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Closing our eyes, opening the door

Commentary surrounding the recent European Elections has been so focussed on the UK Independence Party that you'd be forgiven for imagining its successes are an isolated phenomenon. They're not. UKIP's gains have been mirrored on the continent by euro-sceptic political parties of every colour.

On the surface, the message is simple: a growing body of voters want to see their respective nations withdraw completely from the European Union. But as ever, beneath the surface, the situation is more complicated.

A polarised debate suits the establishment. Everyone knows that in a vote between change and less change, the latter will almost always prevail. For Labour, and the Conservatives before them, the given choice has always been between continued centralisation of power, on terms that we cannot question, or collapse of European unity.

Ordinary people have never been offered an alternative. Indeed, the debate has precluded one. Mr Blair, while remaining the only political leader in Europe who still pretends the proposed EU Constitution is nothing more than a 'tidying-up exercise', nevertheless claims that its rejection would somehow lead to Britain's isolation from Europe and the eventual collapse of the EU.

The effect is that the establishment has for too long been given the benefit of the doubt. Reasonable people have chosen to ignore the fact that the only victims of the EU financial fraud scandal are the very people who have highlighted it — honest accountants. They have chosen to ignore the evolution of the EU decision-making process itself, where people and power are growing increasingly distant. Why? Because regardless of its pitfalls, the alternative is apparently chaos.

When fears have occasionally been publicly aired, the establishment has dismissed them as paranoia, the work of the far right, reactionaries, racists. Given the fact that nearly 50 Labour MPs, growing numbers of Liberal Democrats and the Green Party itself have joined calls for a referendum on the continued expansion of the EU, it's hard to see how this smear can be substantiated. But it has worked. People are afraid of raising alarm for fear of being negatively branded.

The project then has continued on autopilot. But invariably yesterday's fears and rumours have become today's facts. I remember in 1997 how the establishment reacted to claims by the Referendum Party that plans were underway to establish a European constitution. Tony Blair and then Prime Minister John Major both accused the party of

scaremongering, despite knowing that such plans were indeed afoot.

Two weeks ago, there was a choice. It was an ugly one. UKIP has positions on issues beyond the EU, and many of them are preposterous. But its presence on the ballot papers offered an opportunity to register unease. And people seized it. The Conservatives begged voters to believe that they genuinely offered a cautious middle ground. But 'caution' and 'reform' have been the language of all recent governments. The effect has nevertheless been a creeping take-over by a distant bureaucracy over which ordinary people have no control.

It was a protest vote. But if the debate hadn't been polarised, it could have been avoided. And the blame for that lies not with UKIP voters, or Robert Kilroy-Silk. It lies with those people, liberal commentators, environmentalists even, who have for too long refused to criticise the EU for fear of the supposed alternatives. It is they who have allowed

themselves to be blackmailed by fraudulent arguments into meek conformism with a project that would never survive their honest scrutiny.

I've still not met an environmentalist who would advocate the abandonment of democracy. Yet the

Many people have allowed themselves to be blackmailed into meek conformism with a project that would never survive honest scrutiny



European Union is structurally anti-democratic. Its real decision-making body — the Commission — is insulated from any form of electoral pressure. There is no mechanism by which we can remove Commissioners. We can't influence them. Instead we have a system of government that is uniquely susceptible to influence by big business: a single, vast bureaucracy presiding over not 1, but 20 nations, where decision-making is conducted behind closed doors, and where single decisions affect an entire continent. For ordinary people, the system is impenetrable. For a multinational corporation with teams of clever lawyers and lobbyists, it is ideal.

So why the reticence? It's true that the odd piece of green legislation is initiated by the EU (and is immediately undermined by an EU commitment to increased trade liberalisation). It's nevertheless hard to imagine that anybody could be so short-sighted as to subscribe to what Labour MP Alan Simpson describes as a neo-feudal system of government simply on the basis that it might occasionally act in their interests. What happens when the system adopts an agenda that they don't approve of? By then the bureaucracy will have reinforced its dominance to such an extent that change may well prove impossible. And then what?

Zac Goldsmith, editor

THE ecologist

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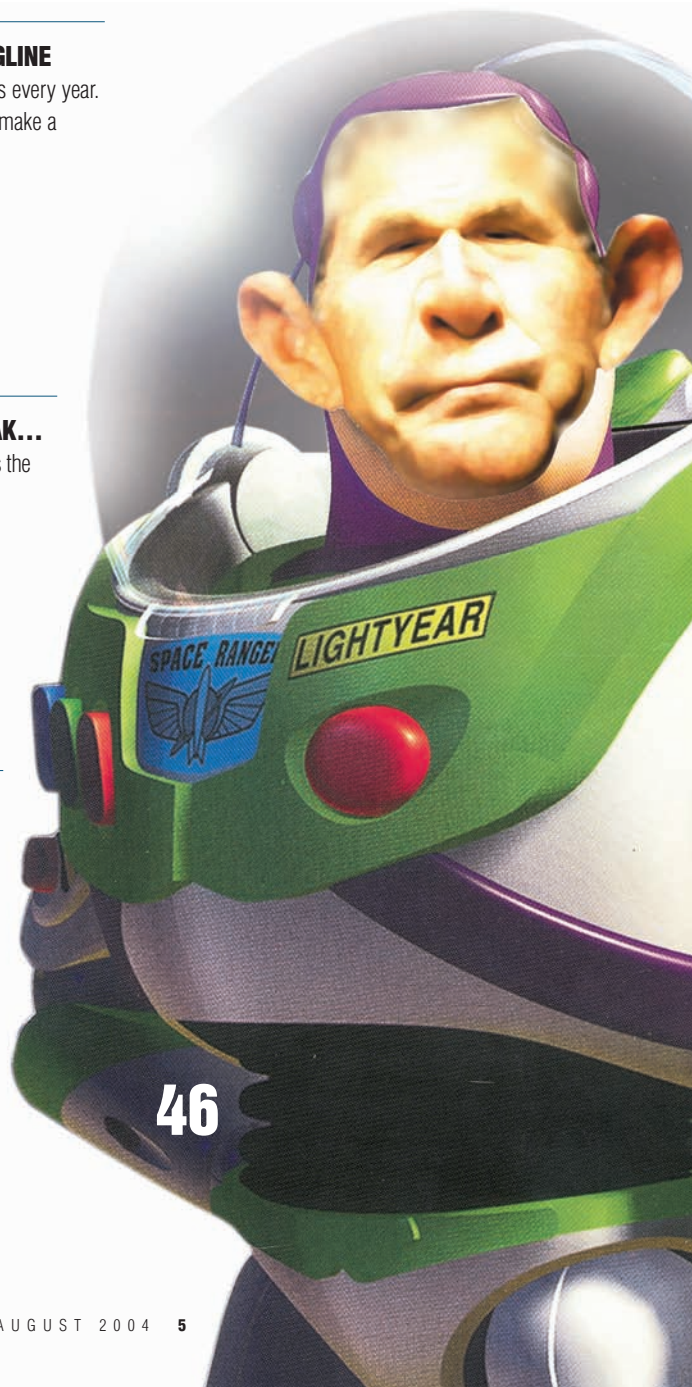
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Communications breakdown

Market research companies cold-call thousands of households every day. Personal, intrusive and demanding: here is one that we recorded verbatim in all its greedy absurdity.

By JEREMY SMITH

Market researcher:

Hello sir, we're conducting a consumer habits survey on behalf of a few leading companies. May we ask you a few questions?

Ecologist deputy editor:

How long will it take?

No more than four minutes. Go on then. Before we start, can you tell me which companies this is for?

No sir, but they are leading companies. Is your name Jeremy Smith?

Yes.

J, E, R, E, M, Y, S, M, I, T, H?
Yes.

Can you tell me which age bracket you fall into: 24-35, 35-50, 50-70?

The first.

What washing powder do you use: Daz, Bold or Ariel. Ecover.

Which supermarket do you buy it from?
I use local shops.

Which washing up liquid do you use: Fairy, Jif...?
Ecover.

Which kitchen roll do you use?
I have no idea. An organic, recycled one.

Do you always use the same brand of kitchen roll?
I don't care what brand it is.

Is the kitchen roll you use white, embossed or with patterns on.
I really don't care.

Which kitchen roll are you using now?
None. It's run out.

How often do you wash your hair?
I'm bald.

How often do you have intensive hair treatments such as head massage?
I'm bald.

Have you suffered from itchy scalp or dandruff in the past three months?
I'm still bald.

How much do you earn?
Mind your own business.

Do you have a mortgage?
Mind your own business.

What month does your household insurance come up for renewal?
Mind your own business.

What month does your contents insurance come up for renewal?
Mind your own business.

Do you have any credit cards?
No.

Would you consider a loan to pay off all your credit card debts?
I don't have a credit card.

Do you have a CD player? A TV? A DVD? A washing machine? A spin drier? A dishwasher? A computer? An internet connection? A mobile phone?
Yes. Yes. No. No. No. Yes. Yes. No.

Do you wear spectacles?
No.

Do you have any pets?
Two cats.

PR Watch

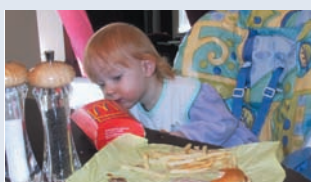
ESSO: STILL CREATING THE WORLD'S TOUGHEST ENERGY CHALLENGES

Pressure group Stop Esso has criticised the corporation's new advertising blitz, which describes the corporation as 'taking on the world's toughest energy challenges'. The campaign organisation accuses Esso of continuing to question the scientific consensus that CO₂ emissions from fossil fuels are the major driver of climate change. It says the energy giant has actually increased its funding of organisations that challenge the science of climate change.



And while the new ad campaign is designed to convince the public that Esso is making great strides in energy efficiency, comparisons with other companies reveal that it is actually underperforming in this regard. According to UK environmental policy magazine *ENDS*, Esso claims to have achieved a 37 per cent improvement in energy intensity over the last 25 years. But the UK chemical industry recorded a 61 per cent improvement in the 18 years up to 1998.

Find out more at www.stopesso.com



HOSPITAL BANS MCDONALD'S

Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital has banned McDonald's from handing out free meal vouchers to patients on its children's ward. Prior to the ban, a member of McDonald's staff had been visiting the ward on a weekly basis and handing out toys and balloons, as well as vouchers for free food. The hospital was forced to put an end to McDonald's thinly veiled promotional campaign after a rush of complaints by parents. A hospital spokeswoman defended the visits, saying they 'were done in the interests of making life for those sick children stuck in hospital a little more bearable'.

TOBACCO MONEY TAINTS RESEARCH

British American Tobacco (BAT) has spent millions of pounds funding university research seeking to prove the controversial theory that 'bad genes' make some people more prone to lung cancer than others. According to internal company memos seen by the environmental group GeneWatch this research was BAT's largest area of university funding in the early 1990s. GeneWatch is now teaming up with anti-smoking group Ash to release a list of UK scientists who received BAT funding but did not declare it in their research papers.



How old is your youngest cat?
Eight.

Do you give blood?
Yes.

Do you give to charities?
Yes.

Which ones? Animal?
Children's? Cancer?
Environmental, animal and
poverty-relief.

Poverty-relief charities?
Yes. To help poor people in
the 'developing world'.

Would you consider
sponsoring a child in the
Third World?
Yes.

Would you consider a
personalised number plate?
No.

Thank you for your time, sir.
Goodbye.

Jeremy Smith is
deputy editor of *The Ecologist*



Medicine is the US's biggest killer

More Americans die at the hands of their doctors than in any other way, according to a study by the Nutrition Institute of America. Analysis of 994 US hospitals showed that there were 783,936 deaths caused by medical drugs, surgery or wrong medical procedures in 2001. Over the same period, there were 699,697 deaths caused by heart disease and 553,251 deaths from cancer.

Putting out fires with gasoline

By Robin Maynard



Flawed logic of the fuel protests

As a farmer-friendly environmentalist, it was with some personal frustration and professional confusion that I found myself stuck in a tail-back caused by one of the convoys protesting over rising fuel prices and the chancellor's proposed additional fuel-duty levy in June. Delayed on a hot summer's day en route to a weekend's camping on the Pembrokeshire coast, my empathy was straining.

Yet I recognise the legitimate concerns of the protesters. Two pence extra on a litre of agricultural diesel doesn't sound much, especially when farmers pay just 22 pence a litre for their 'red' diesel compared to the 83 pence the rest of us fork out. But with farmers receiving farm-gate prices below the costs of their production, any extra outlays can be critical. Two pence on a litre of diesel could add between £350 and £500 to an average farm's energy bill – enough to tip many into bankruptcy.

It is true that oil, the machinery it drives, and the agrochemicals derived from it have enabled agriculture to massively increase its yields: arable farmers today can get eight tonnes a hectare where 25 years ago they'd be lucky to get three. But for many farmers there has been no overall increase in income. The 'cheap' oil that enables them to work their land harder also allows food processors and retailers to access competing produce from across Europe and the world.

Over the long-term, therefore, globally higher fuel costs should help sustain UK food producers, making long-distance supply chains uneconomic. And from the environmental perspective modern agriculture's dependency on fossil fuels is unsustainable. As things are, it takes 400 gallons of diesel fuel to grow, process and package a year's worth of food for the average American. The US farming and food sector consumes an average of 10 calories' worth of fuel energy for every single calorie of food energy it produces. (Some products, like tinned corn, are 10 times as fuel inefficient.) And the UK is well down the same 'eating-oil' track, as a recent report by the farming and food group Sustain put it.

During the last oil crisis, when prices rocketed due to the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, economist Gerard Leach compared 1950s horse-powered rotational farming systems

to machinery- and agrochemical-intensive modern agriculture. A cursory analysis suggested that while traditional horse-based systems could produce 200 units of energy for every one put in, contemporary agriculture delivered a massively improved return of 1,000 units out for each one put in. But when the full costs of fossil-fuel usage were built-in – ie, not just the diesel to drive the tractor, but also the fuel used to build it and to make and truck in fertilisers and pesticides to replace rotations and

manure from horses and other livestock – contemporary agriculture was shown to be greedily inefficient: it required two inputs of energy for every single food output.

Leach made his calculations before the even greater challenges of climate change were commonly accepted. But the conclusion is even more relevant: to be sustainable, farming must orient itself away from oil-dependency to once more becoming a solar industry, so that the sun's energy produces both its fuel and our food.

I mulled over this as my car crawled at a horse's pace towards the coast. Proposing a return to horse-powered agriculture would only provoke disbelief and derision. But instead of taking out their woes on weekend motorists, farmers would serve themselves and the rest of us better by fulfilling the old farming

aphorism, 'live as if you're going to die tomorrow, farm as if you're going to live forever'.

As a first step they could focus on feeding their regions' towns and cities, rather than on supplying global commodity markets. Urban hinterlands worked productively under systems closer to traditional, mixed farming could then become as attractive as the distant coastlines that had lured me and others into our cars. Rather than adding to congestion and climate change, we could have hopped onto our bikes or a local train for a short ride out to enjoy the fresh air and sample the produce of a more local countryside.

Robin Maynard is a founding member of Farm, the campaign group for independent farmers (www.farm.org.uk)



Over the long-term,
globally higher fuel
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making long-
distance supply
chains uneconomic

The rough guide to economic nonsense

By Andrew Simms

Nuclear and fossil fuels are only 'cheap' because we pick up the tab

In a recent strip of the widely syndicated newspaper cartoon *Doonesbury*, the young girl character Alex was shown being berated by her father for never reading the newspaper. She protested that she read the crime page, 'where they list all the busts and trials and scandals', every day. Her father pointed out that what she was actually looking at was the business section. 'That must be why no one ever goes to jail,' she replied.

It's often those who escape the rules who reveal the true nature of the system. Nowhere is this truer than when talking of what actually keeps the economic system going – energy; more specifically, the most environmentally damaging sources of energy – fossil fuels and nuclear power.

While the rest of the global economy theoretically dances to the tune of the free market, the exact scale of subsidies to coal, oil, gas and nuclear is as hard to pin down as an honest Enron spreadsheet. In Europe governments are shy in case they get tripped up by rules prohibiting slush funds or bail-outs for domestic industries. The result is creative accounting. This leads to what economists sweetly call 'information failure'. Not knowing the real price that we're paying – either through taxes or the loss of natural resources – makes it impossible for us to make the best choices for our future.

One good guess based on a combination of sources put the level of rich-country subsidies for fossil-fuel energy at about \$73 billion a year in the late 1990s. Another \$162 billion gets spent in other countries. So, this conservative estimate for the total value of fossil fuels is \$235 billion every year: that's more than four times the total amount of aid given in a year.

But the real level of subsidies could be higher still. Privatisation has shown that nuclear power can not survive in anything like a real market. Cost, an unsolved waste problem and the little-known fact that it is impossible to adequately insure nuclear power plants (imagine who gets to pay if things go badly wrong) all

show how nuclear cheats the system.

There are two reasons why all this is so bad. First, in an age of climate change it's like lending money to a drug addict to fuel their life-destroying habit. Second, the economic distortions created by subsidies enable

influential figures like the environmental guru James Lovelock to conclude, quite wrongly, that clean renewable energy is incapable of meeting human needs, and that we must turn back to discredited nuclear.

According to the G8 Renewable Energy Taskforce, only 1-3 per cent of the \$40 billion spent annually on energy investment in developing countries goes towards renewables. But if the ratios were flipped away from dirty conventional fuel in favour of

renewables incredible things would be possible.

Long-standing calculations about the total amount of renewable energy that is available show that it *could* meet all human energy needs. Even if you factor in the limitations of technology, which mean that far from all of this energy could be used, there is still more than enough to go around. Renewables make up about 13 per cent of the current global energy supply. Research carried out for last month's Bonn International Conference for Renewable Energies shows that proportion could be increased by more than 120 times.

Under the rules of the market, subsidies are meant to be bad. But we, the taxpayers, pay them anyway. It's a simple question, but could someone explain the economic logic of paying for our own downfall via climate change or gradual irradiation, when we could, instead, be tapping into the free and virtually inexhaustible power provided by the sun, the earth and the biosphere?

Andrew Simms is policy director for the New Economics Foundation (NEF) (www.neweconomics.org), which, in partnership with the Ashden Trust, has just produced the new report *The price of power: poverty, climate change, the coming energy crisis and the renewable revolution*.



Subsidising fossil fuels in an age of climate change is like lending money to a drug addict to fuel their life-destroying habit



Banning battery chickens

The government of Austria has introduced a ban on battery chicken farming as part of a raft of new legislation to promote animal welfare in the country. Other measures include bans on the use of wild animals in circuses and of the chaining up of dogs, and regulations guaranteeing that all cattle will be allowed at least 90 days' free movement each year. However, Austria will still allow the import of battery-reared chicken meat from abroad.

Ocean awash with plastic particles

The oceans are being clogged with microscopic pieces of plastic, according to a new study in the journal *Science*. The study claims that small marine animals such as lugworms and barnacles are ingesting the plastic particles, and so introducing them into the food chain. Although it is impossible to ascertain the exact sources of the particles, they are believed to be the result of the slow disintegration of plastic packaging, bags and fishing nets. Study author Richard Thompson said: 'We should try to be more responsible with how we dispose of litter, and, where possible, reuse and recycle plastics, because they might last hundreds if not thousands of years.'

GM Watch

48 MILLION TELL WTO TO LEAVE THEIR FOOD ALONE

Environmental campaigners delivered a petition to the WTO in May protesting against US efforts to force the EU to accept genetically-modified food. The petition was signed by more than 100,000 citizens from 90 countries, and by more than 544 organisations, which together represent a total of 48 million people. The signatories, including South African human rights campaigner archbishop Desmond Tutu and

Agent blue and the business of killing rice

by GERARD GREENFIELD

Over a 10-year period from 1961 to 1971 the US military used an estimated 20 million gallons of herbicides as chemical weapons for defoliation and crop destruction in Vietnam. Most of the barrels were marked with an orange stripe to signify they contained what became known as Agent Orange.

Fewer in number but still significant were barrels ringed with a blue stripe, containing an arsenic-based herbicide (cacodylic acid) that kills plants by drying them out. This was Agent Blue. By starving rice plants of moisture, the enemy (and millions of rice-growing villagers) would be starved of their most basic food. Since its first recorded use in November 1962, more than 1.2 million gallons of Agent Blue were sprayed over the next nine years. The herbicide was an essential component in the US government's rice-killing operations.

Arsenic-based herbicides are still used today as weedkillers, on sites ranging from golf courses to domestic gardens. So common – and so profitable – was the original commercial form of Agent Blue that it was among 10 toxic pesticides partially deregulated by the US Environmental Protection Agency in February 2004. Specific limits on toxic residues in meat, milk, poultry and eggs were removed.

Used in a less toxic formulation than Agent Blue, the commercial form of the herbicide can cause severe poisoning, the symptoms of which include headache, dizziness, vomiting, profuse and watery diarrhoea, followed by dehydration, electrolyte imbalance, stupor, convulsions, general paralysis and possible death within three to 14 days. Imagine the suffering, then, of those who were directly exposed to the bombardments of Agent Blue in the rice paddies of Southeast Asia.

What is bitterly ironic is the way the link between the commercial products of US agro-chemical companies and the US military's chemical weapons programme contributed to the decision to end the use of Agents Orange and Blue, along with Agents White, Pink, Green, and Purple. As military historian Gabriel Kolko observed, 'the Nixon administration finally ended

the programme not because of public outcries or moral afterthoughts, but because the spraying in Vietnam left insufficient herbicides for US domestic users'.

Four decades later, the companies that manufactured these chemical weapons are facing a renewed public outcry. On 30 January 2004 the Vietnam Association for Agent Orange Victims launched a class action lawsuit against a dozen US chemical companies. These include Dow Chemical and Monsanto. The latter, meanwhile, continues to accumulate massive profits from its herbicides – even in Vietnam, where over the next three years Monsanto plans to release into the environment its genetically engineered rice varieties.

2004 is the UN's International Year of Rice. Adopting the slogan 'Rice is Life', the UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) declared this year 'an opportunity to celebrate and promote the ecological, social and cultural diversity of rice-based production systems as a prism through which key global concerns can be addressed'. But this is an opportunity already lost. More accurately, it has been sold off. The FAO has chosen precisely this moment to support the genetic engineering industry. No longer is there any talk of the cultural importance of rice or biodiversity, or of the need to support ecologically and socially sustainable rice production. No longer is there talk of farmers' rights and livelihoods. Instead, the FAO has declared its support for biotech/ agro-chem giants such as Monsanto. In doing so, it is supporting the corporate takeover of rice: the staple food of more than half the world's population.

The International Year of Rice has thus become an opportunity for unfinished business. Companies once involved in the US military's rice-killing operations are now telling us they hold in their hands the crop's future. Those who resist, who want to farm rice without poisoning their fields or themselves, who want to keep rice free of corporate patents, who want to protect rice because it is life, are faced with a new kind of battle.

Gerard Greenfield works with Focus on the Global South; see www.focusweb.org, where an alternative version of this article first appeared.

For more on these and all other GM issues, visit: www.gmwatch.org

French small farmers' leader José Bové, urged the WTO not to undermine the sovereign right of countries to protect their citizens and the environment from GM foods and crops. Last May the US, Canada and Argentina filed a complaint with the WTO, asking the organisation to act against an EU moratorium and various national bans on GM crops. Companies in the three countries claim that the European bans are costing them millions of dollars in potential exports. For more information go to www.bite-back.org/

FEARS OVER BIO-ENGINEERED GOLF GRASS

GM grass designed for use on golf courses has raised the ire of environmentalists in the US. Critics are worried that the grass, which is bred to be resistant to Monsanto's herbicide Roundup, could spread and wreck biodiversity in natural ecosystems.



LOW COST OF UK DAIRY HERD GOING GM-FREE

The British dairy industry could easily afford to stop feeding its cattle GM soya and maize, according to a report jointly produced by Greenpeace and independent farming pressure group Farm. The report claims that the cost of the UK dairy herd going completely GM-free would be less than once extra pence for every litre of milk.

Patents and pollution

By Jim Thomas

Better check what's growing in your garden – before Monsanto sues you



Heard the one about the farmer who was sued by Monsanto when it contaminated his farm? Well, the case is now over. In May Percy Schmeiser, a 74-year-old farmer from the Canadian prairies, finally reached the disappointing end of an iconic legal battle that has come to symbolise big biotech's war on small farmers. Monsanto first prosecuted Schmeiser in 1998, when private investigators discovered GM canola (rapeseed) growing on his 1,000-acre farm. He protested (and it was accepted) that the GM plants were the result of unwanted genetic pollution brought in on the breeze. But Monsanto, in a breathtaking display of greed, still insisted that Schmeiser should pay royalties for the patented genes in his harvest. In the UK Labour backbencher Alan Simpson compared what happened to Schmeiser as having a burglar break into your house, smash up your belongings and then demand payment. The gene giant was trying to enforce a protection racket.



Labour backbencher Alan Simpson compared the Monsanto vs Percy Schmeiser case as having a burglar break into your house, smash up your belongings and then demand payment

Unfortunately, the courts saw things differently. In May the Canadian Supreme Court narrowly voted to back the corporation, ruling that the contaminated plants that had sprung up on Schmeiser's land were the rightful property of Monsanto and that Schmeiser had infringed its patent by growing and selling them. By means of a skillful technicality Schmeiser was excused having to pay Monsanto a penny, but the legal precedent was unmistakable: predatory corporate ownership of life was upheld, and could be arbitrarily extended at the whim of the birds and the bees.

Most significantly, the Schmeiser decision has created a new category of 'inflatable monopoly'. Monsanto only holds a patent on one particular altered gene in the contested crop, yet the justices ruled that the incorporation of this gene granted ownership over the entire plant. They ignored the soil, inputs, water and years of breeding carried out by Schmeiser, a farmer who had saved and developed his own seed for decades. It is a decision that transforms genetic pollution from a nuisance into a novel corporate ownership strategy: with genetic

contamination rife in North America the way is now clear for Monsanto to claim ownership and litigate against any farmer unfortunate enough to be downwind of GM crops.

And Monsanto is wasting no time seizing its advantage. Having already sued nearly 100 farmers in the US, the biotech bully is now turning its sights on the

developing world. In the same week as the Canadian Supreme Court decision, Monsanto took out full-page newspaper adverts in Chiapas, Mexico, warning peasant *campesinos* that any GM soya found growing on their land would lead to prosecution, and encouraging peasants to snitch on their neighbours.

The precedent of inflatable monopolies could be even more dangerous if ever applied in the field of nanotechnology. Corporations are currently taking out thousands of new patents annually on designer molecules and particles that are being pervasively incorporated across all industries. Were such

molecular monopolies to inflate into ownership claims over larger structures, the reach of corporate ownership could multiply dramatically.

Despite seven years fighting Monsanto, Percy Schmeiser and his wife Louise seem not to have tired of the legal process. They have vowed to support local organic farmers taking a class-action suit against Monsanto, alleging that GM contamination has destroyed their seed varieties and markets. 'That was the basis we fought for – for the rights of farmers,' explained Schmeiser in a recent email. 'And I know that if my grandfather and my father were here today, that's exactly what they would want me to do because that's the reason they came to this country: to be free and to use their seeds from year to year.'

Jim Thomas is the European programme manager of technology watchdog the Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration; an online letter-writing campaign protesting against the Schmeiser decision can be found at www.etcgroup.org/takeaction.asp



Pandas threatened by global bamboo loss

Deforestation is threatening up to half the world's 1,200 species of bamboo with extinction, a new study claims. Apart from the panda, which survives almost exclusively on bamboo, the loss of the fast-growing grasses would threaten the survival of the Himalayan black bear, the mountain gorilla and the lesser bamboo bat. The joint study by the UN's World Conservation Monitoring Centre and the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan reveals that 250 species of bamboo have an area of about 1,200 square miles of forest left within their ranges.



Bushmen to take Botswana to court

A group of 248 Bushmen and Bakgalagadi nomads has launched a fresh bid to take the Botswana government to court in what could be a test case for Bushman rights across southern Africa. The case relates to the Botswana government's forced eviction of the Bushmen from their ancestral lands in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. The Bushmen want the government to recognise their rights to return to their land and to live and hunt and gather there without fear of further persecution. An earlier case was dismissed on a technicality in April 2002. The Bushmen appealed, and won the right to have the case reheard.

For further information, contact www.survival-international.org

We are running out of cheap oil – Good

If our conscience won't make us change, maybe our wallets will

by MITCHELL ANDERSON

As petrol prices soar into the stratosphere, likely never to come down, we can expect to hear much doomsaying about how this will end the world as we know it. Let's hope so.

Our long-standing addiction to cheap oil has cost us dearly in terms of health, global security, human rights and a changing climate. It has also long stifled investment and innovation in alternative energy sources and technologies. Maybe we should look at expensive oil as an opportunity rather than a crisis.

First, let's remember that fuel prices will likely continue to rise – recently they hit record prices on world markets – and there is nothing we can do about it. Public proclamations aside, OPEC members are quietly admitting that they have little excess production capacity. Major oil companies such as Shell have recently had to 'revise' their reserve figures.

Couple this with ballooning demand in China and it all adds up to a simple fact: We are finally running out of cheap oil.

Like a drunk on a bender, it might not be welcome news that our favourite liquid is in short supply. There will be a hangover, no doubt, but we should think about the benefits of kicking the habit. We may discover that our addiction has cost us more than we realised.

Climate related disasters rose by 10 per cent between 2002 and 2003, totalling more than \$60 billion. The heat wave in Europe last summer killed more than 20,000 people.

Swiss Re, one of the largest reinsurance companies in the world, announced last month that it expects the cost of weather disasters to climb to \$150 billion per year in the next 10 years.

Then there's the ugly business of securing foreign oil supplies. An obvious case in point is the clumsy and tragic intervention in Iraq that now seems likely to sow the seeds of war and hatred for generations. More than 700 Americans have been killed and probably around 10,000 Iraqi civilians – the US is not counting. It has so far cost more than \$113 billion.

Many of our civil liberties are being

sacrificed on the altar of the so-called 'war on terror'. This nebulous conflict arguably has sprouted directly from our dependence on foreign oil and is eroding many of the constitutional protections that define our free and open society.

Our oil addiction has cost us dearly but there seems little hope that we can kick the habit on our own. US Senator James Inhofe, who chairs the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, made that point clear. At an international climate change conference last year he made a brazen statement typical of an addict in denial: 'I'm becoming more and more convinced... that global warming is the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people and the world.' So who are you going to believe – the leading climate scientists in the world or a

senator from an oil-producing US state in an election year?

Rising fuel prices will succeed where moral persuasion has failed. In fact, they already have. Sales of the automotive monstrosity, the Hummer H2, have fallen 24 per cent in the first four months of this year.



I can think of no better index of an improving planet.

Higher costs will also foster much needed interest, innovation and investment in conservation and alternative technologies. Perhaps some oil companies will turn their massive resources to developing these clean energy alternatives rather than choosing to go down with their ship.

That would be money well spent. Our governments can play an important role in this transformation by bringing in smart subsidies and progressive tax shifting that favour conservation and innovation. Alternative technologies will sprout from the ashes of our oil economy. Change will come, and we should welcome it. Thank God the booze is running out.

Mitchell Anderson is a staff scientist with the Sierra Legal Defense Fund in Vancouver. This article was first published in the *Toronto Star*.



'RED TIDE' WIPES SEAFOOD FROM SHANGHAI MENUS

The residents of Shanghai are being warned not to eat seafood after a massive concentration of toxic red algae was found off China's eastern coast. The algae covers almost 8,000 square miles of sea, and was caused by heavy pollution from sewage and industries in the region. Known colloquially as 'red tide', the microscopic algae affects the nervous system of fish and seafood, and is toxic to humans.

GLOBAL WARMING – 300 MILLION FACE DESTITUTION

Global warming may destroy two thirds of China's glaciers by 2060, the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research announced last month. If the institute's forecast is correct, the livelihoods of a quarter of the country's population could be wiped out.



MORE DAMNING STATISTICS...

China consumed half of the cement produced in the world last year, one third of the steel, almost a quarter of the copper, and one fifth of the aluminium. Only the US imported more oil. At any one time one fifth of the world's cargo fleet is loading or unloading in Chinese ports. Meanwhile, average yearly pay in China fell by 14.7 per cent in 2003.

For the common good

It's time we stopped equating wellbeing with wealth

by JONATHAN ROWE

From cancers prompted by toxins in the environment to obesity and coronary disease caused by too much fatty food, a good portion of our medical problems are growth-induced. Just a few decades ago, hungry children were a cause of national concern in the US; now the big concern is kids who are fat and have attention-deficit problems. Add traffic, noise, bad air, the breakdown of communities, loneliness, stress... and on and on, and you have an economy that creates the problems it is supposed to solve. The tragedy of market economies is that they *have* to create problems and needs, or their gears will grind to a halt.

One source of relief from this dilemma is the invisible economy called 'the commons': the part of life that is not the market and not the state, but which is the shared heritage of us all. The sky and oceans, wildernesses and flowing water, the multitude of species and the like are commons. So, too, are language and knowledge, sidewalks and public squares, the stories and games of childhood, the processes of democracy. The commons are a kind of counterpoise to the market. They provide stability and sustenance, rather than restless appetite and craving. They connect to the 'we' side of human nature, as opposed to the

market's unrelenting 'me'. The commons concept includes anything that isn't owned and which is shared in common.

For centuries, economists have regarded the commons as a quaint medieval relic and mere fodder for the market (or, in the Soviet model, the state). In their creation myth, the commons are inchoate matter, a kind of economic primal sludge that awaits the vivifying hand of the market to attain reality and life. Forests are worthless until they become timber; quiet is worthless until it becomes an echo chamber for noise; childhood is worthless until it becomes a marketing free-fire zone, ad infinitum.

But things change, even if economic beliefs don't. The nature of scarcity has shifted. Where once the products of the market were scarce, now it is the commons that are scarce and most needed. Which is more lacking where you live: electronic noise or quiet, cars or clean air, shopping malls or high streets where people run into neighbours and friends? Which would do more to make your life better: a high-definition television set, or neighbours who could take care of your children and watch your house when you go away?

The commons are *not* a relic of a bygone age. They are a parallel economy that does real work. They produce the languages we speak, the air we breathe, the conviviality of public spaces, the quiet that gives us rest; things, one and all, that the market tends to destroy. If there is to be wellbeing in the future, we will have to reverse this trend. Economic policy will have to become commons policy, as well as market policy; the government will have to do as much to promote the commons as it does now to promote the market.

Climate-change monitor

TRANSPORT POLLUTION FIGURES SUPPRESSED

Official statistics confirming an increase in transport-related greenhouse gas emissions in the UK were suppressed by the government, it emerged in May. The original draft of the Office of National Statistics report revealed that pollution from air transport rose 85 per cent, from 20.2 million tonnes to 37.3m tonnes, between 1990 and 2002. Emissions from freight transport rose 59 per cent, from 15.8 million tonnes to 25.1 million tonnes. But these details were removed from the published version of the report, following intervention by the Department of Transport (DoT). Liberal Democrat environment spokesman Norman Baker commented: 'The first refuge of a scandal is to cover up the truth. The DoT should be striving to drive down emissions rather than covering up that they are increasing.'

PUTIN COMMITS RUSSIA TO THE KYOTO PROTOCOL

President Vladimir Putin announced in May that Russia is to 'rapidly move toward ratification' of the Kyoto protocol on climate change, thus ending months of speculation that the country was about to follow the US by turning its back on the agreement. Putin's apparent change of heart came on the back of discussions with the European Union, which will now back Russia's entry into the WTO.



WHO TURNED THE LIGHTS OUT?

The earth is getting dimmer. The amount of sunlight reaching the planet's surface dropped by up to 10 per cent between the late 1950s and the early 1990s. But in some areas the figures are even worse. Hong Kong is 37 per cent darker now than it was in the middle of the last century. Researchers are not sure whether the changes are the result of variabilities in cloud cover or increased pollution.



MEDIA SEES BENEFIT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

CNN found the silver lining of a report revealing that global warming is affecting the Arctic far more severely than the rest of the planet. CNN reported that the international research project the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment had found the melting of ice was creating increased hazards for Inuit hunters, and disrupting plant and animal habitats. But the channel suggested that these problems might be easily compensated by 'the benefits for commerce [that] might accrue from opening up a largely icebound short-cut sea route from the Pacific to the Atlantic', and by the fact that 'Russia might win easier access to oil and gas as the icecap shrinks and permafrost retreats'.

If one thing sums up commons-based economic policy, it is community. A commons approach seeks to restore the opportunity for spontaneous interaction in daily life. It encourages, for example, development on the traditional village model, with houses close together, front porches for visiting and shopping within walking distance. It encourages mixed-use development and granny flats instead of malls and sprawl. And it builds common spaces, such as community gardens, pocket parks and benches.

This is a template for the emerging economy: a thriving commons sector that both complements the market and provides refuge from it. The market will continue. It answers to a genuine need for initiative and enterprise. But the market will exist in equilibrium with this parallel economy that does some things better – providing health, creativity, community and freedom of a kind the market has begun to foreclose. Government will maintain the boundaries and provide a structure of law and support for the commons, just as it does for the market; no more and no less.

Of course, this will mean big changes – not least for economists. But they have gone to great pains in recent decades to urge the rest of us to accept destruction in the cause of their version of creation. Isn't it time we returned the favour and urged some change on them?

Jonathan Rowe is director of the California-based think-tank the Tomales Bay Institute and a contributing editor of Yes! magazine, where a longer version of this article first appeared

Mitsubishi goes green on logging

Australian environmentalists celebrated a significant victory in May with the announcement by Japanese corporation Mitsubishi that it would stop using wood chips generated from virgin forest in Tasmania. About 5 million tonnes of wood chips are exported from Tasmania each year, much of it from old-growth forests; 4.3 million tonnes is sent to Japan. Mitsubishi, which operates in a huge variety of sectors, has traditionally been the third-largest Japanese customer of Tasmanian wood chips, with an annual take of 400,000 tonnes.



Labour housing plan will destroy countryside

According to the UK government's own figures, an area of countryside half the size of greater London will be destroyed if Labour plans for a million new homes in the southeast of England are approved. A study by the Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs estimates that 192,000 acres of greenfield land would be needed to carry out the massive house-building programme approved by chancellor Gordon Brown. The report adds that if the homes were built it would result in the UK's domestic CO₂ emissions rising by almost 20 per cent in the next 12 years.

The problem with good news

By Malcolm Tait

The conservation movement must be wary of becoming a victim of its own success



Staggering news in from the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), which has recently completed research into British garden birds. It seems that up to 50 per cent of the nation's breeding birds are rearing their chicks in our own back yards. Accepting that the data has to be treated carefully (the gardeners who contributed to the survey are more likely to be wildlife-friendly types), there's a strong message being put out here. Get your gardens right, and wildlife will want to share them with you. We can all play a little part in conservation, and we can see the results on our own doorstep.

As long, that is, as they remain on our doorstep. 'Aren't birds brilliant,' shouts the RSPB this year, rhetorically leaving out the question mark as it tries to forge a stronger relationship between Manx shearwater and Man in the street. 'Yes,' comes back the cry, 'as long as they stay in their place.'

Aberdeen is just one of several northern Scottish urban areas that would like to shove some birds back behind a clearly demarcated line. Gulls

In the Lincolnshire village of Branston mallards are doing the unthinkable: slowing down the traffic

have been nesting on Scottish rooftops at an ever more successful rate in recent years, to the point at which they're becoming a menace to inhabitants and tourists alike as they brazenly nick your fish supper from your hands and crap in your ice cream. Meanwhile, in the Lincolnshire village of Branston mallards are doing the unthinkable: slowing down the traffic. It seems that too many people are feeding them, and they're wandering – heaven forbid – away from their pond and about on village roads.

Now, the Scottish councils do have a point (Worried of Branston most certainly doesn't). But there's an underlying threat here. Birds are fine and dandy, as long as they don't get in the way of human life and development. Now that we're finding out that gardens are more successful ways of conserving birdlife than previously thought, how long before someone takes that argument to the next stage? Why should this wood be protected when the species within are faring well in the nation's gardens? Why should that motorway be halted, when the habitat it cuts through now exists at number three Acacia Avenue?

Conservationists have got used in recent years to combatting unnecessary development by quoting statistics. Destroy this land, and x per cent of endangered species 'y' will vanish. It's worked well in many circumstances, but it relies on the fact that conservation news is bad news. Good news – and the BTO survey is certainly that – can backfire.

Does this mean that conservationists should keep good news to themselves? Certainly not. It means, instead, that the battle must be fought on a broader front than the statistical one on its own. To a certain extent, the RSPB has got it right this year. We should look after birds – and other wildlife – not just because they're in decline, but because they are, indeed, brilliant.

It's as simple as that.

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

Market analysis

The effects of obesity are oozing into the market in unexpected ways. Undertakers are complaining that fat corpses are clogging up crematoriums. Airlines are being forced to widen their seats. Sales of adult tricycles are up. And, as Max Keiser of investment-activism website KarmabandQue reports, the corporations responsible for the fat epidemic risk seeing their share prices going through the floor.

Krispy Kreme

KKD:NYSE

Krispy Kreme, a company viewed by many as emblematic of the US over-consumption lifestyle, has been getting a right royal pasting because of the continuing massive popularity of the carbohydrate-avoiding Atkins Diet. The doughnut firm's share price is down 50 per cent from its peak earlier this year.

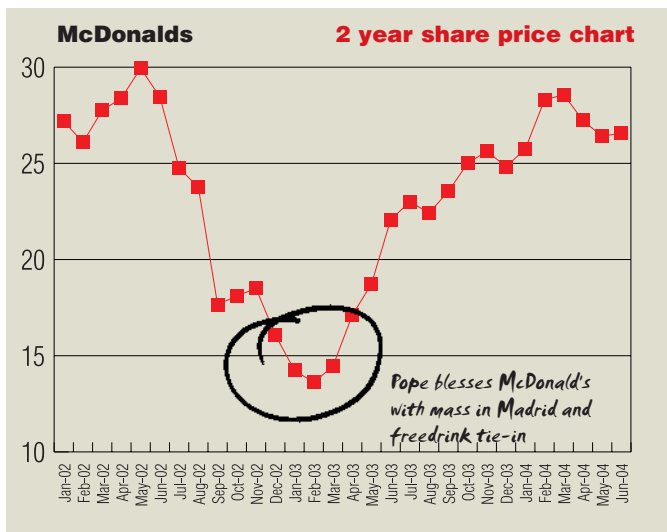
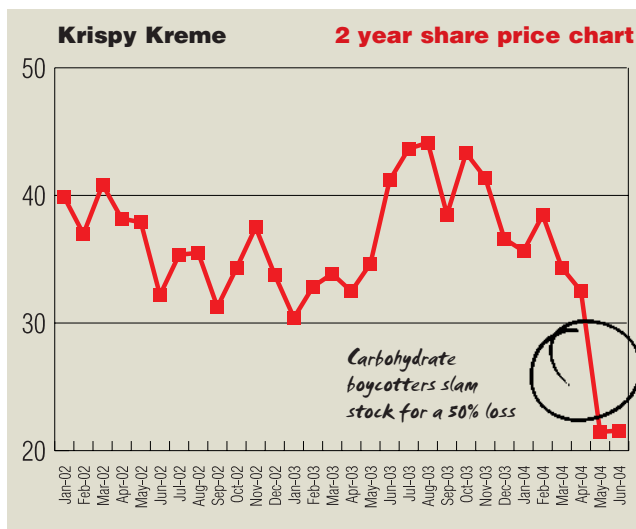
It's amazing how Atkins, which was first let loose on the world in 1972, has suddenly redefined the financial playing field. Not only are carbohydrate-sensitive stocks like Krispy getting whacked, but the price of recommended carb substitutes beef and eggs are zipping higher.

The question for hedge funds now is: 'What to do

with our Krispy Kreme stock – buy, sell or hold?'

The stock-market bears point to a recent *New York Times* article claiming that Atkins' basic anti-carb premise is scientifically sound. The likelihood of a continuing rush of Atkins converts should give Krispy stock owners even more reason to wilt.

The bulls argue for the continuing strength of the consumption-driven economic model of the 'Anglo-Saxon' world. For Americans and Brits this entails embracing the tobacco industry's business mantra as applied to doughnuts: that we should all sacrifice our health for the benefit of fat cats.



McDonald's

MCD:NYSE

To see where Krispy's share price might be heading, the recent fortunes of McDonald's might offer a clue. Since the McLibel began back in the mid-1990s the value of the fast food chain has also been cut in half. This has forced it to retrench, close stores, change its menus and try to rebrand itself by introducing an 'adult happy meal' that includes a salad and a pedometer.

McDonald's has rebounded over the last year

or so, with its share price bottoming out the week the Pope held mass in Madrid last May. The pontiff offered his congregation a McDonald's tie-in of a free drink coupon. How many Big Macs till you're eligible to become a saint?

The Pope appears to have had a change of heart, though. Reports coming out of the Vatican in May quote him as condemning Americans as 'soulless'.

Coca Cola

KO:NYSE

A stock that seems to have dodged the obesity bullet for the time being is Coca-Cola. Its New York share price is down from the \$70 high it hit in 2000 and is now at \$50. But the company is still easily outperforming its market rivals.

Activists can't seem to make a dent in this one. They huff and they puff, but they can't blow this American icon down – despite its alleged acts of mass social irresponsibility in India, Colombia and (presumably) America, where its sugary drinks are quaffed by the

barrel-load by impressionable tots ballooning up to fat-choking proportions.

One man with a massive investment in Coke is billionaire investment guru Warren Buffet. This might explain why investors are reluctant to pull their money out of the company. But Buffet has also made a major bet against the US economy by speculating against the dollar. His reasoning is that the current administration's reliance on selling ever more bonds to Asians and Europeans so as to fund tax cuts at home and

porno in Iraq is swelling the US current account deficit to bubble proportions.

The consensus among money managers is that Buffet looks prescient and he will make money selling the dollar short – possibly enough to offset a losing position in Coke should worldwide anti-American sentiment hit the fizzy drink company's balance sheet.

Signs that the global consumer is beginning to weary with US products are clear, according to the NOP World report *America, the*

World and the New Challenges for Global Brands. The market research company states: 'In a nutshell, there's growing resentment and envy among global consumers toward the US, and that sentiment is manifest in an erosion of support for US products.'

So, there appears to be an enormous amount of unrealised 'dissent risk' yet to be reflected in Coke's share price. The company's biggest shareholder is hedged, and even the Pope looks likes he's 'shorting' the US.



Cadbury-Schweppes

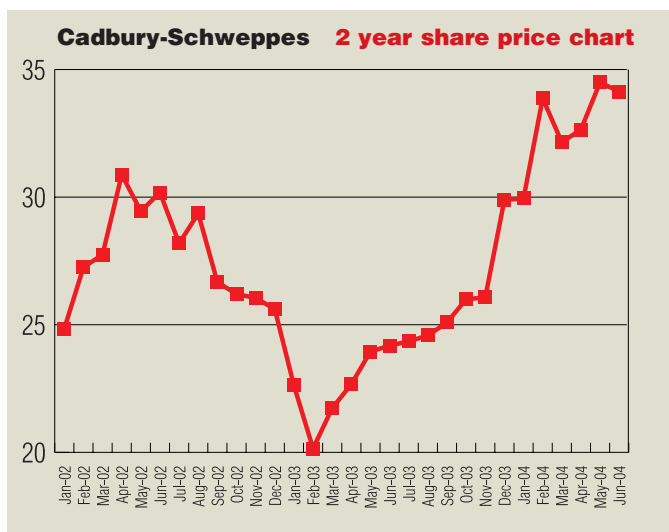
CSG:NYSE

Last year chocolate firm Cadbury launched a £9m UK campaign to get kids to buy 160 million chocolate bars containing a combined total of nearly 2 million kilogrammes of fat in exchange for 'free' sports equipment. The Food Commission calculated that that amount of chocolate amounted to 1.25 million calories.

Break the numbers down further and a primary school child would have to buy £40 worth of chocolate to be eligible for any sports gear.

That works out at 20,000 calories to earn one netball. And before he could pad up to go out to bat, your son would have to eat 2,730 chocolate bars containing more than 33 kilogrammes (the same as a non-obese 10-year-old would weigh before taking Cadbury up on its offer) of fat. Cadbury's anti-obesity arithmetic doesn't seem to add up – unless you're a shareholder.

But as a recent Nobel Prize winner in the new field of 'behavioural economics'



suggests, markets are not always rational. I think about this when I look at a chart of Cadbury's share price and wonder what's holding it up? Could it be a reverse of the Krispy Kreme recommendation? Parents who have obese children, and first-hand knowledge of what eating too much chocolate can do to youngsters, are perhaps investing in Cadbury as a hedge, with the increase in its share price offsetting the cost of feeding children triple the recommended calorie intake.

At some point, however, this obesity-arbitrage will stop paying dividends. And that will be the moment when Cadbury's chart might start to look more like Krispy Kreme's – with a hole in the share price bigger than the hole in the latter's doughnuts.

Oxfam

Not much seems to be happening with Oxfam's four horsemen of the coffee grower's apocalypse: Sara Lee, Kraft, Procter & Gamble and Nestlé. I've never understood why Oxfam doesn't join forces with a group like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, which is campaigning against Procter & Gamble for animal rights reasons. My guess is they wouldn't be able to decide on a common measure of success. But one is staring them in the face: they could work together to force the Procter & Gamble share price down. More on this approach to activist collaboration in subsequent columns.



Max Keiser, former Wall Street broker, creator of the Hollywood Stock Exchange, has been active in various financial markets for 20 years – as a broker, banker, trader and media expert. He is the chairman and founder of KarmabankQue

Investors should be cautious about any and all stock recommendations and should consider the source of any advice on stock selection. Various factors, including personal or corporate ownership, may influence or factor into an expert's stock analysis or opinion.

All investors are advised to conduct their own independent research into individual stocks before making a purchase decision. In addition, investors are advised that past stock performance is no guarantee of future price appreciation.

BEHIND THE LABEL

Suncream

by PAT THOMAS

It is not inevitable that sun exposure will lead to photo-ageing (dry, wrinkled skin), or even to skin cancer. Nevertheless, the sun is now officially the enemy – against which sun creams are our weapons of choice.

The problem is that using sun creams on their own to prevent skin damage is like trying to lose weight by ordering a diet Coke with your Big Mac and fries. Because sun creams encourage a false sense of security, we stay out in the sun far longer than is smart or safe. Few of us apply sun creams as regularly or as thickly as manufacturers recommend. In real-world terms, this means that the sun protection factor (SPF, see below) listed on the bottle is always misleading.

Chemicals that provide sun protection are also potentially irritating to the skin, and irritated skin is more prone to sun damage. Emerging research also suggests that some of these chemicals are oestrogen mimics that persist in the environment and in the body. Potentially, this could lead to gender-bending effects in men and boys, and breast and ovarian cancer and reproductive abnormalities in women.

SUN MYTHS

Used properly, sun screens will prevent sunburn, but evidence of protection against most skin cancers is inconclusive. Sun screens may reduce the risk of squamous cell carcinoma, but their effect on the more serious basal cell carcinoma and the more deadly malignant melanoma is uncertain. Indeed, some studies have linked regular sun screen use to higher rates of melanoma among men and basal cell carcinoma among women.

In contrast, most of the body's vitamin D supply – between 75 and 90 per cent – is generated by the skin's exposure to UVB

rays. Using a sun screen drastically lowers the cutaneous production of vitamin D. Combined with sedentary indoor lives, this raises the risk of vitamin-D deficiency disorders such as rickets, osteomalacia and osteoporosis. It may also increase the risk of certain cancers.

In the US the number of deaths from skin cancer is believed to be in the region of 10,000 per year. Premature deaths from cancers (breast, prostate and colon) associated with inadequate sun exposure are estimated at two to three times that figure.

PROTECTION MONEY

Last year the UK sun-care market generated £182m. In particular, government advice for us all to cover up has boosted the sales of higher protection factor creams. SPF 15 and SPF 25 are now the UK's most popular choices. Unfortunately the higher the SPF the more chemicals the cream will contain.

The leading brand in the UK is Boots' Soltan, which claims around 19 per cent of the market. Ambre Solaire and Nivea come next, followed by Piz Buin and Tesco's own brand.

SAFE SUN

The SPF number defines how long you can stay in the sun before getting burnt. If you normally turn pink after 20 minutes, an SPF 15 product will extend this period by 15 times (ie five hours). The SPF applies only to protection from UVB radiation, not the more harmful UVA radiation.

Sunburn is easily preventable by staying out of the sun between 11am and 2pm. It can also be prevented by wearing appropriate clothing. The average T-shirt has an SPF of seven, and 85 per cent of fabrics tested in an Australian study had an SPF of 20 or more.

Pat Thomas is the author of several books on environment and health issues, including: *Cleaning Yourself to Death: how safe is your home?*, *Living Dangerously: are everyday toxins making you sick?* (both published by Newleaf) and *Under the Weather: how weather and climate affect our health* (Fusion Press)

Isotridecyl salicylate, Octyl salicylate

Purpose:

- UVB filter and antiseptic

Health effects:

- Skin irritants; some salicylates have hormone-disrupting potential.

Butyl methoxydibenzoylmethane

Purpose:

- UVA filter

Health effects:

- skin rashes, allergic reactions and inflammation; BMDM's questionable stability in the sun means it may break down into chemicals that inhibit the skin's natural defences against sunlight, leaving it more vulnerable to skin cancer and premature ageing.

Octocrylene

Purpose:

- UVB filter belonging to the cinnamate family of chemicals.

Health effects:

- Skin irritant; some cinnamates have hormone-disrupting effects; research by the Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority suggests that weak doses of cinnamates can cause premature death of animal skin cells.

Glycerin

Purpose:

- Lubricant - makes skin creams go on more smoothly. Glycerin can be processed from plants or animals.

Health effects:

- Can dry the skin, making it more vulnerable to sun damage and more prone to absorbing other harmful chemicals in the mix.

Potassium Hydroxide

Purpose:

- Controls alkalis

Health effects:

- Skin irritation and eye damage.

Parfum

Purpose:

- Fragrance

Health effects:

- Allergenic; can contain hormone-disrupting, liver-toxic and neurotoxic artificial musks; asthmatic reactions; nervous-system reactions such as headaches, mood swings, depression, forgetfulness and irritation.

Ingredients: Aqua, C12-15 alkyl benzoate, Butylene glycol, Isotridecyl salicylate, Butyl methoxydibenzoylmethane, Glycerin, Dimethicone, Polyglyceryl-3 methylglucose distearate, C18-36 acid glycol ester, Octocrylene, Butyrospermum parkii, Octyl salicylate, Phenoxyethanol, PVP/hexadecene copolymer, Parfum, Tocopheryl acetate, Methylparaben, Acrylates/vinyl isodecanoate crosspolymer, Diethylhexyl butamido triazone, Xanthan gum, Butylparaben, Ethylparaben, Potassium hydroxide, Isobutylparaben, Propylparaben, Tetrasodium EDTA, Dipropylene glycol.



Ingredients with unknown health effects

C12-15 alkyl benzoate

Purpose: Synthetic moisturiser and preservative

Diethylhexyl butamido triazone

Purpose: UV filter

Polyglyceryl-3 methylglucose distearate

Purpose: Emulsifier – holds the mixture of water and oils together

C18-36 acid glycol ester

Purpose: Synthetic moisturiser

PVP/ hexadecene copolymer, acrylates/ vinyl isodecanoate crosspolymer

Purpose: Keep the product stuck to the skin and improve water-resistance

Dipropylene glycol

Purpose: Solvent

Xanthan Gum

Purpose: Thickener, stabiliser

- Although considered 'natural', xanthan gum is produced in the lab by a biotechnological fermentation process from the micro-organism *xanthomonas campestris*. Xanthan gum can be genetically modified.

Dimethicone

Purpose:

- Synthetic silicone-based moisturiser; film former

Health effects:

- Skin irritation.

Methylparaben, butylparaben, ethylparaben, isobutylparaben, propylparaben, butylated hydroxytoluene, tetrasodium EDTA, phenoxyethanol

Purpose:

- Preservatives

Health effects:

- Skin irritation, contact dermatitis, contact allergies.

A safe sun screen?

While it is impossible to make an effective sun cream without chemical sun screens or mineral sun blocks, it is possible to make a sun cream that is low in skin irritants and is without synthetic perfumes or petroleum-derived polymers (plastic-like substances that 'glue' the sun screen to your skin). Products that use mineral sun blocks, such as titanium or zinc oxide, tend to be less irritating than chemical sun screens.

TRY THESE INSTEAD

Green People

www.greenpeople.co.uk

Weleda

www.weleda.co.uk

Dr Hauschka

www.drhauschka.com

Aveda

www.aveda.com

Yaoh

www.yaoh.co.uk

Neal's Yard

www.nealsyardremedies.com

Aubrey Organics

www.aubrey-organics.com

Ecolani

www.ecolani.com



Dam Busters?

This is an actual letter sent to a man named Ryan DeVries by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, State of Michigan. NB read the letter below before you get to the response letter opposite.



**SUBJECT: DEQ FILE NO.97-59-0023;
T11N; R10W, SEC. 20; MONTCALM COUNTY**

Dear Mr. DeVries:

It has come to the attention of the Department of Environmental Quality that there has been recent unauthorised activity on the above referenced parcel of property.

You have been certified as the legal landowner and/or contractor who did the following unauthorised activity:

Construction and maintenance of two wood debris dams across the outlet stream of Spring Pond. A permit must be issued prior to the start of this type of activity. A review of the Department's files shows that no permits have been issued. Therefore, the Department has determined that this activity is in violation of Part 301, Inland Lakes and Streams, of the Natural Resource and Environmental Protection Act, Act 451 of the Public Acts of 1994, being sections 324.30101 to 324.30113 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, annotated.

The Department has been informed that one or both of the dams partially failed during a recent rain event, causing debris and flooding at downstream locations. We find that dams of this nature are inherently hazardous and cannot be permitted.

The Department therefore orders you to cease and desist all activities at this location, and to restore the stream to a free-flow condition by removing all wood and brush forming the dams from the stream channel.

All restoration work shall be completed no later than January 31, 2004.

Please notify this office when the restoration has been completed so that a follow-up site inspection may be scheduled by our staff. Failure to comply with this request or any further unauthorised activity on the site may result in this case being referred for elevated enforcement action.

We anticipate and would appreciate your full co-operation in this matter.

Please feel free to contact me at this office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

David L. Price
District Representative
Land and Water Management Division

Mr DeVries responded as follows:

RE: DEQ FILE NO. 97-59-0023; T11N; R10W, SEC. 20; MONTCALM COUNTY.

Dear Mr. Price,

Your certified letter dated 12/17/02 has been handed to me to respond to. I am the legal landowner, but not the Contractor at 2088 Dagget, Pierson, Michigan.

A couple of beavers are in the (State unauthorised) process of constructing and maintaining two wood 'debris' dams across the outlet stream of my Spring Pond. While I did not pay for, authorise, nor supervise their dam project, I think they would be highly offended that you call their skilful use of nature's building materials 'debris'. I would like to challenge your department to attempt to emulate their dam project any time and/or any place you choose. I believe I can safely state there is no way you could ever match their dam skills, their dam resourcefulness, their dam ingenuity, their dam persistence, their dam determination and/or their dam work ethic.

As to your request, I do not think the beavers are aware that they must first fill out a dam permit prior to the start of this type of dam activity. My first dam question to you is: (1) Are you trying to discriminate against my Spring Pond Beavers or (2) do you require all beavers throughout this State to conform to said dam request?

If you are not discriminating against these particular beavers, through the Freedom of Information Act I request completed copies of all those other applicable beaver dam permits that have been issued. Perhaps we will see if there really is a dam violation of Part 301, Inland Lakes and Streams, of the Natural Resource and Environmental Protection Act, Act 451 of the Public Acts of 1994, being sections 324.30101 to 324.30113 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, annotated.

I have several concerns. My first concern is... aren't the beavers entitled to legal representation? The Spring Pond Beavers are financially destitute and are unable to pay for said representation, so the State will have to provide them with a dam lawyer. The Department's dam concern that either one or both of the dams failed during a recent rain event causing flooding is proof that this is a natural occurrence, which the Department is required to protect. In other words, we should leave the Spring Pond Beavers alone rather than harassing them and calling their dam names.

If you want the stream 'restored' to a dam free-flow condition please contact the beavers, but if you are going to arrest them, they obviously did not pay any attention to your dam letter... they being unable to read English.

In my humble opinion, the Spring Pond Beavers have a right to build their unauthorized dams as long as the sky is blue, the grass is green and water flows downstream. They have more dam rights than I do to live and enjoy Spring Pond. If the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection lives up to its name, it should protect the natural resources (Beavers) and the environment (Beavers' Dams).

So, as far as the beavers and I are concerned, this dam case can be referred for more elevated enforcement action right now. Why wait until 1/31/2004? The Spring Pond Beavers may be under the dam ice then and there will be no way for you or your dam staff to contact/harass them.

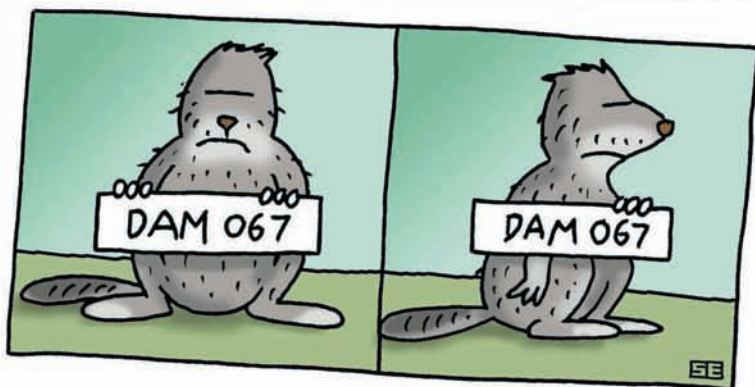
In conclusion, I would like to bring to your attention a real environmental quality (health) problem in the area. It is the bears! Bears are actually defecating in our woods. I definitely believe you should be persecuting the defecating bears and leave the beavers alone. If you are going to

investigate the beaver dam, watch your step! (The bears are not careful where they dump!)

Being unable to comply with your dam request, and being unable to contact you on your dam answering machine, I am sending this response to your dam office.

Thank You,

Ryan DeVries & The Dam Beavers



THE DEFENDANT

Britain has fallen out of love with conventional politics. Could Swiss-style direct democracy end the current crisis of political legitimacy?

by DOUGLAS SMITH

X Politicians tell us that they are concerned by the declining turnout in elections. They bemoan the failure of contemporary politics to engage the public. They commission reports to find an explanation for this alarming trend. They spend large sums of our own money to persuade us of the importance of voting. But they studiously, even perversely, fail to face up to the crushingly obvious truth: people won't vote because it's an outdated, ineffective and crude way of

that prevents us from controlling society ourselves?

Some commentators claim that we don't really care about politics in this country. So why did a million people march in central London last February against the looming war in Iraq? Half a million walked on the issue of hunting. People sign petitions on issues ranging from local planning to the euro all the time. Are these individuals content with the way they are governed and with the quality of decision making in this country?

When people feel disempowered

The other great strength of Swiss democracy is that citizens have the right to call a referendum on any subject they want, providing they can gather enough signatures. For example, any new law brought before the Federal Assembly (the Swiss parliament) can be challenged by the voters *before* it is enacted. If enough people don't like a measure they can call a referendum and throw the law out.

X But the democratic rights of Swiss citizens don't end there. If 100,000 signatures are collected within an 18-month period then a proposal can be proactively put on the ballot paper and voted on by the general public. If it is passed, then it becomes law. This is direct democracy in action. Thus,

Direct democracy

deciding how our affairs are run.

In Britain we've had a universal franchise for many decades. When it was first granted, a large majority of the population was uneducated. Many people thought that it was better to leave the complicated matter of running the country to an elite of wise men. After all, if they made a mess of things they could be ejected from office after five years.

This was a questionable proposition even in the early 20th Century. Yet that is still how we organise ourselves. Every few years we are expected to give a leasehold on power to a cabal of professional politicians. If we don't like them we can wait until the next election and bring in another bunch.

Half the UK population now goes into further education. Thanks to the rapid development of communications technology we have a highly informed citizenry. All of us are used to making decisions of importance in our own lives on a day-by-day basis. Why on earth do we persist with this self-denying system

they can go in one of two directions: they can become energised, sometimes even resorting to violence; or they can become cynical and apathetic. Currently, it is the latter course that is predominant in the UK, but for how much longer? There is no obstacle preventing us from transforming the way we decide public policy in this country, apart from the ingrained resistance of those who have had monopoly control over power for so long – the politicians

In order to break that monopoly we need, as a first step, to adopt the Swiss system. In Switzerland there is a high degree of decentralisation. The country is divided into a series of 26 cantons – historic regions with distinct identities and a high degree of autonomy from the federal government. The one-size-fits-all centralisation of the English or French model is inconceivable to the Swiss. Switzerland's cantons have the freedom to innovate and to learn from each others' successes and mistakes.

in 1990 there was a referendum on a grassroots proposal for a 10-year moratorium on the construction of nuclear power plants in Switzerland. Despite the pro-nuclear stance of business and the establishment, the public voted by a 55 per cent majority in favour of the measure. This stunning example of people power could not have happened in the UK because the government wouldn't dream of allowing an 'ignorant' public to interfere with its plans.

Switzerland's population is approximately 7,500,000, so it takes 1.3 per cent of the population to initiate a referendum there. If the UK adopted the same method then we'd need roughly 900,000 signatures. That would radically transform our politics. Not only would we be able to stop many bad things from happening; we'd also be able to kick-start positive changes. The

whole process of calling a referendum would ensure more widespread and much better informed debate.

A recent instance of this actually happening in the UK was the vote on whether Stoke-on-Trent (not an area noted for enthusiastic democratic participation) should have a directly elected mayor. As a result of the debate on the principle and the election itself the city ended up with a most unexpected result: a gay advice centre worker who ran as an independent was elected; he has become a notably successful mayor. Without the initial referendum none of this would have been possible.

X In the US many states have a system of so-called 'propositions', whereby citizens can put measures they support onto the ballot for the next set of elections. Those who suspect that reactionary populists and big business dominate such votes should look at the record. There is no ideological colour to successful initiatives: everything depends on local circumstances and effective campaigning.

The fear of the vulgar mob – best expressed in this country by the cultural disdain of the liberal middle classes for readers of *The Sun* – is the most effective weapon in the armoury of the political elite. 'My God,' they incant. 'Imagine what they would vote for if we gave them the chance.' Dividing the general public into mutually suspicious blocs is such an obvious trick that it's amazing that anyone falls for it, but there are still plenty of broadsheet columnists who like nothing better than to list their readers' most hated measures and then assure them that they would be enacted the day after Britain adopted direct democracy.

Such scaremongering becomes even more absurd when we take the concept down to the local level. At the moment councils make all kinds of decisions, many of them contrary to the wishes of the people they represent. If Sainsbury's or Tesco is granted planning permission to build a large out-of-town hypermarket because key councillors have had their egos (or wallets) plumped up, and if John Prescott (the minister with responsibility for planning) happens to agree (he usually does), then there is absolutely nothing that the local citizens can do about it. Why not allow those who live, work and shop in the areas affected by such schemes to have the final say? The supermarket boss wouldn't like the idea, but the rest of us would.

There's a further measure that could truly turn the tables on the politicians. It's called a recall vote. Pioneered in California, it allows voters to petition for the removal of a failing and discredited politician. If they get the required number of signatures (900,000 out of 15 million registered voters in California) then the people can have a ballot and sack the person they chose in the first place. Famously, Arnold Schwarzenegger became governor of California last year

after voters recalled the incumbent, Gray Davis, who was widely blamed for incompetent handling of the state's energy crisis. What a fabulous antidote to governmental arrogance that would be if it were applied in Britain.

These proposals are reasonable. They provide a way of dramatically increasing participation in politics. Furthermore, they offer a safety valve – not just for those who

get their way, but also for those on the losing side of a referendum. To be told by the majority of your fellow citizens that they honestly disagree with you is a lot less galling than to be ignored, ridiculed and marginalised by tinpot politicians with the same level of education as the rest of us and only a fraction of our common sense.

There's a very simple way to decide whether direct democracy is a good idea.

Go outside. Walk around. Look at people going about their business. Do they look evil to you? Do they excite your fear and loathing? Of course not. They are ordinary and decent, just like you. Then come back in and switch on your TV. Watch the professional politicians performing in Parliament. Which lot do you trust more?

Douglas Smith, Co-ordinator of C-Change

The myth of modern democracy

Far from being proof of our political emancipation, our right to vote in parliamentary elections is a symbol of power that keeps us powerless. By Ivo Mosley

Although we assume that British democracy is modelled on the ancient Greek system, there are essential differences. The ancient Greeks did not vote for representatives. The 500-member governing council of Athens and most of the officials were chosen by lot, much as a jury is selected in modern Britain. The terms served were short: council members served for one year and could not serve more than two terms. Athens was small: the total number of citizens probably never reached 50,000. By the time they died, most citizens had held political office of some kind at least once.

The council coordinated the state and prepared proposals (changes in the law, declarations of war, and so forth) for the general assembly. Any citizen could attend the assembly, which met on roughly 40 days spaced throughout the year. Final decisions were taken there by votes cast directly on each proposal, after speeches for and against.

Classical historian Moses Finley defends ancient Greek politics against two camps of critics: elitists, for whom it was too democratic; and anti-elitists, for whom it was not democratic enough (because women and slaves did not have citizenship). For Finley, it was democracy of an extremely direct kind, one that has not been tried since.

Voting for representatives began with the Romans as a way of suppressing democracy. The common people were allowed, after much agitation, to elect people to represent their interests, but the candidates had to come from the ruling senatorial class and voting was weighted in favour of the rich. Thus an element of democracy was introduced, while true power remained within the ruling class.

Along with political representation came the kind of long-term political alliances that would later be recognised as political parties. The practical realities of electing representatives once every few years meant that voters had to vote for a whole raft of interests; in other words, for a political programme. Politicians were identified by which faction they belonged to, usually based on which class they promised to represent.

When democracy started making inroads into the European political scene more than 1,000 years later it imitated the Roman model, but with a significant difference. Voting itself was restricted by property and/or rank. In the UK the widening of the franchise in the 19th century eventually led to the formation of the Labour Party. It also had a class-based agenda: the redistribution of wealth. Now, more than a century later, we are left in an anomalous situation. The old ruling class has been

disempowered, but our system of democracy was actually designed to keep power with a ruling class. As a result, a ruling class is continually created out of those who can work the system to their advantage. We live in an illusion of democracy.

There are periodic flurries of discussion about how we could improve democracy, but only recently have people begun to discuss whether it might be a good idea to incorporate an element of Greek democracy in our modern system. Would it be an improvement, for instance, if the House of Commons was chosen by lot, replacing professional 'lifer' politicians with ordinary people? This is the central suggestion in Keith Sutherland's new book *The Party's Over*.

The 'jury', Sutherland suggests, should be drawn from ordinary people with a minimum age qualification (he suggests 30). There could, of course, be other requirements – perhaps to undergo a basic course of study in political history, akin to taking a driving test. He suggests that the Upper House should consist of life peers chosen by Parliament for their experience, achievements or service, and that these 'Lords Advocate' be responsible for preparing and presenting business to the Commons, and for presenting opposing arguments. The administrative side of government (ministers and so forth) would be appointed by a bureaucracy attached nominally to the Crown but acting in accordance with the wishes of Parliament. Ministers could be removed, and policies reversed, by a simple vote of no confidence.

One can only speculate on whether such juries would approve the panoply of madnesses, great and small, that plagues the modern world. It may be the case that Western 'democracies' are too entrenched, psychologically and structurally, to change. We are used to thinking that our single vote once every few years is the one true sign that we live in a democracy. Without it, what power would we have? The irony is, the vote is a symbol of power that keeps us powerless. It is an illusion: it keeps us from looking at how we might really participate and determine our own destiny, rather than drift helplessly in the power of those most unscrupulous and unsavoury characters – politicians and chief executives. To adapt a phrase from Karl Marx, 'voting is the opium of the people'.

Ivo Mosley is the author of Democracy, Fascism and the New World Order (Imprint Academic, £8.95)

Voting for representatives began with the Romans as a way of suppressing democracy. Thus an element of democracy was introduced, while true power remained within the ruling class

If shirts could only speak... if we would only listen



“There is a human being behind that label.”

She is our sister. That garment holds the story of her life. If we ignore it, if we do not care to understand, she suffers. And so do we. ”

CORBIS

by ANITA RODDICK

I've just returned from Bangladesh, and I'm angry. Not, of course, with the Bangladeshi people. They were beautiful, incredibly warm and open, invited me into their humble homes, and sat with me into the night in small, windowless, poorly lit union offices, telling me stories of their lives as garment workers.

I am angry because of what is happening to these workers, who sew the clothes we wear. There are 2 million garment workers in Bangladesh, and 85 per cent of them are young women of between

16 and 25 years of age. Each year they sew £1.6 billion worth of clothing for export to Europe and another \$2 billion worth for the US.

The corporations for whom these clothes are made claim they have codes of conduct that guarantee the human and labour rights of anyone employed in their manufacture, anywhere in the world. They ask us to trust them. They say that they are scrupulous about monitoring their contractors' plants. In reality, though, their monitoring is a joke and is failing miserably.

These are the stories of some of the garment workers of Bangladesh.

One worker said: 'We feel like prisoners. There is no value in our lives. We are like slaves. Our hands are bound and our mouths are stopped.'

Every worker said that if their employer knew they were meeting with me, they would be fired.

The workers live in one-room, dirt-floored huts, which measure about eight feet by 12 feet and are made of scrap metal, wood and plastic. Four or more people live in each hut. Everyone sleeps on a hard, wooden platform raised about a foot off the ground. When it rains, these huts drip with water. During the monsoon the workers' neighborhoods flood, and filth and sewage washes right into their homes.

In these neighborhoods, up to 60 people have to share one outdoor water pump: the water is filthy. There are also two or three shared gas burners for cooking and only one outside toilet – really just a hole in the ground. Early in the morning and late at night there are long lines as people wait their turn to use these facilities.

One workers' housing complex I visited was built on bamboo stilts over a stagnant, polluted lake. It had two storeys. The floors and ceilings were made out of rough wooden planks. The rooms were tiny, measuring eight feet by eight feet. There were no windows and very little light. In the summer the rooms heat up like ovens. It was noisy at all hours of the day and night. The complex was home to 2,000 people.

One garment worker I met was holding her baby. Her employer had not given her the maternity benefits she was legally due. The baby had to eat whatever the woman could find: there was no special food. If the child ever got sick, the woman would have to borrow money to be able to visit the doctor.



REUTERS

WOMEN sewing garments for one of the best-known entertainment companies in the world are forced to work from 8am to 10pm, seven days a week, for just 11 pence an hour. In one recent four-month period they were allowed just one day off. They are cheated of their overtime pay, and are always paid two or three weeks late.

On 18 January, a group of workers went in their lunch break to politely ask their factory manager to pay their wages on time. The manager responded by grabbing one of them by the throat and slapping him and screaming at him. The manager then made a call on his mobile phone, and within minutes five gang members carrying pistols arrived. They began beating the workers, punching them, hitting them with sticks, knocking them to the ground and kicking them. More than 20 workers were attacked. The manager used his cell phone again, and the police arrived. The gang members handed the workers over to the police. Eight of the workers were imprisoned for two weeks.

Those workers are now out on bail, but face long prison sentences if found guilty of trumped-up charges that they destroyed more than £56,000 of factory property. All the workers involved were fired and had their unpaid wages stolen.



ONE GIRL told me she had to sew a pocket every 36 seconds; that works out at 100 each hour, and 1,250 in a 12-hour shift. She sewed trousers for one of the best-known clothing brands in the world. She and her colleagues were paid just seven pence for each pair of trousers they sewed.

EMPLOYEES sewing clothing for one of the largest sports retailers in the world, a European company, had to work from 8am right through to 3am the next day when deadlines for shipments were looming. They slept on the factory floor, curled up next to their sewing machines. A bell would ring at 7am, so they could get ready for the next shift. They were paid six pence an hour. They reported being slapped and beaten for not reaching their production targets.

They went on strike, demanding one day off a week, an end to all physical abuse and that they be paid at least the minimum wage. They then blocked a truck trying to leave the factory. The owner called in the police, who opened fire on the striking workers, killing at least six people. The police attacked the workers with clubs, beating both women and men. 49 people were hospitalised.

WHEN THEY HAVE TO WORK

UNTIL 10PM. Bangladeshi garment employees are often given a 15-minute break from 6:45pm to 7pm and a free snack of a small banana and a tiny piece of cake. Many of the factory owners boast to their European and American buyers about this.

In one sweater factory, one young employee asked the manager if he and his colleagues could have some replacement food, as what they had been given was rotten. The manager responded by beating the young man, locking him in a room, and calling the police.

WOMEN sewing clothing for some of the best-known labels in Europe and the US repeatedly told us that they needed permission – a 'gate pass' – in order to use the factory toilet, and could only do so twice a day.

Women told us they were cheated of their legal maternity leave and benefits. They are sacked when they reach 35 years of age. Managers say: 'You can't keep up. You're exhausted, and you can't see well anymore.' The companies prefer young girls.

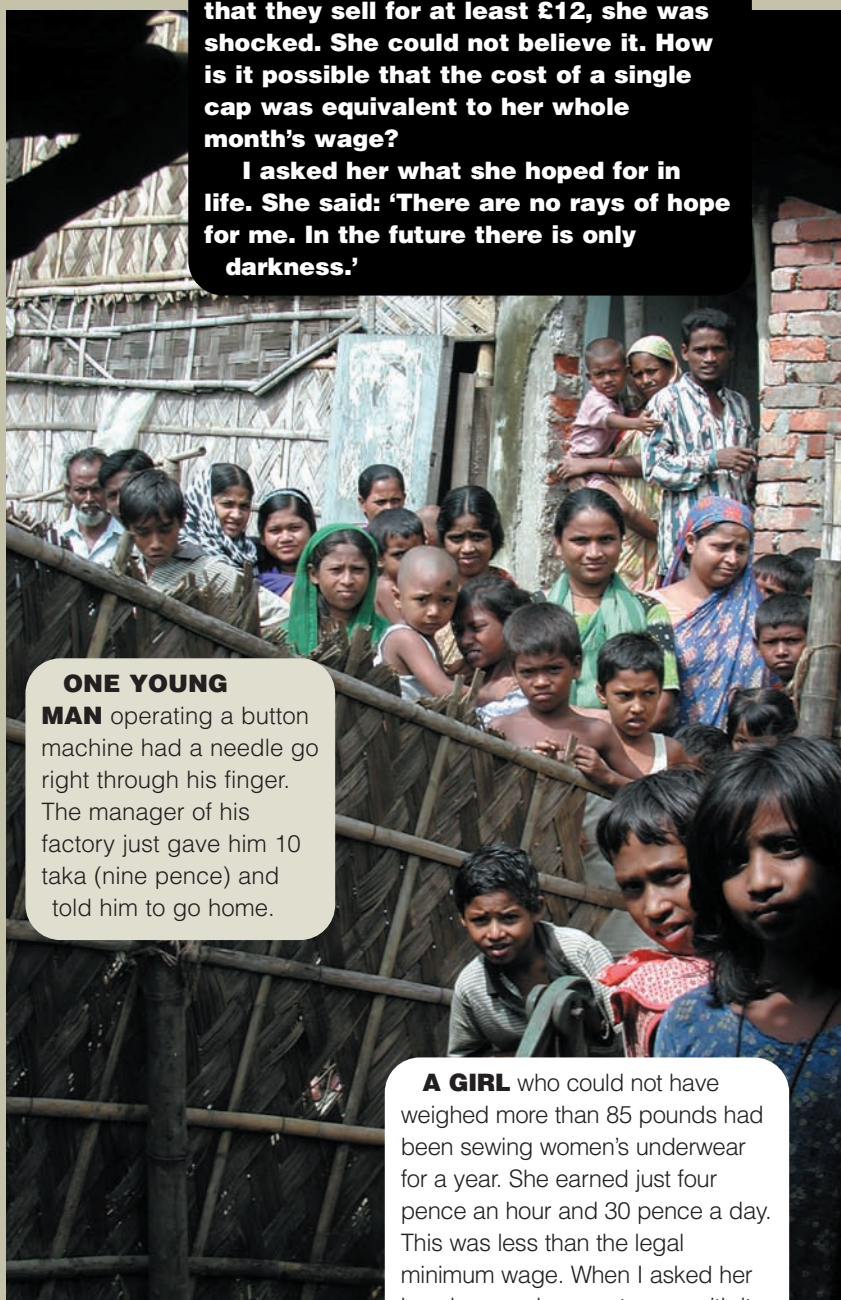
If workers try to organise, they are beaten and fired.



I SPOKE WITH one young woman who sewed baseball caps for one of the best-known sports clothing brands in the world. The caps went to top professional teams in the US. She had worked in the factory for six years, but her basic wage was still just five pence an hour. She made about £2.45 a week, and just two pence for each £12 cap she sewed.

When I asked her how much she thought the caps sold for, she said 20 taka – that's 19 pence. When I told her that they sell for at least £12, she was shocked. She could not believe it. How is it possible that the cost of a single cap was equivalent to her whole month's wage?

I asked her what she hoped for in life. She said: 'There are no rays of hope for me. In the future there is only darkness.'



ONE YOUNG MAN operating a button machine had a needle go right through his finger. The manager of his factory just gave him 10 taka (nine pence) and told him to go home.

A GIRL who could not have weighed more than 85 pounds had been sewing women's underwear for a year. She earned just four pence an hour and 30 pence a day. This was less than the legal minimum wage. When I asked her how her employer got away with it, she said: 'What can I do?'

I want to ask the corporations:

- Why are the people who are supposed to be monitoring the factories of your sub-contractors not visiting those factories at night – at 10pm, say, or midnight, or even 3am – to see them still operating?
- Why are your monitors not visiting these plants on Fridays, a day of rest in Muslim Bangladesh, to witness the plants still operating?
- Why do your monitors never interview workers away from the plants, in safe locations and in the presence of local human rights groups whom the workers can trust? You know that any worker interviewed in their workplace will be fired the minute you walk out the door if they speak candidly about their bad working conditions.
- Why have your monitors never asked to visit Bangladesh's garment workers in their homes? Are you ashamed of the abject poverty your workers are trapped in?
- Doesn't it strike you as odd that not a single one of Bangladesh's more than 3,700 garment factories is unionised? Do you think repression could be a factor in this?

The corporations supplied by Bangladesh's garment sector must stop the current charade and get serious about monitoring these factories.

And this is what I want to say to the WTO:

Two thousand new garment factories opened in Bangladesh between 1994 and 2003. In that period apparel exports from the country grew by more than 300 per cent – exploding from \$1.5 billion in 1994 to \$4.9 billion in 2003. Bangladesh's garment industry is booming.

Shouldn't this be an example of the magic of trade? If so, why are 2 million mostly young female garment workers being stripped of their rights – in their own words, trapped like slaves, paid just a few pennies an hour, working exhausting hours and seven-day weeks, living in utter misery, and sacked, penniless and worn out, when they reach 35 years of age? These people are some of the hardest workers in the

world. They deserve to be treated like human beings.

Trade in and of itself will never bring social justice. The truth is that as unfettered corporate power grows, workers suffer. Consider Wal-Mart, the largest company and worst sweatshop abuser in the world. Three years ago, it paid its contractors in Bangladesh \$38 per dozen sports shirts they produced, or \$3.17 a shirt. That represents the total cost of production, including all materials, labour, overheads and profit to the contractor. Today, for the exact same shirts, Wal-Mart pays just \$26 per dozen, or \$2.17 each. So, Wal-Mart is paying more than 30 per cent less for its shirts, despite the fact that over the last three years the compound rate of inflation in Bangladesh has been 25.6 per cent.

Companies like Wal-Mart are doing exactly the same all across the developing world, telling their contractors either to accept constantly lower prices or to lose their contracts. Behind Wal-Mart's everyday low prices are workers trapped in slave labour conditions, paid starvation wages and living in utter misery.

More than ever before, we need fundamental human, women's and worker rights and environmental protections, which we will not allow the corporations to flout. Since the WTO will never be anything but a lackey to corporate interests, we, the people, must work to bring this about ourselves: we need to hold the corporations to account, so that they respect worker rights and pay fair wages.

The female garment workers in Bangladesh (and this would be true in most developing countries) do not know where the clothing they sew is sent. All they know is that it goes 'outside'. They have never heard of the multinational companies they ultimately work for, and have no idea what the goods they make sell for. And the consumer in the West is just as ignorant about the people who make the clothes that he or she buys in the high street. We need to reverse this ignorance. We need to break through to each other. We need to expose the corporations that are growing ever richer off the backs of workers trapped in appalling conditions in the developing world.

What you can do

These websites all provide news, background information, campaigning tools and action alerts for anti-sweatshop activists

BehindtheLabel

Multimedia news magazine and online community detailing the hidden stories of the millions of workers around the world who make our clothes, the people who care how their clothes are made and the multinational corporations behind the labels.
www.behindthelabel.org

Burma Campaign UK

Part of a global movement campaigning for human rights and democracy in Burma. It publishes a dirty list of companies operating in the country, many of which are supported by Burma's ruthless military junta.
www.burmacampaign.org.uk

Campaign for Labor Rights

Self-styled grassroots mobilising department of the US anti-sweatshop movement.
www.campaignforlaborrights.org

Clean Clothes Campaign

European network of national groups campaigning for rights for garment workers worldwide.
www.cleanclothes.org

Ethical Consumer

Manchester-based website and magazine detailing the social and environmental records of the big corporate brands.
0161 226 2929 www.ethicalconsumer.org

US/Labor Education in the Americas Project

An independent NGO that supports economic justice and basic worker rights in Latin America. Focuses especially on the struggles of people working, directly or indirectly, for US companies like Starbucks, fruit giant Chiquita and fashion company Phillips-Van Heusen.
www.usleap.org

Fair Olympics campaign

Campaign calling on the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the organisation responsible for the Olympic Games (being held in Athens this summer), and IOC-endorsed sportswear companies to act against exploitation in the factories that supply the corporations.
www.fairolympics.org

Haiti Support Group

Launched in June 1992 in the aftermath of the military coup that overthrew the first democratic government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Actively supports trade unions organising in Haiti's sweatshops.
www.haitisupport.gn.apc.org

Labour Behind the Label

UK network of organisations supporting garment workers' efforts to defend their rights and improve their wages and conditions.
www.labourbehindthelabel.org

Maquila Solidarity Network

Canadian network promoting solidarity with Latin American and Asian groups organising to improve conditions and wages in export processing zones.
www.maquilasolidarity.org

Musicians Against Sweatshops

Coalition of musicians and artists. Its members include Chumbawumba, Asian Dub Foundation and Billy Bragg. Links to a sweat-free shopping mall.
www.nosweatshop.org

SFU No Sweat Campaign

Student-led coalition working towards a no-sweat and fair-trade purchasing policy for products bought and sold on the campus of Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada. A model for student campaigners.
www.criticalthoughts.ca/petition

Sweatshop Watch

California-based coalition of individuals and more than 30 labour, community, civil and immigrant rights, women's, religious and student organisations working to eliminating sweatshop exploitation.
www.sweatshopwatch.org

Thai Labour Campaign

Non-profit NGO committed to promoting workers' rights in Thailand and increasing awareness of labour issues globally.
www.thailabour.org

United Students Against Sweatshops

Website of the biggest campus movement in the US since the Vietnam war. Lots of useful guides and briefings.
www.studentsagainstsweatshops.org

Women Working Worldwide

Small British voluntary organisation working with a global network of women worker organisations. The focus, so far, has been on industries that have relocated to the developing world, particularly the textile and garment industries.
www.poptel.org.uk/women-ww

HALL OF CORPORATE SHAME

These sites focus on individual companies with particularly egregious reputations for the way they treat their workforce.

Coca-Cola www.cokewatch.org

McDonald's www.mcspotlight.org

Gap www.gapsucks.orgnike

Nike www.saigon.com/~nike

Wal-Mart www.walmartsucks.com

Albatrosses

Albatrosses are among the largest flying birds: they weigh up to 25 pounds. The largest species, the wandering albatross, has a wingspan of 11 feet and can live for 50 years or more.

They spend much of their lives flying thousands of miles over the ocean in search of food. Chicks cannot survive without both parents looking after them. So, if one parent is caught on a longline chicks will die.

As albatrosses reproduce rarely, live long and have a delayed sexual maturity, their populations are extremely sensitive to drops in adult survival rates. Seventeen of the 20 albatross species are in danger of extinction, predominantly because of longlining.

GLOBAL POPULATIONS OF THREATENED ALBATROSS SPECIES

Critically endangered

Amsterdam	90
Chatham	10,000 to 11,000
Short-tailed	1,200

Endangered

Tristan	9,000
Antipodean	40,000
Northern Royal	13,000

Vulnerable

Wandering	28,000
Southern Royal	28,000
Waved	31,000 to 36,000
Black-footed	62,7000
Buller's	58,000
Grey-headed	250,000
Campbell	38,000 to 52,000
Indian	
Yellow-nosed	165,000 to 185,000
Sooty	42,000
Black-browed	3,000,000

Every year 100,000 albatrosses are killed by longline fishing. This is driving the bird to the brink of extinction. Now a unique venture involving a betting firm, conservationists and a group of celebrities is bringing the plight of the albatross to more people's attention.

The Problem

Longlines are incredibly long, up to 80 miles long, fishing lines. The vast majority of longlines are made of monofilament nylon, which is either transparent or coloured blue, in order to make them less visible to fish.

Rather than having just one hook at the end, they have several thousand. Each of the hooks is baited with squid. When longline boats begin letting their lines out, the squid is readily visible near or at the sea's surface. This attracts albatrosses and other sea birds, which attack and are impaled on the hooks. Dragged under the water, the birds are unable to free themselves and drown.

From 1993 to 1999 at least 2,425 black-footed albatrosses, 6,721 Laysan albatrosses, and 13 endangered short-tailed albatrosses were killed in the Alaskan longline fisheries alone. Between 1997 and 2000, it has been estimated that 67,000 albatrosses were killed in the unregulated 'pirate' longline Patagonian toothfish (otherwise known as Chilean sea bass) fishery in the southern oceans.

What is longlining?

There are two types of longlining:

- 1 Surface longlines are suspended about 200m beneath the surface and are used to catch tuna and swordfish. Fishing lines can be 80 miles long (London to Calais) and carry as many as 10,000 hooks, suspended on 40 m-long branch lines spaced 50 m apart.
- 2 Bottom longlines are used to catch deep water fishes such as ling, hake and Patagonian toothfish. They carry more hooks on shorter and heavier weighted lines.

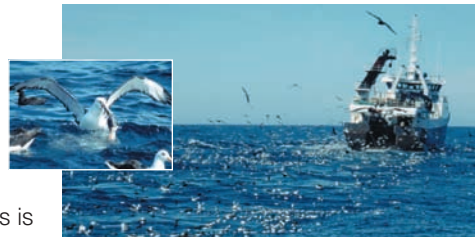
The longline industry

● Longline fishing is a huge industry: at least 33 nations have longline fleets. Countries whose fleets are believed to cause significant seabird mortality are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Ecuador, the Faeroe Islands, Iceland, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Namibia, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Taiwan, Uruguay, Venezuela and the US.

- More than 500 longline boats ply the oceans each year, catching fish such as tuna, swordfish, cod, halibut and Patagonian toothfish.
- In the southern hemisphere as many as 500 million hooks are set annually.
- Longlining is expanding rapidly around the world. For example, the Brazilian swordfish fleet has increased fivefold in the past three years.

Where does it happen?

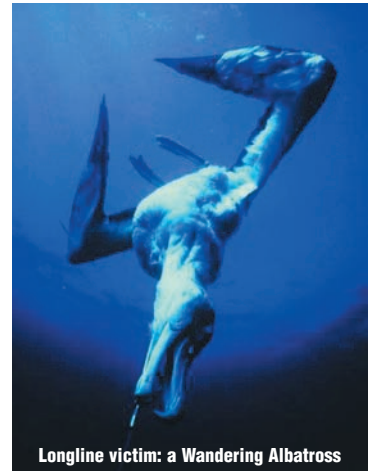
The highest densities of marine life occur around the margins of continents and islands, off places like New Zealand, South America and South Georgia in the south Atlantic. Ocean fronts, where water masses mix and well up, such as the boundary between the sub-Antarctic and sub-tropical fronts off Brazil, are also productive. Albatrosses and fishermen both favour these areas, and this is the main reason why they come into contact with each other.



The world's toughest endurance race

To highlight the plight of the albatross, conservation charities Birdlife International and the Conservation Foundation have teamed up with the bookmaker Ladbrokes to organise 'the world's toughest endurance race'. 18 Tasmanian shy albatrosses have been electronically tagged and sponsored by celebrities willing to lend their support to the birds' cause. The sponsors include Sir David Attenborough, the explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes, singer Olivia Newton-John, snooker player Ronnie O'Sullivan and the model Jerry Hall. *The Ecologist* also has a bird in the race.

The winner of the 'race' is the first bird to complete the Tasmanian albatross's annual migration from Australia to South Africa – a 6,000-mile journey across open water. The presumed death of one of the birds in May was covered by *The Washington Times*, *The Daily Record*, ITV and *Vogue*. There would have been no media interest at all had the bird not been 'owned' by Jerry Hall. Members of the public can bet on which bird wins the race, and the profits will go to future seabird conservation projects. Follow the race at www.ladbrokes.com/bigbirdrace.



Longline victim: a Wandering Albatross



X-ray clearly showing a longline fishhook inside the stomach of a dead albatross

Indiscriminate killing

The albatross is not the only species that is caught on longlines.

- Studies show that 40-65 per cent of the western Atlantic open-sea longline catch is discarded – more than half of it already dead.
- In May 2003 a study published in the journal *Nature* demonstrated a 90 per cent decline in large predatory fish. The decline was primarily due to longline fishing.
- In the Pacific alone scientists estimate that open-sea longlining catches 3.7 million sharks, 422,000 marlin, 41,500 sea turtles, 2,000 dolphins and 1,500 whales every year.
- The leatherback turtle has been driven to the point of extinction by longlining. In 1980 it was estimated that there were 126,000 adult female leatherbacks in the eastern Pacific. There are now less than 3,000. The western Pacific nesting populations have also been devastated, and are now near extinction.

Saving the albatross

Once longlines have been fully lowered, the hooks are too deep for the birds to reach them. All that is necessary to stop albatrosses from being killed by longlines is to make sure the lines sink before the birds can get to them (although this is of course no help to the turtles and sharks). There are several cheap and effective ways of doing this.

- Bird-scaring or 'tori' lines can be mounted on poles at the stern of the boat, and connected to a buoy dragged behind the vessel. Coloured streamers attached to the lines flap in the wind above where the hooks enter the water, and scare birds away. By the time the streamers are submerged the hooks are too deep for the bird to reach them. A University of Washington study found bird-scaring lines virtually eliminate albatross mortality.
- Underwater setting tubes set the lines out of reach of birds.
- Weights can be tied to lines so they sink faster.
- Thawed bait sinks more quickly than frozen bait.
- Dyeing the bait blue puts birds off eating it.
- Most albatrosses feed mainly by day. There is no reason why lines can't be set at night.

What you can do

Birdlife International was scheduled to present a petition to the **UN Food and Agriculture Organisation** in June, calling on the organisation to work to stamp out pirate fishing boats.

Sign the petition at www.forest-bird.org.nz/petition

Don't eat longline-caught fish – eg, swordfish, tuna and Chilean sea bass.

The albatross and the longline

Green Corporate partnerships

... are they an essential tool in achieving the conservationist mission, or just a ruse for covering up ecological crimes?



Mark Rose

Mark Rose is Chief Executive of Fauna & Flora International (FFI), the world's longest established international conservation body which acts to conserve threatened species and ecosystems worldwide



Marcus Colchester

Marcus Colchester is Director of Forest Peoples Programme. The Forest Peoples Programme supports the rights of forest peoples to control their lands and destinies. www.forestpeoples.org

For Dear Marcus,

Perhaps the single most influential group when it comes to determining the future of our planet is the corporate sector. The land area under corporate management is vast. The extent to which people depend on businesses for their incomes and livelihoods is overwhelming. Single companies are wealthier than entire groups of governments. The activities and attitudes of business are of fundamental importance in determining the viability and sustainability of the environment in which we all live and on which we all depend.

There is a wide array of ways in which civil society and NGOs can engage with and influence the private sector, and each of these approaches has its own role and value. Exposés can reveal malpractice, and lobbying can change behaviour. From a business perspective, the relationships companies form in response to such actions are important in terms of managing risk and improving reputation; they can also help achieve the public good sought by the NGOs.

Accepting corporate funding and sponsorship is also a perfectly legitimate activity, and ensures the viability of hundreds of thousands of valuable projects around the world. However, care must be taken to ensure that mutual branding is not used as implied endorsement beyond specific projects.

But none of these approaches should be confused with partnership. Partnership involves two or more groups who may have very different views and resources agreeing on common aims, which, if achieved, will deliver benefits to all.

Effective partnerships set clear objectives and ground rules. Honest partnerships recognise the right to disagree. Efficient partnerships use the strengths of each partner to build the capacity of everyone involved. Strategic partnerships focus on the long term.

It seems to me that if we genuinely want to find lasting solutions to some of the most urgent issues facing our global environment, then translating conservation priorities into value-adding and sustainable business practices is crucial. Smart partnerships with corporations are an essential tool in achieving the conservationist mission. Indeed, we could be regarded as negligent if we failed to engage with business.

Against Dear Mark,

Everyone has the right and the responsibility to be concerned about the environment. If, as we seem to agree, corporations now constitute the main threat to global ecosystems, we certainly cannot afford to ignore them. A first step to dealing with corporations must be to understand their role in environmental destruction; then, as conservationists, we should go about exposing those problems to the general public.

Combined pressure from impacted peoples and communities, citizens, NGOs and even governments can make for change. We need to demand better regulation of runaway industries and encourage companies themselves to reform their ways.

Yes, this may mean talking to companies directly, across the picket line and in the boardroom. But engaging in dialogues and partnerships with the companies that are currently trashing the planet has to be done carefully if it is not to be counterproductive.

In the first place, such dialogues and partnerships must be carried out in ways that don't exclude those whose rights and livelihoods are directly impacted by negative corporate activity. Second, we mustn't let companies use partnerships to 'greenwash' their overall operations: the planet won't survive if we trade off funding for a few nice projects and national parks for condoning sacrifice zones and unsustainable development elsewhere. And third, partnership should be conditional on companies agreeing to certain standards and norms: respecting international human rights and environmental laws would be a good place to start; an embargo on destructive projects in protected areas would be another.

You say there should be 'no mutual branding', but the Fauna and Flora International (FFI) centenary celebration in *First* magazine (the self-styled 'forum for decision-makers') did just that. There you lavishly offered a glossy, green profile to corporate juggernauts like BP, Vodafone, British American Tobacco (BAT), ExxonMobil and Rio Tinto. Giving such companies positive spin and not exposing their tragic records of environmental ruin is giving 'conservation' the bad name that, sadly, it increasingly deserves.

For Dear Marcus,

Much of the focus of conservation organisations during the 20th century was on 'protection', but the real challenge for the future lies in developing a sustainable relationship between people and the environment. The range of stakeholders involved in this task encompasses the entire global, social spectrum – including indigenous peoples. Conservation must become fully integrated into social, political and economic processes, not isolated in a 'box'. Failure to achieve these goals will result in the continued erosion of the natural resources on which we all depend.

You refer to protected areas, though (somewhat contradictorily) you downgrade their importance while also prioritising their integrity. Let me re-emphasise the value of different approaches here. While pressure groups may focus on keeping companies out of protected areas, partnership NGOs work with companies to address their operational impact across their geographic footprint – not just within the small percentage of the earth's surface designated as protected. We need both strategies.

Working with leadership companies that can influence their sectors is strategically wise: these companies are key players in developing the very standards you say you want to see in place. And remember that companies that are committed to social and environmental reporting, which endeavour to build partnerships with NGOs and civil society, and which develop and implement improved practices, are actually just the tip of the corporate iceberg. They are the recognisable names above the waterline. If, due to public pressure, the BPs and Rio Tintos pull out rather than work through issues and set new standards, they may be swiftly replaced by companies that are far less accountable and have no public reputation to lose.

Just a few years ago, conservation issues never reached the boardroom agenda, unless a short-term, emergency response was needed. Environmental policies were about retrospective crisis management, only undertaken when matters came to a head and damage had been done. We recognised the need for an alternative.

Today, as you note with reference to *First*, FFI and other partnership-focused organisations have secured the commitment of influential companies to recognising conservation as a core business issue to be mainstreamed into strategy and operations. Through partnership, we can move from remedy to prevention.

“ We offer an extended hand to those willing to look hard at their own practices and commit to change. If we can get these partnerships right, then they may be among the most important means available for delivering sustainable change. ” MARK ROSE

Against Dear Mark,

You are dodging the question. Are conservationists' partnerships with large corporations 'greenwash'? In my view, your glossy, centenary fundraiser in *First* is exactly that. It says nothing about the environmental crimes of corporations, but makes destructive businesses out to be green leaders and links them to FFI. You are no more explicit elsewhere. We looked in vain at your website and magazine, *Oryx*, for details about these companies' operations.

What have you done to expose Rio Tinto for its part in the destruction of the lands and culture of the Amungme people in West Papua? Have you told it not to profile you as a 'partner' on its website until it stops pouring tailings from West Papua's Grasberg mine into the rivers and forests that sustain the Kamoro people downstream?

Where have you highlighted the role of ExxonMobil in the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline, which has smashed through the forests of the Bagyeli Pygmies in southwest Cameroon? Have you noted that the company dismisses the problem of global warming and openly campaigns against emissions reduction targets?

How come I can't find anything on your website about the pressure from BP to open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska to oil exploration and the threats that would pose to the calving grounds of local porcupine caribou? What have you done to stop BP parading its association with FFI on its own website, while the same company has been pushing through the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline across the Caucasus?

Where are your studies of the deforestation caused by the fuel-wood consumption of the tobacco curers that supply BAT, a company implicated in the 750,000 tobacco-related deaths that the world suffers every year?

Are you working with Nigeria's Ogoni people to stop your 'partner' Shell making yet more mess in the Niger Delta?

Profiling these companies' environmental credentials without exposing the problems they cause is what I call greenwash.

For Dear Marcus,

You are missing the point. It's time for a reality check.

The Baku-Ceyhan pipeline route was partly chosen to stop the environmental risk of a major increase in tankers through the Bosphorus. Multiple governments are planning their national economies around this venture, and public demand is driving it. Don't kid yourself: neither the Forest Peoples Programme nor any other pressure group can stop it. Neither can we.

What we can do, however, is work with BP (which, thanks to NGO partnerships, has a corporate biodiversity strategy that will be implemented across the project) to minimise the pipeline's negative impact. Force BP out, and you won't stop the pipeline, you'll just get someone else, less accountable taking its place.

You don't believe me? To bring you up to date on Grasberg, Rio Tinto has just sold its equity share in the mine – partly due to constant pressure from environmental groups. But the mine hasn't been and won't be closed. Do you consider this a success? Even if you've now lost the one point of leverage that was making a difference? Who does this help more – the Kamoro people or the public profile of lobbyists?

Where are our studies of deforestation caused by fuel-wood consumption for tobacco curing? Well, they're being conducted in association with Uganda's Makerere University. As part of our partnership with BAT, blocks of forest degraded while under government 'stewardship' are being given stronger protection. And, by diversifying plantations, we are growing native tree species with better social and ecological value. Greenwash? Not by my definition.

It is because business has a major environmental impact that we have a dialogue with it. Recognising and trying to address that is the point of partnership.



“ Giving companies [such as BP, Vodafone, British American Tobacco, ExxonMobil and Rio Tinto] positive spin and not exposing their tragic records of environmental ruin is giving ‘conservation’ the bad name that, sadly, it increasingly deserves. ” MARCUS COLCHESTER

Against Dear Mark,

Condoning BP's strategy in exchange for token mitigations seems like a bad deal to me. Nor have I seen good evidence of Rio Tinto improving things in West Papua. Besides, even though Rio Tinto sold its 12 per cent share in mining firm Freeport McMoRan, it still retains its 40 per cent interest in the Grasberg mine expansion. A reality check certainly is needed.

The world I live in is suffering the highest rates of habitat loss and ecosystem degradation for 65 million years, a corresponding mass erosion of biodiversity, and the destruction of more sustainable forms of human societies. This is caused by exponential increases in consumption and the concentration of power in the hands of trans-national corporations.

The same corporations spend billions of dollars a year on advertising to persuade people their happiness depends on buying more of their products. And, just in case any of these consumers get worried that their materialist lifestyles are contributing to global destruction, they also spend a few millions window-dressing their activities to show that they are greener than the other guys. Don't kid *yourself*: business is more worried about promoting a better 'investment climate' than addressing actual climate change, more concerned to shape its 'operating environment' than with caring for the natural environment.

Your approach seems to be 'if you can't beat them, join them'. You assume we have already lost. You also argue that it's better the devil you know. The trouble with such Faustian pacts is that they tend to cost more than was originally bargained for. The political and environmental costs of legitimising corporate unsustainability are trashed ecosystems, exploited peoples, disempowered voices of protest and entrenched corporate hegemony.

Voices of protest need your support, not dismissal for being unrealistic. A realistic response to corporate domination would be to make business accountable for its impact. The longer conservation organisations choose to be part of the business-dominated establishment, rather than identified with the forces for social and political protest and reform, the less hope we have for an environmentally secure future.

For Dear Marcus,

I fundamentally disagree with your last sentence. We need to engage more, not less, with both corporates and consumers for there to be any real change. Conservation needs to be integrated into corporate policy and business practice for us to achieve an environmentally secure future.

I don't decry your approach. As I keep saying, lobbying has a role; of course it does. But do you genuinely believe that

**We offer an extended hand to
those willing to look hard at
their own practices and
commit to change.**

the spectrum of effort across the environmental movement should be reduced to the single route of protest?

It is simply not the case that your way is exclusively, morally right and that everyone else's is evil and wrong. Don't dismiss what you don't like or understand just because that reflects better on your more popularly accepted method. It is a great pity that your perspective creates schisms rather than solidarity in the NGO sector.

Of course greenwash occurs, but ultimately it is in nobody's interests: it will damage NGOs' reputations, alienate their supporters, make other companies less likely to work with them and, most importantly, undermine their work.

FFI has chosen a hard route. Building genuine corporate partnerships is complex and time-consuming. It involves a process of understanding perspectives and drivers, agreeing aims and ground rules, developing methods and management, measuring delivery and impact. We offer an extended hand to those willing to look hard at their own practices and commit to change. If we can get these partnerships right, then they may be among the most important means available for delivering sustainable change.

I believe that you and I have shared motivations: a profound and grave concern for the future of our planet, and a recognition of the power and influence of the private sector. We all have roles to play, so let's get on with it.

Against Dear Mark,

You misrepresent my position to cover up the weaknesses of your own. The point is not *whether* we should dialogue with corporations, but *how* we can do so without giving them green cover behind which they can hide their ecological crimes and so avoid real change. You admit that greenwash occurs, thus conceding the issue we were asked to debate.

What I have argued for is a more principled approach, which requires: the direct involvement of impacted communities and peoples; transparent audits of the real impact of corporate activity; solidarity with, not scorn for, those who protest; and up-front commitments from corporations to adopt real, binding standards – especially to respect human rights and protected areas.

Other conservation organisations have already learned these lessons. For

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example, when the secretariat of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) announced its 'partnership' with the mining industry at the World Summit on Sustainable Development [in 2002] many IUCN members were outraged. The mining companies were being offered green credentials without having to make any commitments to change.

The IUCN secretariat had to back-peddle. First, it renamed the partnership process a 'dialogue'. Then it ruled that further dialogue would be conditional on the mining industry committing itself to dealing with the damage caused by past and current mines, and to working with indigenous peoples. This is good news, but more needs to be done to stop 'greenwash'.

It remains to be seen whether the large conservation organisations – many of them, like FFI, members of IUCN – will adopt a similarly principled approach to dialogues and partnerships with corporations. In my view, they cannot afford to do otherwise.

by **BEN BELTON**

Gangs of workers dressed head to toe in hazard suits pick their way along the rocky banks of the Laerdalselva river in Norway. Pesticide dispensers in hand, they release showers of toxic rotenone. In eddies and shallows further downstream, scores of hook-jawed salmon – fish that were once vital and bristling with silver vigour – gasp forlornly at the water's surface, gulping down air as they shiver out lingering deaths.

The Laerdalselva is just one of at least 41

Norwegian rivers that have been colonised by the parasite *gyrodactylus salaris* over the last 25 years. The parasite was transported into these rivers by millions of farmed salmon that breached their cages and fled upstream to reproduce. Latching onto wild fish and causing them infection-prone bleeding wounds and sores, the tiny organism rapidly decimates the native salmon in any stream it invades. The cure? Annihilate every living thing in the river.

Far away from Norway's arctic torrents, in the tropical waters off Hawaii, other species of fish are being farmed. But off Ewa Beach,

Oahu, the site of the submerged fish cages of Cates International, the scene is very different: it all seems tranquil and benign.

A diver moves slowly through underwater twilight towards a huge grey form the size of a circus tent, pauses momentarily as he reaches its edge, tugs at a seam, then disappears – engulfed in the mesh folds of the structure. Inside rotates a pulsating merry-go-round: a vortex of fish, swirling in an endless clockwise motion. Then a tube above the water's surface begins to gush small brown pellets, and within a couple of seconds the gyrating mass of fish morphs into a blurred frenzy of feeding bodies.

The new open-ocean aquaculture being practised off Hawaii seems replete with sci-fi promise. The fish being raised are moi – fast-growing, voraciously hungry creatures prized for their succulent white flesh. Cates International's venture is at the cutting edge of what may rapidly become one of the largest industries in US waters and a primary source for much of the Western world's seafood. Open-ocean

The reckless deep-sea gold rush that could turn the North American continental shelf into one giant factory-style fish farm



high seas

aquaculture's proponents claim they can vastly expand the capacity for producing in-demand marine fish, and do so in a sustainable manner; they say that by moving into deeper waters they can avoid the catalogue of environmental catastrophes that has beset salmon aquaculture.

For the past 10 years the federal agency charged with managing the US's territorial waters, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), has embarked on a course of research and development aimed at bringing this utopian vision to fruition. In conjunction with universities in coastal states and private investors looking to cash in on the country's insatiable appetite for seafood, the agency has sought to prove the viability of open-ocean aquaculture, garner private investment and government funding for

its activities, and secure its dominion over America's oceans. This campaign has culminated in a National Open Ocean Aquaculture Bill, which will go before Congress later this year.

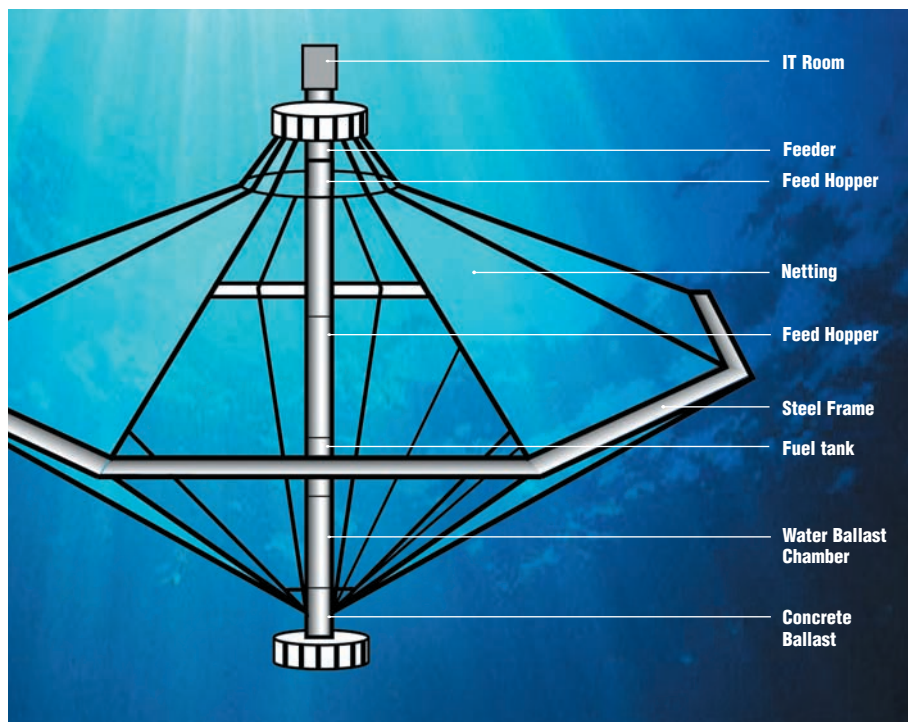
The oft-repeated logic for these developments goes something like this. As the world's population grows exponentially there is an ever increasing demand for fish protein that cannot be met by fishing fleets. Around 75 per cent of global fisheries are either at capacity or in decline. Seafood represents the US's second greatest trade deficit – currently running to nearly \$10 billion a year, but continuing to grow as the country's taste for seafood escalates. New initiatives are needed to satisfy the

US Department of Commerce's policy goal of a fivefold increase in the value of domestic aquaculture by the year 2025. Practising aquaculture in the open ocean, it is claimed, will eliminate all of the environmental difficulties inherent in salmon farming, which takes place close to shore; the strong currents and massive volumes of water far out at sea disperse and dilute any pollutants emanating from open-ocean fish farms.

Taken at face value, this seems to make sense. But a more measured examination of the situation is likely to reveal entirely contrary conclusions – and altogether different motivations for developing the oceans.



s drifters



Open-ocean aquaculture is an extension of the principle of salmon farming. Take high-market-value fish, put them in cages in the sea at huge densities, and feed them on pellets composed of oil and meal from smaller fish until they are large enough to be sold. The end result is a cheap, standardised product, available to consumers all year-round. And therein lies the problem.

Using small fish, such as anchovies and sardines, to create larger more expensive ones is incredibly wasteful. Around four pounds of edible fish are required to make one pound of salmon. Less conventional species now being farmed offshore like moi and red snapper consume even less efficiently. Moreover, the bulk of the fodder fish come from the seas off developing countries like Chile, where they support both the local human population and every other creature on the marine food chain above them. Open-ocean aquaculture is not about 'feeding the world', then. Every farm-raised salmon,

cod or tuna eaten in the Northern hemisphere represents a fourfold reduction in the fish protein available to the people of the South.

Every farm-raised salmon, cod or tuna eaten in the Northern hemisphere represents a fourfold reduction in the fish available to the people of the South

And the idea that offshore currents will disperse nutrients from fish faeces so fully as to make them disappear is little more than wishful thinking. NOAA-funded demonstration projects show no changes in nutrient levels close

to offshore fish cages. However, the cages in the agency's trials hold only a few thousand fish, not the millions that will eventually be required to turn a profit. Cumulatively, the effects of several large farms close together could be devastating. Remember, this is *industrial* aquaculture, a process driven by the same economics that govern terrestrial factory farms.

On land, individual factory farms are clustered together in large numbers. The US state of North Carolina, for example, is home to some 10 million pigs, which generate 52,000 tons of sewage daily. Disposing of their untreated waste has become a critical problem, and contamination of groundwater by slurry is endemic. This leaking liquid manure repeatedly kills millions of fish, while outbreaks of the bacteria *pfisteria piscicida* [itals], which multiplies in the farms' nutrient-rich runoff, have killed millions more and caused memory loss and other severe cognitive difficulties to local people.

As the number of fish species raised in offshore cages expands, numerous

virulent new diseases are likely to emerge. It is this aspect of open-ocean aquaculture that Dr Neil

Frazer of the University of Hawaii finds most disturbing. He explains that in the wild diseased fish are rapidly picked off by predators, which keeps levels of parasites and bacteria in balance. Placing



vast numbers of fish close together in cages where there are no predators, shatters this equilibrium. Pathogens multiply quickly in this environment and are transmitted to wild fish through the water they share. Advocates of fish farming fail to accept the existence of this problem, citing 'a lack of scientific evidence'. Frazer's dry response to this stonewalling is: 'Science is to governments as perfume is to whores.'

Very little research has been conducted on the transfer of disease from farmed to wild fish. 'By far the largest number of references,' says Frazer, 'are denials from paid sea-cage industry representatives and from government officials with administrative loyalty to aquaculture. 'There is no evidence of transmission of disease from farm to wild fish', they inevitably say. Yet all scientists are familiar with the principle that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

'It seems to me that the game being played is the same game that tobacco companies played for 50 years: if you don't look for a connection between tobacco use and lung cancer, you are not going to find one. Similarly, if you don't give researchers the money to study disease transmission from sea-cage fish to farmed fish, you are not going to find evidence for that either. And there is absolutely no government research money flowing to anyone wanting to investigate the topic.' To fill this

gap, Frazer began conducting his own research voluntarily, building models based on well-founded epidemiological principles. His findings are bleak and project a scenario in which, he says, 'we will eventually lose one wild fish to disease for every farmed fish'.

The open-ocean aquaculture lobby has also chosen to ignore an equally uncomfortable set of legal and social



Bush ruling threatens US salmon's survival

In May the Bush administration struck another blow against the US's crumbling environmental protections with a ruling that allows hatchery fish to be counted along with wild fish in determining the protection status of salmon in accordance with the US's Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Bush's own panel of scientific advisers unanimously rejected the change, saying that in-bred hatchery fish – which make up 80 percent of Pacific salmon populations – cannot replenish losses in populations of the 26 species of wild salmon now officially threatened with extinction.

Naturally spawned fish are heartier, stronger, and provide the vigorous genetic variations needed to maintain the salmon's survival in the wild. Filling streams with less-efficient, disease-prone hatchery breeds will give a false picture of species numbers and species survivability, the scientists say.

But that seems to be the intention. Although Bush's bureaucrats say there will be no change in the salmon's status 'for now', the ruling gives them the power – when the media heat is off – to gut environmental restrictions that have protected salmon habitats throughout the West from logging and commercial exploitation by agribusiness and property developers.

These corporate interests have fought long and hard (using lobbying and lawsuits) to eliminate salmon protections, which they say have cost them millions of dollars in potential profits. They have crossed Bush's palm with copious amounts of campaign silver to make their dreams come true, and he has delivered. He appointed the logging industry's top lobbyist, Mark Rutzick, to a key post in the US National Maritime Fisheries Service, which engineered the ESA rule change.

So, it should be no surprise that the new edict closely mirrors logging industry proposals for which Rutzick had pushed for years. The ruling could have devastating environmental consequences. Lifting salmon protections will increase the dumping of industrial and agricultural waste in rivers and streams. Marine and animal life dependent on the salmon, either directly or further up the food chain, will diminish. Another pocket of planet-sustaining biodiversity will wither into sterility.

As one sceptical biologist noted, the pretzel logic of the ruling is 'like counting zoo animals' when considering the overall health of a species. This new legal precedent could mean open season on protected species and their habitats throughout the US.

Chris Floyd



questions. Under international law, coastal nations

maintain jurisdiction for a distance of 200 miles over the waters adjoining them. These tracts of ocean are known as Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). The EEZ surrounding the US is controlled by federal government, but, in accordance with an old legal principle known as the public trust doctrine, its resources are deemed to be 'held in trust' for the benefit of the American people. This

effectively precludes signing its waters and seabed over to private users.

The US EEZ is a contested area. Previous attempts at exploiting it, such as a 1992 proposal to construct an enormous 47-square-mile salmon farm 30 miles from the coast of New Hampshire, failed because of disagreements between the large number of government agencies claiming jurisdiction over the affected area. The NOAA's Open Ocean Aquaculture Bill is designed to consolidate the agency's

power by giving it sole control over aquaculture in the EEZ, and enshrining in law its 'right' to lease out the US's vast oceanic property to industry. It doesn't take a great leap of imagination to realise that once this precedent is set, a wealth of other industries with equally disastrous environmental records, such as mining and waste disposal, will be able to gain access to other abundant resources on the North American continental shelf.

Jeremy Brown, an ex-pat Cornish fisherman turned US environmental activist, has followed the situation closely. He sees the NOAA's efforts to open up the continental shelf to corporate exploitation as directly analogous to the lucrative sell-off of the electromagnetic spectrum to telecommunications companies that took place in the 1990s. Quoting former British prime minister Harold Macmillan, Brown likens the move to 'flogging off the family silver to settle

the tradesman's bill'. He says: 'The EEZ is prime real estate, holding vast natural resources. It is completely out of sight, and 99 per cent of the public don't even know it exists.' With the US government struggling under the weight of a huge deficit, finding ways to start a gold rush on public property that no one knows about must seem pretty attractive.

While non-Americans are by now very well acquainted with the Bush administration's contempt for international law and environmental protocols such as the Kyoto agreement, most are less aware of the way it deals with domestic agreements. Over the last three and a half years, it has initiated the rolling back of more than 200 major environmental laws, a number that far exceeds the greatest excesses of any previous US government. This rabidly anti-environmental agenda has been implemented under a cloak of secrecy, deception and breathtakingly

disingenuous PR, and been facilitated by the wholesale intimidation of dissenting scientists and bureaucrats. It has bolstered the ends of corporate hegemony in an almost inconceivably shameless manner. Open-ocean aquaculture has evolved in a way that fits this paradigm perfectly.

Though funded by public money, the process of developing open-ocean aquaculture has been conducted with an astonishingly arrogant degree of secrecy. The NOAA's Code of Conduct for Responsible Aquaculture Development in the US EEZ, the key public document on which all the relevant legislative efforts have been based, is virtually impossible to obtain – despite its having been in circulation for four years. NOAA personnel are evasive or hostile when asked even basic questions, and a number of 'public' consultative hearings received virtually no publicity and were extremely difficult to gain access to. As with all US federal agencies charged

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with managing industry, the NOAA has fallen into a state of regulatory paralysis: it serves almost exclusively the corporate power it was originally set up to control.

Big oil has also played a role in the development of open-ocean aquaculture.

Plans are afoot in California to raise a number of fish species, including tuna and halibut, in cages

underneath a decommissioned oil platform. The plans are an ingenious attempt by ChevronTexaco to avoid the multi-million dollar clean-up costs associated with removing a redundant oil rig; the corporation hopes to disguise its renegeing on its contractual obligations with a veneer of green virtue.

This kind of green-washing has become endemic. The Bush administration's 'Healthy Forests Initiative', for instance, has opened up

millions of acres of old-growth forest to logging firms. Its 'Clear Skies Program' will create 525 per cent more mercury, 225 per cent more sulphur-dioxide and 68 per cent more nitrogen-oxide pollution than would have been

small group of bureaucrats and scientists who have unilaterally decided that it is desirable and must be pursued at all costs. If you read between the lines and look to the future, it's also about a world where we don't need living oceans.

Dr Alexandra

Morton is a biologist studying the crash in wild salmon populations in the vicinity of fish farms in British Columbia,

Canada. She says: 'Farmed salmon don't need rivers. If you can produce and sell salmon that don't need a river, you can mine, log, divert, pollute and destroy watersheds. For a politician who wants to say "yes" to industry, the farmed salmon is a gift: you can have your salmon product, and wreck your rivers too.' As it is now for salmon aquaculture, so will it be for open-ocean aquaculture.

For more information, visit: www.iatp.org/fish

Open-ocean aquaculture is about power. It is an ill-conceived and unnecessary technological fix presented as an essential cure-all

allowable under the US's existing Clean Air Act. Likewise, offshore aquaculture is sold under the mantra of 'sustainability', when it is clearly anything but 'sustainable' (probably the most misused word in the English language).

Open-ocean aquaculture, then, is not really about some desperate need for seafood; it is about power. It is an ill-conceived and unnecessary technological fix presented as an essential cure-all. It is the creation of a



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by JEREMY SMITH

He goes to great lengths to conceal his identity. He does not give his real name, but an alias he adopts to protect his family. A few years ago he took a knife and skinned a distinctive tattoo from his right forearm. Only a rough scar remains.

The 33-year-old sitting opposite me in the lobby of a London hotel is one of the most wanted men in Burma. Thanks to his courage the most profitable enterprise ever undertaken by the ruling military junta is under threat. The junta – the murderous Tatmadaw – wants him dead. But the many ordinary Burmese who have been abused and seen relatives killed while working on the Tatmadaw's £1.2 billion Yadana pipeline project see him as a hero. They call him 'Ka Hsaw Wa', which in the language of the Karen means 'white elephant'. For the indigenous Karen, the white elephant is a sign of hope.

Ka did not intend to be a hero. And but for a single, dreadful event 16 years ago, he might never have become one. Back then he wanted to work in a bank. 'I was just another obnoxious teenager,' he tells me. 'I loved US clothes. I loved Western music. I wore clothing like AC/DC. Chains. Earrings. Long hair. All I cared about was how I looked, hanging out with my friends, messing with girls.'

All that changed in 1988 – the most infamous year in Burma's recent, tragic history. The country had suffered years of economic collapse, environmental degradation and human rights abuses as a result of the junta's isolationist 'Burmese way to socialism' programme. By the middle of that year, rice stocks were running perilously low and public anger was boiling over.

'It was two weeks after my birthday,' Ka continues. 'A close friend with whom I used to go kick boxing had disappeared. The military was trying to locate him, but I did not have any information. So they tortured me brutally for three days. Before that I was a teenager. Afterwards I didn't want to be a teenager anymore.'

Instead he joined the student protest movement. When the police killed one of

Tortured Soul

Ka Hsaw Wa has seen many of his friends killed and has suffered torture at the hands of the Burmese military. Now he is taking Unocal, one of the US companies that trades with the murderous regime, to court. One of the most wanted men in Burma, talks to *The Ecologist*.

his fellow protesters later that year, the universities came out in mass support. Ka was already one of the ringleaders. Then on 8 August 1988 hundreds of thousands marched to demand the regime be replaced by an elected government. The military's response was as savage as it was inevitable.

Soldiers opened fire with machine guns on crowds of unarmed protesters, killing thousands. Caught in the crossfire, Ka and a friend fell to the ground, desperate to escape the hail of bullets. But when Ka got back to his feet his friend remained motionless on the ground, dead from a shot in the back.

Fearing for his life he fled Rangoon, determined to join the armed insurgents hiding out in the dense jungle of southern Burma. 'I was so angry,' he tells me. 'I wanted to kill.'

Over the following weeks he made his way from village to village, travelling mainly by night, only stopping for as long as he felt safe. Then one day, as he was stumbling through the undergrowth, he came across the naked body of a dead woman lying on the ground. 'Seeing her body,' he remembers, 'changed my whole life.' There was a tree branch in her vagina. One breast was sliced. The other had its nipple cut off.

For days he could not get the image of the brutalised woman out of his mind. (Later he learnt she had been a nurse forcibly taken by the military to cure soldiers who had fallen ill. They had raped and killed her.) The violence he had seen in Rangoon had made him angry, made him want to seek revenge. But this atrocity affected him differently. Alone in the jungle, he began to ask himself if fighting back was really the answer. Would it actually make things better, or was he just seeking to satisfy his own anger? After many days of doubt and soul-searching he decided not to join the armed resistance. 'I didn't want to bring

more violence to Burma,' he explains.

But what could he do? 'All I had was a pen and a little Burmese-English dictionary,' he tells me. He began talking with the people he met in the jungle, listening to their stories of abuse and torture. 'Whenever I interviewed someone I would write the name of the person, the date, the number of the battalion that had committed the abuse, how many they had killed, in the corner of the dictionary's pages. I memorised the rest. Then, whenever I saw a Westerner I'd plead with them to write it all down and send it to Amnesty International.'

Fellow Burmese who had chosen to take up arms against the junta mocked him. 'They told me I did not have any man-blood in my body and I didn't deserve to wear a man's sarong because I didn't dare fight for my people. They did

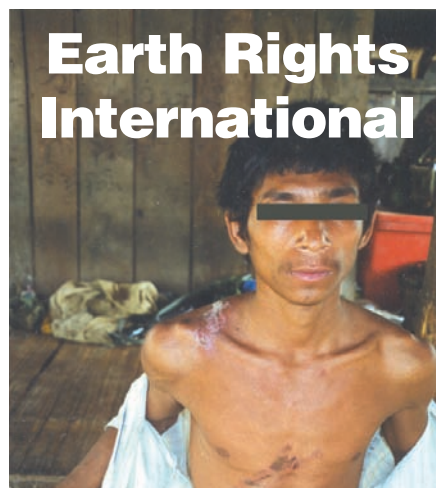
not understand the path I had chosen.'

Ka, too, began to have doubts. 'What was the point in telling all these stories if no one was listening, nothing was getting any better?' he asks.

A meeting with an American law student in 1992 was to change everything. The year before Katie Redford had been profoundly affected by spending a summer teaching English to Burmese refugees in Thailand. Each day the walls of her classroom would shake, her lessons drowned out by explosions as the Tatmadaw fought with the resistance movement hiding in the dense jungle through which the Burmese-Thai border runs.

She returned a year later, hoping that somehow she could help the Tatmadaw's victims. 'If you want to know what's really happening,' the refugees would tell her, 'you must find Ka Hsaw Wa.' So Redford crossed the border hidden inside a truck, and once inside Burma she took a small boat up the Salween river, constantly stopping to ask people where she might find Ka. It seemed every villager knew who he was, and everyone

'When I picked up the pen, the armed revolutionaries told me I didn't deserve to wear a man's sarong because I didn't dare fight for my people'



EarthRights International (ERI) documents human rights and environmental abuses in countries where few other organisations can safely operate. It seeks to expose and publicise these abuses through campaigns, reports and articles. It also works with people living under repressive regimes, teaching them about their rights and how to defend them, making particular effort to train villagers and refugee women to testify at the UN and other international agencies. And it runs schools for activists in Southeast Asia and the Amazon.

'If you look at some of the biggest human rights scandals in the world,' says ERI co-founder Katie Redford, 'they're often abuses carried out in connection with an effort to exploit natural resources – an effort to move oil, or build a dam or open a mine. And, if you think about it, all human rights abuses lead to environmental degradation; and vice versa. If human beings can't exercise political rights or are abused, tortured or jailed because they've exercised their right to free speech, the environment loses its defenders. At the same time, if the environment is pillaged and poisoned and people are living in polluted areas, their basic right to health is affected. They are two downward spirals that reinforce each other.'

www.earthrights.org

wanted to help. Following their advice, she finally left the boat behind and headed off into the dense jungle.

Eventually she found him. The two of them returned to the Salween river, again stopping at the villages scattered along its banks; this time to record the villagers' stories. Amid the ever-growing catalogue of cruelty, one word kept recurring: Yadana.

Stretching 39 miles from the shores of the Andaman Sea on Burma's west coast to the Thai border on its east, the \$1.2 billion Yadana gas pipeline is the largest foreign investment in Burma's history. Built by the US oil giant Unocal and the French firm TotalFinaElf in partnership with the Thai national oil company and the Burmese military, it carries 800 million cubic feet of natural

gas a day to a power station in Thailand. None of the power is used by the Burmese people.

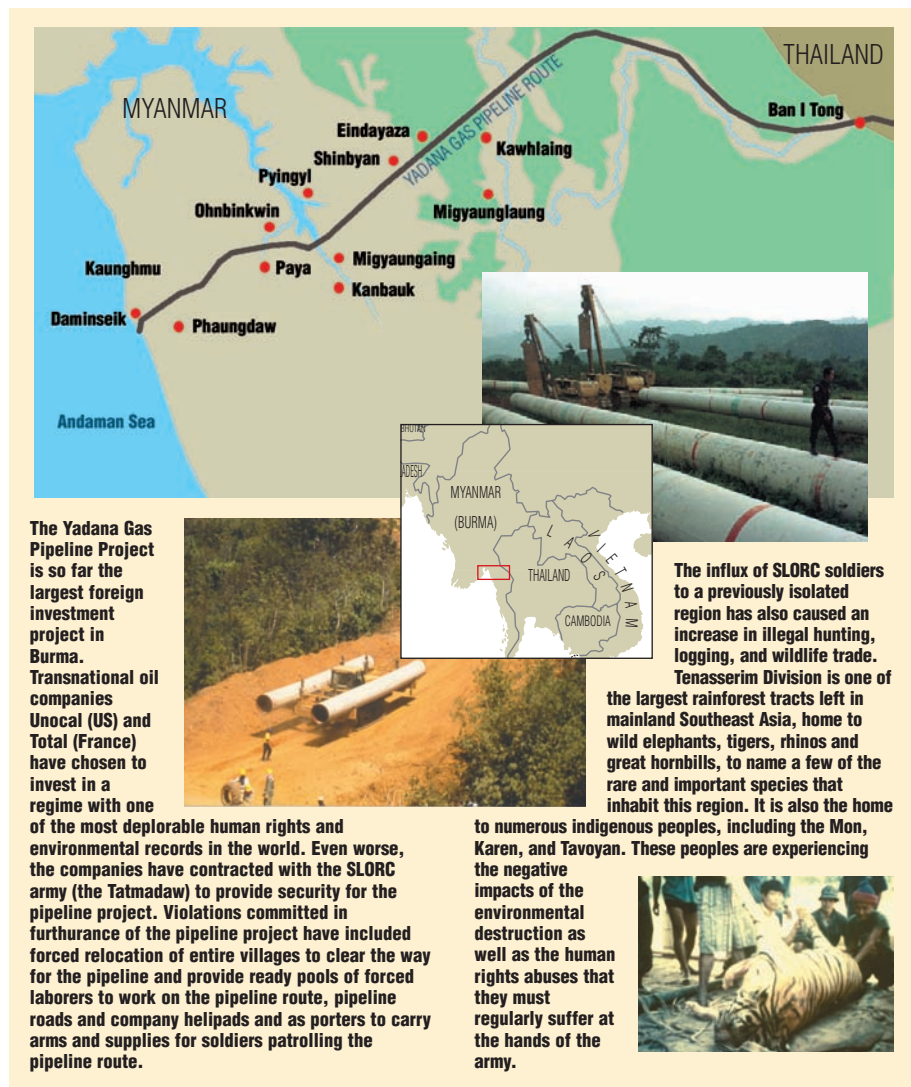
The pipeline traverses the largest intact rainforest in Southeast Asia. Described by WWF as 'one of the richest forest floras of Indochina', the forest is home to dozens of endangered species, including the critically endangered Asian rhinoceros. Kitti's hog-nosed bat, the smallest known mammal in the world, the regal crab and the wild Asian elephant are exclusive to this region. The Yadana pipeline has been disastrous for this wildlife. 'With my own eyes,' says Ka, 'I have seen five tigers being killed. With my own eyes I saw different pieces of a leopard which had stepped on a landmine.' With ill-conceived irony, 'Yadana' is Burmese for treasure.

From the beginning the pipeline consortium has shown a disregard for the environment. Four times more money was allocated to promoting measures supposed to mitigate its impact than was actually spent on the measures themselves. Unocal classified the forests along the pipeline as having 'no canopy', claiming that the pipeline affects mostly 'scrub vegetation and degraded forest'. Not pulling any punches, Wildlife Fund Thailand described this claim simply as 'a lie'. The many troops who have been brought in as a consequence of the project have exacerbated the pipeline's impact on the previously unspoiled area, logging it heavily and hunting its wild animals. 'Villagers even told me they had seen one soldier shoot a rhinoceros,' says Ka.

As well as desecrating one of Asia's last unspoiled tracts of jungle, the pipeline is associated with some of the most appalling human rights abuses. According to Ka, the military has relocated entire villages that stood in the pipeline's path, forcing the villagers to work as near slaves on the project. Many, he tells me, have lost their lives. As well as living in constant fear of the soldiers, there is the ever-present threat of the landmines that surround Yadana, buried to defend it from attack by the resistance movement. To protect themselves from the landmines, the soldiers make their civilian porters walk in front of them.

Do Unocal and Total know the pipeline is protected by landmines, I ask Ka. 'They should know. They can't not know,' he replies. 'We have told them ourselves, and also many, many porters have stepped on landmines. Porters are getting blown up all the time. They will say they don't know to the media, of course, but they are lying.'

When Redford returned to the US for her final year at college, she felt increasingly alienated from her corporate-minded fellow students. Aside from catching malaria and falling in love with Ka, however, she *had* found a way that she could help the Burmese people. The title typed on the front page of her law-degree thesis provided the answer: 'Using the Alien Torts Claims Act:



The Yadana Gas Pipeline Project is so far the largest foreign investment project in Burma. Transnational oil companies Unocal (US) and Total (France) have chosen to invest in a regime with one of the most deplorable human rights and environmental records in the world. Even worse, the companies have contracted with the SLORC army (the Tatmadaw) to provide security for the pipeline project. Violations committed in furtherance of the pipeline project have included forced relocation of entire villages to clear the way for the pipeline and provide ready pools of forced laborers to work on the pipeline route, pipeline roads and company helipads and as porters to carry arms and supplies for soldiers patrolling the pipeline route.

The influx of SLORC soldiers to a previously isolated region has also caused an increase in illegal hunting, logging, and wildlife trade. Tenasserim Division is one of the largest rainforest tracts left in mainland Southeast Asia, home to wild elephants, tigers, rhinos and great hornbills, to name a few of the rare and important species that inhabit this region. It is also the home to numerous indigenous peoples, including the Mon, Karen, and Tavoyan. These peoples are experiencing the negative impacts of the environmental destruction as well as the human rights abuses that they must regularly suffer at the hands of the army.

Unocal vs Burma'.

The Aliens Tort Claims Act (ATCA) is an obscure provision in the US first Judiciary Act, signed by George Washington in 1789. Almost forgotten for the next 190 years, its potential for use in human rights cases was unearthed in 1979 by New York lawyer Peter Weiss, who was attempting to stop a Paraguayan torturer being deported from the US.

Weiss discovered that the ATCA enables victims of human rights violations committed abroad to sue for damages in US courts. Following his successful case, the ATCA began to be used against numerous human rights offenders, including former Filipino dictator Ferdinand Marcos and former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic.

At the same time, lawyers began trying to apply the act to abuses committed not by individuals, but by corporations. Suits have since been filed against ExxonMobil, ChevronTexaco, IBM, Ford and a host of other US corporations. None of them, however, has ever made it to trial.

Nonetheless, Redford's thesis argued that, armed with Ka's many testimonies, it might be possible to bring Unocal to court. (Total was not targeted because the company does not have sufficient US operations to be tried in a US court.) In 1996, less than a year after her paper had been graded A, she and Ka formed EarthRights International, married in Thailand and filed their case in a US court. Four months later, in a landmark decision, the US Federal District Court rejected Unocal's motion that the case should be dismissed and ruled that *Doe vs Unocal* could proceed.

Just as Ka is not his real name, so no one called Doe is called involved in *Doe vs Unocal*. In the US, when a plaintiff's identity needs to be protected for their safety, the names given are 'John' or 'Jane Doe'. On this occasion there is not one John or Jane Doe, but 15.

Jane Doe I testified that after her husband, John Doe I, attempted to escape the forced labour programme, the soldiers shot at him and threw her and her baby onto a fire. This resulted in injuries to her



By accepting the junta's version of events, Unocal appears at best naive and at worst a willing partner in the situation

and the death of the child. Jane Does II and III testified that while working as forced labour on construction projects related to the pipeline, they were raped at knifepoint by soldiers supervising the work. 'When the pipeline came it destroyed our lives,' said Jane Doe 2. 'We lost our homes. We lost our livelihood. We lost everything.'

Most importantly, the plaintiffs allege that Unocal's conduct has given rise to liability for these abuses. Significant amounts of evidence have been presented that Unocal knew forced labour was being used and that it was wholly aware of the record of the Burmese military. In a letter to the company in 1995, a Unocal consultant wrote: 'Based on my three years of service in Burma, my continuous contacts in the region since then, and my knowledge of the situation there, my conclusion is that egregious human rights violations have occurred, and are occurring now, in southern Burma. The most common are: forced relocation without compensation of families from land near/ along the pipeline route; forced labour to work on infrastructure

projects supporting the pipeline; ...and imprisonment and/ or execution by the army of those opposing such actions... Unocal, by seeming to have accepted [the junta's] version of events, appears at best naive and at worst a willing partner in the situation.'

'They are in big trouble,' says Ka. 'But it is David and Goliath. They have so much money and power. We have nothing. They keep trying to postpone the process of the lawsuit. But they know they are not going to beat us.

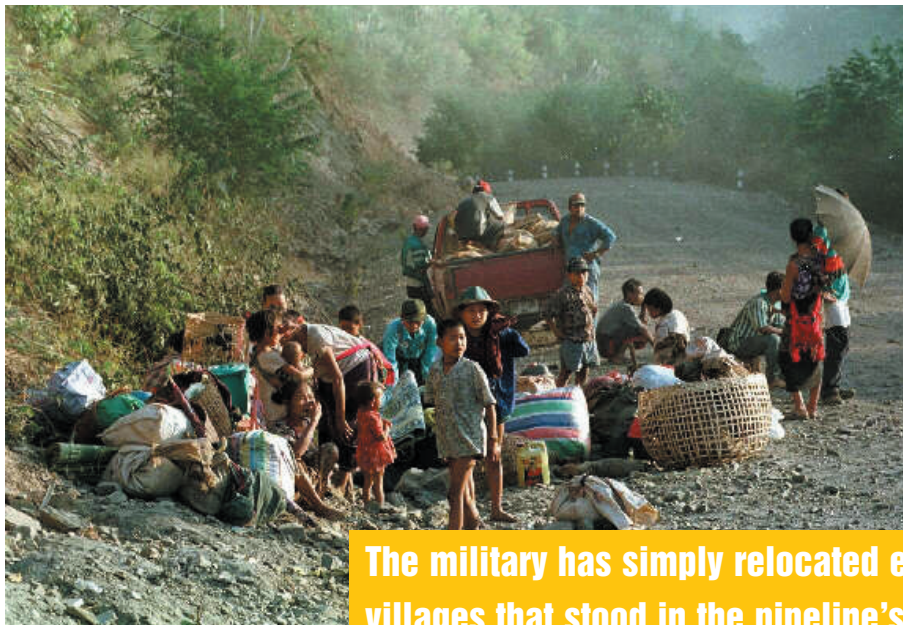
They know this is not going

to go away by postponing it. Even if we don't have money, we will still find a way to survive. For them

it's \$500 an hour for their lawyers. It's ridiculous. If we could give \$500 a month to our lawyers, our lawyers would be so happy. We can't.'

In fact, Ka's lawyers are working for free, taking on this case in their spare time. It is now eight years since the case was first filed. No longer is it just 15 Jane and John Does versus a Californian oil company. The case has caught the attention of the media, corporations the world over, and, since 2002, the multinationals' most powerful friend: the US government.

Why? 'It has the potential of establishing a real cost for companies that do business with repressive regimes,' explains economic-sanctions expert professor Kenneth Rodman. 'If a credible threat of lawsuits poses the potential of multimillion-dollar damages and also gives cold feet to investors, it will change human rights from a matter of conscience, or a matter of social responsibility, to a



The military has simply relocated entire villages that stood in the pipeline's path. Once evicted from their homes villagers were forced to work as near slaves for the military, and many had lost their lives.

matter of the bottom line.'

No wonder Bush and the corporations that support him are now doing everything in their power to get the ACTA repealed. In May 2002 US attorney general John Ashcroft weighed into the Unocal case, challenging the validity of applying the ATCA to the way corporations behave in foreign lands, arguing that it would hurt US relations with governments that assist in the war against terrorism.

Then in April of this year the powerful US trade lobby the National Foreign Trade Council took out a full page in the *New York Times*. The group, which is funded by the likes of Exxon, Halliburton and Bechtel, asked: 'Suppose a foreign country engages in human rights abuses against its own people. Should corporations that happen to do business there be held liable?'

If they profit from those abuses, thinks Ka, then yes. 'The way US corporations behave around the world is worse than terrorism,' he argues. 'Because of the corporations' behaviour a lot of people hate the citizens of the US. Normal Americans do not deserve the hatred of the people of the world because of their corporations' behaviour. Without this law, you cannot hold corporations accountable and they will do whatever they want; especially in countries like Burma.'

The issue, as Ka and Redford see it, is simple. A corrupt regime like Burma will not take a US corporation to court if it violates human rights and causes environmental degradation; not if it is paying the regime handsomely enough. The only place, therefore, that you can challenge such behaviour is in the corporation's home country. This is what makes the ATCA such a powerful tool. 'In every country's constitution there are many laws that favour corporations,' explains Ka. 'But there is one, just one in the US, that holds them accountable. It is our only tool.'

Ka can no longer live in Burma. But he is kept informed of what goes on there by a network of undercover Earthrights workers. When they hear something he needs to know they contact him and he returns briefly, smuggling himself across the border and hiding out in the jungle. Everyone involved is risking their life.

'One of my colleagues was caught by the military last year,' Ka says. 'They tied him to a tree by his hands, gathered the whole village, and said, 'if you do like him, you will die like him'. They sliced

him, put chillies and salt in the cuts, and then left him for a day.' He tightens his eyes slightly, wincing at the memory – one of many that still haunt him. (He can no longer bear to go on demonstrations: they are too painful a reminder of his experiences in Burma).

Today Ka lives in Tacoma, Maryland, with Redmond and their two children. Although he owns a lap-top now, rather than just a dictionary as in his days in the jungle, his acquisition of some of the trappings he aspired to as a teenager and the many awards he has won for his human rights work have not dimmed his focus. 'I barely eat. In my office I only

wear shorts. I bought these pants many years ago.' He squeezes the material of the cheap suit trousers he is wearing. 'I only wear them for this type of occasion.'

The occasion is the Whitley Award, awarded in recognition of his and Earthrights's work in defence of human rights and the environment. Accepting the prize in the evening, there are tears in Ka's eyes as he says: 'Every day, from my country of Burma to the Amazon rainforest in Ecuador to the Niger Delta in Nigeria, we learn of new threats to the defenders of human rights, indigenous people and the environment, and we also learn of brave people who continue fighting even in the face of these serious threats. My organisation will use this award to support these defenders.'

Where, I ask him, does he find his courage. 'I have no courage,' he laughs. 'The only thing that gives me courage is the blood of the Karen people and the images I have seen. The mountains of teak wood cut down, the tigers blown apart because they stepped on a landmine, the many slaughtered people: that becomes my courage. But, really, courage is the wrong term for me. For me it is more, if I don't do it, who will?'

Jeremy Smith is the deputy editor of *The Ecologist*. Sign the campaign letter calling on Bush to end his attack on the Aliens Tort Claims Act at www.notortureforprofit.org/petition

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THE ULTIMATE TOY STORY

BUSH LIGHTYEAR

TO INFINITY AND BEYOND

**How the Bush regime is planning to use
nuclear powered spacecraft and weapons
to secure US control of
outer space**

By **KARL GROSSMAN**

It is time for America to take the next steps. Mankind is drawn to the heavens for the same reason we were once drawn into unknown lands and across the open sea. We choose to explore space because doing so improves our lives and lifts our national spirit.' So spoke US president George W Bush at the end of a rousing speech delivered at the Washington headquarters of the US space agency Nasa in January. Earlier on he had delivered his new vision for the US space-exploration programme. He declared: 'Today I announce a new plan to extend a human presence across the solar system... We will build new ships to carry man forward into the universe, to gain a new foothold on the moon and to prepare for new journeys to worlds beyond our own.' This ambitious agenda would initially be funded by 'reallocating' \$11 billion from Nasa's current budget and by the injection of an additional \$1 billion of federal funds. (Bush didn't say

how much it would cost in total, but estimates range from \$500 billion to in excess of \$750 billion.) More specifically, the money would be spent on developing 'human missions to Mars' and on 'new power-generation propulsion, life-support and other systems'.

It all sounded very idealistic, but it is the 'power-generation' aspect that is key; atomic power generation, to be precise. For the programme announced by Bush in January is the latest stage in US plans for the nuclearisation of space. The hope in the Bush White House is that such nuclearisation will give the US monopolistic control over the heavens. The new programme is closely linked with Project Prometheus, a scheme that has just got underway to build nuclear-powered spacecraft and other atomic systems for space use. Project

Prometheus was quietly unveiled, and its initial \$3 billion five-year budget presented to Congress, on 3 February last year; 'quietly' because Nasa's Columbia space shuttle had fallen to earth, killing all aboard, just two days previously.

Under the direction of Nasa, which is working in close coordination with the US Department of Energy, Project Prometheus has proceeded at a rapid pace. Development and testing of a new US spacecraft to be called the Crew Exploration Vehicle is scheduled to begin by 2008, with a first manned mission following no later than 2014. Major US corporations led by defence contractors Lockheed Martin and Boeing have received the first of what are



anticipated to be many big Project Prometheus contracts. Last November Nasa announced: 'Project Prometheus recently reached an important milestone with the first successful test of an engine that could lead to revolutionary propulsion capabilities for space exploration throughout the solar system and beyond.' In space Nasa's new 'high-power electric propulsion ion engine' would be powered by a 'small nuclear reactor'.

In moving to construct nuclear-propelled spacecraft, the Bush

administration is rocketing back to the US past. From the 1950s until 1972 Nasa and the then US Atomic Energy Commission (whose remit has since been taken over by the US Department of Energy) spent \$10 billion on the development of nuclear spacecraft. That effort was cancelled largely because of the danger, as real now as then, of an atomic rocket falling back to, and spreading radioactive debris over, earth. Warning of 'Chernobyl in the sky', Dr Michio Kaku, professor of theoretical physics at the City University of New York, says: 'Nasa hasn't learned its lesson from history, and a hallmark of science is that you learn from previous mistakes. Nasa doggedly pursues its fantasy of nuclear power in space.'

The risks of nuclear-powered space projects were given graphic exposure in 1964, when an accident involving the Snap-9A plutonium-powered generating system aboard the US navigational satellite Transit 5BN-3 caused the release of a 2.1 pound load of plutonium-238 (an especially nasty isotope of plutonium). A report jointly issued by Europe's Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the



Swedish National Institute of Radiation Protection (NIRP) described this accident as 'the main source of Plutonium 238 in the environment'. The report said: 'A worldwide sampling programme carried out in 1970 showed Snap-9A debris to be present at all continents and all latitudes.' Dr John Gofman, professor emeritus of medical physics at the University of California at Berkeley, linked the dispersal of plutonium from Snap-9A to a global increase in the incidence of lung cancer.

As for the Soviet space programme, the most serious nuclear accident occurred in 1978, when the Cosmos 954 reconnaissance satellite fell from orbit. The incident was described in the 1990 NIRP report *Emergency Preparedness for Nuclear-Powered Satellites*: 'In the early hours of 24 January 1978 Cosmos 954 commenced re-entering the earth's

atmosphere over the Pacific. The object was breaking up and heading towards northern Canada over the Queen Charlotte Islands. It continued for another 12 minutes and 5,500 kilometres before impacting over the Canadian Northwest Territories... Sizeable amounts of radioactive debris had survived re-entry and were spread over a 600-kilometre path from Great Slave Lake to Baker Lake... Most of the satellite material had probably been vapourised and dispersed globally.' There were 110 pounds of highly enriched uranium fuel on board Cosmos 954.

Apologists for Nasa's revived nuclear ambitions insist that the new generation of rockets will however be safe. They point to the fact that the US's nuclear-propelled spacecraft will not be launched using nuclear power, but by chemical systems; the reactors will be turned on

much later. But that's the same approach that was used by the Soviet Union with space nuclear reactors. Even in the event of accidents reactors can only generate high-level radioactive poisons after they have been turned on. Because the Soviet space programme was bedevilled by launch pad accidents, the reactor powering Cosmos 954 was only made critical after the satellite had attained orbit. This did not prevent Cosmos 954 from dispersing lethal nuclear poisons when it fell from the sky.

So far, Congress has shown no appetite for checking the new plans to nuclearise space. Last year Massachusetts Congressman Edward Markey sought to have the Project Prometheus money redirected towards a severely under-financed programme to clean up hazardous waste sites. His

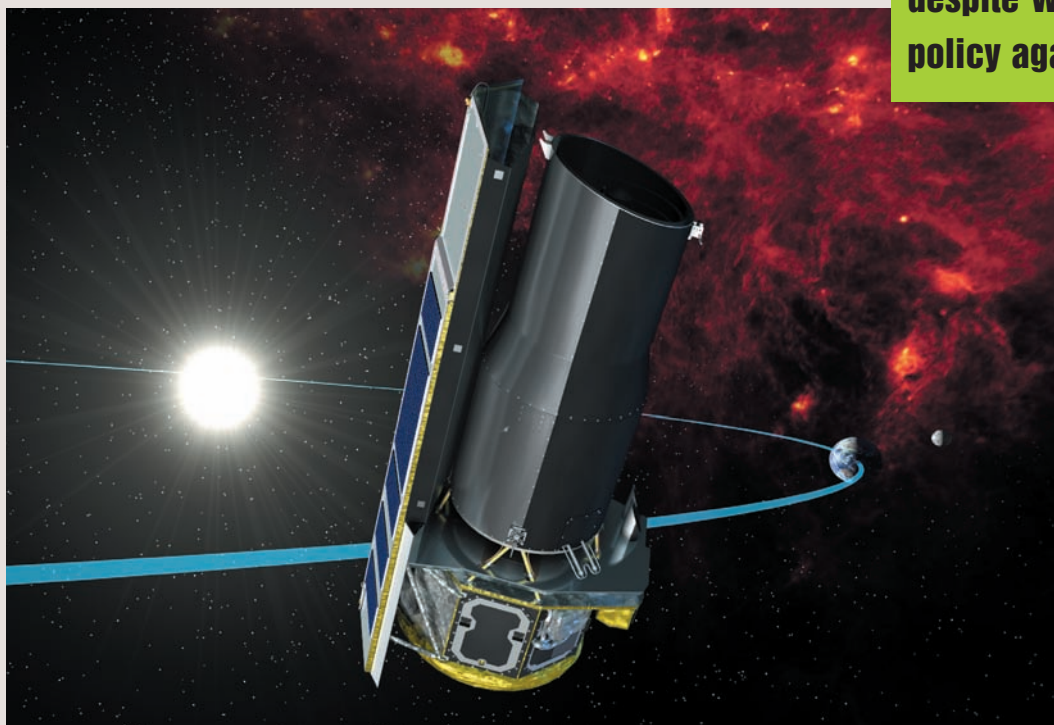
BUSH CROSSES THE COSMIC RUBICON

This summer the human race will pass a sinister milestone. For while the world's attention will be focused on Iraq, the US will break a long-held taboo and launch the first weapon into the global commons

of outer space.

In July a test satellite called the 'Near Field Infrared Experiment' (N-Fire) will be launched via a Minotaur missile

This summer the US will place the first ever weapon in space, despite Washington's official policy against such a practice



from a Nasa base in Virginia. N-Fire is part of the Bush regime's multibillion-dollar, crony-feeding boondoggle known as 'missile defence'. The satellite's primary mission is to gather data on the exhaust fumes of rockets in space, information that will then be used to help future space weapons differentiate more clearly between a target and its trailing plume.

But N-Fire is itself weaponised: it carries a projectile-packed 'kill vehicle' that can destroy passing missiles or, as ABC News reported in June, the satellites of the US's military and commercial rivals. This marks the first time in history that any nation has put a weapon in space, despite the US's still official policy against such a

proposal was overwhelmingly defeated by 309 House of Representatives votes to 124.

Much of the enthusiasm for space nuclear power in the US comes from the Department of Energy, its federal nuclear laboratories and the corporations that build space nuclear systems. The nuclear industry, which has not received an order or built a new nuclear plant in the US since well before the accident at Pennsylvania's Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in 1979, looks at space as a new area of business.

There is also strong support for space nuclear power within the US military, which has long been plotting the development of space-based weapons – devices needing substantial amounts of energy to power them. In 1996 the use of nuclear energy to power 'space-based weapons of devastating effectiveness' was projected in the US Air Force Board report

New World Vistas: air and space power for the 21st century. The US military has also been interested in nuclear-powered rockets. From the late 1980s until 1993 Project Timberwind sought to develop 'dual-use' atomic rocket technology: technology that could be used both to

Vision for 2020 stressed the importance of the US 'integrating space forces into war-fighting capabilities across the full spectrum of conflict'

transport heavy equipment for use in Ronald Reagan's Star Wars programme, and for voyages to Mars.

Bruce Gagnon, coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, says that a dual-use approach now underpins all Nasa's work. He attributes this to the appointment of Sean O'Keefe as the

agency's administrator in December 2001. 'Right after Bush swore [him] into office, O'Keefe told the nation that from now on every mission would be dual-use. By that he meant that every mission would carry military and civilian payloads at the same time. This is further

evidence that the space programme has been taken over by the Pentagon.'

But as long ago as 1996 the US Air Force Space Command report *Vision for 2020* stressed the importance of the US gaining 'control' of space, 'dominating the space dimension of military operations to protect US interest and investment' and 'integrating space forces into war-fighting capabilities across the full spectrum of conflict'.

Two years later Space Command's 1998 Long Range Plan (LRP), declared: 'Now is the time to begin developing space capabilities, innovative concepts of operations for war-fighting, and organisations that can meet the challenges of the 21st century... The time has come to address... the emergence of space as a centre of gravity for the Department of Defense and the nation. We must commit enough planning and resources to protect and enhance our access to, and use of, space. Although international treaties and legalities constrain some of the LRP's initiatives and concepts, our abilities in space will keep evolving as we address these legal, political and international concerns.'

Then in 2001 the Commission to Assess United States National Security Space Management and Organisation, chaired by US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, declared: 'In the coming period the US will conduct operations to, from, in and through space in support of its national interests both on earth and in space.' The commission stressed: 'We cannot fully exploit space until we control it.'

And in 2003 Space Command used the report *Strategic Master Plan Fiscal Year*

practice. As one anonymous sceptic from high up in the Pentagon said, the US is 'crossing the Rubicon into space weaponisation'.

Work on the N-Fire programme began in August 2002 and has progressed smoothly towards its summer 2004 launch date ever since. The Minotaur missile that will haul the weapon into orbit was ordered by the Pentagon in January 2003. Doubtless, there will be more N-Fires in 2005.

As Pentagon officials made clear in an eye-opening presentation to Congress in February, N-Fire is just a first step. They wowed the Bush faithful with highly detailed plans for a whizz-bang space arsenal, the most devastating component of which would be the 'Rods from God' (RFG): bundles of tungsten rods fired from orbiting platforms, hurtling towards earth at 12,000 feet per second, accurate within a range of 25 feet and able to destroy even the most hardened targets. RFG could be launched with only a few minutes' notice at any target on the planet.

RFG is to be accompanied by orbiting lasers, 'hunter-killer' satellites and space bombers with the ability to swoop down out of the ether so as to target any uppity nation that displeases the world-Caesar in Washington.

Long a gleam in many a militarist's eye, this belligerent Buck-Rogering gained unstoppable momentum with the arrival of Donald Rumsfeld at the Pentagon. In the

late 1990s, back before Bush was installed in the White House, Rumsfeld headed a 'blue-ribbon panel' of the usual establishment worthies looking into 'the role of space in national security'. Their conclusion? The US must garrison the heavens to prevent a 'space Pearl Harbor'.

At about the same time, Rumsfeld and Bush's future vice-president Dick Cheney were working on the neo-conservative Project for a New American Century (P-Nac), and speaking openly about the possibility of a 'new Pearl Harbor' that would 'catalyse the US people' into supporting P-Nac's overtly militaristic and imperialistic plans – plans that were published in September 2000. Space weaponisation, via 'missile defence', was an essential part of the P-Nac programme.

Once in office, Rumsfeld and Cheney shovelled billions of dollars to their favoured defence cartels, and fast-tracked space-weapon programmes. Indeed, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice prepared a major speech in which she intended to name missile defence as the Bush regime's national-security priority.

That speech had to be cancelled: it was scheduled for 11 September 2001. But the P-Nac programme (invasion of Iraq, military control of Central Asia, space weaponisation) continued without missing a beat, though clothed now in the expedient rhetoric of a 'global war on terror'.

Chris Floyd

06 and Beyond to describe space as the 'ultimate high ground of US military operations'. Space Command's commander general Lance Lord said: 'Future challenges require that we develop flexible, responsive force-projection capabilities to complement our nuclear deterrent force. In short, we must become a full-spectrum space-combat command.' This commitment

was given added momentum when China successfully launched its first manned spacecraft, also last year. Speaking of that incident, former

Rumsfeld intelligence assistant Rich Haver said: 'I think the Chinese are telling us they're there. And I think if we ever wind up in a confrontation

The Bush space plan will create unnecessary conflict as it expands nuclear power and weapons into space

■ FORTRESS MOON

The US Army spent seven years in the 1950s planning for a military presence on the moon. 'Moon-based military power will be a strong deterrent to war,' opined its 1959 report *Project Horizon*. 'Any military operations on the moon will be difficult to counter... if forces are already present and have means of... neutralising any hostile forces that have landed.'

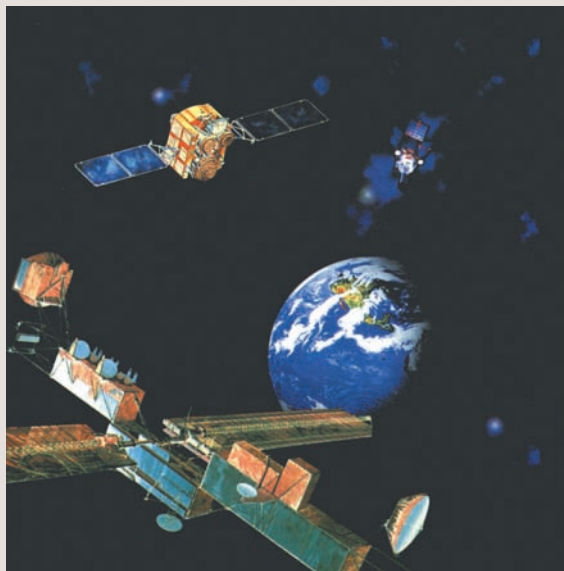
The report went on: 'The lunar outpost is required to develop and protect potential US interests on the moon; to develop techniques in moon-based surveillance of the earth and space... to serve as a base for exploration of the moon, for further exploration into space and for military operations on the moon if required.'

In 1987 a Congress controlled by the Democratic Party commissioned a plan for space warfare, which was released in 1989 under the name *Military Space Forces: the next 50 years*. It's as wild as or wilder than any US military or conservative Republican space vision.

Military Space Forces discusses 'critical economic and military enterprises on the moon'. It stresses: 'The moon is rich in many natural resources.' Military bases on the moon would not only 'defend' lunar mining operations; they could take advantage of the earth's 'gravity well'. This is described as a channel in space between the moon and earth.

'Military space forces at the bottom of earth's so-called gravity well are poorly positioned to accomplish offensive/ defensive/ deterrent missions, because great energy is needed to overcome gravity during launch,' the plan says. 'Forces at the top' – on the moon – could act 'more rapidly'. 'Put simply, it takes less energy to drop objects down a well than to cast them out. Forces at the top also enjoy more manoeuvring room and greater reaction time.'

The plan provides a map of the best 'site' on the moon from which the US could take military advantage of this 'gravity well', and declares that US 'armed forces might lie in wait at that location to hijack rival shipments'.



It also discusses the use of chemical and biological warfare in space. 'Self-contained biospheres in space afford a superlative environment for chemical and biological warfare compared with earth, where weather and terrain virtually dictate delivery times, places and techniques... Clandestine operatives thus could dispense lethal or incapacitating [chemical and biological] agents rapidly and uniformly through enemy facilities without damaging hardware or directly endangering friends.'

again with any one of the major powers who has a space capability we will find space is a battleground.' Haver, who is now a vice-president of major Nasa and Pentagon contractor Northrop Grumman, added: 'I believe space is the place we will fight in the next 20 years.'

All of this flies in the face of the landmark 1967 Outer Space Treaty, which the US helped initiate and which sets space aside 'for peaceful purposes'.

Gagnon observes that just as centuries ago the then global powers used their great fleets to control the world's oceans and protect their economic interests, 'space is viewed today as open territory to be seized for eventual corporate profit'. He speaks of proposals to 'mine the sky' – to extract minerals from celestial bodies. The moon, for example, is being considered as a prime source of rare helium-3, which would be brought back to earth to fuel supposedly cleaner fusion-power reactors. The Global Network coordinator says the US military is seeking to establish bases on the moon and elsewhere in space, so as to protect these operations and to control the 'shipping lanes of the future'.

But if the US believes it will be able to take military control of space without being challenged by rival powers it may be sorely deluded. Alice Slater, president of the New York-based Global Resource Action Center for the Environment, believes that Washington's 'militaristic grab for control of the gateway to space will accelerate a new arms race to the heavens'. She compares the situation today with the race to develop the atomic bomb. Right now the US might think it can capitalise on its perceived advantage in space, but when, 60 years ago, it felt

similarly superior about the bomb it did not take the Soviet Union long to develop a nuclear arsenal of its own. Slater is calling on the US to agree to the proposal, annually repeated by China and Russia, for an international pact banning all weapons in space. 'At this moment in history,' she says, 'Americans can still choose whether to carry hostilities beyond our planet or to maintain the peace of space for future generations.'

When Bush made his January address it was compared to John F Kennedy's announcement before Congress in May 1961 of his dream of 'landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth' before the end of that decade. So far, however, the US public has been found to be less than enthusiastic about the Bush space plan. A *Time/CNN* poll determined that 'more than three fifths of Americans oppose... Bush's proposal'. *Time* and CNN reported that only 9 per cent of those queried backed spending 'billions of dollars on space exploration. Some 40 per cent would rather improve education, 27 per cent would balance the federal budget, and 13 per cent would clean up the environment'.

Sadly, there is little hope of these alternative investments taking place. 'The Bush space plan will be enormously expensive and dangerous,' he says. 'It will create unnecessary conflict as it expands nuclear power and weapons into space – all disguised as the noble effort to hunt for the "origins of life". Hundreds of billions of dollars will be wasted on plans for the nuclearisation and weaponisation of space. In order to fund these missions, Bush and Congress will cut programmes like social security, education, healthcare, childcare, public transit and environmental protection. The lives of future generations will become more insecure.'

Karl Grossman, professor of journalism at the State University of New York College at Old Westbury, is the author of The Wrong Stuff: the space program's nuclear threat to our planet and the writer and narrator of the Nukes In Space series of video documentaries available from EnviroVideo (www.envirovideo.com)

■ US SPACE WEAPONS PLANNED OR IN DEVELOPMENT

Air-Launched Anti-Satellite Missile

Small missile capable of intercepting satellites in low earth orbit. Not ready till after 2015.

Counter Satellite Communications System

Designed to disrupt space-based communications; ready by 2010.

Counter Surveillance and Reconnaissance System

Designed to deny, disrupt and degrade space-based surveillance and reconnaissance systems; ready soon.



Evolutionary Air and Space Global Laser Engagement Airship Relay Mirrors

Will significantly extend the range of airborne and ground-based lasers by using space-based mirrors suspended beneath airships 25 times the size of a Goodyear blimp; lasers would bounce off the mirrors, tracking or destroying enemy missiles; already in development.

Ground-Based Laser

To fire laser beams at low-earth-orbit satellites; ready around 2015.

Space-Based Radio Frequency Energy Weapon

A network of satellites containing high-power radio-frequency transmitters that possess the capability to disrupt, destroy or disable a wide variety of electronics and national-level command and control systems; ready post-2015.

Space-Based Space Surveillance System

A network of optical-sensing satellites to track and identify enemy activities in space; ready soon.



Reviews

Book of the month

Shopped: the shocking power of British supermarkets

Joanna Blythman

FOURTH ESTATE, 2004, £12.99

When I started reading this book I still occasionally used supermarkets. Halfway through and I was planning a sabbatical. By the time I'd turned the last page I was promising myself never to walk their strip-lit aisles again. What Blythman, one of the UK's leading food journalists, does so well is deconstruct the all-pervasive supermarket lies we have all swallowed: 'Having made the whole experience of food shopping dehumanising, functional and boring, supermarkets portray themselves as white knights "lightening the load", riding to the rescue of stressed working women to relieve them of the enormously oppressive burden of food shopping.' Thus, the ready meal is no longer the sad alternative for the lonely and lazy. Now it has been repackaged and sold back to us as haute cuisine for those whose lives are too full to waste time cooking. Here in the UK we spend £7,000 a minute on

them: three times more than any other country in Europe. But is that a sign of the affluence of British society, or of the poverty of its palette?

Blythman goes a lot further than just debunking the myths of supermarket food. The question she left with me was stark: did I really want to give any more of my money to an institution responsible for the death of British agriculture, the demise of local communities, the poisoning of our countryside, the reduction of animals to units of intensely farmed meat, and the debasing of a workforce into underpaid and garishly uniformed automata?

REVIEWED BY JEREMY SMITH



In the 1950s supermarkets had only 20% of Britain's grocery spend. Now they control 80% and are hungry for more.

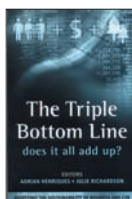
LATEST RELEASES

The Triple Bottom Line: does it all add up?

edited by Adrian Henriques and Julie Richardson

EARTHSCAN, 2004, £17.99

A series of essays examining the ideas of corporate social responsibility. Is it possible for a business to be profitable, socially aware and environmentally responsible all at the same time?

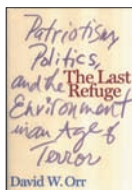


The Last Refuge: patriotism, politics and the environment in an age of terror

David W Orr

ISLAND PRESS, 2004, \$20

No less than a proposal for an amendment to the US constitution to safeguard the rights of nature against the growing onslaught of mankind

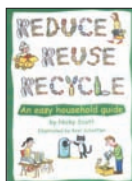


Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: an easy household guide

Nicky Scott

GREEN BOOKS, 2004, £3.95

Where do you take your old mobile phone? What can you do with old medicines? The answers to these and every other recycling question you might have are provided by this simple and handy guide.



Steep Passages: a world-wide eco-adventurer unlocks nature's spiritual truths

David Lee Drotar

BROOKVIEW PRESS, 2004, \$15.95

Drotar's lyrical account of his global travels explores the psychological, social and political implications of his experiences. A profound examination of our relationship with the natural world.



52 Weeks to Change Your World

Allan Shepherd and Caroline Oakley

CENTRE FOR ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGY, 2004, £4.99

From tree planting to changing your energy supplier, a series of once weekly initiatives to improve your life and reduce your environmental impact.



Confronting Capitalism: dispatches from a global movement

Edited by Eddie Yuen, Daniel Burton-Rose and George Katsiaficas

SOFT SKULL PRESS, 2004, \$16.95

Anti-globalist academics and organisers, ranging from Noam Chomsky and Naomi Klein to Arundhati Roy and Barbara Ehrenreich, discuss the issues confronting the burgeoning movement.



Pie Any Means Necessary: the Biotic Baking Brigade cookbook

edited by Agent Apple

AK PRESS, 2004, £8.00

While some attempt to reason with the global elite, the Biotic Baking Brigade just throws pies in their faces. The brigade reminisces about past hits, including Milton Friedman, Bill Gates and Monsanto CEO Bob Shapiro.

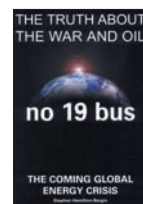


No' 19 bus: the truth about war and oil

Stephen Hamilton-Bergin

SELF-PUBLISHED, 2004, £15

An exhaustive study of why oil really is the lifeblood of today's world. With that blood about to run out, is the world ready to switch to another energy source?



Banana Republicans: How the right wing is turning America into a one-party state

Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber

CONSTABLE & ROBINSON, 2004, £7.99

The latest book by the US journalists behind the best sellers *Weapons of Mass Deception* and *Toxic Sludge is Good for You*. An analysis of the full extent of Republican power in the US today.



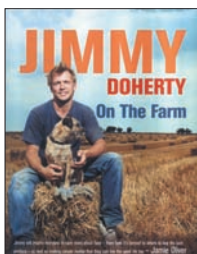
On the Farm

Jimmy Doherty

EBURY PRESS, 2004, £18.99

He may be Jamie Oliver's friend and this may be 'the book of the TV series', but Doherty's account of his escape from the rigours of city life and his efforts to set up his own rare-breed pig farm is an inspiring read. Filled with humour and anecdote, it shows that while the rural idyll is far from an easy option, living closer to the land brings with it so many rewards that the effort is truly worthwhile. The book also features ideas for gathering wild food, rearing your own livestock and a series of cottage recipes.

REVIEWED BY CLAIRE WEBB



Globalization – tame it or scrap it

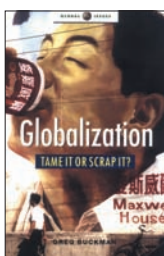
Greg Buckman

ZED BOOKS 2004 £9.99

A common criticism labelled at antiglobalists is that it we're good at being 'anti-' but don't have anything to offer by way of an alternative.

Recently, however, authors have begun to suggest several ways forward. These many different approaches fall roughly into two camps. Either: globalisation is the problem, therefore abandon it and return to a more local scale – this is the approach typified by Colin Hines' book *Localisation*. Or: the problem is not globalisation per se, but the way it is being implemented. Therefore we need to modify our current path to make it fair. For this theory – see George Monbiot's *Age of Consent*. By dispassionately assessing these various strands and attempting to find common ground, Buckman takes the debate one vital step further.

REVIEWED BY RUFUS WESTON



Imperial America – Reflections on the United States of America

Gore Vidal

CLAIRVIEW 2004 £9.95

The concluding part of Vidal's remarkable trilogy examining the truth about what's going on in imperial America. In a series of wonderfully dry essays covering a range of topics from the upcoming American elections to the power of the corporate/government elite, Vidal argues that 'Not since the 1846 attack on Mexico in order to seize China has an American government been so nakedly predatory in its ambitions.' Yet Vidal is far from Anti-American. He sees himself as a true patriot, arguing that it is allegiance to America's founding ideals, not to its current administration, that is what true patriotism is all about. Not only that, but it's written beautifully, too.

REVIEWED BY SOPHIE WHITFORD



Silvio Berlusconi: television, power and patrimony

Paul Ginsborg

VERSO, 2004, £16

Lampooned by *The Economist* as 'Berlusquoni', Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi is frequently seen as something of a reactionary joke. But Paul Ginsborg argues that, gaffes aside, the rise to power of a politician who is also his country's richest man and the controller of most of its media exemplifies all that is wrong with politics today. Berlusconi is the epitome of politician as personality.

REVIEWED BY SARAH MCCARTHY



The Day Philosophy Dies

Casey Maddox

FLASHPOINT PRESS 2004 \$20.00

Many people will be shocked by this novel. Many will be offended. But maybe that's what it takes to make us sit up and confront the harm we are inflicting on each other and the planet that sustains us. In *The Day Philosophy Dies* a US movie star is kidnapped by a group of radicals (are they terrorists or freedom fighters?) and then taken on a brutal 'recovery program from western civilisation'. It's violent, it's cruel, it forces you to challenge the book's, and your own, assumptions about what it is to be civilised, about what is acceptable behaviour. Most importantly it forces you to ask yourself – if I'm not happy with the way the world is, isn't it time I stopped moaning and actually did something about it?

REVIEWED BY JEREMY SMITH



The Party's Over: blueprint for a very English revolution

Keith Sutherland

IMPRINT ACADEMIC, 2004, £8.95

Sutherland's timely book examines why British politics has descended into the quagmire in which it now squirms. He traces the growth of the modern political party, and challenges its relevance in the modern age. With the ever-growing importance of the mass media, parties increasingly need to be little more than a charismatic leader and a bunch of pliant underlings. Sutherland recommends that it's time to ditch the vote and replace it with a system based upon the 'citizen's jury'.

REVIEWED BY COLIN WHEELER



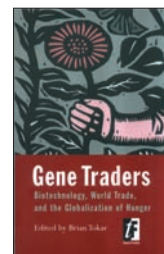
Gene Traders – biotechnology, world trade, and the globalisation of hunger

Edited by Brian Tokar

TOWARD FREEDOM 2004 \$14.00

Rather than just another general overview of what's wrong with GM, *Gene Traders* is a series of in depth essays each exploring a key issue of the supposed 'Biotech revolution'. International trade deals such as NAFTA often seem like little more than an impenetrable acronym of little relevance to every day life. Yet S're DeSantis shows how this treaty has bought about has been the mass contamination of Latin American crops, and the resulting loss of many farmers' livelihoods. Elsewhere authors challenge the World Bank's promotion of biotech; explore how food aid has been co-opted to become an opportunity to dump surplus GM crops; and debunk the myths of GM feeding the world.

REVIEWED BY SAM CLEMENT



Not on the Label: what really goes into the food on your plate

Felicity Lawrence

PENGUIN, 2004, £7.99

Do you know how the chicken in your ready meal lived and died? What environmental problems resulted from your prawn cocktail? *Not on the Label* exposes the truth about food production in the globalised world. How many of us realise or think about the fact that our chicken might contain beef-waste products, or that a bagged salad costing more than £1 contains just a few pence worth of leaves.

REVIEWED BY RUFUS WESTON



Implicit in the *The Day After Tomorrow*'s title is the idea that climate change is a future threat. Try telling that to the inhabitants of the south Pacific island of Kiribati, or the Marshall Islands, Cook Islands, and low-lying islands of Papua New Guinea, who are all preparing to evacuate their lands forever as rising sea levels threaten their homes now. For them, or for the families of the many thousands of people across Europe who lost their lives in last year's heatwave, climate change is not about the day after tomorrow, it is about today.

Which only makes the need for action to prevent it all the more urgent. This is a question not seriously addressed in the film. Hardly surprising when you consider that as a £100 million enterprise, produced by a company owned by Rupert Murdoch, the

film is very much a part of the problem in the first place.

Likewise if one goes to the movie's official website and presses the button 'What can I do' there is nothing other than a link to Future Forests, an organisation which you can pay to plant trees to compensate for our carbon emissions. The implication is that that is all we can, and need, to do.

The hard fact is that however many trees we plant, climate change will not be averted while we continue to consume at the rate we are. But this is not a message that Fox, or the advertisers whose money sustains it, want us to hear. A few viewers may have a change of heart when they leave the cinema, but don't expect George Bush to sign the Kyoto Protocol after a private screening at the Whitehouse or Esso to invest all its money in wind farms.

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Directors: ExxonMobil, armed with dodgy science, millions for political donations and nothing for renewable energy, threatens entire species with extinction.

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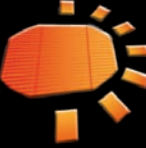
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Leonie Greene has just started a job as political advisor to Greenpeace having completed a two year MSc at Brunel university in 'Environmental Change – social and physical aspects'.

Why did you do the course?

I was working for the Greater London Assembly at the time and I didn't feel I was getting enough environmental work. It worked – for my dissertation I ended up doing a paper for Nicky Gavron while she was bidding to be London Mayor – it was on climate change mitigation policy. Also I wanted to prove to myself I could handle the academic requirements of the course.

How has it helped you?

It has made me more rigorous in the way I research - let's face it when you are left alone you only have yourself to rely on. And before I went on the course I'd been thinking about these issues on an off for five or six years. The course gave me the space to really process these thoughts and develop them.

Who would you recommend it to?

Anyone who is keen to develop their understanding of the environment. Brunel is currently merging its departments into a big environmental centre – it seems geography doesn't speak to people in the same way that the environment does today – so although it's difficult to say for sure that the course will be the same, if anything it will be more developed.

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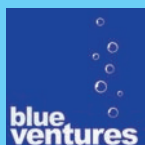
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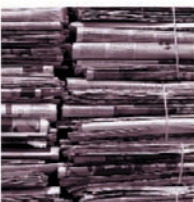


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campaign

DIRECTORY

Every month we bring you up to date information on a wide range of campaigns: how to contact them; what they need; and the progress they're making. And if you know of a campaign that we haven't listed below please email us: campaigns@theecologist.org

ANIMAL WELFARE

Save the albatross

With large numbers being killed by longline fishing boats, the albatross is heading for extinction. Birdlife International is campaigning for the implementation of international agreements to save the bird. Contact Birdlife International: www.birdlife.net/action/campaigns/ 01223 277 318

Stop animals suffering in live transport

Every week more than 10 million live animals are transported throughout the EU. The RSPCA is campaigning for tougher rules on maximum journey times. Contact the RSPCA: www.rspca.org.uk 0870 333 5999

CLIMATE CHANGE

March to stop climate change

The annual march from Esso's UK HQ in Surrey to the US embassy in London to raise the political profile of climate change takes place on 15 May. Contact the Campaign Against Climate Change: 020 8855 3327 www.campaignagainstclimatechange.net

Make your church climate-friendly

Operation Noah provides resources and advice for getting parishioners more involved in community climate-care actions. Contact Operation Noah: www.christian-ecology.org.uk/noah 01252 849904

FOOD

Eat less meat

Compassion in World Farming is calling on the government to reduce UK meat consumption by 15 per cent by 2020, and urging consumers to buy only organic or free-range meat. Contact Compassion in World Farming: www.ciwf.co.uk 01730 264208

MARINE

Adopt-a-Beach

Anyone in the UK can adopt their favourite stretch of coast and take part in quarterly beach cleans and surveys to monitor litter throughout the year and help reduce litter at source. Contact the Marine Conservation Society 01989 566017 www.mcsuk.org

POLITICS

Boycott Bush

www.boycottbush.net tells you which companies fund George W Bush and the Republican Party, what products they sell in the UK and how you can buy alternatives. Find out more at www.ethicalconsumer.org or call 0161 226 2929

RESOURCES

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The Optimum Population Trust campaigns for ecologically sustainable population sizes in the UK and worldwide. www.optimumpopulation.org

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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VIVISECTION

Ban animal testing

Get your MP to support House of Commons early day motion 738, calling for a ban on animal testing for household cleaning products. Contact the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection: www.buav.org 020 7700 4888

Support alternatives to vivisection

Europeans for Medical Advancement works to discredit the flawed arguments behind vivisection and to provide scientifically valid alternatives. Contact Europeans for Medical Advancement: www.curedisease.com 020 8997 1265

WASTE

Recycle more

Find out where your nearest recycling facilities are, what you can recycle and how to encourage others to do the same. Contact: www.recycle-more.co.uk 08450 682572

Increase awareness of the environmental impact of nappies

The Women's Environmental Network runs the Real Nappy Project to raise awareness about the environmental impact of nappies and to ensure that parents and adults with incontinence have a fair choice. Contact the Women's Environmental Network: www.wen.org.uk 020 7481 9004

WATER

Keep water safe from multinationals

Send a World Development Movement postcard to international development secretary Hilary Benn, urging him to 'pull the plug on water in Gats'. Contact the World Development Movement: www.wdm.org.uk/campaign/watergats/takeactiongats.htm 020 7737 6215

HIT THE STREETS JULY

4 BRIGHTON SUNNY DAY

The Level, Brighton

A festival of renewable energy and sustainability, covering a broad range of issues from energy efficiency to recycling.

01273 725077

www.brightonsunnyday.org.uk

10 'WHOSE RULES RULE? 60 GLORIOUS OR NOTORIOUS YEARS'

Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ

Conference organised by the World Development Movement. On the 60th anniversary of the IMF and World Bank, WDM looks back at their blotted past and considers their future. Followed by a party organised by *The Ecologist*.

0800 328 2153

www.wdm.org.uk

AUGUST

1 AMBIENT GREEN PICNIC

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4 main music arenas as well as a host of family entertainment and information on local and environmental issues.

www.ambientpicnic.co.uk

5-8 EARTHWISE FESTIVAL 2004

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0845 330 4340

www.earthwise-uk.com

8-14 ONE WORLD SUMMER FESTIVAL

Witley, Surrey

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01273 279439

www.macrobios.com

9-15 NATIONAL ALLOTMENTS WEEK

Across the UK

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<http://nationalallotmentsweek.netfirms.com/>

IF YOU ARE A CAMPAIGNING ORGANISATION YOU NEED TO BE LISTED IN THIS DIRECTORY

SO THAT ECOLOGIST READERS CAN CONTACT YOU... CALL US ON 020 7351 3578 OR EMAIL campaigns@theecologist.org

Letters

HOT WIND

There are plenty of alternative solutions to wind power. We could force the house-building industry to make new homes greener with solar panel roofs and tighten regulations. We could create a decent, sustainable transport system. We could do all kinds of things but what is easier for a Government eager to placate a population anxious like you about environmental degradation? Build wind farms in places they think few people care about? Or tackle the relentless drive for

consumerism that keeps people voting for them?

Alistair Darling's recent announcements about expansion of air travel and airports, with no specific mitigation measures (such as aviation fuel taxes) make a mockery of the government's supposed commitment to reducing greenhouse gases. A jumbo

A jumbo jet crossing the Atlantic generates as much CO₂ in one and a half journeys as a wind turbine will save in one year.

jet crossing the Atlantic generates as much CO₂ in one and a half journeys as a wind turbine will save in one year. I am deeply concerned that the government is not only destroying our countryside with turbines,

but also our atmosphere with aircraft pollution.

Wind is an intermittent, additional source of a small amount of electricity, it is not a serious alternative for an industrialised nation, and cannot make a significant impact at the global level. The Government has no mandate from the British people to destroy our upland heritage for virtually no gain and must be made to think again.

Wind farms are an expensive dead end. Ten years down the road they will have to concede that wind is not the answer they thought it was and we will have a lot of tall white elephants all over our hills

Glen James, By e-mail

SURVIVAL RESPONDS TO DEBEERS

Nicky Oppenheimer (*Ecologist*, June 2004) denies that diamonds are behind the Bushman evictions from the central Kalahari. But he cannot deny that the ex managing director of Debswana (the 50:50 joint venture between DeBeers and the Botswana government), Mr Louis Nchindo, welcomed the evictions, nor that he, himself, told me that De Beers simply will not support indigenous rights in Africa.

Oppenheimer tries to dismiss Survival's point with semantics. He says, that there was 'no one living' at the De Beers site, Gope. But it is undeniably in Bushman territory. He also claims,

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'there is no mine at Gope.' But until recently there was a test mine there, and the company still pays to retain the site. In any event it has been made clear that if and when the diamonds become 'economic', they will immediately be mined. For Oppenheimer to pretend this would use just 53 hectares of the Kalahari, and would not need the displacement of the Bushmen, is nonsense. It would, in fact, require a mammoth development in addition to the mine itself, with roads, pipelines, housing, clinics, fencing, huge amounts of water and power, and so on.

Oppenheimer pretends that Survival is alone in thinking that diamonds are

the root cause of this injustice. This is not so. In February 2002, the Botswana newspaper *Mmegi* reported, 'These arguments [that the relocations are to help develop the Bushmen] are very weak as it is now clear to all that government intentions on this matter are not humanitarian. Instead, they border on secrecy and hypocrisy. The real intention behind this forcible removal is now an open secret: the CKGR is a rich area endowed with natural resources, wildlife and diamonds.' And on 9 October 2002, the youth arm of the country's principal opposition political party, the Botswana National Front Youth League said, 'The real reason

why Basarwa [Bushmen] are forcefully removed from their ancestral lands is to pave the way for Debswana to mine Diamonds in the area for that matter without even giving Basarwa, the owners of the lands any royalties.'

Survival has been listening to the Bushmen for many years; I have personally made repeat visits to virtually every affected Bushman community. Everything we have been saying has been confirmed. The fact that a few MPs are swayed into a

contrary position through brief government-arranged tours when they talk only to those on government salaries, counts merely for their lack of acumen (and shame?). It will not sway us. We have the wholehearted support of the Bushmen who are desperate to return home and escape the drunkenness and destitution which is now destroying them in the relocation sites. We have no intention of letting them down.

Stephen Corry,
Director, Survival International

Send letters for publication to:

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15 Lots Road, London SW10 0QJ

Email: editorial@theecologist.org

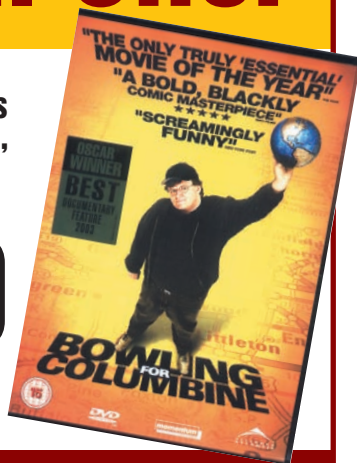
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from the pulpit

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

I'm the Reverend Billy



And now the teary confessions begin. The sinner is... let's just wrap all of them, the Colin Powells and Tony Blairs and the *New York Times* – into one large sin-flecked hand-wringer. They make their way toward their ABJECT RITUAL APOLOGIA.

The fate of these leaders is not the first concern in the Church of Stop Shopping. These apologies don't rise to the savour of Lady Macbeth's speech. Let's face it, these are merely commercial celebrities, the human-become-product... famous faces placed on the media shelf of the world.

Can I preach now? The first business of any commercial leader in this era is to hypnotize the consumers. Tony Blair is a movie star, and Tom Cruise is a politician – THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE. One legislates by advertising and the other advertises by legislation. They both force their way into our bedrooms by way of square flickering screens. Each has the same deadly relationship to consumers. They are of the predator class.

Every once in a while these top guns know that they will be asked about the bombing of weddings. It is the less thrilling part of their work, finding a way to apologise while also insisting that the facts are in dispute. 'The young couple may have had anti-coalition shrapnel in their head-wrappings'... 'The dead children are the subject of an ongoing investigation'... 'Our intentions are not to kill but to free, and free them, and free all of them all the time.'

But these are the words that start up the engines again. When weddings are bombed – when weddings are bombed more than once – because our radar doesn't seem able to properly distinguish the euphoria of young relatives of the betrothed...

Let me try again. It's simple. WHEN WEDDINGS ARE BOMBED, THE EARTH IS TALKING. That's love and death in a mix that is straight talk, not advertising. Are you with me? The Earth is telling us that we're listening to the wrong people. Let us now replace the spinning apologies of great men with the silenced voices of the ones we call powerless.

They shout their celebration of love, firing local pistols. There is a suspiciously happy God down there who hasn't got his coalition permit. What would it take to stop and smile? This is the Earth.

This is us. We are a part of this remarkable thing that we no longer recognise. These raucous best wishes had to be well known to us – this is no technological glitch. The shouts of young love must echo through the aircraft carrier that housed the airplanes the night before. And also... must ring in the ears of the crew that drove the bombs up to the planes and fastened them under the wings. And... would need to be lovely and persuasive too, to the thousands of

Americans and Brits that acquiesced to this endangerment of us all by pausing before a famous face and saying OK.

It is not OK. Even if you apologise and hand over your internal memos for torture. Now we hear you falsifying history over Ronald Reagan's body, the inventor of the seasonal war against the part of the Earth that houses people with brown skin. He also invented the new dramatic form of chuckling lightly while killing. His double-speak is the training ground for the oil companies' use of earthy graphics. The lie of BP, now newly green and sunshiney, claiming that it is 'Beyond Petroleum'. The lie of Phillip Morris, with mortality exploding around the world, escaping from its own products by renaming itself 'Altria'.

But children, we know, don't we? This public culpability is just more advertising. It keeps our heads turned in a guided direction – toward the continuing offer of costly purchases. If the cockpit computers

catch the shadows of children in their finery singing at the wedding, and misunderstand it, then presidential advisors merely terrorise the language ('illegal militia in the area') and send the words once again from the mouth of a famous face until the wedding darkens. FROM BEFORE THE WAR STARTED, THE APOLOGY WAS INSIDE THE BOMB.

We ourselves are that sound in the sky. The children look up when they hear us coming and shout something that we must hear.

And we all know what it is.
Eternal life is not flying all night.
No B52 Bomber. No high tech attack.
A child on the ground is praying that God back.

Bill Talen's book *What Should I do if Reverend Billy is in my Store?* (New Press) is available in independent bookshops (if you see it in a transnational chain store, steal it).
Visit www.revilly.com



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that we're listening to the
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"You'll be making an effortless contribution to the reduction of the gases that cause global warming, and it's not often you can do something for the good of everyone without it costing you a penny". The Guardian 23/05/04

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