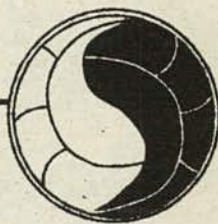


June/July 1994



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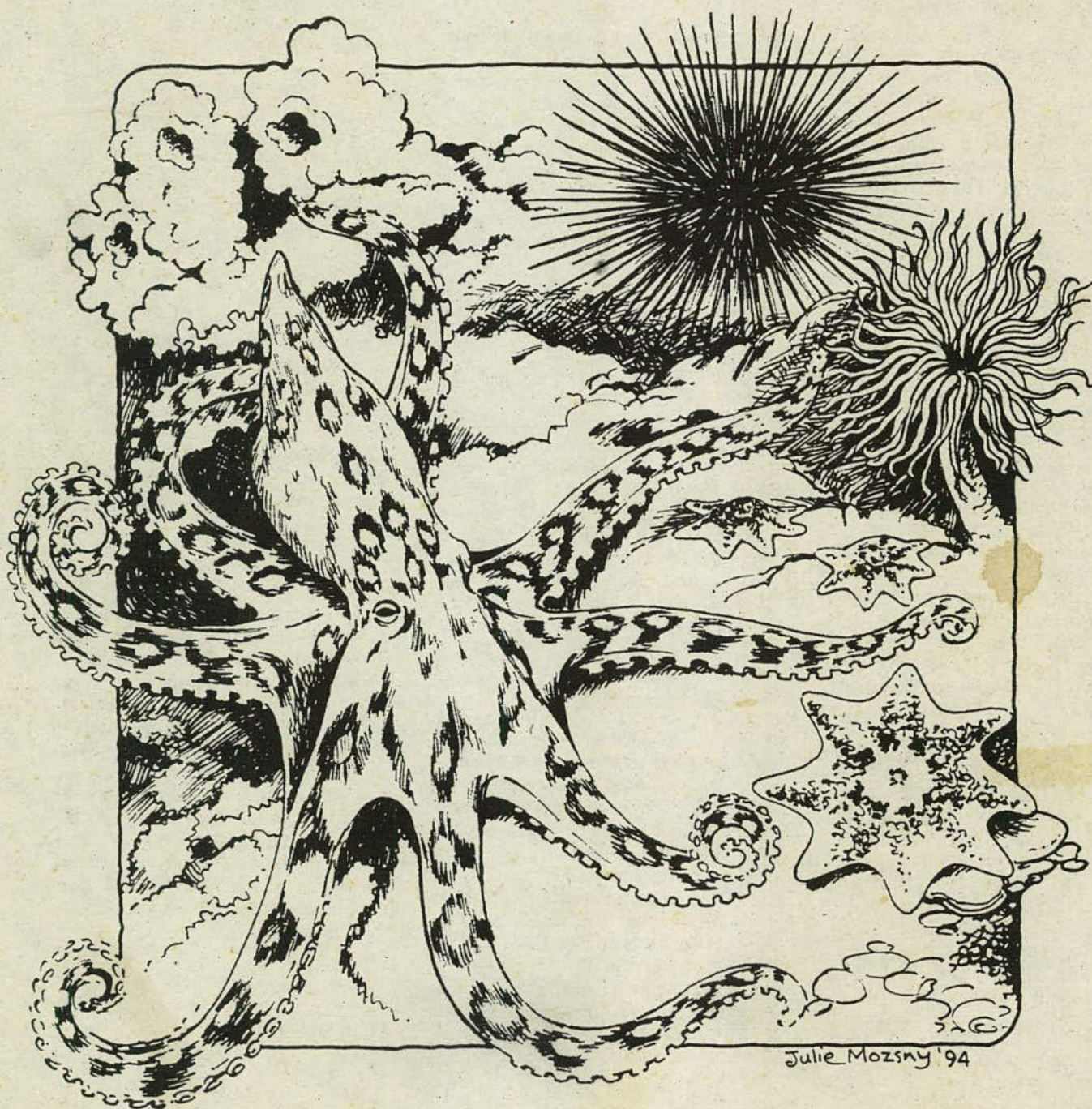
# Environs

*Len to edit*  
*P 16/17/18*  
*P 19*

**THIS ISSUE:** ● Toxic Land - Right to Know, ● TechnoProblems,  
● Wetlands Decline, ● GATT, ● Nambucca Council Gravel Rash

**the north coast environment magazine**

*185 as is*  
*Done*





## NSW ENVIRONMENT IN CRISIS CONFERENCE

**T**he Nature Conservation Council of NSW, which is the peak umbrella group for the environmental movement in this State, is planning an extraordinary conference on July 16 1994.

The proposed title of the conference is: "NSW - Environment in Crisis", with the sub-title: An evaluation of the Coalition Government's successes and failures - and an agenda for the Next Election and beyond".

The objective is to draw together the largest representative gathering of environmentalists ever assembled in NSW to identify and affirm:

- The environmental successes and failures of the NSW government since 1988.
- The issues of greatest current concern to environmentalists which are within the power of the Government to address.
- The major goals of the environment movement for the next elected government in this State.

The conference will help revitalise the NSW environment movement in this crucial pre-election year (a State election must be held by March 1995 at the latest). It will also help the movement as a whole to formulate a set of policy priorities and goals for the next election.

Contact NVCA if you want to be involved.

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## Ombudsman reprimands Nambucca council over gravel policy

### *Ombudsman report welcomed as umpire's decision*

**T**he draft assistant Ombudsman's Report released 6 May 1994, by Nambucca Council has been welcomed by one councillor, Cr. Lyn Orrego, as the umpire's decision on Council's actions over recognising unsubstantiated claims for existing use rights enabling gravel extraction without development applications.

"The Council has now been told by the official legal representative of the people of NSW that twelve of its past decisions to recognise existing use rights for gravel extraction in the Nambucca River were *improperly discriminatory, unreasonable and contrary to law*", she said.

"Of real concern to the ratepayers of the Nambucca is the Report's conclusion that the Council *consistently favoured the sectional interests of gravel extractors at the expense of the ratepayers as a whole* because road contributions could not be put on extractors operating under existing use rights. The Town Planner also warned that the higher costs of road maintenance from increased truck movements was being borne by the Shire's ratepayers rather than the gravel operators," she said.

"The Report's conclusion that Nambucca Council is *in thrall to the gravel extraction industry and a Council whose contempt for the law and its responsibilities has been longstanding and brazen*, should worry all residents who must call on their Council to take note of this verdict and change their actions.

"The Council's actions may also have badly effected the Nambucca River. The Dept of Water Resources warned in 1988 that the size and number of extractive industries compared to the size of the Nambucca River was alarming and that the river was already showing signs of bed degradation.

"If existing use is recognised no development application is required so no assessment of possible adverse environmental effects is submitted to Council and no conditions can be imposed by Council to minimise these. With so many of these extractive operations located immediately upstream of Council's borefields which supply the whole shire with water, it remains a complete unknown if what Council has so freely been allowing is having an effect on Council's own water supply.

"I am also concerned that Council now seems to be misunderstanding the new State Environmental Planning Policy which gives a two year moratorium to gravel operations which can prove existing consent and can submit details about quantities and locations. Council has allowed around 80 applicants to be on the register and to extract gravel even though, to date, only one of those applications has been assessed to comply with the requirements! They have in effect given an 8 month "free go" to some extractors who might not be able to prove their eligibility when the final assessment is completed towards the end of this month.

"In one case, when Council's own legal advice recommended a stop work order because the evidence showed no existing use rights were likely to exist, Council ordered one, but gave the operator 6 months to stop. Water Resources reported that during that time they were going "flat out". Also during that time Council was in a contractual relationship with the operators to purchase gravel from them - a clear conflict of interest. Council's own lawyers commented that Council had given this extension "without any apparent legal right". It's extremely important that this type of thing cease immediately and that Council take its responsibilities more seriously", Cr. Orrego concluded.



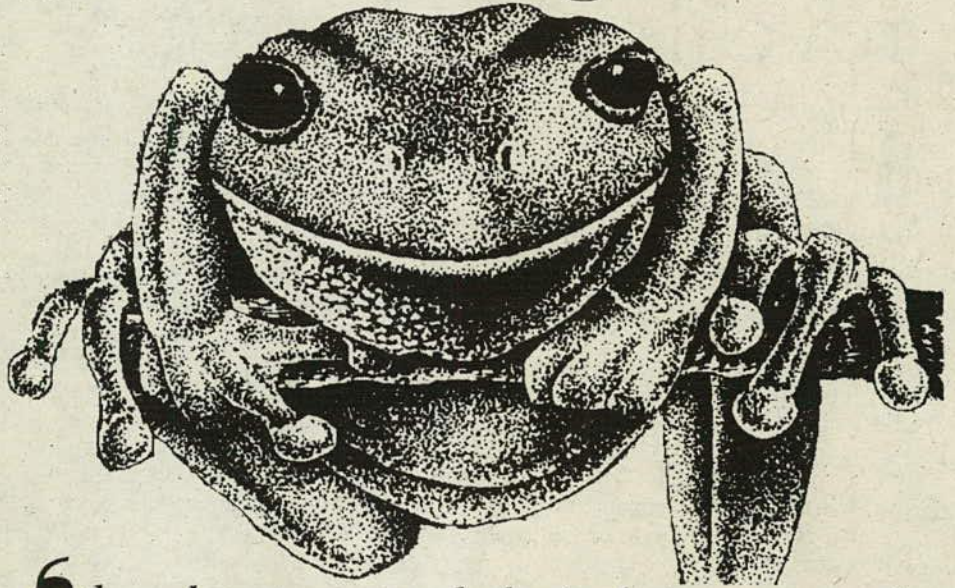
# THIS IS SERIOUS

## *Frogs are Croaking*

**A**mphibians all over the world began disappearing in the 1970's. Scientists from every continent have documented the rapid, global decline. Modern amphibians evolved about 75 million years ago and have not changed significantly since. They preceded and then outlived the dinosaurs, survived ice ages, meteors and volcanoes. They witnessed the continents dividing and learned to co-exist with predatory mammals and birds.

Like other species on this planet, amphibians are threatened by large-scale habitat alteration and destruction. Logging old growth forests, compacting soil, draining wetlands, damming rivers, clearing streamside vegetation, diverting creeks, and depleting water tables all take a heavy toll. Then there is the pollution: acid rain lowers pH levels in streams and has been documented as killing frogs and salamanders in Europe and USA. Pesticides, herbicides and heavy metals can kill larvae and have other ill effects on amphibians. Introduction of exotic game fish and non-native frogs to pristine habitats has caused competition and predation leading to extinctions.

However, other extinctions have taken place in seemingly pristine areas. Higher levels of ultraviolet radiation penetrating the Earth's dwindling ozone layer may be the cause. New research shows that UV-B radiation - one of the most damaging forms of ultraviolet radiation - kills the eggs of some species but leaves others unharmed. Scientists Blaustein and Hays, already knew that UV radiation damages DNA, and that an enzyme called photolyase can repair this damage. They measured levels of the enzyme in the eggs of ten species of frogs, and found that disappearing species have much lower levels of photolyase than non-threatened ones. They also tested susceptibility to UV radiation directly, by placing three clumps of eggs from each species in water where they would naturally be laid. One clump was covered with a UV filter, the second with a control screen and the third left in the sun. Results showed that with threatened species, more of their eggs



“the planet as a whole is being stressed to the point where it can no longer sustain entire classes of species”

survived when the UV radiation was blocked out, in contrast, eggs of a non-threatened species were not damaged by sunlight.

Amphibians are critical elements of natural diversity, often constituting the highest vertebrate biomass in aquatic ecosystems. Their disappearance means the loss of a major food source for fish, birds and mammals. They are themselves carnivores, being some of the most important consumers of insects and small vertebrates - which can proliferate unnaturally in their absence, causing ecosystem imbalance. Feeding on a large variety of

animals on the food chain below them, they are good measures of air, water and soil quality. That's one reason why so many scientists consider amphibians the best indicators of global environmental health. There's good reason for alarm - the recent global amphibian decline indicates far more than an amphibian problem, or an ecosystem problem. It is telling us that the planet as a whole is being stressed to the point where it can no longer sustain entire classes of species.

Sources: *New Scientist*, 5 March 94.  
*World Rainforest Report* No 27, Feb 94

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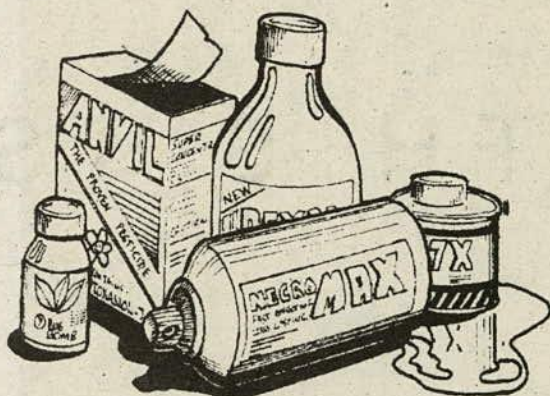


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# Nambucca Council reveals poisons list



In July 1993, the Toxin Action group wrote to the Nambucca Shire Council requesting a list of all chemicals used by them and their applications and quantities used. Included were: fuels, cleaners, pesticides, fungicides, herbicides, and chemicals used in water and sewerage treatments. They were also asked to describe the methods of disposal of chemical containers and residues.

This information was needed so that TAG could compile a data base of the distribution and use of chemicals within the mid north coast region. This data base will be in the interest of community health and information will be available to all interested persons.

The information was supplied by Council, and included lists of herbicides used in 'noxious plant' control and rates of their application, but not the amounts used per annum. Five herbicides only are listed as used: Amicide 500, Frenock, Grazon DS, Bromicide 200, Roundup. Amounts of fuels, oils and cleaners used per annum were given. The cleaners were not detailed as to their ingredients, so further investigation would be needed to put their chemicals on the data base.

The public water supply has three chemicals added: Hydrated Lime at 80kg per day, Sodium Silicofluoride at 6kg per day, and Chlorine gas at 1.5kg per day.

Disposal of the bags having contained Sodium silicofluoride is by burning, chlo-

rine gas containers are returnable to the source, Sodium hydroxide (sewage additive 1 litre/day) containers are triple rinsed, punctured and then put in landfill. No other information was given.

TAG also requested Council to look at taking part in its Pesticide Reduction Program which is a voluntary program for Councils to reduce their use of pesticides in the interests of public health and safety. This was rejected at Council's meeting of April 21. [For more details of the PRP see Environs Oct/Nov 1993, page 7]

for more information contact:

Ms Jillian Crammy,

Toxin Action group Inc, Po Box 410, Dorrigo 2453.



## Extremist Argument

by Jim Williams

It is often argued that when confronted with an issue, the best way is that of the middle, that the extremes are to be avoided. This argument always sounds "reasonable" perhaps because of the bad connotations of the word "extreme". Let's have a look at a hypothetical issue and see what the effect of taking the middle position might have.

An area of wilderness comprising 1000 hectares of rainforest comes under threat from a developer who wishes to build a resort. A local "action committee" is formed that opposes all development on the grounds that there is hardly any rainforest left in the country and that the native animals in the forest need the peculiar conditions there for their sur-

vival. The developer argues that he only wishes to use 500 hectares of the forest and that he will ensure that the remaining 500 hectares is left untouched. Indeed, he proposes to prohibit any movement of persons or vehicles into the area. The issue comes to a boil with various actions taken by the local environmentalists who are referred to as "greenies" by the press and the developer.

After a series of actions and acrimonious exchanges in the local press, a retired Supreme Court Barrister and respected local offers his services as a mediator. He proposes that a middle course be taken. His plan is to allow only low level development in the forest and confine it to half the area proposed by the devel-

oper. Under his plan 750 hectares will be saved. The developer somewhat begrudgingly accepts the "compromise" and the local action committee is forced to concede. The "extremes" are sacrificed for the middle way which is seen as "fair and reasonable".

Time passes. The country around the forest gradually changes from an agricultural area to a mosaic of smaller holdings which includes tourist amenities, small alternative businesses and housing subdivisions. Most of the people involved in the original dispute have died or retired. A new management company has purchased the rainforest resort and decides that the facilities need upgrading and expansion to accommodate the increasingly numerous and

more sophisticated tourists. They propose to develop another 250 hectares of the forest. Again a local group is formed to stop them. again a respected member of the community steps in to find a "middle way" and 125 hectares of the forest is lost.

Without labouring the issue it is obvious that the entire forest is eventually lost, or at the most, such a small remnant remains that the flora and fauna confined to it become extinct anyway. The reasonable middle way becomes one of the extremes. THIS CAN HAPPEN ON ANY ISSUE. DON'T COMPROMISE.

Jim Williams is a member of the Byron Environment Centre Inc.



## CONTAMINATED LANDS AUTHORITY ENDORSES:

# Community 'Right to Know'

**A**t a recent public forum held in Coffs Harbour (23/3/94) the Contaminated Agricultural Land Management Advisory Committee (CALMAC), discussed aspects of classification, notation and disclosure of information relating to land which was "possibly contaminated" or "contaminated". Members of the community were invited to put forward their ideas or questions about the issues raised by the committee. The community was well represented at the meeting with people from the Banana Growers, farmers groups, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Kalang, and Nambucca Environment Centres, Toxin Action Group Inc, North Coast Environment Council, a developer, and other private farmers and concerned citizens.

The only environment representative on CALMAC, Mr Don Want, representing the NCEC, was pleased that CALMAC publicly endorsed the communities' "Right to Know" via the disclosure of information relating to contamination of land, and he suggested a similar model as the Queensland system for disclosure be adopted.

Toxin Action Group Inc has called on CALMAC to adopt a Protocol for Community Participation on this issue, as recommended by Professor Ben Selinger, Chairman of the National Registration Authority. This would prevent this single public forum from being seen as providing adequate community consultation and participation, especially considering that

the Draft Report, soon to be prepared by CALMAC, may well become incorporated into a model for use right across the whole of NSW.

One idea put forward from the Toxin Action Group, received mixed support from within CALMAC. It was the suggestion that Australia adopt a similar system as the USA in setting a 'contaminant level goal'. This idea of setting two levels - one being the current threshold level currently set as acceptable by the National Medical Health and Research Council, and the other - the maximum contaminant level goal - being set in accordance with the latest medical and environmental fate data determined for each chemical, would help to provide an 'optimal goal' for remediation techniques. This system would reflect in policy, consideration of, and support for the "precautionary principle", and "intergenerational equity", which Australia had agreed to strive towards when it signed the International Agreement of the Environment". It would also show that it takes seriously the latest research done by the US National Research Council - the research arm of the National Academy of Science, Report July '93 of which recommends that extra measures are needed to be introduced to protect children from pesticide exposures. The current Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) levels for children do not as yet incorporate the risks posed to children from the accumulation or synergism of chemicals from non-food sources eg: from soil & water & air & indoor surfaces & environment as well as from food.

Other concerns raised by the community were:

- The procedure of using composite sampling to determine contamination levels at the first stage of sampling.
- The notation and lack of continued monitoring proposed for "remediated sites".



- The lack of discussion on the implications of the different methods of remediation.
- The option of alternative land uses for "low-level" contaminated land, including open space and playing fields.
- The big issue of who pays for remediation was briefly dealt with by the EPA.

Generally, I believe, the onus is on the owner of the property to pay for remediation if the contaminant begins to move off site, or if he or she wishes to develop or consider rezoning the site. The owner must pay for remediation in these circumstances, and then may choose to redress this situation if he/she can prove that the polluter was someone else, or a Department whose advice was followed which resulted in the contamination. The onus is on the owner to take these legal challenges to court to try and gain compensation for the costs they may have to pay to the EPA to "remediate" a site. Legal Aid will be essential for some individuals to afford a court challenge and achieve compensation they may well be entitled to.

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) has funding from the Law Foundation of NSW to develop a legislative package for "Community Right to Know". It is hoped CALMAC will send a copy to the PIAC, of their recommendations for community "Right to Know" relating to contaminated agricultural land, for incorporation into the appropriate legislation now being drafted.

*written by Ms Jillian Cranmy, Secretary, Toxin Action Group Inc.*

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## No Ocean Outfall ANYWHERE!

**T**he issue of an ocean outfall at Look-At-Me-Now Headland has brewed, percolated and erupted like an angry volcano since 1987, the issue of sewage for the Northern Beaches even longer.

Coalition Against Ocean Outfalls Inc, has made a brave and principled stand, "No Ocean outfall at Look-At-Me-Now-Headland. No ocean outfall anywhere."

In a battle that has raged for seven years many truths have revealed themselves; there are better environmental and economic solutions than ocean outfalls; that our sewage infrastructure is chained to the dinosaur of engineering technology, and that the New South Wales Public Works Department is jealously protecting that monopoly; that wetlands, microfiltration, effluent recycling, decentralised village schemes are not only more environmentally and socially accountable, but are far more economically sound.

Water is a valuable resource, our environment is our life support system, ocean outfalls abuse both these concerns, forcing us to dam more rivers, to waste more water and to discharge that water into our marine environment.

Look-At-Me-Now Headland is adjacent to the Moonee Reserve and the most highly protected beach in New South Wales. The proposed outfall would dump into the Solitary Islands Marine Reserve an area of an enormous variety of fish species and marine biota, a special place, a genuinely unique place. It is a place of recognised heritage signifi-

cance to the local Aboriginal community. If they can construct an ocean outfall at Look-At-Me-Now, they can construct an outfall anywhere. It is an abomination to the ocean and to the headland.

In 1989 an estimated 7000 people marched against the proposed outfall at Look-At-Me-Now Headland. In 1991 the people of Emerald Beach fought at the barricades to defend work on this headland. Close to 300 people were arrested, some of them charged under the Crimes Act. In 1993 an estimated 3000 people joined hands from one beach (Shelly's), around Look-At-Me-Now Headland to Moonee Beach on the other side in a statement of commitment at the "Rally at Noon". Thousands of dollars have been spent fighting for this headland in court cases, and still the New South Wales Government, the Coffs Harbour City Council, the Public Works Department and their band of hired consultants persevere trying to force this outfall down the throat of an unwilling public and an unwilling ocean.

In spite of obvious physical, social and economic hardships, the people of Emerald Beach and their supporters have vowed to fight on. They have taken on the bureaucratic and political giants of New South Wales. They have not flinched in their resolve. Support them. Join them in their fight. Put an end to ocean outfalls, at Look-At-Me-Now Headland, everywhere and forever.

from: Cr Alph Williams  
for Coalition Against Ocean  
Outfalls Inc and  
Friends of Look-At-Me-Now





## State Forests Hypocrisy

**T**he height of hypocrisy is how the President of the North Coast Environment Council described the proposal of State Forests to encourage the rescue of Glossy Black Cockatoos and similar hollow-nesting birds.

Mr Parkhouse was commenting on a proposal broadcast on the ABC Mid North Coast radio on May 10 whereby State Forests are arranging for people to collect eggs or chicks which may be found and forward them for rearing and breeding in Canberra.

The greatest threat to the survival of these birds, such as the Glossy Black

Cockatoo, Sooty and Powerful Owls, Yellow tailed Black Cockatoo is the destruction of their habitat, including their nesting sites.

The recent determination of the Kempsey-Wauchope management areas EIS has targeted much of the remaining old growth forest for logging. It is the large and old trees found in such forests that provide the nesting hollows for many of the endangered species that are unique to Australia.

But it is not only the old growth forest being destroyed, we have seen areas of Casuarina forest, the main food trees of the Glossy Black Cockatoo, bulldozed by

State Forests to be replaced by Blackbutt.

Because the forests have been overcut for years, and in the case of parts of the Kempsey and Urunga management Areas, still being overcut, the State Forests are finding it more and more difficult to find the timber that their political masters have promised. Therefore forests are being cut far more intensively than in the early days, and wildlife is suffering.

State Forests need to do two things to help wildlife:

- refrain from cutting old growth forests - particularly in the better soil areas
- improve the extent and cover of their wildlife corridors and filter strips in the regrowth forests.

These measures will lead to some loss of timber resources but these losses are going to occur later at the present rate of cutting.

from: Terry Parkhouse, NCEC Inc

## Coastal Inquiry Finished

**A**t their annual conference held in Coffs Harbour 18-21 March 1994, representatives of environment centres and conservation councils from across Australia agreed to the following response to the Final Report of the Resource Assessment Commission's Coastal Enquiry.

The central thrust of the RAC's Final Report, with its emphasis on developing a National Coastal Action Plan, was endorsed. However, the Report's recommendations were thought to not go far enough in addressing the urgency or detail required for much improved national coastal zone management.

The views of the Special Commissioner Bob Graham, expressed in his Minority Report, in calling for commitment to changing attitudes, behaviours and practices and recommending tangible actions and identifying clear management tasks are supported. Mr Graham's recognition that coastal resources don't need management, but rather people's use of coastal resources do, is welcomed.

The Final Report of the RAC Coastal Inquiry, and its 69 recommendations, cannot be allowed to languish on the shelf unaddressed. RAC's report cannot become the 29th coastal inquiry report which has failed to effect change in coastal management!

Concern was expressed that national action on integrated coastal zone management must go further than the preparation of an agreed set of objectives. The use of enforceable standards is preferred to the suggested reliance on "guidelines".

**[A copy of the RAC's report is available in the NVCA office. Further comment on the Report is welcomed. Write to: Diane Tarte National Coordinator, Marine & Coastal Community Network, PO Box 49, Moorooka, Qld 4105.]**

From: WAVES Vol 1 No2 April 1994  
The Newsheet of the Marine & Coastal Community Network

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# GREEN NEWS

## Convenient Definitions

The State Forests' definition of rainforest is at odds with accepted modern scientific definitions and refuses to acknowledge the rainforest status of areas which contain rainforest understorey but which are dominated in the upper canopy by emergent Brush Box or Eucalypts.

from: *Big Scrub Newsletter* No.58

## US Government Recycles Paper

Under orders from President Clinton, all US Federal agencies will be using recycled paper where possible. This is despite intense lobbying from the American paper industry; understandably, as the US government is the single largest paper purchaser in the world.

from: *Chain Reaction* No.70

## Reverse Photocopying

A machine which converts photocopies back to blank paper is being developed by the Japanese company Ricoh. The "recycle copier" works on most documents produced by photocopiers, laser printers and plain paper fax machines, allowing paper to be reused up to ten times without the need for recycling.

from: *New Scientist* 7/1908

## Fire Damage Report

January Bushfires' damage report for State Forests:

On the north coast of NSW from Kempsey to the border, there were 46 fires in State Forests, affecting an area of 102,000 hectares.

On the central coast from Kempsey to Sydney, there were 33 fires, about 24,000 hectares burnt, including 100 ha of eucalypt plantation near Morisset.

Overall, only 14% of State Forests were affected by crown fires (ie, fires that are hot enough to reach up to the tops of the trees).

from: *Aust Environment Review*, Vol 9, No 1 Jan '94

## Hemp for Paper

Environmentally, it is important to liberate one of the earth's friendliest plants - namely Hemp. Hemp is superlative in making paper of all grades and in maintaining land care. Hemp does not need weedicides, pesticides, or heavy fertilising whilst its deep roots restore soil structure and aeration and it is ideal for rotation cropping. Hemp fibre is longer and stronger than cotton fibre, can be made from almost the entire plant and makes a wide range of cloth from the most durable to the finest. Who wouldn't want to find an alternative to the cotton industry rather than watch the slow destruction of the Murray-Darling river basin?

from: *Help End Marijuana Prohibition*, PO Box 177, Nimbin

## Fluoride Poisons

Fluoridation is randomised uncontrolled mass medication that violates the civil liberties of every man, woman and child. Its sole purpose is not to treat the water, but to treat the consumer for "tooth disease", a term coined by dentists to describe tooth decay....

A number of studies have shown a significant increase in hip fracture rates in elderly people living in artificially fluoridated areas as opposed to non-fluoridated areas. 1992 estimates indicate a 30% increase in hip fractures in women over 65 and a 40% increase in men over 70. Fractures, however, are not the only adverse effect of fluoride on bones. A study from Iowa and Seattle, published on 1991, showed a significant increase in osteosarcoma (a very malignant bone tumour) in young males under 20 living in fluoridated areas. This was confirmed in 1992 when a study from New Jersey showed similar results - that young white males under 20 have an 8-fold greater chance of developing osteosarcoma if they live in a fluoridated area.

from: *Australian Fluoridation News* Jan-Feb '94

## Plastic into Oil

The Nippon Steel corporation of Japan has built a factory to recycle plastic into oil. The plant has a capacity of 5,000 tonnes per annum and its conversion rate to oil is 90%. It is currently handling polyethylene, polystyrene and polypropylene.

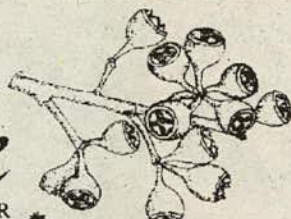
from: *The Daily Planet* March '94

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# NEVER MIND THE OZONE LAYER

## *business is business*

**T**he Montreal Protocol was an international treaty designed to protect the ozone layer, right? Well not quite. What the treaty is really about is managing trade.

When it was mooted, the chemical companies said we would love to stop destroying the ozone layer - especially if we can make more profits on safer chemicals - but you are going to have to make rules that ensure we all phase out the old chemicals at the same time, and none of us gets an unfair advantage. The treaty was designed to create a "level playing field" which makes it profitable for companies not to destroy a vital bit of the planet.

Does this sound cynical? Perhaps - but it's the only way to get results in an age of free trade. Economists regard the



ozone layer as an "externality" because it lies outside the cash economy. If you want to save it - or rainforest or coral reefs or even the global climate - you have to make saving it worthwhile on corporate balance sheets. The dates for phasing out ozone-destroying chemicals weren't chosen because they were the best for the ozone layer, but to allow manufacturers time to change their chemicals while making a profit.

Alas, now that the deadline is very near, the temptation to make a bit more than their fair share is proving too much

for some companies. Some traders supply a healthy black market for desperate CFC users who haven't bought their new technology yet. Unfortunately shenanigans are to be expected. Free markets will always be full of wily dealers ready to pull a fast one. European and UN negotiators need to have a lot more savvy when they are trying to make the market work to save the planet. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) countries are trying to write environmental externalities - and the ones involving labour rights - into the global bible of free trade. Given how hard that has been for the relatively simple task of replacing a few ozone-destroying chemicals, we hope they will set up a strict and independent watchdog. After all, business is business.

*from: New Scientist 19/3/94*

# Plantation Timber



## ...must try harder

**A**ustralia may be the home of the gum tree but the world has stolen the lead in growing them for money, a CSIRO scientist has warned.

Dr Ken Eldridge, of the CSIRO's division of Forestry, said there were as many as 5 million hectares of eucalypt plantations in Brazil, South Africa, Spain and Portugal.

But Australia had only 125,000 hectares of plantations. In 1992-93, Australia imported \$2.4 billion worth of timber products, "most of which we could grow here if we invested a great deal more in plantations".

Dr Eldridge said Austral-

ians should be encouraged to create plantations, warning that although we had 40 million hectares of eucalypt forests, environmental pressures would make harvest harder.

One of four scientists who have written a new technical book, "Eucalypt Domestication and Breeding", Dr Eldridge said many countries short of wood had discovered that Australia's eucalypts could be grown relatively quickly to make everything from fine paper to quality hardwood furniture.

"South Africa found the fastest growing trees and the most profitable for plantations are eucalypts," he said. It used

the timber to prop up its goldmines and to sell as sawn timber.

"Brazil grows the flooded gums, from northern NSW for pulp and paper and for charcoal to burn instead of coal in its steel industry."

Spain and Portugal grew Tasmanian blue gums and river red gums to produce quality pulp and paper.

Eucalypt plantations produced about 20 tonnes of timber per hectare per year, but a forest produced just one tonne per hectare per year. There is a catch. Establishing a eucalyptus plantation on existing land costs \$1,000 to \$2,000 a hectare. It takes 10 to 15 years

to harvest wood for pulp, and much longer for sawn timber. However, Australia still leads the world in eucalypts research.

"We are the world custodians of the gene pool," Dr Eldridge said. "A big debate is coming on whether we should share it as freely as we have in the past. A lot of people are cranky, saying we are doing the wrong thing in exporting it. To some extent, the bird has flown the coop, because they have got a lot of our genetic resources in the past 200 years."

*by Richard Macey, Science Writer, Sydney Morning Herald. 29/3/94*



# GATT...*nothing democratic here*

**T**he conclusion of the Uruguay Round of the GATT negotiations by the United States and the European Community (now the European Union), with 115 countries as bystanders, is seen by some as the end of the world, while others hail it as the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. On a less apocalyptic note, it marks the end of a substantial, and once promising, historical era. It is, in fact, nothing more than the logical conclusion to four centuries of mercantilism and its successor, capitalism: a bookmark at the end of four centuries of European Civilisation.

This is not to say that the whole process was inevitable. The Canadian-US trade deal, the North American trade deal, and now the GATT have all been willfully created and executed by a handful of people making deliberate choices.

Of course that is not the way these deals have been presented to the rest of us, but that is another matter. We are not talking about democracy here, we are talking about trade and about how the business of capital is carried on.

It all began -- or this episode in world history at least -- with the breakdown of European feudalism. The Renaissance and the Reformation elevated reason above faith and encouraged the questioning of arbitrary authority. The rise of commerce and the gradual accumulations of wealth, in mobile capital rather than in land, eroded the foundations of the feudal order. As my university text book put it:

"By the dawn of the modern age, a new type of wealth was already in existence, while a new technique for handling it and a new attitude toward its use were in the making. This new wealth was money wealth. Men [sic] discovered the potentialities of capital and the truth of the axiom that money can make money. Business men were beginning to think in terms of investment of capital and to aim at the accumulation of profit rather than at the acquisition of a mere living.

"The rulers of Europe soon realised the extent to which their own power, or that of the state, depended on the prosperity of the capitalist business men, and with that realisation they began consciously to promote the interests of capital. If the rulers of the European states realised their need of a prosperous business class, the capitalist merchants and manufacturers realised as clearly their



“ neither the  
transnational  
structures... nor the  
way they have  
been created are  
democratic ”

need of a strong state government. (A Survey of European Civilisation, 1952)

The GATT agreement has brought to an end this interdependency of capital and the nation state that has characterised European Civilisation for more than three centuries. In the new GATT Age, the nation state becomes the out-and-out servant of capital: housekeeper and police. The corporation itself has already undergone the metamorphosis from national to transnational. (It never was multinational).

## DEMOCRACY

Obviously neither the transnational structures now being cemented into place nor the way they have been created are democratic. But historically, as now, the noble philosophy of democracy has been used to obscure what is really going on, breaking down the authority structures of princes and prelates, and now parlia-

ments, to replace them with the authority of The Market.

It has always been one of the primary responsibilities of the modern state to control trade in the public interest. Now that capital has become transnational, even the functions that had been the prerogative of national, elected governments are rapidly being taken over by the transnational structures of economic governance, such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) that is to replace the GATT secretariat.

In addition, the indirectly democratic organisations of the United Nations (democratic in that membership in them is at least open to every member government of the U.N.) are being marginalised. Their functions are being taken over by bodies that represent special interests, like the OECD which is composed only of western industrial states; or by the new WTO itself, as in the case of the World Intellectual Property Organisation.

According to the Financial Times of London (16/12/93): The result is an agreement encompassing all forms of intellectual property that would strengthen and harmonise standards of protection and provide for effective enforcement at national and international level. Among its main features are: Protection of patents for 20 years, regardless of place of invention or whether products are imported or produced locally. The main permitted exclusions would relate to animal and plant inventions and biotechnological process for their production -- thus the agreement does not require patents on life. There will also be strict limits on compulsory licensing of patented products. All these rules will have to be implemented in national legislation.

The rigid protection of intellectual property rights (which, as state-granted monopoly rights, are the antithesis of free trade) stands in stark contrast to the total lack of any mention of environmental protection or standards. While many of the parties to the GATT agreement signed on to the Rio Declaration on the environment, including Canada, any commitment to deal with crucial environmental issues must now take second place, at least, to the more businesslike issues of global trade.

The new world order that was originally conceived at Bretton Woods in 1944 has now been achieved, and the WTO will



take its long awaited place alongside the World Bank and the IMF at the helm of global capital. The United Nations will be demoted to a custodial function cleaning up the garbage, looking after the environment and worrying about the kids and public health.

## AGRICULTURE

Just as the GATT agreement to which Canada has consented, marginalises the United Nations, it eliminates those domestic structures designed to serve interests other than simply those of capital, such as the supply management marketing boards governing Canadian dairy and poultry production and distribution.

These marketing boards were established in the 1960s and early 70s to provide some protection and stability for farmers in the face of the rising power of the large corporations they had to deal with in the marketplace. The supply management system was founded on the recognition that thousands of individual farmers producing highly perishable commodities are virtually powerless when faced with a handful of powerful buyers who can shop elsewhere or simply wait until the eggs are about to rot. In this respect the farmers whose labour is embedded in the commodities they produce are similar to industrial workers, and supply management marketing boards to unions.

Unfortunately, the supply management marketing boards, which were created, as we have seen, to protect farmers from the ravages of the corporate sector, have themselves become part of the larger problem of industrial agriculture.

In their commitment to the ideology of Progress and, to quote an old DuPont slogan, "better living through chemistry" -- in this case, fertilisers, agro-toxins, and drugs -- the marketing boards have continually speeded up the technology treadmill. They reward those who follow the high-tech, capital-intensive production model while penalising, and driving out, those who choose to farm in a less intensive, more ecological fashion. They have done this by basing their cost-of-production pricing formulas on the average costs of the top 75-80% of their producers. Those who fall in the bottom 20% or so by design are then systematically pushed out, or at least down.

It is the ideology of industrial agriculture which underlies this approach. Moreover, as a result of its blind obedience to the dictates of Science and Technology and its eager embrace of the dogma



“ In the new GATT Age, the Nation State becomes the out-and-out servant of capital: housekeeper and police ”

of economic efficiency, industrial agriculture as a whole has become the tool of transnational capital rather than the provisioner of ecologically produced healthy food.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the absence of debate about Bovine Growth Hormone (BGH), sometimes referred to as BST, or bovine somatotropin. Six years ago the Ontario Milk Marketing Board, for example, could have encouraged its members to debate the implications and desirability of this type of technology rather than deliberately attempting to keep its members in ignorance and making available only the drug pushers propaganda. The OMMB, or any other similar jurisdiction, could have funded a substantial study on the social, ecological and economic consequences of adopting every new technology created by the corporate sector in its search for profits. Instead, the OMMB has chosen to spend \$200,000 and to hire a new staff member to work on new products, packaging and marketing. Even today a Milk Marketing Board could seize the advantage in the marketplace, in the face of the GATT agreement, by declaring that they will not allow BGH to be used in Ontario whether it is licensed or not. This would gain the marketing board

instant public support as well as being their best defence against cheap milk being imported from the U.S.

It is not just BGH, however. The technology treadmill has afflicted all production agriculture with its fetish of Progress and Productivity. BGH is just the latest technology that the farmers have been told they have to adopt or risk being left behind in the competition. But the competition for what? The 'early adopters' of new technology, as they are called, may get ahead temporarily, but as soon as the technology is widely adopted, there is no longer an advantage, and everyone is simply running faster to stay in the same place.

This is hardly what I would call 'efficiency', since neither farm incomes nor the nutritional quality of the food have gone up as a result of being more 'efficient'. Nor has increasingly 'efficient' commodity production resulted in everyone being adequately fed. On the contrary, there are more malnourished and hungry people than ever.

A diversified dairy farm that grows its own feed can be ecologically sound and may even be certified organic, but the milk it produces has to be sold, under the rules of the marketing board, as generic





## GATT (cont)

milk. The same thing holds for poultry, unless you have few enough birds, whether for meat or eggs, to remain outside of marketing board jurisdiction.

## SOLUTIONS?

If the interests of the state and of capital have become inseparable, if not indistinguishable, then what can we do if we feel we are not being well served by their arrangements such as global trade deals?

The answer to this is, in a sense, very simple: obey the golden rule of proximity. Produce for your community or bio-region, and eat within that area. Buy from someone you know, and produce for people you know. Deal with those you can see and speak to. This is the logic of farmers' markets and community shared agriculture (CSA). Start a local bakery, or even a local dairy. The more diversification and localisation there are, the less capital and the state can touch you. In other words, build alternatives to the models offered by the dominant culture and its structures of wealth and power.

If what we are experiencing today around the world is the completion of an historical process initiated some four centuries ago, then we should not expect to halt it at this point because we don't like one aspect of it by appealing to it in the name of reason or justice. When the train is loaded and underway at full speed, jumping up and standing on the tracks is not likely to be a successful act of survival. Or perhaps it would be more appropriate to suggest that stopping your car in the middle of the expressway at rush hour and getting out to protest at the speed and direction of the traffic is probably not as good a choice as heading for the next off-ramp.

If we take the off-ramp, we might stop on the edge of the road along a corn field. The field is clean and neat right to the road verge. We observe the hybrid model, rooted in the same culture of domination as the expressway and free trade. But if we carry on, and turn down the concession road, we might find another field, this one smaller and less uniform, sheltered by trees and containing a mixture of grains. It is the open-pollinated model, on friendly, non-adversarial terms with its habitat.

Hybridisation is an ancient technique to select and breed different lines of the same plant in order to develop certain desirable characteristics. In the mid-1930s, corn breeders started crossbreeding from

● Buy from  
someone you  
know,  
●  
Produce for  
people you know.,  
●  
Deal with those  
you can see and  
speak to. ●

lines that were deliberately inbred in order to develop very specific traits. Because they were the result of crossing inbred lines, the resulting hybrid plants (F1 crosses) produced seeds that would not breed true, that is, reproduce reliably. Consequently, instead of being able to select the most desirable seeds from her crop for planting the next year, the farmer had to go back to the supplier and buy seed for planting. The justification for hybridisation of this sort is the claim of heterosis, or hybrid vigour. Hybrid seed generally sells for about five times as much as open-pollinated seed, which is seed that will breed true and reproduce desired characteristics year after year depending on the farmers selection criteria. Open-pollinated seed also constantly undergoes genetic changes as it interacts with its specific growing conditions and environment.

In the hybrid model, nature is viewed as an adversary to be tamed, controlled, conquered. This requires violence at the very heart of the culture. The culture of hybrid seed defines its universe in competitive terms, so that any other living plant in the same field is viewed as an enemy to be wiped out. In fact, virtually every other organism is viewed as a competitor to be eliminated. It does not end there, however, for diversity itself is intolerable: every corn plant must be of uniform height, with the ears of corn on each plant at uniform heights and spacing and all maturing on exactly the same day. This is required by the industrial harvester. Being created by a culture that views Creation as an adversary, the crop is dependent on external supports, from irrigation to agro-toxins, and cannot even reproduce itself. The ultimate expression

of this constructed dependency is the farmer having to buy new seed next season. This is progress.

In contrast, the open-pollinated model depends on diversity for survival and lives in symbiotic relationship with a host of other plants and organisms. It may be regarded as less 'efficient' than the single-minded hybrid, but then it can afford to be because it is not dependent on a lot of costly life-supports. Consequently it is able to tolerate diverse growing conditions. It is more labour-intensive, but that means that the village is full of people rather than the machine shed being full of expensive imported machinery.

The open-pollinated seed is the foundation of an open-pollinated economy of self-reliance and abundance. The hybrid seed is the foundation of an economy of scarcity and competition. Being also the expression of a culture of domination, it is imperialistic, seeking to drive out open-pollinated seed and its culture.

Now we are faced with a choice: continue on Progress Expressway bordered with fields of hybrid crops, or take the off-ramp into the diversity of open-pollinated crops and cultures and self-reliance.

by Brewster Keen

From *The Ram's Horn* No. 111 Dec 1993 (via Pegasus Network)

## Fungus may destroy DDT

**R**esearchers from CSIRO Division of Soils, Adelaide, are investigating what affect flooding and soil characteristics have on the mobility of DDT and Arsenic. This research is supported by DIPMAC, the body managing old cattle tick dip sites because the information will assist in their site management.

Funding has been provided by the NSW Environment Protection Authority to assess cattle dip sites as well as other contaminated sites. Also, the NSW Agriculture Department is investigating the use of "white rot fungus" to clean up DDT contaminated soil at dip yards. This wood rotting fungus releases a chemical that breaks down the tough part of wood and has been shown to also break down DDT, but it is unknown whether the arsenic present in those soils will prevent fungus activity.

from: *DipNews* No3 Feb 1994



# NSW Government Condones Wetland Destruction

**N**SW has lost approximately 60% of its coastal wetlands since European settlement. In the past 8 years over 5300 hectares of land have systematically been removed from designated wetlands status.

State-Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) No. 14 is a legally binding document that was legislated to protect wetlands and although it does not prohibit activities in designated wetlands, it does require that proposals be submitted for assessment by the public and local and state governments. Failure to gain Council consent and concurrence from the Director of the Department of Planning before developing a designated wetland can be prosecuted in court.

However, the NSW Government has failed miserably to protect wetlands, to the contrary, the Minister for Planning has actively approved major tourist developments, golfcourses, draining and mitigation works and heavy mineral mining in wetlands which have been proposed on the north coast of NSW. The Minister has even been known to invite a developer to submit a new application to a development that had been rejected by two inquiries!

Whatever the scheme, approval is forthcoming and if restrictions like Regional or Local Environmental Plans get in the way, then there are always ways of amending these problems.



Since 1990 there have been 53 Environmental Impact Statements prepared (list held) to destroy or effect wetlands on the NE NSW coast, all have been granted consent and a large number of these were retrospective consents.

Wetlands are often degraded deliberately by illegal activities such as burning, clearing and filling, to a degree that the

values of the wetland are so compromised, that many of the original values and plant species are lost. Once this has happened there appears to be no impediment to the removal from the SEPP 14 policy and rezoning usually follows.


There are numerous examples where Councils or government departments have requested the perpetrators to comply with the law or create rehabilitation programmes, but have failed to achieve any action - a few examples follow:

- extensive works in wetland 385, Nambucca, no action.
- draining of wetland 494, Hastings, no action.
- clearing of wetland 436, Kempsey, no action.
- clearing and burning of wetland 631a, Great Lakes, no action.

It is imperative that a concerted effort by the environment movement, and public interest groups apply themselves to stopping the destruction of our coastal (and inland) wetlands.

**PLEASE WRITE** immediately to your local members of Parliament, the Premier and Minister for Environment and the Dept of Water Resources, demanding that the proposed State Wetlands Policy - (now being prepared by NSW Dept of Water Resources) must be a legally binding document that will be capable of protecting the wetlands of NSW.

from: *Wetland Red Alert*,  
NCEC 26 4 94



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# Feminism, Environment & Population Control

by Claudette Begin

A woman's right to choose when, if and how to have children is at the core of the women's movement. And yet increasingly, as concern grows about the scarcity of resources and the poverty here and in Third World countries, population control as an argument is winning ground within the feminist movement.

Population control is advanced as a solution to both environmental disaster and the poverty and famine of the poor. Increasingly the problem of feeding the starving masses of Bangladesh or Somalia seems beyond the resources of even rich countries. Poor people in the Third World, and welfare recipients and immigrants within the US, are seen as somehow stupid since they keep having so many babies whom they cannot feed.

In developed countries, decline in the population growth rate followed an increase in the standard of living of most of the population. Population control advocates, however, promote programs in the Third World that only teach or force population control, without addressing the economic factor. This has not worked effectively.

In fact, reduction of population growth has been most remarkable in countries where not only the standard of living for all but especially the status of women have first been substantially improved. Walden Bello of Food First cites the example of Kerala in *Population and the Environment*:

"The Indian state of Kerala ... reduced its fertility rate by 40 per cent between 1960 and 1985 ... 'Fair price' shops have kept the cost of rice and other essentials like kerosene within the reach of the poor ... Expenditures on public health are high and health facilities ... serve both the rural and urban populations

At the same time, greater education for women has apparently led to greater control over reproduction. The literacy rate for females in Kerala is two-and-a-half times the all-India average."

Women in poorer countries have more children because that's their job. The family must provide all the social services

for its members through to old age. To break that cycle, women must be freed from these social burdens.

The typical picture painted by advocates of population control is of an environment literally eaten up and chopped down by the masses of people in the Third World. But is this picture based on reality? As Bello also points out, "Thailand provides a good illustration of how, in many Third World countries, it is not population growth but the impact of Northern overconsumption that is the principal engine of ecological degradation"

Despite its fertility rates being reduced by half since the 1960s, "irreversible erosion is setting in the country's rural Northeast, where close to half of the region's 53 million acres are severely eroded, partly because of the effects of unrestrained deforestation provoked by Japanese demand"

Is it their supposedly out-of-control populations that keep the underdeveloped countries from improving their standard of living? Consider some very relevant and startling facts:

- 80% of the current consumption of the Earth's resources is accounted for by the 20% of the world's population that resides in the north! Hence the sense of plenty in the north and scarcity in the south.
- The average Swiss pours 2000 times more toxic waste into the environment than the average Sahelian farmer.



- If levels of consumption and waste do not change, the 57 million Northerners who will be born in the 1990s will pollute the Earth more than the extra 911 million Southerners. The slower population growth in the northern countries is more than outweighed by their overconsumption of resources.

- Africa is far less populated than Europe. Countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands are among the most populated per square mile.

Once we have become aware of this basic information and it really sinks in, limiting the population growth in poor countries loses its lustre as a solution. Whether population control advocates like it or not, balancing the North's use of resources becomes the essential factor, for both population and the environment.

How can we accomplish this? Will



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depending on 'the new world order' do it? Hardly. We can expect more of the same spoiling of the world's environment, extraction of resources and exporting our wastes, actually inflicting poverty and exporting ecological horrors to other countries.

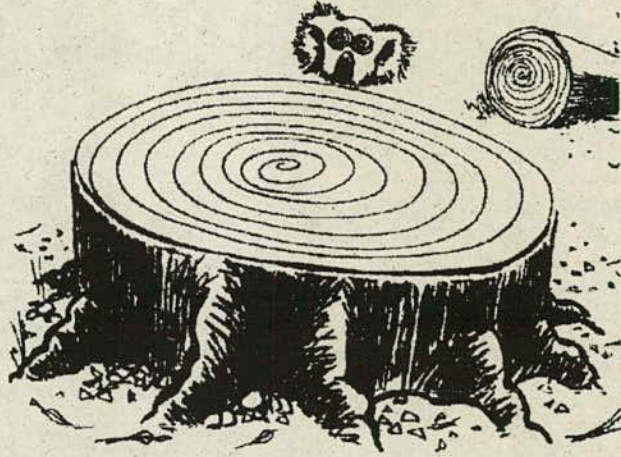
The World Bank and the IMF set out an agenda for Third World countries. That agenda includes development of resources for those outside their borders, payment of exorbitant interest on loans to already rich Northern banks, austerity programs for the population and an end to self-sufficient and sustainable systems of production, since these don't bring in enough cash - a totally anti-environmental and anti-people agenda. Countries are forced into selling their resources cheaply while their people's standard of living plummets and starvation results.

As feminists with an environmental consciousness, we clearly must reject the simplistic solution of population control. Our job is to put the spotlight on the corporations that are raping the environment and impoverishing most of the world. We should join forces with the progressive part of the environmental movement and fight for the people of the world to control and share the resources equably, managing our ecosystem in an environmentally safe way.

We should support struggles for self-determination, people fighting to take control of their own lives and countries. These struggles and their victories enhance the lives of our sisters and provide them the basis for empowerment. They will be free to make choices beneficial to the entire human race and the environment.

Population control is not the answer. Empowering women is a better solution.  
*from: Greenleft News, Oct 12, 1993*  
*(via the Pegasus Computer Network)*

# KOALA USA Campaign



**A**ustralians for Animals, together with the USA's Fund for Animals, and virtually all the major American conservation groups, have lodged a petition with the US Government in Washington DC to get koalas listed as endangered.

The petition is made under the provisions of the US Endangered Species Act, and will take advantage of a clause in the Act which allows foreign species to be listed as endangered or threatened. The kangaroo has long been on their endangered list.

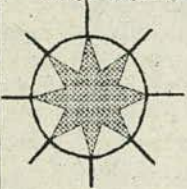
Spokesperson for AFA, Sue Arnold said: "It will be several months before we know if the petition is successful. It will mean that a great deal of international pressure will be brought to bear on the Australian authorities. The state governments and the federal government will no longer be able to pretend that everything is just fine as far as the koala and our forests are concerned."

"We could only deal with one species, so we chose the koala. If we are successful with this petition, then it will pave the way for other groups to take similar steps," said Sue Arnold. "There is no doubt that the koala is on its way out. The bushfires in NSW wiped out precious colonies on the Central Coast leaving only the populations on the mid and far north coast viable. And every one of these populations is at risk either from the timber industry or developers."

The petition is over 100,000 words and will be turned into a resource book to be sold for funds to continue AFA's work. "AFA has already been advised that the koala submission provides the best and most current information on the issue which can be found anywhere. AFA is delighted that we have completed a most worthwhile and critically important undertaking and we are praying for the success of this petition," said Ms Arnold. *Source: Australians For Animals, April Bulletin 1994*

## SOLARWOOD

The Alternative to Rainforest

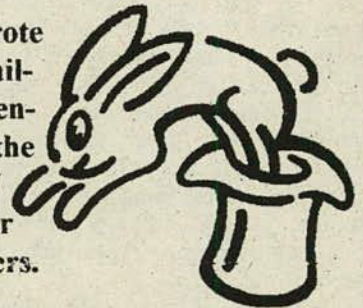


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## Legal Aid Win

Good news for all those who wrote letters protesting about the unavailability of Legal Aid for environmental law matters. As of March 24, the Legal Aid Commission of NSW resolved to reinstate legal aid for public interest environment matters.



TYPE



# managing technology



**T**he concept of sustainable development has succeeded in gaining widespread support among the world's decision-makers and power-brokers because it aims to protect the environment without the need for radical change. Industry groups and business associations have produced numerous documents and policy statements on sustainable development outlining how the environment can be protected in a context of economic growth, freed-up markets and industrial self-regulation. But the support of environmentalists for the concept of sustainable development has been less universal. Some argue that more fundamental institutional and social changes need to take place, including a shift towards steady-state economies.

**vested interests behind public transport have negligible power compared to the influential road and car lobbies**

There is a question of whether technological change can reduce the impact of economic development sufficiently to ensure that other actions will not be necessary. The other actions include changes in population growth and consumption levels, two items which appear to have slipped from the agenda since nations were unable to come to any agreement on them at the Earth Summit in Rio, June 1992. If environmental impact is a function of numbers of people (population), resource use per person (consumption), and environmental impact per unit of resource used (technology), this leaves technology as the remaining variable available for manipulation.

Can technology give us environmental protection and economic development?

Can it ensure equity between and within generations so that everyone - now and in the future, our far neighbours and our great-grandchildren - can enjoy the standard of living we do? Such an accomplishment would require more than just a few adjustments to existing technological systems. It would require a radically different technology. Yet if technology is socially shaped, can we achieve radical technological change without equally radical social change taking place?

Attempts to invent and design more environmentally sound technology are not new. The Appropriate Technology Movement, which blossomed in the 1970s, attempted to do just this, and today involves an extensive network of groups, its own literature and numerous demonstrated technological innovations. Despite this, it has failed to influence the pattern of technology choice exercised by mainstream society.

Having the technological means to reduce pollution and to protect the environment does not mean it will automatically be used. According to Patrick McCully, writing in "The Ecologist": "The reason that the USA is the most polluting nation in the world has little to do with a lack of energy efficient technologies or renewable methods of producing electricity: it has a lot to do with the size of the country's oil, coal and automobile industries, and the influence they have on the political establishment. In the UK, the public transport system is expensive, unreliable and infrequent, not

because the government cannot afford to improve it or does not know how, but because the vested interests behind public transport have negligible power compared to the influential road and car lobbies."

Given that there are many environmentally beneficial technologies already designed and available for implementation, there is a need to look beyond the designer of technology to other people in society who affect decisions about technological choice, including businesses, governments and consumers.

At the Earth Summit, the governments of 170 nations signed Agenda 21, an action plan for sustainable development which said: "the policies and operations of business and industry, including transnational corporations, can play a

**the technology ..was often readily available; it had not been implemented because company engineers had other priorities**

major role in reducing impacts on resource use and the environment". Many firms are not implementing environmentally beneficial technologies, despite their availability. Moreover, efforts to clean up the environment have tended to concentrate on technologies that are added to existing production processes to control and reduce pollution, rather than changes to the production processes themselves. The alternative to these end-of-pipe technologies is to adopt new "clean" technologies that alter production processes, inputs to the process, and products themselves, so that they are more environmentally benign.

A series of media reports and books, have given many people the impression that the environment can be saved if



individuals are responsible in their shopping habits and buy only environmentally sound products. The idea is that firms wanting to take advantage of this new demand for green products will change their production processes and redesign their products to meet the demand. Environmentally sound goods will become profitable. The tendency for consumers to prefer environmentally sound products has already become evident. Market research shows that in Australia and other high-income countries, a significant proportion of consumers (though by no means the majority) make an effort to buy green products such as pump packs, unbleached papers and items made of recycled paper. A survey found that about 28% would pay more for safe aerosols and biodegradable plastic products, and 35% would pay more for natural foods that were produced without pesticides (Clemenger/BBDO 1990).

Green imagery is used to sell products and caring for the environment has become a marketing strategy. However, the power of consumers to influence technologies is limited. Often their information is confined to advertising claims that might be misleading or insubstantial. Greenpeace campaigners claim that Chevron, a multinational oil company, spends about five times as much publicising its environmental actions as it does on the actions themselves. Nor does the consumer face clear-cut choices. Green consumers tend to prefer natural fibres to synthetics, but the cotton industry and large-scale sheep grazing cause significant environmental damage. The debates over whether plastic packaging is better or worse than paper packaging for the environment, or whether milk bottles are better than cartons, are sure to confuse consumers.

Judgement about whether a product is ecologically sustainable is extremely complex, requiring long-term assessment from manufacture to disposal and taking into consideration how long the product will last, whether it can be reused or recycled, whether it is biodegradable, how much energy it consumes and how efficiently it uses resources. Other matters that need to be considered include the way the product will be used, transported, distributed, marketed and packaged.

According to Greenpeace, the products available to consumers do not necessarily reflect consumer demand. If it is cheaper for a company not to recycle bottles, then it will not. They say car companies push "big cars with high compression, high-pollution engines on the

## “Chevron, a multinational oil company, spends about five times as much publicising its environmental actions as it does on the actions themselves”

American public” because they get the biggest profit from them, not because the public demands them.

While consumers may influence packaging and some ingredients of products, they are usually unable to influence more hidden aspects of a product, such as how it is manufactured or whether it's distributed by road or rail. Governments are in a much better position than consumers to influence such decisions, through a variety of mechanisms. For instance, they can encourage the development and implementation of clean technologies through the use of laws and regulations which cannot be met without technological change, or through the use of economic instruments meant to provide a financial incentive for technological change.

A study of 164 innovations in Europe and Japan found that regulations (mainly



environmental and safety) not only promoted innovation, but were a factor in the success of these innovations, particularly in the chemical and automobile industries (Royston, 1982). This was because the technology for meeting the regulations was often readily available; it had not been implemented because company engineers had other priorities. Government regulations had forced a reordering of

priorities, allowing technological changes to take place fairly quickly.

However, regulation seldom leads to the development of radically different technologies, but rather ones closely related to those already being used. Laws and regulations tend to lead to end-of-pipe technologies because they are usually too weak and are aimed at quick remedies. Economic instruments have also tended to be too weak to achieve any real technological change. Because of the reluctance of governments to act against the interests of business, legislation and economic instruments are seldom tough enough to foster technological change of the type required for ecological sustainability. That would require a long-term view and a preparedness to bear short-term economic costs while industry readjusts. It is hard to see governments being willing to do this in today's socio-economic climate in Australia. David Dickson, a well-known writer on technology and former editor of *New Scientist*, has pointed out that an alternative technology can "only be successfully applied on a large scale once an alternative form of society" has been created.

It would appear that as long as sustainable development is restricted to minimal low-cost adjustments that do not require value changes, institutional changes, or any sort of radical cultural adjustment, the environment will continue to be degraded. The goal of sustainable development is viewed by some economists and business groups as being merely to preserve the environment to the extent that is necessary for the maintenance of the economic system. For them, future generations can be compensated for the loss of environmental resources by increased wealth and human capital with which to meet their needs.

Such a scenario would see Australians living in an increasingly artificial world, with areas of unspoiled wilderness increasingly distant, crowded and less diverse. They would be spending more of their money and time obtaining those things that are often taken for granted today - clean air, clean water, clean food, and places to walk, play and swim. Not everyone would be able to afford these things, and certainly not every nation would be able to enjoy the living standards of Australians.

But, of course, this scenario presupposes that our policy-makers will be able to make the finely balanced decisions that ensure the preservation of those functions of ecosystems that are necessary for human survival and economic activities -





## managing technology



continued.

that our societies are knowledgeable enough to know just how much carbon dioxide the atmosphere can take, how much pollution the air and water around us can take without triggering a sudden and irreversible collapse. Any scientist will tell you that we don't know these things.

Even if Australians put their faith in the ability of human ingenuity, in the form of technology, to be able to preserve their lifestyles and ensure an ever increasing level of consumption for everyone, technological optimism does not obviate the need for fundamental social change and a shift in priorities.

Environmentally sound technologies are unlikely to emerge from a sustainable development approach that seeks to incorporate the environment as part of the economic system and therefore to subordinate it to economic needs. There is a real need to value the environment apart from and above its input to our economic well-being, to see that environmental quality is irreplaceable. Only then will the short-term financial costs of the move towards sustainability be willingly borne by all parties.

by Sharon Beder  
from 21C Summer 1993/94



# BAMBOO

## a potential paper source

**B**yron Bay based agricultural consultant and environmental activist, Richard Staples, has recently published a report entitled "Bamboo as a Pulp Source for Eastern Australia".

Research into bamboo was prompted by the discovery that India makes about two-thirds of its paper from bamboo. Bamboo has long, thin, flexible fibres - ideal for making papers of high strength and useful for blending with post-consumer waste paper to maintain strength when making recycled paper.

The report has a scenario of a papermaking industry based on bamboo grown as part of a diverse pattern of land use. The area suitable for bamboo is essentially the well-watered coastal strip of eastern Australia - which also supports a high and rapidly growing population. For this reason a lot of attention has been paid in the report to the relationship between bamboo and the local landscape and its inhabitants.

Since a clump of bamboo is ready for harvest at between 5 to 8 years the timeframe is far less daunting than for a

timber plantation which can take a minimum of 20 to 40 years to mature. The report suggests that 6 or 7 times as much cellulose material can be obtained per hectare from a bamboo planting as compared to a coniferous or broad-leaved forest.

It appears that a bamboo-based paper industry could provide one alternative to woodchipping our native forests for paper feedstock.

Available in the NVCA

library.

By courtesy of The Big Scrub Newsletter No 58

## QUICK POISON, SLOW POISON Pesticide Risk in the Lucky Country

by Kate Short

**T**he exposé of the impacts of a variety of poisons on ill-informed users and a mostly unsuspecting public will both shock and inform. For the first time, concern about termites and potential crop losses from insect attack is weighed against the trauma suffered by the increasing number of people exposed to pesticides through food, air and water contamination.

After six years of research Kate Short brings her exhaustive study of the topic into public view. She presents the facts about pesticide risk in a clear and concise manner, all the time backing up her case by reference to a variety of reports and studies, including crucial European and US research. The author argues that the risk to exports from poison residues could upset the livelihood of many in the rural sector.

By letting those affected speak, through a variety of case studies, QUICK POISON, SLOW POISON presents the human face of the pesticide risk equation and reveals what has often been a litany of corporate deceit and government inaction.

A long-time activist, Dr Kate Short helped establish the PESTICIDE MONITOR at the Total Environment centre in Sydney. she currently writes on a range of environmental issues and is an advocate for people affected by pesticides.

Published by  
ENVIROBOOK 272 pages  
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# New Old Growth Study



The first scientific study to identify old growth forest in NSW has been released by the North East Forest Alliance. Ground breaking scientific methodology has been used to map and identify the values of old growth forests in the Wild Cattle Creek area which covers 20,000 hectares near Dorrigo.

"It is critical that all areas of old growth forest in Wild Cattle Creek be protected until a regional assessment has been completed. If the NPWS and State Forests continue to allow logging in the areas identified they will be blatantly breaching state law and their National Forest Policy obligations to protect old growth forest," said Megan Edwards, project coordinator.

The study was undertaken by NEFA in consultation with scientific experts, including the

Victorian Old Growth Study team who developed the methodology. It was motivated by the chronic lack of information about the distribution of old growth forests in NSW.

"Both National Parks and Wildlife and State Forests were invited to take part in the study, but refused. Instead they continue to make forest management decisions with a totally inadequate information base.

"The release of this study by NEFA demonstrates that yet again the state government is lagging behind community expectations and scientific requirements in its approach to forest management. The NSW government is still refusing to accept the millions of dollars being offered by the Federal Government to complete old growth forest assessments. Instead the Natural Resources Audit Council is embarking on a secretive assessment from which

public interest groups are excluded.

"The NSW Government has shown the greatest contempt for its commitments under the National Forest Policy. Instead of protecting old growth areas they are logging them. Until the Federal Government pulls NSW into line, the National Forest Policy is not worth the paper it's written on", said Ms Edwards.

Entitled: "A Study to Identify Old Growth Forest at Wild Cattle Creek An Assessment For Demonstration Purposes April 1994", a copy is available from the Nambucca Valley Conservation Association upon request. NVCA applauds Megan Edwards and her team for all their hard work and excellent results and thinks that this study will become the benchmark for future old growth forest assessments.

A regional old growth forest assessment is essential in order to know how much old growth of different forest types remains in north-east NSW. Such an assessment will be invaluable when designing a comprehensive reserve system, as recommended by the National Forest Policy and the Resource Assessment commission. This assessment and subsequent reserve system will aid the timber industry by identifying the current significance which could be available for timber harvesting. This will effectively provide the resource security that is currently demanded.

#### Sources:

Megan Edwards, Project Coordinator,  
c/ Clarence Environment Centre, PO Box 1073, Grafton, 2460.  
Phil Margolis, NVCA.

## THE GREAT ESCARPMENT WALK Adventurers Wanted!

If you'd like to experience the magic of walking through some of Australia's remnant pockets of Old Growth Forests and Wilderness areas, celebrating the beauty of life and the spirit of the land whilst supporting Native Title then come and join the Great Escarpment Walk.

The aim of the walk is to highlight the urgent need to protect the Great Escarpment and draw attention to its value for water catchment, flora and fauna preservation, cultural heritage and recreation. The walk will travel through threatened old-growth forest and wilderness areas currently under consideration for World Heritage nomination of the

Central Great Escarpment. The Central Great Escarpment stretches from the Border Ranges to the Barrington Tops and covers areas of breathtaking beauty with rich biodiversity and high conservation values.

People will have the option of joining the walk for as little as one day or more. Vegetarian meals will be provided, but walkers must bring their own tent, sleeping bag and personal gear which on the supported sections of the walk will be transported from camp to camp by support vehicles. On unsupported sections walkers will have to carry their own camping gear, food will also have to be carried. There will be a walking fee of \$20

per day for supported sections, which covers the cost of food, support crew vehicles, and other costs involved in establishing daily camps, OR \$10 per day for unsupported sections covering food only. Your registration fee covers our organisational costs: Individual and family \$20 or Special Interest Groups \$30.

Celebrate the wilderness... do something to protect the ancient escarpment... learn and support Aboriginal reconciliation and justice...  
Contact Regional Coordinators, Cath Eaglesham or Anton Ingarfield, Homeland Community, PO Thora, 2454. Ph 066 558514.

#### ITINERARY

June 1 - 25

BUNDJALUNG: Washpool/ Gibraltar Range

June 26 - July 16

GUNBAINGERI: Guy Fawkes/Mt Hyland

July 17 - August 13

THUNGUTTI: Macleay Gorges/ Werrikimbe

August 14 - August 27

BIRAPAI: Mt Seaview/ Mummel Gulf

August 28 - September 17

BARRINGTON: Mt Royal Range/ Barrington Tops





**This Month's Cover - Marine Life.**

As a young teenager I spent many happy hours wandering around the beaches & rock pools near Cronulla where I lived. I would look up my Dad's tide chart to check for extra low tides - you could explore pools that were not usually accessible, finding sea urchins, starfish, live molluscs, sponges, sea squirts & anemones, nudibranchs (sort of exotic sea slugs - some extremely colourful) even the blue ringed octopus - the main subject of this month's cover.

At that time it's poisonous character was not widely known, but when I picked one up I was very careful how I handled it - I'd been bitten by a baby octopus a couple of years before & had a healthy regard for all octopus. The blue spots intensified in colour while I was handling it.

I also spent a lot of time snorkelling, both off the rocks near home, and in the quieter waters of the nearby bays where the marine life was different, but still very interesting. It saddens me to see how badly our oceans are being polluted - world powers regard them as a dumping ground for all kinds of toxic garbage - & on a more local level, councils are still opting for ocean outfalls to solve human waste disposal problems, when there are better ways of dealing with this valuable resource. Emerald Beach needs friends to support their campaign to STOP the ocean outfall. See inside this issue for details of how you can help.

Julie.


# Environs

the north coast  
environment news  
magazine

Environs is published every other month on a voluntary basis to bring together reports from a large number of environmental organisations. Many groups are affiliated with Environs, including the Bellingen Environment Centre, and the Nambucca Valley Conservation Association.

Editorial contributions are welcomed. They should include the authors name and phone number and should be sent by mail to: Environs, PO Box 123, Bowraville 2449, or by fax to (065) 647 808, or by email to: peg.environs. Subscriptions are \$12 for 6 issues. Advertisements may be lodged with Julie Mozsny by phoning (065) 695 360. Editorial for Environs is by Carol Margolis and the Environs team. Layout and typesetting is by Mike Holland. Cover artwork is by Julie Mozsny.

PRINTED BY: DALE PRINT - MACKSVILLE - 682 296



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