept offering us bribes.'

It turned out that by denying the shepherds an export permit the spiteful official back in Poland had actually done the expedition a favour. Slow Food members have campaigned for years (and with a lot of success) for a more flexible approach towards food production in the EU. So they reacted enthusiastically to the shepherds' outwitting of obstructive authorities. The Italians were delighted to hear that Poles had brought the cheeses illegally; the press seized on the story, and Jacek, not to miss any chance of promotion, pumped it for all it was worth.

Only the shepherds themselves, wary about getting in trouble, were unsure about all this publicity. But when they saw the positive reactions of even Polish journalists at the food fair they relaxed and joined in the fun. Asked by the Polish press if it was really true that they had brought the cheeses packed under their bus seats, they smiled and confided: 'Well, actually in the baggage hatch.'

The shepherds celebrated their success with Jacek's home-made – and also illegal – moonshine cherry vodka. And since their return home – perhaps because of their storm of success abroad – there have been no negative repercussions.

When I met Jacek in Warsaw recently, he and the five shepherds involved with Slow Food's presidia were planning to form a company to distribute the cheese, and defend its reputation from the competition of cheap and nasty imitations by fighting for the exclusive rights to the label *Oscypek*. While officials continue to squabble over regulations, Jacek and co are busy concentrating on 'promotion, promotion, promotion'. ■

Hilary Davies is a freelance journalist based in Poland



Silent earth

Myth number 7

The truth: Industrial agriculture is the largest single threat to the earth's biodiversity. Massive chemical use and row-to-row ploughing, planting and harvesting techniques poison the soil and water and kill off countless plant and animal communities

Industrial agriculture's myth-makers have been so successful in their efforts to shape opinion that they must believe we'll swallow just about anything. They now assure us that intensive farming methods that rely on chemicals and biotechnology somehow protect the environment. This myth, as illogical as it may sound to an informed reader, is increasingly widespread today and is increasingly accepted as valid. What's worse, agribusiness is saturating the media with

misleading reports of the purported ecological risks of organic and other environmentally sustainable agricultural practices.

A typical claim of the industrial apologists is that the industrial style of agriculture has prevented some 15 million square miles of wildlands from being ploughed under for 'low-yield' food production. They continuously assert that the biggest challenge of the 21st century is to increase food yields through modern advances in agricultural science such as the genetic engineering of

commercial food crops. They also claim that if the world does not fully embrace industrial agriculture, hundreds of thousands of wildlife species will be lost to low-yield crops and ranging livestock.

There is a plethora of evidence that busts this myth. At the outset, the idea that sustainable agriculture is low-yield and would result in ploughing under millions of square miles of wildlands is simply wrong. Numerous government studies show that relatively smaller farm sizes are much more productive per unit acre (in fact two to 10 times more productive) than larger ones. The smallest farms, those of 27 acres or less, are more than 10 times as productive (in terms of dollar output per acre) than large farms (6,000 acres or more), and extremely small farms (four acres or less) can be over 100 times as productive.

Additionally, in contrast to industrial agriculture, sustainable or alternative agriculture minimises the environmental impacts of farming – often without added

economic costs. The simple use of composted organic manures is a cost-effective alternative to chemical fertilisers, and increases soil microbiology and fertility, decreases erosion, and helps preserve wildlife habitats. Organic and diversified farming practices increase the prevalence of birds and mammals on farmlands and ensure biological diversity for the planet. In sum, in terms of preserving and augmenting soil productivity and the biodiversity of the planet, small-scale sustainable agriculture is far more beneficial and efficient than its industrial counterpart.

Instead of being a boon to the environment, industrial agriculture is currently the largest single threat to the earth's biodiversity. There are two primary reasons for this: the devastation of wild species caused by chemical use; and the destruction of wildlife habitat caused by industrial agriculture's inefficient fence-row-to-fence-row ploughing, planting, and harvesting techniques.

CHEMICALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Pesticide use, which is endemic to industrial agriculture, has been clearly identified as a principal driving force behind the drastic reduction of biodiversity on US farmlands. According to Tracy Hewitt and Katherine Smith of the Henry Wallace Institute, there are no fewer than 50 scientific studies that have documented adverse environmental effects of pesticide use on bird, mammal and amphibian populations across the US and Canada. The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, for example, found that at least 6 per cent of the breeding population of bald eagles along the James River were killed annually by insecticide poisonings. Cornell University's professor David Pimentel estimates that 672 million birds are affected by pesticide use on farmlands and 10 per cent of these – 67 million – die each year.

In Texas, where some 15 million acres of croplands are treated with pesticides, tens of thousands of migratory waterfowl come in direct contact with the contaminated grains; the consequences are sickness and, ultimately, death. Between 1977 and 1984, half of all the fish kills off the coast of South Carolina were attributed to pesticide contamination. These are only a few of the many tragic examples of wildlife destruction in the US alone.

Chemical fertilisers, which are also a key component of industrial agriculture, pose an even greater risk to soil and water quality and threaten biodiversity and wildlife populations around the globe. Aquatic and marine life are especially vulnerable to the tons of residues from chemically treated croplands that find their way into our major estuaries each year. In the US's Chesapeake Bay native sea grasses, fish and shellfish populations have declined dramatically in number in the last few decades because of extremely high nitrogen and phosphorous levels caused by the excessive use of chemical fertilisers. According to Kelley R Tucker of the American Bird Conservancy, use of inorganic fertilisers also tends to reduce overall plant species' diversity on farmlands. This allows farm edges to be dominated by only one or a few

types of plants. Bird populations suffer as a result because they are highly dependent upon the variety of insects that are supported by diverse, native landscapes.

HABITAT DESTRUCTION

The huge, monocultured fields characteristic of industrial agriculture have also dramatically reduced a number of wildlife populations by transforming habitats, displacing populations of native species and introducing non-native ones. Planting thousand-acre fields of corn, for example, leaves virtually no room for the propagation of other species. Among countless other wild plants and animals, important game species such as prairie chickens, bobwhite quail, cottontail rabbits and ring-necked pheasants have been greatly reduced or eliminated in areas of industrial agriculture. Diversified farming techniques, on the other hand, incorporate numerous varieties of plants, flowers and weeds, and encourage the proliferation of various wildlife, insect and plant species.

No myth can hide the fact that decades of industrial agriculture have been a disaster for the environment. Industrial agriculture's chemical poisoning has caused ecocide among countless species. And it has resulted in irreversible soil loss, reduction in soil and water quality, and the proliferation of non-native species that choke out indigenous varieties. Without question, the tilling, mowing, and harvesting operations of agribusiness have affected, and continue to catastrophically destroy, wildlife and soil and water quality. By contrast, sustainable and organic farming methods result in the reduction of land under the plough and the increase of biodiversity and wildlife on farmlands and beyond ■

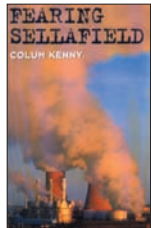


Reprinted with permission from *Fatal Harvest: the tragedy of industrial agriculture*, edited by Andrew Kimbrell, distributed by Island Press, www.islandpress.org

Fearing Sellafield

Calum Kenny
Gill & Macmillan 2003
£10.00, ISBN 0717135837

Reviewed by Doug Bebb



The engagingly written *Fearing Sellafield* introduces and elucidates the arguments surrounding Britain's most notorious

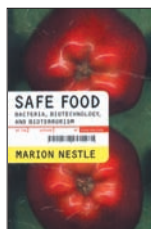
nuclear power station.

Kenny explores the potential posed by the large amounts of lethal liquid waste still being produced and stored at Sellafield. Although the chances of a disaster are statistically low, the plant has been plagued by a continuing litany of concerns over security and pollution. The Irish Sea, into which Sellafield discharges, is one of the most radioactive stretches of water in the world.

Safe Food: bacteria, biotechnology and bioterrorism

Marion Nestle
University of California Press 2003
£16.99, ISBN 0520232925

Reviewed by Jon Napier



Food firms act like any other corporation – working to influence government policies so as to increase sales and keep

shareholders happy. This thesis is nothing new, though when the results are unregulated GM products and salmonella-ridden chicken, there is a rather more immediate cause for concern.

We don't all buy BAE's weapons or Glaxo's drugs, but we do all eat. It is this distinction, argues the author, that should make us aware that consuming safe food involves far more than washing hands, cooking at higher temperatures and paying attention to sell-by dates.

Rethinking Globalisation: teaching for justice in an unjust world

Edited by Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson
Rethinking Schools Press 2003
£15.00, ISBN 0942961285

Reviewed by Dan Box



Much media coverage of globalisation draws lines between 'us' and 'them'. *Rethinking Globalisation* provides a way

of teaching children an alternative before they fall into accepting these divides. It is shaped into hand-outs and lesson plans for classroom use. The effects of teaching US fourth-graders the realities about sweatshop labour are also movingly described: 'The children, deeply concerned about the terrible conditions for workers, felt betrayed, even lied to, by companies such as Nike.'

The Ice: a journey to Antarctica

Stephen J Pyne
Weidenfeld & Nicolson 2003
£16.99, ISBN 1842126741

Reviewed by Dan Box



The implications of the size of The Antarctic are truly staggering. Its weight is enough to deform the earth. Should all the ice melt, the rising sea would

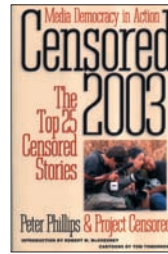
drown entire cities. It is Pyne's fascination with this fragile authority that leads us through this exploration of the ice sheet.

In his account of his journey to the centre of the Antarctic ice mass, Pyne describes the history, science and geopolitics of the continent. The core is an endless, empty region. All in all, Pyne's book is a significant attempt to study and understand the most inhospitable place on earth.

Censored 2003: the top 25 censored stories

Peter Phillips and Project Censored
Seven Stories Press 2003
£11.50, ISBN 1583225153

Reviewed by Harry Ram



The aim of Project Censored is to overturn the complicity and self-censorship of the corporate media. As such, this anthology presents 'the 25 most censored stories of 2001 and 2002 – 18 months of under-reported news'.

Concentrating on the US, each story is a revelation – from the Bush administration's efforts to control investigation of the Bin Laden family before 9/11, to CIA dealings in Macedonia.

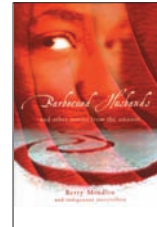
Also included are updates on the most censored stories of 2000 and a guide to independent media resources and activism.

Barbecued Husbands and other stories from the Amazon

Betty Mindlin and indigenous storytellers
Verso 2002
£15.00, ISBN 1859846815

Reviewed by Jeremy Smith

These are the stories of six Amazonian tribes. Six sets of myths for understanding the world, retold here mostly by tribeswomen born in the jungle



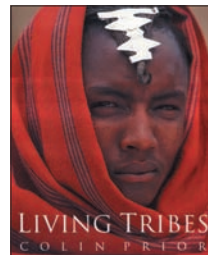
before their tribe had any peaceful contact with 'civilisation'. The tales are certainly not children's yarns. Sexually unashamed,

graphically violent, they refute comfortable notions of an idyllic hunter-gatherer lifestyle. The stories are gripping, funny and full of magic. They deal with sex, love and adventure, as well as the darker themes of incest, rape, infanticide and cannibalism. Conveying both the Amazon's hallucinatory richness and the influence of indigenous myth on magical realism, Mindlin's book is a vital and engrossing record of six ancient and vibrant cultures.

Living Tribes

Colin Prior
Constable 2003
£25.00, ISBN 1841195456

Reviewed by Doug Bebb



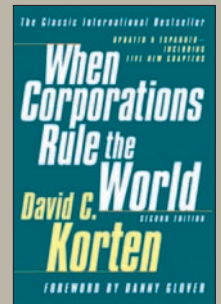
The photos in *Living Tribes* document 15 disparate cultures from Kenya to Alaska as the people

concerned go about their day-to-day lives. Prior focuses on expressive qualities of ritual, costume and physiognomy. These images remind us of the diversity we are destroying in the pursuit of a designer-labelled uniformity.

When Corporations Rule the World

David C Korten
Kumarian Press 2001, £15.00, ISBN: 1887208046

In *World Class*, Harvard Business School professor Rosabeth Kanter wrote that the future belongs to those who are willing to give up their loyalties to community and nation to seek personal financial success in the global economy. And World Bank economist John Page once told a meeting of Middle Eastern officials that the global economy is like the bullet train from Osaka to Tokyo; if you miss it, it's gone and there is no way to catch up. Page urged his audience to get on board quickly by restructuring their economies. In this classic critique of the Page-Kanter variant of globalisation, Korten shows how the world is being smothered by a malignant cancer that advances the colonisation of the planet for the sole benefit of powerful corporations and financial institutions.



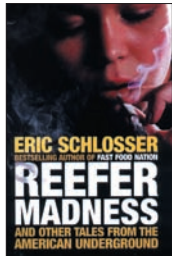
Reefer Madness and other tales from the American underworld

Eric Schlosser

Allen Lane 2003

£10.99, ISBN 0713996587

Reviewed by Tom Stafford



Schlosser's follow-up to *Fast Food Nation* proves that he has lost none of his storytelling flair, searchlight-like intellect or eye

for injustice. *Reefer Madness* comprises three loosely linked pieces covering pornography, the US war on marijuana and the traffic in illegal immigrants used as migrant labour in California. Together they are an investigation of the US's illegal economy and an exploration of the dark side of unchecked market forces. This book sees Schlosser more outspoken and more willing to offer judgments on the subjects he covers. *Reefer Madness* is the best kind of journalism – both passionate and thoroughly argued.

Parecon: life after capitalism

Michael Albert

Verso 2003

£16.00, ISBN 185984698X

Reviewed by Davina Langdale



The Parecon project (participatory economics) is an attempt to answer the 'so what is the alternative?' question that is

so often thrown at anti-corporate globalisers. As editor of the vast internet alternative media resource *ZNet*, Albert is ideally suited to synthesising all the strands running through the anti-capitalist movement. The book lays out in (almost turgid) detail the manifesto of Parecon, and deals with some of the plausible criticisms. The philosophy is based on values such as solidarity, equity and diversity and advocates ideas and mechanisms like workers' councils, balanced job complexes and self-management.

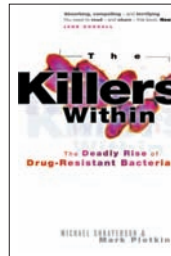
The Killers Within: the deadly rise of drug-resistant bacteria

Michael Shnayerson and Mark Plotkin

Time Warner Books 2003

£9.99, ISBN 0751534811

Reviewed by David Camb



What at first glance appears to be fear-promoting hysteria turns out to be a popular science book with a plot like an adventure story

and implications as important as any bit of social or political research. Shnayerson and Plotkin guide you through the microscopic world of bacteria and antibiotics, and present the real lives affected by the evolved strains of superbugs. They show how our quick-fix reliance on antibiotic 'magic bullets' has led to a situation where the evolution of unstoppable bacteria seems inevitable. The story also encompasses the short-sightedness of pumping livestock full of antibiotics and the greed of drugs firms that only develop cures for the diseases of the rich.

The Earth Around Us: maintaining a livable planet

Edited by Jill S Schneiderman

Westview Press

£16.99, ISBN 0813340918

Reviewed by Jon Napier



The essays in this collection read in such a way that the layman can open the book and feel like a seasoned scientist. A rare

mix of earth science, humanism and ecology explores the wonders, the richness and the fragility of the earth, and engages the reader in an environmentalism that is informed both by science and ethics. A compassionate consideration of environmental justice, theology, and sustainability runs throughout the book, as tales from the toxic struggles at places such as Nevada's Yucca Mountain meld seamlessly with the ins and outs of planetary geology.

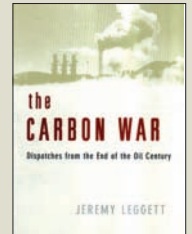
'There is no substitute for energy. The whole edifice of modern society is built upon it... It is not "just another commodity" but the precondition of all commodities, a basic factor equal with air, water and earth.'
EF Schumacher (1973)

The Carbon War: dispatches from the end of the oil century

Jeremy Leggett

Penguin/ Allen Lane, £20.00, ISBN 071399360X

The best book yet on the politics of emissions and climate change. A vital read for anyone interested in how human activities affect our environment.

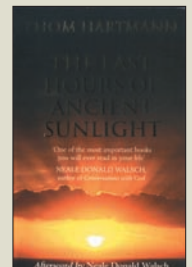


Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight: waking up to personal and global transformation

Thom Hartmann

Hodder & Stoughton, £7.99, ISBN 0340822430

The ancient sunlight (trapped in fossilised plants many millions of years ago) is, of course, oil. A deeply moving call to humanity to return to a more sustainable way of living before it is too late.

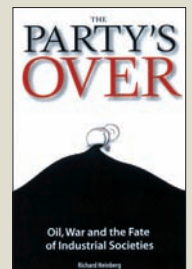


The Party's Over: oil, war and the fate of industrial societies

Richard Heinberg

New Society, £11.99, ISBN 0865714827

Heinberg conclusively shows why we need to rapidly cut our dependence on petroleum, and how our survival hinges on our reshaping society on a smaller scale.



Riding the Dragon: Royal Dutch Shell and the fossil fire

Jack Doyle

Environmental Health Fund, £9.99, ISBN 0972615504

Behind the green adverts lies a dirty truth about Shell, one revealed in exhaustive detail by Doyle. However hard it might try to be a 'good' oil company, the beast is simply untameable.

Project Underground • www.moles.org

This US-based organisation provides information and assistance to communities facing oil, gas and mining operations.

Stop Esso • www.stopesso.com

The quintessential oil campaign. Join the Esso boycott.

Hubbertpeak • www.hubbertpeak.com

Named after the late geologist Dr M King Hubbert, this website provides data, analysis and recommendations regarding the upcoming peak in the rate of global oil extraction.

Die Off • www.dieoff.org

Dealing with the same territory as Hubbertpeak, a rather bleak examination of the issues surrounding the oil production peak.

Care for others as you care for yourself



Viridian is a new kind of vitamin company dedicated to ethical business practices including environmental awareness, pure ingredients and charity donation.

In fact, in 2001/2002, Viridian is donating £30,000 to a range of environmental, children's and other selected charities including NSPCC, Friends of the Earth, Childline, Woodland Trust, Shelter, The Orangutan Foundation, Help the Aged, Amnesty International, Terrence Higgins Trust, Barnados, National Deaf Children's Society, RSPB, Trees For London, UNICEF, Hackney City Farm, Born Free Foundation and Maggie's Cancer Care. Viridian supplies specialist health food stores and each year the stores vote which charities will benefit the

following year – as the company grows, so do the charity donations.

Viridian vitamins and herbs are excellent quality and cost no more than comparable, non-donating brands found in the mass market. So, by switching to Viridian, you not only get the best in nutrition, you also help generate thousands for charities. Everyone's taking vitamins these days and what better way to take them than with a large dose of Viridian's feel-good factor.

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WILDLIFE WEEKS From 1st March to 12th July, from 6th September to 29th November and at any other time on demand if you are a group of at least 6 people. We guide your exploration of the rich diversity of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies, insects, flowers and fungi. We do not promise that you will see any beavers, orchids, chamois, jonquils, swallowtails, griffon vultures, praying mantises, salamanders, wild boar, hawk moths, marmots or wolves...but along with a lot more wildlife, they all live on the farm or in the surrounding mountains and you will have a good chance of seeing at least some of them.

LIVING LIGHTLY From 6th September to 29th November we will also be running week-long investigations into living lightly. You can work out your ecological footprint and explore ways of treading more lightly on the planet – and probably improve the quality of your life and decrease your cost of living at the same time.

NGO CONFERENCES From the 4th January to 13th December we welcome anti-multinational pro-sustainability NGOs to use our facilities for meetings, conferences and forums. We have 21 bedrooms, 34 beds (17 of them double), and can also accommodate campers.

For more information see <http://paulianne.free.fr>.

Or contact Robin or Pam: concentropie@wanadoo.fr;

Paulianne, Luc-en-Diois, 26310 Drôme, France; or (33)4 75 21 37 43

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Visit: www.act.greenpeace.org

Send a free fax to the board of Levi-Strauss. While its workers in Saipan continue to make just \$3.05 per hour, Levi's CEO Philip Marinneau earns \$25.1 million. 26 other retailers have agreed to pay back wages to Saipan workers. Make sure Levi-Strauss follows suit.

Visit: www.corpwatch.org/action

Take the pledge for climate protection, and let the earth provide. The pledge contains 10 vital steps that could help slow global warming and lead to climate destabilisation. Some may be difficult at first, but all are fun and most save money. Visit: www.culturechange.org

Recycle your ink-jet cartridges and help raise funds for WWF. When you buy a WH Smith's own-brand ink-jet cartridge you will find a FREEPOST envelope inside. Use this to send the cartridge to be recycled. WH Smith's will donate at least 50p for every cartridge received.

Visit: www.recyclemore.co.uk

Switch to green electricity. Seven UK companies offer renewable energy from sources that exclude nuclear power and waste incineration. Of these, Scottish & Southern and British Gas charge no premium. Bizz Energy and Unit-e invest their proceeds in renewable technology. Scottish Power does both. For a breakdown of the various providers, visit: www.peopleandplanet.org/climatechange/greenelectricity.php

Send a postcard to Gordon Brown. Hundreds of billions is traded on international currency markets each day. War on Want is campaigning for a Tobin Tax – a 0.1 per cent charge on each transaction. This would generate billions for the fight against global poverty. The Treasury has expressed sympathy for the idea; keep up the pressure. Visit: www.waronwant.org

COURSES

Whale and dolphin conservation courses in Greece and Italy. Organised by the Tethys Research Institute, a non-profit organisation engaged in the protection of cetaceans and their environment.

Six- to nine-day courses from June to October. Tel: +39 0272001947; visit: www.tethys.org

Building Conservation Masterclass.

'The Ecological Management of Historic Buildings and Sites', 3-6 June, 2003. Course Leader: Alan Cathersides, senior landscape manager, English Heritage. The course will consider the flora and fauna of historic structures and their surroundings, grasslands on archeological sites, and the importance of old trees; and will examine the implications for management. Lectures will be supplemented by excursions to look at practical examples.

Cost: £515 residential, £410 non-residential. Contact: Pat Jackson, West Dean College, West Dean, Chichester, West Sussex PO18 0QZ. Email: pat.jackson@westdean.org.uk

Gaia's Kitchen: cooking with the earth in mind, with Julia Ponsonby and Daphne Lambert. Residential course at the Schumacher College, England, September 14-19, 2003. Participants will create menus focusing on local, seasonal and organic production, and will discuss the nutritional benefits of organic food and the wider issues of food production and distribution. Tel: 01803 865934; email: admin@schumachercollege.org.uk; visit: www.schumachercollege.org.uk

GREEN & AWAY

Every summer we run Europe's only tented eco-conference centre. We need volunteers seeking fun and hard work to help build and operate this important service for the UK's voluntary organisations.

Contact: mike@greenandaway.org
01684 893380
www.greenandaway.org

Spiritual Activism: leadership as service, with Alastair McIntosh – author of *Soil and Soul: people versus corporate power*.

Food Culture and Agri-Culture: social, political and environmental analysis of the food economy, with Dr Crispin Hayes. Short courses with Open University credits, July/August 2003. Centre for Human Ecology, Scotland's alternative university for ecology and community, 12 Roseneath Place, Edinburgh EH9 1JB. Tel 0131 624 1974; email: irene.gardiner@che.ac.uk; www.che.ac.uk

New MA programme in Applied Conservation and Community Development

Future Generations, an international school for communities, is offering an innovative new programme for community development practitioners. The programme allows participants to earn a Master's degree while continuing in employment, focuses on global issues of applied conservation, teaches best practices in community development, and uses a blended learning (distance, site-based and on-the-job applications) instructional style. Tuition includes international travel to sites in India, Peru, the US, Tibet and China. Programme catalogue and application material available at: www.future.org; or email: masters@future.org.

Building with lime and earth.

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VOLUNTEER

The Brazil Network is looking for **volunteer translators** – Portuguese into English and English into Portuguese. It is also looking for researchers to help expand its website. Tel: 020 7281 2226; email: brazilnet@gn.apc.org

TAPOL, the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign needs a **volunteer to maintain its specialist press archive**. One day a week for a minimum of four months. Training, travel expenses and lunch provided. Tel: 020 8771 2904; email: tapol@gn.apc.org

AidCamps International offers short-term volunteer work overseas on Third World development aid projects.

Kenya, Cameroon, India. Schools and health centres. Visit: www.AidCamps.org

Join your local Wildlife Trust. Volunteer work across urban and rural sites. Opportunities range from managing nature reserves to community gardening, from species surveying to running Wildlife Watch groups with young people. Visit: www.wildlifetrusts.org

Amaudo UK is a small charity that works with partners in south-eastern Nigeria **implementing sustainable systems of mental healthcare**. Having received an International Lottery Award, it has a range of volunteer opportunities to help with this work. Tel: 020 7834 0477; email: dpieurope@compuserve.com

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Disabled woman requires female personal assistant to help with all aspects of daily living. London and surrounding areas. Full driver's licence required. Non-smoker, environmental awareness preferred. Daily travel allowance available. £6 per hour for up to six hours a day (flexible). Tel: 020 8595 2965

Downham Cycle Taxis. People-powered rickshaws serving the communities of Lewisham and Bromley while protecting the environment. Charity 1090053. Donations/funding urgently needed. Write to: Downham Cycle Taxis, The Goldsmiths Centre, London SE6 1QD. Tel: 020 8461 3876.

Help create a **woodland burial site in the Scottish Borders**. Individuals or organisations wanted with the experience to help establish a non-profit organisation providing an affordable, sustainable alternative. To contribute, or to be kept informed, tel: 01578 730507; email: industry@southcottage.co.uk

ecologist please can you help us

The Ecologist is going to the **Cheltenham Festival of Science, 4-8 June.**

If you would like to help on our stand, please email: Belinda@theecologist.org

For details of the festival, visit: www.cheltenhamfestivals.co.uk



EARTH FROM THE AIR



Earth from the Air is a spectacular collection of large-scale photographs of astonishing natural landscapes. Created by world-famous photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand. A free open-air exhibition in the gardens of the National History Museum, Kensington, London, open from 10am-8pm daily. For more information, visit: www.earthfromtheair.com

JUNE

1-3 JUNE, EVIAN, FRANCE

G8 meeting. Governments of the eight most powerful nations meet to discuss trade, security and development. For information on access, accommodation, towns, security measures etc, visit: www.evian-g8.org
www.protest.net
www.g8circus.org.uk

3 JUNE, LONDON, UK

The Stamford Raffles Lecture. We rarely experience wild nature directly. Instead, the media and zoos mediate that experience for a limited audience. Yet both are critical for the survival of wild nature. Hosted by the Zoological Society of London at its Meeting Rooms, Regent's Park, London NW1. Tickets only. Tel: 020 7449 6227; email: deborah.body@zsl.org

4-8 JUNE, CHELTENHAM, UK

Cheltenham Festival of Science. Features some of the UK's most eminent scientists in a programme packed with talks, debates and events for schools and families. Themes include 'Is organic better for you?' and 'Think global act local'. Plus a talk by James Lovelock and Crispin Tickell. Bookings: 01242 227979. Visit: www.cheltenhamfestivals.co.uk

4 JUNE, LONDON, UK

Indymedia volunteer meeting. This independent media collective meets to discuss current work and future projects. 7.30pm at the London Activist Resource Centre, 62 Fieldgate Street, Whitechapel. Email: imc-london@indymedia.org; visit: www.indymedia.org

5 JUNE, INTERNATIONAL

UN World Environment Day. Annual celebration of the environment, aiming to enhance political attention and action. Celebrations include street rallies, bicycle parades, green concerts, tree planting and recycling efforts. This year's theme is: 'Water: two billion people are dying for it'. Visit: www.unep.org/wed/2003

12 JUNE, LEAMINGTON SPA, UK

Leamington Peace Festival. A free festival to promote international peace. Held at the Pump Room Gardens, it features music, children's and workshop tents and stalls representing charities and fair traders. Tel: 08707 704098; visit: www.peacefestival.org.uk

14 JUNE, KENT, UK

Forest concert. A unique chance to see the **Jools Holland Orchestra** swap the concert hall for the natural acoustics of Bedgebury Pinetum forest. Established as the National Conifer Collection in 1925, the Pinetum now has the most complete collection of conifers in the world. Organised by the Forest Commission, tickets are £24. Tel: 01842 814612; visit: www.bedgeburypinetum.org.uk

16-22 JUNE, UK

Cruelty-Free Week, organised by the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection. Animal testing for cosmetics has ended in the UK, but continues in other countries that make products for sale here. This week is a chance to show that beauty without cruelty is the only way to go. Tel: 020 7700 4888; email: campaigns@buav.org website: www.buav.org



19 JUNE, UK

McLibel: anniversary of 1997 High Court victory. The court ruled that McDonald's pretended its food had 'a positive nutritional benefit which its food did not match', that it 'exploits children' and is 'culpably responsible for animal cruelty'. The McLibel Support Campaign will be holding events to mark the occasion. Tel: 020 7713 1269; email: mclibel@globalnet.co.uk; visit: www.mcspotlight.org

19 JUNE, LONDON, UK

North London Critical Mass. A celebration of cycling taking place on the third Saturday of every month. Bring your wheels to take part in this carnival of anti-car-culture-capitalism. Meet at 2pm outside the Finsbury Park main gate, Seven Sisters Road, London. Email: northlondoncm@home.se; visit: cmlondon.enrager.net/north

20 JUNE, EDINBURGH, UK

Action Café. A free, monthly, vegan café promoting anti-capitalist living. Feel free to bring friends, music or whatever you would hope to find to the table. 5:30-7pm in the Chaplaincy Centre Auditorium, the Potterow Building, Edinburgh University. Tel: 0131 225 3283.

21 JUNE, UK

National Badger Day. The National Federation of Badger Groups helps thousands of badgers in Britain. If you have a badger group in your area, you may be able to join in with their activities. If there is no local group, why not organise your own event? Tel: 020 7498 3220; email: elaine.king@nfbg.org.uk; visit: www.nfbg.org.uk

21 JUNE, DOVER, UK

Live Exports – Dover Rally. Farmed Animal Action will be leading this protest against the transport of live animals in cruel conditions. Meet at 1pm at the roundabout leading to Dover's Eastern Docks. Tel: 0845 4560284; email: info@farmedanimalaction.co.uk; visit: www.farmedanimalaction.co.uk

21 JUNE

Summer Solstice. The sun will be at its furthest point north of the earth at 7.10pm. After the shortest night of the year, it will rise the following morning at 5am. Hundreds will gather to watch the first light at Stonehenge, Amesbury, near Salisbury.

25 JUNE, LONDON, UK

Profiting in the Green Economy. This conference will debate the challenges environmental service providers face in a global industry worth \$515 billion per annum. Speakers will include Margaret Beckett, secretary of state for the environment, and the chief executive of the Environment Agency Barbara Young. To be held at the British Library. Tel: 020 7935 1675; email: info@eic-uk.co.uk

27 JUNE, UK

Lobby Marathon. Organised by the Trade Justice Movement, this event will involve hundreds of supporters contacting their local MPs in the same 24-hour period. The protests will begin at 12pm and last until lunchtime on the following day. Visit: www.tradejusticemovement.org.uk

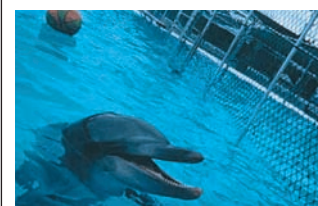
28 JUNE, UK

Greyhound Derby Day of Action. The William Hill Greyhound Derby Final is the day most bets are placed on the dogs. Greyhound Action is organising pickets outside bookmakers to educate punters about the death and suffering of dogs at the hands of the greyhound racing industry. Tel: 01562 745778; email: greyhoundaction@blueyonder.co.uk; visit: www.greyhoundaction.co.uk

JULY

1 JULY, LONDON, UK

LSE public lecture: 'The World Trade Organisation, Poverty and "Global Apartheid".' South African president Thabo Mbeki has described the international distribution of wealth as 'global apartheid'. To what extent is trade law complicit in this system? 6pm in the Old Theatre, Old Building, London WC2. Free and open to all. Tel: 020 7955 6043; email: events@lse.ac.uk



4 JULY, INTERNATIONAL

International Day for Captive Dolphins. Around the world, dolphins are kept in marine parks to provide amusement for humans. Trapped in bare concrete tanks, they suffer isolation and boredom. On US Independence Day, groups around the world will protest against this trade. Join them. Email: cetaceadefence@hotmail.com; visit: www.freespeech.org/cetaceadefence

5 JULY, LONDON, UK

Alternatives to War – Security and Sustainability: two sides of the same coin. Conference with Anita Roddick, Vandana Shiva, director of the International College for Sustainable Living, India, Jubilee 2000's Ann Pettifor and Satish Kumar, editor of *Resurgence* magazine. Held at the City of London School for Girls. Tel: 020 8340 3967; email: peterlang@resurgence.org

5-6 JULY, WARWICKSHIRE, UK

The Organic Food and Wine Fair. Held at the Ryton Organic Gardens near Coventry, the fair is both national event and jolly occasion. Includes tastings, talks, cookery, music and entertainment. Admission: £3.50/£1 concessions for members of groups, or £3.95/£1.50 concessions for individuals. Tel: 0247 6303517; email: enquiry@hdra.org.uk; visit: www.hdra.org.uk



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– Oscar Wilde

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WDCS is the global voice for the protection of whales, dolphins and their environment

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WDCS
Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society