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# EnvironS

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# Cut waste, not trees!



By Peter Montague

In the US the attack on the environment by so-called "conservatives" in Congress has caused a radical re-thinking throughout the environmental community. People are recognising that they must stop working alone and start building alliances.

Among other developments, a new coalition has formed between forest activists, energy-conservation advocates and toxic pollution fighters. Perhaps most importantly, this coalition includes people aiming to create (and retain) good jobs in their communities.

Lois Gibbs of Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste (CCHW) is spearheading an anti-dioxin campaign. Dioxin is among the two or three most toxic chemicals ever discovered, and it is produced by incinerators, paper mills, metals smelters, and in the production of many pesticides. Now CCHW has joined with the Rainforest Action Network of San Francisco in a wood use reduction campaign which aims to cut the use of wood in the United States by 75% in 10 years. Rainforest Action is in it to save the world's forests. CCHW's main aim is to reduce toxic dioxin and stupid wastedisposal.

As Gibbs points out, paper (which, in the US, is made almost entirely from wood) is a major fuel for municipal solid waste incinerators which are also a major source of toxic dioxin emissions. If solid waste incinerators were shut down this act alone would significantly reduce the US's serious dioxin problem. It would also stop virgin wood products such as shipping pallets and paper products from being used as fuel in incinerators (half of all hardwood harvested in the US is for pallets, most of which are discarded after one use), and force municipalities to reprocess rather than land-fill or incinerate wood and paper waste.

The destruction of virgin forests is occurring on a massive scale around the world - in Indonesia, Siberia, British Columbia, and Latin America. Worldwide, some 14 million acres of rainforests disappear

each year. In the US, 95% of virgin forests are gone, with only 5% remaining.

Forests are home to most of the world's species and most of the world's indigenous peoples. They provide important free ecological services - holding water, producing huge quantities of oxygen and providing major cooling. According to a report printed in the Lancet in 1993, when the forests of southern Honduras were cut, the median outdoor temperature rose 7.5 degrees.



In addition, forests serve human needs directly, producing game, medicines, fruits, gums, nuts, resins, fibre, and firewood.

Industrial logging in forests is a major cause of ecological destruction and loss of bio-diversity. For example, in the US, some 350,000 miles of logging roads have been cut through forests - more than seven times the total length of the US interstate highway system. Only 10% of the inhabited Earth remains in road-less condition. The other 90% is chopped up by roads into segments of less than 8000 acres. Logging is a major cause of this disturbance.

## Reducing Demand

Many environmentalists have determined to save the world's forests by confronting the

major source of forest destruction - the rising demand for wood, particularly in the industrialised world. Among industrialised countries, the most wasteful is the US (France, for example, has only 50% of the per-capita paper consumption of the US.) The US logging industry expects a 46% increase in logging operations by the year 2040.

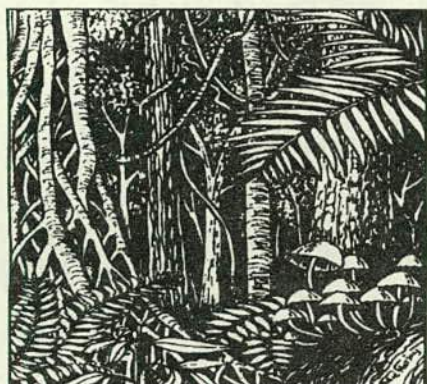
There are two major paths that wood products follow when they leave the forest. One passes through sawmills, plywood mills, veneer, or other wood panel mills, and then into the network of building construction, shipping, manufacturing, and furniture industries. The other path passes through pulp mills into the larger system of paper, paperboard and fibreboard production. A campaign to reduce wood consumption therefore needs to focus on getting wood out of buildings, and out of paper.

Getting wood out of buildings requires two basic steps. First, it is necessary to reduce wood in building construction. Nearly 90% of all housing in the US is constructed of wood and the average new home in the US uses 1600 cubic feet of wood products. Substituting modern materials (other than steel or concrete, which create problems of their own) and efficient construction techniques would reduce the needed wood substantially.

Secondly, building codes must be changed to allow construction using recycled wood, earth materials and even straw bales. Two very promising -and time-tested -building materials are adobe (in dry climates), and rammed earth (in any climate). Fifteen percent of the population of France today lives in adobe or rammed earth buildings.

A relatively new construction material is baled straw, which can be used in any climate. Straw-bale homes are structurally strong, very energy-efficient and fire-resistant, containing enough air to provide excellent thermal insulation, but not enough air to support a fast fire.





## Wood-free Paper

Getting the wood out of paper is even easier. Today, quality paper is made from rice and barley straw in China, from sugar cane waste ("bagasse") in Mexico and India, and from the kenaf plant in Australia. There are 300 mills around the world making paper without wood.

Paper recycling can only carry us so far because the paper fibres break and become shorter when paper is recycled. To give recycled paper good qualities, new fibres need to be mixed in. Those new fibres need not come from wood - the most promising wood substitutes are the kenaf plant and straw - the leftover stalks from cereal grain production. Using this method jobs could be created in both the urban and rural sectors.

Although in the US growing hemp is a serious federal crime - ever. hemp with its narcotic characteristics bred out, the hemp plant will produce high-quality paper as well. Kimberly Clark, a US company, operates a paper mill in France producing hemp paper for bibles and cigarettes.

Marvellously efficient is the use of agricultural residues to make paper, a method which requires no new land to be brought into production. A small-scale mill in British Columbia in Canada is making paper profitably from: agricultural waste, and three more mills are planned.

In sum, reducing wood use by 75% in 10 years seems doable. A campaign to this end also puts the environmental community into a new posture: cooperating across issues and combining economic development with environmental protection.

Source: *Sci.environment* [Abridged from *Rachel's Environment & Health Weekly*.]

# Cadmium Contamination in Sydney Vegetables

Sydneyers may well be getting more in their vegetables than they bargain for. According to Sydney Morning Herald Science and Environment writer Bob Beale, "Many vegetables and fruits grown in commercial gardens supplying Sydney contain levels of the toxic heavy metal cadmium up to 11 times the permissible standards".

The soil in some of the farms contained cadmium levels of six milligrams per kilogram (mg/kg) of soil, as high as those in the worst affected parts of Europe and the United States. Leafy vegetables and herbs, such as lettuce (up to .34 mg/kg), silverbeet (up to .30 mg/kg), cabbage (up to .56 mg/kg) and parsley (up to .24 mg/kg) are worst effected. Australia's permissible maximum level for Cadmium in food is .05 mg/kg.

The Sydney region had special problems with cadmium build-up because of excessive fertiliser use, the intensity and length of time that market gardening had been taking place in the region and the nature of local soil chemistry.

Fertilisers made from rock phosphate (eg superphosphate) from Nauru, Christmas and Ocean islands were

the main culprits, as this rock phosphate from these sources had high levels of cadmium.

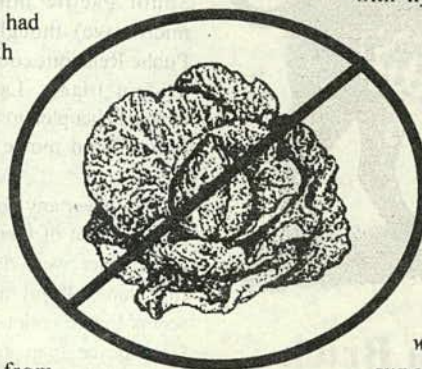
Another source of cadmium contamination is chicken manure from the 1960s to the early 1990s, as Mass-production chickens were often fed rock phosphate food supplements.

Mr Paul Milham, a research chemist with the NSW Dept of Agriculture, estimates that it would take more than 1,000 years for the soil contamination to return to levels where leafy vegetables would again comply with the pure food act.

Cadmium is toxic at high levels and it accumulates in the body. It can cause kidney damage and osteoporosis and has been linked with hypertension.

Source: Sydney Morning Herald, 2/12/95.

Even in the country it pays to wary of growing vegies on pastures "improved" by superphosphate. There was even a subsidy, the superphosphate bounty, encouraging farmers to use the stuff.



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# The Good News Page

## Victories, Promising Developments and the Last Laugh

### Do It Yourself Biodiversity

In a philosophical frame of mind, Danish politician Aage Brusgaard (a representative for the Progress Party), tried to dismiss the crisis of the Earth's biodiversity, saying "that it is inevitable that species are lost, but that new species will evolve."

When he was asked how, Aage Brusgaard replied "Genetic engineering".

Source: Torsten Brinch sci.environment



### Built Like a Brick S...house

A pilot plant is soon to be set up by Wollongong University's Department of Civil and Mining Engineering to manufacture house bricks made up of 70% sewage sludge. The bricks are odorless and about 20% stronger and lighter than regular bricks.

Source: Newsletter of the Society for Responsible Design, via Bogong, Spring 1995.

Whether this was inspired by the North Arm farmer who put too much lime in his pit, or long-drop, dunny is anyone's guess.



### How to Fail at P.R.

The French Military (having caused a near revolution at home by sending the country broke to pay for its latest attempt to turn the South Pacific into the world's biggest microwave) thought it had staged a real Public Relations coup when it lent the ultra-modern frigate, La Fayette and the Tigre attack helicopter to the makers of the latest James Bond movie, "Goldeneye".

However any hopes of gloating at the big screen debut of their new stealth frigate and supercopter were dashed by the star of the film, James Bond mark V, Pierce Brosnan. It seems Pierce is not only anti-nuclear, he is a Greenpeace man as well. Brosnan told Le Monde "No one is going to convince me that nuclear weapons are good for peace. I've been out there and listened to what the Polynesians have to say, to their grievances. It's impossible to believe that the blasts will have no effect on the environment, wildlife and human beings".

The French Government even cancelled a long-planned gala preview of the film, afraid of the fallout from anti-french remarks by Brosnan.

Source: The Guardian Weekly

What's a Greenpeace supporter doing playing James Bond anyway?

### Eco-coffins

Coffins weighing only 12kg made from 85% waste paper and which pack flat are on sale in Germany. Although they cost half the price of a wooden coffin, their appearance is similar and the company claims a number of environmental benefits for their product. These include reduced air pollution at crematoriums.

Source: Warmer Bulletin No 46 via

Bogong, Summer 1995.

### Woodchip Your Way to Social Ridicule

Boral has demonstrated its willingness to support a sustainable forest industry by threatening to burn all its unused woodchips after the Federal Government's threat to cut export quotas for recalcitrant States. While demanding increased licenses, the enlightened multinational sees this option preferable to selling the chips. They would prefer to burn what they've already got in protest and annihilate more forests for their precious "value added product".

While governments, Unions and industry fatcats continue to denigrate responsible greenies as radicals and fringe elements, such an openly irresponsible, absurd and wanton act will doubtless be applauded as the work of concerned economic rationalists. Nor is it the first instance of such a holocaust.

In Tasmania in 1993, almost 200,000 tonnes of woodchips were burnt after the company involved proved it necessary with redoubtable economic rationalist rhetoric. IT seemed that the forests from which they were extracted had to be cut, for mysterious ecological reasons to which only they were privy, and which left poor green experts eternally puzzled.



The wise Tasmanian Government, which had already been frustrated in its great farseeing visions of vast hydro-electric dams in useless un-value-added wilderness, were fortunately able to grasp the mystical motives behind the saintly wisdom of the forest-torchers, and gave them the go-ahead.

The Federal Government, by making token reductions in woodchip export quotas, has effectively endorsed such paramount Industry paradigms and demonstrated it has no intention of phasing out this most hideous of anti-products (Whoops - I mean vital taxpayer subsidised foreign relations scheme). Plans are afoot to build a new mill in Tassie to turn the Tarkine into toilet paper. Isn't it great what they can do these days?

Mick Daley

*Source: Big Scrub Newsletter, Christmas 1995*

## Dunbogan Canal Development Rejected

The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Mr Craig Knowles, has refused the proposed Camden Shores Development at Dunbogan, in the Camden Haven area.

The decision followed a Commission of Inquiry which concluded that the adverse environmental impacts of the proposal were substantial enough to negate approval of the development. Citing the effects on the 28 species of endangered fauna likely to occur on the site (including the koala and bent wing bat), Mr Knowles concluded "The area is obviously of high conservation value and should be protected."

He also promised that "The Government will take further steps to completely ban canal development early in the new year"

*Source: Mr Knowles news release 21/12/95 via Camden Haven Protection Society Inc*

*This sets a dangerous precedent. If this sort of logic was unleashed in other NSW Government portfolios, like Environment and Land and Water Conservation, who knows what could happen (protection for endangered species and high conservation value forests for example).*

## Finally, some good news from the forests

The North East Forest Alliance (NEFA) have claimed a 7 point victory following negotiations with Land and Water Conservation Minister, Kim Yeadon. Mr Yeadon convened the meeting following blockades in Mebbin and Wollumbin State Forests.

The seven points are:

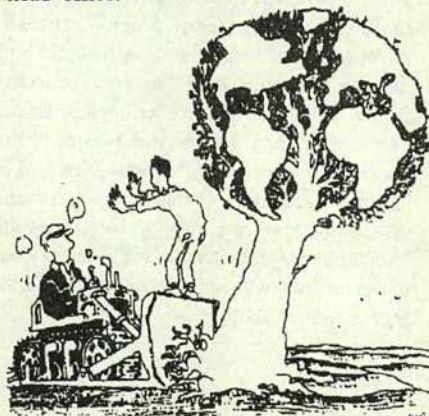
For Wollumbin State Forest

1. Flora and fauna surveys by Mr Rob Kooyman commenced 15/12/95 in disputed compartments 18 and 19, Wollumbin SF.

2. Logging resumed after flora and fauna surveys identified areas that can be logged without further controversy.

3. Logging dump No.1 to be deferred pending further discussions

4. Further meeting to discuss log dump 1, flora and fauna survey results, and other relevant matters including non-controversial areas for further harvesting, with State Forests represented by senior officer from head office.



5. Prescriptions to be applied to vulnerable and endangered plants subject to consultation with NEFA.

For Murwillumbah Management Area

6. Management Area-wide pre-logging flora and fauna surveys to be operational by mid March.

7. Murwillumbah Management Area Advisory Committee will be set up by Minister Yeadon to oversee flora and fauna surveys and review Harvesting Plans, with initial attention to Whian Whian State Forest.

*Source: Big Scrub Newsletter No 68*

## Earth-Friendly Architecture

Green architecture is coming of age on university campuses nationwide. Green architecture is the practice of using materials and building techniques that cooperate with nature. The motivation for building green over building conventional is overwhelming, experts say. Most acknowledge that environmentally sound buildings are not only earth-friendly, but cheaper to operate and offer a healthier environment.

"Green buildings are marketplace driven and demand a careful evaluation of every component that goes into construction, including lighting, heating, ventilation, carpeting, wall coverings, paint, waste disposal and even the structure itself," says Tim Casai, vice president, TMP Associates, the Bloomfield Hills, Mich., architectural firm hired to design Oakland's new student recreation center. "Architects and designers are recognizing their responsibility to make decisions that are more in harmony with the earth."

Up until recently, green buildings were scarce in the United States. After World War II, America enjoyed a tremendous technological strength and cheap energy, a combination that encouraged the development of glass buildings and of haphazard siting, Casai says. The oil crisis of 1973 gave an impetus to the effort to avoid toxic components and fossil-fuel technologies in building design, but the ecologically conscious structures that resulted were not very livable.

"Today, the architectural trend is to design structures that are far more energy efficient than even 10 years ago and that combine technology and nature in surprising new ways," Casai says. Some of those new ways include floor tiles made from golf tees, broken glass, wood chips and plastic scrap and combine plastic and sawdust to form a replacement for lumber.

*Source: Env.Arch*



# Motivating Social Transformation

By Janis Birkeland

One often hears it said that the 'only hope' for the planet is a giant environmental catastrophe which will motivate people to change direction. What, then, was global warming, Three-Mile Island and Chernobyl, the hole in the ozone layer, the mass extinction of fellow animals, and the extermination of many human and biotic communities in Chechnya, the Balkans, Iraq and Ethiopia?

Despite massive evidence of the need to change, our society is still galloping toward oblivion. Perhaps arguments based exclusively on fact, science and reason have not been effective thus far partly because the crisis does not stem from 'rational' causes. The environmental crisis results from pathologies that are deeply rooted in Western society's culture, institutions and individual psyche.

Despite enormous courage and remarkable gains in recent years, it could be said that green theory and activism is losing ground relative to the increasing rate of environmental destruction. For decades, mainstream green theory has spelled out what personal values and social policies we should take on board. However, with few exceptions, the movement has not tackled the issue of why the general public and

leaders fail to respond positively to rational arguments, warnings and policy proposals. We need to ask 'why don't people listen to reason?'

In our youth, some of us green feminists thought if we were academically pedigreed and professionally positioned, people might 'listen'. And they did, until we uttered anything pro-nature or pro-female. Then we would be the same strange marginalising and trivialising behaviours, or highly irrational remarks to the extent that "we need to destroy our health to have jobs", or "technology can fix it", or "we can move to another planet". These responses were really an expression of denial, avoidance, dissociation - or sometimes even the 'kill the messenger' syndrome. Denial and other defence mechanisms shelter people from ideas which threaten the power-based social order.

Ultimately, this negative and defensive thinking reflects a kind of 'slave mentality' which has served to protect those in positions of power. Mainstream greens generally understand that 'denial' is a big factor in both the environmental crisis and our collective failure to resolve it. However, their strategies have tended to ignore the significance of this prevalent society-wide mental block. The green movement continues to put forward more rational arguments for spiritual, structural, or value change; yet every day one meets people who still have no idea what greens are on about.



Why do so many unconsciously protect those that most benefit from the exploitation of humans and nature? Having power is being in a position where one does not have to listen, especially to people who are unhappy with, or abused by the social structure that one benefits from. Those who value hierarchy structures listen only to those who have more power than themselves. This is why, for example, greens study and understand the viewpoint of 'forest industries', but not the reverse, and feminists study and understand 'Malestream' theories, but not the reverse. (Likewise, mainstream environmentalists have been accused of not listening to the women activists and indigenous peoples who they claim to support.)

What strategies do mainstream environmentalists offer for social change? While there are a variety of green perspectives, there are two main orientations toward social transformation. Some see personal values as the primary source of change and focus on the individual's perception of nature. If we realised that to harm nature is to harm ourselves, they reason, we would act in our own self-interest. This is really to define the problem as a lack of knowledge about our interconnectedness. Some go further to suggest that if we developed a less human-centred or more 'spiritual' relationship with nature we would abandon consumerism, industrialism, materialism and so on. The irony is that people must first be 'persuaded' to embark

WHAT WE CAN'T  
DO ALONE  
WE CAN DO  
TOGETHER





upon this new spiritual way of being or experiencing nature. That is, the call for a better appreciation of our symbiotic (if not spiritual) relationship with nature is based on an appeal to reason.

At the other end of the mainstream green spectrum are those who see structural change as the primary means to social transformation. They situate the problem in our social institutions and modes of production. Much faith is placed on the idea that if people realised their problems were due to structures, such as capitalism and colonialism, they would almost spontaneously change the system. Both orientations, then, rely on the reason to persuade people to change their values, structures and policies. The assumption that people act in response to rational arguments is largely unquestioned; even though the course of society is patently irrational.

The assumption behind advocating a spiritual reverence for nature, intellectual appreciation of interconnectedness, or structural reform, is that behavioural change will flow from value change, which will in turn flow from better information and reason. However, the link between reason, values and behaviour is not linear. One need only to remember some of the atrocities committed in the name of religious values. Many simply abandon their ethical standards when these cannot get them what they want. Besides, most greens already agree on what we need to make people understand. The issue is how would we 'motivate' people (especially the powerful) to adopt a new value system, spirituality or rationality, in the first place.

People seldom abandon personal or political power simply because cooperative and reciprocal relationships are more rational or spiritually sound. Just try asking those who push weapons and drugs (the world's two biggest businesses) to take up, say, spiritual ecology because it is 'good for them'. Social movements begin to focus on value change as an end to itself, which then becomes focused on keeping the movement itself going, and finally reduces to obtaining media time. Even a gigantic environmental movement could not overturn the 'new world order'.

Mainstream environmentalism is bringing about awareness, but not basic behavioural change, because it does not adequately address human motivation. The impulse to seek and abuse personal and political power is deeply ingrained, and can not merely be transcended. The reliance upon

the appeal to reason is owed to the fact that many greens still implicitly subscribe to the ideal of 'Rational Man' which underlies mainstream Western thinking. Traits that have been defined as rational in our patriarchal culture (individualism, competitiveness, independence, goal-seeking and so on) have historically been attributed only to Males. In fact, it is only very recently that women have even been considered capable of reason, and only within the last century that scholars finally agreed that women possessed souls. If humanity is by definition rational and self-interested, it seems obvious that people will be motivated by reason. But is this really so?

Where does irrational behaviour come from? In our patriarchal society, to be 'Man' involves the denial of one's dependency - especially on women and nature. Needs related to personal and emotional well being, such as a sense of belonging, recognition and intimacy, have connotations of 'weakness'. The suppression of the Feminine and the pressure to live up to an emotionally-unbalanced ideal motivates the abuse of power at the personal and political levels. The pressures are fundamental to militarism and the exploitation of nature through which the resources are required to obtain and exercise power. Thus the western male stereotype 'Rational Man', has led to an unbalanced conception of the ideal human.

What does an ecofeminist analysis suggest for green strategy? Ecofeminism challenges the basic gendered dualisms of Western thought (public/private, male/female, culture/nature, rational/emotional). These dualisms conceal the operation and abuse of power by making dominance and control seem natural. In Eastern thought - though not in practice - the gendered notion of reality is seen as complementary and in balance. Western feminists advocate a similar realignment. This analysis also informs ecofeminist strategy, which does not view people as mechanisms who automatically gravitate to the best idea, untouched by ego or emotions.

People are motivated to act, not just by concepts, facts or arguments, but through unmet emotional needs. Emotional needs are a powerful influence in shaping values and

behaviours, especially where denied or repressed. We have seen people adopt new ideologies or fashions very quickly in order to obtain emotional, sexual or ego gratification. Certainly militarists, weapons traders, advertisers and movie makers effectively play upon personal needs, sex, gender identification and emotions for their own profits and power. In a patriarchal or power-based culture, then, people are more vulnerable to manipulation and control. We can, however, work to identify and redress the unbalanced conception of the human and the personal insecurities and psychological barriers that block social transformation.

But the patriarchal culture is disempowering in other ways as well. Social movements are good when they are supportive or energising. They are not good when the delicate power relations and processes of the culture they seek to transform. The green movement should ensure that all participants are empowered to use all their talents. World then becomes its own reward. In the past, when this has happened, the green movement has achieved its greatest successes. We should remember that greens have two strategic advantages over the advocates of irrational forms of growth: reason and emotion. If we lose sight of either we begin acting like hamsters on a wheel.

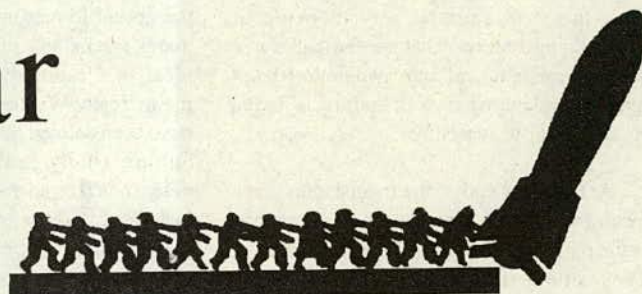
*Janis Birkeland qualified and practised as an architect, environmental planner and attorney in San Francisco. She is now with the new Centre for Environmental Philosophy, Planning and Design at the University of Canberra. In between, she raised her children in Northern Tasmania while working in the peace and green movements.*

*Source: Bogong, Volume 16, Number 2*





# More Nuclear Hypocrisy



What, realistically, could we have expected to hear from a group of pro-nuclear has-beens besides a lot of hypocritical posturing? This was the upshot of last week's meeting of the 16-member Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, brainchild of the hawkish foreign minister Gareth Evans.

The commission met for three days to prepare a report for a United Nations General Assembly meeting in September. Besides having the distinct flavour of yet another pre-election stunt, the commission's discussions were full of duplicity and outright lies. The only exception to this was former French PM, Michel Rocard, who was happy to tell as many as possible (Keating even had to intervene to stop him from talking to a reporter at Admiralty House!) that Jacques Chirac's latest nuclear testing program in the Pacific did not jeopardise the signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

While Evans and Co. may benefit from headlines heralding the end of nuclear testing, the reality is, as they themselves admit, that the end is nowhere in sight. While there's a slim chance that the CTBT may be signed this year - and that's still far from certain - it will not stop the select club of five nuclear powers from retaining, testing and developing nuclear weapons.

For example, while the US is obliged, under the terms of the arms treaties it has with Russia, to decommission more than 15,000 nuclear weapons by 2003 (most of which are obsolete), that still leaves it with 3500 warheads - more than enough to blow up the world many times over.

Further evidence is the US government's decision to go ahead, regardless of the CTBT, with its weapons tests at the Nevada test site. Over the next two years, the US government has planned six underground "zero-yield" tests which it has euphemistically described

as "experiments". Nuclear experts, including those in favour of nuclear weaponry, agree that such zero-yield tests can result in fully fledged nuclear explosions.

The nuclear powers and their allies in Australia maintain that these tests are necessary as a deterrent against "outlaw" states such as Pakistan, Iraq and North Korea.



As Keating told the commission: "We are an old and committed ally of the United States and have benefited from the protection of extended deterrence".

Hitting back at criticism from former New Zealand PM David Lange, who dared to suggest that Evans' commission initiative was hypocritical given Labor's support for nuclear weapons, Evans proclaimed that Australia is in a unique position to broker a nuclear-free world. His proposal for a "nuclear accord" and "action plan" which would contain "realistic measures" for nuclear disarmament is a plan to deceive people.

Does the federal Labor government really believe it can dupe the majority of Australians into believing that it has, overnight, changed its stripes? The only way we will be persuaded is if it stops mining and selling uranium, breaks with the US military alliance and closes the US bases, and gives political and material support to the anti-nuclear movement here and internationally.

Cold War politicians living in a post-Cold War world are having to run for cover. Their guise is to set up commissions, talk a lot, do nothing substantial - and make the world a more unsafe place to live. That means that we have to keep up the fight for a nuclear-free world. Without the majority of people leading the way, humanity faces the danger of extinction.

Source: Greenleft.news

## Rainforest seed collective

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# The environment and elections: who can we trust?

*By Pip Hinman*

Prime Minister Paul Keating launched a \$460 million policy - Our Land - on land care and biodiversity on January 24 in Albury on the NSW-Victorian border.

Why Keating chose this venue is not hard to fathom. Labor needs to capitalise on every opportunity to win support in marginal seats, many of which are located in rural and semi-rural areas which have been hard hit by drought and the ALP's rural restructuring policies.

Polls suggest that many people are disenchanted with Labor's environmental performance. A Newspoll survey late last year has done nothing to calm ALP number-crunchers' nerves; it showed that a higher proportion of voters believe that the Coalition would better address the environment than the ALP.

John Howard's strategy is not going to disabuse those voters by releasing his environment - or any other - policy if he can avoid it. Nevertheless, the poll shows that a growing number of people are fed up with the ALP back-downs on important environmental questions, including uranium mining and sales to France, protection of old growth forests, drought relief and public transport.

It's not surprising that the Australian Greens and the Democrats are polling well in the Senate at 5% and 8.5% respectively

(according to the January 23 Bulletin). An Australian Bureau of Statistics survey released in October, "Environmental Issues - People's Views and Practices", revealed that 71% rank the environment and the economy equally, with only 7% ranking the economy as more important.

## Band-aid approach

Our Land was designed to convince voters, particularly in the country, that Labor is serious about combating soil salinity and protecting biodiversity, rivers and wetlands.

While the sums of money involved look considerable, critics say that over a four-year period they are paltry. By comparison, defence spending for the year 1995-96 is \$1 billion - 10% of the budget.

As well, in the absence of a commitment to tackling some of the other equally fundamental environmental problems, such as Australia's stalling on its greenhouse and ozone targets, the package has all the hallmarks of a pre-election pork-barrelling stunt. This band-aid approach means that much of the promised millions may well be wasted.

The funding is allocated to a number of programs, including:

\* an extra \$176 million over four years to the national Landcare program;

\* \$100 million to the Murray Darling Basin Initiative, with the hope that the states and private industry will contribute another \$500 million;

\* \$80 million to protect biodiversity in a system of national reserves, with \$10 million allocated to a Nature Conservation Trust Fund which will help non-government organisations, companies and individuals to acquire land;

\* \$10 million to implement "best practice management" in World Heritage areas;

\* \$13 million to develop recovery plans to better protect endangered species;

\* \$6 million to the National Wetlands program, which includes community-based monitoring of wetlands sites;

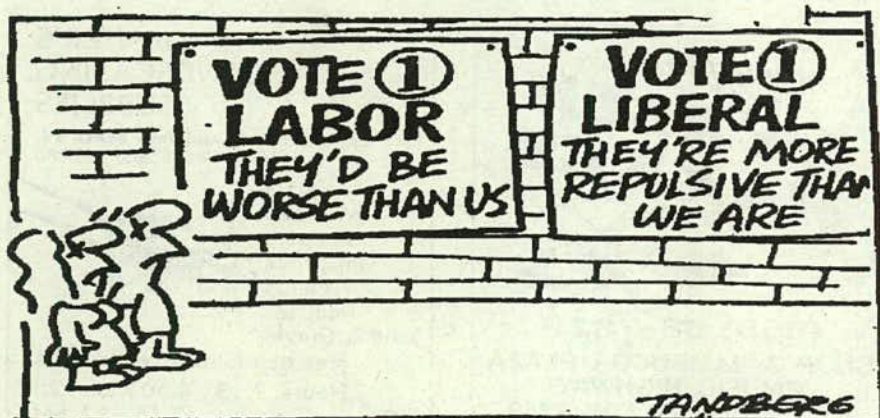
\* \$21 million to the Save the Bush program, which will establish national priorities to protect native vegetation outside national parks and other reserves;

\* \$15 million to improve river management;

\* \$13 million to the eradication of feral animals and environmental and marine invasive weeds.

The National Farmers' Federation, the peak body which represents large-scale farmers, has welcomed the package, calling it "a major contribution towards sustainable agriculture". Liberal Party leader John Howard also gave it cautious praise, saying that Keating had stolen most of the initiatives from the Coalition.

Protecting biodiversity within a new national reserve system is the central theme of Our Land. Most of the funding will be given to state and territory governments to purchase properties of "outstanding





biodiversity and/or wilderness values to add to the national system of forest reserves". According to Senator John Faulkner, "Land acquisition is in some cases the last and only mechanism to protect the full range of Australia's ecosystems".

Ten million dollars has been allocated to a new Nature Conservation Trust Fund, which seems to be a mechanism to subsidise rich individuals or corporations with an interest in conservation. How would it work? Apparently, a property purchased through the fund could be subdivided to conserve the areas deemed valuable. Just who decides what is worth saving isn't explained.

A part of the national reserves proposal is to "strengthen cooperative management mechanisms with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the establishment of an Indigenous Management in Protected Areas".

"This program will allow for better protection of the natural and cultural values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander properties and other protected areas where strong indigenous interests exist", it states.

While Aboriginal and Islander people are said to "own" 15% of the Australian continent, the truth is that most of this land is desert, and Labor's Native Title legislation has prioritised pastoral and mining leases over native title claims.

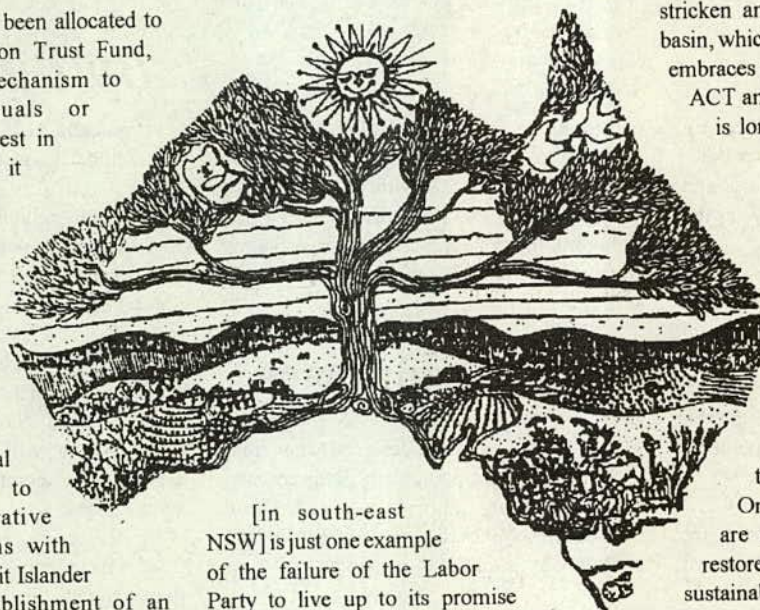
## Record

Neither does Labor's record on protecting old-growth forests within a national reserve system do anything to engender confidence in this package.

According to the National Biodiversity Council, which comprises some of Australia's foremost forest ecologists, including Dr Clive Hamilton and Professor Harry Recher, the government's approach is not scientific. The council has rejected the results of the deferred forests area (DFAs) process because the government's criteria are wrong.

The council also provided evidence, on January 18, that high conservation value forests in the south-east of NSW and Victoria are still being chipped.

"The woodchipping of the Glenbog State Forest



[in south-east NSW] is just one example of the failure of the Labor Party to live up to its promise that the management of native forests be based on scientific principles. It is also a stark example of the collusion of the woodchipping industry and the state forest agencies in the destruction of the old growth forests."

Some of the council's criticisms of the DFAs could also be applied to the approach the federal government has taken to protecting biodiversity in Our Land. The council pointed out that without the cooperation of the state-based forests agencies, important information would not be made publicly available. This could and has led to important old forests being harvested.

Many of the measures outlined in Our Land will also rely heavily on state agencies cooperating with their federal counterparts -

a situation which hasn't characterised the DFA process - including the national river health program, the national wetlands program and the Murray Darling Basin Commission.

The government's focus on the salt-stricken and drought-prone Murray Darling basin, which covers one-tenth of the continent, embraces 20 rivers in four states and the ACT and supports nearly 2 million people, is long overdue.

Given that productivity losses due to salinity are estimated at \$100 million per year, and that the value of this area's agricultural production exceeds \$8.5 billion a year, \$200 million over the next four years (plus, the government hopes, an additional \$400-500 million from the private sector) is far too little. One estimate is that 12 billion trees are needed for replacement cover to restore the basin to a minimum level of sustainability and that this will cost \$1.2 billion in seedlings alone.

Tree cover removal and irrigation have led to some 1.3 million tonnes of salt flowing through the Murray River each year. In some dry seasons, the salt level in the drinking water in Adelaide is higher than the levels recommended by the World Health Organisation.

Unless some dramatic changes are made, in 40 years some areas of the Murray Darling Basin will not be able to sustain fruit trees (one of the area's major industries). Decreasing yields lead to a greater reliance on fertilisers, which leads to greater waterway pollution. The blue-green algae bloom along the Darling River in 1991 was the result of phosphorous from fertilisers polluting the waterways.

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Beyond establishing an Environmental Flows Decision Support System, the statement does not spell out whether the overuse of the Darling and Murray Rivers for irrigation will be curtailed.

According to the Australian Industry Commission's 1992 Inquiry into Water, the provision of irrigation water is heavily subsidised by the taxpayer. And while state governments recognise the need to increase water prices, political pressure from irrigators has stopped this from happening.

## Landcare

**B**ob Collins, the federal minister for primary industries and energy, announcing the landcare provisions, reiterated the line that there has to be a "balance" between "ecological sustainability and the long-term prosperity of Australia's farmers".

The reality, however, as seen in the Murray-Darling Basin, is that there has been no balance, and the government has used the recent drought years to push ahead with its restructuring of rural industry. While the landcare program was an important initiative, which took off beyond the government's expectations, it has been under-funded and its political role restricted.

There are now 2500 landcare groups around the country, 500 more than the government had predicted by the year 2000. One in four people in rural areas is involved, making Landcare a national grassroots organisation with considerable potential political clout.

However, according to Andrew Campbell, author of Landcare: communities shaping the land and the future, Landcare groups generally restrict themselves to field

trips, meetings with guest speakers, developing catchment plans, individual property plans, local inventories of natural resources and the development or purchase of equipment.

Only about 13% of the current funding to Landcare gets to the groups, which may explain why they are not the powerful political force they could be.

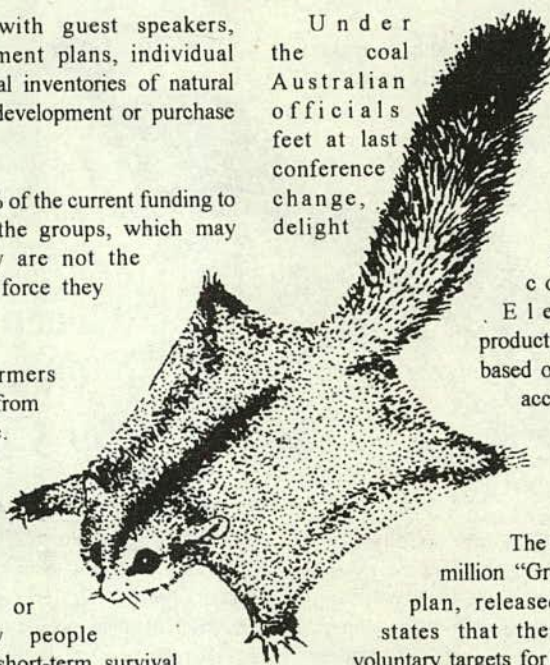
Struggling farmers will receive no joy from this package. Obviously, more sustainable systems of farm management are not likely to be developed or implemented by people preoccupied with short-term survival.

The government seems hell-bent on pushing ahead with its rural restructuring program, which has advantaged the richer farmers at the expense of those less well off. Additional funding will go to the Rural Adjustment Scheme, the program which determines which farmers are "viable" and which aren't. Over the last few years, one third of all farmers have been classified "unviable".

## Challenges unmet

**A** glaring omission from Our Land is any mention of Australia's international commitment to reduce to 1990 levels the production of greenhouse gases by 2000, and to phase out ozone-destroying chemicals. Per capita, Australia produces the largest amount of greenhouse gases in the world.

Under the coal Australian officials feet at last conference change, delight



pressure from industry, government dragged their year's Berlin on climate much to the of the big oil-producing countries.

Electricity production, still largely based on coal-burning, accounts for about 25% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

The fact that the \$63 million "Greenhouse 21C" plan, released last March, states that there should be voluntary targets for industry means that the government has abrogated responsibility.

Unless a global view is taken to solving the problems associated with preserving what's left of Australia's biodiversity - flora and fauna - packages like Our Land will be rendered useless over time.

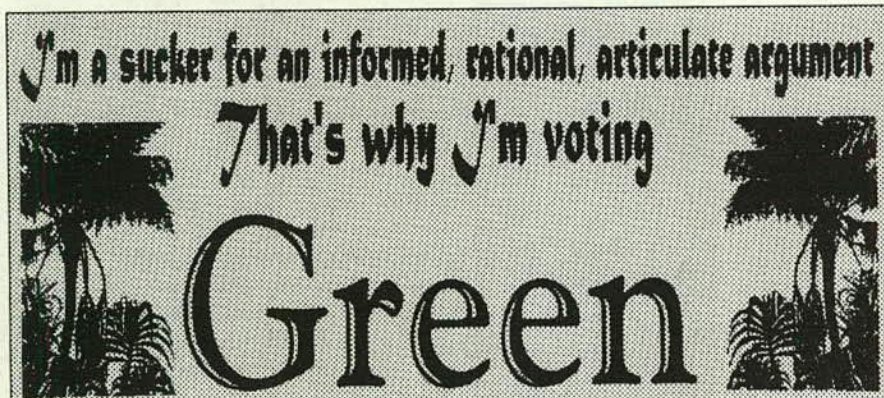
While Labor can't be trusted - its record makes this clear - neither can the Coalition, which has generally fallen behind Labor on all the important ecological questions.

*Source: Greenleft.news*

*Comparing the two "policies" is like sitting in on a macabre poker game; "I'll see your \$100 million for the Murray Darling Basin and raise you \$63 million".*

## The Liberal's Environment Policy

**E**nvirons has just received a copy of the Liberal Party's Environment election promise (whoops, I mean Environment Policy). Not to be outdone by the extravagance of Labor's glossy "Our Land" package, the Liberals managed to show their true concern for the environment by printing their policy on bleached virgin paper and used a huge typeface so more





pages were needed, presumably to make it appear that the document is more substantial than it is.

The Liberals claim their Environment "policy"

represents \$1.5 billion over and above what Labor plan to spend over the next five years. Comparing the two "policies" is like sitting in on a macabre poker game; "I'll see your \$100 million for the Murray Darling Basin and raise you \$63 million".

As far as forest policy is concerned, the Liberals claim they plan to hasten the implementation of the National Forest Policy Statement. They plan to do this in co-operation with the States, which basically means that State Forest agencies can trash what they want, in much the same way as Federal Labor idly watched the trashing of Wild Cattle Creek's majestic 2000 year old brusbox trees in 1994. The phrase "socio-economic considerations" appears as a disclaimer in every plan to protect forests, preserve biodiversity, etc. This means that the Liberals will save the forests, but only if the National Party doesn't mind, which effectively means that State Forest agencies can trash what they like, as outlined above.

While not wishing to appear too cynical, I've seen enough elections and subsequent governments to realise that what is presented as "policy" in the lead up to an election can more aptly be described as a "hollow election

promise", which has as much chance of being fulfilled in its entirety as the infamous "By 1990 no Australian child will be living in poverty".

## Green Candidate for Cowper

The North Coast Greens' candidate for Cowper is Jillian Cranny, who also contested the seat in the March 1993 election. Jillian's Green credentials include initiating recycling at Dorriggo Rubbish Tip, North Coast Environment Council (NCEC) representative on the Southern Environmental Health Committee, NCEC nominee for a North Coast Public Health Unit working group considering agricultural chemicals, buffer zones and residential developments, President of the Toxin Action Group, and National Toxics Network representative on the National Registration Authority Community Consultative Committee. She has also attended and/or written reports for Environmental Health Conferences and workshops on Water Quality, Waste Water Re-use, Toxic Chemicals, Land Use Conflict, Environmental Education and Community Consultation. Jillian has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Education and Human Bioscience, and has taught Recycling Management for Bellingen Skillshare and designed and implemented a Non Toxic Weed Control Project, run by the Bellingen Enterprise Support Team.

Jillian hopes that people will show their dissatisfaction with the major parties and

support her by voting 1 The Greens. The Greens have matured as a political force and are emerging as a credible alternative to the major parties. The Greens not only stand for the environment, but for social reform and economic reconstruction. The Greens are active in the debate on the Republic and Constitutional reform and provide a healthy alternative which considers long term vision and intergenerational justice in their policies.

## The Greens' senate team



The Greens' senate team for the election is as follows

Karla Spelling is the Number 1 Senate candidate. Karla lives with her family near Albion Park, south of Wollongong. She is a qualified solicitor although she does not practice law. In 1994 she obtained a Master of Natural resources Law from the University of Wollongong. In 1995, prior to becoming a Senate candidate, Karla was continuing the research for her PhD, on the subject of legal mechanisms for achieving ecological sustainability through reform of the urban planning system. Karla does not regard herself as an "ivory tower academic" and her research has developed as an extension of her community activism and the work she has done for the Greens. It is her aim to apply this research if she becomes a senator. Karla says

*"The major challenge during the campaign will be to communicate the Greens' policies to the electorate, many of whom I believe are already green in their thinking, but may not identify themselves as Greens politically. This is particularly necessary in relation to economic issues where the task is to explain that sensible environmental policies may also benefit the economy".*

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Peter Denton is the Number 2 senate candidate. His article "Fair is foul and foul is fair - the roots of economic rationalism" is lurking in the last issue of Environs, and gives a fair indication of his beliefs. He says that he

*"...dropped out of the conventional work force to live a more simple life-style that I believe is necessary if this planet is going to survive. But I have also come to believe that more is required. If we don't stand up and be counted, if we don't actively pursue our goals of developing an ecologically sustainable and just society, then those who believe they have a right to control and exploit nature will continue to dominate government and business."*

Jane Elix is the Number 3 candidate. Jane has worked for many years in the community sector. Following two years as National Coordinator for the Women's Electoral Lobby, she moved on to work with the Australian Conservation Foundation, focusing in the last few years on natural resource management issues. She then worked as Director of the Australian Federation of Consumer Organisations, coordinating the work of more than sixty consumer groups across the country. She is now a partner in a small consultancy business, which provides services to



government, industry and the community sector.

Leeza Dobbie is the Number 4 candidate. Leeza has been very involved in the Randwick-Botany Local Council election (which resulted in two Green Councillors being elected). She was the Number 3 Upper House candidate in the recent NSW election. Leeza's background is in the areas of women's issues, forest campaigning, non-violence training, education and employment.

Source: Greemail, October 1995

# Editorial

It's election time again in the land of Oz. For the past month we've been bombarded with policies and promises of dubious credibility, as the two major parties try to convince us that they alone are worth voting for. In an earlier election campaign, Peter Smark summed up the situation perfectly when he said "Having to choose between Labor and Liberal is like being in the trenches in World War One and having to choose between staying in the trench and being gassed or going over the top and being shot."

Apart from porkbarrelling, band-aid solutions and tokenism, there's not much on offer from the big players. Important, long term issues, like getting the poisons out of our foodstuffs and farmlands, flogging off income producing assets (privatisation) and diverting investment from developing industries, etc don't even get a mention. Hopefully the "minor parties", which actually face up to the real issues, will end up with a decent share of the votes, despite being ignored and marginalised by the mainstream media.

As long as Australia is governed by party machine men, whose only real concern is the profit margins of the multinational corporations that they're minding the country for, we can't expect much help or leadership from the government on environmental issues. Which leaves it up to us to do it for them; by getting out there and saving the forests, by adopting permaculture principles, by building earth friendly homes, by recycling, by composting, by reducing consumption; in short by living according to our beliefs.





Om Gaia,  
Tom.



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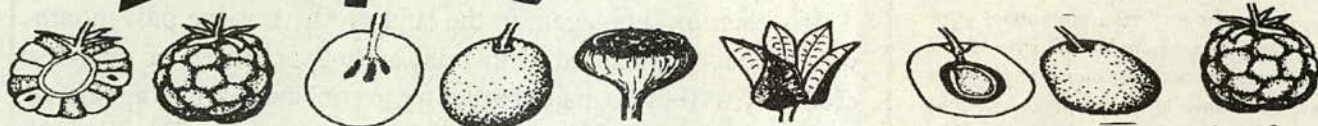
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# Papaya fruit fly



The Papaya Fruit Fly outbreak in far northern Queensland has renewed concerns over the methods used to control horticultural pests in Australia. This species of fruit fly, which is endemic to Thailand, Indonesia Malaysia and Singapore, was first detected closer to Australia in 1992 on the islands of Saibai, Boigi and Dauan adjacent to the Papua New Guinea coast and on the Stephen and Darnley Islands near the centre of Torres Strait. The fly infests most edible fruit and vegetables and is considered a serious quarantine pest worldwide.

The Total Environment Centre (TEC) first heard of the Papaya Fruit Fly outbreak from a banana grower in northern NSW who rang with concerns over the method of treatment being proposed by the Queensland Department of Primary Industries (DPI). The TEC then received several other calls and faxes from organic growers closer to the infected areas, also concerned about the treatment process.

The Queensland DPI issued a Papaya Fruit Fly Fact Sheet explaining that an outbreak had occurred in the Cairns district. A quarantine zone was set up to prohibit movement of infested produce from the area.

It was then proposed that all produce from the 4-5 infested hot-spots (an area covering a large part of northern Queensland) would have to be dipped or sprayed with an insecticide containing Dimethoate before it could leave. Southern states were also insisting on treatment for fear that the fly would travel further south.

The DPI initially proposed a ground spraying program which would have seen thousands of litres of pesticide sprayed around the area, including suburban backyards. As part of that program nearby rainforest areas were also targeted for spraying as there were concerns that the fruit fly may have infested rainforest timbers.

## Did anyone know the chemical dangers?

The TEC issued two press releases raising concerns about the health and environment problems of broad-scale treatment with Dimethoate. Dimethoate is an organophosphate insecticide which has been classified by the US Environment Protection Agency (EPA) as "extremely hazardous".

There is scientific evidence which states that Dimethoate is an experimental carcinogen (causes cancer), mutagen (DNA damage) and teratogen (birth defects). It also

leaches readily from the soil and initially breaks down to Omethoate, a pesticide in its own right, which is 2-5 times

more toxic than Dimethoate. There was also concern that the usual seven-day withholding period for fruit and vegetables treated with Dimethoate was being completely ignored.

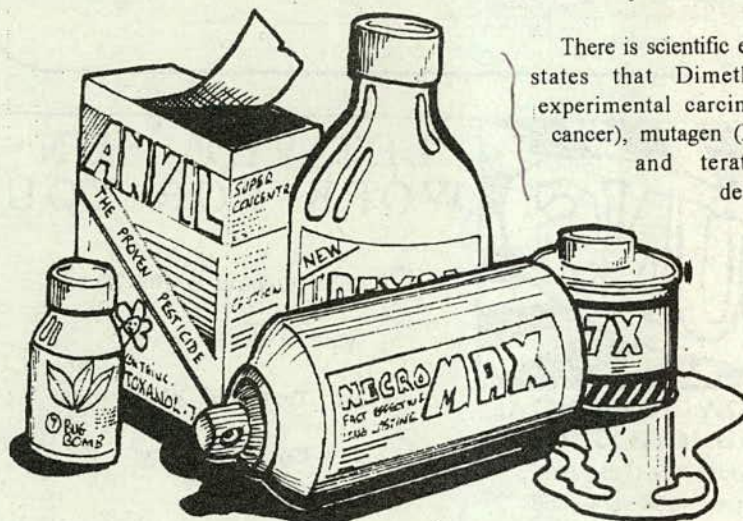
The TEC called for a review of the proposed treatment plan and asked for blood monitoring for farmers having to dip and spray fruit and for pesticide residue monitoring of the treated fruit and vegetables.

The story was picked up by several radio stations and received coverage in the *Cairns Post*, *Sunday Mail* and *The Australian* newspapers. Environment groups, concerned residents and growers have now pulled together in an effort to ensure the DPI does not impose hazardous treatments. Organic growers in the quarantine zone are badly affected as they supply produce free of pesticide residues and at this stage they will be forced to treat.

## Chemical cowboys

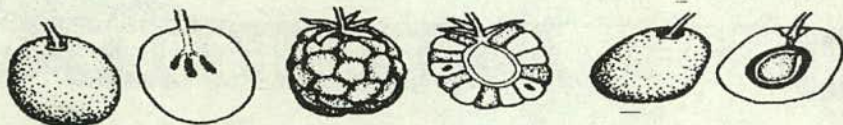
There is widespread concern that the DPI is embarking on a "spray and pray" approach to the crisis, borne out of desperation, rather than a well-researched integrated management program. Five farmers have already been taken to hospital with poisoning from Dimethoate and one batch of tested produce has been found with high Dimethoate residues.

It appears that occupational health and safety was badly neglected at the outset but moves have since been made to ensure farmers have access to safety information. Worksafe Australia, the Queensland Health Department and the National Registration Authority set up a series of shed meetings for farmers to be briefed. The question that is raised is the poor level of understanding many farmers have about the hazards of pesticides. Perhaps there should be requirements for them to attend regular safety information meetings in the future.





# Panic! outbreak discovered



by Jo Immig

A revised treatment program is now being implemented which includes dipping and spraying with Dimethoate at accredited facilities (about 250 have already been approved). Fumigation facilities have also been established which are treating produce with two highly hazardous pesticides - Ethylene dibromide (EDB) and Methyl bromide. Community groups living near fumigation sheds are very concerned as requirements to keep the sheds 500m from houses or other facilities are being ignored in some areas. Other reports from residents indicate that some so-called "sheds" are merely tarpaulins held together with bulldog clips under flimsy shelters.

Ethylene dibromide has been banned in six countries, including the USA. It is described as "possibly the most cancer causing pesticide ever evaluated by the US EPA, causing birth defects, fertility decreases, and damage to the lungs, liver and kidneys". It has also been found to contaminate food supplies and groundwater across the US.

Methyl bromide is a commonly used fumigant in the horticulture industry. In fact some countries, such as Japan, will not accept produce from Australia unless it has been fumigated with EDB or Methyl bromide. Methyl bromide is a major depleter of the

stratospheric ozone layer when it escapes into the atmosphere. Queensland uses about 42% of the 400 tonnes of Methyl bromide applied in Australia. As a signatory to the "Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer", Australia has a responsibility to look for alternatives and to phase this chemical out as soon as possible.

The most recent press release from the National Registration Authority (21/11/95)



indicates that permits have been issued to produce baits which will contain the insecticide Malathion and the attractant Methyl eugenol in blocks of caneite. The baits will be nailed on trees and telegraph poles in suburban areas and orchards. The same baits may also be dropped from helicopters throughout the rainforest if evidence is found that flies have moved into those areas.

## Alternatives

Concerned organic growers have been busy researching alternatives to Malathion and are suggesting Pyrethrum or Neem, which are less hazardous insecticides extracted from plants. They are also suggesting that baits be placed inside the lures and not nailed to trees where they will be exposed to the weather and other organisms. Proposals are also being made that carbon dioxide and extremes of temperature could also be effective and would provide a less hazardous option to the current fumigation process.

While officially we are told pesticide residues in food will not go above the maximum residue limit (MRL), next time you sit down to a delicious mango or paw paw think about just how many chemicals you may be eating. Pesticides applied to produce while they are still growing can build up in the flesh. Dipping produce concentrates the pesticides on the skin. Wash all fruit and vegetables and avoid eating the skin and flesh which comes off with the skin.

Source: Toxic Network News, Dec 1995, Toxic Chemicals Committee of the Total Environment Centre.

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# Book Review

*The politics of the  
microbe soup*

## "The Coming Plague - Newly emerging diseases in a world out of balance"

By Laurie Garrett  
Virago, 1995. \$29.95  
Reviewed by Dot Tumney

"Ultimately, humanity will have to change its perspective on its place in Earth's ecology if the species hopes to stave off or survive the next plague.

"Microbes, and their vectors, recognise none of the artificial boundaries erected by human beings. Theirs is a world of natural limitations, temperature, pH, ultraviolet light, the presence of vulnerable hosts, and mobile vectors."

Well there you have it. Worse, both your digestive system and your favourite yoghurt won't work without microbes. The balancing act is not simple.

The Coming Plague describes in detail the successes and failures of attempts to control infectious diseases over the last 30 years. Infections spread best among humans living in poverty, crowding and ignorance. The Black Death in the middle ages was so devastating because no one realised the cure was to kill off the rats.

That plague spread widely but slowly because it had to go on foot. HIV/AIDS spread, however, benefited from a long

latency period, a highly mobile human population and idiotically repressive policies that left it free to grow in marginalised groups and provide a reservoir for wider distribution.

Nothing works as well for a microbe than to get into poorly equipped medical facilities run by well meaning missionaries with no medical skills, vitamins and drugs to be injected, and reused needles. The potential for disaster when invasive methods are employed in the absence of effective hygiene is astronomical.

Microbes entering a body directly into the blood bypass much of the normal defence mechanisms of the skin, respiratory system and gut processes.

Since the 1970s, expensive medical technology, drugs and methods have been exported in bits and pieces to everywhere. The results are a few good hospitals here and there, and a dog's breakfast of useless equipment and wrongly used drugs in between.

Garrett points out that diseases which exist in a low toxicity among an isolated population may take on a totally different character when given a previously unexposed set of hosts. Organisms may also adapt in response to a changed environment. Microbes which are dangerous but hard to transmit

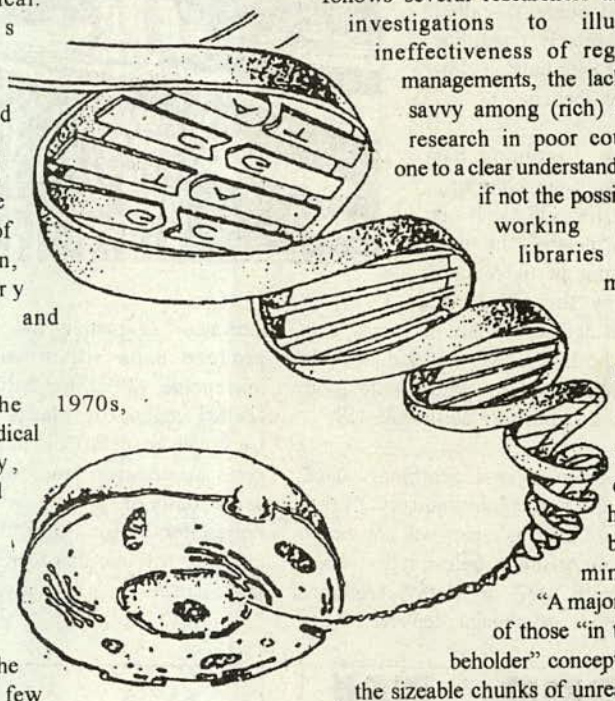
may arrive the easy way by blood to blood transmission.

Simple and effective disease control methods are mainly labour intensive (nursing time, cleaning and disinfection); low technology (involving isolation and protective clothing); unprofitable; and unspectacular, therefore not useful for either corporate PR or fundraising.

Garrett's book contains a wealth of detail on how to confront infectious disease. She follows several researchers and particular investigations to illustrate the ineffectiveness of regulators and managements, the lack of political savvy among (rich) researchers - research in poor countries leads one to a clear understanding of politics if not the possibility of good working equipment, libraries or fax machines.

When research is complicated by politics, implementation of public health policies becomes a minefield since "A major threat" is one of those "in the eye of the beholder" concepts. In addition the sizeable chunks of unreasoning belief that has shifted from religion to medicine in recent decades has given, not only individuals, but also institutional thinking a severe case of magic bullet syndrome.

The emergence of drug resistance in common, previously controlled diseases came as a rude shock to recent generations of "curative" physicians. Rich people were no longer safe - even if you could afford fancy pills there mightn't be one that worked. And you couldn't even take the damn bug to court.





Magic bullet type thinking is tailor made for market medicine, thus the mad rush of pharmaceutical companies to the new wonders to be found in rainforests. The microbe population (forgive the imagery) is sitting back laughing its head off - swap a few bits of DNA with the bug next door and off we go again.

It's not that magic bullets aren't useful, it's just that too narrow a focus is deadly. Vaccination programs must be carried out completely. Blood products must be cleaned up. Reusing needles must be totally eliminated. Proper use of antibiotics is essential both for patient treatment to be effective and to prevent loss of effect.

Of course money is hard to find. But all the research funding recently invested in cancers and lifestyle problems had better be balanced by efforts to keep tabs on microbes. Besides, the more work you do on cancers and degenerative diseases the more likely you are to find a virus helping things degenerate or mutate.

If money is hard to find, rational social planning planet-wide, equally essential, is even harder. For example, all basic health advances on a large scale necessitate the education and empowerment of women the world over.

In the end, capitalism's much worshipped market forces don't stand a chance in competition with the inhabitants of the microbial soup - microbes engage in competition and growth on a scale that leaves BHP looking like a little woolly lamb. We more complex life forms had better find another way. This engaging book is a good start.

*Source: Greenleft.news*

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## **Koori land claim to fight wetlands destruction**

*By Tony Illtis*

A proposed luxury marina at Shellharbour is being opposed by local Kooris because of the area's historical and cultural significance. The \$750 million development would also destroy the Bass Point site's unique wetlands environment and restrict public access to the south Shellharbour beach.

Reuben Brown of the Korewal Elouera Jerrungerah Tribal Elders Corporation spoke to Green Left Weekly about the importance of the site to local Aborigines, and how their claim to the land would preserve the area's environment and access for the whole community.

Bass Point was the scene of a grisly chapter in Australia's unwritten colonial history. "Where they want to build the marina is very sacred to us. There are middens and skeletons buried there", Brown explained.

"Our ancestors were killed there and our great, great grandfather shot and wounded. His mother was killed along with the other women and children so that D'Arcy Wentworth could acquire this land. It's just lucky he got saved. They brought him back down, and he grew up to be the chief of the whole area. Wollongong is named after this person. That's why we want to stop [the marina]."

The site is also home to a number of rare species of marine life. "There's unique coral; we've got some dated there up to 500 years old, and there is the blue devil fish, a sacred fish named after a tribal elder. The devil fish has only 12 [remaining habitats], and we've got the only ones left in this part of Australia. There's also the green bell frog."

The marina proposal is currently the subject of a public inquiry. Following the commission's recommendations, the state government will hand down a decision in March.

If the development is allowed to go ahead, Brown says that the Tribal Elders

Corporation will ask federal minister for Aboriginal affairs Robert Tickner to intervene using the Aboriginal Heritage Act. If this fails they plan to take the issue before international bodies. "We're not threatening anyone - we're just saying these are our options."

Shellharbour councillor and marina opponent Russell Hannah told the commission on January 16 that the proposal will cost Shellharbour residents \$600 each for the dubious benefit of losing a beach and a wetland.

A number of other Shellharbour councillors have also opposed the development. Brown said that they have been asking why the existing harbour isn't used. "It's right in the middle of town, and will draw in tourism and build up the town again."

Marina supporters have held up employment creation as a supposed benefit. Yet, as local environmentalist George Petersen told the commission, only 95 jobs will be created during the marina's construction, and there will be 12 jobs once it is completed (half of which will be reserved for local people).

However, the project's developer, the Walker Corporation, has received strong backing from the local big business media. An editorial in the January 13 Illawarra Mercury was devoted to slandering Brown and the Korewal Elouera Jerrungerah Tribal Elders Corporation, and demanded "an investigation to check credentials before it goes around making noises about sacred sites".

Brown was unfazed by the media criticism. "They can say what they want to say", he told Green Left Weekly. "If we're successful, the beach that they're going to cut in half and the wetlands that they're going to remove will be saved. If we don't win, there'll be nothing left for the community."

"People used to walk from one end of the beach to the other, but they won't be able to. They'll have to make an eight kilometre trek around this marina to get to another spot on the beach where they're going to put this channel in. It's just ludicrous."

"If we get control of this area, we're going to put in elevated wooden walkways, leave the middens as they are, fence off certain areas and put plaques down saying 'This is what happened here' and 'This is who's buried here'. We want to share it with all communities, and share our heritage with our children and grandkids."

*Source: Greenleft.news*



# The Green Page



## Tofu From Hell

The soybean, ingredient of tofu, soy-milk and a host of other delicacies without which life would be more the poorer, just wasn't good enough for multinational leviathan Monsanto, so they indulged in a bit of genetic "tweaking".

Monsanto's new, genetically engineered soybean, already unleashed on the US market, has been modified so that it can survive heavy doses of Monsanto's legendary weed-killing herbicide, Roundup (glyphosate). Agribusiness already dumps more than 220,000 tonnes of herbicides on US farmland each year, with Roundup leading the toxic parade. Herbicides contaminate ground water and the food chain, contributing to the cancer epidemic which now strikes one in three

citizens. A study released in August 1995 found that levels of herbicides in drinking water exceed federal safety levels in 29 towns and cities tested in the US "Corn Belt".

Other risks include the potential for engineered genes to move into wild relatives or weeds. The soybeans, called "Roundup Ready", were approved for commercialisation in the US last year. A transgenic cotton plant, also designed by Monsanto to resist Roundup, is currently awaiting approval.

Source: *The Grass Roots (US)*, a publication of the Foundation On Economic Trends

## Boycotts

The Native Forest Network, along with other international human rights and environmental groups, is calling for a boycott of Shell Oil following the execution of Nigerian activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni tribesmen. The political trial, based on trumped up charges, was intended to silence the campaign to stop Shell's environmentally-destructive exploitation of the Ogoni people's homeland and the genocide of their people.

Source: *Native Forest Network News via Potoroo Review No. 149.*

## Every 30 seconds a baby dies from unsafe bottle feeding in the Third World

Also subject of a boycott is Nestle, the world's largest producer of powdered baby milk, currently breaking a World Health Organisation Code on the marketing of baby milk.

1. Nestle provides free milk to maternity hospitals in the Third World, so that newborn babies are routinely bottle-fed.

2. When newborn babies are given bottles, they are less able to suckle well. This makes breastfeeding failure likely, and the baby is then dependent on artificial milk.

3. When the mother and baby leave hospital the milk is no longer free. At home the mother is forced to buy more milk which can cost 50% of the family income.



4. Because the milk is so expensive the child is not fed enough. This leads to malnutrition.

5. The water used for the formula is often contaminated. Baby gets diarrhoea and often dies.

6. 1.5 million babies die each year from unsafe bottle feeding.

7. Breast-feeding is free, safe and protects against infection - but companies know that unless they get babies on the bottle, they don't do business.

Help save infant lives.

Boycott Nestle, Wyeth and Mead-Johnson

Source: *Baby Food Action Group Leaflet*



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19 notes

## Remember these dates

The Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) are taking a breather from researching and



compiling the Koala Habitat Atlas to give us the Conference on the Status of the Koala in 1996, to be held on the 19th to 21st of August, 1996. The venue is still to be advised, contact the AKF on (07) 3229 7233 for more information.

Also coming up Save the Koala Day (otherwise known as Clearfelling Awareness Day) on July 26.

Source: AKF Newsletter, December 1995

## New laws on Threatened Species, Energy and Waste

The Total Environment Centre have a Seminar for community groups and green councillors on Sunday, March 31 1996 at the Southern Function Room, 4th Floor, Town Hall House, 456 Kent St, Sydney.

For \$40 per person, the seminar will guide you through the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995, the Energy Reform - Supply, Corporations and Sustainable Energy Acts 1995 and the Waste Minimisation and Management Act 1995.

Phone the Total Environment Centre on (02) 247 4714 for more details.

## Is this justice?

*"Took a stranger to teach me to look in Justice's beautiful face,  
With a seeing eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth"*

Bob Dylan

The latest Potoroo review gives us an insight into justice Victorian style with these three cases.

Two Gippsland men appeared in court charged with firearms offences, after an incident in Goongerah in which a resident reported having been run at with a car and then fired at with a shotgun. The judge dismissed the charges against the men as "trivial".

A shooter who pleaded guilty to firing at duck rescuers at last years opening on Lake Buloke was fined \$1250.

A peaceful, solitary (and definitely unarmed) protester who erected a small display board on forest management issues outside the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources office in Orbost was fined \$800.

Source: Potoroo Review No.149

## Greenpeace

### 21 years of Global Action

Greenpeace is an international environmental action group that seeks solutions and campaigns for a nuclear-free future and to stop pollution and protect nature.

It was formed by a group of Canadians and Americans in 1971. Greenpeace Australia was established in 1979 and the movement has since extended its interests to promoting green solutions.

It takes care to maintain absolute independence and takes no money from business or government. There are 5 million supporters in 150 countries and in Australia there are 90,000 members.

Greenpeace's greatest successes include:-

\* In 1972 US atomic testing in Alaska abandoned \* In 1975 French atmospheric testing at Mururoa abandoned \* In 1982 the

European community banned the import of seal pups \* In 1983 London Convention regarding dumping nuclear waste in the sea \* In 1984 New Zealand prohibited nuclear warship visits \* In 1986 International Whaling Commission banned commercial whaling \* In 1987 first non-government base established in Antarctica \* In 1988 global ban on increasing toxic wastes at sea \* In 1989 & 1991 protection of Antarctica from mining \* In 1990 legal changes following an Australian Clean Waters Campaign \* in 1991 Three Mines Uranium Policy was not expanded \* In 1992 Japan agreed to cease high seas driftnetting \* 1995 Shell decides not to scuttle oil rig at sea \* 1995 International condemnation of Mad Jacques' resumption of nuclear testing.

Membership information is only a phone call away 008 804 690.

Source: Nimbin News Feb/Mar 1996

CRUMBS!!

## Act locally: environment action from A-Z

19

A do it yourself environment handbook, soon to be released by the Nature Conservation Council, will tell you what to do about environmental issues from air pollution to waste, water and wetlands, before you need to call your environment centre.

Designed to give readers enough information to take local community action on their own or with friends, the book, "Act Locally", will also be an invaluable resource for environment centres which receive frequent calls for information and guidance.

The book is divided into three sections, with most space given to the first section, the issues from A-Z. Problems are outlined briefly, followed by lots of ideas for action.

The second section is about understanding government - local, state and federal - and the third section, Getting Organised, gives general advice on running a campaign.

Contact Bruce Dickman at the NCC (02) 247 4206 to order copies.

Source: Environment NSW, Summer 1995/1996



This Month's Cover... King Parrot - *Alisterus scapularis*  
I've chosen the King Parrot for the cover this month because I so often see them right outside my studio window, feeding on the fruits of the wild tobacco, just as I've drawn it. Although many people regard it as a nuisance, we like to leave wild tobacco trees in our garden, amongst the vegies & fruit trees because so many birds are attracted by its fruit. We live in hope that the birds will fill up on it & eat less of our corn, bananas etc!! The King Parrots are such beautiful birds - the male with his bright scarlet head & breast, green wings & deep blue tail, & his mate, more green, with her red mainly on the lower breast & belly. Both have a light green stripe on the wing.  
We're always prepared to share some of the fruit & vegetables we grow - it's a small price to pay to have these colourful visitors come so often to our garden, & much appreciated by our many overseas visitors who come to "Wwoof" for us!

Julie

(Wwoof stands for 'Willing Workers on Organic Farms')



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