

Chain Reaction

Magazine of Friends of the Earth Australia

Number 59 Spring 1989 \$3.00



- Green Election Fever
 - Nurrungar — Non-violent Confrontation
 - “We need a change of heart” — Hugh Stretton interview
- also: Coronation Hill; Nuclear News; and more

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Publisher: Friends of the Earth, Chain Reaction Co-op Ltd, 33 Pirie Street, Adelaide, SA, 5000. **Editors:** Clare Henderson, Larry O'Loughlin **Production:** Chris Sanderson, Mandy Graham, David Pope, Roman Orszanski, Jonathon Goodfield, James Prest, Margaret Dingle, Kenton Penley, Margaret Colmer, Heinrich Hinze. **Thanks:** Monica, Charlie, Tim, Elizabeth and others too anonymous to be named. **Front and rear cover:** Mandy Graham. **Reprographics:** Andrew McHugh, Stallard and Potter. **Printing:** Bridge Printing Office, Murray Bridge, SA. **Correspondence:** Chain Reaction, GPO Box 90, Adelaide, SA, 5001 Ph: (08) 212 6251

Registered as a periodical category 'B' by Australia Post No VBQ 2034

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Multi Function Polis

It seems to me that the proposed Multi Function Polis (MFP) could critically and dangerously, shape future Australian research and technology, economic paradigms, and industry/labour relationships.

The implications are enormous. In fact, although environmental research, as the latest bandwagon, has recently become one of the 'good word' catch cries for the MFP proposal, it seems to me that this project, in one critical intervention, could largely determine whether Australia goes down the drain of international corporate 'high-tech market economics' (with the concomitant exploitation of environment and resources, and competitive international play-off of 'workers') ... or retains any chance of establishing an alternative, sustainable economics with independent control of its social, industrial and financial future, or environment.

It certainly presents a dramatic opportunity to force public and Parliamentary debate on that choice, and to publicly demonstrate that 'Green' goes deeper than the superficial environmentalism it's mistaken for. If the opportunity is not confronted now, we can expect a post-MFP, post election, leap in the present trends towards deregulation, privatisation, the 'rational' economics lunacy generally, including foreign

ownership of Australian property, industry and intellectual resources into the bargain.

As a joint Australian-Japanese Government project, initiated by MITI and funded by a selected 'membership' consortium of major Australian and Japanese corporations, there has been very little public information, or debate, on its goals, structure, or implications. So far it has surfaced only in brief, vague, media 'kite-flying' statements, obviously testing public reaction, teasing up enthusiasm, and laying the grounds for post-coup 'we told you so's' — when we have been told nothing.

I suggest that it is urgent to establish a network of critical debate within the trade unions, green movement, universities before it becomes a fait accompli — possibly in March 1990.

Eric Mack
Glen Osmond SA

Eurong not Eurasian

In reading Peter Springell's review of David Suzuki's new book (*Chain Reaction* 57), Peter concludes "Perhaps because of his own mixed-race Eurasian origins he is in a special position to appreciate the value of a cross-cultural approach".

Genetically speaking Suzuki is of pure Japanese ancestry, he is not Eurasian. Culturally Suzuki is Canadian, is this what Springell is confusing? Being a third generation American of Japanese descent, and having lived in many different countries I have experienced this Eurocentric approach to citizenship.

What I mean by this is that white Americans and

Australians consider themselves Yanks or Aussies and all other ethnics as Black Americans, Mexican Americans, Japanese Americans, or here in Australia, Italians, Greeks, Lebanese, Vietnamese.

Whenever whites in either of these countries refer to me as a 'Japanese American' I tell them I'll accept that if they start referring to themselves in similar ways ie 'English or French Americans' or 'Dutch Australian'. But if they don't want to include their ancestral past then don't include it on other ethnics who have made, or only have known America or Australia as their home and culture.

Tlaloc Tokuda
Mosman NSW

Flying into the Greenhouse

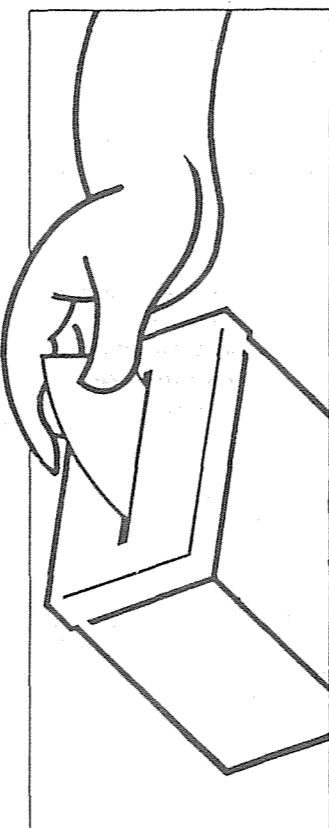
In reply to Margret Dingle's letter (*Chain Reaction* 58) here are some figures on the energy consumed by aircraft and ships. Direct energy consumed by aircraft is about 32,000 kJ/tonne/km, as compared to 600 kJ/tonne/km for ships.

One reason for the big difference in these figures is the large amount of energy used by aircraft in overcoming the force of gravity. It's a bit like comparing a walker with a cyclist. The walkers legs use a considerable amount of energy supporting his/her weight. A cyclist can travel about 5 times the distance using the same amount of energy.

Obviously the figure of 600 kJ/tonne/km can be reduced significantly if ships make more use of our abundant supply of wind power.

Ashley Campbell
Black Forest, SA

You are invited to write letters to Chain Reaction with your comments on the magazine or any other issues of interest. Letters should be kept within 300 words so that as many as possible can be published. Longer letters may be edited. Write today to Chain Reaction, GPO Box 90 Adelaide, 5001, South Australia.



Alternative Economic Policy

In his article "Is Growth So Bad?" (*Chain Reaction* 58), James Prest takes issue with Ian Grayson's advocacy of a no-growth economy and reduced personal levels of consumption (*Chain Reaction* 57), and calls for the environment movement to present an alternative economic policy.

My reading of Ian's and James' articles left me with the view that, rather than there being vast and fundamental differences between the two, there is a fairly substantial amount of commonality and shared concerns.

To try to resolve or alleviate this country's economic and environmental problems (and the two are fundamentally interrelated), we need both reduced production and consumption of socially, environmentally and economically wasteful products and materials, as well as an alternative economic policy which is based not on purely monetary values, but also on social and environmental costs and benefits.

In his article "Growing Pains" (*Chain Reaction* 58), John Young advances the debate and points out correctly that "GNP makes no distinction between good growth and bad growth, and doesn't consider the costs of growth". Both James and John call for a new way of measuring our national accounts which would more appropriately reflect our social, economic, and environmental well-being.

When the Australian Democrats formed in 1977, amongst our twenty Policy Objectives at that time were the following:

"To accept the challenge of the predicament of humanity on the planet with its exponentially increasing population, disappearing finite resources and accelerating deterioration of the environment; and

"To seek the transition to a sustainable economy, in equilibrium with world resources and eco-systems, with a minimum of dislocation by planning the necessary changes in good time, and by increasing public awareness of the problems ahead".

All twenty Objectives remain current and form the basis of progressive policy updates over the years.

One of our most recent policy updates, balloted by Democrat members, was "The Economy - Towards a Sustainable Society". The policy is designed to realise the interdependent goals of social equity, environmental sustainability, democratic control and international responsibility.

Without going into all the details of the policy here, some of the major and progressive elements include:

- replacing GDP with more appropriate measures of national well-being to include environmental and social costs (e.g. the loss of soil fertility from farming and the social cost of car accidents) - similar to John Young's suggestion of Net Human Benefit;
- reviewing the definition of work. This would be done in the context of technological change and our social and ecological objectives, and would include changes to working hours, work patterns, the relationship between paid work, domestic labour and income needs, and an expansion of both socially

useful work and the recognition of 'employment' beyond traditional occupations;

- introduction of a National Support Income Scheme (or guaranteed minimum income) to ensure that all citizens receive a basic income which is guaranteed and maintained while enabling people to add to this income as their abilities permit. This scheme would ultimately replace all existing social security and benefits payments and ensure that people may move in and out of formal employment with dignity and without fear for their livelihood;

- the reduction and, where possible, elimination of environmentally unacceptable (polluting, resource wasteful) products, a requirement for industry plans to incorporate environmental and social requirements for all production processes and the development of a National Development Fund to assist in the creation of industries compatible with the interdependent goals referred to above, including the development of import replacement industries;

- economic policy making and planning processes which maximise the decentralisation and democratisation of decision-making within a framework of an integrated approach to social, economic and environmental decision-making oriented to equity, sustainability and democracy at national, regional and local levels. (The processes employed for the development of a sustainable society are themselves part of the successful achievement of such a society.)

John Young states that

"like most of the worthwhile reforms of the past, the transition to a sustainable economy will be difficult and frustrating — there will be backward steps and blind alleys as well as progress". There will also be differences of opinion to varying degrees as we have seen in the articles by James and Ian. However the airing of these views is of itself refining the debate and influencing mainstream decision makers. As with environmental issues generally, we are now seeing the concepts of growth and sustainability discussed at all levels of government and throughout the community. (Of course we all need to be ever-vigilant to ensure that the real meaning of sustainability is not watered down or corrupted as it becomes part of mainstream policy making and planning!)

It is only by exploring the diversity of views that the environment movement (and I include here the Democrats and other green political activists) will be able to refine and present fully integrated social, economic and environmental policies capable of achieving widespread understanding and support, recognised by James as being necessary for their implementation. Indeed, that is the process the Democrats have been engaged in for the past 12 years.

Heather Jeffcoat
Executive Officer
Australian Democrats

Copies of the policy, 'The Economy, Towards a Sustainable Society', can be obtained by writing to me at 10-12 Brisbane Avenue, Barton, ACT, 2600, phone (062) 731059.

BACKSTAGE

Somehow or another, you are reading another *Chain Reaction*. Thank you for waiting.

We have managed in the last few months to collect some excellent articles which have led to the extra pages of this issue, and perhaps go some way toward explaining its delay.

We have also managed to be students, workers, parents and friends, all of which seemed to take up some of the time we could spend on *Chain Reaction*.

And, of course, something must be said about the creative chaos that surrounds the production of each *Chain Reaction*. With more or less co-ordination, a group of unpaid workers beg, borrow and steal (and sometimes pay for) access to equipment and services to produce the magazine. And then we rush to try to get the magazine mailed out to all our subscribers, including those who have renewed their subscription and have queried us because they haven't yet received the latest copy.

There are few, if any, of the previously promised

design changes to this edition, as we have focused on production first, with any re-design to occur when we have time available.

We will try to do something special for our next issue, which will be number 60. This may include some design changes, but we will also try to include some positive alternatives for environmental change.

The next edition will also include the activist contact list, which is currently being compiled — if you have any information on activist environment groups, please get it to us quickly.

On a sad note, we would like to pass our condolences to the friends and family of Peter Springell, who died recently. We will miss his contributions, which have been regular, well-written and covered a broad range of issues over a number of years. Although the environment movement will continue to bring forward new writers and activists, it is still a great loss when someone as intelligent, committed and articulate as Peter is gone.

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Symposium on social defence

Wollongong, 16-18 February 1990

This symposium is designed both as an introduction to social defence and as an opportunity for activists in the area to meet, share experiences and plan future activities.

In attendance will be Johan Niezing, Professor of Peace Studies at the Free University, Brussels and author of important writings on social defence.

There will be no charge for attendance. Child care available (please give a week's notice). Some billets available, or accommodation can be arranged.

An invitation is extended for expressions of interest in giving talks, organising workshops or nominating items for the agenda.

Phone: Brian Martin — (042) 287860 (home)

(042) 270763 (work)

Alison Rawling — (042) 264497

Organised by Schweik Action Wollongong. Hosted by the Board of Studies, Peace and War Studies, University of Wollongong.

Complete and return to: Brian Martin, STS, University of Wollongong, PO Box 1144, Wollongong, NSW, 2500.

I am interested in attending the Symposium on social defence.

Name

Address

Postcode Telephone

- Please arrange a billet for me if possible
- Please arrange child care for _____ children aged _____.
- Please arrange accomodation for me (about \$20/night), for the nights of _____.
- I would like to present/lead the following talk/workshop: _____

Banning ivory trade to save the elephant

Environmentalists are hailing the decision by the 103-country Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to ban all international trade in ivory.

During the meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland in October, CITES approved a vote, 76 to 11 with four abstentions, to place the African elephant on Appendix One of the Convention, which bans trade in all ivory products. It joins the Asian elephant, already upgraded from Appendix Two, limiting and regulating trade.

However the ban may be undermined by the declaration by Botswana, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique and Burundi that they might file a reservation, which would allow them to sell and export ivory then becoming a sump for illegal ivory which would be laundered and sold as clean ivory.

Two other loopholes of the ban are the exemption of trophy hunting and the local use of meat, skin and even ivory.

Owing to increasing illegal ivory trade, elephant numbers across Africa have more than halved, from 1.3 million a decade ago to 600,000. An estimated 3 million have been slaughtered since 1960.

Zimbabwe and Botswana have proposed selling their ivory jointly and channeling the proceeds into conservation. The proposal includes plans to set up a single auc-

tion floor at which raw ivory from southern Africa would be sold once or twice a year. The auction would be run by a new body, the Southern African Centre for Ivory Marketing (SACIM), which would regulate the marketing of elephant products from these two countries.

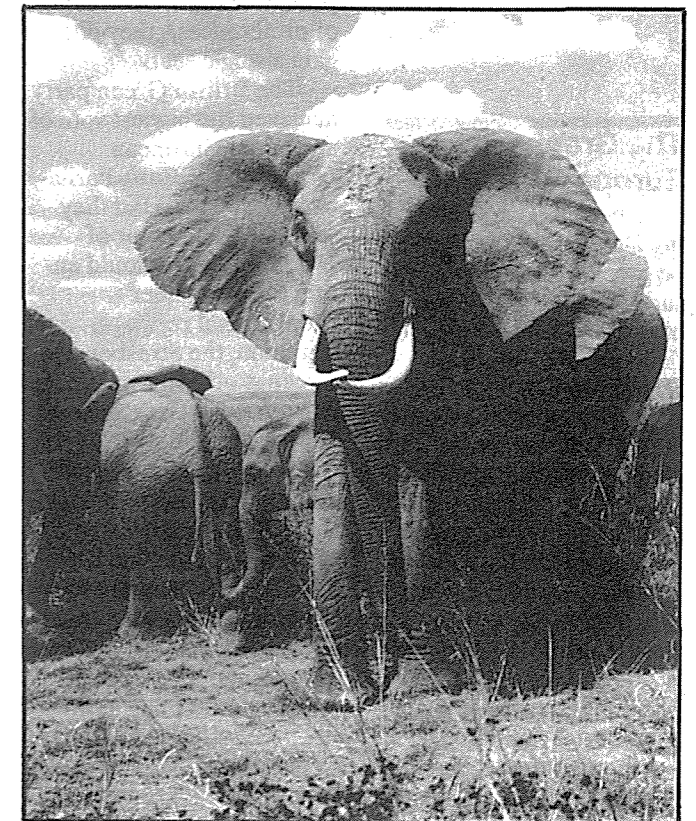
Enforcement of strict regulations to eliminate illegal ivory dealing would mean that only whole tusks would be exported. SACIM would set a quota for each country, and earnings would go to wildlife bodies, minus a levy to cover costs and finance setting up a conservation fund.

But these plans could be frustrated by pressure to refuse imports put by anti-ivory lobbyists on countries like Japan. Until its June decision to restrict imports, Japan was the world's largest ivory market, accounting for about 40 per cent of sales. Before the meeting, Japan intended to vote against the ban. However, endorsement of Japan as host of the next CITES meeting would have made this position politically embarrassing. Japan abstained.

Dealers in Hong Kong — which as a British colony has no voting rights in CITES — were angered by the ban. Hong Kong is now faced with the disposal of its 670 tonne stockpile of tusks. Dealers have argued that they acquired the ivory legally under CITES regulations, and have threatened to sue Britain over the issue.

Others have pointed out that most of the ivory was

EARTH NEWS



probably poached, and that Hong Kong is the centre of the illegal ivory trade. In an effort to clean up its image, Hong Kong earlier this year announced a moratorium on ivory imports. HK authorities have now agreed to abide by the Convention's rules, and may consider compensating private traders.

In spite of a ban on ivory trade within Kenya, its elephants have declined in the last ten years from 65,000 to 17,000. Since a shoot-to-kill policy was introduced a year ago, game wardens have shot more than fifty poachers dead, yet the poaching continues. Even more alarming, in Tanzania 25,000 elephants

in the Selous game reserve have been wiped out in just two years, bringing the number from 55,000 to 29,000.

These countries and their supporters such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) are convinced that anything but a total ban will allow trade to flourish. According to the WWF, illegal trade in wildlife, including live animals, skins, furs and bones is a US\$5 billion a year business, second only to drugs in illegal commerce. With elephant tusks currently trading in Hong Kong at up to \$400 a kilo, ivory is a lucrative business. Source: Dede Esi Amanor, *Third World Network Features/Africa Events*

EARTH NEWS

The Greens in Europe

"The becalmed and faltering Democrats must by now be green with envy over the sudden media prominence of the Greens." A report on the Australian political scene? No, though it well might be. It is the start of an article in *The Guardian* about the recent British result in the elections for members of the European Parliament.

The British Green Party boosted its vote from almost nothing to an average 14.9 per cent of the vote, with a high of 25 per cent in Sussex West, and 23 per cent in the Cotswolds, Hereford, Worcester and Somerset. The Greens did best in areas with a high percentage of middle-class voters and a low proportion of unemployed. In the seats where the Greens did best, the Tory and Democrat

votes were significantly reduced, whereas Labour was unaffected. The Green Party managed to save its deposit in all 78 seats in Britain. However, due to the British first-past-the-post system (no distribution of preferences), they didn't gain a single seat.

The British Green party achieved the highest vote of any of the European Greens in the Euro-Parliament elections. Had they secured the number of seats their votes would entitle them to under proportional representation, the Strasbourg Green grouping would have been the third largest in the European assembly. As it was, the Greens and their allies almost doubled their seats, from 20 to 39. Overall, the parties of the Left and the Greens now command a slim majority in the Parliament. In France, the Greens made it to the European Parliament for the first time. Another notable success was in Italy, where the Greens boosted their vote from 2.5 per cent to 6.2 per cent, guaranteeing them five seats.

Source: *The Guardian Weekly*, *Ontario Green News*.

Here are recent election results from European nations:

	EuroParliament			General Election	
	Votes	Seats	[Prev]	Votes	Seats
UK	14.9	0	0	0.6	0
Germany 8.4	8	7	8.3	42	9
Belgium	13.9	3	2	7.1	2
Luxemburg	6.1	0	0	5.1	2
France	10.6	9	0	0.4	.0
Italy	6.2	5	0	2.6	13
Netherlands	7.0	2	2	3.1	3
Ireland	3.7	0		--	--
Spain	2.0	0		--	--

New Green Party organised in the East Germany

The Greens of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was founded as a party at a conference in late November. The Party has adopted three principles: it calls itself ecological, feminist and non-violent. They see themselves as a political force at the side of all those who advocate democracy and freedom through radical reform. Their founding statement says they regard themselves as part of the Green movement in the GDR and as part of the world-wide Green movement, and in particular the European Green movement.

Efforts are underway to set up a 'Green League' to exist parallel with the Green Party. The Sixth Berlin Ecological Seminar, at which the Party was founded, was largely dominated by a dispute about the founding of either a party or a league. Initially the representatives of ecology groups from all over the country seemed to be more in favour of a grass roots association of all such groups. Supporters of a Green Party argued that this would be fine as far as local efforts were concerned, but that a Green League would play no role in the planned election. This argument eventually carried the day. A Green Party was founded, but a Green League is still to be set up as well, probably in February 1990.

This does not point towards a split among the Greens, though. The Green League is to bring together a variety of groups, among them the well-established Society for Nature and the Environment, church

groups and various local groups, who will continue their practical work. The Green Party, on the other hand, is seeking political responsibility through putting up candidates for election to parliament.

Its main purpose is to work to preserve the natural environment, and the Party advocates an ecological transformation of society as a whole. Such ideas were explained at the founding congress. There should be a radical move away from economic growth secured at the cost of wasted materials and a destroyed environment, and from the Stalinist-style treatment of people, the economy and the environment. Immediate action should be taken in the ecological disaster areas in the south and southeast of the GDR.

The Green Party advocates general and complete disarmament as the way to ensure permanent peace. It rejects violence, chauvinism and racism, and is committed to consistent anti-fascism. As for the Green Party's declared feminist commitment, this appears to be contained in its plea for the unrestricted equality of men and women at all political levels.

The Party supports the process of renewal in the GDR, but warns that short-sighted pressures for swift improvement in the material sphere could lead to the emergence of a society in which the strong and ruthless prosper and the weak go to the wall, and in which waste and a throw-away mentality dominate.

Source: *USA-GDR Data-Bank BBS / Econet*

Dioxins in sanitary products

There are about four million women of menstruating age in Australia, and each year they use 969 million pads, tampons and pantyliners.

A recently formed consumer group, People Against Dioxins in Sanitary Protection (PADS), aims to get these unmentionables on to the list of green issues. PADS have called for a boycott of all sanitary products likely to contain dioxins — Stayfree, Modess, Sure 'n Natural and Kotex pads and Tampax, Fleur, Meds and Carefree tampons.

PADS' concern is that the paper pulp used in sanitary pads is, like most paper pulp, chlorine bleached. Tampons are made from a combination of cotton pulp and rayon, which is derived from wood pulp. Bleaching removes the remnants of lignin, the woody fibre, as well as making pulp white.

Highly toxic oranochlorines, a family of chemical compounds which includes dioxins, are a by-product of this process. Dioxin in pulp mill effluent can enter waterways and may also escape into the environment when paper products are disposed of as waste.

Dioxins are known to accumulate in the food chain and the body. They have been associated with cancers, birth defects, and damage to the immune and reproductive systems. Some scientists believe there is no safe level of exposure. There is no medical agreement about whether or not they can enter the body from sanitary pads or tampons — PADS believes it's better to be safe than sorry.

"We know that dioxins are absorbed through the skin and the vagina is a very vulnerable area — toxic shock syndrome showed us that", said Philomena Murphy from PADS. "Fibres from tampons have been found embedded in the walls of the vagina. Dioxins are very mobile, and we say we should stop using these products until we know just what the risks are".

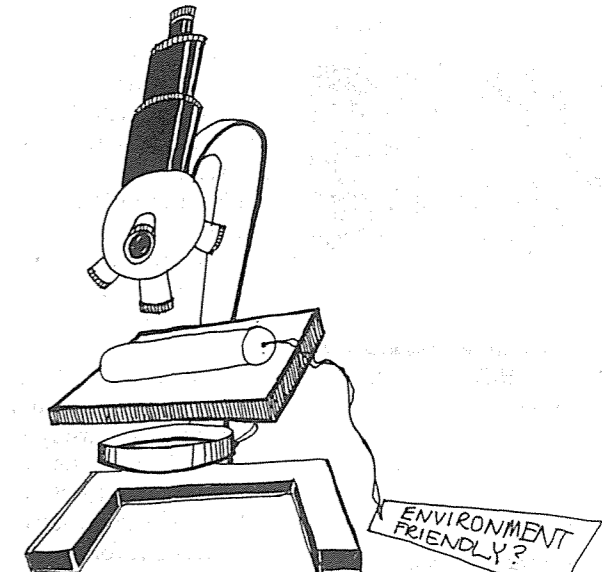
Manufacturers admit that extremely low levels of dioxins have been found in their pulp, but say they are below world standards and there is no danger to the consumer. But according to Robert Cartmel, researcher for Greenpeace's paper and pulp campaign, no studies have been done on the effects of long term exposure to low levels.

PADS is also dubious about these claims. Philomena Murphy refers to a Greenpeace study which found that one drop of dioxin in an Olympic size swimming pool prevented trout eggs from hatching. Murphy questions the integrity of testing by manufacturers in Australia. "PADS believe there should be an independent body testing and setting independent standards", she says.

Cartmel believes dioxins are just the tip of the iceberg.

"Not enough is known about the organochlorines, which might be equally toxic. It's not necessary to bleach with chlorine, other agents like hydrogen peroxide could be used which would not release organochlorines," he says.

These alternative methods are in use. Women wishing to support the boycott can use Libra pads and pantyliners, produced by Sancell. Sancell have



already changed over to non-chlorine bleached pulp, although old stock is still on the shelves.

Non-chlorine bleached tampons are not available. Chlorine is used in the production of rayon, as well as in the bleaching of pulp. In Europe Sancell have eliminated the chlorine bleaching phase, but have yet to find an alternative in the earlier phase of manufacture. According to Chris Gurney from Sancell, efforts are being made to reduce the use of chlorine. Sancell plans to use this new pulp in their Fleur tampons in Australia from next year.

Sancell have followed the lead of their parent company, Swedish based Molnlycke, which introduced chlorine-free pads about four years ago in response to consumer pressure.

In Scandinavia and parts of Europe almost all pads and pantyliners use non-chlorine bleached pulp. In England, where the products were introduced only a few months ago, they already constitute about 20 per cent of the market.

Because of its European connection, Sancell has

ready supplies of non-chlorine bleached pulp and is ahead of the competition. The two other sanitary product manufacturers, Johnson and Johnson and Kimberley Clark say they are looking for sources of non-chlorine bleached pulp, and will use it if they can get it. Both companies are supplied by the US and New Zealand, where pulp companies still use chlorine. They have responded to consumer alarm by improving their effluent management so there is less danger of dioxins getting into the environment.

But, as Robert Cartmel points out, this is only reducing the problem, and we should be aiming to eliminate it. Cartmel sees the sanitary products issue as having broad implications.

"How the dioxin issue is approached will be indicative of just how serious our society is about tackling environmental problems," he says.

For further information: PADS, 18 Paling St, Lilyfield, NSW, 2040 Ph: (02) 568 3114

Source: *Jess Walker, Tribune*

Mandy Graham

EARTH NEWS

Rainforest activists reload timber ship

The Melbourne Rainforest Action Group (RAG) recently attempted to blockade the rainforest timber ship *Arawa Bay* as it travelled up the Yarra River into Melbourne. Two members of the group managed to bow-ride the vessel as it ran the blockade. It was the seventh RAG blockade of a rainforest timber ship in 1989.

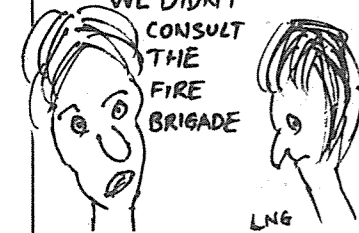
RAG is one of a global network of RAGs campaigning to save what is left of the global rainforest heritage. Melbourne RAG has a deep commitment to the principles of nonviolent struggle; the impact of its campaign so far is ample testimony to the effectiveness of this strategy.

On Saturday 18 November 1989, 80 members of RAG gathered at North

WHY DON'T WE SET IT ALL ON FIRE?



WE DIDN'T CONSULT THE FIRE BRIGADE



Wharf in Melbourne. At 9:40am, as RAG had advised the police and port security authorities several days before, 60 activists climbed the fence and illegally entered Victoria Dock where the latest shipment of rainforest timber from Malaysia was being unloaded from the *Arawa Bay*.

Once inside the fence, RAG members picked up long planks of sawn rainforest timber and carried them 50 metres to the side of the ship where they were stacked ready for reloading. As a result of previous negotiations with the Waterside Workers Federation, the waterside workers stopped work as soon as RAG activists were on the wharf.

Despite a substantial police presence, RAG activists restacked timber for several hours; however, an attempt to reload the timber by building human pyramids against the side of the ship was thwarted by a police blockade.

The group had several meetings involving waterside workers and police and confirmed a decision of the previous week that it would occupy the wharf indefinitely — thus preventing the unloading of the ship. With the media long gone, the police eventually gave us two warnings and then reluctantly made 32 arrests at 2:50pm. Unloading had been delayed for five hours.

Seventeen activists refused a bail condition and spent two days in the watchhouse in solidarity with Penan tribespeople in Malaysia who are in jail for blockading logging roads in their rainforests. RAG activists are due in court 24 January 1990.

Source: Melbourne Rainforest Action Group

Scott Paper project recycled

Scott Paper's decision to withdraw from the \$654 million eucalyptus plantation/woodchipping and pulp mill project has been cheered by environmental and human rights groups world-wide. It was widely held that the project located in Meruake, Western New Guinea (Irian Jaya), would bring environmental devastation to the area, and wreck the lives of 15,000 tribal people living in the 800,000 concession.

But local and international environmental organisations have realised that the story of the Astra-Scott joint-venture has not yet ended. The Indonesian Government is determined to see this highly publicised project go ahead, with or without a foreign partner.

Scott's decision to withdraw took the Indonesians by complete surprise and was not taken lightly. Indeed the government has been dealt a severe blow. The investment — Indonesia's biggest outside the oil and gas sector — had already been included in the Investment Coordinating Board's widely heralded foreign investment figures for 1988.

Scott's explanation for their decision was taken with a pinch of salt by both the government and the environmental and human rights organisations. According to Richard Leaman, President of Scott World-wide, "extensive studies" indicated that "the Company can meet its needs for pulp from other sources".

"Other sources" could mean Scott's planned project with Shell and Citibank at Nacimiento, Chile, and there is also

speculation that the company is interested in Brazil.

The Indonesian Director of Astra-Scott Cellulosa, Barry Kotek, was quoted as saying: "NGO pressure was the only reason why we withdrew."

Government officials agree with this version, Director General of Reforestation and Land Rehabilitation Armana Darsidi attributing the decision to withdraw to "the campaigns ... made by environmentalists and non-governmental organisation executives who claimed the huge forestry project would destroy rich plant genetic resources in the area ...", and to Scott's fears of a consumer boycott.

There are signs that government fury over Scott's withdrawal is being directed towards the organisations who campaigned against the project. As international organisations are beyond their reach, the government is turning on the more vulnerable Indonesian groups. However local groups like SKEPHI and WALHI are already part of the international network and this may restrain the government.

Meanwhile, foreign investors seem to be wary of environment campaigns and have not jumped into the venture yet, so the Indonesian government is encouraging Astra to seek support from other Indonesian companies, and Astra is already negotiating with the government in East Kalimantan for another eucalyptus plantation and pulp project.

Source: *Down to Earth*, No. 6. December 1989 c/- *Survival International*, 310 Edgware Rd, London W2 1DY, UK.

Soviets to get high technology

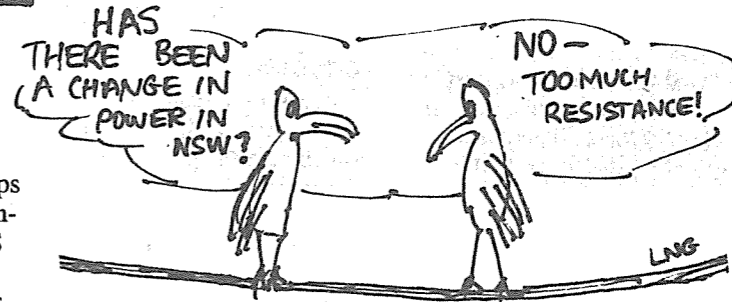
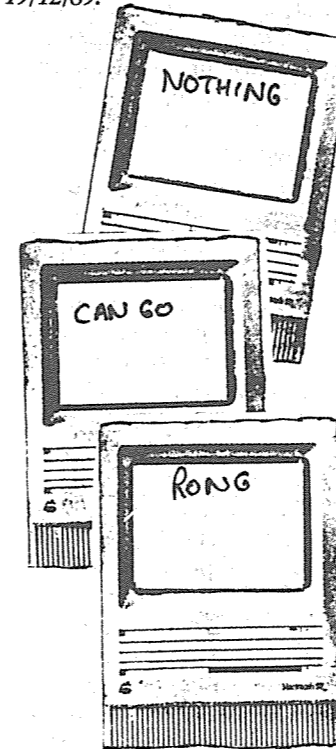
In a reflection of recent political developments in the Soviet Union, and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, the Pentagon has allowed two US companies to export relatively powerful computers to the Soviet Union.

One company, Control Data, is selling six mainframe computers to be used in the Soviet nuclear power program, including a site at Chernobyl.

The Pentagon has not set conditions on the sales, as the companies are doing that themselves, and have included a clause that they be allowed on-site inspections to ensure that the computers are being used solely for the civil nuclear power program.

It is rumoured that there will be a program that displays, in Russian, a greeting: "To err is human, it takes a computer to really foul things up."

Source: *The Australian*, 19/12/89.



Electricity planning in NSW — moving backward into the 1990s

The Electricity Commission of New South Wales (Elcom) has published its 30 year Strategic Plan, entitled *Meeting Customer Demands*. The publication arose from legislation passed by the Wran Government after the McDonnell Inquiry into Elcom's activities. Although there were initially great hopes that the preparation of a 30 year plan would result in a significant improvement in planning at Elcom, and provide for broader community involvement, the Strategic Plan shows that Elcom has changed very little in recent years. The change of Government, the dismantling of the Department of Energy, and the amendments to the legislation which remove the need for including comparative costs of options, have turned the planning process into a procedural rather than a substantive activity.

In contrast to Victoria, where the Government and the State Electricity Commission (SEC) are talking very publicly about the importance of energy conservation, co-generation and renewable energy, and the need for address-

ing the Greenhouse Effect, Elcom barely acknowledges the relevance of any of these considerations to their forward planning. The Plan lists a number of activities to be undertaken in the demand management area, but no specific commitments to actual energy saving programmes are given. The first three demand side options identified are intended to increase demand; they are promotion of Strategic Load Growth, development of an Electricity Supply Marketing Plan, and promotion of further off-peak sales. Nowhere is mention made of the study Elcom commissioned from Deni Green Consulting Services, which found that by 1996, nearly 3000 gigawatt-hours of energy savings were possible from efficiency improvements costing one cent per kilowatt hour or less.

The Plan includes about a page on the consultation process, which involved several seminars and the opportunity to comment on the draft plan (which was actually not released to the public until six months after it had been completed).

Elcom's understanding of public consultation and the sincerity of their commitment to it can be judged by its failure to even mention possible retirement of Vales Point A and Tallawarra power stations in their draft plan despite the legis-

lative requirement to include retirement and refurbishment options. (Tallawarra was closed in July and Vales Point A drastically cut back, with complete shutdown scheduled for 1990.)

The recent Government decision to complete the Mount Piper power station, despite the current large surplus of power and the availability of cheaper demand management options, means that business as usual will prevail in Elcom for a number of years to come. The only demand management program included in its "Preferred Sequence to Meet Expected Capacity Need 1988 to 2000 Based on Expect Growth Rate" is 200 megawatts of curtailable supplies, that is power, generally to industrial customers, which can be interrupted when Elcom generation is overloaded. (Companies which sign curtailment contracts get discounts on their power supplies.)

Despite the inclusion of a number of colourful graphs and charts, Elcom's Strategic Plan is a depressing document. It shows, only too clearly, that despite public concern about the Greenhouse Effect and awareness of the need for energy conservation, Elcom has little intention of taking account of such concerns in its actual planning. Presumably only Government leadership will cause Elcom to plan as if it were entering the 1990s instead of the 1950s, and that type of leadership has not been much in evidence in New South Wales during the past year.

Source: *Friends of the Earth Sydney*

Stanthorpe

Eighteen people attended the first meeting of FOE Stanthorpe (Qld) August 10 1989.

Topics discussed were:

- Recycling – encourage local council to provide organised collection points and transportation to Brisbane. Encourage more businesses, schools and government departments to purchase APM *ReRight*.
- Burning at local dump – encourage council to refrain from burning plastics and other toxic materials.
- Public surveys – possible health risks from using chemical sprays (Stanthorpe is a predominate fruit growing area). Obtain doctors' support and provide questionnaires; local community's attitude to recycling and need for council support; need for unbleached paper products supplied by our supermarkets.
- Education – involve school-children to participate in as many of our projects as possible, e.g. nominate a high school representative to both provide and network ideas, tree planting etc.
- Organise farming education, or rather "re-farming" alternative education.
- Increase public awareness as best we can i.e. photocopied leaflets, local article in newspaper, regular public meetings.
- Give support to international as well as local issues.

Contact: Lynn Alexander, c/- Post Office, The Summit, Stanthorpe Qld 4377, tel: (076) 83 2245

Perth

Friends of the Earth Perth is lobbying the Federal Government to ensure that all taxation laws reflect a commitment to the conservation of resources. For example, they claim that recycling of

soft drink bottles will be discouraged as a result of actions of the Australian Tax Office. Until now, the Commissioner of Taxation has issued rulings to soft drink and cordial manufacturers and wholesalers, allowing them to deduct from the wholesale selling price the cost or value of reusable or "second hand" bottles and the cost of their recovery and reuse.

On September 1, 1989 all such rulings were withdrawn. The selling price for tax purposes will now include the costs of recovering and reusing bottles such as costs of crating, classifying, storing, sorting, washing and cleaning.

Friends of the Earth has called on the Federal Government to review all tax laws so as to encourage conservation of sources rather than encouraging a throw-away mentality. They state that the Sales Tax Act should be immediately amended to provide that: no sales tax is payable on any recycled or re-used components, and; that a waste tax is imposed on all throw-away products.

The Income Tax Act also encourages businesses to throw away valuable equipment by allowing write-offs only if the equipment is scrapped. The sales tax changes mean that companies like Schweppes and Coca-Cola will inevitably phase out bottles in favour of plastic containers. Plastic containers are opposed by Friends of the Earth because they become rubbish. Arguing that such chemicals are grossly underpriced and should be reserved for more important long term uses.

Plastic containers already make up 2 per cent of Australia's rubbish. Some companies even mark their plastic containers as *RECYCLABLE* when there are no facilities or commercial operations for recycling these containers.

The changes mean the cost of soft drinks and cordials which are sold in bottles will rise. This will add to the hardship already suffered by many in the community.

The changes to these taxation laws also contradicts the Federal Government's Environmental Policy. The Tax Office has acted without thinking of the wider consequences and the office of the Federal Minister for the Environment was not aware of the changes until informed by Friends of the Earth.

The changes have developed as a result of a reinterpretation of the Sales Tax Act. This reinterpretation effectively means that a sales tax will be imposed on second hand goods. It also contradicts an express exemption for bottles for repeated use where the manufacturer does not part with ownership. This exemption also discouraged recycling because it encouraged brand-marked bottles.

Consequently, the dominant manufacturers can control the re-purchase of their own brand marked bottles, preventing recycling companies from offering the bottles to other manufacturers at a better price. FOE Perth is also calling for a ban on brand marked bottles and the standardisation of all to allow a free recycling market.

South Australia

FOE Adelaide voted in October to change itself from a Friends of the Earth group to a Green Party in South Australia. Bob Lamb, contesting a hastily-called State election, won 10,000 votes as a candidate for the Legislative Council.

The other FOE groups in SA have agreed to continue the running of the FOE national meeting in Adelaide, which will be held 20-21 January, preceded by a two-day recycling conference 18-19 January. Contact *Chain Reaction* (08) 212 6251, for further details.

The Adelaide Uni FOE helped to create a position of Environment Officer in the Students' Association, along with funding for campaigns. Jo Dyer

and Ian Steele both active within Adelaide University FOE are the first incumbents. They can be contacted on (08) 228 5383.

Meanwhile, plans are afoot to start another metropolitan FOE group in Adelaide – operating by consensus and concentrating on urban issues. Currently, monthly general meetings are held at the World Workshop, 155 Pirie St, Adelaide. For more information about FOE (Nouveau), contact Trevor Webb (08) 373 1634 or Jasmine Payget (08) 495 376.

Fitzroy Recycling Conference

FOE (Fitzroy) Recycling Campaign held a successful conference on Recycling and beverage container deposit legislation (BCDL) in early September. The conference decided to initiate national campaigns to: introduce deposit legislation in each state, and; re-introduce refillable glass milk bottles.

The conference agreed that waste management should be carried out in accordance with the principles of waste minimisation, in the following order: (i) reduction at source; (ii) reuse of products without reprocessing – e.g. refilling bottles; (iii) recycling of materials to manufacture the same product – e.g. recycling paper; (iv) reprocessing of materials for different products – e.g. plastic wood substitute from plastic bottles or bags; and (v) finally, recovery of energy and resources in materials – e.g. waste to energy incineration.

The distinction between recycling – which creates a closed waste cycle in which resources are saved – and reprocessing – whereby the materials are turned into new products which may create new markets for those materials – was considered important.

Arising from the Conference was the successful national Action Day for Milk Bottles. In Melbourne a rally was

held in the City Square and speakers called for a week long boycott of milk cartons and plastic bottles. In rural Victoria, milk cartons were dumped on the steps of the local MP in Gisborne and at Sandhurst Industries' dairy in Bendigo.

There will be another recycling conference in Adelaide on January 18-19. Contact Fran Macdonald, FOE Fitzroy (03) 419 8700 for details.

Maitland

FOE Maitland, formed earlier this year, have been very busy in their local community: running stalls and displays, preparing reports for the local council, visiting schools and community groups, writing a weekly "Environmentally Aware" column in the newspaper, planting trees and producing an informative monthly newsletter, not to mention the regular meetings and guest speakers. For further information: FOE Maitland, 34 Eurimbla St, Thornton, NSW, 2322

FOE International

Five new groups have joined the FOE International network as associate members: *Arche* – East Germany (GDR); *BUND* – West Germany; *Environment Management Society* – Pakistan; *Fundashon Defensa Ambiental* – Curacao (Dutch Antilles); and *Friends of the Earth* – Sierra Leone.

Paul McCartney has dedicated his new world tour to the international environment movement, especially to FOE International. During his concerts, he calls upon the audience to fight for a world without environmental destruction, and points out FOE groups around the world. Room is also provided at the concerts for FOE stalls and literature.

The introduction to the tour book says: people need to no longer accept that the destruction of the world is inevitable, they need to act.

VICTORIA

- FOE Fitzroy
222 Brunswick St
Fitzroy, Vic, 3065
Ph: (03) 419 8700
- Organic Fruit & Vegetable Co-op
as above
Ph: (03) 419 9926

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

- FOE Adelaide University
C/- Clubs Association
Adelaide University,
Adelaide, SA, 5000
Ph: (08) 228 5852
- FOE Willunga
PO Box 438
Willunga, SA, 5172
- FOE Williamstown
C/- Post Office
Williamstown, SA, 5351
- FOE Flinders University
Students' Association
Bedford Park, SA, 5042
Ph: (08) 275 2614

NEW SOUTH WALES

- FOE Blue Mountains
156 Megalong St
Leura, NSW, 2780
- FOE Maitland
45B Elgin St
Maitland, NSW, 2320
Ph: (049) 34 2094
- FOE Newcastle
15 Sketchley
New Lambton, NSW, 2305
Ph: (049) 52 3385
- FOE Sydney
PO Box A474
Sydney, NSW, 2001
Ph: (02) 211 3953

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

- FOE Perth
PO Box 23
Northbridge, WA, 6000
Ph: (09) 328 3155

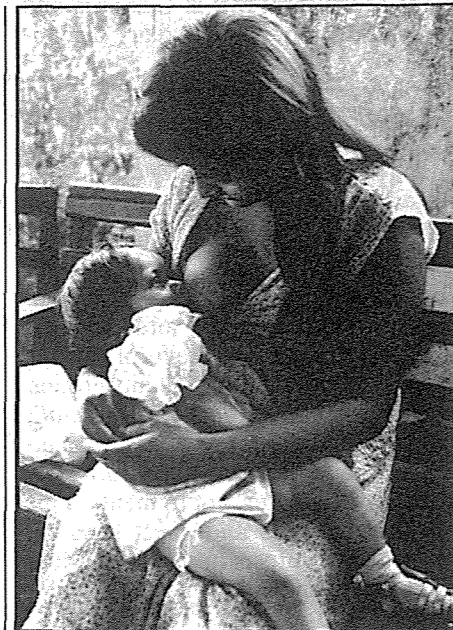
QUEENSLAND

- FOE Brisbane
10 Rowton St
Holland Park, Qld, 4121
Ph: (07) 349 4436

NATIONAL

- Chain Reaction
GPO Box 90
Adelaide, SA, 5001
Ph: (08) 212 6251

Battle of the bottle



Advocacy groups around the world called off their seven year boycott of Nestle products in 1984 when the Swiss-based multinational agreed to abide by an international baby milk marketing code. But five years later, Nestle continues to supply hospitals and health clinics with free infant formula. A second Nestle boycott, begun last October, is gaining strength. *Fauziah Varusay, writing for Consumer Lifelines, reports.*

When breast-feeding advocates in the United States and Germany announced a second Nestle boycott last October, it

was with angry resignation. They had little choice.

Nestle, the largest baby-food manufacturer in the world, has continued to violate international baby-milk marketing recommendations by supplying free formula under the guise of charity to hospitals and maternities, especially in the Third World. Groups monitoring the corporation's activities say Nestle's marketing tactics have become more subtle, but are as effective as ever.

The call has gone out from the Minneapolis-based Action for Corporate Responsibility (Action) for a renewed campaign against Nestle and other companies. Groups in the UK, Sweden, Norway and Ireland joined the boycott in March this year. Groups in another 20 countries have pledged their support.

The first seven-year boycott of Nestle products was called off in 1984, when boycotting groups were satisfied that the company would keep its promise to end its unethical marketing practices. Millions of babies in developing countries have died from malnutrition and diarrhoea because mothers who had neither the money nor hygienic conditions to prepare infant formula safely have been led to believe through the promotional tactics of baby milk companies that it was superior to breast-feeding. Nestle was targeted because it controls most of the market.

The practice of giving free supplies is the industry's "most damaging entry into the lucrative market," says Action's national chairman Douglas Johnson. "It creates the impression that health professionals recommend it. And, of course, once bottle feeding starts, breast milk begins to dry up. When mother and baby leave the hospital

there is a physical need to buy more formula — both are hooked."

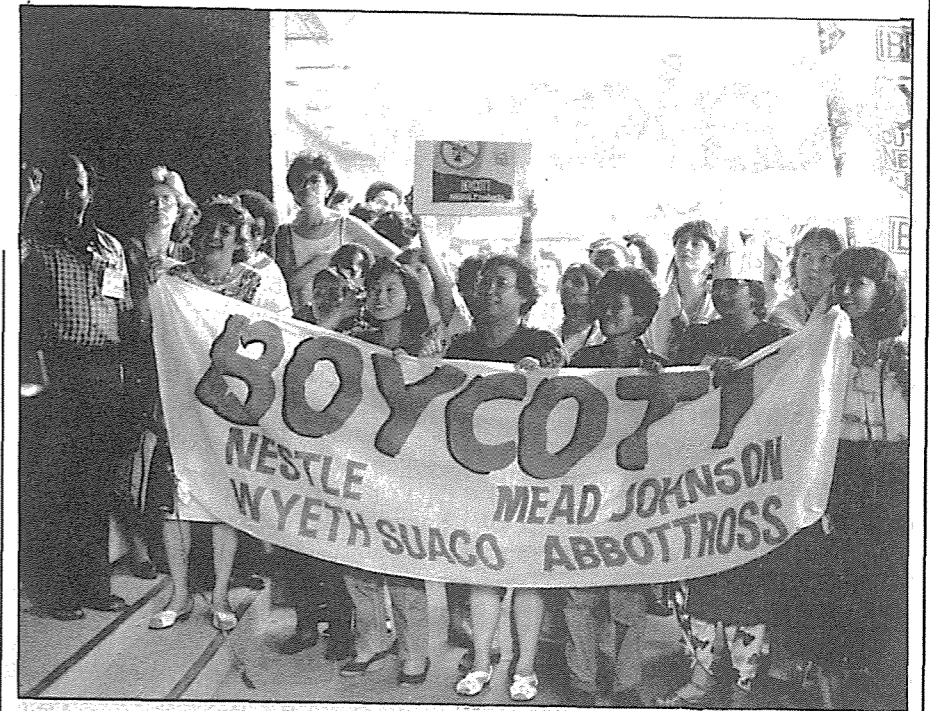
Reports of Nestle and Wyeth practices by the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) show that free baby milk substitutes are still being pushed in hospitals and maternity wards in over 20 countries, particularly in Africa and Asia.

According to UNICEF's 1988 annual report, bottle-fed babies run a 15 to 25 times higher risk of sickness and death from diarrhoea in their first six months than children who have the immunological protection of an exclusive breast milk diet.

Nestle appears nervous about the renewed boycott. The company hired the New York public relations firm Ogilvy & Mather to help it fight the negative backlash from the boycott. In March, the agency produced a strategy called Proactive Neutralization, a plan that recommended, among other things, infiltrating groups that are organising and supporting the boycott. Ogilvy & Mather also suggested that Nestle cultivate a more positive image through news programs for high school students, funding foster care for children with AIDS, a tutor-by-phone homework helpline system, and a racial awareness program.

Nestle says it rejected the recommendations, but Nestle critics wonder if that's the end of it. The company should devote more attention to the well-being of infants than to its corporate image, they say

Fauziah Varusay is a Malaysian journalist who specialises in issues relating to women and food. She is based in Penang, Malaysia.



IBFAN members demonstrating outside Nestle in Manila, Philippines

Breast feeding code of Practise

The WHO/UNICEF Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes was adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 1981, but it wasn't until three years later that Nestle agreed to comply with its conditions. These are to stop advertising to the public; stop giving free samples; eliminate baby pictures from labels; place warnings on packages and promotional literature about the potential hazards of bottle feeding; and to stop donating free supplies of formula as a sales inducement.

Bottle feeding is still on the rise in developing countries. The US\$107.4 million spent on infant formula imports into the Philippines in 1984 was enough to feed 252,000 poor urban families in metro Manila for ten months. BUNSO, the country's national breast-feeding promotion group, estimates that infant formula consumption is increasing by 15 to 20 per cent a year in the Philippines, despite deteriorating economic conditions.

And in Pakistan, where 47 per cent of households earn the equivalent of only US\$21 a month, formula feeding of a three month old infant takes 40 per cent of a family's wages. According to the country's Federal Bureau of Statistics, national imports of powdered milk more than doubled from US\$2 million in 1982-3 to US\$4.4 million in 1987-8.

Pressure groups say breast-feeding will catch on only when the formula industry abides by the WHO code. "Underfunded hospitals are in many ways innocent victims of corporate promotional schemes," says a Baby Milk Action (BMAC) briefing paper on the Nestle boycott. "When free supplies of formula are no longer provided to maternity wards, formula will be treated as any other food. The hospital, therefore, will have a practical incentive to encourage breast-feeding."

Threats to Kakadu

A National Park is affected by more than that which is contained in its boundaries. Kakadu National Park contains almost an entire ecosystem, and Friends of Kakadu argue that uranium mining operations, officially outside the Park, are akin to cancer.

Consider a melanoma or skin cancer. A small spot, a blemish, hardly anything at all. Yet, if you had one you'd probably be worried — very worried. Why? Because you'd know it's not just a speck of grime that can be washed off, or a stick-on patch. Through connections with your lymph system and blood stream it is linked to every part of your body and — in a malignant state — has the capacity to cripple your vital functions and cause death. This may not happen overnight. In terms of your life it could take a very long time to become malignant, or it might never amount to anything at all. You could leave it there, and hope that it wouldn't develop further, but for most people this is not the sort of risk they'd feel comfortable with. Your body, after all, is a pretty special sort of place.

In the Top End of the Northern Territory there is a park named Kakadu National Park. An area has to be a pretty special sort of place to become a National Park. Very few National Parks are judged so special that they gain World Heritage listing. Kakadu is a World Heritage National Park.

One of the most unique features of Kakadu is that, ecologically, it's close to being a self-contained province, encompassing nearly the entire catchments of the Alligator Rivers

which run through it. So it's very like an independent, living super-organism, like a human body only much more complex. Of necessity it is big — huge — an outstanding example of the preservation of northern Australia's heritage for future generations. All Australians should feel immensely proud of it.

Presently, there is one mine in Kakadu. It is a uranium mine at Ranger, near Jabiru. On the map of the Park it's a small spot, a blemish, hardly anything at all. It has been argued, technically, that the mine is not part of Kakadu. This is akin to drawing a line around a skin cancer and arguing that it is no longer part of your body. Through connections with water and wind, and plant and animal life, the mine is intimately linked to all the vital life support systems in the surrounding Park. Thankfully, the operation is heavily regulated and the mining company is under continuous scrutiny to ensure that harmful levels of mining by-products don't escape into the Park. So is there anything to worry about?

The risk you take with a skin cancer is usually a long term risk: you might not see harmful effects for 20-30 years. It's the same of the mine in Kakadu, but 'long term' takes on a whole new dimension. In terms of the life of the Park you need to gaze 200-300 years into the future, maybe longer, to harmful effects you certainly won't have to deal with.

One long term problem that not many people seem to be paying attention to, or taking seriously, is weeds. The Ranger mine lease is a haven for multitudes of introduced weedy plants. They thrive in disturbed environments and most probably couldn't live anywhere else, but there's always one or two that show a bit of unwanted initiative. Mission Grass *Pennisetum polystachyon* is one such species. It's an

aggressive tall grass that has taken to undisturbed areas in the Ranger lease with alarming efficiency, displacing native plants as it spreads. Its wind-dispersed seeds surely won't stop at the mine lease perimeter fence, so before very long Kakadu is going to inherit what could be a major biological headache that may take generations to get rid of. The National Park Service in Kakadu is only just keeping ahead of its existing weed problems and doesn't need to be encumbered with any more.

Another long term problem relates to the toxic substances being so carefully kept out of the Park today. Don't be misled, they aren't magically disappearing, they're merely being stored, stock-piled, in an enormous tailings dam. When the mining stops, this huge body of waste will be either buried in a pit, or worse, be covered where it is. Either way, after the mining company and the supervisory authorities have gone, the entombed tailings will be left sitting there, possibly unattended, a toxic time bomb strapped to the heart of Kakadu. Regardless of how stable the retention structure for the tailings dam is claimed to be, decade upon decade of exposure, to what is one of the most extreme climates in Australia, will eventually pierce it. This is a certainty. The tailings will ooze into aquifers or wash into waterways. It will then do the damage that is clearly unacceptable and being prevented today. The life support systems of Kakadu National Park will one day cop the brunt of the tailings from the Ranger mine. It is definitely a big worry to have a mine in Kakadu.

This article was prepared by Friends of Kakadu, PO Box 402, Jabiru, NT, 0886. They would be happy for this article to be reprinted in newsletters and magazines.

More inroads in Kakadu

A new all weather mining road is proposed which will give access from the proposed Jabiluka mining operation to the existing Arnhem Highway at Jabiru East. More than three kilometres (23 per cent) of this 13.5 km road works proposal is planned to go through Kakadu National Park. The remainder would pass through the unmined northern part of the Ranger Project area.

The project has been proposed jointly by the Northern Territory Government through its Transport and Works Department and the Pancontinental Mining Company.

There has not been any recent Environmental Impact Study on this proposed mining road cutting through parts of Stage I and Stage II of the World Heritage Kakadu National Park. The proposal seems to pre-empt the ALP Uranium Policy Review by providing an all weather access road to the proposed Pancontinental uranium mine.

Environmental issues

The proposed road will bulldoze a fifty metre wide strip through Kakadu National Park, devastating approximately sixteen hectares of this World Heritage Area. The location, size, impacts and rehabilitation of borrow pits is of major concern and has not been addressed by the N.T. Government even at this late stage.

The road alignment will open up vast areas not previously touched, destroying the wilderness values of the towering escarpment and outliers. The development of mining infrastructure, which is clearly one of the motives for Pancontinental Uranium's involvement in the road construction, is not compatible with the magnificent wilderness landscapes in this area.

The new road will provide year round access to the north of the Park, but the effect of tourists on the major visitor destinations and ecosystems north of the Magela Creek has not been considered. This is also a major concern of Aboriginal Traditional Owners who live in this northern section, and who see the land, in the midst of the vital growing season, being deprived of the 'rest' that is necessary for it to recover from visitor impact.

Social issues

There are a number of groups of people whose lives will be substantially altered by this construction, not only those who traditionally own the land the road will pass over.

There needs to be effective consultation with all affected inhabitants of the area. Some residents of an outstation had not been shown the proposed route and did not know about the road until they saw a backhoe digging holes in the Magela Creek in search of foundation material for the large high level Magela bridge only a kilometre from their outstation doorstep.

All year access will impact upon people living at Cannon Hill, the East Alligator, Oenpelli, as well as those living in smaller outstations (some less than a kilometre from the new road). These people will now have to suffer the pressure of sharing their country with thousands of tourists for twelve months of the year instead of the present seven months. These are not minor effects, but substantial incursions into the social fabric of communities already stressed by the intrusion of western culture. The 1987 Fox Report recommended measures to ensure "that Aboriginal people can remain sufficiently able to live according to their own lifestyle on their land, without intrusion or interference from others." (Second Report page 233) The current seasonally imposed isolation from tourists and the township of Jabiru goes some part of the way to meeting this objective. Likewise the Kakadu Plan of Management (p52) reflected traditional owner wishes and concerns by stating unambiguously that the Oenpelli road should not provide all weather access to the East Alligator. If the road proposal is approved in its current form, then the traditional owner wishes reflected in the Plan of Management will be over-ridden. The Plan specifies the sealing of the road surface and the construction of causeways, not all weather access.

Consequential developments

The completion of this road would facilitate the mining of the Jabiluka site by Pancontinental, as the road is essential infrastructure for such a development. It is not sufficient to consider this current proposal without taking into account the sequential developments which are intended for the future.

Our group firmly believes that the Pancontinental Jabiluka mine should not be permitted on the edge of the sensitive Magela Creek wetlands. The Jabiluka Project area, excised from the Park by the then Fraser Government, should be handed to the Kakadu National Park.

Attention needs to be drawn to the exploration activities about fifteen kilometres from the road, adjacent to the border of Kakadu and Arnhemland. It is obvious that pressure would be exerted on the Government to allow expansion of exploration and mining access roads from the Pancontinental project area to service these exploration areas. These sequential developments would be assisted by this mining road, and may have future impacts on Kakadu National Park and its people.

There should be a new and thorough Environment Impact Statement prepared which addresses the above issues, and which includes a comprehensive Social Impact Assessment, before any further development of this road construction is allowed. The road project should cease pending this review.

Please write to: The Hon R. J. Hawke — Prime Minister; Senator Richardson — Minister for the Environment; or your local Federal member of parliament; all c/- Parliament House, Canberra, ACT, 2600.

Coronation Hill sellout?

In October, the Federal Cabinet decided to defer mining in Kakadu Stage III for twelve months. However, Senator Richardson says Coronation Hill could go ahead eventually.

The so-called "conservation zone" includes the South Alligator River catchment area. The Cabinet decision returns 2,200 square kilometers back to Stage III of the park. The mineral deposits at Coronation Hill and El Sherana were not returned. These deposits are on the South Alligator River which feeds Kakadu's wetlands.

Pat Jessen interviewed Elena Eldridge, environmentalist in the Northern Territory, about what the decision means to the Jaowyn custodians of the Coronation Hill region.

PJ: Elena what has been the response by conservationists to the Cabinet decision?

EE: It seems the mainstream conservation movement is happy there is now another year added in which we have to fight. From my point of view this is an odd attitude considering the recent meeting when conservationists pledged support to the Jaowyn in their fight to stop any more mining and exploration.

We have to look very closely at the social disruption that mining and explo-

ration is causing to the Jaowyn. They are under enormous pressure from mining companies, from the Land Councils and the Government to agree to exploration and mining. They simply can't; they remain totally opposed to mining activities. They are devastated by the decision. It means one more year of social disruption bringing them closer to cultural and physical extinction.

PJ: I imagine that the custodians of Coronation Hill are having a lot of difficulty with having another 12 months dealing with governments and BHP

EE: Yes, a further year to enable more adequate assessment on the area. So much study and scientific survey of the area has already been done; its proven that any mining activity in that area will affect the country and the wetlands downstream.

The implications don't bear thinking about. Also from the Jaowyn viewpoint they have proven this is their country; they are custodians to that country. The proof is shown by the 14 other tribes, linked to that country through ceremony, who are also unanimous in their opposition to mining or exploration in the area.

PJ: So what was the outcome of the recent meeting between the Jaowyn and conservationists?

EE: The conservationists pledged total opposition to mining and exploration and support for the Jaowyn. I think the Jaowyn are having difficulty with the lack of action since the deferral decision - it wasn't really a decision. There doesn't seem to be much conservationist support for the Jaowyn claim for land and sacred sites. So the Jaowyn are planning their own action. They hope conservationists will join them in trying to force a Government decision before the next election.

PJ: It's not unusual for an exploration site to become a minesite overnight once given the green light. What is happening at Coronation Hill?

EE: It's preparation for mining. They have built benches around the Hill and I believe building the tailings dam has begun. The country is suffering terrible degradation. Silt and soil are going into the South Alligator already.

That is not even looking at the cultural and social disruption that exploration activity is having.

You have to understand Aboriginal Law — the custodians of part of the country are responsible for anything that happens to that country. They are responsible to other groups linked to that country.

If that country is damaged in any way, those custodians are responsible. They have the pay back system — if the custodians fall down in protecting that country they are paid back. That could mean death. So they are looking down the barrel of a gun.

PJ: What is the process now?

EE: The traditional owners and tribal people of Arnhem Land, who are linked with the Jaowyn and the Bula site, are preparing to take their own actions to try and force a decision as soon as possible. They do not want any more consultation with the mining companies or government, there is no point.

They just want a decision not to mine and for no more exploration in the area.

One proposal is to undertake some rehabilitation of the area during the wet when no exploration can take place, planting trees and fixing up areas.

It is time for the conservation movement to embrace Land Rights as part of their program. This is a Human Rights issue as much as it is a conservation issue. The two are inextricably linked.

Uranium Market Cools

How to make a profit on uranium *without* mining it

The price of Uranium has dropped so low that it is often more expensive to mine it than buy it. The official Australian minimum price is almost three times that on the world markets. FOE's John Hallam suggests a solution.

Years ago, when uranium prices started to falter, cartoonist Bruce Petty did a cartoon of the then minister for minerals and energy, Doug Anthony. Doug was depicted in the process of selling Australia's soul to the devil for thirty pieces of silver. The devil however, wasn't particularly interested, because even then, there was a uranium glut on. Anthony, determined to sell Australia's soul, was saying "I'll take fifteen..."

This cartoon, though dated, sums up the dilemma that faces Anthony's successor, Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, John Kerin. Since Whitlam, Australia has operated a 'floor price' system for uranium exports. Australia has similar systems for wheat, coal, iron ore, etc. The idea is not to permit export prices for particular commodities to dip below a certain minimum, and all contracts are supposed to incorporate this floor price. Floor prices have particular relevance where Australian prices have the potential to force down the market price for a commodity globally — as they do for uranium, as well as wheat, coal, etc.

However, both long term contract prices and 'spot' prices for uranium have long dipped below the US \$31/lb uranium floor price that has been in place for years. In May last year, spot prices were US \$15.40/lb. By May '89, they had dropped to \$9.85/lb, and they are now round \$9.80/lb, and don't seem poised to make a comeback. Long term contracts have been affected by the low spot prices, and though there's the odd Japanese or Korean contract for around \$30/lb, Saskatchewan, Australia's main competitor, is selling at an average of \$18-19/lb, and European utilities are offering \$16-17/lb for long term supply.

Although Canadian mining giant CAMECO, (recently formed by the merger and privatisation of Eldorado Nuclear and the Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation) is saying it won't sell 'on spot' at the present low prices, and has cut its workforce by 20 per cent and closed down its Rabbit Lake mine and mill for 6 months, and although some US producers talk about boycotting the market, there is an awful lot of what is called 'inventory' sloshing around.

Excess Uranium

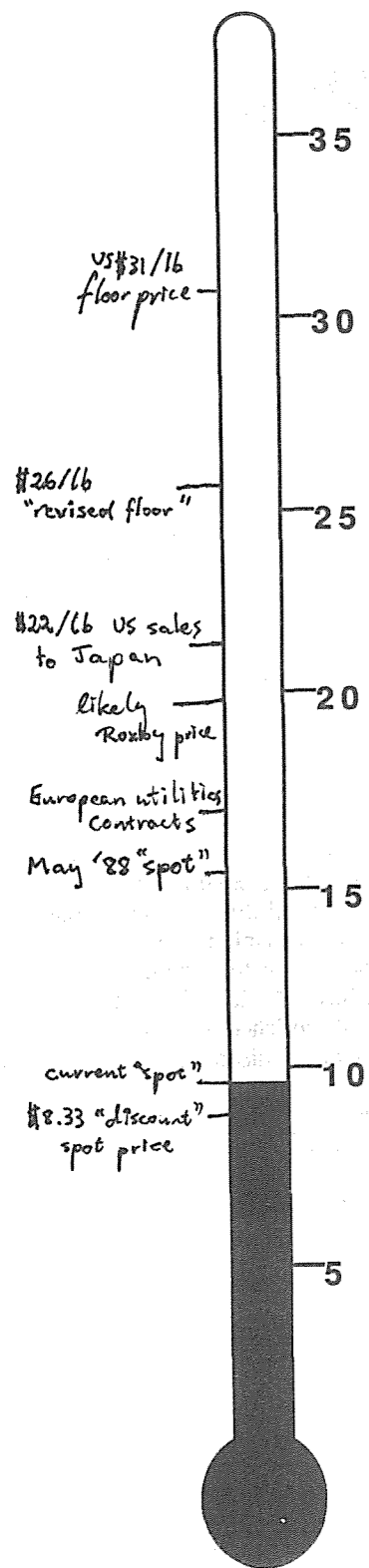
'Inventory' is uranium that the owner doesn't need. For example, uranium bought for a plant in the US years ago, by a utility that subsequently cancelled that plant. West German utility RWE, a 6.25 per cent shareholder in ERA, has 10 years worth of 'inventory' for its Mulhiem Kärerlich PWR, while that plant is closed indefinitely by court

order for re-licensing. Particularly in the US, utilities with thousands of tonnes worth of 'inventory' have tried to get rid of it by any means possible at 'we'll pay you to take it away' prices. Current inventories held by miners, utilities and traders like NUEXCO and NUKEM as well as governments like Australia, come to between 150,000 and 175,000 tonnes. Annual demand is about 45,000 tonnes/year (t/y). According to the OECD, there is a 2,500t shortfall between demand and supply. Inventory is enough to fill it for 30 years, if stockpiles are halved.

As if all this were not enough, both the Soviet Union and China have now appeared on the uranium market, with the Soviet Union's Techsnabexport selling off enriched uranium from scrapped weapons at discounted prices to US and

“ ERA has signed contracts with about a dozen US utilities ...

... to supply uranium for well below ” the floor price ”



European utilities, and the Chinese supplying about 2000t/y to a number of European and US utilities at ultra-cheap prices.

All this has put the pressure onto Olympic Dam and ERA. ERA in particular has gotten itself into an embarrassing position, with contracts with US utilities that are 'spot-related'. In other words, ERA has signed contracts with about a dozen US utilities that require it to supply uranium for well below the floor price.

This is hardly surprising: ERA has more US contracts than any others, and though it has insisted that they are floor-price, US utilities have said firmly that they will not even consider purchasing uranium for \$31/lb, when they can get it for \$10-15lb. Already, rumours abound in the authoritative uranium supply journal *Nuclear Fuel*, that ERA has evaded Australian government floor price requirements by buying on the spot market, and using what it has purchased to fulfil its long-term US contracts. ERA denies this, but when its denials are examined in detail, we find that ERA has only denied selling Australian uranium for less than US \$31/lb - and industry sources talk confidently about ERA entering into arrangements with low-cost US producer Malapai Resources for 'a series of spot deals'.

At today's prices of US \$9.80-85 on spot, or even at last year's spot-price of \$15.40/lb, (the price of many current long-term contracts), it's a whole lot cheaper to buy on spot than it is to actually mine uranium. Buying on spot at last year's prices of \$15.40/lb, to fulfil last year's ERA contract with KEPCO of \$41/lb (now renegotiated to \$31/lb) would be far more profitable than mining and selling to KEPCO. At \$10/lb, it's a whole lot more tempting, and the majority of erstwhile uranium producers are in fact reported to be doing this - acting as traders like NUEXCO, rather than as producers.

ERA's embarrassment with its US contracts is compounded by the problems it's had in renegotiating contracts with its European and Japanese shareholder-customers.

Already, ERA's largest German shareholder-customer, utility RWE, have indicated that they will terminate their ERA contracts from the end of 1990, whatever decision is taken on

floor price. ERA's other West German shareholder, Saarberg Interuran, relinquished 1.25 per cent of its 3.5 per cent share of ERA to French government-owned giant Cogema; then 75 per cent of Saarberg Interuran was sold off to Cogema. ERA's only remaining West German shareholder-customer is Urangessellschaft, with 4 per cent.

ERA's Japanese customers, the Kansai, Kyushu and Shikoku power companies, have all been offered cheap Chinese uranium, (turned down because they already have far too much), and have large 'political' contracts with a group of cheap US producers for around \$22/lb. Japanese demand is "fully supplied" to 1995, and Japanese utilities have uranium to spare until the year 2000. ERA had hoped to renegotiate for at least US \$26/lb with them, but they have been less than enthusiastic.

New Contracts

There's no way ERA can obtain new contracts for the current floor price, and it is unable to negotiate renewals of old contracts with shareholder-customers for more than US \$26/lb, and will probably have to settle for less. ERA claims that it has successfully renegotiated with its customers, but agreement seems to have been for well below US \$31/lb. ERA is therefore pulling out all stops to get Kerin to lower, modify, or abandon the government floor price.

But abandoning the floor price or drastically lowering it will raise its own problems. Abandonment of the floor price in particular, would mean that ERA and Olympic Dam would have to accept the same 'spot-related' contracts that are being written now by US and

" at today's prices, it's a whole lot cheaper to buy on spot than it is to actually mine uranium "

responsibility to our endeavour. Australia assesses 30 percent of the world's low cost uranium reserves. Our exports are much smaller in proportion than this resource base would suggest they might be. There are clearly opportunities for increasing our level of activity in uranium mining and export with substantial consequent benefits to our balance of payments.

An increased involvement by Australia in supplying uranium would bring with it enhanced controls of this material through adherence to strict safeguard conditions. In this way, Australia can make a positive contribution to strengthening the non-proliferation regime associated with the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

an ever optimistic Chairman of ANSTO, R E Collins, introducing their 1988-89 Annual Report

Canadian producers. This would mean that the effective price for long term contracts might drop to US \$15-20/lb, with a catastrophic loss of revenue for Olympic Dam and ERA, and the loss of up to \$A150-200m/y in export income. One way out of falling revenues due to a fall in prices, is to increase production, as Denison Mines of Canada has done. To simply maintain existing export income, ERA and Olympic Dam would have to increase sales and production by 2-3,000t/y, wiping out the current supply/demand gap on the global uranium market, and further depressing prices - if anybody would buy at all. The industry is thus caught in a cleft stick of its own making.

Kerin's department is said to favour a 'notional' floor price done on a contract-by-contract basis, but it is not at all clear why this should be any better for ERA and Olympic Dam than no floor price at all. With so much uranium sloshing round in inventories, and still under production in Canada, the US, and South Africa, being offered at such low prices, people have no real reason to be interested in taking additional tonnage from Australia unless it is at a much cheaper price than elsewhere, and maybe not even then. The only vaguely comforting thing for ERA and Olympic Dam is that the current depressed market is hurting the US, the Canadians, and the South Africans just as much or more, and they too, are forced to take whatever prices they can get or withdraw from the market. The South Africans have largely withdrawn from the market, and US producers are talking about doing the same. The average price for Saskatchewan uranium, the main competition for ERA, is \$18-19/lb, far below even the prices ERA contemplates for its renegotiated contracts.

There is a possible way out. I mentioned that ERA has been rumoured to have bought uranium on spot from Malapai Resources of the US, to fulfil US contracts. With spot-prices as low as they are, ERA, like other producers, will find it more profitable to shut down its operations in Kakadu entirely and act purely as a uranium trading company, rather than continuing mining. The government should encourage it to do so, providing that it uses a fixed proportion of the profit it makes from buying on spot and selling to fill its higher-priced long-term contracts to clean up the mess it's made of Kakadu.

In early September, Kerin persuaded the Government to move to "individually negotiated" floor prices, decided on a contract-by-contract basis. He approved a revised floor price of US \$26/lb for two ERA contracts, with Kansai EPC and OKG. While the official spot-price remains at \$31/lb, spot "discount" prices of US \$8.33 are rumoured. Other approvals pending may well be lower than \$26/lb: those for Roxby will probably be nearer US \$20/lb.

FOE, MAUM, and ACF have already sent faxes to Kerin expressing opposition to dropping the floor price, and suggesting a shutdown of production.

The final irony of the matter is that a shutdown of Australian uranium production now could be achieved without adversely affecting ERA's profits, providing it's allowed to buy cheaply on spot and use the material to fill its high-price contracts - ie, by leaving it in the ground.

John Hallam is researching uranium markets at FOE Sydney

ATTENTION

Teachers of:

- * Australian Studies
- * History
- * Peace Studies
- * Science
- * Geography
- * Social Studies
- * Environment Studies

THE JOURNEY

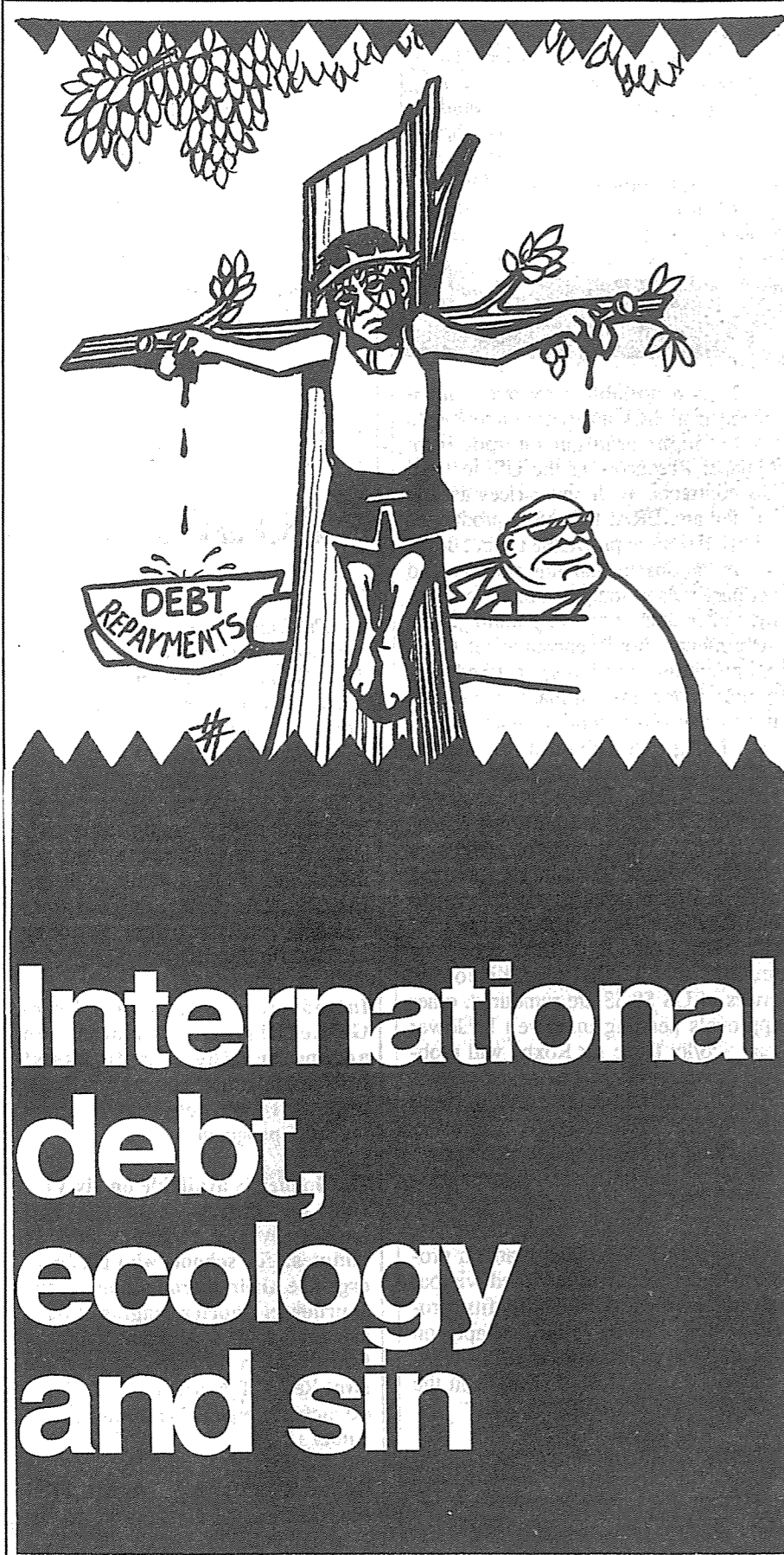
The Journey is a major film for peace, produced and directed by Peter Watkins. Shot in more than ten countries, The Journey is the first film to explore the global nature of the nuclear threat to peace.

The Journey is designed to be stopped at 45 minute intervals for discussion. While it would make an excellent basis for a complete teaching unit, extracts could be selected for specific purposes.

Introductory notes and a Users Guide? Discussion Notes can accompany the film to assist teachers to quickly assess this film's potential for inclusion in their teaching program

The Journey is available on six VHS video cassettes for rental \$75. Full length version 14 hours and 32 minutes. For schools who prefer to organise their introduction to the Journey in shorter lengths, there are recommended extracts of the film that can be screened on their own. Rental for extracts \$40. These extracts vary from 45 minutes to 2 to 3 hours.

Contact: Watkins Australia Film Foundation, 25 Barkly St, North Fitzroy, 3065. Phone (03) 486 1384



International debt, ecology and sin

Sean McDonagh is a missionary whose message to the West is that it needs to learn about the religious reality of tribal people. According to him, we need to develop the sense of reverence and wonder at the beauty of nature that they have. Robyn Weston adapted this interview for publication.

Somewhere at this very moment, a man is standing among the trees in a forest. He looks at the immensity of the green life stretching far above him into the sky. Perhaps the music of the forest reaches his ears, perhaps not. In any case, it cannot be allowed to affect his intentions. Neither can the hundreds of years which shaped this massive life be allowed to mean very much to him.

Who is he? At one time either he or his forebears lived closely with the land. These days, in a society eaten away by poverty, he is simply grateful for a job. He starts up his chainsaw ...

Not far away from the logger, a small group of people have arrived in a clearing. The men have slashed and burned and cleared what they can. The women have begun to plant vegetables: root crops and corn. Careful gardeners they must be. This small plot of land will give them all their food for the next couple of years — if they are lucky. They will not be in the clearing very long. For all its rhapsodic growth and profusion of life, rainforest soil is thin and once the canopy is broken, the earth does not remain fertile.

The governments of the countries which are rapidly losing their forests blame the slash and burn farmers, yet the farmers enter the forest by the loggers' roads, and knowing that they will move on soon, stay close to the roads. Inevitably, as soon as heavy rains fall, the bare earth from road and clearing is swept away and rivers fill up with mud. Game has no habitat and fish die in mud. Huge rivers of mud slide down the naked hills. More people are homeless and without food. Many of them will move into the forest and begin to slash and burn.

Some years ago, Father Sean McDonagh, an Irish Columbian missionary

who works with the T'Boli rainforest dwellers of Mindanao in the Philippines, was caught in a downpour. He took shelter in the hut of Dodong, a slash and burn farmer, or Kainginero.

Their talk that afternoon enabled Sean to understand the plight of the Kainginero. Dodong's story was and is part of a cycle of events which has affected many people.

Dodong's father migrated to Mindanao from one of the central islands in the 1950s. A traditional farmer, he acquired a few hectares of rich lowland country. When Dodong married, his inheritance was about two hectares.

In 1969, a local Department of Agriculture technician convinced the younger farmers that they should try some new varieties of seed. Dodong was very keen. He had to borrow money for fertiliser and an irrigation system but the promise of doubling his harvest made the loan a reasonable proposition, and besides, credit was on easy terms.

For two years the harvest doubled, but this was not as exciting as it might have been because the price of rice went down. In 1973 the price of fertiliser increased two and a half times. In 1976 there was a drought. One crop was completely lost and the other was almost lost. Like many farmers around him, Dodong was seriously in debt and there seemed to be no way that he could regain lost ground. The price rise of 1979 finally beat him.

He sold out to a multinational concern: pineapple growers. They gave him a fair price for his land, but virtually all the money was spent paying off debt.

A great deal of the Third World borrowing in the seventies was for agricultural purposes. Much of the borrowing was done with good intentions, but instances were reported of bank officials at international conferences waylaying Third World finance ministers to offer them easy loans. No word was uttered then of possible currency fluctuations or interest hikes. It was also the time in which the spending sprees of the outrageously wealthy spiralled.

According to Sean, even Dodong had heard about Imelda Marcos' thousands of pairs of shoes, but he had not heard that the small debt begun by the country during the seventies was now draining the nation's budget.

When Sean suggested that in cutting

down the forest perhaps Dodong's six children would find themselves eventual farmers of rocks and rodents, Dodong said maybe, but he couldn't think about that, he had to feed his family today.

As a missionary, Sean McDonagh has no illusions about bettering the lives of people who in a few brutal years have lost their environment, their food and water sources, and above all, their spiritual reality.

He also has serious qualms about any religious effort which does not address environmental issues. If we import good will, medicine and food for people today, what will we do in twenty years time when possibly there will be no land? To help in a real sense, we have to teach people to protect forest, to plant trees, to save seeds.

Twenty years ago, when Sean first went to Mindanao, he flew over country which was covered with rainforest: some twenty million hectares. Today there is less than a million hectares left. As Sean said recently:

The banking businesses and manufacturing communities see themselves as the powerhouses of our industrial economy — they're not really aware that the world is a living reality. They think it is a mine to be mined until it goes broke, and they forget if it does go broke, then every other corporation in the world goes down with it.

Rainforest in countries like the Philippines presents us with one of the most bewildering profusions of life imaginable. Millions of years ago, during the Ice Ages, countries like this were temperate while the rest of the world froze. Much of what is now our staple food evolved from such forests, as did valuable medicines. Such is the variety of life that we hardly even investigate its potential before we turn to destruction.

This problem requires a careful look at the religious beliefs which have shaped people's attitudes through the centuries. It has been argued that through our religion we have been led to feel superior to Nature, to treat it with contempt. Through this arrogance, we become conquerors, and dominators.

Yet, says Sean, this perspective is a selective one. Many covenants and creeds within the Judeo-Christian tradition also stress the need to care for

“ we have not taken seriously the magnitude of the problem or the urgency with which we are called to face it. And unless we take peace and justice seriously, ecology can very often appear to third world people as another way of exploiting the third world ”

Father Sean McDonagh

Creation.

Missionaries are not generally seen in a good light these days. They have in the past indicated that Redemption and truth were the exclusive property of the West needing to be carried to the ignorant pagan.

Today the so-called heathen might well ask what the Christian message has to do with Christ if it only serves to inspire European cargo cultures addicted to war, vanity and exploitation.

In reality, undisturbed tribal cultures possess a religious awareness of creation which permeates every aspect of their lives.

It is a curious turnabout that Sean McDonagh has become a missionary who preaches that the West needs to learn about the religious reality of tribal people. According to him, we need to develop the sense of reverence and wonder at the beauty of nature that they have. We need to stop seeing the natural world as an 'it', as a resource for the exclusive benefit of humans.

In the great vastness of time, the real age of human discovery emerged with tribal people.

It was during the tribal era that all the varieties of languages, and all the social moral and political systems developed. Tribal peoples also developed the world of myth. They identified and shaped many of the archetypal structures of awareness which still guide our religious awareness today. Among these are the

myth of the great hero, the journey symbol, both within the human psyche and across the landscape of the Earth, and also the symbol of the sacred place. The contours of the world of the spirits was also laid down. These operated to guide the community in its relationship to the natural and supernatural worlds.

If we look at tribal culture and call it primitive, this only shows our ignorance. The foundations and boundaries of human existence were set down then and if we want to survive then we must consciously learn from these ancient cultures.

For Sean, an acknowledgment of the value of tribal culture does not mean an abandonment of the Christian message. The compassion and the hope which originally took him to the Philippines, has continued to support his work there and still inspires his writing and his speaking. It is based on his faith. Christian celebration is still the key to his religious message as well as being a tool of criticism against greed.

He refuses to work with what he calls 'maimed symbols', and in a country where rice is eaten rather than bread, it is logical that rice should become the Sacrament.

Sean's congregation has developed liturgies of the Earth. In one of these, the congregation each pour a small handful of earth from their gardens into a pot. The leader, pronouncing a blessing upon farms in the area, then

sprinkles Holy Water upon the earth.

"Let us never lose our love for the land," they all pray.

A litany of the plants is then sung. When this liturgy was devised, many traditional plants were included, some of which have vanished from the area. In his services, many old people cry as extinct plants are recalled.

A clay figurine is modelled from the earth as the congregation is called upon to remember how God made humankind from the soil, how the animals, the birds and the fishes are made from God's fingers and live, pulsing with life from God's breath.

O God, Creator of this beautiful Earth which you have filled with an abundance of living creatures, help us never to forget that our life and the life of every creature depends upon our soil. Help us always to be grateful for this most precious gift. Enrich our soil, make it black and fruitful and rich. Protect us from long periods of drought and floods. Bless our land, especially your People.

The traditional T'Boli fertility dance is especially appropriate here at the conclusion of the ceremony. Then following their service, the congregation can take home the blessed earth and scatter it on their lands. According to Sean:

In good ritual there is a way of taking action against the terrible things which happen to the Earth. In good ritual, we approach the problem on the level of the imagination, we address the symbols which affect our lives, and we are enabled to become the vehicles of healing on this level.

In a traditional world, where symbols still connected the Philippino farmer with the land, traditional wisdom enabled people to eat the produce of the land, but to save the breeding stock even if this meant going hungry for a while.

The seed companies have not taken care to maintain variety in breeding stocks. They encourage farmers to abandon traditional varieties of seeds, and to allow them to become extinct so that the agricultural business can sell lucrative hybrids. A customer who has to go back year after year to buy seed is a better sales prospect, after all.

In the long run this hurts everyone because if hybrids are attacked by disease or pests, genetic material from traditional varieties is needed in the

laboratories as a basis to develop new hybrid stocks.

A major problem with modern hybrids is that they need a lot of chemicals in order to grow. This means that earth and water may be poisoned. Transnational companies such as Royal Dutch Shell and Ciba-Geigy who attempt to control seed production may bring about a situation where the only seeds available on the market are those reliant on a high chemical input.

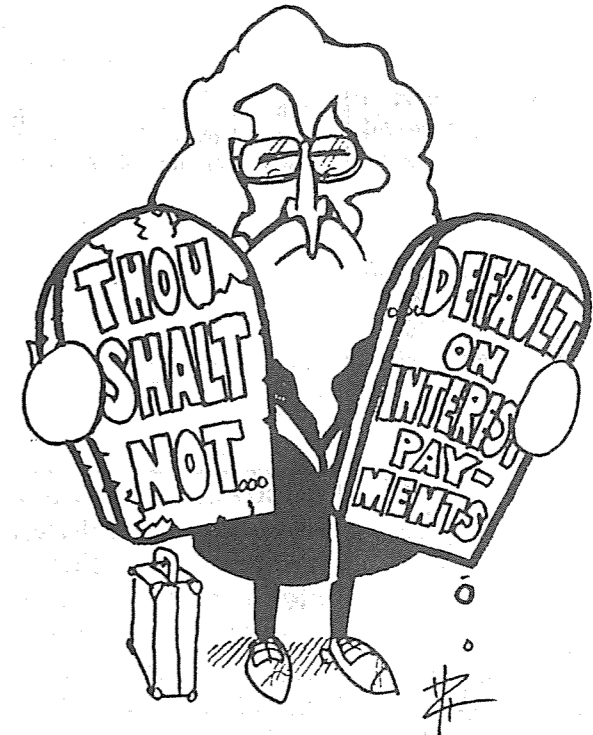
In giving up the old seeds which reproduce by themselves and which even in small areas have an enormous genetic diversity, a Third World farmer is quite simply inviting disaster.

Sean describes this process as ecological sin, saying that if today it is the poor in the Third World who are suffering, in the future it will be the whole world.

If our evil threatens 20 billion years of creation, it is a serious business. If we begin to consider redemption in this case it should not be a blind process to take us beyond the Earth. It should be a process capable of healing the Earth, of restoring primordial unity, of making it possible for future generations to live here. There is much we can learn in the Christian tradition from the way that Jesus himself approached the natural world; much of his language, his parables, came from the birds of the air, the sheep, the shepherd, the vine, the branches, and ... for a Christian there is the experience of Christ as the cosmic Christ in perspectives like Paul in Colossians or John.

In Tagaytay City in the Philippines, a meeting of Catholic bishops took place on the 26 January 1988. The main purpose of the meeting was the creation of a pastoral letter with the title, 'What is Happening to our Beautiful Land?' It was the first time anywhere in the world that bishops devoted a letter to the issue of ecology.

We often use the word 'progress' to describe what has taken place over the last few decades. There is no denying that in some areas our roads have improved and that electricity is more readily available. But can we say that it is real progress? Who has benefited the most and who has borne the real costs? The poor are as disadvantaged as ever and the natural world has been grievously wounded. We have stripped it bare,



silenced its sounds and banished other creatures from the community of the living. Through our thoughtlessness we have sinned against God and His Creation.

But the bishops also stated that none of us are helpless when it comes to the environment. Major battles are being fought and often won simply because people do not remain silent when they see their environment being destroyed.

Organise people around local ecological issues. Become involved in some concrete action. There is much that can be done by individuals to reforest bald hills and prevent soil erosion.

Speaking of these suggested actions in Sydney, Sean went further. We should all compost if we possibly can, he said. We should endeavour if there is the smallest piece of land available to us, to grow some food: trees, vines, vegetables. Above all if there is forest, trees or parkland in danger, then we should do what we can, and our understanding of the issues and their causes should remain flexible and ready to grow.

The most thorny problem of all is the question of International Debt. Banks and First World governments are wary of debt cancellations, saying that such a step would rock the financial systems to their foundations and bring everything down in an enormous crash. Yet in a

single day in October 1987 more money was wiped off the price of shares than the whole combined debts of Third World countries. The world financial system survived.

Many religious leaders like Bishop De Jong of Zambia, call for the cancellation of their country's foreign debt. There is solid biblical basis for this approach, which is designed to alleviate intolerable poverty and growing despair in Third World countries. The Year of Jubilee was seen as an attempt to re-establish a just social order at regular moments in the history of Israel. The excess land which had been accumulated by the rich and powerful, often through questionable means, was restored to the original owners (Leviticus 25 23-31). One important aspect of this was the cancellation of all debts. This desire to transform society did not emerge from a vague sense of pity for the poor but was seen as a demand of God's justice. His covenant did not envisage a community where a few would live in abundance and the rest in misery. The Earth after all is the Lord's and He wishes all people to share the goods of the Earth to meet their basic needs.

Robyn Weston is a member of Friends of the Earth Sydney.

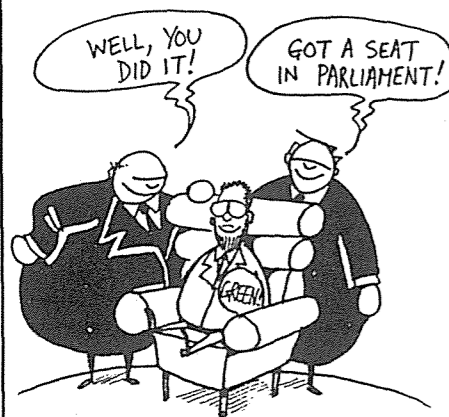
O GOD... WE PRAY THAT YOU BLESS THIS LAND & THESE PEOPLE, PROTECT US FROM DROUGHT & FLOOD, AND HELP STRENGTHEN OUR RITUALS THAT WE MIGHT DEFEAT THE SPIRITUAL EVIL DEVOURING OUR FORESTS...

... AND IN THE MEANTIME, COULD YOU PLEASE HELP US BUILD A REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION WITH A PROPER THEORETICAL GRASP OF IMPERIALISM, AND ENOUGH GUNS TO FIGHT OFF THE MILITARY...

ROAR!
CHOP!
CHOP!
BUZZZZZ!
WARNING: FOREST CLEARING ZONE



Green election fever



Australian greens seem to have been captured by the excitement of elections. The election of the Tasmanian independents has raised hopes enormously. But do environmentalists really gain all that much by participating in electoral politics? Brian Martin presents a sceptical view.

campaigns, direct action, promotion of alternative technologies and practices — all these can be done without reliance on politicians.

Politicians can be helpful in such efforts, and some undoubtedly are. But that's different from activists getting involved in parties and election campaigning. Most of the effort in this is effort taken away from immediate campaigns. Indeed, the whole idea of elections is to get someone else — politicians — to take action.

The worst part is after the election. Win or lose, many activists lose heart. After the Liberal victories in 1977 and 1980, the anti-uranium movement lost energy. Partly it was because too much hope was put in a Labor victory. Partly it was because there was no well-developed long-term strategy which went beyond action by the national government. These struggles are indeed long-term. In 1980, many anti-uranium activists were burnt out. Yet now, a decade later, the issue remains of crucial importance.

Electoral 'victory' can be even more disempowering. After Labor was elected in 1983, activism on south-west Tasmania rapidly declined. Everyone expected the government to take over. Yet the Tasmanian Hydro-Electric Commission was and still is building dams.

Elections give the general public little encouragement for personal action. Filling out a ballot paper every few years is hardly a great deal of participation in decision-making in environmental matters, or anything else. To get people hopeful about elections is to divert attention from the need for people to get involved themselves.

If elections tend to disempower ac-

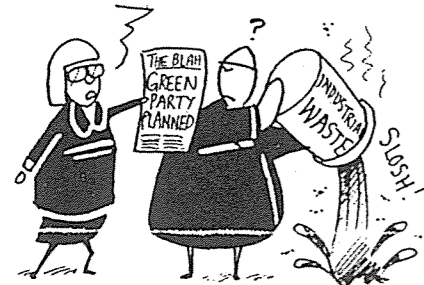
Environmental issues in Australia are becoming increasingly linked to political parties and electoral politics. Green-style parties are springing up all over the place. The traditional parties, both Labor and the Liberals, are desperately trying to improve their image of environmental consciousness, while the Democrats keep touting their soundness.

At the recent Ecopolitics IV conference in Adelaide, politicians from various parties were in evidence. Most participants seemed to believe that working through the electoral system was the way to go.

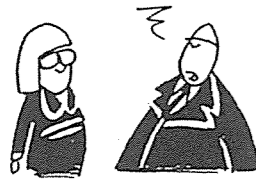
But wait a moment! Should it be automatically assumed that electoral politics is a good place to devote environmental energies? After all, the Labor party was once the hope of working class radicals, and look where it is now. Although electioneering may be all the rage, I think some careful scrutiny is called for.

One big problem with electoral politics is that it tends to remove power and initiative from people at the grassroots level. Environmentalists have long been effective at taking issues into their own hands. Public education

UH-OH! THE GREEN PARTY INTENDS TO REPRESENT GREEN INTERESTS IN PARLIAMENT!



WHAT, LIKE THE LABOR PARTY REPRESENTS WORKERS' INTERESTS IN PARLIAMENT?



WHO DO WE MAKE THE CHEQUE OUT TO?...



tivists and the general public, who do they empower? Politicians and the government, of course. They are the only ones allegedly given a 'mandate'. The trouble is that politicians are the least likely people to preside over a really lasting change in the way society is organised — and the way society is organised is the root of most environmental problems.

Politicians and government bureaucrats are subject to incredible lobbying efforts by industry and government enterprises. Environmentalists can and do try to compete in this process. Some are very skilful at it and achieve impressive victories. But environmental lobbying and pressure group tactics cannot alter the basic driving forces behind government policy. Governments, among other things, must manage an economy based on large corporate and government enterprises. Policies upsetting the basic economic arrangements are virtually impossible.

At best, environmental lobbying and electioneering can achieve reforms in policy. This means protecting some patches of wilderness, applying more restrictions to industrial emissions, stopping particular projects etc. But more fundamental changes are ruled out.

The Government response to anti-logging campaigns is, at best, to protect some forests. Well and good. But the basic structure of the industry and government remains: the forest industries, the market economy, the forestry commissions etc. In other words, the driving forces remain the same. Some projects can be stopped, but the same battles have to be fought time and time again. After all, pro-environment policies can be reversed. Voting and lobbying change only a few individuals, not the political and economic arrangements which lead to environmentally destructive actions.

A green government?

Is this perhaps too pessimistic? Isn't it possible for a real greening of the political system? Let's say that at some future time a really green government takes office — perhaps following the rapid growth of a green party or the greening of one of the existing parties. Surely this would be a breakthrough?

The historical record is not so

promising. In nearly every case where a radical government has been elected in a time of social ferment, the government has served as a break on social change, rather than a spur towards it. This includes the New Deal administration which took office in the United States in 1933 at the height of the depression, the Popular Front elected in France in 1936 (which proceeded to take every effort against strikes and occupations), the British Labour government elected in 1945, and the Eurosocialist governments in France, Spain and Greece in the 1980s.

A green government would probably introduce some desirable legislation and take some symbolic stands. But it might very well be hostile to radical grassroots action, which could jeopardise its standing. The splits within the German Greens are indicative of the problems.

By present indications, green parties are unlikely to be able to form a government on their own. Entering coalitions is more likely, and this is a prescription for compromise. Politicians in a coalition government always see the prospect of doing something positive, and so activists and supporters are counselled to keep waiting. "Don't rock the boat too much, or else the gains in the pipeline may be jeopardised." Once again, the

grassroots are disempowered.

Green participation in coalitions actually helps to legitimate the policies made. That's the whole idea of electoral participation, after all. If we vote, we should accept the election verdict, so the argument goes. This obscures the extremely limited degree of participation represented by voting in an election.

There's another problem with a green government, and that is that all government operates by coercion. Government decisions are backed up, ultimately, by the military and police. Is this the proper way for environmental decisions to be enforced? Some environmentalists may believe that protecting the environment is so important that using autocratic means is justified if necessary. I'm not one of them.

In any list of the disadvantages of electoral politics, it is hard to avoid mentioning the incredible bitterness and bad feelings so often produced. Struggles over parties, candidates, policies and personalities are rife, and are enough to alienate many a potential supporter. This is mostly due to the quest for power. People believe their views, or their personal power, are so important that other people can be stepped on. This is basically the philosophy that the ends justify the





means: getting elected justifies some rough play along the way. This is the same philosophy that has generated most present-day environmental problems.

Alternatives to elections

It's all very well to criticise electoral politics, but is there any better way to proceed? This is something that has to be decided by all those involved. What I will do here is argue that there are some other ways.

My emphasis is on the long term. That means doing things now with an eye towards many years hence. Many environmental problems are urgent, to be sure. The great temptation is to assume that governmental action is the only way to confront these urgent problems. The trouble is that the driving forces are not addressed, and the 'urgent' problems persist or reappear.

The basic alternative to looking to governments for solutions is to build from the grassroots: popular education, community groups, people's campaigns. The idea of the 'grassroots' is vague, but in practical terms it refers to lots of environmental campaigns over the years, those which have involved people directly in changing their lives. This includes much of the anti-uranium campaign, recycling, promotion of solar energy and organic farming.

Action at the grassroots is never entirely separate from the formal political system. The point is that grassroots action can lead to changes in policy, even though little or no direct involvement in parties or elections is undertaken. The anti-uranium movement has been high-

ly successful in preventing the introduction of nuclear power, uranium enrichment or waste reprocessing in Australia. Both Liberal and Labor governments have responded to campaigns and changes in public attitudes.

It should be recognised, though, that a social movement is not a permanent alternative. Grassroots action, like electoral politics, is a way of operating within the present system — and the present system is based on a very small number of people having great power to make decisions.

The big challenge is to work towards a more participatory system. Electoral politics is precisely the way not to do this, since electoral politics is based on limited participation and hence reinforces the present system. Grassroots campaigns have limitations, but at least offer the hope of promoting alternative structures.

Participation: what does it mean? I'm concerned here about people participating directly in making decisions that affect them. Most people seldom do this. Voting every few years is at best indirect participation; it is the elected (as well as non-elected) officials who participate directly in decision-making. Writing a letter to a politician is similarly indirect. Even joining a rally or occupation, if the main aim is to obtain media coverage and influence politicians, is a form of indirect participation.

The most important area for direct participation is, for most people, at work. Most jobs offer little opportunity for employees to participate in decision-making. Indeed, most

enterprises, private and public, are autocratic. The alternative is workers' control: the workers collectively make the decisions. For the many enterprises which have major effects on the public, members of the affected community should be involved as well. The goal then is worker-community control.

Australia in the 1970s had one of the most widely admired examples of worker-community control: the Green Bans. Also often cited are the British Lucas Aerospace workers' plans, for producing socially useful products. The idea of workers' plans has been taken up in many countries, including in Australia by Victorian railway unions, for example.

In the 1980s, Australian employers such as the timber industry have become more successful in pitting workers and environmentalists against each other. Many environmentalists would be wary of giving workers control over decisions, in case they continued destructive practices. These environmentalists would rather give power to governments to intervene from above. Thus, rather than promoting greater participation, environmentalists have reduced it through their focus on governments.

Decision-making

What is the practical meaning of participation in this 'worker-community control'? How are decisions actually to be made? There are a number of methods worth exploring.

One is consensus. This has been greatly developed in parts of the environment movement and other social movements. It has great strengths, but also some limitations, especially in large groups of people with fundamentally different interests.

Another method is voting. Voting may have limitations when used to select politicians, but it usually works better with smaller groups, especially when voting directly on policy rather than for representatives to make policy. Voting can overcome the stranglehold of a minority that can block consensus. The danger is that voting allows minorities to be overrun and alienated.

A less well-known method is random selection. Decision-makers can be selected randomly from volunteers, rather like the selection of a jury. The advantage here is that all interested

people get an equal chance. Electoral politics is dominated by ambitious, power-seeking individuals; consensus is often dominated by those who can manipulate feelings or stay at endless meetings. Random selection offers a way over these problems.

Studies in the United States and West Germany with randomly selected 'policy juries' — some dealing with environmental issues — have shown that people quickly become knowledgeable about the issues and are highly responsive to the general interest.

Whatever the decision-making method, small scale is vital for participation. Large electorates, or even large consensus groups, make for frustration and alienation. Small groups, each dealing with specific issues, offer the best prospects. This means some type of decentralisation and coordination of different groups.

These are some of the alternatives, all well worth exploring and promoting today. The best place to start is in environmental organisations themselves. If grassroots participation is the goal, as an alternative to elected and nonelected autocrats, then there's no place like home to begin. The bureaucracy and powerbroking in some environmental organisations are not promising in this respect. But, as I said, the struggle is bound to be a long one.

Today we see leaders of the Labor Party and the Australian Council of Trade Unions, as nominal leaders of the labour movement, taking amazing anti-worker stands. In the future, will environmentalists have to struggle against repressive green politicians and greenocrats? Is green election fever the symptom of a serious disease?

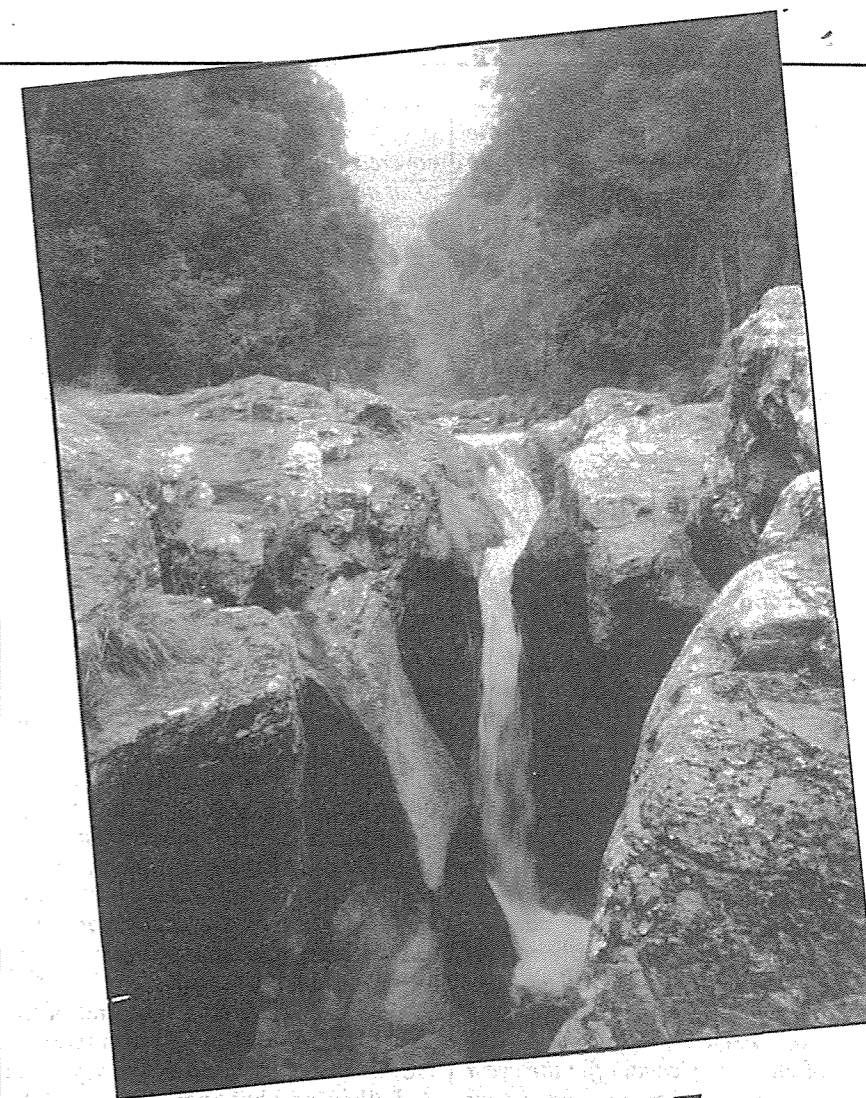
Suggested reading

John Burnheim, *Is Democracy Possible? The Alternative to Electoral Politics* (London: Polity Press, 1985). Random selection for an alternative society.

Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Consequences of Consent: Elections, Citizen Control and Popular Acquiescence* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1982). The limitations of voting as participation.

Jane J Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 1980). On consensus and voting.

Brian Martin has been involved with environmental issues and campaigns since the mid 1970s.



Killarney Glen

A long running environmental battle in Queensland is gradually receiving national attention as the Federal Government attempts to move an old man off his former land at Killarney Glen, south of Brisbane, to make way for an army training centre. Friends of the Earth Brisbane collated this report.

An hour's drive south of Brisbane lies the little town of Canungra, once the centre of a thriving timber industry. The valleys echoed to the hum of huge saws and the shouted commands of bullock drivers as they cajoled their teams to haul the huge logs to the mills.

Thankfully, the destruction of the forests ended, the town shrank, and today is a centre for tourism as busloads of travellers journey to adjacent national parks to experience a small taste of the natural environment.

Obtaining directions from the Canungra Information Centre we set out

to discover one of the best kept secrets of the Gold Coast hinterland. Taking the Binna-Burra road we wind past the Canungra Land Warfare Centre — a huge spread of a military establishment specialising in counter insurgency warfare — and cross the sleepy Coomera Valley then climb a winding road adorned with signs forbidding entry to Commonwealth land. The roadway falls gently to Botan Creek and as we climb once again an enchanting valley unfolds on the left. With no sign of accessibility we travel 2-3 kms past Botan Creek until we enter a small cutting of a starkly different type of rock. The chalky white banks are studded with myriad sticks of petrified wood and moss hinting of a different geological age when the area was rent with volcanic activity and whole forests were buried beneath mountains of hot ash and mud. To the left lies a small, well-used driveway which opens into a secluded parking area in front of an old wire gate.

As many before us and as many more will do in the future, as the urban cancer spreads south from Brisbane and west from the Gold Coast, we leave our car, ignoring Commonwealth Government signs forbidding entry, and stroll leisurely down the 4WD track beneath the leafy canopy of mixed eucalypt forest. The trunks of the young leaves offer the eye a contrast of smooth barked spotted gum and rough dark Grey Ironbark. The only sounds to be heard are the rustle of a breeze in the treetops and a hum of

“
... the peace is
suddenly shattered
by earsplitting
explosions... followed
by the roar of
automatic gunfire...”

cicadas as they bask in the warm sunlight. Where the road reaches a lichen-covered cliff top and veers left, we pause to sit on the rocks and contemplate for a moment. To the south the valley narrows and deepens as it cuts its way into the Lamington Plateau. The top of the mountain to the east has been cleared of its massive trees and is now an expanse of emerald cow pastures where the first European child in the area was born in 1909.

Our gaze drops from the mountaintop into great landslides caused years ago when the tall scrub was felled and its roots lost their grasp of the mountainside as it sagged in despair. The great scars end and the eye follows the land as it disappears beneath the green-grey forest.

Amidst the sweet birdsong and rustle of leaves we hear a gentle gurgling of water as it ambles down the valley on its journey to the sea. The creek is hidden from our view by the lush soft canopy of rainforest directly below us but the whip-birds call to us to descend into paradise.

A flush of serenity engulfs our being until the peace is suddenly shattered by earsplitting explosions to the north, followed by the roar of automatic gunfire. The valley is under threat.

In 1971, just prior to the end of the Vietnam War the Commonwealth Government acquired Killarney Glen and other land holdings to the south by compulsory acquisition, for extensions to the then Canungra "Jungle Training Centre" now Land Warfare Centre. The previous owner, Pat Fitzgerald, whose family selected the land in the 1890s, and who was the first European child born in the area, was informed by the government that although he no longer owned the land there was no need for him to vacate, in the foreseeable future.

For many years, Pat had worked tirelessly to develop the property as an outdoor education centre for cultural and environmental studies, despite a crippling illness caused by dieldrin and other pesticides used on his banana plantation, which was intended as a source of income to finance development of his proposals. During these early years, the property was used by such groups as the Royal Ballet of England, J.C. Williamson's Theatre Troupe, St John's Ambulance and Scouting Jamborees, as well as various Gemmological Societies and countless members of the public, for the express

purposes he intended.

Commonwealth valuation of the 17 acre property was based on 'highest and best use' which for the purposes of the Government was dairy farming. This method of evaluation failed to recognise Pat's work and placed a value of \$98 per acre on Killarney Glen, which even by 1971 standards was a ludicrous amount for such a unique educational resource. Pat rejected the valuation and continued to live on the property in substandard accommodation, in order to prove the worth of his proposals.

In 1974, Pat received an advance payment of \$15 000, being 88 per cent of the Commonwealth valuation. Under the Land Acquisition Act of 1955, which provides for no right of appeal, does not recognise loss of heritage, or allow debate on proposed land use, he had no option but to accept the advance payment. Under the Act, acceptance of the advance does not constitute agreement to the acquisition or the Commonwealth valuation. Final settlement was to be decided by negotiation or through the court. His continued occupation of the property was not subject to payment of rent as no formal request was ever made, or could be made, until such time as he had been satisfactorily compensated. Under these conditions he was forbidden to earn an income from the property.

Deciding the gunfire is still far to the north, we descend the steep road beneath the gaze of a malevolent mass of rock above us and on the left. It lies perched there like some stern guardian of the valley ready to fall and block the way should it be necessary. On our right the velvety soft foliage of a red cedar springs forth after a winter rest and we notice a cleared area below us. As we enter this we see that beneath the young regrowth of rainforest someone has been busy for years planting trees. The eye falls on young Cedars, Hoop Pine, Wheel of Fire, Crows Ash, Lilly-Pilly, Tulip Wood and many other species. All of them are thriving as if they can't wait to grow tall and reclaim the valley. It is obvious that much care and love has been spent on this project as we wend our way down through this carefully nurtured young forest.

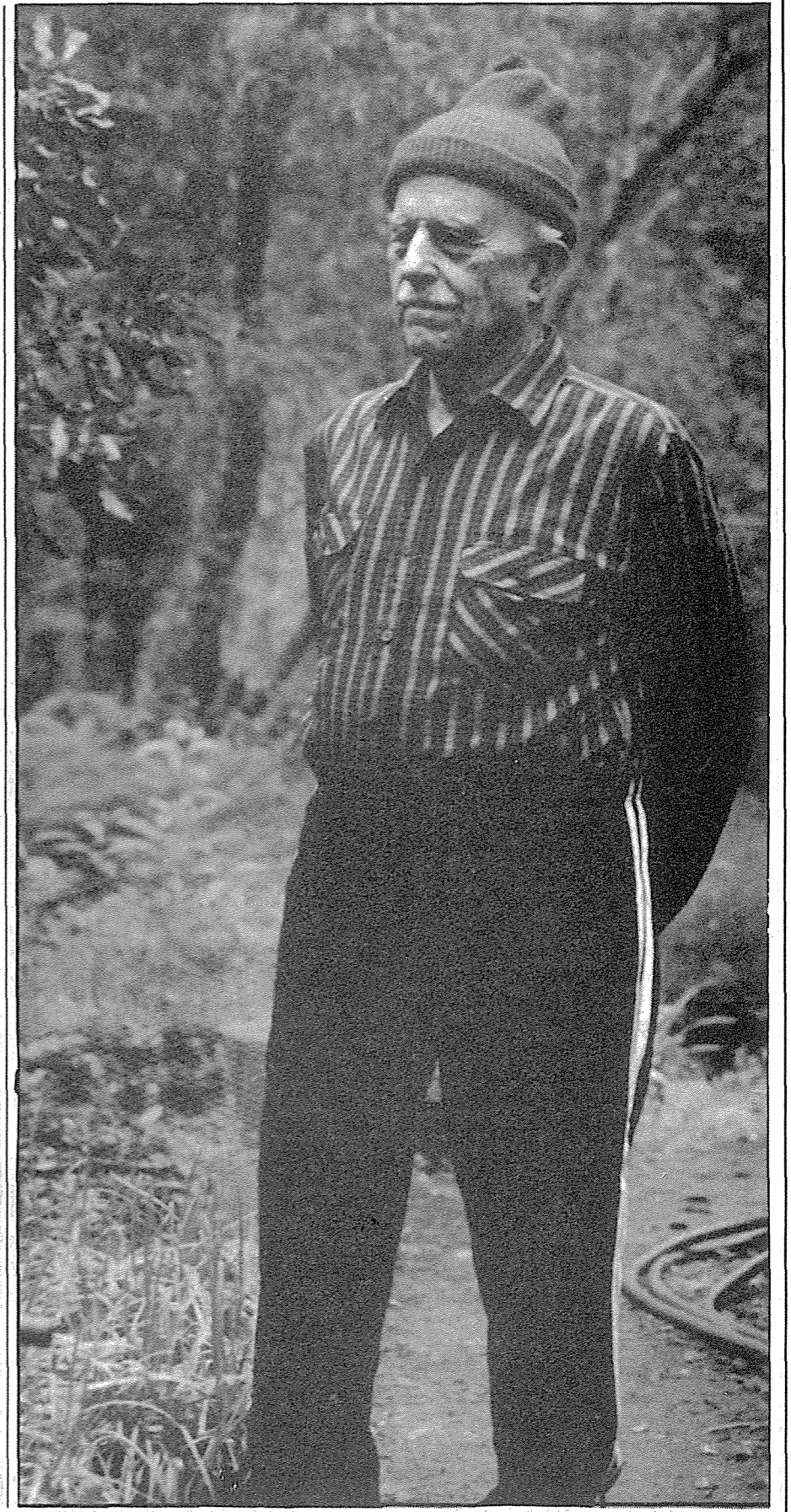
In the years 1971 to 1983, and to the present day, the Army rarely used the property for military training, however, the Commonwealth has permitted continued use for recreation by Army

personnel, their families and guests.

On July 5 1983, an official of the Department of Administrative Services (D.A.S.) — the department responsible for the acquisition — accompanied by a commissioned Army officer, suggested all parties use negotiations as a means of settlement. The officer present failed to make any reference to the Army's plans for the property. Later that month the Fitzgeralds advised D.A.S. of their terms of settlement and provided the Government with a submission detailing future land use proposals and means of negotiation, which was prepared by the eldest son Patrick H. Fitzgerald. Later that year the Army announced that: the property would be used for live firing to "absorb stray bullets and ricochets"; Army families would continue to use Killarney Glen for recreation, between periods of live firing, and; Killarney Glen would be closed to the Fitzgerald family and the public. The Army declared this stance was not negotiable.

Persistent lobbying of relevant departments and bodies by Patrick Fitzgerald during the following 12 months resulted in: a call from the Government for the Army to review its land use requirements; deferment of further action by government until such review was completed; listing of Killarney Glen by the National Trust of Queensland, and; a personal inspection of the property, by the then Minister for Administrative Services Tom Uren, who stated his hope that the area become part of the National Estate. At this time, the requested Army review was complete, and under Minister Beazley's consideration.

Minister Uren referred the matter to the Prime Minister, who intervened, recognising that a serious land use question existed. Mr Hawke called for joint ministerial advice on land management issues and personally set the agenda for resolution of the conflict. This agenda consisted of the arrival of a "satisfactory resolution of the land use question", to be followed by meaningful negotiation. Further lobbying by P.H. Fitzgerald and family resulted in a groundswell of support from politicians of all parties, and organisations involved in land use and environmental issues, which included a report by the Royal Australian Institute of Parks and Recreation that came out in favour of



the Back Creek Valley being set aside for public education and recreation. At this time, the Army's position remained in favour of live firing.

As we pass a small apiary of gleaming white beehives we are greeted by the happy bark of a rather pudgy old corgi that comes to greet us with wagging tail. She proudly leads us to an old dwelling of canvas, concrete and iron where a proud old pioneer, his eyes still with a mischievous twinkle, greets us and offers a cup of billy tea. His home is surrounded by thousands of young rainforest trees grown from seed by his son Patrick. He shows us round the nursery telling us of the names and qualities of the many different timbers.

Listening to this elderly ex-digger is like being taken on a journey through time as he tells of the history of the valley and explains the many complex interactions taking place between the biotic and abiotic environments. This is what we used to wish for when we sat in sterile classrooms being lectured on things that most of us had never seen. This is what learning is really about.

As we leave Pat and wander down to the waterfalls we see numerous mosses, fungi, liverworts and a host of other lifeforms. The creek flows quietly beneath a huge banner declaring the land an environmental park, to fall in two steps. The smooth ancient rock gathers the waters into a huge bowl before it spills over into the dark depths of the cavern to crash on the rocks below. Early morning mist is shot with sunlight to form soft rainbows in the pristine air above the cavern and we feel at one with nature. After lunch we shall take the graded track to the amethyst deposit to fossick in the forest, or maybe we'll stroll up into the rainforest to see its wonders. Just now, we'll spread a rug on the soft lawn and have a picnic in paradise.

In July 1987 Minister John Brown informed the Fitzgeralds that consideration of the land use question was proceeding and that Mr Beazley would notify them of the outcome. At a meeting in November that year between the Fitzgeralds, the D.A.S. and the Government Solicitor, the family was told that the information supplied by them on land use was a "waste of time on their part and would not be included in the joint advice", and that vacant possession was required within four weeks. However, no action was taken to secure it.

Despite repeated calls for copies of the joint advice the Fitzgeralds have not received such documents. Despite repeated invitations to Ministers Beazley, West, Richardson and the Prime Minister to inspect the area, no inspections were forthcoming, and to date these parties responsible for resolution of this conflict have failed to address the important aspects of the issue.

Throughout this period a revised Land Acquisition Bill was being prepared by a Senate Standing Committee which would attempt to prevent conflicts such as this from occurring in the future.

On 25 May 1989, Mr Beazley stated that the area was needed by the Army to provide 'buffer zones' for live firing ranges to be constructed in the area, and that the danger of stray bullets and ricochets would mean it was unsafe for anyone to reside in the area. He then stated however, that public access to this same area would be allowed between periods of live firing. This last proviso is the only alteration to the Army's original demands of 1983. This decision was made despite the fact that the Army's own review papers failed to establish the need for new ranges at Killarney Glen, or that this form of land use is contrary to the long term community interest.

An official notice to vacate was issued on 29 May 1989 which demanded that Pat take his possessions and vacate by July 31. From this date the conflict increasingly escalated and Pat vows to stand his ground until such time as the public are guaranteed safe and managed access at all times and the Back Creek Valley is declared an environmental park. Throughout this entire dispute Hawke, Beazley and West have treated the advice of the Fitzgeralds and their exemplary supporters with sheer bureaucratic contempt, since the adoption of Beazley's proposals flies in the face of all of Hawke's rhetoric concerning land use, environment and conservation.

As public support continues to thrive, the Government has abandoned its pathetic justifications of its action and chooses to "hide its head in the sand" and allow the Army to make irrelevant statements concerning rent and compensation in an attempt to divert public attention from gross ministerial irresponsibility.

Local Federal members David Beddall (Rankin) and Mary Crawford (Forde) expressed disappointment with Mr Beazley's decision and continue to support the Fitzgeralds' proposals as do many other politicians, Australian Conservation Foundation, Wilderness Society, Wildlife Preservation Society and a host of other organisations.

Since July 31, 80 year old Pat has lived under daily threat of physical removal from his life's work by Federal Police and in order to prevent this legalised thuggery from taking place a vigil has been mounted by Friends of Killarney Glen, Friends of the Earth, Griffith University students, Rainforest Information Centre (Lismore) and local landholders. One camper Malcolm Spann who has strongly supported the cause says that he feels it is a 'legalised land steal ... that shouldn't be allowed to happen', and Rick Fitzgerald, younger son of Pat firmly states that:

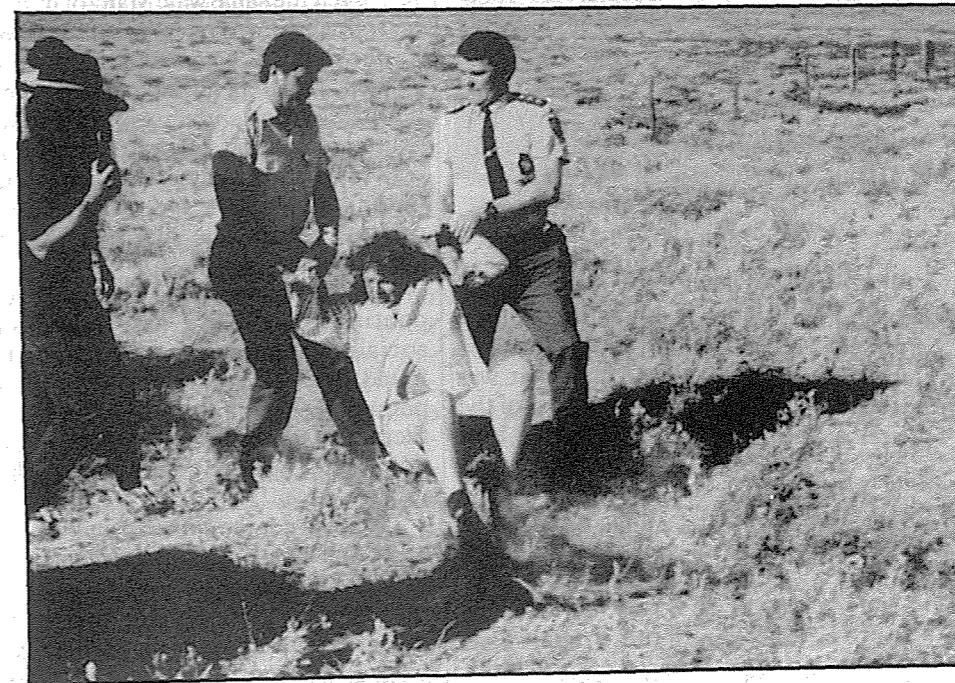
Our environment doesn't have a problem, it's the people and their relationships with the environment that create the problems. If the limit of people's experience is urban living, they can't be expected to feel a part of and actively care for the natural environment. The Public in large population centres must have easy access to places such as Back Creek in order that they may see the need to change their lifestyles and values. Due to the immense pressure on existing parks and preserves close to the cities it is imperative that any recreational, educational resource within such easy reach is kept accessible.

Pat Fitzgerald has been told to vacate his premises, and although the case has been to court, no action has been taken to evict him. Supporters occupied the office of the D.A.S. and were told by a spokesperson that the Minister, Stewart West, gave his word there would be no forcible eviction, and that he wished to negotiate.

The fight continues — we need your support. If you can offer donations, time or your presence at the Blockade please contact: Friends of the Earth, 10 Rowton Street, Holland Park, QLD, 4121, tel: (07) 349 4436.

This article was written by members of Brisbane Friends of the Earth in consultation with the Fitzgeralds.

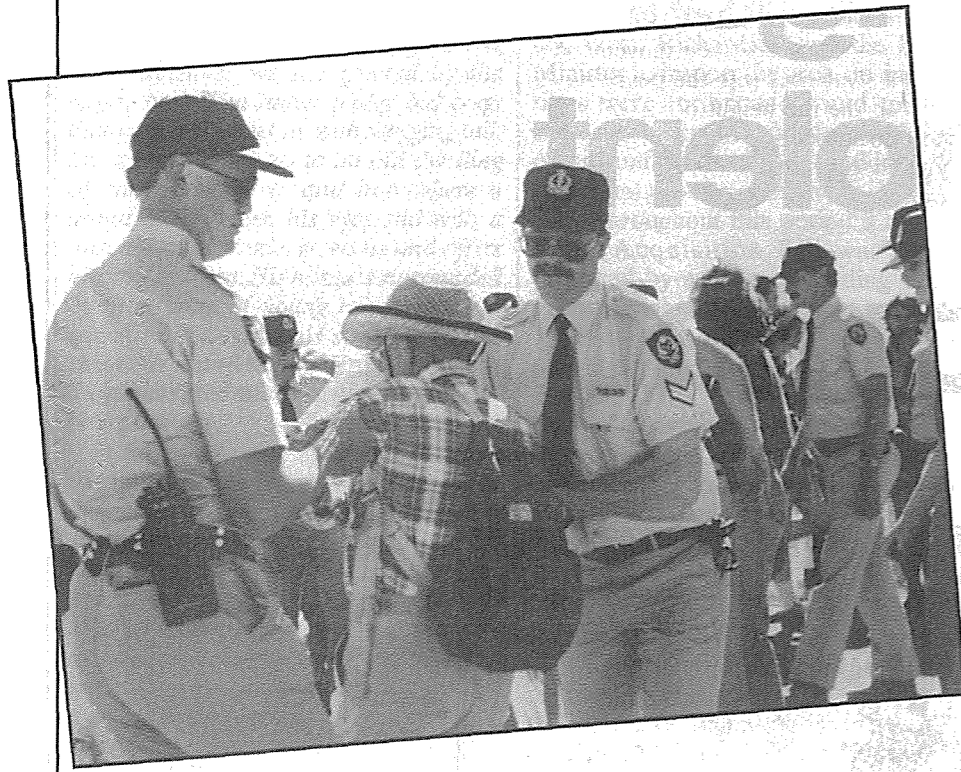
Nurrungar — non-violent confrontation



In the last week of September 1989, activists from all over Australia participated in actions at the United States Joint Defence Facility at Nurrungar in South Australia. On the fifth day of the actions, the Federal Defence Minister, Kim Beazley, called in troops against civil protesters for the first time since the Eureka stockade in 1854, indicating a measure of the success of the actions.

Protesters at the camp diverged on appropriate political strategies. Non-violent strategies were particularly contentious and two viewpoints are outlined here. Andrew Nette, Kate Tempany and Ian Wilson argue that non-violence strategies should take into account the social and political context of power, and that environmentalists should be embarking on 'real' rather than 'symbolic' protests. Robert Burrowes argues that non-violence principles incorporate co-operation with the police and protests should be well-planned, disciplined and with participants clear on the principles of non-violence.

The limits to non-violence



by Andrew Nette, Kate Tempny and Ian Wilson

As members of the peace movement on and off now for the last six years, we want to focus on the problems we saw in much of the political direction taken at Nurrungar. We especially want to highlight the differences between the various groupings present, differences which were obscured but not diffused by the emphasis camp organisers placed on asserting 'common aims' and a 'community of interests'.

It has been said many times that the Australian peace movement has lacked a coherent critique of imperialism and the state. This weakness was again demonstrated at Nurrungar. The importance of realising the fundamental imperialist nature of the bases, in relation to our own independence, and the way they tie Australia into a network of superpower domination throughout the Pacific, does not need expanding on here. However, the particular problems associated with the function of the state were thrown up in a new light at the camp, especially in the disagreements expressed about the role of the security

forces and how we should view their actions. Apart from the fifty soldiers flown in from Sydney, Nurrungar was guarded by about forty members of the Australia Protective Services, Star Force officers, eighty regular South Australian police, as well as the dog squad and mounted police. Overhead surveillance was supplied by the South Australian Westpac rescue helicopter, and of course there was the usual assortment of plainclothes ASIO goons skulking around trying to blend in with the crowd — all in all, an impressive display of intimidation by any standard.

In response to this, there were those, probably the majority present, who advocated structuring all our protests so as to build up a feeling of trust between the security forces and demonstrators and ensure all protest was non-violent. Exactly what this 'non-violence' meant was constantly debated throughout the period of the camp, but early on in the proceedings a large and vocal contingent of activists from the Melbourne Rainforest Action Group (RAG) managed to impose their conception of non-violent direct action on most of those at the camp. This entailed that all

actions should be carried out in a calm and orderly manner, and any behaviour entailing damage to property and abusive language or taunts to the security personnel was to be avoided at all times. They even went so far as to suggest that the camp's police liaison group be informed well in advance of the precise details of any actions to be taken by the camp as a whole or by affinity groups. The rationale for this was that it was a gesture of trust which would be reciprocated by the police in the form of a respect for our reason for being there and decent treatment of any protesters arrested.

Certainly there were few, if any, who wanted to provoke hostility for its own sake. But many, the authors included, were sceptical as to whether the security forces felt the same way. Many of us had had previous encounters with the police in our political activities, as students, women, squatters and so on, and many of the Queenslanders for their part elaborated on the type of political lessons to be drawn from their encounters of the forces of law and order as they operate under the National Party Government.

Thus counterpoised to the RAG contingent, an odd assortment of socialists, anarchists and feminists found themselves thrown into a temporary alliance of sorts. It was around these two groupings that debate on most issues was polarised during the protest.

There is not the space to embark on a discussion of the nature and objectives of non-violent direct action. We do not wish to deny the valuable part non-violent direct action can play in political actions like Nurrungar, but to criticise the particular interpretation taken by many at the camp. Such strategies lacked any structural analysis of the role of the security forces in relation to the base as representing the civil extension of the military threat we had come to protest against. There was a basic antagonism between protesters and police no amount of mutual respect or trust could wipe away. Power inequalities cannot be overcome purely through mutual understanding. Taking power away from those who control is rarely a 'calm' or 'orderly' process, seldom achieved through the voluntary actions of the more powerful.

It is at this point that the notion of a

'community of interests', invoked at the camp, ceases to be empowering and ultimately serves only to protect dominant power relations. Indeed, those who did entertain illusions that the police would respond in kind to our conciliatory gestures had them shattered on the last day when nearly two hundred demonstrators tried to enter the base en masse. The police used mace spray on several people and many more were hurt when mounted police attempted to break up the protest.

The disagreement also revealed a wider division of political styles between those favouring 'symbolic' as opposed to 'real' types of protest. The former, like the RAG, concentrated on actions such as declaring Nurrungar illegal under international law and delivering a summons for the arrest of its commanding officer, while those of us in the latter category felt some sort of physical challenge should be made, whether it be the unauthorised entering of restricted spaces or trying to damage the property associated with the base. The most striking example of this occurred when some protesters succeeded in entering the base itself and climbed on top of a radome, on which they managed to spray paint several slogans before being apprehended. The camp's radical edge came mainly from those prepared to undertake concrete actions against the base. It was the act of actually getting inside the base that was primarily responsible for the decision to send in the military, thus changing the entire nature of the protest. Actions like this pushed to the limits not only the space for dissent established by the security forces, but also by the organisation of the camp itself. Many protesters were not prepared to wait for the last two days when arrestable actions were officially supposed to take place. Their actions caught the security forces off guard and set in train a process whereby small groups of activists were able to set progressively more radical precedents for action, which gradually became accepted as legitimate by larger and larger sections of the camp. As a result the space allowed for political action was always in a state of expansion.

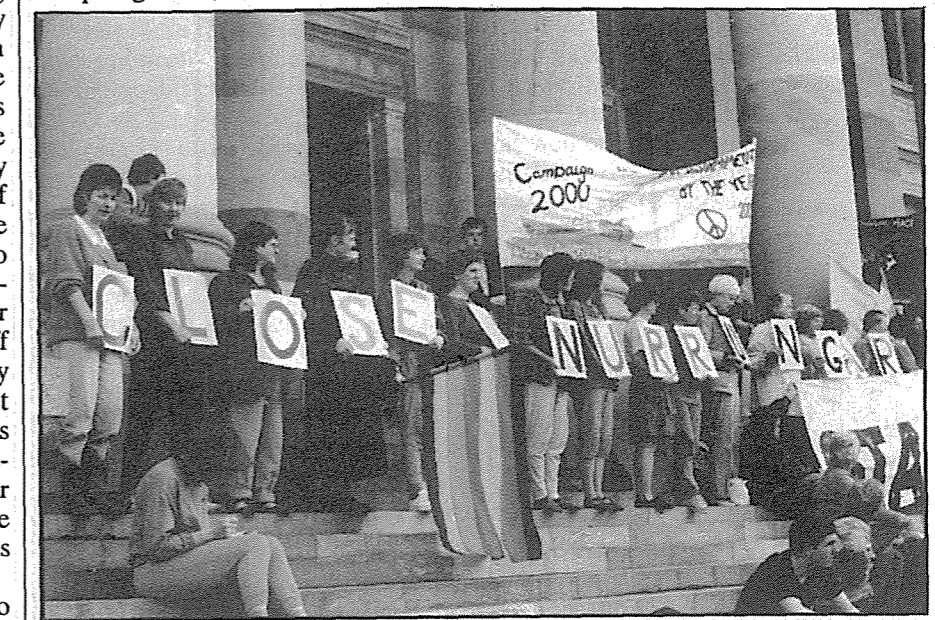
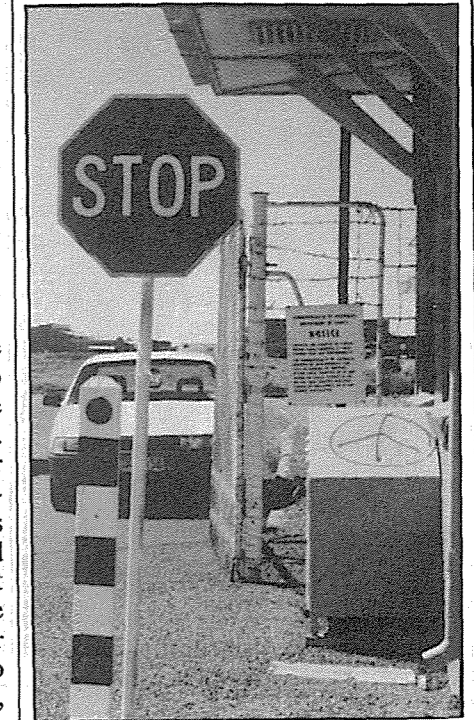
It is no coincidence that those who favoured the less radical non-violent direct action are those most currently active in the environment movement.

Throughout the proceedings, they constantly cited the good relations they had with the police as proof of the success of their strategies. But as is the case with large parts of the green movement at present, as it was with the peace movement at the height of its influence, most do not seem to question why exactly it is that certain authorities, so overwhelmingly hostile to such movements in the past, suddenly undergo radical changes in attitude as they begin to grow in size and influence. Given the emphasis of much of the green movement on symbolic action, it is little wonder that they appear to get on well with the police. However, if environmental activists were to occupy Western Mining Corporation's main office in protest at its efforts to mine Kakadu, there is little doubt that the appearance of police sympathy would not be maintained.

The last factor to consider about the symbolic style of protest in relation to Nurrungar is its reliance on the mainstream media for most of its effect. This led many present not just to aim for favourable media coverage, but to constitute virtually the entire event in terms of what would and wouldn't make good press. Media coverage is important, but how far are we prepared to go to secure it — to the point where it dictates our tactics so much that we are forced to conduct politics in a series of short, sharp segments, characteristic of the

type shown on most nightly news shows? In this regard, a positive aspect of the camp was the presence of a large number of the alternative left media.

The Nurrungar demonstration brings to a close a definite stage of development for the peace movement. Over the last several years the peace movement has as its main focus attempted to highlight to the public the presence and functions of the 'joint'

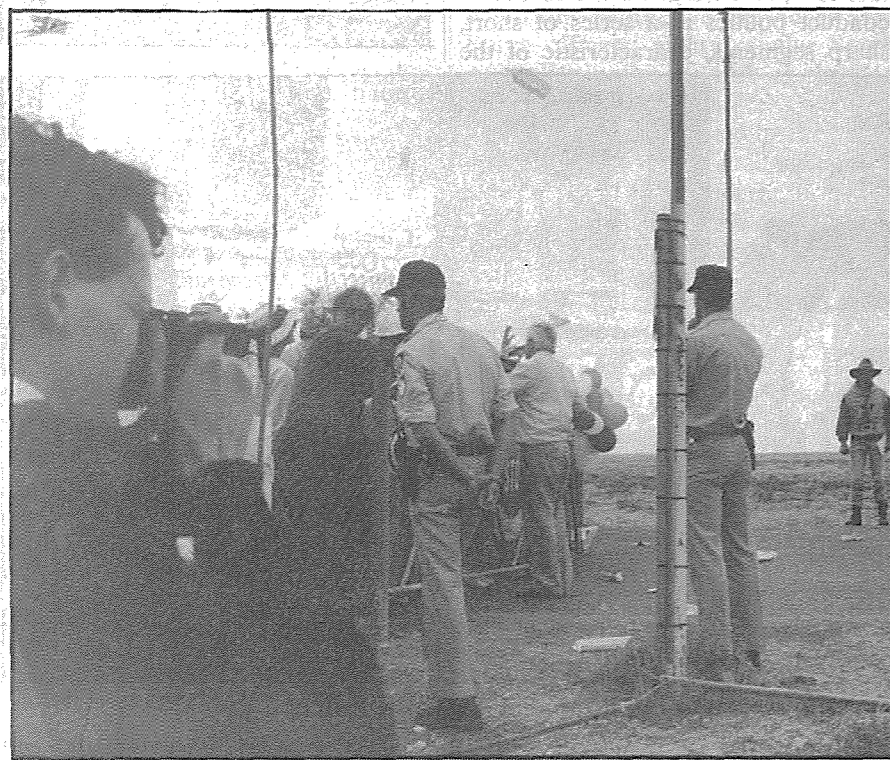
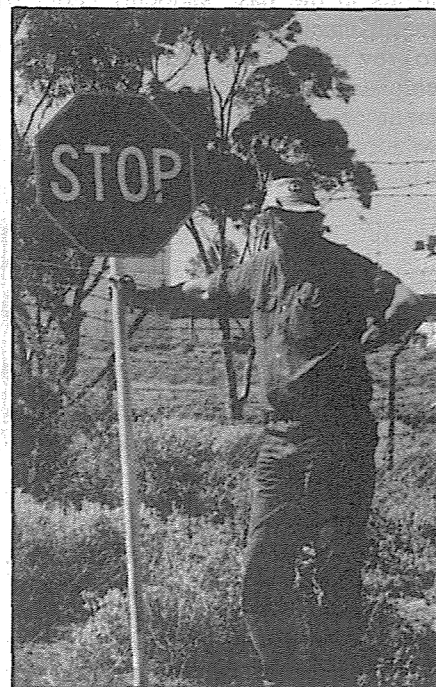
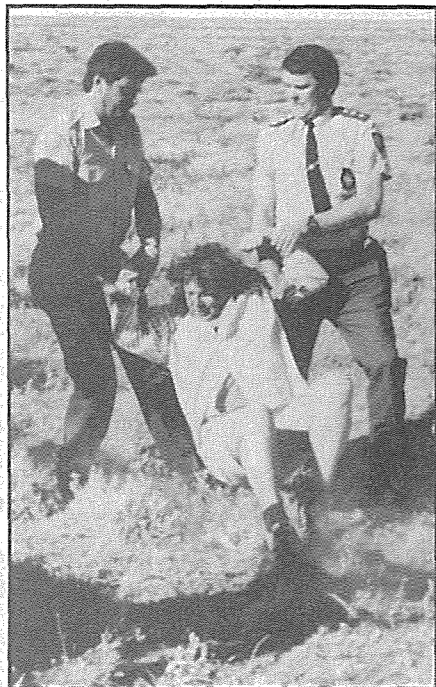


Rally in Adelaide before the actions at Nurrungar.

Top: Spray painting property - violent or non-violent?

facilities. This has seen demonstrations at Pine Gap, North West Cape; the most recent at Nurrungar brings this strategy full circle. It has undoubtedly been successful in raising awareness and debate, and has highlighted the ALP's determination to continue playing host, regardless of the dangers this may entail. But where do we go from here?

The best suggestion seems to us to



make a re-assessment of the situation and opt for a different direction. New issues, based around what is gradually becoming known as 'Australia's new militarism' offer the peace movement new avenues for action and possibly even prospects for rejuvenation. These issues are also important given the ramifications Australia's military build-up has in the domestic scene and

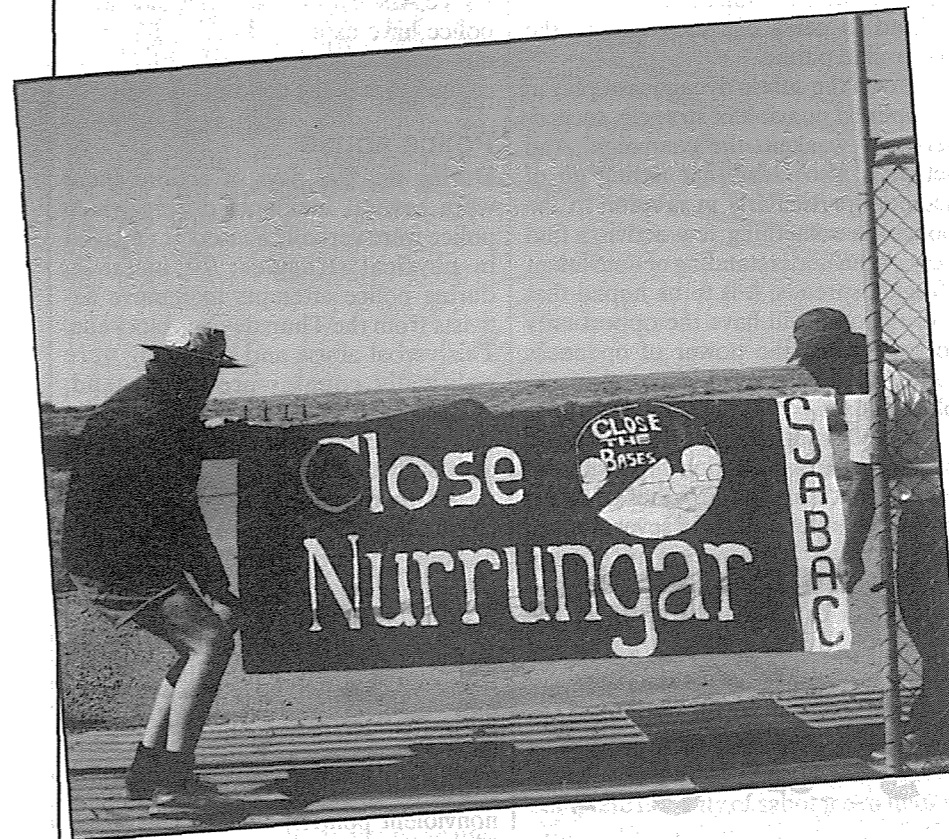
internationally, and because they are largely unknown to the majority of the Australian public, even to many who consider themselves well-informed members of the Left. A case in point is the Australian International Defence and Equipment Exhibition (AIDEX) held in Canberra from 28 to 30 November. A growing export industry in the area of military equipment and services is one of the Labor Government's great hopes for mitigating the balance of payments crisis. AIDEX was designed to give Australian companies the opportunity to display their capabilities within the defence industry and to establish an international profile, particularly with customers in the south-east Asian region. It had the full backing of State and Federal governments. The lack of public debate about AIDEX, let alone the issue of whether Australia should finance its economic problems with dollars earned producing armaments, has been truly remarkable.

A national coalition of peace groups organised a demonstration to take place in Canberra concurrent with AIDEX. The Melbourne organisation of the event was undertaken by a small group, People Opposing Military Expansion (POME), formed earlier this year to more directly address issues of violence and militarism. In POME's attempts to push the broader peace movement towards an examination of these issues, the group has come up against many difficulties. It seems that because of the challenging nature of these issues fewer people than was previously expected are keen to take them up, while the extreme sensitivity the Government has displayed to even the slightest opposition has meant the margin for protest is diminishing and the use of more outright repressive measures has become a real possibility. It is in this context that the questions and debates raised at Nurrungar will need to be viewed again.

Andrew Nette, Kate Tempny and Ian Wilson are Melbourne based activists.

This article has been excerpted from *Arena*, with permission. A four issue subscription to *Arena* is available for \$22/year (\$15 unemployed, pensioner) from PO Box 18, North Carlton, Victoria, 3054.

Non-violence needs discipline



by Robert Burrowes

One of the groups which attended the Nurrungar protest was a contingent of 21 from the Melbourne Rainforest Action Group (RAG). RAG is an activist group with a strong commitment to the philosophy and principles of nonviolent struggle; its entire campaign to halt global rainforest destruction is based on these principles.

It was apparent on our arrival that there was a diverse range of activists and political philosophies represented at Nurrungar. However, not all of these philosophies were based on politically effective principles, nor were some activists keen to engage in debate about the value of conflicting strategies.

It was also apparent that some activists had a great deal of personal anger to express (including some towards the police) and that they were unconcerned about the political effectiveness of how they did this. There were probably some

provocateurs within the camp as well.

While these factors (among others) made politically meaningful dialogue and debate difficult, there were five issues which RAG activists at Nurrungar highlighted in order to generate discussion. These were the decision-making structure being used at the camp, the use of secrecy, the verbal abuse of police, the use of sabotage, and the emphasis on spontaneity rather than well-planned, disciplined and politically effective actions.

RAG activists were also concerned that the type of actions which evolved from these 'principles' gave media crews little choice but to focus on poorly planned stunts and side issues rather than well planned actions which highlighted the main issues.

Decision-making

It was apparent from the first meeting attended by RAG activists that there was considerable opposition among the

activists present to the decision-making process being used at the camp. The preliminary organisation and infrastructure for the action had been undertaken by the Anti-Bases Campaign (ABC) in Adelaide. The decision making process outlined in their 'Activist Handbook' prepared for Nurrungar, was intended to revolve around affinity groups with meetings of group spokespersons to make final decisions.

The idea of affinity groups discussing proposals and representatives taking ideas to a meeting of spokespersons (rather than a large group meeting) is not, in itself, inconsistent with consensus decision-making processes. However, the importance attached to the role of the "coordinating group", its "guidelines for action" (which some felt needed discussion and modification) and the directive that "general meetings will be information only, there will be no discussion or debate on proposals" led many people, especially nonviolent activists and feminists, to question the decision-making structure. This feeling led to a modified decision-making process being introduced which allowed more active participation (not without its problems) by everyone, although the coordinating group still performed some control functions.

Secrecy

According to the ABC 'Activist Handbook': 'No specific details of arrestable actions will be given to the police'. Indeed the policy on secrecy was well entrenched long before most activists arrived in camp.

Attempts to persuade activists at camp meetings of the value of truthfulness and openness were met with limited but loud opposition and impeded by severe time constraints and the disinclination of some outspoken activists to encourage discussion of activist theories in such fora. Activists who attended workshops on nonviolent politics were given more adequate opportunity to discuss this and other theoretical issues.

The many reasons why secrecy fundamentally undermines nonviolent struggle has been dealt with frequently and extensively in the literature.

In brief, honesty and openness help activists to overcome their fear (the



For activists with a disciplined non-violent commitment, such blockades are more effective if the police, media and other relevant people (such as the bus driver in this case) are fully informed of the intended actions, as well as the activist commitment to remain in place in a disciplined nonviolent manner. Basic 'rules' for organising this type of blockade (which should be role-played to embellish it according to circumstances) should be explained.

For instance, the blockaders could sit facing away from the bus thus maximising the moral pressure on the driver; the blockaders could be linked together using such things as ribbons and balls of wool; there should be prior agreement as to how activists will respond to police directives to move (e.g. ignore them, hold each other tightly, sing to maintain group feeling and discipline, talk quietly to the police to explain commitment and persuade them to discontinue performing their role) and the blockaders could decide if some of their number should join the initial blockade afterwards by enclosing the bus from all directions.

While there is room for limited ele-

ments of creativity during actions, politically effective actions are the direct result of planning, preparation, training, role-playing and discipline. Such actions are also more likely to get precisely the media coverage desired by activists.

The media

It is apparent from the media coverage of the actions that the lack of well planned and disciplined actions together with a coherent media strategy also deprived the actions of much possible educative publicity. For nonviolent activists who expect to generate precise media images and messages, this was disappointing but predictable.

Media coverage of the actions at Nurrungar was extensive; virtually without exception however it was poorly focussed and of limited political value. Indeed two of our three major daily themes were not mentioned at all and our main reason for being at Nurrungar was mentioned only rarely. The policy of not letting the media into our camp was politically short-sighted and the undisciplined actions gave the

media plenty of red herrings upon which to focus.

In well planned and highly disciplined nonviolent actions designed with the media in mind, it is usual to have the media portray the images and convey the messages that activists create with their primary issue in focus. Such an action will therefore lead the media to report precisely what the activists want; this is astute politics.

Conclusion

It is evident to me that the most valuable aspect of the Nurrungar actions was the learning it allowed the activists involved. We learned a lot from each other.

It is also apparent that there is a gradually expanding interest in learning more about the principles and dynamics of nonviolent struggle as it is classically understood.

In my opinion, activist groups without a theoretical framework and an appropriate organisational model can expect to attract fewer critical adherents in future.

This, I believe, reflects the increasing level of dissatisfaction with branches of alternative politics devoid of a conceptual framework and a genuine commitment to tackling the hard organisational questions — such as those related to patriarchy and hierarchy.

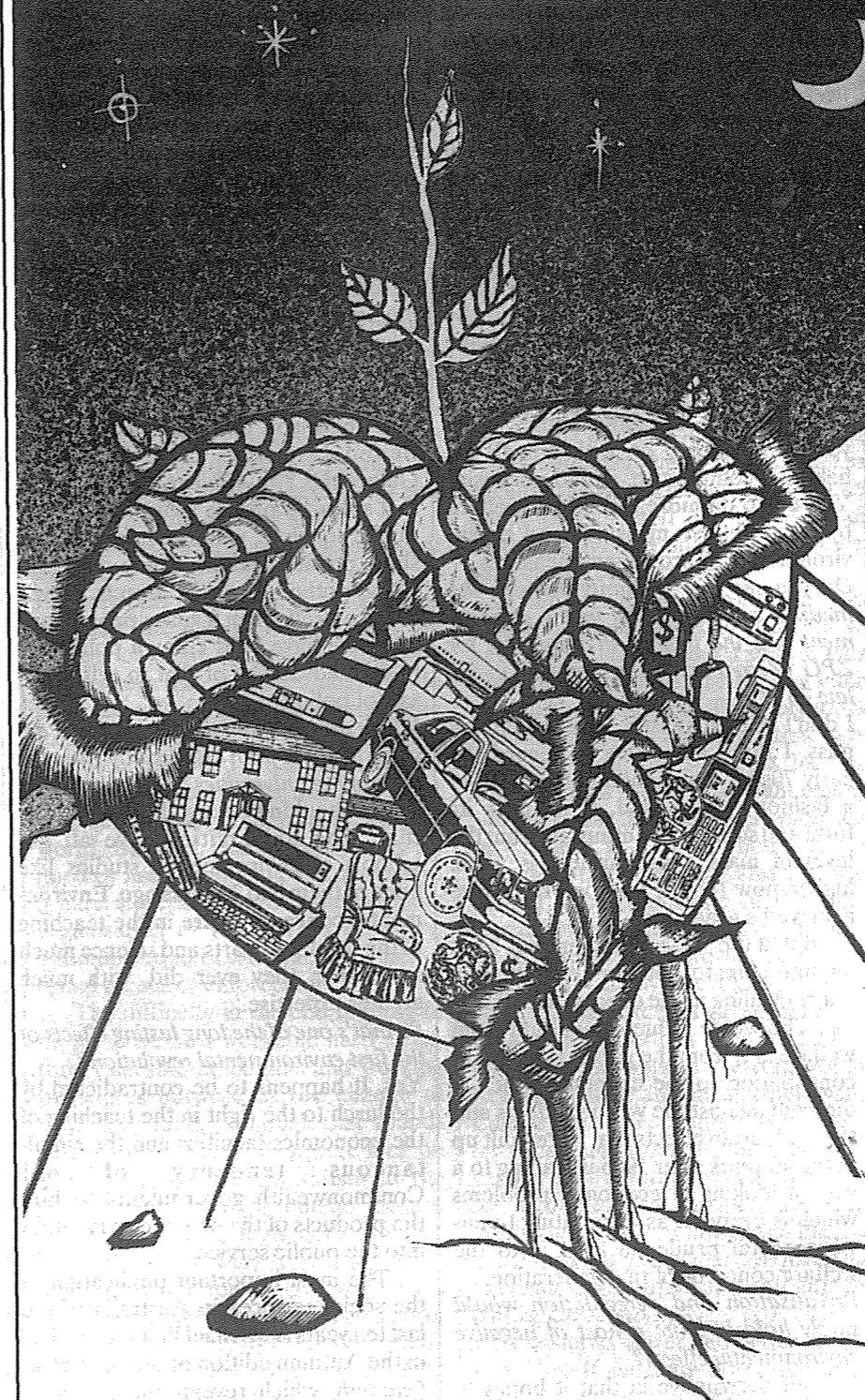
Activist politics may feel good but more people want it to be politically effective in a more personal way. Hence the search for politically relevant theory and the attraction to networks of smaller groups.

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Robert J. Burrowes is an activist with the Melbourne Rainforest Action Group

"We need the change of mind and heart to progress together and help one another along"



For a number of years, Hugh Stretton, an academic at the University of Adelaide, has been concerned with issues relating to the environment and its relation to the distribution of material wealth, and in 1976 he published *Capitalism, Socialism and the Environment*. On the eve of Stretton's retirement, James Prest interviewed him on some of the issues raised in his book.

Hugh, in your book, *Capitalism, Socialism and the Environment*, you discussed the need for environmentalists to be aware of the equity implications of any measures taken to protect the environment. That was 13 years ago. Do you think that people have paid any attention to what you said then?

I don't know whether they paid any attention to it but there's much more potential electoral support for environmental restraint now than there was then. And where its most sophisticated, in Europe, its full of equitable concern, I think. It's always complicated, there are at least three levels of equitable calculation.

One is — if you must restrain consumption, whose consumption are you going to restrain? Do you ration access

Hugh Stretton interview

to National Parks, like Victoria does at Wilson's Promontory, or do you restrict access by charging high prices?

Second, there are international considerations of the same kind, and they pose much more acute problems: where people are actually on subsistence and sometimes below it, can you really require that they defer their needs to later generations needs? I have a very able economist friend who says that the poorest countries should be making a living any way they can for their poor, which would include importing pollutant industries, because it is better to live in a polluted world than die in a clean one. Those acute problems crop up. It seem disgusting to export jobs from a country like this to a low wage country where capitalism can be more exploitative, environmental constraints are less, or corruptly mis-applied. On the other hand, if it redistributes a bit of employment this rich country to that poor one, who are we to complain? The issues are complex.

Thirdly, there are the fundamental generational issues somebody wittily summed up long ago — "What do I owe posterity? What has posterity done for me? On the one hand, the unborn are unrepresented and therefore expect least consideration from materialist consumers now. On the other hand, they're the one category of distant, unknown supplicants for whom people do seem to have a bit of built in concern. You say that this economist friend says its better for the poor to live in a polluted world than die, but how can you always be sure that the benefits of that polluting industry are going to be distributed to the poor?

Of course you can't. All I mean is that you must expect to run your environmental revolution considerately to the very poor. It's going to be awfully easy not to, they're the easiest ones to rob. Consider that most infamous remark of Paul Ehrlich's about treating Bangladesh as a basket case not worth care, and the United States of all places as the lifeboat that needed preserving. In the light of your comments, then, how do you feel about the implications for the poor of calls for a ban on the importation of rainforest timbers into Australia?

There's no harm in such a ban, chiefly because it helps to raise consciousness. But the effective control of global deterioration won't be achieved by a

whole list of separate enthusiast bans. It can only be achieved in the end by agreement between national governments, or by international constraints, like the whaling constraints.

It is very important to insist, first, that environmental degradation doesn't automatically follow economic growth. But I think that one ought to concede that in the long run, the level of material intake that goes on in the rich countries now is of course an enemy of environmental prudence.

You get to a point beyond which people still go on contending for material improvement, but there's no reason to suppose that, collectively speaking, more growth is going to improve human happiness. I don't for a moment believe that happiness in the United States at present levels of intake is greater than happiness in the US in 1948.

There is a threshold above which you're only going on with growth for habitual, competitive, stupid purposes. You could do more for human welfare by redistributive measures and by environmental improvement measures. Do you see any similarity between the media's current interest in the environment and the interest in proposals for ZPG (Zero Population Growth) in the late 70's?

I don't think it's just a fashion that will pass. I think it's wrong to regard the early 70s environmental enthusiasm as a fashion that passed. It changes its form and some of its enthusiasm, but the level of mass consciousness is much higher now than it was before. We've achieved a great deal.

But at the same time there has been an unfortunate counter-revolution in our prevailing mode of economic thinking. The whole affluent revulsion from welfare and from the public investment contribution to the economy which is directed against the welfare effects and the egalitarian effects that were built up in the 40 years after 1945 is leading to a way of looking at economic problems which is every bit as devastating to environmental prudence as it is to the welfare concerns of that generation. Privatisation and deregulation would surely hold in store a host of negative environmental effects?

It's self destructive in that it hopes to accelerate the rate of growth. I think economists are mistaken, for example,

about relations between public investment and growth... . And the accounting approach to environmental problems, which includes systematic discounting for future time, is completely inimicable to any long term environmental prudence. They can't even have long term plans for making money now!

But, the one cause for hope, both from an Old Left view, and from a new environmentalist point of view, is that the enemy is so technically flawed, so technically mistaken his intentions will not be fulfilled by his performance. To some extent people are already getting disillusioned with them.

How do you think people are ever going to accept the expanded program of public investment that is needed to protect the environment, to conduct recycling, to plant trees, if the private sector is only willing to invest in speculation?

One thing you can ask is how it happened last time ... in 1957 with Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* ... with that splendid phrase "private affluence, public squalor", with the images of the shiny private Cadillac going down the filthy, potholed, public streets. It will reverse itself when it hurts people, and when we have bold enough politicians to take advantage of that to sell reversals of policy.

Where do you think those politicians are going to come from? Especially given the state of the universities?

There shouldn't be any difficulty about that. The universities have all got schools of environmental studies like none of them had 20 years ago. Environmental concerns figure in the teaching of the faculties of arts and science much more than they ever did, with much greater expertise.

So that's one of the long lasting effects of the first environmental revolution?

Yes. It happens to be contradicted by the lurch to the right in the teaching of the economics faculties and the simultaneous tendency of our Commonwealth governments to hire the products of the economics faculties into the public service.

The most important publication of the social sciences in Australia of the last ten years is Michael Pewsey's article in the Autumn edition of the *Australian Quarterly* which reveals the extent to which that dry doctrine known as economic rationalism now possesses

the upper reaches of the Australian public service. It's the most highly educated, the most co-operative, the most like-minded civil leadership we've ever had. But it's possessed of a devastating set of faiths and beliefs. That's the most difficult thing to cope with.

The Keatings of this World were to some extent betrayed by their banker friends, but to a rather greater extent I think they were converted by the persuasive voices of the public service. It's such a grievous problem, and people like me who say so are not forgiven by these people who think this is a most impertinent, ignorant, stupid, and unhelpful thing to be saying. But it's something you've got to go on saying.

How do such economists respond to your criticisms? Do they say that because you're not trained as an economist you can't talk about it?

Yes. But a great many good economists escaped the undergraduate brain washing. It's no bad thing to come to economics with alternative theories and ways of thinking in your head.

Is a revolution in economic thought what we need?

It's only part of the two general things we need: the change of mind and the change of heart to progress together and to help one another along. We do need the soft do-gooding efforts of the Left and environment movement that persuade people to live differently, and to value different things, and to content themselves with a materially simpler world. But that change of heart is no good by itself. It has to be married with a hard structure of workable complex organisation of the world's economy, national and international, with institutional means of enforcement.

The difficulty in the end is going to be to arrive at a workable hard structure, tolerable in its aims and working principles because of the change of heart all round. Although that sounds extremely difficult, if you reflect on other things, even capitalism in the Western democracies remains most of the time well enough controlled to respect human life, to abstain from slavery, to pay for its Union Carbide explosions, and so on. A great deal of constraint has already been imposed on raw greed if you think back how capitalists could behave 150 years ago the achievement is remarkable.

But even the most cursory study of the

“But that change of heart is no good in itself”

politics of food today tells you that a capitalist economy which can allow 500,000 to go malnourished every day is motivated by raw greed, isn't it?

That's one of its motivations. But wholly planned and publicly owned economic systems are no better: they're not perfect at distributing farm output, and much worse at producing it.

You're supposing that a free market will function effectively to save the Planet? That scarcity will cause the prices of resources to rise thereby resulting in the conservation of resources?

No, I don't think we'll ever achieve any sensible management by that means, because the prices do not go up on account of expected scarcity. The oil scarcity is measurable, and the prices have come roaring down.

I think it's going to take deliberate political, allocative action just as we have for international radio waves. There might even be a re-birth of international organisations. That may sound fanciful in view of the opposition to be expected from big spenders like the United States — but that might change — Americans have been very early and very radical in some of their own environmental changes. They've also helped to reform some of the worst aspects of their capitalistic behaviour.

My dream is of a world in which the forces of villainy are the Australian ones, and the forces of virtue and clean-up are the American ones, and all we had to do was oppose Western Mining to Ralph Nader and virtue would win.

Can we focus our attention to the issue of resource scarcity and the time when Rex Connor tried to buy back those resources for Australia. If it couldn't work then, what is the prognosis now, given that our treasurer is bragging about how far he has succeeded in internationalising the Australian economy?

Connor looks better and better as time goes by. If we had borrowed huge amounts of Arab money at 7 per cent fixed interest and bought back public Australian ownership of most of our

mining industry, how much better off we would be! (Except that we would have equipped our present politicians with more and more assets to sell off.)

Have you met the Walsh doctrine? When Peter Walsh [Finance Minister] was asked why the government wanted to sell some public asset or other, he said — "Just piling up more stuff for Howard to sell when he gets in? Why hang on to our assets?"

On that principle, you must go out of office leaving the cupboard absolutely bare, with not an asset left in public ownership.

I don't know how we can escape from such attitudes of mind, except by plugging the idiocy of it and the short termism of it because it is already beginning to cost Australians en masse considerable sums of money. Borrowing to make up your trading deficit is a quick way to get a bigger trading deficit and start having less and less to spend. I don't know why simple old fashioned puritanism hasn't taken over. Whatever government is doing such improvident things, the opposition should be offering the opposite. But our problem is that the government and the opposition are vying with each other to sell the future.

In your book you said, "I assume that the left need no longer bother to abolish capitalism". You seemed to hope that it would abolish itself?

It was a silly remark. But one effect of the lurch to the right since then is that the further reform of capitalism and the necessary kinds of environmental reform look more and more alike. Left-Green alliances are more promising than they looked fifteen years ago. Between environmentalists who want to build their concerns into the standard program of the main reform parties, and those like a big factor in the German Greens who want environmental parties to stay pure and free to trade with governments of all colours, I'm not sure who is right. But both strategies are achieving more than they used to.

The road not taken?

In the race to win the hearts and minds (or money and votes) of the environmentally conscious public, the environmental movement may be coming in a poor third behind industry and political parties/governments. Even more seriously, the "business as usual" of these last two is, in some instances, being reinforced by the environment movement's efforts. Stuart White looks at these three sectors, and suggests some strategies for the future.

Edelman, a public relations firm which handles the account of ICI (Australia), our largest manufacturer of plastics, are polling environmentalists and other (?) opinion makers about ICI's image. "What could ICI do to improve its image?", I am asked. "Are environmentalists happy with pollution control measures?"

I experienced the same sense of frustration answering these questions as I did on a recent visit to the ICI Botany suite where I met senior personnel. The problem is this: ICI have the following goals:

- (i) to maximise return to shareholders and, therefore,
- (ii) to produce as much plastic as can be sold
- (iii) to implement such pollution control measures and publicity campaigns as are deemed necessary to safeguard (i).

Certainly it is not my intention to argue against pollution control measures as they do force the price of plastics up to a more "realistic" level. However, the bigger problem is (i) and (ii), which is where ICI and I part company. The kind of shifts we are observing in materials use in the post-war period, as outlined by Barry Commoner in *The Closing Circle*, represent a shift in an opposing direction to sustainability. The petrochemical industry is intrinsically hazardous and polluting, as evidenced by recent revelations about the incidence of large and serious spills and leaks at the Botany site. It's not just a case of problems of the waste plastic, but also the inputs and the process itself, and the way in which the industry is organised. The growth of the market in plastics is itself a worry. The use of plastics in Australia has historically grown at 20% per year and the proportion of plastics in the packaging waste stream has risen substantially. As demand levels off here, companies like ICI look to South East Asia for their markets.

The industry is quick to respond to a backlash against plastics. Photo-degradable, biodegradable and recyclable plastics are offered as rather insubstantial 'bait' to a public well trained in the jingle of the 'brand swap'. for Earth Clever read Image Clever.

A video produced recently by ICI uses all these distracters, all with one goal in mind: the expansion of their polyethylene capacity with a second plant to produce 90,000 tonnes per year. It's all quite neat: we work to ensure that recycling and problems with plastics are on the public agenda, ICI use it as PR to sell an expansion of their capacity, and Coles-Myer gain a market

advantage.— the wheels oiled with the Hailes/Elkington/*Green Consumer Guide* ethos of win-win (see box). A classic martial arts manoeuvre.

Governments

What about governments? The last issue of *Chain Reaction* analysed, with due cynicism, the antics of the major parties. Perhaps the greenhouse targets game best illustrates how governments will follow the political leverage rule (maximum effect with minimum action) every time.

Before the February 1988 WA state election, incumbent ALP Premier, Dowding, promised that his government would adopt the Toronto Conference goal of a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emission by 2005. What can he mean? The WA government has had one of the highest growth rates in use of electricity (9%) and gas (17%) in the western world, and their development strategy remains unchanged.

Likewise, Premier Greiner in NSW recently stated that his government would 'aim to achieve' this goal. He knows not what he says! Every policy of the NSW government, in transport and energy, is heading in the opposite direction.

Such statements about goals are meaningless without some supporting information about implementation. A trap which even environmental groups, who should know better, risk falling into.

And what of these environmental groups? With apologies to Robert Frost via Amory Lovins, we appear to be milling around at the fork of two paths we could call the 'soft path' and the

'hard path', defined by choice of campaigns, method of campaigning, ways of organising and the breadth of our objectives.

The 'hard path', a hot contender, is characterised by the 'quick and dirty', the high appeal forest fire campaign where the profile of the campaigning organisation often takes precedence over the issues. Long on mass appeal, short on analysis and long-term solution, or a vision of the future. Networking, the slow building of a broader, deeper critical awareness of issues is sacrificed on the altar of the pragmatic and instrumental world that has created our problems.

The hard path also takes its toll on the green workers. Overwork in an increasingly hierarchical and bureaucratic industry, and disconnection from the community or from where one might see the sprouting of the seeds for change, are recipes for activist burnout or the anaesthesia of cynical pragmatism. In the US, a portent of things to come is the instance of industrial action by the staff of a major environmental group. The question must be asked, how do we think we can act to change structures which promote ecocidal behaviour if we uncritically adopt the same structures?

The Soft Path

So, what might characterize a 'soft path' for the environment movement? Firstly, we might take advantage of the green wave, but choose our issues more strategically, informed by their seamless interconnectedness. Take the case of a campaign about genetic engineering. Sure, we could just look at the environmental aspects of the risks of deliberate release of genetically modified organisms. Alternatively, this could be just one corner of a network of overlapping interests. Animal rights groups, the women's movement, peace groups, the deep ecologists, third world activists, all have a stake in the issue. *The single focus approach may win a regulatory reform here, a banned release there, but the political pendulum swings by sheer weight of numbers, and broad political influence and an informed public. There are no short cuts in the end.* Food is another good example. Clearly an environmental issue, but somewhat neglected by the mainstream environmental groups: food

politics involves third world, animal rights, rainforest campaigners, energy policy, worker's rights, toxic chemicals, sustainable agriculture, and allows for some concrete projects, such as the highly successful organic food co-ops started by Friends of the Earth (Collingwood) as part of their Food Justice Campaign over a decade ago.

Secondly, we could work on our campaigns in a way that provides people with a clear vision of what a sustainable future might look like, an emphasis on the solution, rather than the problem. Perhaps the most famous example is the 'soft energy paths' campaigns which grew out of the anti-nuclear movement. Another is the more recent, and laudable, development of sustainable forestry strategies by major groups in Australia. The success of this approach is so clear it is disheartening not to see it pursued more often. Even better are campaigns which contain possibilities for communities or individuals to build structures for themselves; food co-ops, energy or waste reduction methods. Solutions can empower people, problems by themselves just wear them into submission.

Thirdly, if the way we operate and organise ourselves is consistent with our vision of the future, then we have a real chance of realising that vision. This means more equal participation, more consensus-based decision-making, 'practising what we preach' as individ-

uals and as organisations and remembering the community. These things all take longer and are less 'efficient' (in the sense that an army or Dow Chemical is 'efficient'), but if we don't think and act on them, then we're not part of the solution. And as Fritz Schumacher observed, "if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem."

The environment movement is in a unique and critical situation. Our profile and tactical successes have won despite the lack of a clearly defined vision or strategy. In the US, as the excellent book *Environment at the Crossroads* shows, there has been a bureaucratic consolidation of the major groups (Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Friends Of the Earth and now even Greenpeace) and a reactionary rise of the "hero" groups Earth First! and Sea Shepherd.

The emerging pattern in Australia is not entirely clear, but it is likely that 'corporate competitiveness' or ideological difference will create divisions in the environment movement. This will just reflect the hurly burly of a rapidly growing market. What will be more significant is the future emergence of a significant 'soft path' direction in the environment movement. That, in the words of Robert Frost, could make all the difference.

Stuart White, keeping a sharp eye on business from Lismore

Green Business?

Sydney's Regent Hotel, Ballroom Two. Breakfast for 250 business people including many from senior management, others from high-flying PR firms and ad agencies. Julia Hailes is speaking. Julia, with John Elkington, wrote the *Green Consumer Guide* and formed the company *SustainAbility* to advise companies how to green themselves. The occasion was organised to launch *Environmental Marketing Services*, an Australian Associate of *SustainAbility*, whose clients include Coles-Myer and whose personnel number at least one previously active environmental campaigner, retained by an attractive salary.

Question time was interesting. Plastics inevitably arose. According to Julia Hailes, the direction in Europe is thumbs-down to photo- or bio- degradable, thumbs up to recycling. It seems a green consumer feels happier if they think the plastic they buy undergoes reincarnation. Presumably they feel so happy as to go on consuming more plastic, increasing the happiness of the board members of ICI and Glad Australia.

One twist came when Lindsay Showyin from Samuel Taylor (and the Aerosol Association of Australia) asked Julia to clarify a comment she had made that even non-CFC aerosols were a problem. She did, and it was an appropriate reply which Mr Showyin would not have been happy with. One wonders if the Tick-Environment Friendly campaign of the Samuel Taylor has moved into the arena of purchasing green candidates with hard cash. Samuel Taylor recently donated thousands of dollars to the NSW National parks and Wildlife Service in exchange for use of their logo in advertising.

Capitalists and greens — can they cohabit?

In response to the new wave of environmental consciousness, business is eager to prove its green credentials, resulting in a rash of promotional activity such as newspaper advertisements. While some environmentalists are cynical about the motivations of business the issues become more intense when environmental groups accept such advertising. Linda Siddall responds to the comments made in *Chain Reaction* questioning corporate links.

In your article "FOE Hong Kong Taken Over by Eco-industrialists" (*Chain Reaction* 58) you attack FOE Hong Kong for accepting advertisements in our magazine *One Earth* from "such crooked and unscrupulous uglies as Shell, Barclays Bank and Ciba-Geigy", singling out one of Ciba Geigy's products for particular mention. You then claim that we praise McDonald's "for its environmental awareness", whereas (according to you) McDonald's is well-known for destroying rainforest in Central America.

Thirdly and finally, you warn that polluting companies may offer sponsor-

ship to develop a green image as a screen for their dirty activities.

This latter point was canvassed in the issue in question, and is something of which FOE (HK) is acutely aware. However, as we also said in the same editorial, confrontation with industry can become a habit, and where companies are genuinely trying to clean up their act, should environmentalists not now work with them in the race to save Planet Earth? Or are we too mean-minded and insecure to give a pat on the back when industry does manage to get something right?

Our policy is one of 'co-operation without compromise'.

Had you waited for the subsequent issue of *One Earth*, published as a World Environment Day Special you would have seen even more clearly how aggressively independent FOE (HK) policies are, and how far we are from being taken-over or taken-in by our advertisers.

Two examples: we used a full page advertisement from HK's main electricity company (and one of its main polluters) China Light and Power (CLP). On the facing page we editorialise against a new power station proposed by CLP, launch a signature petition to stop it and elsewhere devote a full page to attacking the company for its lack of any energy conservation policy. Largely as a result of FOE's efforts in the magazine and elsewhere, the

Government Environmental Committee has now required the company to state its energy conservation policy.

Secondly, McDonald's and the rainforests. In the issue you referred to, we praised McDonald's only for switching to non-CFC containers, not its environmental awareness generally as you alleged. We put the allegations you make about "the hamburger connection" and more to McDonald's, stating that we proposed to do a story and inviting their response.

We received literally a stack of evidence from McDonald's refuting the charges, including copies of the letters written by Dr. Norman Myers (the WWF researcher who initiated the allegation that McDonald's was directly or indirectly responsible for clearing Central American rainforest for ranching) and Prince Philip unreservedly retracting and apologising for both allegations after Myers had further researched the situation.

We concluded that part of our article by commenting:

It remains something of a mystery why, when McDonald's went to so much trouble to establish the innocence of its 10,000 restaurants worldwide in 1983, it has done so little to let the public know about it since then — particularly as the allegation has continued to gain currency as the rainforests vanish.

You assert that "McDonald's is well

known for its role" in rainforest destruction. Yes, that is the rumour. Do you have any evidence for your apparent endorsement of this rumour?

If so, please send it to us urgently, we will be happy to put it to McDonald's and print their response. Have you done likewise in Australia?

If you have no such evidence, are you serving the environmental cause well by basing your position on mere gossip?

Thirdly, you singled out one product manufactured by Ciba-Geigy, Clioquinol, for special mention. We have asked Ciba-Geigy to respond. Meanwhile we would simply point out that to our knowledge, Ciba-Geigy has recently built a virtually closed-cycle (i.e. non-pollution producing) paint plant in Indonesia, it has been granted a licence to operate a plant above Lake Geneva by the Swiss authorities, (who are close to paranoid about preventing further pollution of the lake and require stringent standards) and they were chiefly responsible for establishing a much-needed pest-controllers' association in Hong Kong to control a horrifically unregulated area in the use of poisons.

On the contrary, the fact that Ciba-Geigy is emerging as a leader in clean technology and responsible marketing, and showing a genuine desire to support environmental work confirms my view that FOE should seize opportunities to work with them.

Of course where mistakes are made and damage done, environmental organisations must say so fearlessly. But let us be equally fearless about giving praise that is due.

If we praise such a company for such achievements, we believe our readers in Hong Kong are sophisticated enough to know that neither this, nor the acceptance of an advertisement from the company, implies any blanket approval from us.

We are equally clear, as I think our advertisers are, that should they seek to use their position as advertisers or sponsors to influence our independence, we would have no hesitation in returning their money and publicising the reason why.

I fear FOE may get trapped in fossilised 1960s thinking if we continue to treat all industry as the focus of all evil, (continued page 54)

James Prest Replies

FOE Hong Kong indeed deserves congratulations for its work. It appears to be a vibrant and growing organisation playing a lonely role in a significant debate.

That FOE (HK) has been prepared to approach and confront industry, rather than criticise from a safe distance, is especially important. This activity is rare in many sections of FOE in Australia.

But to discuss this is to sidetrack the debate. More is at stake than an argument over specifics of particular chemicals and specific incidents of pollution and desecration — there is disagreement over fundamental philosophy. The purpose of my original comments was to generate discussion of broad issues raised by the acceptance of advertising or sponsorship from large corporations by environmental groups, particularly Friends of the Earth.

I stand by my position that it is dangerous to accept advertising from such companies. Despite your suggestion that we "give the readers credit", there will inevitably be a significant number of your readers who are not in possession of the full facts on an issue, and will accept the point of view that ICI is now OK because it supports something as full of holes as the Montreal Protocol on CFCs and ozone depletion.

In Australia, the ownership of the media of mass circulation is concentrated in the hands of a few. This is also the case in Hong Kong. In this situation many people are not given the opportunity by the media to fill in critical gaps in their knowledge about the slowness of many to act on certain issues.

What a corporation fails to tell the public is usually of far more significance than what they do say. Consider the glossy poster on ozone depletion produced by Du Pont and published in a recent issue of *One Earth*. As far as I can tell, FOE (HK) failed in its responsibility to provide sufficient detailed information in the pages of *One Earth* to complement that which Du Pont had deliberately omitted from its poster.

The McDonald's case provides an example of the difficulty environmentalists can have in substantiating their claims. While it cannot be proven that beef McDonald's uses does not come from former rainforest land, we should not accept this just because McDonald's says so. The problem then becomes an issue of 'rumor' versus 'taking industry's word for it'. However while the 'hamburger connection' can not be proved directly, it is indisputable that soya beans are being grown in Amazonia on what used to be rainforest land, and that they are exported to feed beef in the US, beef probably used by McDonald's. Perhaps it is meat production itself that is the problem.

Further, I believe that there are certain types of companies from whom we should always reject offers of sponsorship. These are many of the companies from whom FOE (HK) has accepted support, such as Du Pont, ICI, and Shell. As members of the petrochemical industry — one of industrialised society's top producers of hazardous waste — they are intrinsically eco-rapers.

Certainly we should give credit where credit is due, but it would be wiser not to be taken in by the company's efforts to green itself when the measures being taken are not very significant when put into the context of continuing oil spills, the use of toxic dispersants to clean them up, the lack of serious attempt to develop anti-greenhouse technology, and the continuing fight in some parts of the world against the speedy introduction of unleaded fuel.

Degradable plastic bags are another example of why we shouldn't be taken in by superficial corporate 'greening' operations. An article in the *Greenpeace* magazine (Sept/Oct 1989) revealed that five of the top six United States hazardous waste products (by volume) were by-products or inputs of the plastics industry — propylene, phenol, methylene, polystyrene, and benzene.

The 'profit at all costs' orientation of most companies is the root cause. We must pressure them to consider the constructive possibilities of putting money into more ethical projects, those which have a charter wider than maximum dividends for shareholders at all cost.

James Prest is active in the production of *Chain Reaction*.

Remaking Society

by Murray Bookchin

We tend to think of environmental catastrophes — such as the *Exxon Valdez* oil-spill disaster in the Bay of Alaska — as accidents: isolated phenomena that erupt without warning. But when does the word accident become inappropriate? When are such occurrences considered inevitable outcomes of our society rather than accidents?

What environmentalists must emphasise is that the global ecological crisis is the result of our social and economic arrangements, not simply the product of random mishaps. If the *Exxon Valdez* disaster is treated merely as an 'accident' — as were Chernobyl and Three Mile Island — we will have once again diverted public attention from a social crisis of historic proportions: we live in an inherently anti-ecological society. This situation will not be healed by acts of statesmanship or the passage of piecemeal legislation. Ours is a society in need of far-reaching structural change.

Perhaps the most obvious of our problems is uncontrollable growth. In modern societies, unlimited economic growth is assumed to be evidence of human progress. Growth is, in fact, al-

most synonymous with the market economy that prevails today in the United States and the world. That fact finds its clearest expression in the popular business slogan, "Grow and die." We live in a competitive world in which rivalry is a law of economic life.

It's not enough, however, to blame our environmental problems solely on growth. A system of deeply entrenched structures — of which growth is merely a surface manifestation — makes up our society. In a vast market economy (be it of the corporate kind found in the United States or the bureaucratic kind found in the Soviet Union), competition itself generates a need for growth. Growth is each enterprise's best defence against the threat of absorption by a rival.

Unlimited growth is traced to its basic source — competition in a market society — the demand to control growth is meaningless as well as unattainable. We can no more arrest growth while leaving the market intact than we can arrest egoism while leaving rivalry intact.

Another popular explanation of the environmental crisis is the planet's increasing population. This argument would be more compelling if it could be shown that countries with the greatest rates of population increase are the largest consumers of energy, raw material, or even food. But it's no secret that industrialised nations, which sport the lowest birth rates, produce a disproportionate share of environmental woes.

'Industrial society', to use a genteel euphemism for capitalism, has also become an easy explanation for the environmental ills that afflict our time. But a blissful ignorance clouds the fact that several centuries ago, much of England's forest land, including Robin Hood's legendary haunts, was deforested by the crude axes of rural proletarians to produce charcoal for

metal forges and to clear land for sheep. This occurred long before the Industrial Revolution. Technology may magnify a problem or even accelerate its effects. But rarely does it produce the problem itself.

To discuss the issue of growth without a proper social and economic context is to distort and privatise our environmental problems. It is inaccurate and unfair to coerce people into believing that they are personally responsible for present-day ecological dangers because they consume too much or have too many children.

This privatisation of the environmental crisis has reduced many environmental movements to utter ineffectiveness and threatens to diminish their credibility with the public. If 'simple living' and militant recycling are our only responses to the environmental crisis, the crisis will certainly intensify.

Ironically, many ordinary people and their families cannot afford to live 'simply'. It is a demanding enterprise when one considers the costliness of 'simple' hand-crafted artifacts and the exorbitant price of organic and 'recycled' goods.

Public concern for the environment cannot be addressed by placing the blame on growth without spelling out the causes of growth. Nor can an explanation be exhausted by citing 'consumerism' while ignoring the sinister role played by competing producers in shaping public taste and guiding public purchasing power. The social roots of our environmental problems cannot remain hidden without trivialising the crisis itself and thwarting its resolution.

This article was first printed in the US magazine The Progressive August 1989 and was excerpted by Utne Reader. Subscriptions: \$US27.50/yr (12 issues) from The Progressive, Box 54615, Boulder, CO 80321-4615

“
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The Nuclear Activities (Prohibitions) Act

Just a Scrap of Paper?

The mining of radioactive mineral sands raises questions of legality under Victoria's Nuclear Activities (Prohibitions) Act. The MAUM newsletter asks how long will the anti-nuclear stand remain?

Mineral sands are usually associated with the sandy shores of eastern and western Australia. Environmentalists have struggled over many years against the sand miners to save sand dunes and beach vegetation from their ravages.

In 1985 CRA discovered an extensive mineral sands deposit lying beneath Wimmera farmlands around Horsham. The sands are ancient seabeds laid down over a million years ago. *CRA now holds exploration licences over 15,000 square kilometres of Western Victoria.*

The Wimmera deposits are possibly the largest in the world.

Mining Wimmera mineral sands will pose serious groundwater and other environmental problems for the farming area. Importantly, the monazite concentrate, extracted from the sands, contains uranium and thorium.

The presence of these radionuclides creates special occupational and environmental problems. *Their removal from any mining site raises questions of legality under the Nuclear Activities (Prohibitions) Act.* Legality is a fundamental issue that must be dealt with before other matters are considered.

When the Labor Party came to office in 1982 it moved with commendable speed to pass the *Nuclear Activities (Prohibitions) Act*. Since then the Government has given much publicity to its principled stand against those nuclear activities, other than nuclear medicine, under its jurisdiction.

When the Minister, David White, introduced the Bill into the Legislative Council it is clear that he was guarding against the situation where uranium or thorium are produced 'incidentally' in a mining operation. He said:

"Clause 6 of the Act provides that incidental mining or quarrying of uranium or thorium is permitted under a valid lease...provided the material remains in the tailings and is adequately treated according to regulations..."

David White is now saying that the incidental uranium and thorium in monazite from Wimmera mineral sands can be legally exported. No official explanation is forthcoming about an obvious conflict between how David White once described the purpose of the Act and his defence now of shipping materials containing uranium and thorium out of Victoria.

Mining will be done by Wimmera Mineral Sands (WIM), a CRA subsidiary. WIM set up a pilot plant in 1988. Before completing its pilot studies, WIM applied for a licence to mine one million tonnes of mineral sands to feed a demonstration plant producing mineral concentrates.

Unquestionably this 'demonstration' project is intended by WIM as the start of its commercial production.

Victoria: How Nuclear-Free?

•The WIM commercial operation will produce 30,000 tonnes thorium and 2,400 tonnes uranium as components of radioactive monazite*;

•The Federal government is trying to negotiate safeguards to cover monazite; meanwhile it can be legally used in nuclear weapons;

•Even if safeguarded the uranium can be used in nuclear reactors;

•Uranium from Australian monazite was sold to French and US nuclear companies supplying nuclear weapon fuel;

•If Victoria's 'nuclear-free' legislation permits export of monazite then it is worthless in terms of public perception of its intention;

•The Conservation Council of Victoria has been advised by eminent legal counsel that WIM 150 project is illegal.

*The concentrate also contains radioactive xenotime, and has 4 per cent thorium and 0.3 per cent uranium.

The pilot plant was approved on the basis of a Preliminary Environmental Report. Public consultation was thereby deliberately minimised. This mining project like others promising financial returns to the State is being given 'fast track' treatment by the government.

Environmental groups have asked for a full EES on the impacts of full-scale commercial mining before a decision is made on the demonstration plant.

WIM would eventually produce thousands of tonnes of thorium and uranium in its monazite concentrate.

Premier John Cain wrote to the Conservation Council of Victoria (CCV) saying the Government will observe the spirit and letter of the Act. But how he did not say. Requests for a definitive statement on the legality of the project within the meaning of the Act have been ignored.

WIM argue that because the uranium and thorium in the ore are below the limits set in the Act, the removal of monazite concentrate does not breach the Act.

But Section 6 of the Act is expressly concerned with extracted material. The clause stipulates that

"Uranium of an amount greater than 0.02 per cent by weight or thorium of an amount greater than 0.05 per cent by weight is not removed from the land covered by mining lease".

WIM argues that "there are no logical reasons" to assume the uranium or thorium will find their way into nuclear weapons or reactors. WIM also says that uranium and thorium "do not confer additional value on the minerals".

In fact uranium extracted from Australian monazite has been sold to French and American nuclear companies. Both companies supply fuel for nuclear weapons and nuclear reactors. Thorium from Australian monazite has fuelled experimental reactors.

The Federal government is presently trying to negotiate safeguards over exported monazite for the very reason that the uranium *does* have value for weapons. Safeguards over monazite will be even more difficult to police than yellowcake. In any case, safeguards do nothing to prevent the uranium being used in nuclear reactors. If this happens Victoria will have links

The Wimmera Industrial Minerals (WIM) Project

The 'fast track' record so far:

- 1987.- CRA applies for development lease.
- 1988 - CRA subsidiary, Wimmera Industrial Minerals (WIM) issues Preliminary Environment Report on pilot plant to process 20,000 tonnes sand.
 - Ministry for Planning & Environment (MPE) issues Assessment approving pilot plant.
 - Conservation Council of Victoria (CCV) issues Statement of Concern on behalf of environment and anti-nuclear groups about environmental impacts and illegality under the Nuclear Activities (Prohibitions) Act
 - CCV appeal to Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) against pilot plant
 - AAT rejects CCV appeal
- 1989 - Environment Effects Statement on demonstration plant to process 1 million tonnes of sand before pilot plant studies completed.
 - CCV makes submission and appears at panel hearings on EES.

Proven Reserves (tonnes)

WIM 150 Deposit	
Monazite and Xenotime	750,000
Zircon	5,100,000
Rutile and high titanium minerals	8,000,000
Ilmenite	12,500,000

with the nuclear power industry, a situation the Act is supposed to prevent.

The CCV has been advised by an eminent legal counsel that, in his opinion, because uranium and thorium in the monazite concentrate exceed specified limits WIM would be in breach of Section 6 of the Act if it removes the monazite from the site. Also since uranium, at least, has value for the nuclear industry the WIM project would probably breach Section 5 of the Act.

Apart from making the Nuclear Activities (Prohibitions) Act toothless the Government is glossing over the serious health and environmental problems of handling radioactive material.

The Australian mineral sands industry has a disastrous radiation record. Environmental bodies have requested the Federal Minister for the Environment, Senator Richardson, to call a public inquiry into the regulation and monitoring of mineral sands mining throughout Australia.

This article was first printed in the MAUM Victoria newsletter.

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Old husband's tales

There has been much research done into why men are aggressive, but Bill Williams and Gisela Gardener say that it usually attempts to justify aggression. They suggest that men have more to lose than gain by fitting into society's definition of 'masculine'.

Conventional wisdom supposes that men are 'naturally' aggressive, that male violence towards women, to each other and earth itself is an inescapable biological fact. If the violence of men is part of an inborn natural pattern then there is little hope for our survival. But where does that belief in the innate aggression of man come from, and why is it so readily accepted?

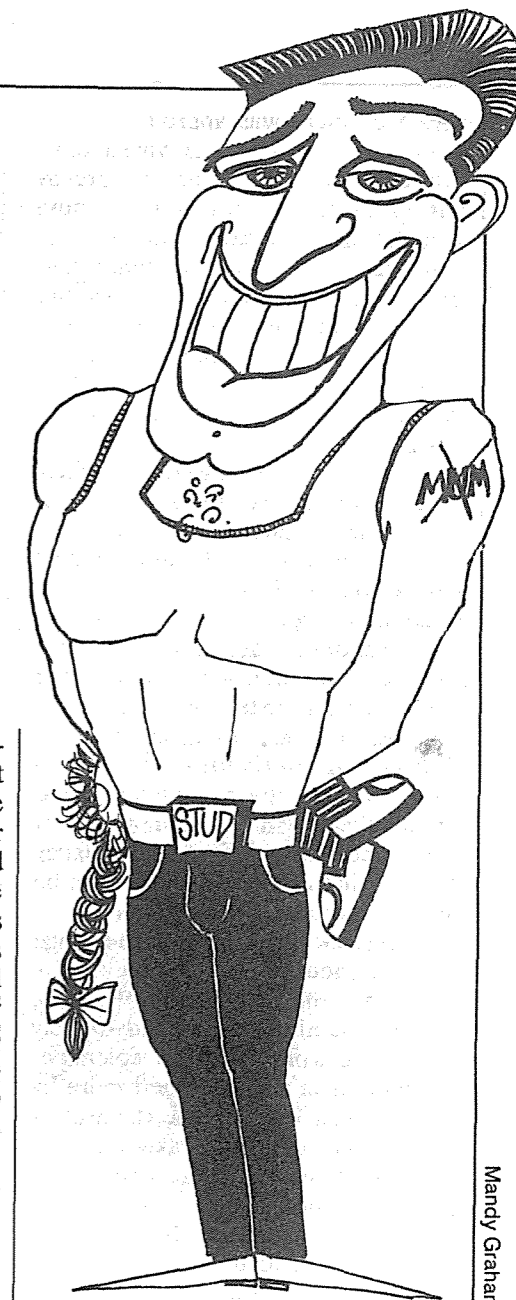
Think of the caveman, whose image is largely constructed by archaeologists, historians, novelists and film makers. We almost universally refer to all humans of prehistoric times as *cavemen*, the male being the norm as usual. Our instant mental picture is that of a male figure, clad in animal skin hunting some mythical animal or, club over shoulder, dragging 'his' woman off to his cave. These images form our ideas of what 'natural' man was like before civilisation turned him into the naturally violent but sophisticated thinking man of today.

Anthropologists, generally white

middle class scientific gentlemen, fortified the racist concept that Westerners have advanced from the 'primitive' pursuits. Enthusiasm for sporting competitions, the parry and thrust of the business world and the scientist's race to conquer life's mysteries are said to be manifestations of the aggressive impulse in the civilised male. This theory counsels us — either overtly or covertly — not to be too surprised if now and then man's true nature erupts and he bares his teeth to the world and, for instance, wallops the missus.

Socio-biologists were keen to prove that male aggression is natural by studying the behaviour of primates like gorillas and chimpanzees. Popular faith in the Tarzanists' 'naked ape' theories has waned since *National Geographic* published photographs of Diane Fossey cuddling some of these non-macho apes. Equally erosive to the belief that men are naturally aggressive has been the growing recognition that the cultures which we have termed primitive are often considerably more harmonious than our own, with intricate and sophisticated mechanisms for the resolution of conflict and maintenance of the environment.

Thus men of science have turned their attention to the Y chromosome and the hormone testosterone in their search for that essential factor which is supposed to make men more aggressive than their female counterparts. One team of researchers found that rats injected with testosterone-type hormones



Mandy Gaham

(androgens) behaved "aggressively", which led them to assert that men are aggressive due to inborn hormonal differences. This habit of extrapolating from captive rodent to human behaviour has been called into question by recent research which indicates that oestrogens — hormones associated with female characteristics — might actually be causing so-called 'androgen effects'. When androgens are given as a drug they are converted in the body to oestrogens; it turns out that the 'androgen effects' can be blocked by the administration of anti-oestrogen drugs, but not by anti-androgen drugs.

The tempting hypothesis that male aggression was under direct genetic control was raised when numbers of male prisoners were found to possess an

extra Y chromosome. When the excitement died down it was noted that, although some XYY males were in prisons or mental institutions, most were not. It also became apparent that men with an extra X chromosome were found in these institutions in roughly the same proportion! Adolf Hitler and Mahatma Gandhi both possessed Y chromosomes (they were both vegetarians for that matter). Is anyone going to suggest that their markedly differing levels of aggressive behaviour were paralleled by differing levels of testosterone — rather than by differing social influences and their individual genetic codes?

Biology is not destiny. The complex genetic code of each individual does influence behaviour — women and men alike — but this is a far cry from attributing aggressiveness to the Y chromosome. We live in a society which chooses to sanction male violence, and any and every available piece of propaganda is mobilised to reinforce the idea that male violence can not be helped: it is natural. What better excuse can you think of for men not to change their behaviour?

Neither the conventional wisdom, nor the scientific research adequately explain man's propensity for violent behaviour, which is determined more by the way men learn to see themselves than by their biological make-up.

In an attempt to better understand how males become men, we sought responses from men to the question: "what does it mean to be a man?"

Whilst women's literature, especial-

ly of the past twenty years, is full of celebrations of womanhood, men seem to be struggling to understand the question. There was a wide variety of responses ranging from "being strong" or "being rational minded", to the more sophisticated "being able to walk down the street unmolested" or "taking initiative". Men usually defined masculinity by referring to capabilities that all humans possess but from which women have been excluded by men. None were inherently positive definitions of maleness.

Masculinity is intangible. Despite all the clenched fists, jutting jaws and bulging biceps, the masculine image males are urged to adopt — by parents, teachers, peers, media propaganda — is nothing but a shell to protect him in adulthood. But to protect him from what? From being seen to be a girl, a woman, an old woman?

The most important aspect of masculinisation process is the rejection of any features which might be construed as feminine. The virtues boys are taught to regard as masculine do need to be pummeled into them — but it is the virtues that are pummeled out of them that cripple them in the long run. The qualities that have been represented as feminine are inherently positive, life affirming qualities, such as care, co-operation and empathy. In our society they have been artificially tied to the child bearing capacity of human females. Even more important than their adoption as natural characteristics by little girls, is their rejection by little boys. Those who are to succeed in the

man's world must reject many human needs and experiences. Intimacy comes to be regarded as a feminine need. Closeness and dependence are seen as weaknesses. Anything which might cast doubt on a lad's blossoming virility must be distanced.

As they cast off the emotions and warmth of the so called 'feminine within', they do come to recognise themselves as autonomous individuals. But there is no great masculine brotherhood welcoming them into the warmth and shelter of its hearth. By definition men are alone: it is part of the masculine ethos not to share, not to offer warmth, not to care. So the image of masculinity to which males aspire is just that: an image, a mask, a shell which permits them to indulge in the fighting and rivalry and dominance of a man's world — but leaves them with little capacity for self knowledge, empathy, and intimacy with their fellow humans.

Masculinisation leaves men emotionally disabled. Much of what passes for independence in men is more a case of self-alienation. To maintain control and achieve dominance it is essential to sever the connections between us and other humans. Intimacy and dominance are incompatible. Intimacy makes you vulnerable. The man who wants to dominate must first learn to distance himself from other living things — and in so doing becomes separate from his own capacity to love and nurture.

Peel off the shell and what do we find?

It is men who are plagued with anxieties about their sexual prowess, their machismo, their capacity to measure up. Doing battle might test the armour of the man but it does little for the barren interior. The long treks up icy mountains and across frozen wastelands have little effect on the emotional chill at the core of the great explorer. Separation — and thus alienation — from children, from women, from other men, from environment and ultimately from self, is the lynchpin of masculinity. It ensures rivalry, ambition and conflict and produces the 'aggressive nature' of the human male.

Bill Williams and Gisela Gardener co-authored the recently released book *Men: Sex, Power and Survival* (Greenhouse Publications).

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Stark

by Ben Elton. Sphere, \$9.99
 Reviewed by Tony Smith.

Somebody connected with the film *On the Beach* commented that Melbourne was a great place to film the end of the world. Ben Elton, British comedian and writer of television scripts for the anarchical 'Young Ones', has set the climax of his novel of ecological disaster, *Stark*, in Western Australia's "aptly named" Great Sandy Desert.

Stark is black comedy. The plot involves the futile attempts of an unlikely band of environmental commandos to discover, expose and undermine the *Stark* conspiracy. The world's richest (mostly) men abandon the doomed planet to recreate in their moon utopia the very miseries which their ethics of progress caused on earth. Current concerns with the greenhouse effect and association of economic malaise with the AIDS epidemic through the image of the grim reaper make the story topical and almost plausible.

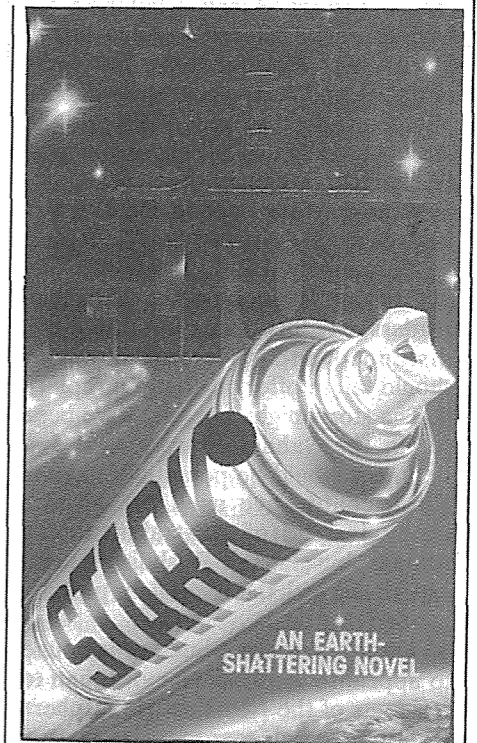
Elton's book, a best seller in Britain, contains many interesting episodes. It is, however, unlikely to become the cult story of the decade, unless its loony characters are realised on the screen. Anyway, the decade, and indeed the century, is winding down almost as fast as the Greiner government is dismantling the public sector in NSW.

Nor is *Stark* likely to receive critical acclaim, for Elton's staccato style owes more to the demands of the television audience than to the requirements of the serious reader. It does, however, have two saving features. Firstly, it will appeal to young adults who would otherwise read very little and might balk at any work approaching 450 pages. Secondly, it will provoke controversy and discussion of environmental issues.

Reactions to the book are likely to be extreme. Those who sympathise with Elton's characters will be able to afford a chuckle at his offbeat analogies, while feeling grateful that his important messages might reach a different audience than do the scientists and political activists. Those who are cavalier about the environment and condemn warnings of ecological disaster as the ravings of demented "doomies" will reject the work as slanderous, crude and inaccurate. Some politicians will guffaw at the suggestion that it is corrupt to accept gifts in return for slices of the national estate.

There is a certain piquancy in setting humanity's last stand in the world's oldest and most stable landscape. The isolation of Australia from the centres of finance and toxicity gives the story a fantastic quality. This removal from the Northern Hemisphere has some positive aspects. Peace activists have suggested that Australia is the ideal setting for Prime Minister Hawke to convene a peace summit in order to weave a spell of consensus around the superpowers. The seismological stability might encourage some political risk-taking which seems to be necessary if ecological disaster is to be avoided.

Stark's opponents are anachronisms and misfits - Aborigines, hippies, war veterans, teen-age groupies and British immigrants - who belong neither in the world of the mega-rich, nor in the raw landscape of the desert. A "huge peacefreak, a lovesick dickhead, a born again environmentalist and a middle aged woman with a degree in sarcasm" have the potential to become glorious failures. As Elton predicts early in the tale: "the appropriation of radical thinking by lazy, self-obsessed hippies is a public relations disaster that could cost the earth." Hopefully, this will encourage activism rather than the disdain of the peace movement.



The *Stark* conspirators are loyal only to themselves, accustomed to manipulating national governments and dominating decision-making. Perhaps this is one reason that the characters are not particularly 'Australian' in any sense that most readers will recognise. Both business tycoons and eco-activists have universal perspectives. Citizenship has its uses, but there are limits, and these are stretched by the attentions of national Taxation Departments for the rich, and by the environmental rapaciousness of state development policies for the greens.

Had a local author created Sly Moorcock and Zimmerman, we would hail them as important to the process of demythologising the over-romanticised Australian. As Elton is British, we will probably conclude that he missed the mark completely. His representation of

REVIEWS

Aboriginal English is hopeless and Zimmerman and Walter are not Australian characters. Nor will the world citizen/internationalist reasoning excuse heroine Rachel's faltering behaviour when offered a place in the Stark rocket. Her decision is decidedly practical, and some observers will happily conclude that pragmatism is the most Australian of all characteristics. Perhaps that is the reason our tall poppies do not take root in the hot, dry landscape.

Fortunately, Elton avoids the 'Oz-in-Pomland' stereotype but Australian readers may feel uncomfortable that a distanced and objective observer should fail to offer anything to replace it. The story might as easily have been set in the Sahara, except that few Bedouins would be potential readers. Elton could have used the oil-rich sheiks instead of Australian media tycoons, but Salman Rushdie's recent experience with the Ayatollahs probably ruled that out.

Elton's irreverent humour is bound to appeal to Australians more than to residents of the Northern Hemisphere where the toxic cargoes, acid rain, mountains of waste and the bristling

missiles of the two great armed ideological blocs are all too real. Indeed the absence of any recognisably Australian sacred cows may have been a commercial decision. Great book consumers, we can laugh at general human foibles rather than specifically Australian ones.

There are echoes of the 'Magic Pudding' theory of the environment - the idea that the more we exploit and take, the more appears to replace it. Mistaken ideas about the great Australian emptiness has led two British governments - one in Westminster and one in Canberra - to assume that the continent was a perfect site for atomic testing. The emptiness was not in the reality of the land, but in the unimaginativeness and ethnocentricity of the Establishment's vision.

These same ideologies still inform the comments of some powerful Australians. Mining executives assume that a concern for profits endows them with a particular right to speak on environmental issues. Conservative politicians still assume that there is a conflict between conservation and the needs of the people. Both groups have moved reluctantly some way towards the policies of the "greenies", but by their hostile comments show that they would prefer to turn the political clock back to a more permissive and irresponsible time. It is not the greenhouse but the green wave effect which they fear and would remove.

Elton's scenario is complex and in-

tegrated. The environment is like a balloon which is squeezed at different points, only to erupt elsewhere. So industrial pollution, advertising, biodegradability, political manipulation and animal liberation are all linked inextricably. Elton's skill at handling these questions simultaneously suggests that a novel based on the Australian economy would be a natural sequel.

The eruptions of the economy into fiscal, financial, trade, budgetary and monetary policies require a similarly global understanding. The Treasurer seems to be forever bobbing up on the television screen and deflecting amateurish media criticism into other areas. Viewers must sense that his pouting, petulant, pharasaical performances are little more than diversionary tactics, but it is difficult to make the links necessary to pin him down.

With such incompetent characters in opposition, the Stark conspirators really undo themselves. Had they been a little less greedy, they may have been able to keep on exploiting the earth indefinitely. Elton does not belabor the helplessness of his heroes, but makes light of their traumas and even their deaths. The ungainly poses of a camel, which is named after two of their departed friends, indicates the level of dignity Elton claims for the apocalyptic warriors. Fans of Mel Gibson may find it difficult to imagine him in the lead role.

Perhaps Stark will prompt a new wave of clichés among the trendy young. Parents should prepare to hear their teen-agers spouting such wisdom as "you can't surf all day and root all night on ham and cheese" or "anything that happens beyond the U-bend is somebody else's business", and calling places "as romantic as anal warts".

Stark is neither immoral nor amoral. It abounds with maxims such as "when all else fails, tell the truth," and "you can't stop progress and it is after all, only a few dolphins", and "would you unpick the Bayeux Tapestry to get a reel of cotton?" Its most serious accusations are of humankind generally, which Elton compares to a bad kid moving in on the block. The other animals do not need to read Stark. We do.

Tony Smith is a regular contributor to *Chain Reaction*.

Patrick White Speaks

PRIMAVERA PRESS

Patrick White Speaks

by Patrick White. Primavera Press, \$29.95 cloth, \$16.95 pb.

Reviewed by Vivienne West.

How many of our readers know that Patrick White, famous Australian author and maverick, is the patron of Friends of the Earth? Indeed, how many of Patrick White's readers are aware that he is greener than white?

Most of us think of Patrick White in terms of long descriptive novels that follow the development of complex characters and their interactions in a reasonably non-political Australian setting. Certainly, White's own politics, though present between the lines, are not pushed in his writing, and we are not left with the feeling of having a particular viewpoint on politics presented to us.

This, however, is not one of White's novels. This is a particular and almost exclusively political statement, a collection of his public speeches, a letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* and a couple of interviews. As such, Patrick White the artist and the fascinating and often repellent characters he holds up for our inspection is wholly absent; and Paddy White the private citizen afraid for the future of his country and, ultimately, the world, speaks with a strident voice at political meetings, book releases and at anti-nuclear gatherings. Paddy White

the childless, the "nutty old amateur from the brotherhood of untouchables", displays a stronger concern for Australia's children than most of her parents, watching "steak-fed gladiators" beating each other up on television every weekend.

The first "chapter", written in 1958, is not even a speech (several times he stresses his dislike of speaking in public, and admits frankly to writing his speeches beforehand and simply reading them aloud). It is, instead, an autobiographical essay explaining why he returned to the country of his origin after living abroad for many years. Then there is a gap of nearly eleven years in the collection, to another work that is not a public speech but a monologue compiled from a conversation with Craig McGregor on his artistic and religious philosophies. White begins to emerge as a very complex animal indeed by this stage, although the complexity of his literary style is greatly reduced in his narrative style.

It is with even more direct and forceful style that his actual public speeches are delivered. Readers be warned! If you like his literary style, packed with fleeting images and allusions and with the long, serpentine sentences that wind like the Murray to the sea, then you will find this a disappointing book stylistically, if in no other way. If, however, you are a reader who finds White "difficult and inaccessible" (there are, apparently, people who find him so) you will find this book refreshingly different and far easier to read. This is a book for every bookshelf, literary and political, just as his speeches were intended for every ear, activist or homebody.

Reading this book from beginning to end, rather than dipping in and reading a speech at a time, one traces White's career as a public speaker through interesting stages. Early on he was a champion of the little people, the people who are Australia's blood and bone. His care for them never abates. In the early seventies, for example, he defends the people's right to have greenery (in the form of Centennial Park) in which to run their dogs, play with their children, meditate or even just relax and soak up the sun. He urges us to "Protect your parks from political concrete," stating that the area is well serviced with mammoth sporting

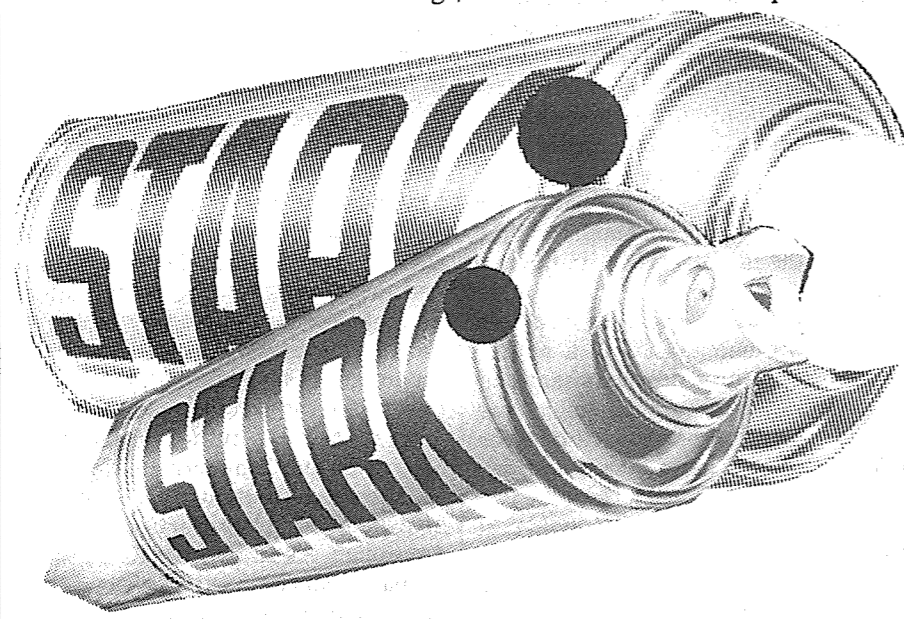
facilities anyway, and the stadium should rather be built in an area that has a need of it.

Then he is on the side of the little people again, raising his voice to defend the "sacred sites" of people who have lived all their lives in houses threatened by proposed development on the King's Cross area, slamming the huge financial interests that developers had in the area and pointing out the importance of territory. This is very reminiscent of his later protests against the monorail in the middle eighties.

In 1973 he was awarded the honour of Australian of the Year. I wish I had seen his acceptance speech being delivered either in person or on the infernal box that he seems to dislike so much - it can be read in many ways. My feeling was one of a gentle humour and a piquancy, but I realise it could also have been delivered straight-faced, or with a biting sarcasm in certain places. The actual thanks he gives for the award are sparse. Instead, he expresses a feeling that any one of three other great Australians (and you will have to buy the book to find out which and why) deserve the award at least as much as he does, and concludes the speech by saying: "Perhaps when I go home I'll try sawing this Impressive Object in four, and send a piece to each of them." I can only imagine the ironic voice and the gust of applause - if it wasn't entirely lost on them.

Then he gradually becomes more political, lending his support to the Whitlam government because of their support of the arts and of individual freedom - something our present Labor government doesn't seem to match - while still making fun of would-be poets "chasing after Pan at Lane Cove with artificial vine leaves in their hair" or delivering a speech on the importance of reading and the power of librarians to open Literary Week. With the dismissal of the Whitlam government his political beliefs are violated, and he makes many biting speeches about the state of the nation and the tottering state of the constitution. White the Republican becomes louder, referring to the "seduction" of "Prince Phillip's fried sausage" and referring to the Princess of Wales as a "clotheshorse waxwork of a wife".

A later stage again, is the stage of protest against the growing possibility



of nuclear war. As he becomes less strident about the downfall of the constitution he becomes more strident about the ever present threat to the inhabitability of the planet, holding up for our inspection in more than one speech his "icon" of war: the image of a man in Hiroshima standing in the ashes, his skin in tatters, looking down at his hand where one of his eyeballs is resting. White points out that the superpower governments seem to have lost touch with this very personal aspect of war,

and in his later speeches increasingly supports the Nuclear Disarmament Party as the one body that has the right attitude to nuclear affairs.

This is a book that anyone who feels the ordinary person deserves a go should read. This is a book that anyone who thinks we deserve to live in a world with some beauty and freedom should read. And mostly, this is a book that anyone who doesn't want to die horribly in the ashes of a nuclear explosion or in the creeping poisonous aftermath that

will eventually blanket the earth — "swathed in its contaminated shroud" should also read.

If you admire White's literary style you could be disappointed by this book. If, however, you wish to survive, you will be in agreement with Patrick White. This volume shows us the political side of a man with very strong views about human rights.

Vivienne West is a member of Friends of the Earth Sydney

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Capitalists and greens

(continued from page 45)

when clearly many companies are genuinely trying to find a green path.

Not only that, but we will miss opportunities to speed up the urgent work of environmental improvement if we automatically reject offers of help from companies because they are not yet lily white.

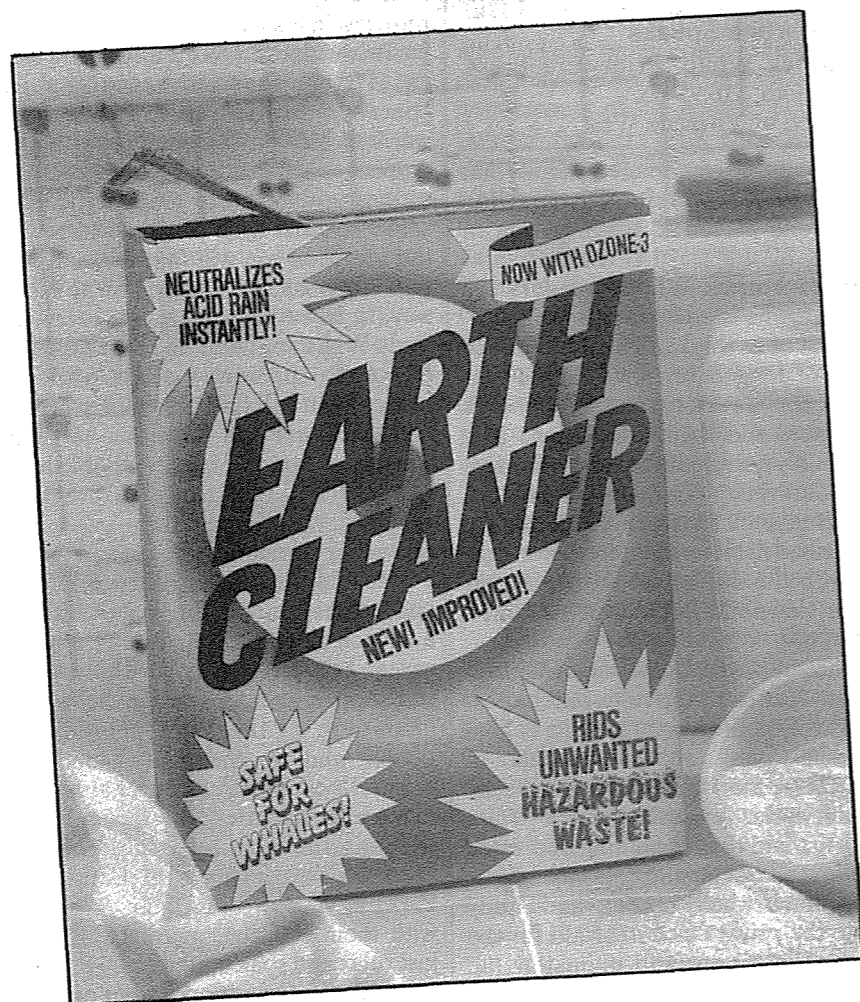
I can see nothing but environmental good coming from developing a working relationship with industry and multinationals.

Finally, as Director of FOE (HK) and editor of *One Earth*, I would like to thank you for your concern and suggest, gently, that while it is safer and simpler to continue seeing things in black and white, environmental performance by industry today comes in many shades.

Let's be courageous enough as environmentalists to criticise what continues bad and work with what is becoming good.

Linda Siddall is the Director of Friends of the Earth Hong Kong

**IF ONLY IT WERE
THIS EASY.**



Greenpeace

RESOURCES

Kids Contact

Australian Freedom from Hunger Campaign

This is a magazine for kids which covers issues all over Australia and the world in an interesting format with large easy-to-read typefaces. It also has a companion teachers guide which is also easy to read. The first issue is on the environment, and the second issue will be on food and health.

It looks like it could be very useful in the classroom, but could also be a good read for many kids in other places.

Available from: Australian Freedom from Hunger Campaign, 155 Pirie St, Adelaide, SA, 5000.

The Ethical Buyers Guide

Community Aid Abroad — Annerley Group, \$2.

This is "a directory of businesses and organisations which provide an alternative for thoughtful consumers in south east Queensland". It also covers some organisations in other parts of Australia, and many of the listed businesses have mail order operations.

This valuable guide is intended to be updated regularly, and reader's contributions are invited. Every locality should have a similar guide. Printed on recycled paper.

Available from: The Ethical Buyers Guide, PO Box 280, Mt Gravatt, Qld, 4122.

Genetic Manipulation

Law Reform Commission of Victoria, free.

This report is probably the best attempt made so far by legal authorities in Australia to suggest regulation of the area. This makes it important — although not necessarily correct — as it may provide a lead for legislation in

this area. The report supports genetic manipulation, and suggests that there should be safety standards. It lists most of the reasons in favour of scientific work and the development of technology in this area, and it mentions some of the objections to genetic manipulation.

Available from: Information Victoria, 318 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne, 3000.

Environmental effects of Wood-based Pulp Mills

Noni Keys, the office

This handbook examines the different pulp mill technologies available and analyses the environmental impact of each. It is ideal for people who need to be informed on the pulp mill issue, and who want to know about methods other than the kraft chlorine bleach process (à la Wesley Vale).

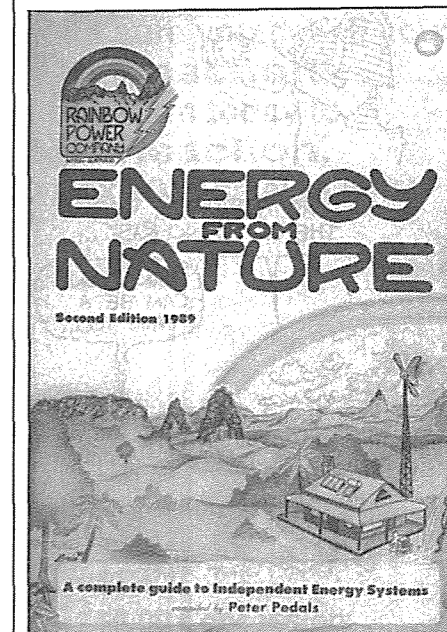
The handbook considers alternative processes, and recommends that chemo-thermo-mechanical and thermo-mechanical processes using hydrogen peroxide as a bleach be considered.

Available from: The Office of Jo Valentine, PO Box 137, West Perth, 6005.

Alternativas Tecnologicas

Servico de Informacion Technica de CETAL

"Ya casi nadie discute que los problemas energéticos que afectan al mundo no podran ser afrontados con éxito, si ellos no se vinculan, finalmente, con las formas de vida y tipo de bienestar que las sociedades aspiran establecer" — Alternativas Tecnologicas — Energias Renovables — vivamos mejor con menos energia. Centro de Estudios en Tecnologias Apropriadas para América Latina, Casilla 197 — Valparaiso — Chile.



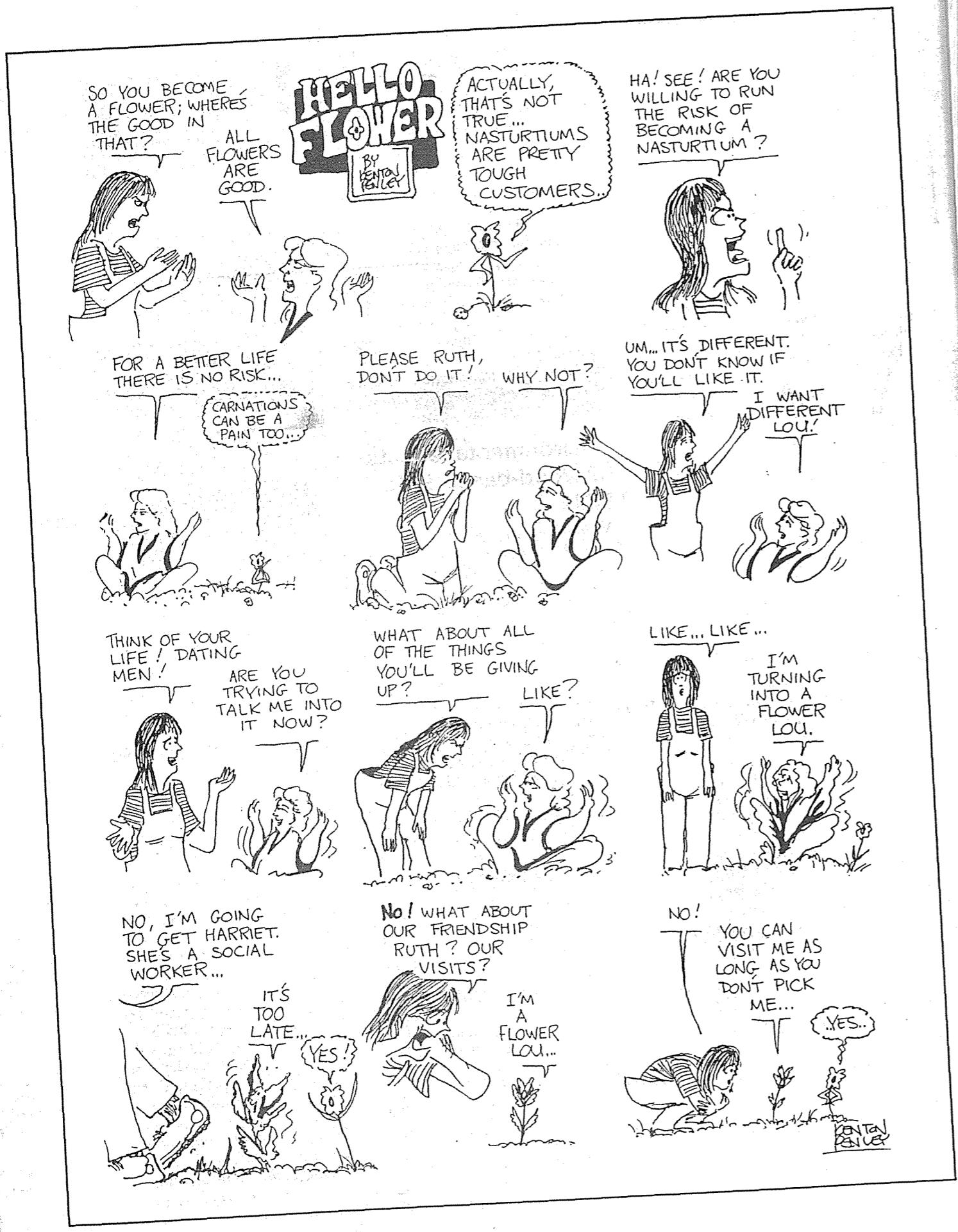
Energy from Nature

Rainbow Power Company Pty Ltd, \$10.

This book not only covers energy production in an environmentally sensitive manner, it also contains valuable information on the basics — like how an electric current flows. This book has been commended by absolute beginners through to people who know what they want but not where to get it.

This is a valuable resource for people trying to develop an independent or environmentally acceptable energy source, and it's a good read for people who want to know that it's possible to do that. Printed on recycled paper.

Available from: Rainbow Power Company Pty Ltd, PO Box 217, Nimbin, NSW, 2480. Friends of the Earth Bookshop, 222 Brunswick St, Fitzroy, Victoria, 3065.



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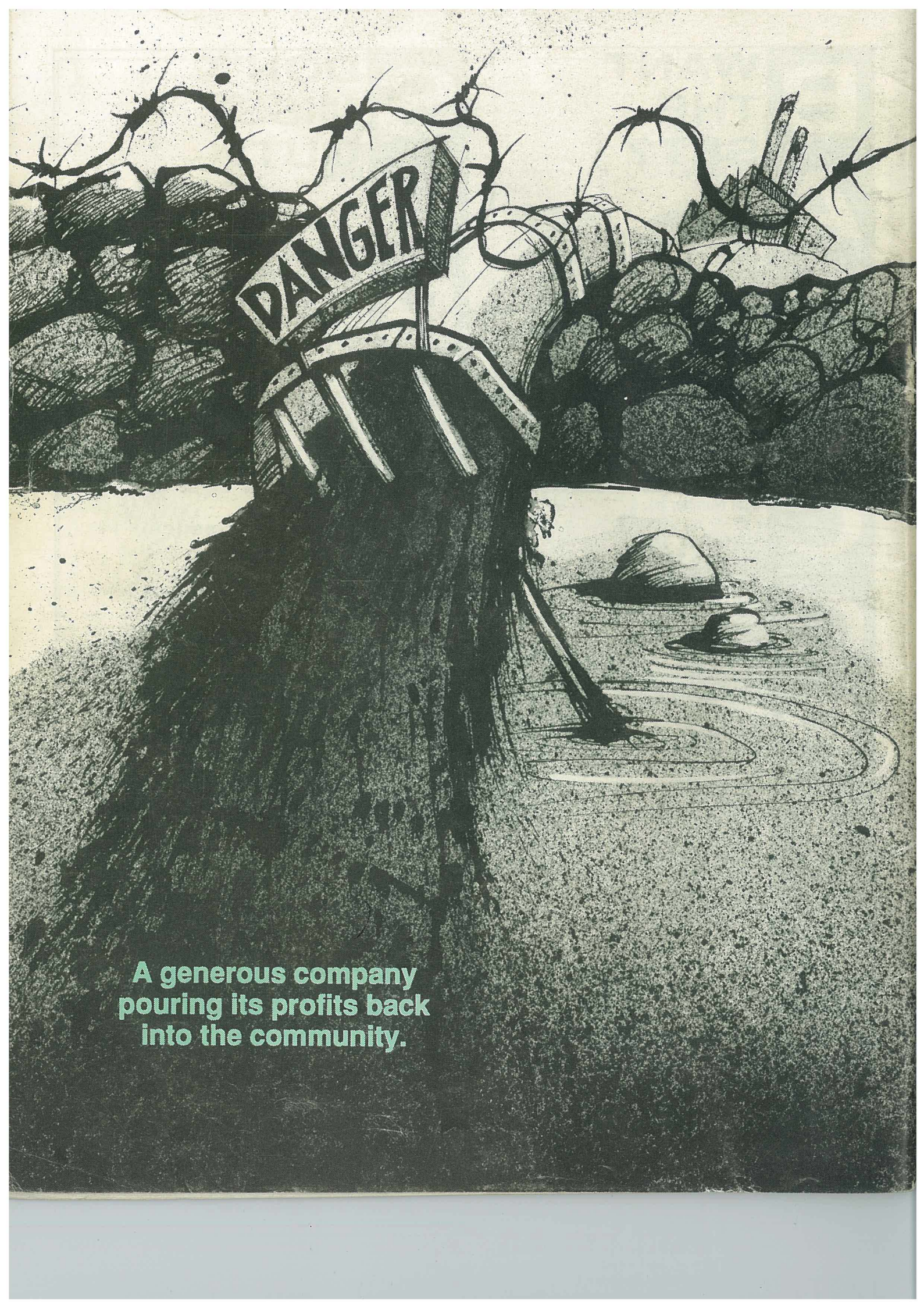
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