

PLANET • PEOPLE

THE ecologist

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Ban junk food, boycott Bush

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Barbie vs Buddha

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Chemical-induced puberty

Dr Marcia Herman-Giddens is a long-standing professor of child health at the University of North Carolina School of Public Health. In the years leading up to 1997, she began to notice a change in her young patients. 'I was seeing a lot of young girls coming in with pubic hair and breast development,' she said, 'and it seemed like there were too many, too young.'

So she embarked on what is still the largest ever study of sexual development in American children to date; 225 physicians examined more than 17,000 young girls, and the results, published in the academic journal *Pediatrics*, were shocking even to the report's authors.

At the time, the standard medical line was that signs of puberty, including breast development and pubic hair, could be seen in 1 per cent of girls under the age of eight. By the end of the survey, that figure had risen to an astonishing 27.2 per cent for black girls, and 6.7 per cent for white girls. Worse, the doctors reported that 1 per cent of the three-year-old girls they examined had swollen breasts or pubic hair.

These are profoundly disturbing statistics and reveal unambiguously that something in the US system is literally robbing children of their childhood. But what is almost more disturbing than the statistics themselves is the near blanket refusal on the part of the US political establishment to address the phenomenon. It is as if within decision-making circles, the news hasn't registered. And while money is poured into biotechnology, nanotechnology and every other form of high-tech research, the campaign for reversing, let alone understanding, these trends has scarcely begun.

How is that possible? The usual argument that politicians are interested only in the 'here and now' with a view to securing re-election, while for the most part true, does not apply in this case. The problem is already here, and the time to act was yesterday. Nor can it be said that the problem is insoluble, or that its causes are unknown.

There is a solution, and we know what it involves. For years scientists have documented alarming changes to the development of sexual organs in countless species. The majority of lakes in the state of Florida, for instance, contain alligators unable to breed because their testes have been feminised to resemble ovaries. In one region of Montana, when 254 male deer were removed after road accidents, 67 per cent of the carcasses had severe genital abnormalities.

There is an abundance of examples that reveal a general problem. And at its root, according to all available science, is a wide family of endocrine-disrupting chemicals that to varying degrees mimic

the effects of the female hormone oestrogen.

Numerous studies have confirmed the link. Dr Walter Rogan, the former clinical director of the US National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, for instance, measured the levels of PCB and DDE in a group of pregnant women with a view to monitoring their children after birth. The girls with the highest exposure to the chemicals entered puberty 11 months earlier than their contemporaries. Rogan's study led to three separate tests on rats and mice involving 'oestrogenic' chemicals like DDT, Methoxychlor and PCBs. All produced results consistent with his findings.

And the phenomenon is not by any means restricted to the US. A study in Puerto Rico has shown that girls with early breast development have disproportionately high blood levels of phthalates, a chemical used in cosmetics, toys and plastic food containers.

If there is a glimmer of hope for the industries responsible for producing these chemicals, it is fading by the day. Even the normally sluggish World Health Organisation has cautioned that 'the biological plausibility of possible damage to reproductive and developing systems from exposure to endocrine-

In a study of premature puberty in the US 1 per cent of the three-year-old girls examined had swollen breasts or pubic hair



disrupting chemicals is strong'. Some industry scientists will no doubt bend over backwards to shift the blame to factors over which we have little if any control – like genes, for instance. That would buy time for the industries involved, and it would open the doors to yet more expensive research grants. But given what we know to be true, it would take a truly shameless scientist to deny the involvement of synthetic or oestrogen-mimicking chemicals.

So where, then, is the crisis committee? Where is the action? It's true that individual chemicals are occasionally banned. The pesticide Atrazine, for example, which causes male frogs to grow ovaries in their testes at levels 30 times lower than those set by the US Environmental Protection Agency, was banned last month by the EU. But nowhere is there a concerted effort to confront the problem as a whole. That would involve pointing the finger at too many big businesses, and that is something politicians seldom do.

But at what point can we realistically expect our leaders to put happiness and human survival before the interests of industry? Is 'precocious puberty' just another trend, like rising cancer, asthma and allergies, that we will simply have to get used to? Will puberty-slowng drugs become the new Ritalin? Will this phenomenon simply become yet another excuse for profiteering?

Zac Goldsmith, editor

THE ecologist

SPECIAL REPORT



Smithfield Foods and its factory-farm cronies have driven tens of thousands of family pig farmers off their land, shattered rural communities, poisoned thousands of miles of US waterways, killed billions of fish, put countless fishermen out of work, blighted the health of rural Americans and treated hundreds of millions of farm animals with unspeakable and unnecessary cruelty. Now Smithfield is invading Poland.

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When Robert Kennedy Jr wrote 'pig factory farms are more dangerous for our lifestyle and democracy than Osama bin Laden and global terrorism' he was fined \$128,000. Why would he make such an allegation?

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How Smithfield Foods turns local independent family farmers into serfs.

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Fields covered with faeces, children vomiting at school, plastic bins stuffed full of dead pigs. This is the firsthand reality of life in Smithfield's Poland.

COMING UP

In the next issue of *The Ecologist*:

SPECIAL REPORT: CLIMATE CHANGE... THE EVIDENCE

Plus: 4x4 planet killers; Ecodemics: the six plagues of modern man; Mekong River; Phosphates; GM soya; WWF in the dock; Road protesting

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Costing over \$1 billion, the Karahnjúkar hydroelectric dam in Iceland is a hugely controversial project. Mark Lynas journeys to the blasting face hoping to work out for himself whether this elephant is 'green' or of the more usual, brilliant white.

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Worth billions of dollars, the 'death care industry' is booming at the expense of our connection to life.

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Imagine trade in a substance more deadly than heroin – one that causes skin cancer, cataracts and immune deficiency, and destroys crops, fish and animal life worldwide.



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Are you a company with blood on your hands and money to burn? Why not call WPP, the world's largest media company and an expert at removing unsightly blemishes from the world's worst brands?

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'Dieing' to show us their latest tricks, killer whales, with a lifespan in the wild of 35 – 50 years, survive on average six years in captivity.

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Fighting to stem the tide of western consumerism, the remote region of Ladakh, framed by the Karakoram mountains, is putting up a remarkable defence of its culture.

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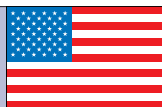
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UNITED STATES



Bush sued over climate change

A dozen US states have filed a lawsuit against the US government to force it to act on global climate change. Responding to a decision by the US Environmental Protection Agency earlier this year that it does not have the authority to regulate carbon dioxide from vehicles and power plants, the suit says the agency is ignoring federal studies that demonstrate climate change is causing 'disease, extreme weather, destruction of shoreline, and loss of critical wetlands and estuaries'. The 12 states are Connecticut, California, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington.

Using medals to spin war

Only one senator objected to a vote urging George W Bush to give War on Terrorism medals to soldiers fighting in Iraq. Vermont senator James Jeffords said the Iraq war was not related to terrorism, stating: 'Those who support giving this medal to our troops in Iraq are once again trying to make a connection [with] 11 September that simply does not exist.'

Most of Bush cabinet linked to companies targeted by class actions

Just as Bush was about to launch a campaign to limit consumers' rights to bring class action lawsuits, it was revealed that 13 out of his 16 cabinet members have been employed by, have served on the board of, or have significant financial interests in corporations that have been targeted by consumer class-action lawsuits.

Farewell to arms

A judge has thrown out a case brought by the world's largest arms manufacturer, Lockheed Martin, against 52 anti-war protesters. The company had sued the protesters for \$41,000 worth of 'security costs' incurred during a demo at one of its bases. The judge dismissed the case when Lockheed conceded that it wasn't fair to force protesters to underwrite its security costs.

www.stoplockheed.org

Bill Gates goes GM

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has donated \$25m to a programme called HarvestPlus, which aims to use genetic modification to improve the nutritional value of staple foods. The announcement should come as no surprise as last year one Dr Florence Wambugu was appointed to the science board of the Gates Foundation's 'Grand Challenges in Global Health' initiative. Wambugu is a member of the DuPont advisory panel on biotechnology, a two-time winner of the 'Monsanto Company Outstanding Performance Award', and the author and publisher of the book *Modifying Africa: how biotechnology can affect the poor and hungry*. She has been called 'an apostle of Monsanto in Africa'.

For more, go to www.gmwatch.org

Brand new baby

Increasing numbers of US parents are naming their children after luxury brands. In 2001 there were 273 boys and 298 girls called Armani, 269 Chanel (all girls), 24 girls called Porsche and six boy Timberlands. Also apparently popular were Nike, Chivas Regal, Champagne, Nivea, Evian, Fanta, Guinness, Pepsi and Lexus.

Et cetera

The EPA says there is no need to regulate dioxins in sewage sludge that is applied to land... Scientists find Prozac in livers, muscles and brains of fish downstream of Texan sewage treatment plant... Largest Christian retail goods chain in the US to open on Sundays... Muslim girl suspended from Oklahoma school for refusing to take off her head scarf... Texan teenager suspended for supplying drugs (lending his inhaler to asthmatic girlfriend who had lost hers)... Cleaners at Wal-Mart found making less than \$2 a day.

Cost of war

At the time of going to press, the war with Iraq had cost the US \$83,637,482,512. Every passing second adds another \$3,000 to that figure. For the same sum 25,606,971 additional children could be provided with a year of health care. To see how much the war costs now, go to www.costofwar.com.

MEXICO

Naked workers invade Mexican senate

Naked farm workers staged a mass invasion of the Mexican senate in a row over land rights. The 150 naked protesters only agreed to leave the senate after its vice president, Carlos Chaurand, guaranteed that their demands would be met. The protesters were calling for a decree signed by former Mexican president Carlos Salinas to be put into action. The decree authorised the donation of land to workers who are part of the '400 People' movement.

SWITZERLAND

Swiss to vote on GM ban

Opponents of GM foods in Switzerland have forced a referendum, which, if successful, will ban GM products from Switzerland for the next five years. A coalition of environmentalists and farmers collected more than 120,000 votes to ensure that there would be a referendum on whether Switzerland should remain GM-free. In Swiss law campaigners can secure a referendum on any issue so long as they can collect 100,000 signatures.

BOLIVIA

Bolivian president resigns following mass protests

Bolivian president Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada resigned in October following a month of protests against government plans to sell Bolivia's natural gas resources to multinational corporations. Beginning in late September, thousands of Bolivians took to the streets calling for the president to step down. The protesters used non-violent tactics such as hunger strikes and human blockades to put pressure on the government and attract international media coverage. Although 80 people were killed in the ensuing police repression, it served only to fuel the flames of resistance as ever broader sections of society joined the demonstrations. The Associated Press reported: 'Abandoning the presidential residence in a military helicopter, Sanchez de Lozada became the fourth Latin American president driven from office by widespread protests in recent years. Ecuador's Jamil Mahuad, Peru's Alberto Fujimori and Argentina's Fernando de la Rúa were all unseated by outpourings of public anger over US-backed free-market economic policies.'

ECUADOR

Chevron sued over Amazon pollution

Ecuadorian Indians demonstrated outside a courthouse in the middle of the Amazon jungle last month at the start of a case accusing US oil giant ChevronTexaco of polluting the region. According to lawyers for the 30,000 Ecuadorian plaintiffs, a Texaco subsidiary dumped 18.5 billion gallons of oil-laden water into local rivers between 1972 and 1992. 'Before Texaco, we were free,' said 67-year-old Secoya Indian Esteban Lusitande. 'We drank from the river, bathed in the river and everything was peaceful because it wasn't polluted. Now there's nothing. We can't even swim.'

CHILE

Chilean mine stopped

A proposed mining project in Patagonia has been called off, after 10 years of opposition from local inhabitants and environmentalists. For the last decade the Canadian mining company Noranda has sought to build an aluminium smelter and three hydroelectric plants in the Aysen region of Chilean Patagonia. The plan was so unpopular that even Chilean president Ricardo Lagos opposed it – despite the fact that its \$3 billion cost would have represented the largest foreign investment in the country ever. However, environmentalists warn that Noranda has not abandoned its plans – only halted them, and that it is currently looking for another site for the project in the region.



FRANCE

French McDonald's strike continues

McDonald's employees in Paris have now been on strike for eight months. Staff at one of the fast food chain's restaurants on Boulevard St Denis have been on strike since 11 March, occupying the premises around the clock, shutting it down and plastering it with protest slogans.



EU

Controversial herbicide legalised

The European Union legalised the controversial herbicide paraquat in October, despite claims that it is acutely toxic for both humans and animals. Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Austria, all of which have banned paraquat for many years, voted against the proposal, as did Luxembourg. The Netherlands abstained. Paraquat was sprayed on Latin American marijuana fields in the 1970s as a defoliant.

CHINA

Energy use rockets in China

Coal use in China is growing faster than almost anywhere in the world, according to new figures released by the International Energy Agency. The agency, which is linked to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, also predicts that China's increase in greenhouse gas emissions from 2000 to 2030 will almost equal that of the rest of the industrialised world put together. Chinese car sales and domestic energy use for televisions, air-conditioning and other electronic appliances are also rising dramatically.

Findings

Global warming kills 160,000 a year

Climate change may be killing about 160,000 people a year, according to a new report by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the World Health Organisation. The report adds that by 2020 the number of such deaths could almost double.

Workplace causes quarter of asthma cases

People who work in cleaning, farming and transportation are particularly vulnerable to asthma, according to a new study published in *The American Journal of Industrial Medicine*. Overall, the study found that 26 per cent of all adult asthma cases in the US are caused or exacerbated by the workplace environment. This is mainly due to exposure to solvents, pesticides, dust, oil mist, lubricants and other chemical compounds.

Discovery of clean way to generate power from water

The *Journal of Micromechanics and Microengineering* has revealed that scientists at Canada's University of Alberta have discovered a clean and simple way to generate electricity by forcing water through narrow glass tubes. It is claimed that it is the first time a completely new way of generating electricity has been discovered in over 160 years.

Microwaving destroys food's nutrients

Flavonoids (nutrients with anti-inflammatory properties) in broccoli are almost completely destroyed by microwave cooking, according to new Spanish research. Scientists at the Department of Food Technology in Murcia found that microwaving the vegetable destroyed 97 per cent of its flavonoids and other chemicals, whereas conventional boiling reduced them by 66 per cent. Steaming resulted in the lowest losses of nutrients.

For more on the effects of microwaves, contact Simon Best at Electromagnetic Hazard and Therapy on 0906 4010237



BRAZIL

Brazilian state goes GM-free

The Brazilian state of Parana, declared itself a GM-free zone in October, following a recent decision to allow the cultivation of GM in the neighbouring state of Rio Grande do Sul. Parana also detained around 1,000 trucks believed to be transporting GM soya to the port of Paranaguá.

According to official estimates, this year's Brazilian soya crop should be around 51 million tons (or 26 per cent of the world's total soya production), 6 million tons of which will be GM soya grown in Rio Grande do Sul.

CHAD

Chad pipeline opens despite opposition

Environmentalists and human rights activists in Chad declared 10 October a day of mourning following the official inauguration of the publicly-financed Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline. Only a month previously the Chad government had prohibited a peaceful march against the pipeline, and used a \$4.5m signing bonus from oil companies to purchase arms.

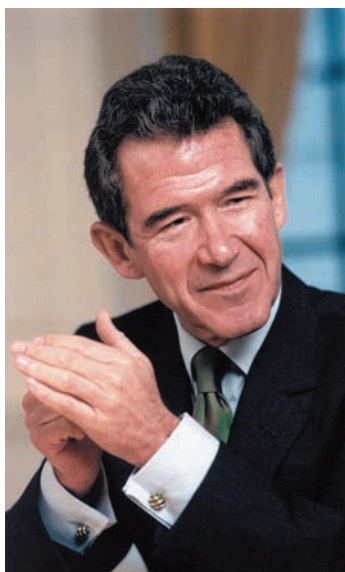
The pipeline project is backed by ExxonMobil, Petronas and Chevron, and received \$200m of funding from the World Bank and 144m euros from the European Investment Bank.

CHINA

Problems already at world's largest dam

The Three Gorges Dam, the largest dam in the world, has begun experiencing environmental problems less than five months after it started functioning. When the dam came on line in June the reservoir behind it rose to 443 feet. It was supposed to stay at that level until 2006, but the Chinese government quickly announced that the reservoir was expected to rise a further 13 feet by the end of October. Environmentalists believe that silt is building up behind the dam more quickly than anticipated.

NEWS Britain and Ireland at a glance



BP boss speech disrupted

Activists disrupted a lecture by BP boss John Browne on 'the role of energy in sustainable development' at the Royal Institute of British Architects in October.

Outside the meeting protesters distributed leaflets with the message 'John Browne, the future will hold you to account for the crimes of your company... BP: more climate chaos; less social justice', and displayed banners declaring 'no public money for Baku-Ceyhan pipeline' and 'BP sponsors climate chaos'.

One activist managed to make it inside, and interrupted Browne mid-flow – condemning his company's record throughout the world. Following her removal, Browne went on to praise the work of chemical engineers.



Horrors of Tesco pig farm exposed

Undercover video footage has revealed the terrible conditions suffered by pigs at one of Tesco's suppliers. A video shot by animal rights group Viva showed pigs at Cherry Tree Farm in Attlesborough near Norwich confined terrified to tiny pens and struggling to move with ulcerated cuts on their flesh. In one graphic shot maggots could be seen crawling over the decomposing flesh of a piglet corpse. The farm is part of the giant Bowes of Norfolk group, which supplies thousands of kilogrammes of pork, bacon and processed meat to Tesco each year, and also processes 50 per cent of the supermarket's 'Organic' and 'Tender Select' ranges.

www.viva.org.uk
For more on the horrors of industrial pig farming, read our special report on Smithfield Foods starting on page 47

NORTH SEA IN 'ECOLOGICAL MELTDOWN'

Global warming is sending the North Sea into 'ecological meltdown', according to new research by scientists at the Sir Alister Hardy Foundation for Ocean Science in Plymouth. Record sea temperatures are killing off the plankton that underpin the entire marine food chain and on which all sea-life ultimately depends. Fish stocks and sea bird populations have plummeted.

The foundation, which has been monitoring plankton levels for over 70 years, says an unprecedented heating of the waters has driven the cold-water plankton species hundreds of miles to the north; they have been replaced by smaller, warm-water species that are less nutritious.



Furthermore, the Copenhagen-based International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) says North Sea and Skagerrak cod stocks only reached 52,000 tonnes this year, less than a third of their minimum recommended size.

The worst affected area was in the Atlantic waters west of Scotland. There, the estimated cod stock stood at only 2,500 tonnes; the ICES says that the region's minimum stock size should be 22,000 tonnes. In the Irish Sea, where the ICES says the minimum stock size was 7,000 tonnes, stocks were 1,700 tonnes. In both areas the ICES has called for a halt in fishing.

Pesticide ban renders GM tests meaningless

Following the publication of the results of the GM field trials, the biotech lobby pointed to the study's assessment that GM maize was better for wildlife than its conventional equivalent as proof of the technology's benefits. But atrazine, the weedkiller used for the non-GM trial plots, has now been banned in Europe, rendering the results still more meaningless in terms of providing any prediction as to how the impact of GM crops will compare with conventional agricultural practices.

The US Environmental Protection Agency says that Atrazine, which is manufactured mainly by Syngenta, can cause heart, lung and kidney damage, as well as cancer. It is also a persistent contaminator of groundwater. For more information, see: panna.org/resources/panups/panup_20031024.dv.html



Rubbish tax protest arrests

A group of 15 people were arrested in Dublin recently for protesting against a proposed bin tax. The protesters were angry at the tax, which shifts the costs for disposing of waste from industry and agriculture (the producers of most waste) onto the general public. The changes mean that the poorest sections of society will end up paying relatively more because the tax is a flat charge regardless of income. <http://struggle.ws/wsm/bins.html>

GM crops approval would make science minister millions

UK science minister Lord Sainsbury's company Innotech has a 12.4 per cent stake in US firm Paradigm Genetics, which could, if GM crops were approved in the EU, make millions. Paradigm is involved in a joint venture with Monsanto to develop novel genes that could be used to modify the DNA of crop plants.



Oil and money jamboree

Ever wondered how detached the executives who run the oil industry are from the devastation they are causing? In November the 24th annual Oil and Money Conference took place in London. The title of 'the world's most prestigious energy forum' was 'shaping a course for a fragile world', but the conference participants showed little understanding of the consequences of their trade. One session had the subtle billing 'Iraq's future: bonanza or turmoil'; its two speakers were the US-appointed chief executive of the Iraqi oil ministry and the man in charge of government operations at Halliburton.

However, the highlight was undoubtedly the announcement of ExxonMobil CEO Lee Raymond as Petroleum Executive of the Year. The reasons given for this recognition say it all: 'Under his leadership, ExxonMobil has enjoyed stellar financial performance relative to its competitors with an unwavering focus on shareholder return.' In other words, fuck the planet, just show me the money.

Drink a glassa fluoride a day

Public health minister Melanie Johnson has said that drinking a glass of fluoridated water is the 'preferred method' of preventing tooth decay. In a recent letter to MPs Johnson outlined what she saw as the advantages of fluoridation over brushing teeth. The government wants to give health authorities the power to order utilities to add fluoride to the local water supplies.

Johnson says brushing requires 'ongoing positive personal action by the individual', and there's nothing this government likes less than that. People who drink fluoridated water, however, can protect their teeth 'without needing to take any personal action'. What could be better, a nation of apathetic, disengaged consumers... with fluoridated teeth? For more on the dangers of fluoridation, see: www.npwa.freeseve.co.uk

Green-washing the Republicans

'A caricature has taken hold in the public imagination: Republicans seemingly in the pockets of corporate fat cats who rub their hands together and chuckle maniacally as they plot to pollute America for fun and profit. I don't have to remind you how often Republicans are depicted as cold, uncaring, ruthless – even downright antisocial. The fundamental problem for Republicans when it comes to the environment is that whatever you say is viewed through the prism of suspicion.' So writes Frank Luntz, a top public opinion researcher for corporate lobbyists in the US. The Washington-based green research organisation the

Environmental Working Group recently obtained a book by Luntz that teaches Republicans how to make the public believe they care for the environment. Some of his key messages include:

- First assure your audience that you're committed to 'preserving and protecting' the environment, but that 'it can be done more wisely and effectively' [than by pursuing an overtly green agenda]. Since many Americans believe Republicans do not care about the environment, you will never convince them to accept your ideas until you confront this suspicion. Absolutely do not raise economic arguments first.
- Your plan must be put in terms of the future, not the past or present. The

environment is an area in which people expect progress. When they do not see progress, they become frustrated.

- If you must use the economic argument, stress that you are seeking 'a fair balance' between the environment and the economy. Be prepared to specify and quantify the jobs lost because of needless, excessive or redundant regulations.
- Emphasise common sense. In making regulatory decisions, use 'best estimates' and 'realistic assumptions', not the 'worst-case scenarios' advanced by environmental 'extremists'.
- Finally, Luntz provides some helpful creative writing advice for any Republicans still struggling with the cause of environmentalism: 'It can be helpful to think of environmental and other issues in terms of "story". A compelling story, even if factually inaccurate, can be more emotionally compelling than a dry recitation of the truth... The facts are beside the point. It's all in how you frame your argument.'

DON'T THEY KNOW WHO WE ARE?

Each month The Ecologist receives a range of PR materials from firms keen to promote their green credentials

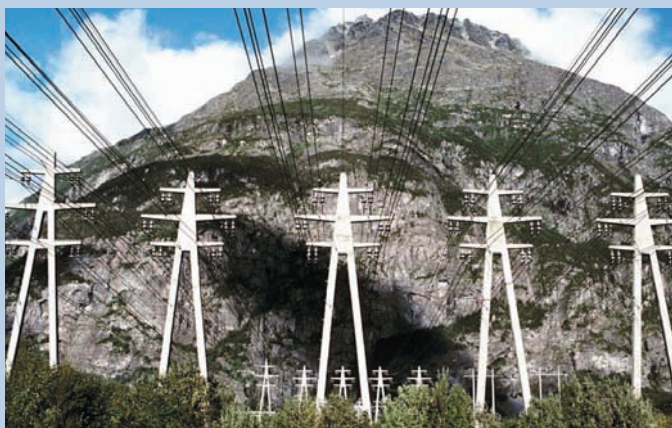
THIS MONTH



Sometimes you have to hand it to the people who write press releases. It takes a remarkable amount of something (creativity, guile, absence of morality?) to be able to get up each morning, write releases with headlines like 'the bird-man of Powergen brings wildlife to power stations', and then sleep easy at night.

The bird-man is one Bill Jones. Bill discovered that a couple of power stations in Kent (Kingsnorth and Grain) had nature reserves (sic), and then set about enhancing them. Over the years he has managed to attract rare and scarce (or 'rare and scare' as the press release put it; creative, maybe, but still illiterate) species of birds, grass snakes, slowworms and orchids to the sites. He is now 'environmental initiatives officer' for the two power stations.

Well how about this for an initiative, Bill? Powergen controls 11 per cent of the UK's energy-generating capacity and says it intends to become the country's leading green generator. Yet currently 49 per cent of Powergen's energy comes from coal, 50 per cent from gas, and just 1 per cent from renewables. One of its three old coal-fired power stations, the emissions from which have been rising steeply in recent years, is Kingsnorth. Meanwhile, Powergen's parent company EON emits more carbon dioxide in a year than the whole of France. The next time you take one of your '2,000 visitors' a year to see your slowworms, why don't you tell them that, too?



The indomitable pride of Halliburton

The CEO of Halliburton sent an internal memo to his staff in October asking them to write letters to news organisations to 'show pride in your work and your co-workers'. Dave Lesar's memo went on to say: 'Please add your voice to mine, so we can be heard over those who are distorting our efforts... Please write from the heart and use your own words, and, where possible, use first-hand stories.'

Votes not for sale

South Carolina Democratic Party chairman Joe Erwin has decided against selling advertising space on ballot papers for voting in the state's Democratic primaries. Erwin had previously told a reporter of his cash-strapped party's plans, but has since changed his mind, saying: 'Even if it's legal, even if it doesn't violate any party rules, it doesn't pass the common-sense test.'

Crap joke

Tyre manufacturer Dunlop was criticised recently in Toronto for sponsoring a bizarre and degrading game called Moulette. In the game a cow walks around the inside of a giant 50-foot diameter roulette wheel, with contestants taking bets as to where she will defecate.

Terminally ill

The British Airports Authority (BAA) is hosting an exhibition at Heathrow Airport called 'Focus on your World'. It features a selection of photographs from the UN Environment Programme. The BAA's head of environment says: 'The future of the aviation industry... depends on us all embracing environmental principles.' So that's why they're building Terminal Five then.

SELLAFIELD PIGEON



Droppings from the pigeons living near Sellafield are classified as 'nuclear waste'... More fresh pickings from the detritus of modern life

Bears get sick in the woods

Bears in the US are getting tooth decay because hunters are using sweets as bait, according to wildlife officials in North Carolina. The bears are becoming addicted and suffering a range of symptoms, including tooth decay, hair and weight loss and lethargy.

David Cobb, chief of the Wildlife Management Division at the state's Wildlife Resources Commission, said that he once found a bear lying in the road, moaning and unwilling to move out of his vehicle's way.



ET CETERA



Ecuadorian mayor hires parrot to answer 'undesirable questions'... Austrian farmer faces jail under EU law for selling marmalade made from apricots... Japanese store to offer £145 New Year meal for dogs... Beer manufacturer Carlsberg to relocate plant to Gothenburg due to too much uranium in Stockholm spring... Zoo to use animal dung to fuel biomass power plant... Solar-powered glow-in-the-dark gravestones go on sale in Austria... Angry farmers force New Zealand to abandon plans for flatulence tax on farm animals... Millipedes on track stop Japanese train... Baghdad gets first Burger King

Victory for Argentinian tribe

ARGENTINA The indigenous Wichí people of Argentina have won their seven-year struggle for the rights to their ancestral lands (see 'Leapfrogging the law', June 2003). In 1996 the Wichí of Hoktek T'oi in the northern Argentinian province of Salta brought a case against the provincial government because it was illegally issuing deforestation permits to a firm called Los Cordobeses. In defiance of the Wichí's wishes and constitutional rights, the permits have resulted in the deforestation of over 1,800 hectares of Wichí ancestral forest. But in September Argentina's Supreme Court ruled that the Salta state government was obliged to ensure the participation of indigenous peoples in the management of their natural resources.

Botswana government admits to eviction of bushmen

BOTSWANA The Botswanan foreign minister has admitted his government were responsible for moving the bushmen of Botswana's Central Kalahari Game Reserve from their ancestral land. Speaking at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies in October, Mompoti Merafhe at first denied that the bushmen had been forced off their land but then admitted: 'We put these people... where we want them to be.' The minister faced hostile questioning by several students over his government's forced eviction of the bushmen. He claimed the government wanted the bushmen to 'enjoy the better things in life – like driving Cadillacs', and asked: 'Why must they continue to commune with the flora and fauna?'

Japan rejects Icelandic whale meat

ICELAND Just weeks after the finish of Iceland's first whale hunting season in 14 years, the country's expansive whaling plans suffered a serious blow when Japan decided not to import Icelandic whale products. The meat from the 36 minke whales landed had previously received a very tepid response from Icelandic consumers.

Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society director Sue Fisher said: 'When Iceland announced its whaling programme, Icelandic politicians and whalers banked on Japan buying hundreds of tonnes of meat and blubber over the next few years. That gamble has backfired. The last thing the Japanese market needs is more whale meat. The government must now tell the Icelandic public about Japan's block on whale meat imports and decide whether a continuation of whaling is worth the financial and political costs.'

CAMPAIGN OF THE MONTH

In the Christmas spirit?



Every year 6 million turkeys are slaughtered in the UK, simply to meet Christmas demand. The life of an intensively farmed turkey is a world apart from that of its ancestors. Originally a native of America, the common turkey is a sociable and curious bird. In the wild, turkeys will live for around 10 years and, like chickens, roost in trees as soon as they are able to fly. They also dust-bathe to clean their feathers. None of these natural types of behaviour are possible within the squalid, cramped conditions of factory farms.

BIRTH

Factory-farm turkeys have been selectively bred to have so much breast meat that natural breeding has become physically impossible; all reproduction is by artificial insemination. The breeding males (stags) are 'milked' two or three times a week for their semen. Then the females are inseminated via a length of tubing inserted into the vagina.

LIFE

Most factory-farm turkeys are reared in windowless sheds with up to 25,000 other birds, and have so little space that moving becomes an overly stressful challenge that can induce aggression. To prevent this aggression, most turkeys spend their short lives (lasting between 12 and 26 weeks) in near-darkness. Some are also de-beaked: they have the ends of their beaks sliced off with a red-hot blade; this process, which can cause life-long pain, is carried out to prevent feather-pecking and cannibalism – behavioural traits that have become rife *only* under factory-

farm conditions. Factory-farm turkeys' bodies are often so heavy that many adult males (which can weigh as much as an eight- or nine-year-old child) suffer from painful degenerative hip disorders.

DEATH

In preparation for slaughter, the turkeys are unloaded from transport crates and hung upside down from shackles. UK law allows the birds to be left hanging like this for up to six minutes before slaughter. The moving shackle line then drags the turkeys through a bath of electrified water that is meant to render them unconscious before their throats are cut. But sometimes the struggling birds' heads miss the bath entirely, and the turkeys remain fully conscious during throat-cutting. Some are even still alive when they enter the feather-loosening scalding tank.

WHAT TO DO

- 1 Write to environment minister Elliot Morley at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR. Explain the suffering of intensively farmed turkeys, and ask him to introduce legislation to prevent routine mutilations, reduce stocking densities and end selective breeding.
- 2 If you are buying turkey this Christmas, choose a bird from a local, free-range and organic farm. Yes, it will cost more money. So, make a cutback somewhere else. The Soil Association (www.soilassociation.org) has a national directory of reputable suppliers.
- 3 Photocopy this page and distribute it widely. Pin it up at work, or take it into school. Let whoever is cooking Christmas dinner know that you won't eat factory-farmed turkey.
- 4 Think about the rest of your Christmas meal. Were the vegetables grown in the UK? Is the wine organic? If there is any other meat involved? And, if so, is it also from a local free-range organic supplier?



GET INFORMED — CORPORATE CRIME

The International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal has declared the upcoming anniversary (3 December) of the 1984 Union Carbide disaster as the Global Day of Action Against Corporate Crime. One of the longest ever fights for justice waged by survivors of an industrial disaster against a transnational corporation, the Bhopal struggle epitomises the challenges involved in holding corporations to account. Bhopal survivors are calling on pollution-impacted communities, public-interest organisations, trade unions, student activists, concerned citizens and progressive academics to take action on the day of the anniversary against criminal corporations in general and Dow Chemical facilities and offices in particular. Dow Chemical acquired Union Carbide in 2001.

www.bhopal.net

MAGAZINES

Corporate Crime Reporter

Published 48 times a year, *Corporate Crime Reporter* keeps bang up to date on legal proceedings against corporations. Each issue features an interview with a key figure involved in fighting corporate crime.

www.corporatecrimereporter.com

Multinational Monitor

The magazine tracks corporate activity, especially in the Third World, and focuses on the export of hazardous substances, worker health and safety, labour issues and the environment.

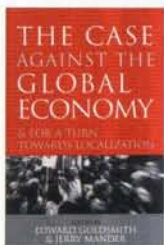
www.multinationalmonitor.org

BOOKS

The Case Against the Global Economy and For a Turn Toward the Local

Edited by Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith

EARTHSCAN, 1996



A comprehensive analysis of the global economy, and its social and environmental implications. A collection of 43 economic,

agricultural and environmental experts argue that free trade and economic globalisation are producing exactly the opposite results from what has been promised. Contributors include Jeremy Rifkin, Ralph Nader, Vandana Shiva, David Korten, Wendell Berry, Kirkpatrick Sale and Herman E Daly.

When Corporations Rule the World

David Korten

KUMARIAN PRESS, 1995



Korten's central message is that the global economy has become a malignant cancer advancing the colonisation of the planet's living spaces for the

benefit of powerful corporations and financial institutions.

Captive State – The Corporate Takeover of Britain

George Monbiot

PAN, 2000



Focusing on the UK, Monbiot documents how the traditional business of government (economic and development planning, law and order, and protecting the workforce, consumers and the environment) and academia and most of the media are falling into the hands of private business.

WEBSITES

The Corporate Europe Observatory

www.corporateeurope.org

European research and campaign group targeting the threats posed by the economic and political power of corporations and their lobby groups.

Corporate Watch (US)

www.corpwatch.org

News on human rights abuses abroad, public policy and the environment.

Corporate Watch (UK)

www.corporatewatch.org.uk

Anti-corporate collective whose website and newsletter detail corporate crimes. With a slight UK focus.

Transnationale

www.transnationale.org

Vast and ever-growing database of critical information on transnational corporations.

The Endgame Project

www.endgame.org

Extensive catalogue of abuses by multinationals, with a particular focus on logging industries.

GET INVOLVED — PETITION SAINSBURY'S

There's every chance the milk in your tea is not GM-free, unless you shop at M&S or buy organic. GM is sneaking into our milk because dairy herds in the UK are fed on GM crops imported from the USA. Sainsbury's claims it can't take GM out of milk products - but M&S already have! We believe Sainsbury's should follow M&S's lead and commit to going non-GM on animal feed. The other supermarkets would then most likely follow suit.

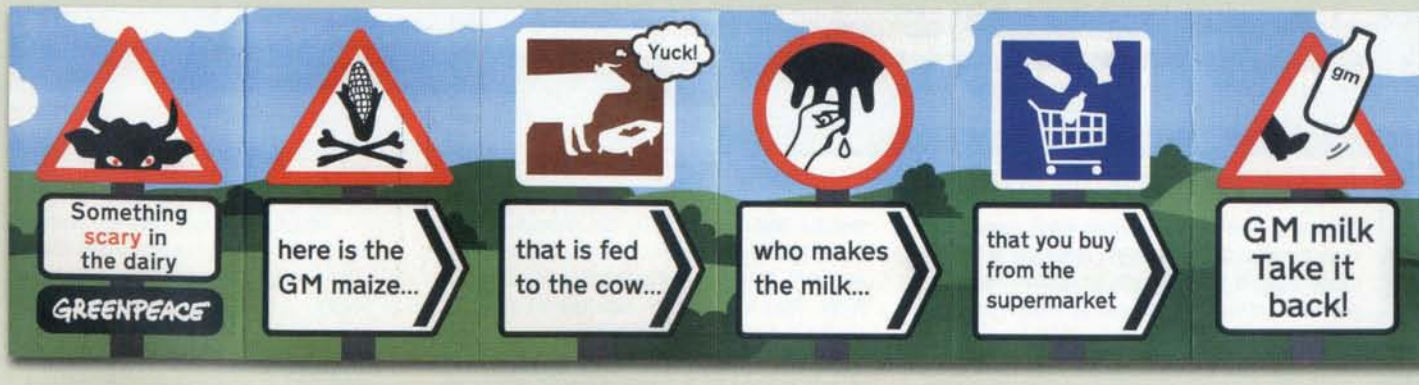
Write call or email Sainsbury's and tell them you don't want to buy GM milk

Write to: Sir Peter Davis, Group Chief Executive, J Sainsbury's PLC
33 Holborn, London, EC1N 2HT

Call: the customer services line 01622 712987 and tell them you won't be buying their own brand milk until they can assure you it's not GM

Email: using the contact form on the Sainsbury's website
www.sainsburys.co.uk/contactus/main.asp

For more information on this campaign, go to www.greenpeace.org.uk



CFC SMUGGLING • Imagine trade in a substance more deadly than heroin – one that causes skin cancer, cataracts and im

Since the 1930s man-made substances, in particular chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), have been destroying the ozone layer. Scientists estimate that since the 1980s alone, there has been a 3-6 per cent global reduction in the ozone layer. This may seem insignificant until one considers that for every 1 per cent reduction in ozone there is a 2-4 per cent increase in skin cancer and between 100,000 and 150,000 new cases of eye cataracts.

In 1987, having finally realised the significance of the ozone layer, the world moved to stop ozone destruction by signing up to the Montreal protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The protocol has been remarkably effective, and has led to the worldwide consumption of such substances falling by 80 per cent.

Unfortunately, this initial success has led to complacency. The Montreal protocol's stated goal of industrialised countries phasing out the production of ozone-depleting substances entirely by 1996 has not been achieved, and a black market trade in CFCs is now thriving.

ABUSE OF THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL

When the Montreal protocol was negotiated industry successfully lobbied to allow CFC production to continue in Europe under two special circumstances: the products responsible would be solely for export to developing ('Article Five') countries; or they would be, like inhalers for asthma sufferers, for 'essential uses'.

Recent studies led by the international campaigning organisation the Environmental Investigation Agency have found that these two provisions are being seriously violated.

1 Undercover investigators posing as merchants were sent to buy CFCs for 'sandwich bar refrigeration systems' that needed servicing. They found that 45 per cent of Spanish companies contacted were willing to supply CFCs. In Italy the figure was 29 per cent, in the UK it was 24 per cent, and in France it was 12 per cent.

2 Some 15,000 tonnes of CFCs meant for export to Article Five countries were laundered back into Europe between 1994 and 1996. The Dutch Antilles, for example, began importing huge amounts of CFCs (far more than was needed for the islands) in 1995. In 1998 customs officers intercepted some of these CFCs as they were about to be illegally shipped back to France. There is strong evidence suggesting that this trade continues.

THE EARTH'S PROTECTIVE BLANKET

The one protection we have on earth against the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation is the ozone layer. It is a naturally protective blanket of gas situated between six and 30 miles above the earth's surface, and has been under assault from man-made substances for over seven decades.

By far the most pervasive of the substances responsible for ozone depletion are CFCs. They are a family of chemicals containing chlorine,

fluorine and carbon. CFCs are commonly found in refrigeration systems, air-conditioners, aerosols, solvents and in the manufacture of foam. They leak into the atmosphere when these products age or are damaged.

When CFCs interact with the stratospheric clouds formed by Antarctica's extremely cold temperatures they rapidly destroy ozone molecules.

Since the early 1970s the level of ozone destruction has become so bad that an ozone hole has been appearing over Antarctica every spring. It is now 29 million square kilometres in size – about three times as big as Australia. What's more worrying is that a second hole is expected to appear over the Arctic within the next 20 years.



immune deficiency, and destroys crops, fish and animal life worldwide. Matilda Lee reports

PROFITING FROM DESTRUCTION

Since the Montreal protocol came into force developing countries have received over \$1.4 billion from a 'multilateral fund' to help them phase out their own CFC production. Given that it costs £450 to replace a car's air-conditioning system, compared to £60 for a cylinder of illegal CFCs that can service many air-conditioners, it isn't surprising that there is a burgeoning market in illegal CFCs.

- 1 A black market in CFCs is now thriving in India, thanks to imports from neighbouring Bangladesh and Nepal – both of which have lax CFC import controls. CFCs are concealed and transported between borders in all manners of transport, including rickshaws.
- 2 In Pakistan imported CFCs are being falsely labelled to evade customs checks.
- 3 Malaysian authorities discovered imported CFC cylinders disguised as CFC-alternative products.
- 4 75 per cent of the CFC consumption in the Philippines is illegal. The profit margin for CFCs has become so great that vehicle air-conditioning systems that were adapted for CFC alternatives have been converted back to using CFCs.

FUTURE IMPERFECT

In 1987 scientists estimated that if countries fully implemented the Montreal protocol the ozone layer would recover completely by 2050. Given the continued and illegal production of CFCs in Europe and the growing illegal CFC trade in the developing world, this looks impossible. If governments don't clamp down on this deadly trade soon, the consequences could be apocalyptic.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Make a copy of this article and send it to your MP. Tell them that all CFC production and use in Europe should be banned. To find out who your MP is, see www.locata.co.uk/commons/

Sources: *European Union CFC Production and the Worldwide Illegal Trade in Ozone Depleting Substances*, Environmental Investigation Agency briefing by Ezra Clark and Julian Newman, November 2002; *Illegal Trade in Ozone Depleting Substances: is there a hole in the Montreal protocol?*, *OzonAction Newsletter* special supplement, October 2001; Environmental Facts and Figures: The Ozone Hole, The Environment Agency (www.environmentagency.gov.uk/yourenv/eff/pollution/544857/544888/?version=1&lang=_e)

THE GLOBAL CONSEQUENCES OF OZONE DEPLETION

- Approximately 90 million more cases of skin cancer are expected by 2060.
- More than 25 million additional cases of eye cataracts are expected by 2050.
- It reduces the immune system's ability to recognise and destroy damaged cells and germs, causing decreased resistance to tumours and diseases.
- Crops such as wheat, barley, rice and soya (on which we depend for much of our food) are at risk from

damage to their height and shoot mass and reductions in their foliage area.

- It reduces the ability of vegetation to fight disease.
- Marine phytoplankton, the microscopic plants on which all fish and marine invertebrates are dependent in the food chain, are reduced. This causes an overall reduction in fish yields.
- UV radiation can interact with hydrocarbon pollutants in the sea, making them 10,000 times more toxic.



The CFC-producing Atofina chemical plant, Bilbao, Spain



Atofina-produced CFCs being moved by smugglers on the Nepal-India border



Seizure, Calcutta



CFC-releasing refrigerant seized in Varanasi, India



Freon cylinders seized in Fort Lauderdale, Florida



Percentage of modern medicine derived naturally from plants

24

Percentage of all the deaths in pregnancy and childbirth that are caused by iron deficiency

23

Millions of US citizens that suffer from illegal substance dependence

22

Thousands of people who die each year in the EU from exposure to car pollution

21

Number of thousands of people that live on each hectare of municipal dumping ground in slums outside Manila

20



Percentage of baby food that contains pesticide residues

19

Number out of every 24 girls aged 15-19 in Mozambique that don't know how to protect themselves against Aids

18

Percentage of species in the world that aren't arthropods

17

Thousands of miles of streams and rivers in the US that have been polluted by mining contaminants

16

Age over which 50 per cent of Congolese women are illiterate

15

Percentage of Zambians that live above the poverty line

14

Dollars spent in debt-servicing for every \$1 countries receive in aid

13

Percentage of the world that received over 52 per cent of total world profits in 2001

12

Thousands of combatants in Colombia younger than 18

11

Millions of years it will take for the planet to recover from the loss of plants and species made extinct by mankind

10



Number of the world's 17 major fishing grounds that are in serious decline

9



Number of cases of blindness out of every 10 that are preventable

8

Number of houses that share one toilet in Alexandra, Johannesburg

7



Billions of plastic bags that are used and binned in Australia every year

6

Number of people under 20 that commit suicide every day in the US

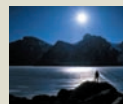
5

Seconds within which another person will die from starvation

4

Decades until one in three people in the world will live in slums

3



Number of times by which the rate of polar ice melt has increased since 1988

2

Number of children that die from malaria in sub-Saharan Africa every 30 seconds

1

The number of convictions made in 30 years for 1,000 reported deaths in police custody, prisons, and mental institutions in the UK

0



NO DEFENCE FOR VIVISECTION

Some years ago I was part of a Central Television debate on vivisection. As it was live, the anti-vivisection element was able to put forward effective, science and medically based arguments. Eighty-one per cent of those who voted in a telephone poll afterwards called for a ban on all animal research. Needless to say, live vivisection debates have not been seen since, and the blanket ban on all non-animal-rights-type arguments against vivisection is strictly maintained by the establishment media — led as always by the licence-funded BBC.

Simon Festing should not be overly condemned for failing to answer any of Ray Greek's arguments against vivisection ('Animal research: necessary, evil or both?', November 2003). When the House of Lords called for scientifically-valid pro-vivisection research, none was forthcoming. This is hardly surprising since none exists. The vivisection community has always had to rely upon arguments that incorporate the words 'most experts agree', 'you are talking rubbish', 'children are more important than animals', etc, etc.

As for Festing (or any other inhabitant of this synthetically-poisoned earth) saying 'animal research is essential for a healthy planet', perhaps someone should sit him down and quietly break the news to him that the global environment has been poisoned by hundreds of thousands of medical, military, agricultural and industrial chemicals (in millions of different combinations) that have all been 'safety-tested' on animals.

The vivisectioners are, quite literally, costing us the earth.

We face a theoretical 100 per cent cancer incidence within decades, and we are totally unable to produce safe effective treatments for any of the chronic, degenerative diseases that now afflict mankind. (NHS expenditure has risen tenfold, in real terms, since its inception.)

We are heading for an economic-disease gridlock, due to two main reasons: the use of synthetics as medicines and fraudulent animal testing.

Pat Rattigan, The British Anti-Vivisection Association

Thank you for your fascinating debates, which highlight both how difficult people find it to actually answer a point put to

them and how easy it is to hide behind the power of accepted opinions such as those on global warming and evolution theory.

Ray Greek cited many reasons for not using animals in research. Simon Festing ignored all of these, preferring to say: 'Your claims are false. Neither patients, politicians, the press nor the public believe you.' Well I believe him. Strange how Festing sounds like a few politicians I can think of.

Charles Dowding, Somerset, England

After reading the debate on vivisection I am amazed that a forward-thinking, enlightened and ethical magazine like *The Ecologist* can give the likes of Simon Festing word space.

He is clearly deluding himself if he believes that laboratory animals are happy, do not feel much pain and are treated well. I wish this was the case. Even if it was, it is still cruel to imprison animals. No dog wants to spend all its time in a metal cage with no comfort, affection or exercise even if it isn't tortured. Maybe Festing would like to justify or explain the burning of the skin of beagles to test anti-infection vaccines, or boiling rabbits alive for no apparent reason.

If animals are used when there is no alternative and it is really necessary, maybe Fasting can justify the experiments in which mice were given speed then exposed to such loud music that they died.

Festing talks of us having the best standards in the world (in reality, the least lax). This does not mean animals do not suffer. Undercover filming has shown that they clearly do, that they are not always well looked after and that the severe suffering that does occur breaks the government's own rules.

It doesn't take much intelligence to realise that the results of drug tests cannot be extrapolated from animals to humans, otherwise we would not have so many drug disasters. Many drugs that are known to be safe for humans have been shown to be unsafe for animals. Vivisection is only beneficial in hindsight. What is the point of it then, I ask? Medical progress this century has been made in spite of animal experiments not because of them.

The fact that Festing thinks that we need vivisection for a healthy planet is sheer breathtaking arrogance. Does it not occur to him that the planet was quite healthy before humans came along. Do animals really need to suffer as a result of mindless human activity?

Name and address withheld

NAIVE ASSUMPTIONS

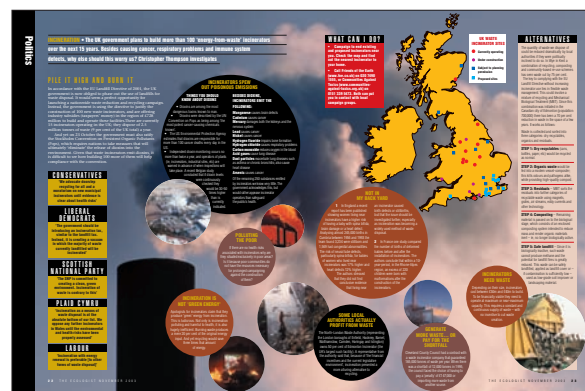
After reading the debate about technology ('Technology: will it save or kill us?', October 2003), I think the most important point has been missed. The assumption that there is nothing intrinsically good or bad with technology is incredibly naive.

Engineering creates technology for a reason. Conducting research leads to the development of technology with a specific intended purpose. A technofix's intrinsic ethic is ingrained in its conception, creation and intention. To leave its use in the hands of utilitarian ethics is forgetting the centuries of development that have shown us that science is not objective and value-free.

If scientists were to get off their holier-than-thou backsides and question the ethical reasons for doing their research then maybe volatile and dangerous technologies would never have been

developed in the first place and we wouldn't be having this debate. I wish I was taught that during my Physics degree.

Dan Oakley, by email



West for each rainforest tree they cut down? Probably just a few US dollars.

So, what is costing the earth could be stopped for the price of a relatively

DON'T FORGET THE GREEN PARTY

I thought it strange that the Green Party was missing from the list of political parties in your 'Incineration' article (November 2003).

Just so that *Ecologist* readers are aware, I quote from the current Green Party *Manifesto for a Sustainable Society*: 'The Green Party opposes the mass incineration of municipal, commercial and industrial waste because it requires large-scale plant and, therefore, a large-scale supply of waste over a long period to justify the investment, which discourages waste reduction and recycling.

'Incinerators produce harmful emissions, greenhouse gases and highly toxic ash residues, which are dumped in landfill. The waste has to be transported over longer distances, almost invariably by road.'

Stephen Watson, Brighton, England

ANIMAL-FREE SHOPPER

Marie-Claire Oliver (Letters, November 2003), writes: 'It would be good to know which companies test their products on animals before they market them.' There is an excellent book available called *Animal Free Shopper*, which lists animal-friendly products. It costs £4.99 and the current (sixth) edition has over 300 pages of information about food and drink, toiletries and cosmetics, clothing and healthcare products, etc. Best of all, it's small enough to carry with you when you go shopping.

Marc Hughes, Manchester, England

SUBSIDISE RAINFORESTS

Given that most of what is manufactured in the Third World costs just a few pounds or less to buy, how much are developing-country logging companies paid by the

[illegible]

So, what is costing the earth could be stopped for the price of a relatively

small agricultural subsidy paid by the West to Third World governments for keeping their rainforests intact. We already pay our own farmers to leave land fallow. It surely wouldn't cost that much.

Of course, the cost of timber, and derived products, would rise. But this is only proper as it would encourage sustainable usage. Cheap Third World timber is costing us all dearly. Perhaps an eco import tax would work.

Craig Harrison, by email

Send letters for publication to:

Letters, *The Ecologist*,
Unit 18 Chelsea Wharf,
15 Lots Road, London SW10 0QJ.

The Ecologist reserves the right to edit letters as necessary

Erratum

In the article on Group 4 (*Ecologist*, November) we incorrectly stated that Group 4 owns Ecover. In fact, Group 4 owned 50 per cent of Ecover's shares until 1999 when they were bought by J Philip-Sorensen.

In the article on microwaves (*Ecologist*, November) we forgot to include a credit to Simon Best, editor of *Electromagnetic Hazard and Therapy*, on whose original article much of our article was based.

Science & Technology

Leaving aside how one feels about the ethics of vivisection, there is another question: Is it good science? P is testing an animal model of a neurodegenerative disease that has resulted in the countless suffering and deaths of millions of animals?

THE DEBATE Dr Simon Festing vs Dr Ray Greek

Animal research necessary, evil... or both?

Dr Simon Festing
 "I have been involved in the development of new drugs for the treatment of cancer, heart disease, and other conditions. I have been involved in the development of new drugs for the treatment of cancer, heart disease, and other conditions. I have been involved in the development of new drugs for the treatment of cancer, heart disease, and other conditions."

Dr Ray Greek
 "I have been involved in the development of new drugs for the treatment of cancer, heart disease, and other conditions. I have been involved in the development of new drugs for the treatment of cancer, heart disease, and other conditions. I have been involved in the development of new drugs for the treatment of cancer, heart disease, and other conditions."

getting everything done, such as eye tests, arthritis or bedsores. Even people who have been brain-computer interfaces can be used to help people with severe disabilities. People who are unable to move can be helped with robotic devices. The medical and scientific communities are working to find ways to help people who are unable to move from one place to another. This is a very important area of research. It is a very important area of research. It is a very important area of research.

It is not just for medical reasons that vivisection is vital. Ecologists need animal studies to investigate why species are wiped out on beaches, or how viruses circulate in body systems. Animal research is essential for a healthy planet

with our cultures and communities. Unfortunately, people are concerned about the ethical implications of animal research. But the evidence shows that animal research is essential for a healthy planet. It is a very important area of research. It is a very important area of research. It is a very important area of research.

Understandably, people are concerned about the ethical implications of animal research. But the evidence shows that animal research is essential for a healthy planet. It is a very important area of research. It is a very important area of research. It is a very important area of research.

developing treatments, but even today, many people are still using animal models to test new drugs. This is a very important area of research. It is a very important area of research. It is a very important area of research.

I visited recently in the environmental laboratory at the University of Cambridge, where scientists are using animals to test new drugs. This is a very important area of research. It is a very important area of research. It is a very important area of research.

There is a lot of research being done in this area. It is a very important area of research. It is a very important area of research. It is a very important area of research.

This independent committee has looked at the scientific validity of animal research. It is a very important area of research. It is a very important area of research. It is a very important area of research.

Look what combinations can be made. It is a very important area of research. It is a very important area of research. It is a very important area of research.

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YVES ENGLER

The case FOR protectionism

Third World countries have a right to subsidise their agriculture; no country ever developed through 'free' trade

Commentators, from both left and right, seem fixated on the harm wealthy nations' farm subsidies are having on the world's poor. The tone of these pundits has been such that you could be forgiven for thinking these subsidies were the root of *all* the developing world's problems. *The Guardian*, for instance, recently bellowed: 'There is only one way to address the growing gulf between rich and poor countries: abolish agricultural subsidies.'

The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have happily supported these sentiments. But for the past 20 years the IMF and the World Bank have also been pushing poorer countries to re-

structure their economies towards exporting agricultural products. And, knowing full well that rich countries would not reciprocate, the IMF has frequently compelled poor countries to eliminate their agricultural price stabilisers or subsidies.

In the 1990s, for example, the two institutions pushed for the reorganisation of Burkina Faso's agricultural sector. Consequently, the Burkina Faso government provided new seed varieties and other support services to cotton

farmers to help them increase yields for export. Cotton production increased from 117,000 tonnes in 1993/1994 to approximately 400,000 tonnes in 2001/2002. The result? Burkina Faso now has an abundance of cotton, the price for which is very low thanks to Washington's massive subsidies for US cotton, but an insufficient quantity of food. So, people go hungry.

Also in the 1990s, Zambia agreed to IMF structural adjustment programmes incorporating economic changes of a

scope without parallel in any other African country. The programmes included a shift from subsidised agriculture and controlled food prices to

an emphasis on sugar exports. Not coincidentally, in the past year a quarter of Zambians have been threatened with famine.

That the IMF and the World Bank should push for neo-liberal restructuring, no matter what the human toll, should not be surprising. As Michael Phillips wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* in July, 'the World Bank [is] the main tool the wealthy nations have to influence economic policies in the poor ones'. The voting structures of the World Bank and

IMF are heavily skewed towards richer nations. The US, Japan, Germany, France and the UK control approximately 46 per cent of the votes on the bank. (Naturally, the US has the largest share.) The numbers are similar at the IMF, where the US also effectively has a veto.

The antagonism of the IMF and the World Bank towards the state as a food guarantor and their promotion of an agricultural export model are in line with neo-liberal globalisation's general antagonism towards community self-reliance. Central to neo-liberal ideology is the supremacy of the global marketplace, which the move towards cash crops by IMF/World Bank-adjusted countries reinforces. A practical reason (from capitalism's viewpoint) is that export earnings increase countries' foreign currency reserves so that they can repay external debts. An African nation's agricultural self-sufficiency offers little in the way of profit-making opportunities for banks or other multinational corporations.

Perhaps, then, we should question the motivation of those who claim agricultural subsidies are 'the' problem. When World Bank president James Wolfensohn complains that agricultural subsidies 'are crippling Africa's chance to export its way out of poverty' we should ask what country has ever escaped poverty by depending on agricultural exports? Dependence on commodity production has, in fact, always been a recipe for underdevelopment. No country, with the possible exception of



An African nation's self-sufficiency offers little in the way of profit-making opportunities for multinationals

Bushisms

'The vast majority of Iraqis want to live in a peaceful, free world. And we will find these people and we will bring them to justice.'

Washington DC, 27 October

'Whether they be Christian, Jew, Muslim or Hindu, people have heard the universal call to love a neighbour just like they'd like to be called themselves.'

Washington DC, 8 October

'See, free nations are peaceful nations. Free nations don't attack each other. Free nations don't develop weapons of mass destruction.'

Milwaukee, 3 October





Hong Kong (a very special case) has ever 'developed' through free trade. Throughout the history of capitalism it has always been already developed economies that have sought to impose 'free trade' on militarily weaker or less-developed parts of the world. Economic liberalism has a long history of being a cover for naked greed.

Agricultural subsidies should be discussed – but not in the context of 'free' trade. The argument should be more about domestic priorities. (Should the state fund organic farmers, the health system, or what?)

To be fair, condemnation of farm subsidies by organisations like Oxfam has yielded some good. Discussion about rich countries' subsidies highlights the contradiction between what the West says in terms of economic liberalism and what it does. Likewise, highlighting the fact that Western governments give more to their countries' cows than they do in aid to the world's poor says something about our priorities.

Nevertheless, the fact that segments of the left believe that agricultural subsidies are a significant cause of world poverty is disconcerting. It tells us how effective neo-liberal propaganda has been. Even many progressive people can only see the world through its lens. Personally, I think we need a new lens.

Yves Engler is a Montreal-based activist and author
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Free market economics (is) for dummies

NUMBER 3 •: PROPERTY

From fake Nikes to plots on the moon, it's all a question of ownership. But when the patenting of medicines causes thousands of people to die each year property is not so much theft as murder. By Andrew Simms



This is the season of getting stuff. Things. Lots of them. But the Anglo-Saxon world has moved on a bit from easily portable gifts like gold and frankincense, or socks, scented candles and the latest Craig David CD.

Imagine the surprise of Nike shareholders when they opened their corporate Christmas cards to discover that the company had started buying them major international landmarks.

A high-tech two-storey glass and steel exhibition stand sat proudly in the middle of Vienna's huge central square – Karls Platz. Renovation work was taking place all around. Inside you could view Nike's plan to rebrand the square 'Nike Platz'. A special pair of trainers had been designed for the mayor to wear at the re-opening ceremony. And it didn't stop there. Nike appeared to have plans for a chain of rebranded landmarks across Europe – in Rome, Madrid, Berlin and London.

The exhibition stand caused uproar among the proud Viennese, whose city centre has changed little since it was rebuilt after WWII. But they needn't have worried. It was a hoax, a very good one, by some well-funded local artists. The reason it caused uproar was that it seemed only too plausible in a world in which nearly everything is for sale to an individual or a company.

Western market economies are founded on private property rights. The problem is that increasingly narrow ownership regimes define property only in private and individual terms. This is leaving us hopelessly ill-equipped to deal with huge problems like homelessness, hunger and climate change.

Karl Polanyi wrote in *The Great Transformation*, his classic tract on economic history, that commodifying land to buy and sell in the marketplace was 'the weirdest of all undertakings of our ancestors'.

But even Polanyi couldn't have imagined what Californian Dennis M Hope would do in November 1980. Hope had spotted a loophole in the international treaties governing space exploration. Governments were forbidden from claiming as their property any celestial bodies. Individuals, however, were not. Not hedging his bets Hope

claimed as his own all the planets in the solar system (apart from Earth) and all their moons (Earth's included). The result of this intergalactic speculation is that you can buy plots on the planets. For Mars a bill of rights has been

written to mediate in the event of land disputes with native creatures. It may sound crazy, but it is really just the logical conclusion of the market economy's excessive focus on narrow property rights.

The outer-space land grab is no more different, or

defensible, than the commercial occupation and exploitation of the inner world of our genetic make-up, or the plant chemistry that lies behind life-saving drugs.

Our one-size-fits-all approach to property regimes means that nothing fits. In medicine 37,000 people are estimated to die every day because of restrictive patent rules. Yet, simple initiatives to put the patents of life-saving drugs unrestricted into the public domain could end the tragedy.

In Brazil there are many models of land ownership, including community land trusts. But the domination of private ownership leads to unemployment, poverty and homelessness. One per cent of large landowners control nearly half of all the agricultural land. Only 60 million of 400 million hectares of arable land are planted, while nearly five million families have no land at all and 35 million Brazilians live in poverty.

But in some cases the absence of a property regime is the problem. Where climate change is concerned, many are coming round to the view that there needs to be a system of equal rights for every person on earth to the global commons of the atmosphere; otherwise it will be impossible to agree an effective worldwide deal to halt global warming.

Andrew Simms is policy director of the New Economics Foundation. The report *Limits to Property: the failure of restrictive property regimes in the modern world* is available on the foundation's website at: www.neweconomics.org

A bill of rights has been written to mediate in the event of land disputes with native creatures on Mars

‘The real comparison should be between GM and organic agriculture. But organic is so obviously better for the environment that the GM industry refused point blank to have this included in the trials. The trials are simply comparing one highly damaging form of agriculture with one that’s even worse’

Greenpeace executive director Stephen Tindale on the GM field trials

‘[US biotech companies] tried to lie to people and they tried to force it upon people. It’s the wrong approach. You cannot force it upon Europe. So I hope they have learnt a lesson from this, especially when they now try to argue that this will solve the problems of starvation in the world and so on. Come on... it was to solve starvation among shareholders, not the developing world’

EU environment commissioner Margot Wallstrom

‘Bush would cut down a tree and then climb on the stump that remains and give a speech about conservation’

Democratic senator and presidential contender John Kerry

‘Why is this man in the White House? The majority of Americans did not vote for him. He’s in the White House because God put him there for a time such as this’

William Boykin, the newly promoted (and Christian fundamentalist) deputy undersecretary of state of defence for intelligence

‘We’re lucky if we can get over here once a month. We’re so busy raiding houses and kicking down doors in the middle of the night’

US platoon leader Adrian Miller, 19, having just spent \$84 at the new Burger King in Baghdad

Tony Blair is at his weekly meeting with the Queen, when he turns to her and says: ‘As I’m the PM, I’m thinking of changing how the country is referred to, and I’m thinking that it should be a “kingdom”.’

The Queen replies: ‘I’m sorry Mr Blair, but for a kingdom you have to have a king in charge and you aren’t one.’

Blair thought a while and then said: ‘How about a “principality”, then?’

The Queen replied: ‘Sorry again, but for a principality, you have to be a prince and you’re not a prince, Mr Blair.’

Again, Blair thought long and hard before asking: ‘How about an “empire” then?’

Getting a little pissed off by now, the Queen replied: ‘Sorry again, Mr Blair, but for an empire you must have an emperor in charge, and you are not an emperor.’

Before Blair could utter another word, the Queen said: ‘I think we’re doing quite nicely as a “country”.’

MALCOLM TAIT

Between a rock and a hard race

Seabirds are tough, but, while able to endure the most hostile environments, they are being driven to extinction by mankind

Cape Wrath, the most northwesterly corner of mainland Britain, is indeed a wrathful and, at this time of year, virtually uninhabited piece of land. The stormy seas lash its sturdy, defiant red-rock cliff walls with a vengeance, and the lonesome lighthouse that peers out across the inky Atlantic Ocean has little but Ministry of Defence equipment to keep it company.

One of the great sights along the headland, however, (and, indeed, on many of the cliff faces of the nearby Western Isles) is the auks. There are hundreds of thousands of them, mainly guillemots, clinging to imperceptible ledges and crevices in the cliffs, or scattered like breadcrumbs in the sea as they search for the plentiful fish that will feed their mates who squat over eggs tapered to roll in tight circles rather than off the rocks.

Once the young of these extraordinary birds are ready, the adults call to them from the water and the little fledglings hurl themselves towards their parents’ yelps. Some break on the rocks below, others make the sea but are plucked from the water by gulls and skuas who can’t believe their luck. Those that make it, though, adapt quickly to their marine life and spend their first year at sea.

After all they went through just to make it off the ledge in the first place, you’d think they’d make life a little easier on themselves, but no. While swallows and martins and other such wimps make their way down to the snug bosom of Africa, the gutsy little guillemots bob around in the near-freezing waters of the Atlantic and southern Arctic. These guys are hard. If they spoke human, they’d probably do so with a Glaswegian accent. But then they’re seabirds, and seabirds don’t take no guano from no one. Or almost no one.



Inside the birds’ bellies have been found fag lighters, toothbrushes, fishing equipment and even, aptly, a toy dinosaur

One of the most famous extinctions in ornithological history is that of the great auk, which squawked its last in 1844 after having once thronged in huge colonies in this country as well as on the rocky North Atlantic coasts of Greenland and Canada. This penguin-like bird was a great swimmer, but could not fly. It had long been caught easily and killed for food, but its rapid extinction was due to a passing fashion for wearing great auk feathers.

Sadly, the great auk is not the only seabird with an ability to survive the harshest of climates but to be particularly vulnerable to the harshest of mammals. Oil spills have caused catastrophic declines in the populations of many species. At least 200,000 birds died as a result of the 1967 *Torrey Canyon* disaster alone (among them 85 per cent of the French puffin population). Two decades later the *Exxon Valdez* went about 50,000 birds better. The oil industry gave sealife a polite breather through the 1990s, but got bored and let the *Prestige* go down off the Spanish coast last year. Once again, a couple of hundred thousand birds were killed.

These numbers are huge, but are as nothing compared to the impact of the fishing industry, which – thanks to longline fishing for tuna and other alleged delicacies – takes out an estimated 300,000 birds every single year. The birds get caught in the lines, which can be up to 80 miles long, or trapped by the bait. As a consequence, several bird species – including 17 of the 21 types of albatross – are being helped down the road once fatally explored by the great auk.

Meanwhile, we’re littering our ocean waters at an extraordinary rate, and taking down further populations of seabirds in the process. Discarded plastic – and there’s a lot of it around the world – is washed

away from our streets, into rivers and out into the seas at an alarming rate.

This waste floats almost forever – unless it is eaten by seabirds, particularly undiscerning chicks. The dioxin-riddled bodies of birds have been found with their bellies full of cigarette lighters, plastic bottles, toothbrushes, fishing equipment and even, once and rather appropriately, a toy dinosaur.

In short, we're turning our seas into death-traps for the birds that live in them. These amazing creatures, which can live for decades above and on vast rolling oceans that can kill humans in seconds, are being sliced, suffocated, clogged, twisted and poisoned by by-products of our constant desire to use up the rest of the world's resources. In April a Manx shearwater was caught for ringing on Bardsey Island off North Wales. It had already been ringed three times before, in 1977, 1961 and... 1957. As such birds aren't ringed until they're a few years old, this extraordinary traveller, which could have clocked as many as 5 million miles during its lifetime, is probably around 52 years old.

Will it be found again next year? The odds are stacking up against it, and not just because of the bird's advanced age. The plight of the seabirds is becoming a truly disturbing one, both for the birds, and because of what our avicidal tendencies reveal about our treatment of the world around us. Unlike the ancient mariner, who wore the albatross around his neck as a hairshirt for killing it, we must find a way of avoiding slaughter in the first place. If we succeed, we may be able to save ourselves.

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



ROBIN PAGE'S DIARY

■ It's that time of year again for those of us on the after-dinner speakers' 'Z List'. I don't fit that category exactly, however, for not only do I undertake after-dinner speeches, but I also do before-dinner speeches and often I give speeches with no dinner at all. What is worse (or better) is the fact that sometimes I even do speeches without being paid, as my main aim is to get various messages across rather than simply chunter for cheques.

■ Another person who frequently gets invited to speak at functions is Tony Blair's good friend and Britain's farming guru Lord 'Cream of the Milk' Haskins (pictured below). Earlier this year I had the good fortune to meet him at the Oxford Union. I, Clarissa Dixon-Wright and the Bishop of Hereford John Oliver had the delightful experience of wiping the floor with Cream of the Milk, the dapper head of the Countryside Agency Ewan Cameron and Rod Liddell – the BBC's current countryside-hating pin-up. We simply argued that the government had done nothing for the countryside in six years, the opposition said very little that was coherent and Haskins didn't even know what Defra (the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) stood for – not bad for the government's farming guru.



■ Cream of the Milk used to be chairman of Northern Foods and Express Dairies. As someone who is opposed to privilege, his elevation at Express Dairies had absolutely nothing to do, of course, with his marrying the boss's daughter. Haskins was always a strong advocate of the break-up of the Milk Marketing Board (MMB), something that eventually happened in

1994. My old father was in his late 70s at the time and believed that the board's demise would be the death of the dairy industry. Haskins thought it would usher in a golden age of rationalisation and efficiency. The doorstep price for a 'pinta' then was 37.9 pence, the supermarket price was 23.9 pence and the farm-gate price was 14.2 pence. Last year the doorstep pint cost 42 pence, the supermarket pint cost 25.5 pence and the farm-gate pint cost 9.7 pence. So, while income for the supermarkets and the firms like Express Dairies that deliver milk to the doorstep has risen healthily, returns for dairy farmers have collapsed.

■ I recently spoke at the Highland Cattle Society dinner – held, quite naturally, on the Isle of Wight. There, I heard that two local dairy farmers had just crashed out of business and that a third was about to do the same: the famous herd of Friesians at Parkhurst Prison is about to go, as the prisoners have refused to undertake farm work (apparently, it is too demeaning). It's nice to see that the prisoners are the ones who now run the prisons – rehabilitation the Blair way. Perhaps Parkhurst is adopting an easier regime in anticipation of the day when the foot-and-mouth law-breaker Blair is admitted.



■ My next after-dinner was in Gloucestershire; more dairy farmers had just gone out of business there. Then it was Wales, where one ex-dairy farmer who is now just a retailer told me: 'There's no money in producing milk any longer, only selling it.' Furthermore, my round of dinners tells me that many of the dairy farmers who are still in business cannot afford to dine out.

■ I am told that the National Farmers Union (NFU) also supported the break-up of the MMB. The president of the union at the time was Sir David Naish (all NFU presidents get knighthoods for not upsetting the government). Between the MMB's dismantling and 2002 the number of dairy farmers in England fell by 30 per cent. When Naish finished with the NFU he was lucky enough to get a job in the dairy industry. By amazing coincidence he became a consultant to Express Dairies. By 2002 the average income of dairy farmers had plummeted to just £13,000. In the same year Haskins was receiving £61,000 as a non-executive director at Express Dairies. At the Oxford Union I asked a question: 'As dairy farmers are going bust while working 365 days a year, how many hours a month does Lord Haskins work for his £61,875?' He never replied. Silence is clearly golden.

Robin Page is head of the Countryside Restoration Trust



What Ken Livingstone

PHOTOGRAPHS REUTERS

Politics Junk food should be banned... The world's population has to be halved... Civil disobedience against the cultivation of GM crops is legitimate... And the genocidal George W Bush is not welcome in the capital. London mayor Ken Livingstone shares his thoughts with *The Ecologist*

IS RED KEN TURNING GREEN?

George W Bush

'I was in California over Easter and I was denounced by all and sundry for being rude about George Bush at the Stop the War Rally. Some US journalist came up to me and said: "How can you say this about president Bush?" Well, I think what I said then was quite mild. I actually think that Bush is the greatest threat to life on this planet that we've most probably ever seen. The policies he is initiating will doom us to extinction.'

The World Trade Organisation

'The World Trade Organisation's structure enforces the US system of consumption around the world. It is one of the biggest threats to life on the planet.'

The consumer society

'There is no future in it, but right now we are locked into that mode of production and distribution. It will become the norm in India, China and the rest of the Third World as each of these economies grows. On that basis the world can't survive...
'...A whole generation has grown up

with the attitude that you don't get things repaired. People might expect the mayor of London to have a wide-screen TV, but I've had my TV since 1985. You've got to keep things till they fall apart. The same applies to fashion. You should buy clothes, and wear them till they fall apart.'

Devolution

'True devolution would actually unleash cultural difference. For example, the south west has a very distinct cultural identity, yet they have been smothered for 250 years because of the strong centralised state. But the Government never really devolves power in the elective sense.'

The EU

'The only reason I support the United States of Europe is that I want to see a powerful block emerge to rival the US. The American agenda is sweeping everything before it, and although it's not perfect the EU is better on environmental issues. It's a less rapacious form of capitalism.

The nightmare is that everything that is

centralised around Whitehall is sucked up to Europe. For me, everything should be devolved to the regions. Look at the problem the government has with trying to get the health service to turn around. The solution is to devolve it down. Look at how we turned the buses around. We have increased bus riders from 4.2 million to 5.4 million in 3 years. That only happened because there is a mayor who focussed on a local problem.'

Political success

'Politicians who advocate restraint are not likely to get elected. It's much easier to vote for people who tell you to consume.'

New Labour's failure to set a radical agenda

'I went through the 1997 general election thinking it was a load of old guff they'd come out with because they didn't want to upset the *Daily Mail*, and that when they got in Blair would follow the sort of agenda put out by Will Hutton in *The State We're In*. [Hutton's agenda] wasn't revolutionary but it was a big progressive step forward. I was just amazed

There is no way that the current global population can have US levels of consumption.



tone really thinks

when it transpired that Blair had been serious, and [New Labour hadn't campaigned as it had] just to win the election.'

Tony Blair

'I think there is a background problem. There is nothing in his past that was radicalising. He wasn't interested in all the great student activities, the radical campaigns. He did not get involved in politics until the 1970s when the high point was passed. So, you have someone of the "summer of '68" generation who actually wasn't part of it.'

The cultivation of GM crops

'If the government ignores public opinion then civil disobedience on this issue is quite legitimate, as long as it's not violent. But the most important thing that affects a government is not peaceful protest but fear of the ballot box.'

THE FUTURE

When will the current system change?

'I think the combination of a social movement growing out of the Third World and a holocaust-style disaster leading to environmental degradation will be what finally forces the world economy to reform.'

What will that social movement be?

'It might be an alliance between progressive (but sadly minority) groups in the advanced

capitalist nations with people like Lula (The Brazilian president) in the third world. It will be interesting to see what happens if Lula really challenges American power. Unlike in Iraq, where you couldn't be enthusiastic about protecting Saddam Hussein, here we'd be faced with a democratically elected, charismatic leader capable of mobilising massive support. Anything smaller than Brazil wouldn't stand a chance. The challenge has to come out of Brazil, India, China – one of the emerging economies. Our role in the West is to weigh in there and make sure we prevent our governments from destroying it.'

IF HE HAD THE POWER

Childhood and obesity

'If it was up to me, it would be illegal to add salt, sugar or fat to any foods that were on sale for kids, and schools would have a very tight regime over what they can actually serve. If kids get in the habit of eating good, wholesome food then they will avoid obesity and an awful lot of disease. Invariably, these things could be produced locally or in the school rather than bought in.'

The EU

'There is a need to democratise the EU. All the power should be within the European Parliament. There should be no European Commission. The commission should be the civil service answering solely to the people

elected. Increasingly, however, the power of party machines that control candidates means it doesn't matter anyhow. No one gets to stand unless they have been vetted in advance.'

Overpopulation

'There is no way that the current global population can have US levels of consumption. We need to manage down population to perhaps half of what it now is over a century.'

Cheap flights

'There is no taxation on aviation. I don't have the slightest doubt that if we stopped giving tax breaks to cheap foreign holidays, we wouldn't have any demand for another airport or runway.'

What you have effectively got through the current tax system is the poorest people in Britain, who might just be able to afford a week in Blackpool, are subsidising people like us who are flying all over the bloody world.'

BUSH'S STATE VISIT

'I don't formally recognise George Bush because he was not officially elected. So, we are organising an alternative reception for everybody who is not George Bush. We are trying to get Michael Moore over as our guest as the alternative voice of the US, and then get all the environmental and peace movements here in this building for a "not the George Bush reception".'

. We need to manage down population to perhaps half of what it now is over a century

Dirty laundry

WPP, the world's second largest ad agency, was recently praised for ending its operations in Burma. But any claims that the firm is a model of corporate responsibility are nonsense. Solomon Hughes shows why



In 1985 Martin Sorrell (above) bought Wire and Plastics Products Ltd. Sorrell turned the shopping basket manufacturer into advertising giant WPP, which is now worth \$9.9 billion and employs 36,157 people. WPP poses as a responsible firm: Sorrell regularly lectures executives at Cambridge University, together with anti-globalisation activist Noreena Hertz. He was knighted on the personal recommendation of Tony Blair, who made him an 'ambassador for British business'. WPP claims expertise in social responsibility, saying that 'corporate reputation' is a 'core area of our business'. But when *The Ecologist* confronted Sorrell about the reality of WPP, he admitted: 'There are difficult ethical issues in marketing.'

BURMA

This August WPP closed a recently acquired Burmese firm to avoid accusations it was doing business with dictators.

- Yet WPP subsidiary Hill & Knowlton has been fighting against sanctions on Burma for years. In 1997 Hill & Knowlton's lobbying arm the Wexler Group set up USA*Engage, which claims to be a 'broad-based campaign' but is funded by corporations opposed to human rights sanctions – especially against Burma. It is what's known as an 'Astroturf' lobby; it looks like its grassroots, but is really artificial. USA*Engage funders include Halliburton and Unocal, both of which work in

Burma's oil industry. Advocates for Burmese sanctions point to the junta's use of forced labour in oil pipeline construction in areas cleared of peasants by aggressive military operations.

- Until November British American Tobacco was involved in a joint venture to make cigarettes with the Burmese military junta. Like Unocal, it is both a prominent member of USA*Engage and a client of Hill & Knowlton.
- Howard Paster, the WPP director responsible for corporate social responsibility, was previously the chairman of Hill & Knowlton.

TOBACCO

- Tobacco firm Phillip Morris (the Marlboro men) is one of WPP's four biggest clients. It was WPP's 'brand consultancy' Landor Associates that masterminded renaming Phillip Morris 'Altria', an altruistic-sounding name unblemished by nicotine stains.
- The tobacco industry hired Hill & Knowlton to 'build confidence' in cigarettes in the 1950s, when the link with cancer first became known. The firm founded the front groups the Council for Tobacco Research and the Tobacco Institute, which lobbied politicians, reassured the public and undermined scientific research linking tobacco with cancer – despite the industry's knowledge that the product was a poison.
- When WPP took over Hill & Knowlton the tobacco work continued. *The Ecologist* obtained a 1993 Hill & Knowlton report for Phillip Morris in Asia. The report acknowledges the inevitability of '10 million global deaths' because of tobacco, but still advocates promoting 'greater acceptance of smoking'. It advises that tobacco firms should 'avoid being drawn into discussion on medical issues wherever possible'.
- WPP staff argued that Phillip Morris should strongly back campaigns to decrease smoking among children. Bizarrely, these plans included setting up a 'Phillip Morris Youth Centre' in Hong Kong to 'offset anti-smoking lobby activity'. This would be 'smoke-free', but would also give the firm 'exclusive branding' among the young.

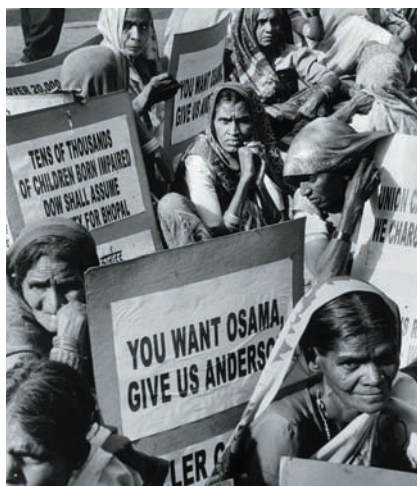
- *The Ecologist* found a separate 1992 Hill & Knowlton marketing report advising on the 'emotional appeal' of Marlboro, particularly its 'appeal to the lifestyles, aspirations and needs of young smokers'.
- WPP is particularly concerned about the possibility of advertising bans. That's because they work. The firm has said: 'It is obvious that controls [on advertising] are having an effect, as countries like Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong are showing a marked decrease on the incidence of smoking.' WPP recommended that Philip Morris should organise a 'freedom seminar' using 'civil libertarians' to link tobacco ads to 'free expression' and 'free speech'. A handwritten note suggested that for the sake of 'credibility' the meeting could be 'fronted' by 'organisations unrelated to tobacco'.
- Another internal document shows how in 1992 Hill & Knowlton advised attacking anti-smokers, so as to 'explore and exploit the opposition's weaknesses' and 'investigate legal challenges to opposition efforts'.
- WPP spied for tobacco. *The Ecologist* has a 1988 memo from the firm to an executive of RJ Reynolds (the manufacturer of Camel cigarettes). A Hill & Knowlton employee had gone undercover at a 'tobacco litigation meeting' but, comically, had left 'to avoid being questioned' after she was 'identified'.
- WPP's co-chairman was also chairman and CEO of Phillip Morris from 1984 to 1991.

EVERYTHING BUT SAATCHI

As well as Hill & Knowlton, J Walter Thompson, Landor Associates, and a partnership with Bell Pottinger, WPP's ever growing family includes...

Burson Marsteller

In 2000 WPP bought Burson Marsteller, a firm whose past clients include Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, Dow Chemicals at the time of Bhopal and oil firm Exxon at the time of the Exxon Valdez disaster. Burson Marsteller also worked hard for tobacco, founding the phoney front organisation the National Smokers Alliance. Current clients include BP and the British government watchdog the Environment Agency.



Ogilvy PR

WPP subsidiary Ogilvy PR designed BP's new flower-shaped logo. Corporate Watch says: '[The] aim of the so-

called global branding initiative was to define the company as environmentally responsible. More specifically, Ogilvy aimed at positioning BP "as a new

type of energy company that confronts such difficult issues as the conflict between energy and environmental needs and takes actions beyond what is expected of an oil company".'

Cohn & Wolf

In 2001 GlaxoSmithKline decided to market a new disease instead of a new drug. A rash of stories appeared in the press describing 'generalised anxiety disorder' – a hitherto unknown condition paralysing millions and which could only be cured by Glaxo's drug Paxil. The campaign, which

involved feeding the media with ready-made stories, surveys and personal accounts was masterminded by WPP PR firm Cohn & Wolf.

SELLING NUCLEAR

- State-owned British Nuclear Fuels hired WPP partner Bell Pottinger to persuade the government that it should be privatised.
- Hill & Knowlton boasts that it helped 'create a political climate in which it would be possible for the Conservative government to privatise nuclear power' in the 1990s. British Energy was floated in 1996.

POLITICAL LOBBYING

Hill & Knowlton describes itself as 'a partner who has seen all the manoeuvres in the political playbook, and who, year after year, has been an active player in the game'.

- In 1990 the Kuwaiti government hired Hill & Knowlton to persuade the US government into war against Iraq. The firm set up the front organisation Citizens for a Free Kuwait, and organised the congressional appearance of a Kuwaiti 'hospital worker' called 'Nayirah'. The 15-year-old spoke of seeing Iraqi soldiers dumping babies from hospital incubators. Nayirah turned out to be the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the US. While there were real brutalities during Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, the incubator tale was later contradicted by hospital officials.
- Hill & Knowlton also handled public relations for the Suharto dictatorship in Indonesia.

SELLING GM

- Labour's new chief of communications Dave Hill used to work for Bell Pottinger. His clients included Monsanto.
- Hill & Knowlton led the biotech-funded pro-GM campaign in Canada, while another WPP subsidiary, Burson Marsteller (BM), held the Canadian Monsanto account. BM's efforts included hiring fake pro-GM demonstrators at \$25 a head in 1999.

CONSUME

Sorrell argues that companies need WPP because it can make shoppers love brands. He concedes: 'Many find such concepts difficult to accept, believing there is something immoral or unsavoury about people buying products for emotional rather than tangible benefits.'

- One of WPP subsidiaries is J Walter Thompson (JWT), which promotes Kellogg's, Smirnoff Vodka and the Royal Air Force's careers service. Sorrell recruited Charlotte Beers to head JWT. In 2001 George W Bush hired Beers as an 'under-secretary of state' to market the US to the world as a 'brand'. Beers resigned from the job this February, having achieved little in the way of success.
- Last year WPP created a food marketing group called simply ConsumeTM.



CAPTIVE KILLER WHALES • Dosed with drugs to help them cope with stress, captive killer whales (orcas) suffer terribly in marine parks. Now Russia has caught the first orca in six years, and the macabre trade in the whales seems set to be revived. By Jeremy Smith

ORCAS CAPTURED – TWO DIE

On 26 September a group of orcas was captured in the remote Russian Far East. This was the first time in six years that an orca had been captured alive for use by marine parks. During the capture attempt, a juvenile became entangled in the net, suffocated and died. One female orca was removed to a floating pen and later transferred by charter plane to an aquarium in the southern Russian town of Anapa on the Black Sea. By the end of October she too was dead. Conservationists are concerned that this incident will set a precedent for further captures in Russian waters, and that it will lead to a revival of the international trade in these animals.

A HISTORY OF DISASTER

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 1961 | First orca captured and taken to the Marineland of the Pacific park in Los Angeles. She dies a day later after repeatedly swimming around her pool at high speed and ramming into the sides. |
| 1970 | The entire Washington/southern Vancouver resident orca population is captured. |
| 1976 | Six orcas caught in Puget Sound, near Seattle, using seal bombs and aircraft to 'buzz' the whales and herd them into nets. The resulting uproar leads to Washington State banning all future captures in its waters. Later the same year, US marine park chain Sea World applies for rights to capture or purchase orcas from areas that include Iceland, Norway, Greenland, Japan, England, South America and Africa. |
| 1979 | Five orcas kept in a holding pool at Iceland's Hafnarfjord marine zoo catch severe frostbite. Two die of pneumonia. Their six-feet deep concrete pool had no roof. |
| 1985 | Female orca Corky breaks an observation window at Marineland of the Pacific – resulting in the loss of over a third of the water in Corky's pool. |
| 1989 | A young female orca named Kandu dies after ramming into Corky. |
| 1991 | An orca called Kahana dies of multiple skull fractures, cerebral contusions and severe haemorrhaging, after colliding with a pool wall at Sea World San Antonio. A female trainer is drowned by three orcas after falling into the tank at Sealand of the Pacific, Canada. |
| 1992 | A female orca named Samoa dies at the relatively young age of 13 at Sea World San Antonio. In the months leading up to her death she had frequently thrown her body into the air, crashing onto a shelf at the side of her pool. Her near-term foetus dies with her. |
| 1997 | Ten orcas captured by fishermen at Hatajiri Bay, Japan. The fishermen encircle the pod, and use water bombs and iron rods to create a barrage of noise and drive the group into the bay. |
| 2003 | First orca captured in six years, in Russian waters. |

MARINE PARK MYTHS

Shamu never dies

In the 1960s Sea World decided to use the same few names for all its performing orcas. The 'Sea World family' of Shamu, baby Shamu and Kandu was created. Following the death of one of the orcas at Sea World's Texas park, a spokesman said: 'Shamu has not died today. One of the whales who plays that role we lost this morning, yes. But Shamu lives on.'

Captive orcas are vital for research purposes

Marine World Africa says: 'It is vital that a handful of these animals be in captivity so that we can learn about them physiologically and behaviourally.' But the French environmentalist Jacques Cousteau once said: 'No aquarium, no tank or marine park, however spacious it may be, can begin to duplicate the conditions of the sea. And no dolphin who inhabits one of these aquariums... can be described as a "normal" dolphin. The conclusions

drawn by observing the behaviour of such dolphins are often misleading when applied to dolphins as a whole.'

The only significant knowledge that can ever be gained by studying captive orcas is how best to keep the whales in captivity.

Captive orcas improve public attitudes towards conservation

The theory is that watching six-tonne wild animals performing circus tricks in a swimming pool will somehow enhance our understanding of and desire to preserve them.





WILD AND FREE

IN THE WILD...

'To deny liberty to a wild animal involves the diminishing of that animal's life. It is an inherent characteristic of wild things to be free... In almost all cases, the denial of this inherent characteristic involves stress, frustration, anxiety and even aggression.'

Professor Andrew Linzey, animal theologian, Oxford University

- Orcas live in closely knit, highly complex social groups (pods) typically numbering five to 25 members.
- Members are related by blood and remain together for life.
- The pod may travel as many as 100 miles a day, in a home range of maybe 500-900 miles.
- They hunt, play, socialise and rest as a cohesive group.
- They eat a variety of live fish, squid and other marine mammals.

IN CAPTIVITY...

'Our killer whales live in habitats where the water quality and temperature are carefully monitored and controlled. Unlike killer whales in the ocean, those at Sea World are not forced to contend with dangers such as shortages of food, parasites and threats from humans... [They] receive a balanced, nutritious diet, and we make sure their day includes plenty of exercise.'

Daniel Odell, Sea World

- Home is a concrete tank filled with artificially salinated and chlorinated water.

- Calves are routinely moved from their mothers at a very young age.
- In 1999 at least four facilities kept a solitary orca.
- Diet is defrosted dead fish (usually herring), supplemented with vitamins, minerals and a wide variety of antibiotics.
- Orcas from different pods and different oceans are routinely mixed. At Sea World's Orlando park a small Icelandic male called Kota was forced to share the pool with Kanduke, a transient orca captured off British Columbia. Kotar often deliberately beached himself and was frequently heard to make crying sounds. Kanduke occasionally beat his head against the pool's gate until it bled. In 1987 Kotar bit Kanduke's penis, turning the pool red with blood. Both orcas died before they reached the age of 21.
- The dorsal fins of captive orca whales frequently droop to one side, something practically unknown in the wild. Although marine parks blame genetics or 'overheated collagen' for this phenomenon, scientists believe it is because orcas are reduced to swimming round and round in circles rather than in a straight line. One vet commented that of 10 orcas he observed at Sea World, eight had left tilted fins and swam anticlockwise, while two had right tilted fins and swam clockwise.
- Stress is considered a factor in the deaths of up to 50 per cent of captive orcas. Marine parks commonly use anti-ulcer drugs for stressed whales.

ORCAS & CAPTIVITY: THE NUMBERS

Marine parks where orcas are kept	13
Orcas in captivity	49
Orca capture permits issued by Russian authorities in 2003	10
Estimated Russian orca population	151
Orcas caught since 1961 for marine parks	135
Number that are now dead	111
Average lifespan of female orca in wild	50 years
Average lifespan of male orca in wild	30 years
Average survival time of orca in captivity	less than 6 years
Number of captive orcas to have survived to average age at time of death	1
Tourists watching wild orcas off Vancouver Island each year	400,000
Revenue from this tourism	\$75m
Value of one orca when sold to a marine park	\$1m
Percentage of Sea World's revenue accounted for by orcas	70
Visitors to Sea World each year	9-10 million
Annual Sea World income from visitor revenues	\$400-500m
Maximum volume of water in gallons traversed by orca whales in 24 hours at Sea World orca pools (the world's largest)	46 million
Minimum volume of water traversed by orca whales in 24 hours in the wild	45.3 billion

YOU CAN HELP

Please help the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society in its campaign to stop further captures. Send a polite email to the Russian minister of natural resources Vitaly G Artyukhov at: admin@mnr.gov.ru

For more information and a sample letter, see: <http://www.wdcs.org>

Please send your message and a copy of any response to info@wdcs.org.

MARINE PARKS HOLDING ORCAS WORLDWIDE 2003

The following marine parks all keep captive orcas. Don't give them your money.

		Total	Born in captivity	Born in the wild
US	Sea World (California, Texas, Florida)	21	16	5
	Miami Seaquarium	1		1
	Six Flags Worlds of Adventure, Ohio	1	1	
Canada	Marineland, Niagara Falls	6	3	3
France	Marineland, Antibes	6	3	3
Japan	Kamogawa Sea World	6	3	3
	Nanki Shirahama Adventure World	3		3
	Taiji Whale Museum	2		2
	Izu-Mito Sea Paradise	1		1
Argentina	Acuario Mundo Marino	1		1
Iceland	The Keiko release programme	1		
(Russia)	Utrish Aquarium (died end October)	1		1)

For more information, see the report *Captive orcas: dying to entertain you*, from which much of the information in this article was taken. It is available at www.wdcs.org.

WDOS

Adopt a Whale!

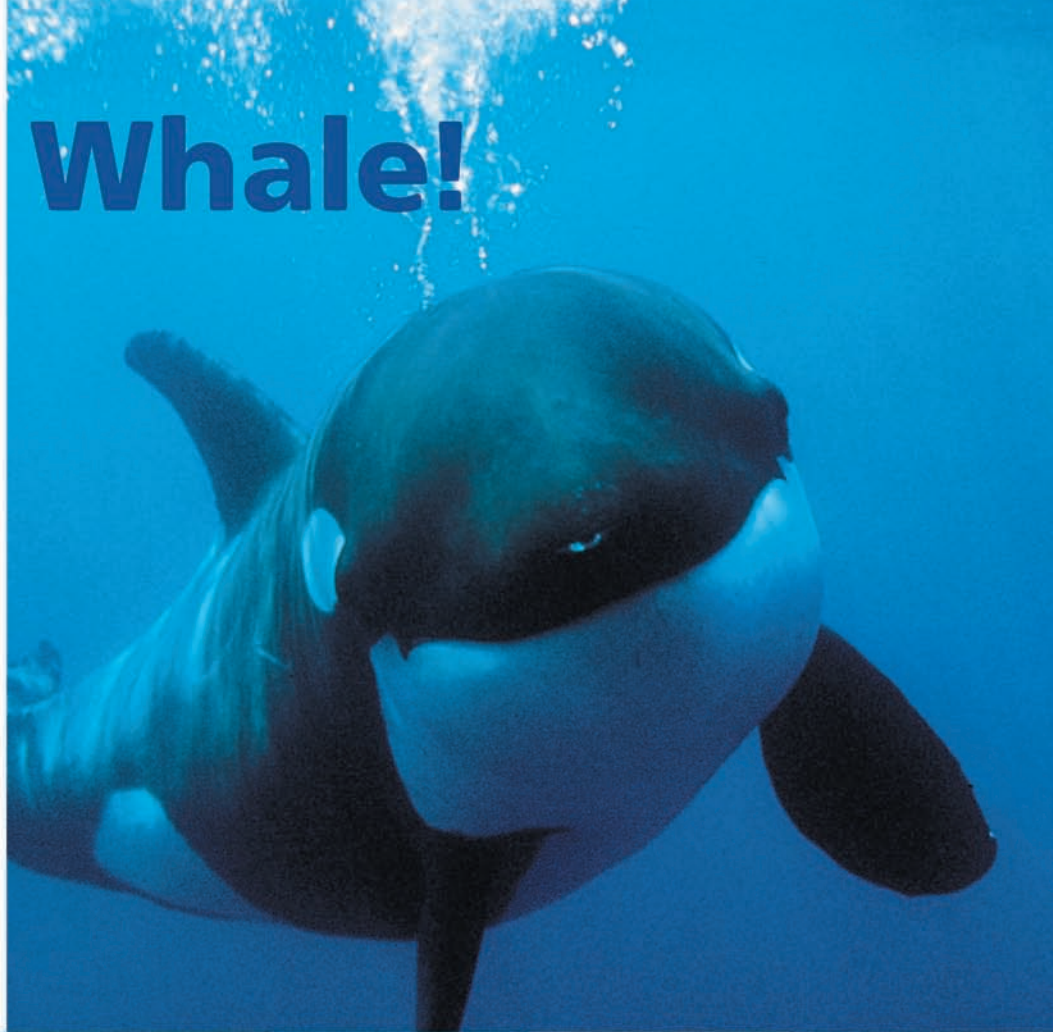
Adopt Arrow today!

For just £3 a month you will form a special link with Arrow, an orca living wild and free in the waters of British Columbia, Canada. We'll send you your adoption pack plus our full colour magazine, updates and newsletters throughout the year.



In some parts of the world whales like Arrow continue to be brutally snatched from their natural environment by the captivity industry. They are helpless victims, taken away from their family groups to be transported long distances to small enclosures that bear no resemblance to their open ocean home.

Through your adoption you will be helping WDCS to end this suffering and secure a safer future for Arrow and all whales and dolphins.



Adopt Arrow today - in two easy steps

1) wish to Adopt Arrow for £3 a month

☐ for myself

☐ as a gift for the person(s) named below

Please send to:

☐ recipient myself

Disguise packaging?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Please send:

☐ Adult pack
☐ Under 14's pack

Adopter's Date of Birth (essential if under 18)

MY NAME (MR/MRS/MISS/MS)

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

TEL NO:

EMAIL:

GIFT RECIPIENT'S NAME (MR/MRS/MISS/MS)

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

TEL NO:

MESSAGE YOU WOULD LIKE TO INCLUDE (OPTIONAL)

THANK YOU

AWAD0349ECO

2) Please fill in the whole form and return it to WDCS, FREEPOST(SN863)*, MELKSHAM SN12 6GZ

WDCS

DIRECT Debit

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

ORIGINATOR'S IDENTIFICATION NUMBER 9 4 1 0 5 1

WDCS REFERENCE NUMBER (OFFICE USE ONLY)

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society TO THE MANAGER

BANK/BUILDING SOCIETY

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

NAME OF ACCOUNT HOLDER(S)

BRANCH SORT CODE

ACCOUNT NUMBER

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society

Please pay WDCS Direct Debits from the account detailed in this Instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this Instruction may remain with WDCS and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

SIGNATURE(S)

DATE

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account.

DO NOT DETACH

☐ Tick here if you are a UK tax payer and would like WDCS to reclaim tax, through Gift Aid, at no extra cost to you, on this and any donation to WDCS made from 6 April 2000.

Under the terms of the Data Protection Act, you have the right to advise us at any time if you do not want to receive further mailings from WDCS or from other organisations with whom we co-operate.

Company Registration No. 2737521 Reg Charity No. 1014705

Return your completed form to:
WDCS, FREEPOST(SN863), MELKSHAM SN12 6GZ

For more information about WDCS, please visit www.wdcs.org/adoptawhale or call 0870 870 5001

WDCS is the global voice for the protection of whales, dolphins and their environment

WDCS
Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society

Main pic: © Ingrid N. Visser. Inset pic: from left: © Ingrid N. Visser, © Alex Morton, © Ingrid N. Visser, © Kelly Balcomb Bartok, © Ken Balcomb



Seeds of hope

NICOLA GRAYDON

Society Media & Culture Ladakh is framed by the Karakoram mountains to the north and the Himalayas to the south. Yet even in this remote environment the forces of global consumerism are intruding. Nicola Graydon reports on the locals' inspiring defence of their culture

Likir, a village three hours drive west of the Ladakh capital of Leh, is a place of near indescribable beauty. At an altitude of 3,500 metres, it's a verdant oasis curving down from the stark peaks of the Himalayas. Walking around the village, which is arranged on three levels, is to be made constantly aware of the presence of human hands nurturing life out of a desert soil as thin and unforgiving as the sharp high-altitude air. Tumbling streams run in stone-built channels through vegetable gardens, orchards, livestock pens and hectares of terraced barley fields fringed with poplar and willow.

In the short summer months these fields once sang with the voices of villagers celebrating the abundant harvests that resulted from their work. Now they are all but silent.

'The young have all gone,' says Dorje Lundup. Seventy years old, he is the seventh generation to have lived in the same family

home – a handsome building, three storeys high and decorated with threadbare prayer flags that give the house the air of a great ship floating on a sea of green.

Lundup, the *aba-le* (father) of the household, is a master carpenter who carved the wooden throne for a recent visit by the Dalai Lama. He's also an *amchi* – a traditional healer – and versatile chef. He's a man of contagious humour. It's only when he talks about the changes he has seen in his lifetime that he becomes sombre.

'Our young men have gone to the army, our children are in school. Others have gone to the city to work in government jobs.' He shrugs and spins the miniature home-made prayer wheel that sits above his left shoulder.

'You've no idea how generous Ladakhis used to be,' he continues. 'Everything was shared. Neighbours and friends always used



NICOLA GRAYDON



JOHN PAGE



NICOLA GRAYDON



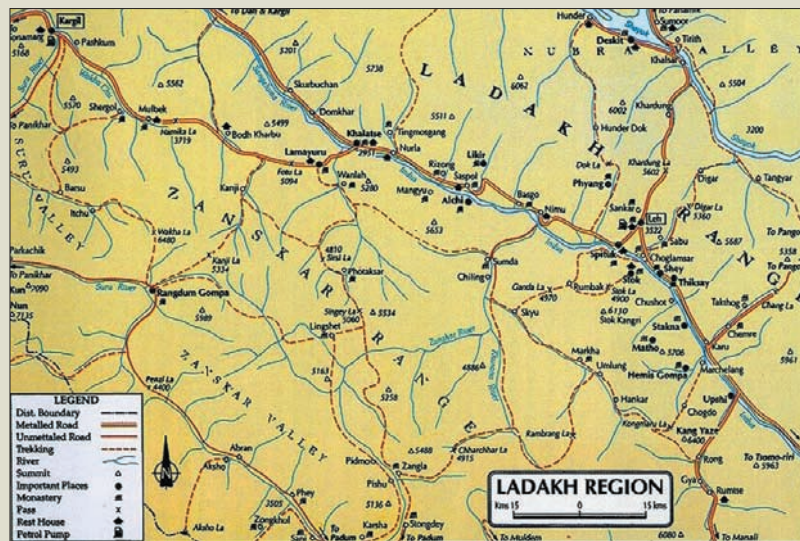
JOHN PAGE

LADAKH

Situated in the high-altitude deserts where India meets China and Pakistan, Ladakh is a strategically sensitive part of the troubled Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. Its first real exposure to the outside world came with contact with the Indian army in the 1960s: local labour was taken off the fields to work on roads, cash was introduced and diesel and kerosene started to replace local fuel.

The floodgates opened in 1974, when the Indian government decided to throw the area open to tourism and development. By 1986 some 6,000 tons of wheat and rice, 900,000 pounds of hard coke and 50,000 cubic feet of firewood were being imported into the region. In 1988 some 20,000 tourists came to Ladakh between June and September; that's equivalent to almost a quarter of the indigenous population. Promises of a better life in the city, and the impact of an influx of heavily subsidised goods from outside, began pushing people off the land in search of jobs as clerks, trekking guides and taxi drivers. The century was comparable to the land exodus in the US last century or even the Industrial Revolution in Britain – only much, much faster.

For Thupstan Paldan, a monk and leading Ladakhi intellectual, the demise of the region's agriculture is a catastrophe. 'Our ancestors prepared these fields. They are the root of our culture. Self-sufficiency was a matter of pride. Now we're dependent – on the army, on subsidies and on tourism.' As Paldan points out, this is insanity for a place that's inaccessible for eight months of the year.



to help us with our harvest. Now, it's all about money. No one has any time to be generous any more. We are losing what it means to be Ladakhi.'

For days now I have been a guest in Lundup's home, experiencing firsthand the Farm Project of the International Society for Ecology and Culture (ISEC). The ISEC is an organisation that seeks to promote locally-based alternatives to the global consumer culture. Working in the fields and living with local families, participants in the ISEC's programme help to raise the status of farming and rural life in Ladakh, which has been increasingly undermined in recent years by misplaced ideas about what it is to be modern. Since the project started eight years ago, the sight of privileged Westerners getting their hands dirty – actually enjoying taking animals up to their grazing lands or making butter in simple wooden churns – has apparently helped many young Ladakhis regain a respect for their agricultural heritage.

A mountain paradise

Ladakh is situated in the northeast of India-administered Kashmir. One of the first Westerners to visit the region in modern times was Helena Norberg-Hodge, the ISEC's founder and director. She was amazed by what she saw. In one of the most difficult environments in the world people not only managed to provide for all their basic needs, but produced an excess of grain that they traded for luxuries from the outside. 'Over the centuries they had developed social structures that allowed them to make the most of their limited resources. Their lives were physically demanding, but they actually worked far fewer hours than we do in the West. Buddhists, Christians and Muslims lived peacefully side by side for generations. And, most importantly, they really seemed to enjoy life. I've never seen people more at peace with themselves, more content.'

A linguist by training, Norberg-Hodge mastered the Ladakhi language within a year and was uniquely placed to experience the impact on the traditional culture of the global economy. 'The gap between rich and poor widened dramatically,' she says. 'There was no poverty when I arrived. Then suddenly there was unemployment, along with increasing corruption and crime. Families and communities began to disintegrate as they became separated from their own knowledge and from the land.' And for the first time in 500 years there was violence and friction between Buddhist and Muslims.

In the remoter villages a good deal of the traditional agricultural economy still remains. But in those areas closer to the roads that link Leh to the Indian plains, the story is very different. Subsidised rice, sugar, wheat and other foodstuffs, trucked in at vast and hidden expense over the Himalayas, are dramatically altering the traditional diet and, more importantly, undercutting the price of locally harvested produce. A kilogramme of imported wheat flour, for instance, sells for half the price of local flour and is destroying the market for local farmers.

Yet, you might ask, if the traditional culture was so wonderful how come it was so easily undermined? According to Norberg-Hodge, it was the result of psychological pressures to modernise, which eroded the Ladakhis' self-respect. 'I saw firsthand how people who had previously been self-confident and assured came to view themselves as backward and inferior.

'I remember being shown around the remote village of Hemis Shukpachan by a young Ladakhi called Tsewang. It seemed to me that all the houses I saw were especially large and beautiful, and I asked Tsewang to show me the houses where the poor people lived. He looked perplexed for a moment, then replied: "We don't have any poor people here." Eight years later, I overheard Tsewang talking to some tourists. "If you could only help us Ladakhis," he was saying, "we're so poor."

The introduction of media and advertising provided a glamourised view of Western consumer culture. And this image of infinite wealth and leisure was supported by the influx of Western tourists, many of whom would spend upwards of \$100 a day – the equivalent of someone spending tens of thousands of dollars a day in Europe or North America.

These illusions of modernity had a profound effect on the minds of Ladakhis – particularly on young people, who had not yet formed strong cultural identities. In comparison to the images of life in Paris and New York, they saw their own lives as dirty and primitive, and desperately sought to imitate what they thought was modern. For young boys, that was Rambo; for the girls, Barbie.

'Ladakhis soon began to develop some of the same neuroses we have in the West,' says Norberg-Hodge. 'They even started using an artificial cream called 'Fair and Lovely' to lighten their skin.

'Every day on the radio "experts" of various sorts were extolling the virtues of chemical fertilisers, of caesarean births, of consumerism. There was nothing in the traditional culture to warn the Ladakhis that they were being sold a lie.'

Market forces conquer Shangri-la

In Likir on a Friday afternoon, Lundup's son, Tsering, the 45-year-old headmaster of a school some kilometres away, bounds up the steep wooden stairs to the family home, appears in the kitchen in a suit and tie, greets his parents, disappears for a couple of a moments and reappears in a traditional jacket holding six rough scythes. We are going to one of the family's outlying fields, where Nepali labourers, hired to replace absent relatives and friends, are harvesting alfalfa.

'Sometimes I wonder if I should give up my job,' Tsering Lundup sighs, as we pick our way along streams that are alternately flowing and dry depending on the irrigation flows that give Likir the feel of endless motion. 'Here I am, working as a headmaster in order to pay people to do something I love to do myself. I suppose my job is valuable, but it seems like a kind of



JOHN PAGE

'Sometimes I wonder if I should give up my job, Here I am, working as a headmaster in order to pay people to do something I love to do myself.'

madness, doesn't it?'

It didn't seem appropriate to suggest that Tsering Lundup was a victim of 'progress'; that the Ladakh of his childhood (called the 'last Shangri-la' in the *National Geographic* in the early 1970s) had been conquered by forces as effective as any military invasion; that his family had become prey to 'market forces'.

But I was tempted to say something when some days later he took me to his new home on the outskirts of Leh, where he now lives with his wife and young daughter in a government 'housing colony'. Grey concrete, warren-like houses – the very antithesis of traditional Ladakhi architecture – sit forlornly in the desert. Hardly a blade of grass is able to push its way through the cracked concrete paving. Dogs scavenge in rubbish, and water is delivered in huge trucks. The crystal mountain air is filled with diesel fumes, the stench of fetid drains and the grating gears of goods trucks making their way to Leh. It is a scene that would be unrecognisable to anyone who had passed this way just 10 years ago.

It's an admirable example of the Ladakhi spirit that Tsering Lundup and his wife are able to live harmoniously in this nuclear-family hell. For me, this arid, soulless place brought only a crushing despondency about the fate of Ladakh.

Seeds of hope

Remarkably, Norberg-Hodge doesn't share these feelings. When globalisation first threatened to overwhelm this unique civilisation, she helped to create a powerful movement to resist it. The resistance movement was

based largely on bringing the Ladakhis fuller information about the realities of life in the West.

In 1980 she and her husband John Page set up the Ladakh Project, a small British-based NGO. The Ladakh Project was followed in 1984 by the locally-run Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDG), which set out to demonstrate alternatives to the petroleum-based development policies being promoted by the Indian authorities. Building on local traditions of sustainability, the group developed a wide range of appropriate technologies – including solar heating systems, village-scale hydroelectric units and greenhouses for winter agriculture.

If slightly worn by time, the LEDG's Ecology Centre on the northern fringes of Leh remains a brilliant example of what can be done when the traditional meets the modern in an amicable truce. Built in traditional style, the building is partly solar heated and a small wind generator provides power for back-up lighting. In the garden are an array of solar cookers and dryers and a solar greenhouse. There is also an extensive library, with books on subjects ranging from Ladakhi history, flora, fauna and folklore to alternative technology and Gandhian philosophy.

The impact of the group's work extends far beyond Leh. 'The people of Zaskar, a remote valley to the south, are enjoying steady 24-hour electricity for the first time thanks to the installation of micro-hydros,' says the LEDG's director Sonam Dawa. (The 70-year-old gave up his job as a senior government engineer to head the group.) 'By now people are realising they can't depend on electricity run by diesel from God-knows-where. The stations are not run efficiently, and if they break down it takes a month to restore power.' The LEDG is currently installing an 80-kilowatt station that will replace a diesel-powered one, and provide 1,000 homes with round-the-clock electricity. Five hundred households will also receive solar dish cookers; the other half will get solar box cookers.

Leading by example

Not surprisingly, the LEDG has become something of a model for grassroots organisations around the world. Representatives of NGOs from China, Peru, Bhutan and many other countries have come to Ladakh to learn from its success.

Another of the LEDG's founder members, Thupstan Chhewang, is now executive director of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) – the regional local authority set up in 1995 and which has been dubbed the 'first Green Party of the East' because of its radical vision of a self-sustainable Ladakh and its understanding of globalisation issues. 'We are looking to rid Ladakh of diesel by 2020, and with the help of the Indian government we will achieve that', says Chhewang.

Like Dorje Lundup, Chhewang is most concerned about the impact of development on Ladakhi youth, but believes that circumstances will ultimately force them



JOHN PAGE

back to the land. 'We currently have a generation of children who are being educated for government jobs that simply aren't there,' he says. 'They will be forced to look to our traditional local resources. They will go back to the fields.'

Among its many projects aimed at restoring greater economic self-reliance, the LAHDC is looking to promote the sustainable propagation of sea buckthorn – a berry that grows in abundance in Ladakh's thin soil. Sea buckthorn is used as a medicine by local healers, and is a valuable source of vitamin C and antioxidants. 'China is currently making 200 products out of sea buckthorn,' Chhewang says. 'As long as we propagate it sustainably it can really help us by bringing in revenue without taking us away from our culture. Our climate is such that we could become a major organic seed production centre for the rest of India.'

It's a bit unusual talking to a government representative with ideas like Chhewang's, and the LAHDC is yet to prove itself. For now the priority is changing education policy so that Ladakhi language becomes compulsory and term times are shifted so the children are on holiday during harvest. Chhewang is honest about the fact that politics make change difficult. 'We have to take everyone, including the bureaucrats, with us.' But he's unequivocal about the value to Ladakh of the ISEC's work. 'Helena was among the first to propagate alternative ideas. She was a lone voice. At the time people were awed by development, while she was talking about respecting our own culture, and encouraging technology appropriate for our land. It's had enormous impact.'

Pride after the fall

On the northern fringe of Leh, beyond the bazaar now replete with internet cafes, souvenir shops and honking traffic, are the headquarters of the Women's Alliance – the most recent of the ISEC's projects. Set up in 1991 to strengthen cultural self-respect and promote the best of Ladakh's traditions, the alliance also seeks to counter the disempowerment experienced by Ladakhi women as the new economy centralises power in the capital rather than the villages. It boasts a membership of 6,000. 'It's no longer merely an NGO,' says Chhewang. 'It's a movement.'

Built in traditional style, the alliance's handsome centre houses offices, meeting rooms and a craft shop where village women sell everything from hand-woven shawls and baskets to brass spoons and vegetable seeds. The centre also hosts an annual festival celebrating local knowledge and culture. Women in traditional dress display skills passed down through generations – weaving, cooking, pressing oil from mustard and apricot kernels. To an audience of local dignitaries, the women speak eloquently about their attempts to preserve their culture. They have become the custodians of the land, and they know it. 'Everything we need, we can make ourselves,' says the alliance's director Dolma Tsewang. 'We have so much in Ladakh. We must learn to use



NICOLA GRAYDON

REALITY TOURS

Advertising and the media bombard non-Western cultures worldwide with glamourised images of urban consumer culture, causing young people in particular to reject their own heritage.

The International Society for Ecology and Culture's 'reality tours' give Ladakhi community leaders the opportunity to see with their own eyes what life is really like in the West. The tours to the UK include visits to old people's homes, landfill sites and drug rehabilitation centres, but also offer the chance to witness inspiring examples of organic farming, local trading systems and sustainable communities. On their return to Ladakh, participants discuss their experiences on local radio and at village meetings – painting a more realistic picture of life in the industrialised world and helping to promote cultural self-respect.

Ladakhi 'reality tourists' on British society:

'If he's got brothers and sisters, why doesn't he live with them?' (*To the director of a London homeless shelter.*)

'They were always spending money. They didn't even make their own bread.'

'They call it organic. It's just like what we do.'

'They have special doctors and special pills just for people who are unhappy.'

'They were always rushing, or on the phone, or driving the children somewhere. They never seemed to have time to enjoy themselves.'



NICOLA GRAYDON

Renewable energy is now mainstream; the doctors are talking about the greater nutritional value of local food; and the agricultural experts have started advocating organic methods

what we have, like our parents and grandparents did. We must be proud in our dress, our food, our land.'

Tsewang has been to Europe three times now, and is no longer seduced by the glitter of Western consumerism. 'Your old people see their grandchildren once a year, and you don't seem to have any time for enjoying your life. I think in many ways we are more wealthy here,' she says.

Despite the rapacious Kashmiris touting for business in Leh, the diesel-spewing taxis and schoolchildren who cannot count to 10 in their own language, there is still hope for a sustainable future in Ladakh. In the smoky bar at the ultra-modern Ibex Hotel, even suited businessmen and handsome young trekkers are unsure about the gains of 'development'. 'This is the high point where we can look behind us and see what we have lost, and look to the horizon and decide what kind of a Ladakh we want in 20 years time,' says one 27-year-old. 'We need to find ourselves again.'

There is no doubt that the cash economy has severely undermined local self-reliance, that corruption is rife and that the gulf between the Levi's-wearing youth and their parents is deep. But there is also an extraordinary awareness. People are already becoming jaded by the empty promises of progress, and are open to the possibility of an alternative route.

Ladakhi intellectual Thupstan Paldan is encouraged. 'We are at a crossroads,' Paldan says. 'There was a time when we blindly followed development. Now we are beginning to realise that progress is not all good; that sugary tea does not nourish as our own salty butter tea; that rice does not make us as strong as barley. Young and old are getting rheumatism in the new cement homes, and even people in the remote villages are turning away from chemical fertilisers.'

Norberg-Hodge is more optimistic now than she has been for decades. 'There is a new consciousness here. Renewable energy is now mainstream; the doctors are talking about the greater nutritional value of local food; and the agricultural experts have started advocating organic methods. It's quite amazing to see the changes.'

Does she believe that Ladakh could once again

become the 'ecotopia' it was sometimes described as in the past? 'Ladakh can never go back, but perhaps it is coming full circle. Three decades ago I was impressed by the sophistication of the culture here: one based on real sustainability, co-operation and peace. While in the West we were only just beginning to discuss the environment, here everyone – young and old – had an intimate understanding of ecology, women enjoyed unusually high status, and communities had evolved highly complex systems of working together. These characteristics of the traditional culture have so much in common with the "post-industrial" values now found in the West. So maybe what we're witnessing is a synthesis of the very old and the very new.'

Back in Likir, headmaster Tsering Lundup arrives at a distant field and hands out scythes to the Nepali labourers. Much to their surprise, he keeps one for himself and begins to hack away at thick green iris stalks. He says the stalks are a particular delicacy for sheep and goats.

'Why would I want to leave this?' Calling from the far end of the field, Tsering Lundup sweeps his arm around to indicate the horizon. Why indeed? The sun is gently falling behind purple mountain slopes, sweeping light over the distant monastery and skimming the thick barley buds nodding slightly with their own weight.

Whatever the noxious glamour of Western development and the pressures of globalisation, the pre-industrial past is more than just a memory. The generation currently in power in Ladakh grew up on the land. They will not easily let it go. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Ancient Futures: learning from Ladakh (University of California Press), by Helena Norberg-Hodge. ('Everyone who cares about the future of this planet should read it,' *The Guardian*.) To order copies of the book and the award-winning film of the same title by John Page ('an extraordinary film... compelling viewing,' *The Times Educational Supplement*), contact the International Society of Ecology and Culture (ISEC, see details below). The book costs £9.99 (plus p&p), and the video £12.00 (plus p&p).

The Ladakh Farm Project

The ISEC's Farm Project provides a unique opportunity for people of almost any age and background to experience a traditional land-based culture coming face-to-face with Western consumerism. Participants stay with Ladakhi families for a month, sharing all the household and agricultural work. They also take part in regular workshops led by ISEC staff, in which the situation of Ladakh is discussed within the broader framework of the global economy. This is an intense and challenging programme, offering genuinely life-changing opportunities for cultural exchange. For further details and application forms, contact: The ISEC at Foxhole, Dartington, Devon TQ9 6EB, UK, or at PO Box 9475, Berkeley, CA 94709, The US.

www.isec.org.uk

Nicola Graydon is a freelance journalist

Head of WP,
world's second largest
advertising agency. (See page 22)

OUR PLANET NEEDS YOU

Over the past month we have been telephoning our subscribers. We wanted to know what you think of the magazine - what you'd change, what was missing. But you wanted to talk about the issues – genetically modified foods, mobile phone masts, fluoridation, farmers markets, climate change, the war in Iraq, corporate crime, whaling, responsible travel, vaccine risks, toxic shampoos, nuclear power, cloning. Above all you wanted to know...

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me Minister

World Bank head. Since 1992 has spent \$20.8bn on fossil fuel-based energy projects in developing countries.

Head of Glaxo SmithKline accused of keeping HIV medicines out of reach of the poor. Meanwhile, in his own words: 'I demanded £20 million to keep me motivated'. Of the 120,000 employees, 60,000 are in sales and marketing.

Face of L'Oreal, which devotes 3 per cent of annual sales to research, making it one of the most prolific patenters in the world. More toxic and chemically reactive than larger particles, nanoparticles have the potential to penetrate every vital human organ with alien toxins.

Head of IMF. Its structural adjustment programs demand massive lay-offs, health and education spending cuts, and currency devaluation. Since IMF intervention, environmental protection budgets have been cut by up to 66 per cent in countries across the world.

Cargill controls 45 per cent of the world grain market, is the world's seventh largest food and drink company, the US's third largest beef / fourth largest pork packer and is one of the world's largest producers of pesticides.

UK's biggest retailer and one of five supermarkets that control 88 per cent of the UK food market. Each new supermarket means the loss of 270 local jobs. 50 years ago farmers received half of every £1 spent on food, now they get less than 8p.

England's most influential epidemiologist. Refuses to accept man-made chemicals, radiation, environmental carcinogens and food additives as major factors in development of cancer. Won't acknowledge radioactivity workers for carrying a 'leukaemia causing virus' to nuclear sites.

Head of Japanese Whaling association. Since commercial whaling was banned in 1987, the Japanese have killed 5,760 whales under the guise of 'scientific' whaling.

Head of News Corporation, controlling much of the media



Nature & Resources Costing over \$1 billion, the Karahnjúkar hydroelectric dam in Iceland is a hugely controversial project. Mark Lynas journeyed to the blasting face, hoping to work out for himself whether this industrial elephant is green or brilliant-white.

Damned nation

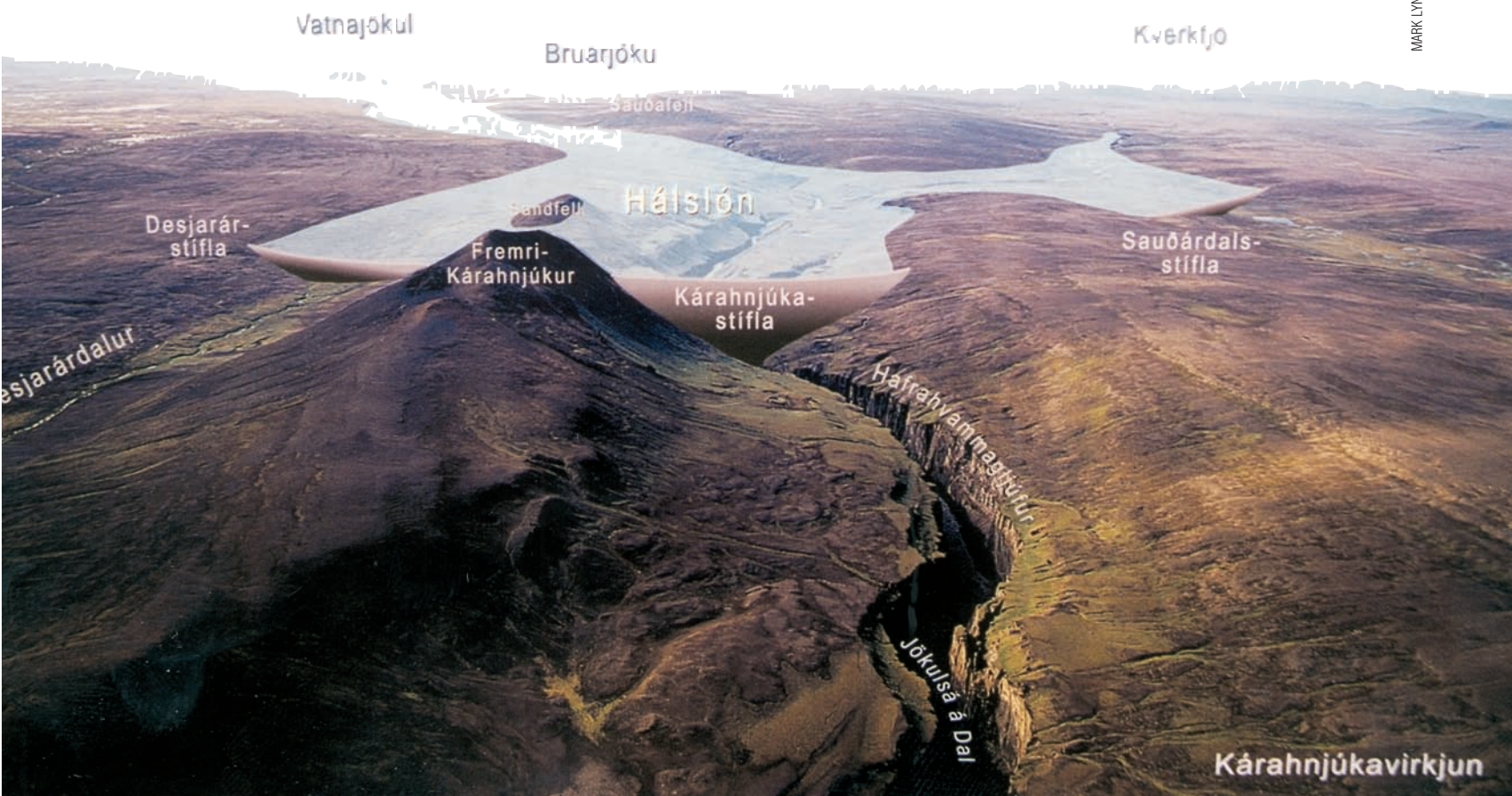
I had only been in Iceland three days and it was all going wrong. I was there to investigate the massive Karahnjúkar aluminium smelter project, a huge hydroelectric dam currently being built in a remote area of the country's eastern highlands. Highly controversial during its planning stages, Karahnjúkar triggered national demonstrations, international email and fax campaigns and even a hunger strike by the singer Björk's mother. Having previously watched dam projects destroy natural landscapes and human societies in places like India and Brazil, it already seemed pretty clear to me that big dams were generally bad things.

Yet I found myself sitting in the

office of Mr Thorsteinn Hilmarsson, press officer for the Icelandic national power company Landsvirkjun, being convinced that Karahnjúkar was actually beneficial. 'A lot of the debate has been "either-or",' he was saying, 'as if either you use rivers for energy-intensive industry or you leave nature unspoilt and have tourism.' But in Iceland, Hilmarsson pointed out, the construction of roads – a by-product of energy development – was helping promote tourism.

And how, he asked, do tourists get to the country, anyway? 'They come by plane, and planes are made with aluminium.' You could either have this smelted with coal in somewhere like Australia, he went

on, which would result in 10 times more greenhouse gas emissions, or you could manufacture it with clean hydro power in Iceland. Using renewable power instead of coal to fuel aluminium smelters would lead to an overall drop in world carbon emissions (a fact recognised through the so-called 'Icelandic clause' of the Kyoto agreement on climate change). This goal – together with the promotion of economic growth in remote areas of Iceland that are facing depopulation as people move to Reykjavik in search of jobs – underlie the government's policy of developing energy-intensive industry. As Hilmarsson explained it, Karahnjúkar seemed to make perfect sense. ►



MARK LYNAS



MARK LYNAS

The immense scale of the project was only clear from a lookout point high up on the other side of the valley. The bulldozers looked like yellow ants labouring away in the distance

Stop making sense

A few days later I was several hundred kilometres northeast of Reykjavik, bumping along a dirt track towards the dam site itself in a jeep belonging to Sigdur St Arnalds. With infectious enthusiasm St Arnalds – an engineer by training and now handling the on-site PR for the project – was outlining some of Karahnjukar's vital statistics. The biggest reservoir, Halslón, will reach 57 square kilometres in area and be formed by the highest rockfill dam in Europe – a massive rampart reaching 190 metres in height. Seven smaller dams will complete the project. Together, the dams will funnel water through 16 underground tunnels to a powerhouse buried 600 metres below, deep within a mountain.

With a generating capacity of 4,400 gigawatt hours per year, the resulting electricity will power a new aluminium smelter that will be constructed and run by the US company Alcoa at Reydarfjörður on Iceland's east coast. The whole thing will cost over \$1 billion.

To say the landscape was bleak would be an understatement. Located just 20 kilometres north of Europe's largest glacier Vatnajökull, a freezing wind blew across the high plateau and low cloud hugged the grey hills. Much of Iceland's interior is heavily desertified – a legacy of centuries of overgrazing, thin volcanic soils, low temperatures and strong winds – and there appeared to be little vegetation to speak of across much of the proposed reservoir area. A few forlorn patches of green broke up the sand and gravel flats, but overall the impression was pretty uninspiring. Wilderness it may have been, I thought, but of what value? Nor would the Karahnjukar project result in any displacement of people – a frequent problem with big dams elsewhere; for obvious reasons, no one lives

anywhere near the place.

'We don't have many wild animals here,' St Arnalds was saying. 'We imported reindeer 250 years ago from Norway, and they now run wild in east Iceland. Karahnjukar will affect a third of the stock, and reindeer that calve in the area will have to move to other valleys.' Other than that, it was thought that 600 nesting sites for pink-footed geese would also be submerged, but overall the geese numbers are rising and around 50,000 currently nest in Iceland as a whole. (They are even plentiful enough for hunting to be allowed.) Nor would there be much impact on fish; the huge glacial rivers affected by the Karahnjukar project are too muddy and cold to support significant aquatic ecosystems at present. In fact, I was informed, the biggest of these rivers, the Jökulsá á Dal, might even find itself supporting a new salmon population in clearer water from lower tributaries once the dirty main flow was diverted into a neighbouring valley.

Moving mountains

I was astonished by the sheer scale of what was happening. Huge yellow bulldozers – over a dozen of them on each side of a gaping canyon – were plying up and down the hillside, scraping black earth off the bedrock and then pushing it over the edge into the raging torrent of the Jökulsá á Dal river. Diggers and earthmovers were also labouring away – almost to the summit of Karahnjukar mountain itself, and had already scoured a huge triangular scar from the flanks of the peak. Roads criss-crossed the whole area, and lines of lorries and trucks roared up and down among clouds of dust. We travelled down one of the new roads into the canyon itself, our engine noise almost drowned out by the roaring of the water, and then switched on our headlights as we entered a dark tunnel.

The tunnel floor was covered with running water and a layer of brown mud, and the air was thick with diesel smoke from the

bulldozers and trucks working inside – despite a huge ventilation pipe running the length of the ceiling. I squelched through the mud up to the blasting face, where two men in red overalls were working high up on a cherry-picker, carefully inserting sticks of explosive into newly-drilled holes. Dozens of wire fuses hung out from the rock, and empty cardboard boxes labelled ‘dynamite: 32mm X 100mm’ lay discarded in puddles around the tunnel edge. Back in the jeep, we drove into a side tunnel that led out to the sheer canyon edge – squeezing ourselves against the rock walls as a huge dumper truck lumbered past to empty its load into the river below. Dust fell regularly from high above, where unseen bulldozers were still pushing hundreds of tonnes of dirt over the edge.

The immense scale of the project was only clear from a lookout point high up on the other side of the valley. The bulldozers looked like yellow ants labouring away in the distance, and the Vatnajökull ice-cap lay across the horizon like an enormous grey pancake. ‘The impact on wildlife in my opinion is extremely modest,’ St Arnalds was

Americans throw away enough aluminium every three months to rebuild the US’s entire commercial airline fleet

saying, as a squall of sleet hit the windscreen of our jeep. ‘There are some fish, but compared with other areas it is pretty poor.’ I asked about whether the project was destroying wilderness. ‘Not destruction, but the reduction of wilderness to a certain extent,’ he corrected me.

In the long-term, tourism traffic would be at least as significant an intrusion. All the new roads had opened up the area, which, with its waterfalls, canyons and untouched valleys, was becoming known as the ‘new Golden Circle’ of Iceland. (The old one, encompassing Geysir and the Gullfoss waterfall and accessible from Reykjavik, is already crowded with coach parties.)

All in all, I was left with the impression that the Karahnjúkar project was far less damaging than one might have expected for such a large scheme, and that the overall impact might even be beneficial with regards to mitigating global climate change. These happy thoughts stayed with me until, once back in the UK, I did some further research. Then I discovered, stumbling across some documents I had previously overlooked, that the reality was rather different. Confirmation of the truth was to be found not in a report penned by some green campaign group, but in the project’s original environmental impact assessment (EIA), commissioned by Landsvirkjun itself.

Take two

The first thing I learned was how easy it is to miss the real ecological value of an area when all you do is drive around it for a day in a jeep. What had seemed bleak and lifeless to me turned out to be rare heathland habitat, harbouring several types of endangered mosses and lichens, as well as other plants vital for reindeer and goose grazing. Around 280 species of small animals have been identified at Karahnjúkar by researchers from the Icelandic Institute of Natural History. These species include three insects never previously found in Iceland – two of

which may be completely new to science altogether. Not only will nine square kilometres of this precious heathland be directly submerged (including the only known site for one of the nationally rare lichens), but soil erosion from the lake edge will result in wind-blown sand and dust drying out wetlands and killing vegetation far outside the project’s immediate area.

In addition, the EIA identifies many unique geological features that will also soon be submerged – including unusual moraine deposits, two major waterfalls (one of which will eventually be lost forever under the lake’s sedimentation), hot springs, and the top of the spectacular Hafrahvammagljúfur canyon (‘Iceland’s Grand Canyon’).

The idea suggested to me by my dam-site host that fish will flourish in the new, clear water of the Jökulsá a Dal river once its main glacial flow has been diverted does not bear much scrutiny either. Late each summer the lake will overflow and the massive glacial river will roar once again – flushing out any new life downstream. And with less sediment overall, the river’s estuary will become vulnerable to erosion by the sea. This is bad news for the greylag geese, which use the estuary as a moulting ground, as well as for harbour seals – the population of which is already in steep decline and may crash further once the main dam is built. In fact, Karahnjúkar’s impact on wildlife could be so negative that Birdlife International, WWF and several other groups are campaigning for a case to be opened against Iceland under the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (both pink-footed and greylag geese are ‘protected fauna species’ under the convention’s annex III).

Then there are the dam’s downstream effects on the second affected river – the Jökulsá í Fljotsdal, which will carry all the extra water from the power station down to the lowland valley lake of Lagarfljót. The lake’s level will rise, ►



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its colour will get darker, and the water temperature will drop by half a degree, thus undermining the aquatic ecosystem and reducing the food supply for fish and ducks. Taking into account all these wider impacts, the project will in total affect 3,000 square kilometres of territory – nearly 3 per cent of Iceland's entire landmass.

It's hardly surprising, then, that the country's planning agency originally turned the Karahnjukar project down only to find itself overruled by Iceland's environment minister, who gave it the go-ahead on political grounds after ordering some minor changes.

What's more, Karahnjukar's supposed benefits in terms of global warming also turn out to be largely non-existent. As the conservation organisation the International Rivers Network (IRN) points out, last year Alcoa actually closed three US-based aluminium smelters (two of which were driven by hydropower) due to cost considerations and overcapacity. The electrolytic processes involved in aluminium smelting also lead to emissions of tetrafluoromethane and hexafluoromethane – greenhouse gases that are thousands of times more powerful in trapping the sun's heat than carbon dioxide.

The truth is, Alcoa is moving to Iceland because the energy there is cheaper. 'If Alcoa were really concerned about climate impacts it could go for more recycling,' suggests the IRN's policy director Peter Bosshard, who is also the author of the recent report *Karahnjukar: a project on thin ice*. Bosshard calculates that achieving a higher recycling rate for the 100 billion drinks cans Alcoa produces every year could easily generate more aluminium than several new smelters like the one planned in Iceland. 'It is crazy to start destroying large tracts of wilderness just for cheaper aluminium,' he states.

A monstrous environmental folly

Indeed, if one looks at the whole aluminium issue holistically, as

Landsvirkjun press officer Thorsteinn Hilmarsson insists, more pitfalls quickly become apparent. Hilmarsson pointed out that aluminium is vital for the planes that transport tourists to Iceland. Yet the mining campaign group Project Underground has calculated that Americans throw away enough aluminium every three months to rebuild the US's entire commercial air fleet. Moreover, recycling aluminium uses only 5 per cent of the energy it takes to extract new metal from bauxite. None of the bauxite for the smelter will be mined in Iceland, so it will have to be shipped from overseas – causing extra fossil fuel emissions in the process. Nor is bauxite mining environmentally benign where it does take place: communities near mines in the Brazilian state of Para have complained about contamination from toxic red sludge; while in Surinam villagers petitioned the country's president in protest against the destruction and contamination of their lands by the company Suralco – itself a subsidiary of Alcoa (see box, right).

The principal political justification for Karahnjukar is the creation of jobs in the eastern Icelandic fjords. The fjords constitute one of Iceland's remotest and least-developed areas; the local population declined by 10 per cent during the 1990s. But with a price tag of \$1.4 billion for the hydropower scheme alone, and another \$1.1 billion for Alcoa's smelter, the Karahnjukar project is a crippling expensive way to create employment. Even if the Icelandic government is correct in estimating that Karahnjukar will create 1,000 permanent jobs in the region, this still adds up to a price tag of \$2.5m per job – easily enough for each worker to retire in luxury and the wilderness to be left untouched. Indeed, it's doubtful whether high-income Icelanders will even want to work in an industrial smelter. A large proportion of the construction jobs on the dam site have so far been

ALCOA

With 127,000 employees in 40 countries and 2002 revenues of \$20.3 billion, Alcoa is a giant corporation even by today's globalised standards. It is also well-connected

politically; former CEO Paul O'Neill was (until being sacked) George W Bush's treasury secretary.

Alcoa's massive Rockdale plant is one of Texas's biggest polluters, and spews out thousands of tonnes of greenhouse gases and sulphur dioxide a year. In Brazil Alcoa gets cheap power for a smelter in the Amazon from a dam that displaced 35,000 people and flooded 2,820 square kilometres of tropical rainforest when its floodgates were closed in 1984. Alcoa is now bidding for new dam concessions in other parts of the Amazon region. But Alcoa's, and the world's, biggest mine is Australia's Huntly mine – responsible for the clearing of vast areas of Western Australia's Jarrah Forest. While the company's *Sustainability Report 2003* boasts about the 'rehabilitation' of the forest after mining is completed at Huntly, the Western Australian Forest Alliance talks about 'vast areas of state forest' being 'devastated by bauxite mining'.



If the project succeeds in creating the estimated 1,000 permanent jobs, it will have cost \$2.5m per job

filled by foreign labourers.

And the figures don't seem to add up either. The project's profitability was originally estimated on the basis of a high aluminium price. Yet prices globally continue to fall because of over-supply. One Icelandic economist has calculated that rather than being profitable the scheme will instead lose around \$36m a year. In essence, the government of Iceland may find itself using taxpayers' money to indirectly subsidise aluminium production by a foreign multinational while destroying its own backyard in the process.

So why go ahead at all? As the now-defunct World Commission on Dams pointed out, narrow vested interests – among banks, government bureaucracies and national power companies – often play a key part in advancing big dam projects. But over and above this, the issue is systemic. Capitalist economics cannot function without continual growth in both material consumption and corporate profit – and there is very little of either in just recycling old Coke cans. The dam will be built. The monster must be fed. ■



Death & the sales

Economics Expensive, polluting, unnatural and booming. Jeremy Smith investigates the 'death-care industry'.

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A LifeGem is a diamond created from the carbonised remains of a corpse. The 'closeness and mobility' refers to the fact that once set in a ring, your loved one will be very much close at hand wherever you go.

Should a LifeGem not appeal, then Eternal Reefs could mix your



The Celestis Foundation's 'Earthview service' will shoot canisters (indicated by red arrows) containing a loved one's cremated remains into space

ashes with concrete to create an artificial reef (with a brass plaque bearing your name), which will then be sunk onto the ocean floor. Or the Summum Organisation could wrap you up like an Egyptian mummy, a process it believes 'could be appealing to anyone who works hard at staying in shape', adding 'With the increasing number of people joining health clubs and becoming more health conscious, why not end up on a high note?'

Not dramatic enough? Then, for \$5,300 the Celestis Foundation's 'Earthview service' will shoot 'a symbolic portion of the cremated remains of a loved one' (their

'cremains') into orbit, so that they will circle the earth for nearly 50 years before re-entering the atmosphere 'blazing like a shooting star in final tribute'.

Worth over \$20 billion in the US and over £1 billion in the UK each year, business in the 'death-care industry' is booming. In the States, three giant firms handle a quarter of all funerals. The largest is Service Corporation International (SCI), which owns funeral companies across five continents, conducts some half a million funerals a year and employs over 35,000 people. Based in Houston, Texas, the firm's CEO Robert Waltrip is a close personal friend of George W Bush. A few years ago Waltrip and SCI were named as defendants in a whistleblower lawsuit over allegations that Bush had



People don't want to know, when discussing what will happen to their dead loved ones (or 'prospects', as the industry calls them) that their willingness to pay over the odds at such a moment is an 'attractive industry fundamental'. But that's how Loewen Group, the second largest funeral services company in the world, puts it. Nor would they necessarily want to know that in 1995 Loewen bought out nearly 200 locally owned Canadian funeral homes and went on to post a 41 per cent profit.

If the costs of confronting death seem expensive, they are nothing compared to the costs of doing your utmost not to. For \$28,000 the Cryonics Institute guarantees 'reliable and affordable cryonic suspension' (or freezing of corpses) until such a time as science is ready to give you once again a 'youthful and healthy new life'. More affordably, companies like Genetic Savings & Clone are offering all-inclusive pet cloning services (from \$895 – shipping excluded), allowing doggie years to be relived again and again. And now these same firms are waiting for public attitudes and legislation to shift so they can offer you cloned granny – only this time she's 40 years younger than you are.

PASSAGE OF TIME

Our attitude to death was not always like this. In the past, before the Victorians came over all squeamish, families took care of their own. A woman would learn from her mother how to lay out a body once it had died, and how then to care for it. A father would teach his son how to build a coffin and dig a grave. And all of this was watched and understood by the children, themselves learning from a young age not to fear the bodies of the dead, but simply to see death as an inevitable part of life.

Most importantly, all of this took place in the home. Everything was done cheaply, quickly, and locally. Towards the end of the 19th century, however, these domestic rituals began

For \$5,300 the Celestis Foundation's 'Earthview service' will shoot 'a symbolic portion of the cremated remains of a loved one' (their 'cremains') into orbit

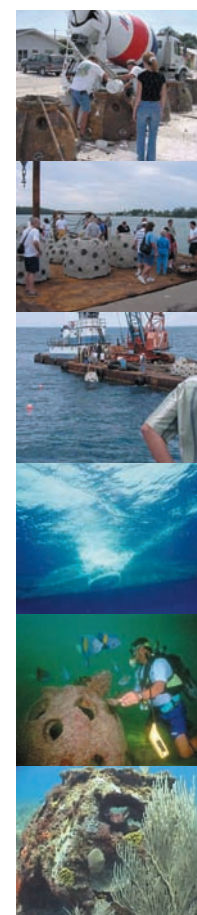
to be replaced. The funeral parlour removed corpses from the household, beginning a process of distancing people from the corporeality and immediacy of death. Today, the Vancouver Crematorium in Canada boasts to its clients (for that is what the bereaved now are) that it offers a 24-hour within-the-hour pick-up service.

In fact, it is no longer enough just to shut out death. Now, with the increased medicalisation of our world, the dying are shut out too. Most people no longer die at home. They die in hospitals, maintained and cared for not by their families but in bland wards monitored by white-coated professionals. Worse still, 'home' has become a euphemism for somewhere to deposit the old once their living has become too death-like, too much of a reminder for us of our own mortality, too much of a burden. As the late Ivan Illich wrote in *Limits to Medicine: Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health*, 'when hospitals draft all those who are in critical condition, they impose on society a new form of dying'.

UNNATURAL PRESERVATIVES

Few people today have even seen a corpse, let alone washed one. When we die, nearly three quarters of us are embalmed in the hope of preserving us in as lifelike a state as possible rather than allowing the natural process of rotting to take place. The result? Each year the US alone buries 827,060 gallons of embalming fluid. In half of all embalmings this means formaldehyde, a potent carcinogen that causes flu-like symptoms, rashes, asthma and neurological illness, and which cannot be made non-toxic. Hospital workers involved in embalming and people working in funeral homes have a 30 per cent

Eternal Reefs will mix your ashes with concrete to create an artificial reef that will then be sunk onto the ocean floor



intervened on SCI's behalf to help stop an investigation by Texas's regulatory agency. SCI was also a big financial contributor to the Bush presidential campaign, and Waltrip has given \$100,000 to the George Bush Presidential Library set up in honour of Bush Sr.

Not that all of SCI's friends are Republicans. While SCI was busy funding Bush's campaign, Tony Coelho, the chairman of Al Gore's presidential campaign, was sitting on the firm's board of directors. He also owned more than \$450,000 of shares in the company.

However, you won't see SCI's name when you visit a funeral parlour. Sensibly, it hides behind the family names of the businesses it buys up, aware that people want the personal touch when it comes to dealing with funerals.



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greater chance of catching cancer of the throat, nose or pharynx. And although it takes only three days after embalming for the body to start decomposing, and two to three years for the embalming substances (volatile organic compounds known to contribute to smog, ozone depletion and global warming) to seep into the surrounding soil and water aquifers, we would rather this than confront the reality of our bodies' decomposing.

Decomposition is further delayed by coffin design. In the US Oak Grove International's 'Summerfield' coffin is made of thick, reinforced fiberglass, meaning it's not biodegradable and allowing the company to boast on its website that it is 'thereby protecting the body from the environment, and the environment from the body, for countless tomorrows'.

Our modern attitudes to death are not just about separating ourselves from death, they are about separating ourselves from the processes of nature, from the cycle of decay and rebirth – from life. As psychologist Robert Jay Lifton observed in his book *The Broken Connection: on death and the continuity of life*, we have lost the 'psychological relationship between the phenomenon of death and the flow of life'.

For many years anthropologists have realised that one of the best ways to study the life of a culture is to study its attitudes to death. What, for example, is the perceived role of the dead on the affairs of the living? Is the process of dying a public or private event? To what level is a social stigma attached to those dying, dead or bereaved? Is the prevention of death a central goal? Is the frank discussion of death taboo?

On the one hand Western philosophy sees life as the material reality, with death as the end of existence and what goes after illusory. For Buddhists and Hindus, however, death is not the most painful of events, but something that constantly recurs and leads to rebirth into a cycle of lives; it is the

11 per cent of mercury vapour in the atmosphere originates from mercury amalgam in fillings burnt during cremation

end of rebirths that is their goal, not the end of death. As a result, Hindu and Buddhist cultures are less obsessed with seeking medical extensions to life, and more concerned with living life correctly. In such cultures material life is illusory, *maya*, with the only reality being *nirvana* – the loss of individual ego into a greater collective good.

ASHES TO ASHES

The eminent cultural critic Lewis Mumford saw even more striking parallels between a culture's relationships with death and life. For Mumford the growth of the city, and all that urbanisation brings with it, are presaged in the growth of communal cemeteries. In *The City in History* he writes: 'Early man's respect for the dead... perhaps had an even greater role than more practical needs in causing him to seek a fixed meeting place and eventually a continuous settlement. Though food-gathering and hunting do not encourage the permanent occupation of a single site, the dead at least claim that privilege. Long ago the Jews claimed as their patrimony the land where the graves of their forefathers were situated; and that well-attested claim seems a primordial one. The

city of the dead antedates the city of the living. In one sense, indeed, the city of the dead is the forerunner of the city of the living.'

Far-fetched? If we look closer at cemeteries and crematoria, and the rituals and practices that take place in them, we see that these cultural institutions do indeed reflect much of the value of the society they belong to. Compare our attitudes to disposing of the dead with our attitudes towards the disposal of waste.

In *City Limits*, the mayor of London Ken Livingstone's 2002 report on London's ecological footprint, it is revealed that the city's inhabitants generated 3.4 million tonnes of household waste in the year 2000. Of that, 71 per cent is now piling up in landfill, 20 per cent was incinerated and just 9 per cent was recycled.

For the vast majority of us what happens to our waste once it leaves our house is somebody else's business. In our minds it is gone for ever. But, of course, this is not the reality. In truth, the 91 per cent that is either landfilled or incinerated has not vanished, but merely moved. And, though we cannot or refuse to see it, it is polluting our and our children's world with toxins. We think our waste is our past, but really it is our future.

So too with our dead. Now that landfill is out of vogue with the dead as well as the living, we send 73 per cent of our corpses to be incinerated; that's up from just 4 per cent immediately after WWII. The effect is just the same as with our waste. According to the EU, 12 per cent of UK atmospheric dioxins resulting from combustion come from crematoria. The World Health Organisation describes the dangers of dioxins thus: 'Short-term exposure of humans to high levels of dioxins may result in skin lesions and altered liver function. Long-term exposure is linked to impairment of the immune system, the developing nervous system, the endocrine system and reproductive functions. Chronic exposure of

NATURAL FUNERAL ALTERNATIVES

THE COMPOSTORIUM

The compostorium is an urban method of disposing of human remains. A compostorium is similar to a crematorium, except that the deceased is allowed to decompose naturally into soil rather than being incinerated into carbon dioxide. Deposited in a large urn with four parts vegetable matter to one part human matter, the cadaver is allowed to decompose for several months. After a period of six months or so, the entire contents have become high-grade soil.

Biological materials of the deceased's choice can be incorporated into the composting process – lawn clippings, tree trimmings, his/her favourite foods, well-used leather shoes, water from a river or the sea, flowers from the funeral, soil from the backyard, etc.

THE CORPSE AS FERTILISER

A Swedish biologist has come up with a process whereby bodies are freeze-dried into about 30 kilograms of organic and nutritious powder. The powder is placed in a box, buried and covered with topsoil. The deceased's favourite plant can then be grown from the soil.

animals to dioxins has resulted in several types of cancer.'

Furthermore, 11 per cent of mercury vapour in the atmosphere originates from mercury amalgam in fillings burnt during cremation. (If we carry on as we are, this statistic will have increased to over 30 per cent by 2020.) Mercury pollutes marine environments in the form of highly toxic methyl mercury, which accumulates subsequently throughout the food chain. A 10th of the mercury in the North Sea comes from crematoria.

Exposure to methyl mercury, even in small amounts, can result in devastating neurological damage and death. It is also thought to affect unborn children in the womb. Spread throughout the marine food chain, from plankton to fish, it is ultimately bound to proteins in fish tissues, and no method of cooking has so far been found to eliminate the danger to consumers.

Fifty years ago in Minamata, Japan, 1,400 people died from seafood contaminated with mercury. Higher than normal concentrations of mercury have also been found in European soils, and increasing temperatures from global warming could accelerate its release from soil and sediment storage into the

atmosphere. Researchers in Northampton have discovered twice the normal level of mercury in the hair of crematoria workers. And for women living near crematoria the risk of having a stillbirth are 4 per cent higher, and the chance of the baby having a brain abnormality up 5 per cent.

Recycle your corpse

But again, as with our approach to waste, so with our approach to death. In recent years there has been an increase of people wanting more natural funerals through which the cycles of life are not resisted, but embraced. The fastest growing type of natural funeral in the UK is woodland burial. In January 1996 there were 17 woodland burial grounds. By January 1997 there were 52. By May 2000 there were 100. Now there are over 180, with more and more people each year opting not to be encased in dead wood, but to be part of the nutrients that help new trees grow.

At woodland sites there are no headstones and no metal. The most popular coffins are biodegradable cardboard, with many people opting for a simple woollen shroud. Trees are planted on each grave. We are

THE MEXICAN DAY OF THE DEAD

Not all countries are so uncomfortable with death. In Mexico the dead are commemorated in a special Day of the Dead (*Día de los Muertos*) celebration on 1 and 2 November. Offerings are made to the deceased, and friends and relatives visit grave sites. These visits are far from sombre affairs, and families bring picnics, tequila and even mariachi bands to accompany them. Others set up altars at homes, decorating them in flowers, and lay places at their dinner tables for dead loved ones. Often a bowl of water will be left out for the dead to bathe themselves in. All manner of special foods are eaten to mark the occasion – from special bread of the dead (*pan de muerto*) to sweets shaped like skulls made out of sugar (*calaveras*).



CORBIS

For women living near crematoria the risk of having a stillbirth are 4 per cent higher, and the chance of the baby having a brain abnormality up 5 per cent



REUTERS

not taking from the earth as our last act; we are giving back.

This understanding and appreciation of death as a process not of departure but of regeneration is nothing new. JG Frazer's anthropological masterpiece *The Golden Bough* is, for example, filled with stories of cultures whose death rituals and associated imagery were all about regeneration. Perhaps a better understanding of death might be the beginning for a better understanding of life. ■

Jeremy Smith is the deputy editor of *The Ecologist*. For more information about woodland burials, contact: The Natural Death Centre, 6 Blackstock Mews, Blackstock Road, London N4 2BT; tel +44 (0)20 7359 8391; fax +44 (0)20 7354 3831; www.naturaldeath.org.uk

SPECIAL REPORT

Smithfield Foods

We ignored the 'No Entry' sign at a recently opened Smithfield pig factory, clambered over wire barriers and wrenched open the ventilation shaft of one of three vast concrete and corrugated iron sheds. Inside, five thousand squealing pigs were crammed into strawless compartments. Outside, effluent from cement cesspits, though now frozen, had over-flowed sending a small stream of brown stinking liquid into the lake below. In a large plastic bin (empty the previous night) we found 20 dead pigs. Astonishingly, it seems that the entire operation is illegal.

When the German army launched its invasion in 1939, much of the world declared war to save Poland. Now, when the transnational agribusiness firm Smithfield Foods threatens the livelihoods of 4 million farmers, Poland's best foreign allies come from an unlikely source: Bobby Kennedy Jr, lawyer and leader of a US coalition of family farmers, fishermen, environmental and animal welfare organisations; Tom Garrett, an ecologist from the state of Wyoming; and Tracy Worcester, ex actress, turned environmental activist.



Who are Smithfield

When Robert Kennedy Jr wrote 'pig factory farms are more dangerous for our lifestyle and democracy than Osama bin Laden and global terrorism' he was fined \$128,000. Why would he make such an allegation?

The Virginia-based firm Smithfield Foods is one of a handful of multinationals that are transforming global meat production from a traditional farm enterprise to a factory-style industrial activity. It is the largest pork producer in the world, controlling almost 30 per cent of the US pork market. The Smithfield style of industrial pork production is a major source of air pollution and probably the largest cause of water pollution in the US. Smithfield and its fellow industrial pork producers have driven tens of thousands of family farmers off the land, shattered rural communities, poisoned thousands of miles of US waterways, killed billions of fish, put thousands of fishermen out of work, sickened rural residents and treated hundreds of millions of farm animals with unspeakable and unnecessary cruelty.

In 1999 Smithfield began buying slaughterhouses and state farms in Poland. On 22 July this year the firm's vice president promised Poland's Senate agricultural committee that Smithfield will 'modernise' Polish agriculture and bring prosperity and jobs to rural communities.

For 20 years Smithfield and its allies have made identical promises to the people of the rural US state of North Carolina. The North Carolinian Senate subsequently passed legislation to make it much easier for Smithfield to do business in the state. With encouragement from these politicians, Smithfield built the largest slaughterhouse in the world in Bladen County. The plant butchers 30,000 pigs each day and has triggered a boom in factory-style production of pig meat in North Carolina.

FACTORY FARMS

Smithfield used to be a simple meat packer with no experience of owning a pig farm at all. Its CEO Joe Luter began buying up farms so that the company could control all aspects of pork production — 'from piglets to pork chops'. Luter describes himself as 'a tough man in a tough business', but surprisingly doesn't live near one of his pig farms. Instead, his home is a \$17m Park Avenue mansion in New York. He is known for a ruthless approach to business that maximises profits by industrialising agriculture and eliminating both animal husbandry and the family farm.

Smithfield builds football field-sized warehouses in which it crams thousands of genetically manipulated pigs into tiny metal boxes where they are deprived of sunlight, exercise, straw bedding, rooting and social interaction. Yet a pig is as smart and sensitive as a dog. In these stressful conditions, they are kept alive by constant doses of antibiotics and heavy metals. Antibiotic-resistant bacteria and additive residues naturally end up in their waste.

INDUSTRIAL-STYLE POLLUTION

A pig produces 10 times as much waste as a human. One of Smithfield's Utah factories houses 850,000 pigs and produces more faecal waste than New York City's 8.5 million people. In pig factories waste falls through slatted floors into a basement, where it is periodically flushed into giant outdoor pits called lagoons. While cities must treat sewage before discharging it, Smithfield's meat



CORBIS

factories just dump their liquid manure untreated onto fields, which quickly become saturated. It then seeps into groundwater or is carried by rain into nearby streams or lakes. Waste from these factories contains a witch's brew of nearly 400 dangerous substances – including heavy metals, antibiotics, hormones, deadly biocides, pesticides and dozens of disease-causing viruses and microbes. Antibiotic residues in this lethal soup foster the growth of deadly 'super bugs' – disease organisms that are immune to human antibiotics.

POLLUTED WATER SUPPLIES

Millions of tons of faecal stew produced by pig-meat factories have poisoned the groundwater in 34 US states with deadly nitrates that can kill infants and cause severe mental retardation in children. In 1998 alone, Smithfield was fined \$12.6m for 6,900 violations of the US Clean Water Act. Disease epidemics caused by meat factories have



A spill from one pig lagoon killed a billion fish in the Neuse River in 1995. Bulldozers had to be used to plough the dead fish clear

sickened and killed thousands of Americans. In 1993 a meat operation's microbes were thought to be responsible for tainting the water supply in Milwaukee. Some 400,000 people (half the city's population) fell sick, and 114 died.

SICK RIVERS

Fifteen years ago North Carolina had some of the purest waters in the US. Today it has some of the most polluted. A spill from one pig lagoon killed a billion fish in the Neuse River in 1995. Bulldozers had to be used to plough the dead fish clear. Thanks to Smithfield's pig industry activities, pollution has poisoned the Neuse so badly that 100 million fish die in it every year.

PFIESTERIA – THE 'CELL FROM HELL'

Pig factory contaminants have caused outbreaks of a previously unknown microbe, *Pfiesteria piscicida*, in the US's coastal waters. *Pfiesteria* kills fish by the billion, and causes open sores that won't heal, severe respiratory illness and brain damage in humans who handle affected fish or swim in polluted water. Pustulating sores cover the bodies of fishermen from the Neuse River. Thanks to *Pfiesteria*-caused brain damage, some of the fishermen have trouble recalling basic information – including how to get home. After *Pfiesteria* appeared in Maryland, the state had to close the rivers of the Chesapeake Bay to protect public health.

BAD ODOURS

Pig factory smells defy description. Neighbouring farmers choke, vomit and faint from the fetid gases as they ride their tractors or work their fields. The smell cannot be removed from skin or clothing – even with the strongest soap. Food eaten even a mile downwind of a pig factory can take on the odour and flavour of pig waste. In the summer neighbours are unable to sit on their porches, open their windows, hang their laundry out to dry or even enjoy their meals. The odours can be so strong that they nauseate people flying in aeroplanes as high as 3,000 feet above industrial pig plants.

DANGEROUS GASES

The fumes inside pig buildings are so strong that the

animals quickly die from asphyxiation if the ventilation systems fail. Hydrogen sulphide, methane and ammonia gases emanating from these factories also harm human health. Numerous studies show that factory farm workers and downwind neighbours are unusually susceptible to lung disease, nausea, eye infections, nosebleeds, gastrointestinal illness, depression and even brain damage. Every year, pig factory workers become seriously ill and die from deadly gases emanating from liquid manure pits.

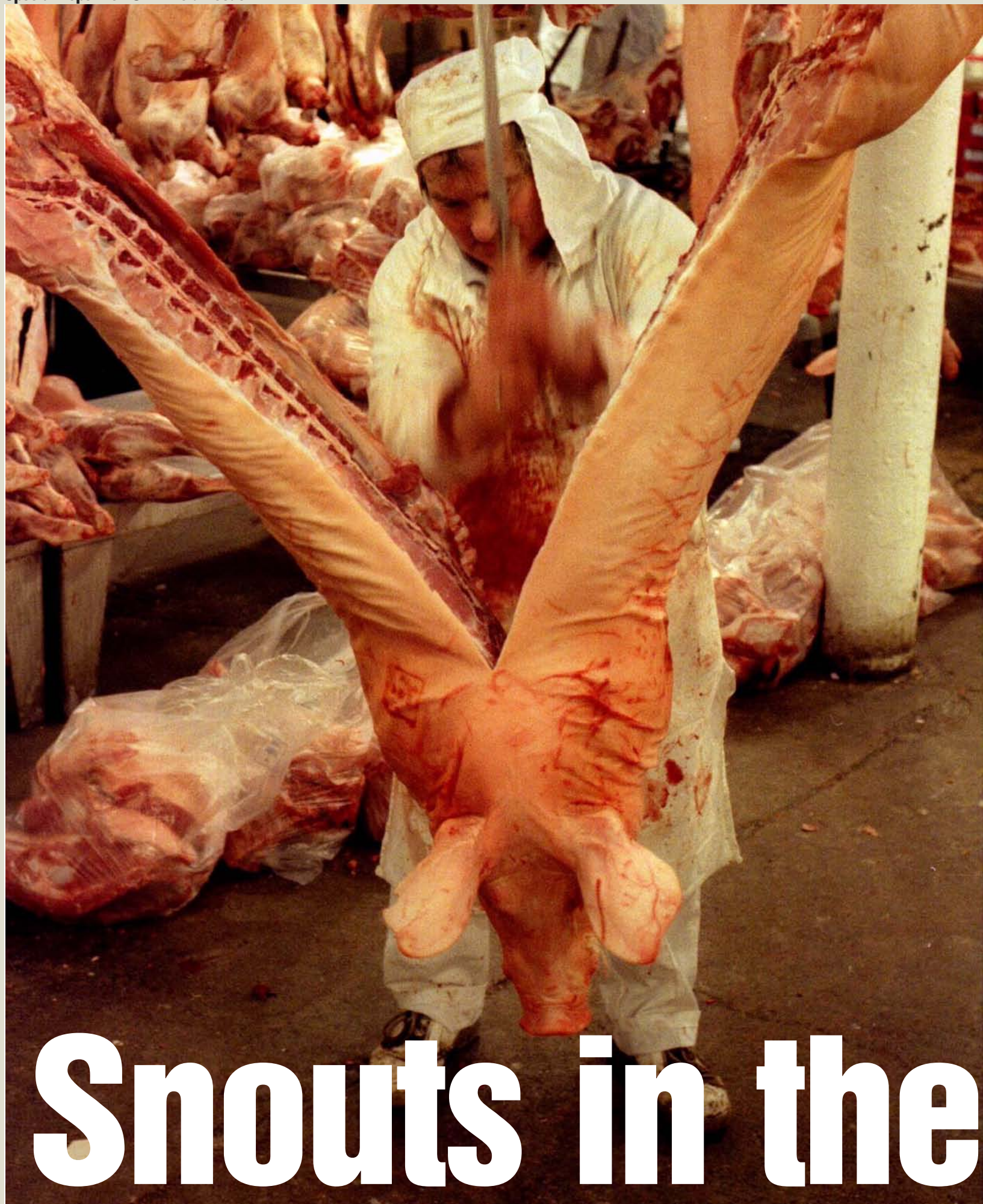
Recent scientific papers produced by the US government indicate that toxic air discharges from pig factories are so poisonous they violate federal health and environmental laws and endanger the health of human neighbours. One study shows that millions of antibiotic-resistant bacteria move by air from pig factories every day, threatening public health and neighbouring herds. Another study shows that some meat factories emit seven times the particulate matter allowed under US clear-air laws.

THE END OF THE US FAMILY FARM

Each pig factory puts 10 family farmers out of business, replacing high-quality agricultural jobs with three or four hourly wage workers in degrading positions that are among the lowest-paid and most dangerous in the US. Because the animals are given almost no husbandry, as few as two workers may tend a factory of 10,000 pigs. Conditions are so miserable that employees seldom endure these jobs for more than a few months. Major slaughterhouses, including those owned by Smithfield, have a 100 per cent annual employee turnover rate.

The situation in North Carolina is typical. Two decades ago there were 27,000 family pig farmers in the state. Today, there are almost none. North Carolina's pig farmers have been replaced by 2,200 pig factories – 1,600 of which are owned or indentured by Smithfield. The firm now controls 75 per cent of pig production in the state. From North Carolina, Smithfield moved to Iowa – the number-one pig producing state in the US. Because of the growth of factory farming, Iowa has lost 45,000 independent pig farmers in recent years. Joe Luter told *The Washington Post* that Smithfield will turn 'Poland into the Iowa of Europe'. ■





Snouts in the

Big, bad and bent. Robert Kennedy Jr reports on how Smithfield Foods is destroying the pig industry.

In the early days of Smithfield Foods, the company signed a few contracts with large North Carolinian producers to provide tens of thousands of pigs for its slaughterhouse. It then took over those producers, who had to take Smithfield's price for their farms because they had nowhere else to slaughter their pigs. Once Smithfield owned these large farms it began overproducing pigs so that the price of pork dropped from 60 cents per pound to eight cents per pound. Since it costs 36 cents per pound for a farmer to raise a pig, most other US pig farmers went to the wall. Only pig farmers who sign contracts with Smithfield survive. These contracts are never negotiated. The desperate farmers will sign the contract the way Smithfield writes it.

Typically, Smithfield contracts require farmers to use their property for security and borrow approximately \$200,000 to build warehouses according to the firm's specifications. In return, Smithfield promises the farmer approximately \$20,000 per year. The farmer owns the warehouse and pays the insurance and interest to the bank. Smithfield owns the feed and the pigs. The farmer also owns the manure, but Smithfield does not pay the farmer enough for him to be able to legally dispose of it. That's his problem and the problem of his community as he pollutes the air and water with the excess manure.

Often Smithfield's contracts last only one year, even though it will take farmers 20 years to pay off their warehouse mortgage. When it is in

Smithfield's interest to buy more land, the company has the power to make future contracts so burdensome that farmers go bankrupt. Smithfield can then buy their property from the bank for pennies on the dollar. Since these farms are valueless without a Smithfield contract, there are no other bidders. In this way Smithfield came to control pork production in North Carolina.

Even with the wholesale price of pork as low as eight cents per pound Smithfield continues to make money, because the price the consumer pays for Smithfield's processed pig-meat products stays the same. And with Smithfield owning the sole slaughterhouse, it squeezes the farmer until it has a monopoly on farm production. This is one of the reasons why the US Senate, along with many national legislatures, is considering legislation that will ban the ownership of farms by slaughterhouses. Smithfield's 'integration' system, through which it is farmer, slaughterhouse and meat packer, puts small farmers at a catastrophic disadvantage.

There are many studies that show that factory farms have a devastating impact on rural economies and quality of life. There is not a single empirical study showing net benefits to rural communities. Studies show that property values in areas hosting pork factories fall, on average by 30 per cent. If you drive through the US's rural communities, you will see bankrupted hardware and feed stores (factory farms don't buy ►

THE BIGGEST AND THE WORST

Smithfield Foods is the world's largest pork producer and packer. It markets approximately 12 million pigs a year in the US. In the last fiscal year, Smithfield's profits were approximately \$224m on \$5.9 billion in sales. The company has pig production facilities in 10 US states, Brazil and Mexico, as well as slaughtering and processing facilities in 11 US states, Canada, France, Mexico and Poland. Its operations have consistently been found guilty of gross environmental violations.

- The US Department of Justice and Environmental Protection Agency have alleged almost 7,000 violations of the Clean Water Act by Smithfield dating back to 1991, and accused the firm of falsifying and destroying records to conceal its actions. Smithfield's waste-water treatment plant manager was sentenced to 30 months in prison for crimes that he alleged Smithfield officials had ordered him to commit. In 1997 a federal judge ordered Smithfield to pay \$12m – one of the biggest Clean Water Act penalties in history. The court determined that a single Smithfield plant had violated the act on more than 6,000 occasions, and that Smithfield officials had intentionally lied to federal regulators to cover up these violations.
- In April 1998 a Smithfield meat processing plant in Kinston, North Carolina, recalled approximately 490,877 pounds of processed ham products that were potentially contaminated with gear lubricant grease.
- In 1999 and 2000 Smithfield received approximately 178 'Notices of Violation' for offences that included: reported and unreported spills and discharges into streams or wetlands; over-application and run-off of wastes; failure to notify state officials of discharges; spraying wastes into streams or woods or onto unlicensed disposal fields; leaking waste pipelines and malfunctioning equipment; over-full, leaking, unstable, breached or abandoned lagoons; and improper or inadequate record keeping.
- In a 23-month period between June 1999 and May 2001 Smithfield companies and partners were fined at least 55 times. A lagoon rupture at the Murphy's Vestal facility spilled 1.5 million gallons of liquefied faeces and urine into nearby wetlands.
- In 2000 the US federal agency the National Labor Relations Board found Smithfield guilty of serious labour law violations. The board found that Smithfield managers conspired with local police to physically intimidate and assault union supporters. It also found that the firm's attorneys suborned perjury and that company witnesses lied under oath.
- In July 2002 Smithfield recalled almost 20,000 pounds of fresh pork bones due to possible contamination with plastic. The same year Smithfield was found guilty of significant labour law violations – this time by a federal court, which ordered the company to pay \$755,000 in damages to workers who it had wrongfully imprisoned.



trough

SMITHFIELD IN POLAND

Last year Smithfield used a Polish-registered front company called Prima Farms to begin operating pig factories stocked with imported sows in the the northwestern Polish region of Western Pomerania. Currently, Prima has at least 11,000 sows, reportedly Pig Improvement Company (PIC) stock imported from Britain, housed in former state farms at Byszkowo and Zensko. Prima intends to confine up to 15,000 more sows on its farms, and plans to produce 500,000 pigs for Smithfield's AGRYF slaughterhouse in the town of Szczecin. It expects to be transporting 11,000 pigs a week to AGRYF by 2006.

In the meantime, Prima is moving aggressively to acquire and renovate state farms to confine feeder pigs. It already has one nursery for piglets and at least three other occupied farms in Western Pomerania. Smithfield is in the process of setting up operations at Kiełpino and at Liskowo, where it has encountered fierce opposition from the public. It is also reportedly in the process of establishing pig factories at Wierzchowo, Ognica and Sulisewice.

All this represents, in all probability, only a partial list of ongoing developments in Western Pomerania.

Some of the Prima pigs are being shipped to properties of the Smithfield-owned company Animex at Wieskowice and Trzciel. Last spring Animex was forced by local authorities to move approximately 7,000 pigs illegally housed at Rekoniewice, southwest of the city of Poznań. The company still controls the Rekoniewice farm, however, and there are reports that it is either confining or preparing to confine feeder pigs at nearby Stara Dobrowa and Goszczyn.

In the northeastern province of Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Animex is renovating a number of former state farms as pig factories. In Warmińsko-Mazurskie there are already pigs present at Wronki Wielkie, Kozaki near the border with the Russian federation of Kaliningrad, and Wyrandy. It has been reported that there are 10,000 feeder pigs at Radziejmy, while a reported death loss of 1,760 pigs in six months suggests an even larger number of animals at Bykowo. Farms at Rozynsk and Koliszki are in the early stages of renovation. All in all, there are plans to transport 250,000 pigs a year to the Warmińsko-Mazurskie slaughterhouse at Elk, which exports meat products to the UK under the brand name PEK.

Smithfield has been quoted in *Pig International* magazine to the effect that a complex of pig factories in the southeast of Poland will be delivering another 250,000 animals a year to the Constar plant in Starachowice by 2006. An investigation uncovered a probable Smithfield front company confining PIC sows at Nowy Machnow in the southeast of the eastern Polish province Lubelskie. There are also reports of activity in three other sites in the area.

Smithfield predicts that its own Polish pig factories will produce around 20,000 pigs per week by 2006, and that an additional 10,000 animals will come from farmers raising Smithfield-owned stock under contract. There is no reason to believe (judging by the firm's record in the US, or its continued acquisition of land and the excess capacity being developed at its existing facilities) that Smithfield's expansion in Poland will stabilise in 2006. There is every reason to believe that the firm will – as in the US – strive for complete vertical integration and that it will deny farmers that do not accept its yoke a market in its plants.



locally), boarded up high streets and closed banks, churches and schools. The US's heartland and historic landscapes are being emptied of rural Americans and occupied by large corporations.

POLITICAL CORRUPTION

Traditional farms are exempt from laws regulating the disposal of manure, because for them manure is not waste but a valuable fertiliser. However, pig factories produce far more manure than is needed to fertilise the fields around them. The costs of properly treating and disposing of this waste make factory farming uncompetitive for traditional farms – unless they violate numerous environmental laws. Because factory meat producers must break the law in order to survive, the industry's business plan relies on the assumption that pork factories will be able to evade prosecution by improperly influencing government officials.

Smithfield uses its wealth to buy politicians, paralyse regulatory agencies and break health and environmental laws with impunity. In North Carolina Smithfield made



Bought? Senator Wendell Murphy (top) and former Polish Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek

business partnerships with then state and US senators Wendell Murphy (left) and Launch Faircloth, who protected the company's interests in local and federal legislatures. Using these alliances and adept campaign contributions, the pig industry has been able to corrupt and control the North Carolina state senate. The state's largest newspaper, *The News and Observer*, won the Pulitzer Prize for its five-part investigative report disclosing how the factory pig industry had captured and corrupted the state senate. And in 2000 Murphy was made a director of Smithfield. He now owns 15 per cent of the company's shares.

Politicians who oppose the pig barons are punished. When North Carolina's Duplin County state assemblywoman Cynthia Watson began speaking out against Smithfield's impact on her farm community, the pig industry launched a savage multi-million dollar attack, spending as much as \$510,000 a week for two years to destroy her reputation. Watson was subsequently unseated, and the pig barons succeeded in sending a powerful warning to all North Carolina's senators not to

Smithfield uses its wealth to buy politicians, paralyse regulatory agencies and break health and environmental laws with impunity

oppose their industry.

Citizens who protest get the same treatment. When communities have opposed the siting of pig factory farms within their localities they have had their democratic rights removed. In Iowa, North Carolina, Michigan and many other US states and Canadian provinces, public officials have stripped local governments of their decision-making powers over these facilities. Similarly, Polish local officials who opposed Smithfield developments have been overruled by national authorities. The industry routinely uses bullying lawyers and illegal intimidation, threats, harassment and violence to terrorise and silence its critics – including those among its own workers. A group of Nebraska citizens who made comments during a public hearing on a pig factory planning proposal were sued by Nebraska's largest livestock producer. Neighbouring farmers are routinely sued for participating in public hearings or speaking out against the pig industry.

TAKING OVER EUROPE VIA POLAND

Just as Smithfield used North Carolina to launch its takeover of US pork production in the 1980s, so Poland is now being used as Smithfield's platform for launching its bid for monopoly control of pork production in Europe.

In 1999 Smithfield purchased Animex, the state-owned conglomerate of slaughterhouses and giant communist-era farms responsible for exporting Polish sausage and ham to the US. The deal was a bargain, Smithfield paid only \$55m just after Animex had made, at state expense, extensive renovations to its facilities. The estimated value of the company following these improvements was \$500m, causing Smithfield CEO Joe Luter to boast that he paid 'only 10 cents on the dollar' for Animex.

But gaining monopoly control of national slaughterhouse capacity is difficult in Poland, because there are over 4,000 slaughterhouses in the country. Smithfield's strategy? Get the government to close down the competition for them.

Following a three-hour meeting between Luter and Poland's then prime minister Jerzy Buzek (opposite, below), the Polish government began closing hundreds of small slaughterhouses. Buzek's minister of agriculture promulgated regulations that would put up to 50 per cent of Poland's slaughterhouses out of business.

The government justified these new rules under the fraudulent pretence that small slaughterhouses must be shut down to comply with the EU regulations. EU regulations clearly state, however, that small slaughterhouses may be kept open to serve regional markets. Germany, France and Sweden have all fought to keep their small slaughterhouses and milk plants open, and even subsidise them in the knowledge that local markets and food distribution depend on them. Once small slaughterhouses disappear, local markets quickly follow.

Furthermore, large high-tech slaughterhouses do not make for a safer food supply. In the US and the UK the closure of small slaughterhouses coincided with huge increases in meat-borne disease (by 300 per cent and



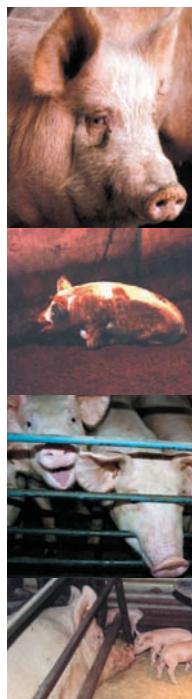
Disease is rampant because large centralised slaughterhouses encourage the consolidation of pork production on factory-farm lines

500 per cent, respectively). This is because large centralised slaughterhouses encourage the consolidation of pork production on factory-farm lines; disease is rampant in factory farms, and the long transport distances resulting from centralisation stress the animals and spread disease further. In addition, technologies that increase line speed inside the slaughterhouse multiply worker errors and make proper inspections impossible. Now the big slaughterhouses are insisting on the controversial technology of irradiation in order to solve the problems of disease.

The Polish government took a number of other steps to facilitate Smithfield's takeover of Polish agriculture. First, it legalised the uncontrolled use of liquid manure and tried to dismantle the country's Animal Welfare Act. Then it allowed Smithfield to use front companies to buy and lease farms in Poland, despite official policies forbidding foreigners to purchase Polish agricultural land. Finally, it gave large pork-export subsidies to Smithfield amounting to 55 cents per kilogramme. The subsidies were supposed to aid Polish farmers, but as Smithfield imports both its pigs and the feed it is difficult to see how.

With this help, Smithfield has converted as many as 35 Polish state farms into pig factories. One in Nielep, West Pomerania, already houses 30,000 pigs. To circumvent Polish laws, some of these factories are listed as the property of front companies wholly owned by Smithfield. Prima Farms, for example, is officially owned by two Poles, but every important decision must be signed by Mr Griffith of Smithfield. In this way, Smithfield can capture subsidies from the EU intended for Polish farmers.

The pattern is almost identical to the route Smithfield took in Carolina. Soon Smithfield will own all the landscapes of Poland, and the farmers who are so critical to the country's culture and democracy will be wiped off the land. ■



Smithfield's inv

Fields covered with faeces, children vomiting at school, plastic bins stuffed full of dead pigs. Robert Kennedy and Tracy Worcester experience firsthand the reality of life in Smithfield's Poland

I gnoring Smithfield's 'no entry' sign, we clambered over wire barriers and wrenched open the ventilation shaft of one of three vast concrete and corrugated iron sheds. The noise was deafening. Five thousand squealing pigs were crammed into strawless compartments inside the recently opened pig factory near the town of Szczecinek in the northwestern Polish

province Zachodnio-Pomorskie.

Back outside, effluent from cement cesspits had over-flowed – sending a small stream of brown, stinking liquid into the lake below, which had then frozen over. In a large plastic bin we found 20 dead pigs. When we'd looked the night before, it had been empty.

It seems that the entire operation is

illegal. During the communist era, the state farm had employed 44 locals. Officials told us that Prima (a Polish company now owned by Smithfield) had only been given a permit to renovate the derelict farm on condition it guaranteed 15 local jobs.

Instead, no locals were employed and 5,000 pigs arrived in the dead of night. Villagers only grasped what had happened when the company began illegally dumping liquid faeces on the snow-covered fields.

People were angry and frightened, but village and township officials told us they were powerless to defend their community as the local government had taken Prima's side.

At a meeting for local farmers people sat in stunned silence as they tried to grasp the impending destruction of their livelihoods and community



Evolution of Poland

'If you had informed us of Smithfield's record six months earlier,' they told us, 'we would have refused all permits and prevented Prima from gaining a foothold.' Now they could only ask for our help in challenging the company on environmental grounds.

A few miles north we visited Prima's factory farm at Nielep, where 30,000 pigs are confined. We were met at the compound gate by a tall man in a surgical face mask. Removing the mask, he identified himself as the manager and demanded that we kept away. Responding to our questions about animal welfare, he claimed that although there was no bedding for the pigs, the factory had all the appropriate permits and required number of employees. However, he refused to say exactly how many pigs were impounded, how many died each day or what mix of chemicals were pumped into them. Admitting that he had been taken to Smithfield installations in North Carolina for training, he mouthed the standard company line: 'Our local and national opponents are selfishly concerned with animal welfare instead of feeding the world'.

LOCAL RESISTANCE

In a nearby village, a meeting had been convened for local farmers and authorities to hear Tom Garrett of the animal rights advocacy group the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) describe Smithfield's record in the US. People sat in stunned silence as they tried to grasp the impending destruction of their livelihoods and community.

When Garrett had finished, the audience erupted. Many demanded that the local authorities in Poland take control of the country's former state farms and give tenancies to former employees rather than foreign transnationals. Desperate and angry, one old lady confirmed what we had already seen: 'The company has been spreading effluent over snow-covered fields,' she explained. 'People have developed rashes and stomach upsets.' The stench from the effluent had caused vomiting, which threatened the closure of the local school

A LAST BASTION OF TRADITION IN POLAND

Poland is an oasis of traditional farming in a world dominated by agribusiness multinationals. Around 2 million Poles, about 18 per cent of the country's population, are farmers or members of farming families. That's as many as the rest of central Europe put together.

The Polish landscape is not yet marked by the vast monocultures of row crops that are typical of the US. Currently, Poland is a country of picturesque farm villages, with farms that average five hectares and modest homes of wood, timber and fieldstone. Typically, each farmer has a horse, a couple of cows and some pigs and chickens. Animals are raised free range and humanely. And Polish farmers rotate a variety of crops in the traditional way that fosters healthy soils.

Many Polish farmhouses still have occupied stork nests on their roofs. The country hosts 25 per cent of the world's white stork population – some 50,000 pairs. – more than the whole of western Europe combined. Elsewhere in the continent the bird has been exterminated by modern agriculture practices: liquid manure and pesticides effectively wipe out the fish, frogs, crabs and insects that storks eat. In Denmark, for example, there are only six pairs left.

Poland has large stands of timber as well as the last sanctuaries of European bison and Europe's last clean-flowing unregulated rivers. It has purer soils than anywhere else in Europe. Its land is uncontaminated by pesticide and fertiliser residue and almost entirely free of the heavy metals caused by industrial smokestack pollution throughout the rest of Europe.



and the destruction of local businesses. To raucous applause, a local politician declared: 'Smithfield must be kicked out.'

This same cry is now being heard all over Poland, with locals signing petitions and farmers forming blockades to get Smithfield out. Across the provincial border from Zachodnio-Pomorskie is Wiekowice, a beautiful village of brick and wooden homes, shrines and long stone barns in the region of Wielkopolska. There we found several dozen local activists carrying signs outside a former state farm owned by Smithfield's Polish subsidiary Animex. The facility has permits for only 500 cows and 500 pigs. It has been reported that it houses 17,000 pigs. The farm is 40 yards from an elementary school where residents say their children get sick and vomit because of the pig odours.

Among the protesters was Irena Kowalak, a dignified woman who served as village mayor for 35 years. She told us she had resigned recently because of intimidation by Smithfield. Andrzej

Nowakowski is the governor of Wielkopolska. Nowakowski said that the local population was unanimously and adamantly opposed to Smithfield and that he refused to give the company permits when it bought the farm two years ago. But six months later Poland's environment ministry overrode him.

Nonetheless, thanks to the governor, Smithfield has not been able to get permits for liquid manure. So the farm uses straw bedding and has not yet devised a plan for disposing of its waste. Fields of wheat surround the pig barns, but they are never harvested because Smithfield is not interested in agriculture. To Smithfield, these fields are a place to dump the notorious wastes of industrial meat production.

A convoy of indignant Wiekowice residents took us out to see the giant pile of pig manure. On the side of a 1,000-acre wheat field was a mountain of pig waste 150 metres long, four metres high and 50 metres wide. 'Seventeen thousand pigs for six ►

SMITHFIELD'S TASTELESS ENTERPRISE



Millions of years of natural selection have endowed pigs with back fat to regulate their body temperature. But Smithfield gets more money from meat than from fat, so the company has bred its own strain of super-lean pigs with almost no back fat. They are highly-strung and unable to survive normal outside temperatures.

Food professionals say this extreme leanness has dramatically diminished the quality of US pork. Food magazine *Saveur* described the pigs of modern confinement agriculture as being so skinny that they look 'like dachshunds'. While applauding traditional farming methods of the kind used in Poland, *The New York Times Magazine* stated: 'The pork industry has managed to engineer a pig with almost no fat at all. And this is why most modern recipes for pork involve some kind of liquid — putting the meat in a marinade before cooking, basting it while cooking or braising it in broth. If you simply grill a

mass-market pork chop, it becomes inedibly dry.' The

Times went on to say that free-range pork 'is rich when sliced and sautéed, fine textured and robust in flavour. It needs nothing more than seasoning with salt'. The dryness and poor taste of confinement pork have become so bad that many major pork companies are now 'enhancing' their pork: adding water, flavoured liquids, or even stock to their tray-pack and prepared meats, and using red food colouring to improve its drab appearance.



months,' a young man said, nodding at the pile. Local authorities have been ordering Smithfield to move the illegal pile for six months, but the company has refused. The night before our visit Smithfield covered its pile with a giant black tarpaulin, which was already inflated and writhing with the internal pressure of methane gas.

Half a mile downhill from the pile, villagers had created a public beach on a 1,500-acre lake where umbrellas shaded dozens of families swimming and playing on a steamy 90° day. Manure residues festered on the shores of a nearby bay into which Smithfield's waste pile drains. An old man with twinkling blue eyes stuck his hand into the water, smelled his fingers and offered us a whiff. 'Smithfield Foods,' he announced.

Governor Nowakowski told us that there is another Smithfield factory, in Sedziny, that has 4,500 pigs but a permit for only 1,000 cows. He said his assistants were now inspecting the facility. 'But,' he explained, 'the legislation is very difficult for the local government to enforce [without state support].' Unfortunately, the federal government is not supporting the Wielkopolska authorities.

Nowakowski is not the only local politician begging for federal help. Zofia Wilczynska is a deputy in the Sejm, the lower houses of Poland's national parliament. Wilczynska has complained to the federal government that a Smithfield operation in Polczyn Zdroj is endangering the northern

Polish town's 400-year-old health spa. Right over by Poland's northeastern border with the Russian Federation enclave of Kaliningrad (former East Prussia) another

health spa, in Goldap, is also threatened by pollution and odours from a Smithfield site.

The day after our visit to Wieckowice, a member of a parliamentary agriculture committee told us that the Polish government had recently conducted an investigation of 16 Smithfield farms (14 owned by the corporation and two owned by front groups it controlled). The agricultural ministry found that every one of the farms had broken Poland's veterinary, health and construction laws. Yet when Smithfield lacks proper permits, or is caught breaking the law, it is fined, laughably, just a few hundred dollars.

Sometimes Smithfield just buys officials off. A hundred miles north of Wieckowice, the mayor of the Western Pomeranian village Wierzchowo gave Smithfield permits for two enormous farms after the company paid his wife approximately \$4,000 to perform the environmental impact assessment.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES DEVASTATED

The economic impacts of Smithfield's production methods are devastating local communities and markets. When Smithfield



In Wieckowice we found several dozen local activists carrying signs outside a former state farm owned by Smithfield's Polish subsidiary Animex. The facility has permits for only 500 cows and 500 pigs. It has been reported that it houses 17,000 pigs.

Manure residues fester near a public beach where umbrellas shade dozens of families swimming and playing on a steamy 90° day. An old man sticks his hand into the water, smells his fingers and offers us a whiff. 'Smithfield Foods!' he announces.

took over Animex, the latter's three principal farms near Goldap employed 60 employees. Following the farms' conversion to automated pig factories, only seven of these workers remain.

Smithfield says it wants to produce 6 million pigs in Poland each year. Polish peasants currently rear 20 million pigs per year, and a quarter of them will have to lose their livelihoods to make way for Smithfield. The corporation is already squeezing the small farms. In Western Pomerania we found that the region's small slaughterhouses had already been closed, and that the remaining Smithfield-owned slaughterhouse would not slaughter pigs from small farms. The same will soon apply to the rest of Poland. Once Smithfield controls the slaughterhouses and has eliminated local markets, it will be able to control prices and, ultimately, the farms.

AVOIDING THE MONOCULTURE IN POLAND

Instead of reinventing itself to mimic the failed systems in Europe and the US, Poland should celebrate its assets and sell them to the world. Polish meat tastes much better than factory meat. Polish sausage is world famous. Consumers like knowing that their meat is from animals that were humanely raised in ways that are good for the environment, supportive of family farms, and free of dangerous hormones, antibiotics

and chemicals. But all these things make quality meat more expensive than factory meat. And when the consumer sees free-range pork that does not look much different to a Smithfield cut, they will choose the cheaper product. The answer is branding.

When Europe opens its markets to Poland, the Poles should establish a market

for their produce by using branding to draw attention to their traditional values. The AWI has offered the Polish government to help brand the country's pork internationally. The institute specialises in helping small farmers by finding consumers who are willing to pay a premium for produce that is healthy and raised humanely and without the use of antibiotics and hormones.

Anybody who pays a premium for Polish meat will be getting a good deal. Some of the meat and sausage that we gorged on in Poland was among the best we've tasted. Pork of the kind produced by traditional Polish farms is widely recognised to be tastier and juicier than confinement pork of the sort produced by Smithfield.

If Poland is going to flourish rather than flounder, the nation needs to recognise its enormous strengths and start believing in itself. The words 'produced in Poland' should become a standard for high quality. This is no easy challenge. But the easy way out, signing a contract with Smithfield, is not the solution. ■



A 10,000m² 'lagoon' of liquid pig manure at a giant factory pig farm in Koczala village, Poland.



Rotting carcass at Koczala farm

Robert Kennedy Jr is the president of the Waterkeeper Alliance, an international grassroots coalition dedicated to protecting water systems from pollution; Tracy Worcester is the associate director of the International Society for Ecology and Culture (www.isec.org.uk), a non-profit organisation that aims to protect cultural and biological diversity

FINANCING THE SLAUGHTER

Financial institutions like the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) use EU taxpayers' money to subsidise companies like Smithfield. The result? Small farmers disappear, food quality deteriorates, animal welfare suffers. Although it claims to be 'environmentally sensitive', the EBRD has joined with the Polish banks BRE and Rabobank Polska to provide a \$100m loan to Smithfield's Polish subsidiary Animex.

The EBRD's 'project summary' states: 'Follow-up investigations of [EBRD] environmental staff and discussion with Smithfield management responsible for such issues demonstrated that the [Animex] facilities comply with the national requirements for environment, health and safety.' Yet the evidence suggests that the EBRD is consciously and deliberately backing a corporate takeover of Polish agriculture. The bank's press releases and 'transition impact' statements are full of talk about 'restructuring Poland's agribusiness and food industry'. The EBRD refers, for example, to the 'restructuring of the meat-processing sector' and 'the consolidation of the agribusiness sector'.

The reality is that Poland, like the rest of the modern world, is about to bury an ancient culture based on community living, family and land stewardship for the benefit of future generations. As Tom Garrett of the Animal Welfare Institute has lamented: 'There is no salvation to be found in industrial agriculture owned and controlled by foreign multinational corporations. There is only damage.'

For more information about the EBRD's involvement in Poland: www.bankwatch.org/issues/ebdr/animex/manimex.html.

HOW TO BYPASS SMITHFIELD PRODUCTS

As Smithfield buys local companies to front their operations, it is difficult to trace its products. The surest way of avoiding them is not to buy from supermarkets but to buy organic or locally produced pork from local butchers or farmers' markets instead. To find information about local producers, visit: www.localfood.org.uk or www.bigbarn.org.uk.

In the UK Smithfield's pork products are marketed under the brand name PEK. However, it is more than likely that Smithfield meat is also ending up in mass-produced products like pizzas. So, while not buying PEK-branded products is good, not buying anything containing non-organic pork is better.

Contribute to or join the AWI (www.awionline.org/membership); it is the only humane organisation fighting the cruelty of pig factory farming in Poland. But the International Coalition to Protect the Polish Countryside is also doing important work. See its website at www.icppc.sfo.pl.

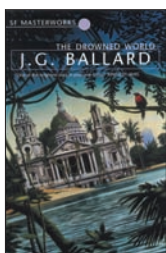
26 novels everyone

Ecological collapse, rapacious multinationals, the world taken over by genetically mutated creatures. It must be *the Ecologist's* Christmas reading list.

What follows is a totally subjective selection of 26 classic novels (one a fortnight for the coming year), picked on the following criteria: they embody our vision of the world we most (or least) want to see; they elicit a passionate response – hopefully enough to change the world; they aren't too obvious (hence, no 1984, *Animal Farm*, *Grapes of Wrath*, etc); and your life won't be complete until you've read them (see *The Lorax* and *Fup*, in particular).

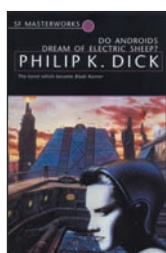
The Drowned World by JG Ballard GOLLANCZ 1962

Ballard's first novel is set in a 21st century in which the ice-caps have melted and mankind has been forced to retreat to the Arctic and Antarctic circles. Cities have been reclaimed by nature as primeval swamps, and humanity is reduced, as is so often the case in Ballard's stories, to a state of near barbarism.



Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? by Phillip K Dick GOLLANCZ 1968

It's 2021, and a devastating world war has wiped out millions of people, consigning entire species to extinction. For the few remaining humans, any living creature is a highly desired possession. For those that can't find the money for a real animal, there are companies that build incredibly realistic alternatives – the electric sheep of the title.



A Friend of the Earth by TC Boyle BLOOMSBURY 2000

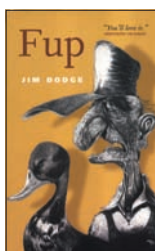
Southern California, 2025. Global warming has caused the environment to collapse. Ty

Tierwater is managing a pop star's private menagerie, but years earlier he had been a radical environmentalist. Now, as he surveys the wasteland that the world has become, and the destruction he has wreaked upon most of his human relationships along the way, he realises: 'To be a friend of the earth, you have to be an enemy of the people.'



Fup by Jim Dodge CANONGATE

Fup is a duck, a giant mallard with no desire to learn to fly. She lives with two humans – Granddaddy, a cantankerous old whisky sot, and Tiny, who just builds endless and legendarily straight fences – in the hills of northern California. A unique piece of fiction that is both terribly sad and riotously funny, it simply has to be read.



The Lorax by Dr Seuss COLLINS 1957

Dr Seuss's classic story should be obligatory reading for every child... and their parents. Beautifully illustrated, it is a tale of corporate corruption and greed, of rapacious logging interests and one humble creature's efforts to

save the trees. Forget cogent polemics and 300-page exposés. Anyone who reads this and is not profoundly moved to do more to save the earth is beyond hope.



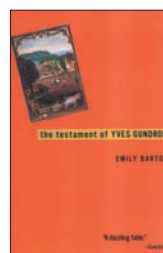
The Monkey Wrench Gang by Edward Abbey PERENNIAL 1975

Once you've finished this book you'll have to stop yourself from going out and blowing up dams. Utterly anarchic, Abbey's hilarious novel has inspired thousands of activists since publication. It's a reminder, above all else, that saving the world need not be dull, only highly illegal.



The Testament of Yves Gundron by Emily Barton CANONGATE 2000

Mandragora is an isolated island off the coast of Scotland. No one has yet learned how to harness a horse to a cart. Then a young American anthropologist stumbles upon this undeveloped community. What ensues is a marvellously imaginative exploration of the divisive effects of technology, as the Mandragorans are hurled unwittingly on a rapid course of development.



We by Yevgeny Zamyatin PENGUIN 1924

Forget 1984. *We* is the true masterpiece of the modern dystopian vision. In this world there are no individuals, only



numbers. Nature has been defeated, banished behind the Green Wall. Banned in Russia for more than 60 years, the novel demands that we ask what is the price for putting the dream of 'progress' above our individual selves.

The Whale Rider by Witi Ihimaera ROBSON BOOKS 1987

The story of Kahu, a young Maori girl struggling to find her place in her family and community. A beautiful fable about modernity clashing with tradition and magic with reality, about the racism and disregard for nature endemic in the modern world.



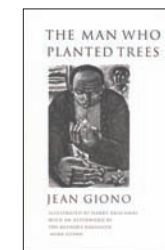
Arcadia by Jim Crace PICADOR 1992

80-year-old millionaire Victor plans to leave his mark behind by building Arcadia, a glass-covered rural dream in the centre of the city. Crace's darkly lyrical novel exposes the corruption of the city and how urbanism sweeps away the past and separates us from the natural world.



The Man Who Planted Trees by Jean Giono HARVILL 1953

Elzéard Bouffier is a shepherd committed to bringing life back to France's barren plains. Though its simple message (with determination we can bring about the change we want to see) is somewhat harder to swallow in a world of multi-billion-dollar lobbyists and unaccountable politicians, it is still a magical book to inspire one to take control of one's own destiny.



must read in 2004

Brazzaville Beach

by William Boyd
PENGUIN 1990

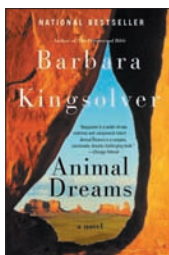
Ecologist Hope Clearwater is studying primate behaviour in Africa. When the chimps start behaving in increasingly weird ways, her life, and the lives of her fellow researchers, turn upside-down. A profound investigation into science, the pursuit of knowledge and our relationship to our fellow beings.



Animal Dreams

by Barbara Kingsolver
HARPER COLLINS 1990

When Codi Noline returns to her hometown, she finds it threatened by a silent environmental catastrophe. In a novel that mixes flashbacks, dreams, and Native American legends, *Animal Dreams* explores notions of commitment both to those we love, and to the world at large.



You, Darkness

by Mayra Montero
HARPER COLLINS 1998

A US scientist and his local assistant seek out a near extinct frog species in the mountains of Haiti. The tension between their two responses to the country – one representing Western scientism, the other a more instinctive response to the natural world – is at the core of this dark and magical novel.

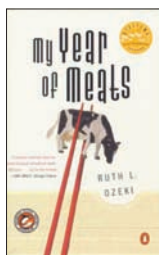


My Year of Meats

by Ruth Ozeki
PENGUIN 1998

Jane Takagi-Little works on *My American Wife!*, a Japanese television show sponsored by a lobby organisation for the US meat

industry. The novel follows her eccentric trawl through the freezer counters of the US, searching for suitably carnivorous candidates for the show.



Momo

by Michael Ende
DOUBLEDAY 1984

An enchanting tale about the importance of making the most of our time. An allegory of our modern world, it is concerned with the loss of values and how the meaning and joy of life get lost in the pursuit of corporate ambition.



Sick Puppy

by Carl Hiaasen
RANDOM HOUSE 1998

Corrupt property dealings in the sultry depths of the Florida Everglades. Massively over the top, it calls on us to do what we can to stop the concreting over of earth's most beautiful reaches.



The Far Tortuga

by Peter Matthiessen
HARVILL 1988

A poetic portrayal of life aboard a small turtle-hunting vessel, *The Far Tortuga* is a reminder to our disconnected world of what it is like to live truly close to nature.



Oryx and Crane

by Margaret Atwood
BLOOMSBURY 2003

Crake works for a biotech corporation, for whom he designs a new race of human

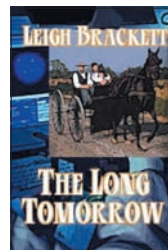
beings. Oryx programmes them to cope with the world. An incredibly imagined vision of what might worryingly be only just round the corner.



The Long Tomorrow

by Leigh Brackett
BALLANTINE BOOKS 1965

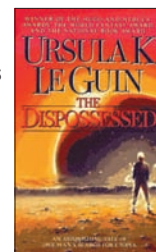
Following a nuclear war, Amish farmers seek to maintain a simple agrarian civilisation – resisting any return to a technological and urban society. Unfortunately, while the planet may have changed, human nature has not.



The Dispossessed

by Ursula Le Guin
HARPER COLLINS 1974

A man travels from an anarchic moon to the capitalist planet it orbits to see how the other half lives. Rejecting the typically pejorative associations of the term anarchy, Le Guin's masterpiece examines the trials of living in a world based on truly libertarian ideals.



War with the Newts

by Karel Capek
CATBIRD PRESS 1936

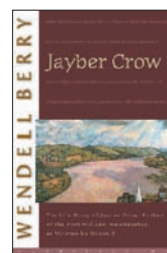
A sea captain finds a race of giant newts on a south Pacific island and brings them back to Europe to work as slaves on industrial water projects. But, as the newts' intelligence grows, they begin to fight back. A brilliant satire on militarism, rapacious capitalism and society's obsession with technology.



Jayber Crow

by Wendell Berry
THORNDIKE PRESS 2001

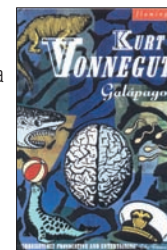
Jayber Crow reflects on life in rural Kentucky. Farmers are separated from the land; a community is replaced by shopping malls, and a motorway gets built. All commonplace events whose impact it is too easy to forget.



Galapagos

by Kurt Vonnegut
FLAMINGO 1985

A disaster leads to the extinction of the human race – except a small group shipwrecked in the Galapagos. Over the next million years, their descendants evolve into seal-like creatures with much smaller brains, greatly increasing the general level of happiness.



Island

by Aldous Huxley
FLAMINGO 1962

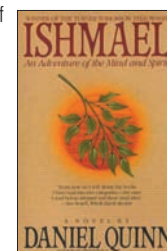
In Huxley's last novel the protagonists set up a utopian community on the Island of Pala. If *Brave New World* is Huxley's vision of where we might end up if it all goes wrong, this is its counterpart.



Ishmael

by Daniel Quinn
BANTAM 1992

Ishmael is a student of ecology and the human condition. He is also a half-ton gorilla. A mind-opening journey through the hidden realities of our destructive civilisation.



UK Vegetables
in season

- At its best
- In season

artichokes (Jerusalem)	•
artichokes (globe)	
asparagus	
aubergines	
beetroot	•
borlotti beans	
broad beans	
broccoli (purple sprouting)	•
broccoli (calabrese)	
Brussels sprouts	•
Brussels tops	•
cabbages (various green varieties)	•
cabbages (white)	•
cabbages (red)	•
cardoons	•
carrots	•
cauliflower	•
celeriac	•
celery	•
chard	•
chicory	•
courgettes	
cucumber	
endive	•
fennel	
french beans (whole pod)	
garlic	
greens (spring & winter)	•
kale (and borecole)	•
kohlrabi	•
lamb's lettuce	
leeks	•
lettuce	•
onions	•
pak choi	•
parsnips	•
peas (incl. sugar snaps)	
peppers and chillies	
potatoes	•
pumpkins (and squashes)	•
purslane	
radishes	•
rocket	•
runner beans	
salsify (and scorzonera)	•
samphire	
sea kale	
sorrel	•
spinach	•
swede	•
sweet corn	
tomatoes	
turnips	•
watercress	•

DECEMBER

Sunday

6-7
Trident Ploughshares
Pledgers' Training

Two-day non-violence workshop for people wishing to become Trident Ploughshares pledgers. Stirling, Scotland. To register, phone: 0788 1818487; or email: ere@q-olio.net



Monday



Tuesday

2
Regressive Globality

Global theory in the age of George W Bush. LSE public lecture. Speaker: Professor Martin Shaw (left); chair: Professor Mary Kaldor. Free and open to all, entry is on a first-come, first-served basis. 6.30pm, Hong Kong Theatre, Clement House, London. For more information, please email events@lse.ac.uk or phone 020 7955 6043.

Wednesday

3
Rachel Carson Memorial

Ecologist, acclaimed author and survivor Sandra Steingraber (right) present 'Contaminated without why our exposure to chemicals in and water violates human rights' inaugural Rachel Carson Memorial. 6.30pm at the Prince's Foundation. Details: www.pan-uk.org/briefing. For tickets, phone 020 7274 8895 or email katebootle@PAN-uk.org

10
International Animal Rights Day

On 10 December 1948, the UN General Assembly ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Uncaged, along with other animal rights organisations, seeks the ascription of moral and legal rights to animals, and their enshrinement in a UN Declaration of Animal Rights. As Uncaged state: 'Factory farming, the destruction of the natural environment and the introduction of novel scientific procedures such as cloning and xenotransplantation represent abuse of the lives and interests of animals unimaginable even half a century ago.' Uncaged Campaigns, 9 Bailey Lane, Sheffield S1 4EG, UK tel +44 (0) 114 272 2220, fax +44 (0) 114 272 2225, www.uncaged.co.uk

13-15
Menwith Hill spy base

Women's peace camp and blockade. It's the largest electronic monitoring station in the world – the 'Big Brother' of all global spy installations, its gigantic golf balls listening in on our every word. Menwith Hill played a crucial role in both Gulf wars, even winning an award for its work during the first one. It is also central to plans for the 'Star Wars' National Missile Defence programme, which is part of the US's plans for 'full-spectrum dominance' and which are meant to give the US control of space itself.

For more information on the blockade, phone: 01943 458 593; or email: helenmenwith@yahoo.co.uk

JANUARY

16-21
World Social Forum 2004
Mumbai, India

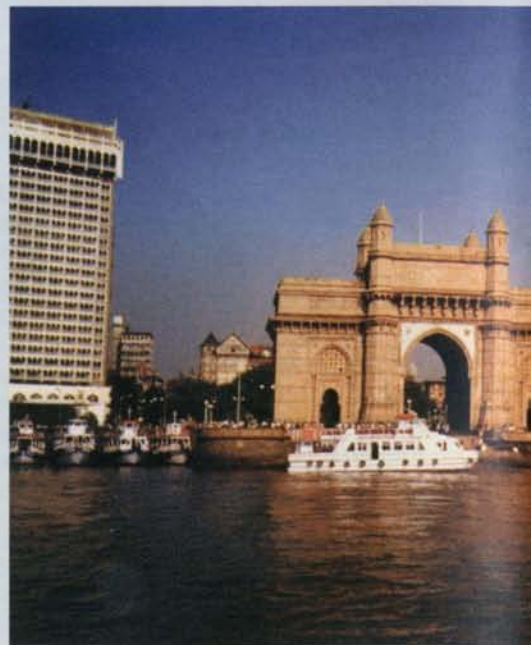
Peoples' movements around the world are working to demonstrate that the path to sustainable development and social and economic justice lies in alternative models for people-centred and self-reliant progress, and not in neo-liberal globalisation.

The World Social Forum (WSF) was created to provide an open platform to discuss strategies of resistance to the model for globalisation formulated at the annual World Economic Forum at Davos by large multinational corporations and their foot soldiers – national governments, the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO.

Firmly committed to the belief that 'another world is possible', the WSF is an open space for discussing alternatives to the dominant neo-liberal processes, for exchanging experiences and for strengthening alliances among mass organisations, peoples' movements and civil society organisations.

The first WSF was held in 2001 in the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre. It was here that the WSF's charter of principles was adopted to provide a framework for the forum. The forums in 2002 and 2003 saw the movement grow rapidly, as the WSF came to symbolise the strength of the anti-globalisation movement.

In 2004 the fourth WSF will be held in Mumbai, India, where 75,000 delegates are expected to express their belief that another world really is possible. For more information, visit: www.wsfindia.org



Thursday

Lecture

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air, food
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London.
RCML.pdf



11 Getting local people active and involved

One-day training event aiming to disseminate methods for increasing the interest and involvement of local people in environmental issues and projects. It will look at how to target local people and design easy ways for people to get active.

Manchester. For more information, contact: The Environmental Trainers Network; tel: 0121 358 2155; fax: 0121 358 2194; email: ETN@unite.net www.btcv.org/etn



Friday



12 Drums against Guns

Campaign Against the Arms Trade benefit with Japanese Taiko drumming band Meantime, Saxophone Stew, DJs, visuals and 'optional' fancy dress. 8pm-4am at The Brixton Telegraph, London. For details, see: www.seasidetribe.org.



Saturday

6 Ban the Bird Market

Protest at the NEC, Birmingham, organised by Animal Aid. Up to 300,000 exotic birds are trapped only to end up on sale at the Bird Fair. Contact Animal Aid at: The Old Chapel, Bradford Street, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 1AW; tel: 01732 364546; fax: 01732 366533; web: www.animalaid.org.uk/campaign/sport/necbird.htm

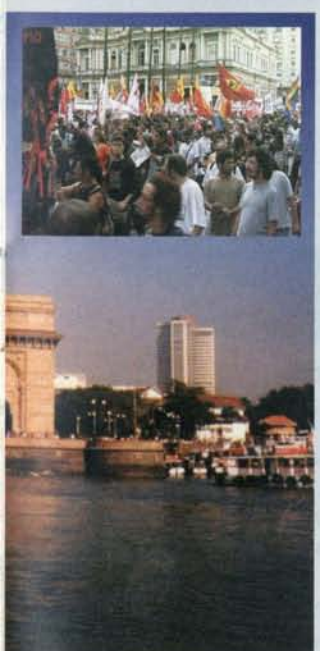
20 Farmed Animal Action Dover Rally

Protest against the harbour's involvement in the live-export trade. Meet 1pm at the roundabout leading to the Eastern Docks, Dover, Kent. Contact Farmed Animal Action; tel: 0845 4560284; email: info@farmedanimalaction.co.uk; web: www.farmedanimalaction.co.uk



21-25 World Economic Forum 2004 Davos, Switzerland

Annual meeting of the organisation funded by the world's biggest corporations, at which the business and political elites meet to map out our futures. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF) website, 'the WEF is an independent organisation committed to improving the state of the world'. The site says: 'The forum facilitates dialogue between corporate, political, intellectual and other leaders on matters of global, regional, corporate and industry importance. We facilitate discussion, acting as a catalyst for the development of key strategic insights.' To put it more simply, the WEF is all about working out how to continue screwing 99.9 per cent of the world for the benefit of the 0.1 per cent remainder. If you want to find out more, visit: www.weforum.org



Malcolm Tait



100 years ago this month...

On 17 December 1903 Orville Wright piloted the *Flyer* for 12 seconds and a distance of 120 feet at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. This was the first powered, sustained and controlled flight. Many of the preparatory designs for the plane were based on kites...

...The red kite is one of Britain's biggest birds of prey. Largely a carrion eater, it became extinct in the 19th century across the country in all but a few sites in Wales through eating poisoned mammal corpses, many of which were deliberately laid as bait by gamekeepers and farmers who regarded the kites as vermin. Today, populations reintroduced in the 1990s in Scotland, Yorkshire and the Chilterns are thriving – but the gamekeepers are getting twitchy again...

...Probably the most famous fictional gamekeeper is Mellors, the eponymous lover of DH Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley*. Yet in the first version of the book Mellors was called Parkin, which is also the name of a West Yorkshire cake made with oatmeal and ginger. Parkin cakes are a traditional favourite in the region on Guy Fawkes' Night...

...Guy Fawkes' Night is the second greatest killer of hedgehogs in this country (after the ubiquitous car). The beginning of November is the time of year when the prickly mammals settle down for their hibernation (decreasing their heartbeats from 190 to 20 beats per minute, and dropping their body temperature from 35 to 5° centigrade). A pile of leaves and wood can look like the perfect home for a tired Tiggywinkle – until the flames begin. Thousands are believed to die in bonfires each year...

...Hedgehogs are the only British animals that regularly feed on adders. If a hedgehog encounters an adder, it will provoke it and roll itself into a ball to protect itself against the snake's attacks. The adder will either impale itself on the hedgehog's spikes, or exhaust its venom, leaving it vulnerable and edible. Adders are members of the viper family...

...The Gaboon, or Gabonese viper, has the largest snake fangs in the world. They're almost 55 millimetres long. Although the Gaboon rarely bites people, its poison can kill an adult human in just 15 minutes. The species is named after the African country where it lives. Gabon gained its independence from France in 1960; it came into being as a separate colony when the French divided up their Congolese territory on 29 December 1903... 100 years ago this month.

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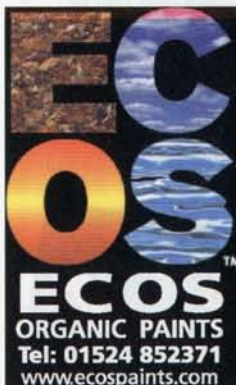
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Executive Director



Organic Agriculture is currently practiced by more than one million farmers. The organic markets have been growing at a rate of 20 percent per year over the last decade and are valued today at USD 20 billion worldwide. At the centre of this development is IFOAM – The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements with 747 members in 97 countries. Our members are organisations covering the whole organic chain; producers, certification bodies, trade development NGOs, consultancy and research. The activities include the Organic Guarantee System, international lobbying, promotion and information exchange. The Head Office, with 13 staff members, is located in Bonn, Germany. IFOAM is now recruiting an Executive Director who will lead the organisation from the Head Office.

The Executive Director is accountable to the Board of Directors for leading and managing the operations of the organisation. The Executive Director pro-actively supports the Board of Directors and leads and motivates the staff.

Applicants will need to demonstrate a proven management track record preferably in international non-governmental organisations. Skills in communication, managing people, strategic thinking and planning is essential. Experience in policy, lobbying and promotional work in the field of agriculture, environment or sustainable development will be highly regarded. A commitment to the IFOAM mission is a precondition.

The job description and more details are available on www.ifoam.org/ed. Applications should contain an application letter, a CV and professional references from at least three persons, all in English. Any special requests for salaries and other working conditions should be specified. The applications shall be addressed to the IFOAM President, preferably by e-mail to recruitment@ifoam.org or by mail to Gunnar Rundgren, Grolink Torfolk, 684 95 Höje, Sweden. Applications shall have reached us no later than 5 January, 2004. General information about IFOAM is available at www.ifoam.org.

IFOAM's mission is leading, uniting and assisting the organic movement in its full diversity. Our goal is the worldwide adoption of ecologically, socially and economically sound systems that are based on the principles of Organic Agriculture.



We interrupt our regular programming for a moral advisory...

I'm the Reverend Billy.



Dearest children, awake from Christmas!

In Ye Olde Christmas we see the Utter Evil Christian kill-the-infidels Fundamentalism unite with its bigger brother – Corporate Product hammer-my-brain Fundamentalism.

Double Consumerism, our souls choked by tinsel, is a fate worse than crystal meth. Here are some guidelines from the happy catacombs of the Church of Stop Shopping.

- As Wal-Mart and Microsoft and the Pentagon stalk the planet, hell-bent on market-share, remember: all you need to start the Revolution is simply One Hot Neighbourhood. Three people talking on a street corner without a logo branding their flesh, is radical enough.

Why not speak in tongues in broad daylight?

- The religion of Consumerism wants you to be an Eventualist. Nothing can be done by you alone immediately. You need to buy something first. The gigantic supermodel is winking at you. Until you buy her pants, you can't have sex. Happiness comes with a price; life's meaning is available by overnight delivery via FedEx.

Pray for: the possibility of direct action.

- Anybody reading these commandments who works in the field of advertising, well, that's not a field. You must, when you leave Saatchi and Saatchi at 6pm, you must dedicate yourself to subverting your day job. Join Reclaim the Streets or Dyke Action Machine. If you're in advertising in 2003, it's a little like what they say about critics. You come down out of the hills after the battle has been fought to kill the wounded.

Please consider the advantages of shame.

- Affleck and J-Lo, Posh and Becks – these two couples represent the idea of humans-as-products and must be removed to The Hague, where their rehabilitation may involve, for instance,

maturity itself. Remember, our current emergency of dullness is shepherded by these Super-people. They attack any element of complexity or surprise in us. Any unsupervised mutation outside the plot of their dull but large soap opera is considered an 'unexploited market'.



Posh and Becks represent the idea of humans-as-products and must be removed to The Hague, where their rehabilitation may involve, for instance, maturity itself

Rev sez: You are a star, baby.

- With a chutzpah that has won the admiration of the business world, the Disney corporation has patented the imagining of Flight by every child in the known universe, especially at Christmas. Disney will charge parents' credit cards every time their children imagine weightlessness of any kind, lending product identity to Peter Pan, Dumbo, Tarzan, Aladdin, Tinkerbell, Hercules, flying horses and the undulant flight of the Little Mermaid.

Moral: unmediated kids fly free.

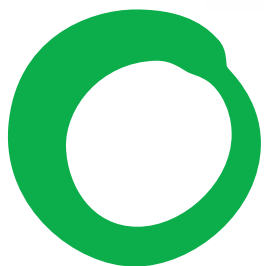
- Congregation listen to me. When you pull your fingers away from a transnational product you are pulling bullets from the flesh of a child who dared to run out of the sales room patrolled by the US and British infantries. These two countries are the biggest weapons dealers in the world, by several orders of magnitude, and their violence sustains a deadly loop, life-numbing here at home and life-threatening out in the colonies. Pierce Brosnan and Arnold Schwarzenegger fetishise the deaths of movie extras. Then we discover that we are doing the stunts ourselves.

Let's put down the popcorn and turn our backs to that screen.

Seriously children, consumerism is a joke, but stop laughing. Consumerism doesn't make sense. Start thinking. LIVING THROUGH PRODUCTS KILLS. Save your soul! Stop shopping! Merry Christmas! Amen!!

Bill Talen is the author of the book *What Should I do if Reverend Billy is in my Store?* (New Press). It is available in independent bookstores. If you see it in a transnational chainstore, steal it





**Friends of
the Earth**

George Bush has concocted a case in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to try to break the EU's moratorium on GM food.

If he's successful, GM food could be served up in our restaurants and supermarkets whether we like it or not.

We need to stop Bush and his regular dinner dates – the biotech companies who have invested heavily in GM – from forcing it onto our plates.

Time is running out, take action now

Now is your chance to send GM food back to the chef!

Join thousands of others and sign an international petition calling for:

- Our right to decide what we eat and grow – it's not up to the WTO
- Governments' right to legislate to protect their environment and citizens from the risks of GM food.

www.foe.co.uk/gm_trade_war/

Friends of the Earth inspires solutions to environmental problems, which make life better for people

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