

# The Ecologist

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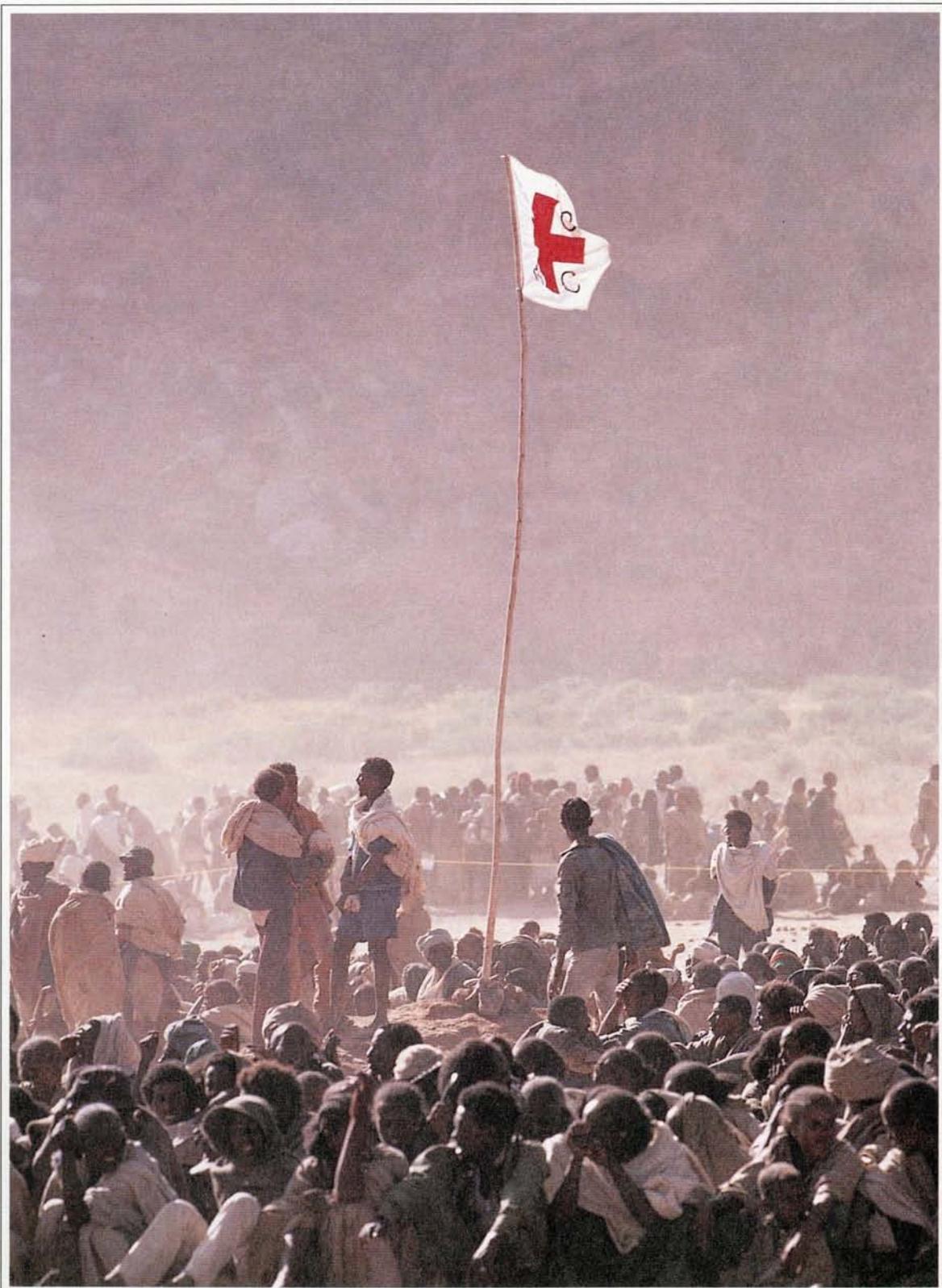
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After the 1985 famine in Ethiopia, a massive food-for-work programme was established to support environmental rehabilitation. The famine was held to have been caused by environmental degradation, in turn attributed to population increase, poverty and poor farming practices. This narrative and its supporting data not only misrepresented the nature of the degradation, but also ignored Ethiopia's physical environment, social arrangements, the effects of earlier agrarian reforms and civil strife. Unsurprisingly, the programme did not achieve its stated aims.

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Over the past decade, several new pulp mills producing for the global paper market have set up in the Canadian province of Alberta. One of these mills was given government approval against the recommendation of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Its four years of operation have had manifold consequences for the environment and local democracy, many of which were not foreseen by the EIA. Communities facing various development projects could benefit from the experience of those who have opposed this mill.

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The massive effort to develop the Third World after the Second World War was motivated by the need to create an expanding market for the West's goods and services and to gain a source of cheap labour and raw materials for its industries — which was also the goal of colonialism from the 1870s onwards. There is thus a striking continuity between the colonial era and the era of development.

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**Cover Photo:** Red Cross food distribution, Mekkele refugee camp, Ethiopia. (Heine Pedersen/Still Pictures).  
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# Micro Credit

## Band-aid or Wound?

A global campaign to ensure that 100 million of the world's poorest families receive credit for self-employment by the year 2005 was launched at a three-day Microcredit Summit in Washington, DC, in February this year. Organised by RESULTS Educational Fund, a US-based non-governmental organization (NGO), the summit was supported by an array of financial and development institutions including the World Bank, International Fund for Agriculture and Development, and transnational banking institutions like Citicorp, Chase Manhattan and American Express.

Suddenly, it appears that everyone is jumping on the microcredit bandwagon. The reasons for this are as varied as the players. Microcredit has the support of many women's advocates who view expansion of microcredit as a potential bell-wether for women's empowerment as poor women gain greater access to financial resources. Multilateral development banks, meanwhile, in an era of budget cuts and disbursement reductions, are embracing microcredit as an opportunity for them to move away from the capital-intensive "development as charity" model to the potentially more profitable "development as business." Indeed the financial community as a whole seems to have woken up to the fact that there is a great deal of money to be made in microlending, an area in which interest rates can range from 20 to 100 per cent. Microcredit is often portrayed as a "win-win" option, whereby investors profit handsomely while the poor gain access to resources that allow them to help themselves. The reality, however, is not always so rosy.

In India, a number of self-help groups (SHGs) were created in the 1980s to provide credit facilities to the poor, especially women, in both urban and rural areas. These SHGs stumbled upon a surprising finding: by targeting women, repayment rates came in well over 95 per cent, higher than most traditional banks. Impressed by the repayment rates, institutions such as the National Bank for Rural Development (NABARD) and Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) began increasing their lending to SHGs in India. However, the lending rates of SHGs to borrowers were not cheap. For example, the banks lent to NGOs at 9 per cent; NGOs were then allowed to lend on to SHGs at a rate up to 15 per cent; and SHGs, in turn, were allowed to charge up to 30 per cent to individual borrowers. Although such high-interest credit is touted as a vehicle for poverty alleviation wherein the poor use the funds to undertake commercial ventures, the loans are largely used by poor people to meet their daily consumption needs.

Nevertheless, similar microcredit operations are now being established in India, with liberal grants from international donor agencies such as the Ford Foundation, UNDP and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. This seed money, in turn, will attract additional capital from the corporate sector and financial institutions. Loans are to be provided to borrowers through a network of subsidiary lending institutions. In order to assure investors a good rate of economic return, these corporate entities will lend at market rates. Critics charge that such microcredit, rather than alleviating poverty, will simply keep the poor on the treadmill of debt or bypass them altogether in favour of those who can afford credit at market rates.

In 1995, the World Bank launched its own microlending arm, the Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest (CGAP) with the goal of "systematically increasing resources in microfinance." World Bank President James Wolfensohn announced this programme at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, claiming that CGAP would improve access to microcredit for "the globe's poorest citizens, particularly women."

To evaluate whether CGAP and other microlending programmes will achieve the goals they set for themselves, it is important to distinguish between the two types of microlenders: those whose primary goal is empowerment of the poor and those whose primary goal is profit. The field is already crowded with microlenders of the latter variety whose exorbitant interest rates keep the poor trapped in a downward spiral of debt. What is desperately needed are more microlenders committed to the empowerment of the poor. The laudable successes of microcredit programmes like the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) of Ahmedabad in India was not won overnight, nor was it derived from a simple process of making small loans to the poor. Microlenders like SEWA combine low-interest microloans with labour advocacy on behalf of women employed in the informal sector and provision of healthcare, training and other services, thereby raising the wages, education and standard of living for the women it serves. Access to credit is only a small part of SEWA's success.

The World Bank's CGAP, by contrast, appears to be narrowly focused on microlending as an end in itself. And the means to that end, critics charge, may do more damage to "empowerment lenders" like SEWA than good.

A recent report produced by the Washington, DC-based Institute for Policy Studies found that 46 per cent of CGAP's expenditure in its first year of operation was spent on policy reforms which may benefit lenders but end up hurting poor borrowers, particularly women. For example, CGAP views microlending as unviable in the presence of usury laws — legislation which provide ceilings on interest rates. Thus, its first order of business at a \$500,000 conference in Mali was to get government officials to repeal their nation's usury laws. CGAP also calls on countries to privatize completely their microlending institutions, removing all subsidies for banks which service the poor. Such reforms would force banks such as the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, which relied on subsidies for 17 years before becoming financially viable, to shut down or charge much higher interest rates to reach self-sufficiency in a shorter time-span. CGAP also advocates stronger debt collection laws — specifically collateral laws — which would result in a safer environment for bankers but which could exclude the poorest, and poor women in particular, from access to small loans.

CGAP is arguably a small programme — its total budget approximates one-tenth of one per cent of overall World Bank lending. Yet if past performance is any guide, this small programme could prove to wield significant clout in defining the parameters and practices for microlenders in general.

In the current global economic climate, microcredit, by itself, as a poverty alleviation tool is analogous to giving someone a fishing pole, and telling them to go fish — in the

wake of a giant trawler whose net spans the horizon. Macroeconomic policies of liberalization and globalization have destroyed many formal sector jobs; drastic cuts in social sector spending under the rubric of World Bank-imposed structural adjustment programmes coupled with the absence of social safety nets has further aggravated poverty for the world's poorest. The only option for many poor is self-employment, which microcredit aims to foster. Yet the odds are stacked against the self-employed in the global marketplace. Consumer trends fluctuate nearly as wildly as the economy, which is becoming more prone to external factors as India opens its markets. Aggressive brand selling and marketing coupled with the strong financial clout of transnational corporations places the poor, especially poor women, at a particularly unfair advantage in the global marketplace.

In this context, microcredit, at best, can lead to micro-solutions. This is not to say that microcredit cannot play a

valuable role in poverty alleviation. But any developmental strategy will require far more than the "band-aid" of microcredit on the gaping wound of poverty and unemployment. As microlenders chasing the growing ranks of the poor multiply, a proper regulatory and supervisory framework under which these entities should function must be developed to ensure that intermediaries, corporate bodies and others involved in microcredit come under close public scrutiny. Otherwise, these new entities may simply lend legitimacy and greater financial clout to an exploitative form of organized money-lending.

*Kavaljit Singh and Daphne Wysham*

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# Environmental Racism

## The US Nuclear Industry and Native Americans

For decades, the United States has mined Native American lands for uranium and has tested nuclear weapons on them. Some 75 per cent of the country's uranium reserves lie under native lands — lands once considered so worthless that the authorities did not mind designating them as reservations — while all nuclear testing within the United States has been carried out on native lands. Children now play on radioactive waste from the mines simply left where it was piled up. Some of the waste has been used to build houses or schools. In many mining areas, the death rate among children is higher than among the miners. In New Mexico, Arizona and South Dakota, radiation from uranium mining tailings has contaminated water resources. The Shoshone have fought for decades to end nuclear testing on their land in the Nevada desert which has exposed them to levels of radiation many times higher than that generated by the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of the Second World War.

Now the authorities want to dump nuclear waste on native lands as well. Two proposals are currently being mooted: a high-level radioactive nuclear dump on Yucca Mountain in the lands of the Shoshone in Nevada; and a low-level radioactive waste dump in Ward Valley in the California Mojave desert, an area which is sacred for five native peoples, the Fort Mojave, Chemehuevi, Quechan, Cocopah and Colorado River Indians.

An estimated 30,000 tons of nuclear waste are in temporary storage in the US, either in underwater pools or in steel and concrete casks, at 109 nuclear reactors across the country. But these stores are nearly full. Some plants may well have to shut down within the next few years unless more storage space is found. There is no central facility in the US for handling, processing, storing or disposing of nuclear waste.

The nuclear industry is attempting to force the national government — specifically the Department of Energy — to take responsibility for nuclear waste, but the Department maintains it does not have the capacity to do so. It is, however, mandated to "provide" a central underground disposal site for the country's entire stock of high-level nuclear waste. The only candidate it has come up with is Yucca Mountain.

Millions of dollars have been spent studying the safety of burying nuclear waste at Yucca, the results of which are

anything but promising. Located in a volcanic area and potential earthquake zone, the proposed site is also near groundwater. Even though the site has not been approved as an underground nuclear waste dump, further studies have been commissioned and its opening has been postponed until the year 2010 at the earliest, several proposals currently going through the US Senate and Congress aim to send radioactive waste to Yucca Mountain from 1998 onwards. If approved, this waste would simply sit in the nuclear equivalent of a parking lot without adequate controls or equipment.

Besides the permanent site of Yucca Mountain, the Department of Energy has also suggested 21 temporary dump sites in the US for high-level waste, 18 of which are on native lands. Large sums of money have been offered to "persuade" the various tribes to accept these proposals; so far all but two nations, the Goshute and the Paiute-Shoshone, have refused. In neither of these two cases did the Tribal Council put the decision to the tribe as a whole. Probably for good reason: previously the Goshute rejected a proposed toxic waste incinerator on their lands and decided to start a recycling business instead, while, in a survey of the Paiute-Shoshone, tribal members opposed the nuclear dump by 4 to 1.

The government and nuclear industry are also hurrying to go ahead with the low-level radioactive waste dump in Ward Valley in the Californian Mojave desert. Despite misleading terminology, low-level radioactive waste contains the same ingredients as high-level waste; the half-life of some low-level waste is tens of thousands of years. The waste would be placed in steel drums inside sealed plastic or steel containers and then buried in shallow, unlined trenches.

The proposed dump is right above a major aquifer and about 30 kilometres from the Colorado River which flows through the valley on its way to Mexico. Scientists of the US Geological Survey warn that leaking radioactivity may end up in the river. Even the National Academy of Sciences' Board on Radioactive Management has recommended further safety studies. The river and its canals bring drinking water to over 20 million people in Los Angeles to the west and in Phoenix and Tucson to the south, as well as providing water for agriculture and cattle.

In Beatty, Nevada, an existing dump, similar in design to the proposed Ward Valley site and also in a desert, has

started to leak and contaminate groundwater, even though it is only 20 years old.

Ward Valley is in the midst of eight designated wilderness areas and is a protected area because it encompasses the few remaining habitats for the endangered desert tortoise. The Valley is also sacred to the five native peoples of the area. Their ancestors have walked there, their dead are buried there and their spirits still roam there. It is their church and graveyard. The Mojave believe they are guardians of the land, caretakers of the water and neighbours of the desert animals. If the Colorado River dies, the Mojave believe they will disappear as well. Together with the other native peoples of the area, the Mojave have organized protests and ceremonies in the area. They have set up a permanent camp on the proposed dump site where some of the Elders stay. Said Corbin Harney, a Shoshone Elder and healer:

"This nuclear power is always taken to native lands. First it is mined from there and now the native lands are turned to dump sites. They take our water, then they poison it hurting all the living things there. I don't really appreciate what the government is doing. They know it is dangerous but still they move nuclear waste through roads to seas. We, the people, should be out there at the

front. That's why we have asked the non-Indian people to stop the government. Not only here but everywhere: in England, Puerto Rico, Russia — we should really unite! We in Nevada have too much mining and chemicals that go to the watertable... In my part of the country, we saw that nuclear radiation was making our lives shorter. I've seen children born without legs: I've seen cats born with just two legs. I've seen a lot of humans die of diseases caused by radiation... Everybody has been polluting [this land] and everybody has to pitch in and make things better. If we continue to destroy things, then nobody will be able to survive at all. If we don't start working together to clean up the planet soon, there won't be anyone left to clean up our messes tomorrow. We have to unite to understand what nuclear energy does."

*Ulla Lehtinen*

**Ulla Lehtinen** is a social anthropologist at the Organization of the Fourth World — First Peoples, Finland.

For more information, contact Shundahai Network, 5007 Elmhurst St., Las Vegas, NV 89108, USA. Tel: +1 (702) 647 3095; E-mail <shundahai@radix.net> Website <http://www.macronet.org/macronet/shundahai/shutdown/html>

## Scientific Uncertainties & Technical Deficiencies Underground Burial of Nuclear Wastes

Nuclear power produces nuclear waste. Britain was one of the first countries to generate nuclear power and has one of the largest nuclear waste stockpiles in the world. In the 1970s, a Royal Commission headed by a Director of the British Atomic Energy Authority investigated the adequacy of the nuclear industry's plans to deal with this waste. The Commission found that virtually nothing had been prepared. On the Commission's recommendation, a disposal agency was established in 1982, the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive — Nirex. Against the Commission's advice, however, Nirex is not independent of the nuclear industry.

Deciding that burying the waste underground was the best option, Nirex set off around the country to find a burial site. One of the first places it chose was a disused anhydride mine beneath an ICI factory in Cleveland which ICI was willing to sell. The scheme had to be abandoned, however, because of extensive public opposition.

Nirex went on to choose a further four sites, but again faced substantial local opposition at each one. It abandoned all these sites in 1987 and settled on two places where the nuclear industry was already operating, Sellafield in the north-west of England, where plutonium is separated out from the spent fuel of nuclear reactors, and Dounreay in Scotland, home to the recently-abandoned plutonium-fuelled fast breeder reactor. At least here Nirex expected to find "a measure of public support".

### Simplified Science

In the face of steadfast public hostility, Nirex repeatedly argued that it was only "public perception" holding it up from burying nuclear waste safely. Science, it said, was on its side; the public needed only to understand this science to realise that their concerns over radioactive contamination were misplaced. Nirex published many scientific reports, but these referred to "migrating radionuclides" — instead of "leaks" — and "zones of enhanced conductivity" — rather

than "cracks" in the underground layers of rock. As Nirex chose not to produce readily understandable reports, it is in fact very difficult to piece together what their scientists are actually saying unless one pores over the detail, which I did for three years working for Friends of the Earth.

What I found in the scientific reports was very different to what I was told in Nirex's PR brochures. The science of nuclear waste disposal is not actually concerned with keeping the waste in place — the industry itself recognizes that this is impossible because, after burial of waste drums and subsequent corrosion, radioactivity will inevitably seep out and contaminate underground water. In fact, Nirex had to *add* a leakage system to the design of its dump to allow the gases produced within it to escape. Nirex's science therefore focuses on predicting how serious radioactive leaks would be and the extent of the problems they would create. If Nirex could demonstrate that the cancer risk generated by radioactive leaks from an underground waste dump was sufficiently low, then it expected to get the go-ahead to start burying wastes. Predicting this cancer risk is a highly complex process. An enormous number of factors affect the repository leakage rate — and the assumptions made about these alter the results of the risk calculations considerably.

### Trojan Horse

When Nirex first opted for Sellafield in 1989, it candidly admitted that it did not have enough solid data on which to base its calculations. Nevertheless, it confidently asserted that radioactive leaks would be carried out to the Irish Sea. It soon became clear to Nirex scientists, however, that this assumption was incorrect — instead of flowing sideways out to sea, groundwater contaminated by radioactivity would be carried upwards towards the overlying sandstone aquifer and would contaminate the public water supply. Nirex did not use these findings to guide a decision to move the dump elsewhere; instead it dug in its heels at Sellafield and refused

to release information either to the Royal Society review group that it had established to check its work or to the government body set up to review its science.

In 1994, Nirex applied to the local authorities, Cumbria County Council, for what it called a Rock Characterization Facility — an underground “laboratory” — on the edge of the Lake District national park, a few miles from the Sellafield complex which produces plutonium. This was where Nirex wanted to build its waste dump; indeed, the Facility’s proposed shafts were in exactly the same place that Nirex had chosen for the shafts of the dump itself. Thus although the stated purpose of the £200 million “laboratory” was to test whether the site would be suitable as a dump site, many observers believed that it would simply be the forerunner for the dump. (This “laboratory” was not the same as research facilities built overseas, in Canada or Sweden, for example, to investigate the possibility of burying nuclear waste underground.) The rapid timescale allotted by Nirex in which to build the laboratory would be insufficient for both adequate measurements to be taken of possible leakage mechanisms and for the measurements to be analysed. Furthermore, such laboratories should be kept well apart from any planned dump site because of the damage that experiments might cause. Finally, although the stated justification for building the “laboratory” was to provide data for the government’s pollution agency, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Pollution, (HMIP), Nirex would not allow HMIP access to its plans.

Cumbria County Council rejected Nirex’s application for the laboratory in December 1994. Nirex appealed the decision, and in February 1995, the Secretary of State for the Environment, John Gummer, announced that the appeal would be heard at a Public Planning Inquiry starting in September of that year. Friends of the Earth felt that it was essential for the scientific case against Nirex’s plans to be presented at the Inquiry. For instance, although Nirex claimed that the “laboratory” would provide key data on how leaks from a repository might affect the water system, the excavations to build the laboratory would actually destroy this water system, the most important means of measuring the safety or otherwise of underground burial of wastes.

I spent months asking geologists to present scientific evidence at the Inquiry that Nirex’s “laboratory” would destroy rather than generate the information needed to predict the dump’s cancer risk. The majority agreed with our concerns, but were unwilling to jeopardize potential funding in the future from Nirex for their work. Finally, seven international experts agreed to act as witnesses, including an adviser to the European Community, a member of the British Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee and a

Nirex contractor. At the Public Inquiry, they argued that Nirex needed to carry out at least 10 years’ more work before it could possibly proceed with construction.

During the exhausting six-month Inquiry, it became clear that Nirex’s case — that the problems it faced in constructing the dump would be solved by the underground “laboratory” — had fallen apart. Nirex had simply not carried out the essential groundwork to give its claims credibility. This failure affected every area of its proposal, ranging from the choice of cement and the blasting method to chemical assumptions and the choice of Sellafield itself.

Nirex appeared confident, however. While still waiting for a decision from the Public Inquiry, it appointed contractors to start digging the shafts (pending government approval) at the beginning of September 1997.

## Nirex’s Struggle

Meanwhile, in January 1997, a memorandum written by Nirex’s director for science, John Holmes, to the company’s science manager on 10 December 1996 was leaked to Cumbria County Council and Friends of the Earth. It showed that Nirex was in deep trouble. Despite having spent £200 million on site investigations at Sellafield, it could still not pull together credible numbers. Holmes maintained that Nirex could not proceed with its plans until it had 10 to 100 times more data. Concerned in particular about the permeability of the highly-fractured rock at the proposed site and its impact on the radioactivity leakage rate, Holmes wrote that “we may struggle to make a case for the site”.

Holmes outlined three options: carry out more “site characterization” before going ahead (which would mean spending hundreds of millions pounds on more work); adopt “a different approach to modelling” (which simply means doing the risk calculations in a different way); or accept that Sellafield is “inherently not characterizable to the requisite level” (which would mean abandoning the site).

On 17 March 1997, Gummer announced that the Inspector at the Public Inquiry had rejected Nirex’s proposal for an underground “laboratory”, a decision he concurred with, not only because the scheme was unacceptable for the Lake District national park but, crucially, because of concerns “about the scientific uncertainties and technical deficiencies in the proposals presented by Nirex”.

This decision is tremendously important. Not only is it the first time in its history that the nuclear industry has lost a planning appeal in Britain. It also gives the lie to assertions made continuously by the industry that the problems it faces are not scientific but a matter of “public perception”. The public is right to mistrust the claims of the nuclear industry — the industry does not know how to deal with the long-term problem of nuclear wastes.

When Nirex was set up, waste disposal was thought to be cheap and simple; now it is realised that safe waste management will cost tens of billions of pounds and presents technical challenges which have not yet been met, despite decades of effort and public spending.

The technology for long-term solutions to the problem of radioactive waste does not exist. Until it does, there is no option but to continue holding such waste in storage above ground whilst research on credible long-term strategies is carried out. Alongside this, segregated funds must be set up so that future generations have the money to deal with the problem we will hand on to them. Finally, society must call a halt to nuclear waste production.

*Rachel Western*

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# On the Front Lines But Struggling for Voice

## Women in the Rubber Tappers' Defence of the Amazon Forest

by

Constance E. Campbell

in collaboration with The Women's Group of Xapuri, Acre, Brazil

*Prevalent images of the rubber tappers' movement in western Brazil, which gained renown under the leadership of Chico Mendes, are of men. Yet women also tap rubber, gather Brazil nuts, defend the forest and are members of the rural workers' union and elected leaders. Despite their various contributions and activities, however, women have tended to remain in the background of economic and political arenas, almost invisible to environmentalists, researchers and even the movement itself. Many women are now working for women's more active political and economic participation in the rubber tappers' movement and the recently-established extractive reserves.*

In Brazil's westernmost state of Acre, the municipality of Xapuri is home to the nationally and internationally-recognized movement of rubber tappers. These Amazonian rainforest-dwelling extractive producers have defended their livelihoods since the 1970s (under the leadership of Chico Mendes until his assassination in 1988) from cattle ranching and other development initiatives and have successfully lobbied for the establishment of extractive reserves — areas in which people recognized by the state as "traditional" are guaranteed usufruct rights on state-protected land.<sup>1</sup>

The most popular images of the rubber tappers' movement in the press and international environmental circles tend to be either of a solitary man leaving home before daybreak to walk the forest trails to tap rubber trees (*Hevea brasiliensis*) and gather latex from them, or of the Xapuri union office, the base of the national rubber tappers' organization created by Mendes and other leaders, or of an *empate* (stand-off), a forest demonstration in which rubber tappers face ranchers' hired hands and armed police to prevent clearing of the forest.

Only in the last of these images is it possible to spot women easily, standing on the front lines between the chainsaws and the forest (see Box, pp.50-51). But women also tap rubber, gather Brazil nuts, are members of the rubber tappers' union and are elected leaders, teachers, church organizers and rural health agents, as well as being responsible for a myriad of domestic activities ranging from childcare to fence building. But because women have tended to remain in the background of the rubber tappers' movement, particularly in economic and political spheres, the important and varied roles they have played have largely gone unnoticed by the movement and even by the women themselves. Yet they are slowly gaining a stronger voice in their homes, the union, and in national and international gatherings.<sup>2</sup>

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### Extractive Reserves and the Movement in Xapuri

The rubber tappers' movement in Xapuri and the establishment of extractive reserves from the late 1980s onwards grew in response to the Brazilian government's development policy of the 1970s and 1980s for the Amazon. Through tax write-offs and reduced-interest financing, the expansion of capital-intensive agricultural enterprises, particularly cattle ranches, was promoted. To clear large tracts of forest for these enterprises, the ranchers' gunmen and chainsaws began to drive rubber tapper families from the *seringais*, the rubber estates. In the state of Acre, an estimated 10,000 rubber tappers and their families fled to Bolivia, while others took up residence on the periphery of Acre's capital, Rio Branco. At the same time, the trans-Amazonian highway, the BR-364, was being paved through the neighbouring state of Rondonia on its way to Acre, causing widespread deforestation and social conflict.<sup>3</sup>

There was little organized resistance initially from the rubber tappers to the ranchers' forest clearing and expulsions, nor any entities or leaders to whom the *seringueiros* could turn for help. One of the first forms of social organization in the *seringal* in the 1970s was the church groups or base communities of the Catholic Church (Comunidades Eclesiasiais de Base — CEBs)<sup>4</sup> which denounced the ranchers' violence and encouraged the rubber tappers to think about their land rights. The CEBs provided an organizational stepping stone towards unionization; the rubber tappers formed a rural workers' union in Xapuri (Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Rurais — STR) in 1977.

### First Steps At Organizing

The many church groups (CEBs) in the Xapuri rubber holdings have been an important catalyst in initiating and sustaining women's social interaction in the *seringais*, particularly since women in the forest typically lead a fairly isolated life on a family's 300-500 hectare holding and have infrequent contact

# Mulher Seringueira

During the rubber boom of the late 1800s through the 1920s, women were scarce in the *seringal*. Those controlling the latex extraction industry preferred to recruit single men from northeastern Brazil as labourers. Few *seringueiros* were allowed to bring their wives and families with them,<sup>1</sup> not least because women's presence could undermine the control the "bosses" (the merchants who controlled the marketing chain) exerted over the rubber tappers — women's labour in subsistence agriculture and healthcare would decrease the rubber tappers' purchases of the bosses' dry goods and medicines.<sup>2</sup>

When rubber tappers in more isolated regions such as Acre requested that their bosses supply them with women, large commercial trading houses in Belem and Manaus began sending women to the *seringal*. They were delivered in much the same way as dry goods and utensils — at inflated prices charged on the *seringueiro's* account in the boss's store. In one instance, the governor of the State of Amazonas ordered the Manaus police to round up 150 women from the city's brothels and cabarets. These women were then shipped to and distributed in the Acrean city of Cruzeiro do Sul.<sup>3</sup> One immigrant, who arrived in Amazonas in 1942, recalled how his uncle made his fortune by selling his five sisters to local men.<sup>4</sup>

During the rubber boom at the turn of this century, *seringueiros* were prohibited from cultivating their own crops, since this would take time away from rubber tapping and would decrease their purchases at the boss's store. When the price of rubber collapsed on the international market in 1910, bosses permitted their workers to prepare subsistence agricultural plots.<sup>5</sup> They also allowed rubber tappers to send back home for their wives and families or to create a family with women in the area. With



the presence of women and child labour, household production diversified to combine agricultural and extractive activities for subsistence and sale. Elderly *mulheres seringueiras* today say that it was fairly common for women to tap rubber in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>6</sup>

The division of labour in the extractive reserves has not changed dramatically since then, although divisions of labour within households do vary. Typically men and older boys walk the forest trails to gather latex, while all household members gather Brazil nuts in the forest and share agriculture. Men care for the larger animals while women are responsible for chickens and pigs. Women do most of the cooking, cleaning, childcare, water collecting, food processing and other domestic tasks.

In accounting for the difficulties most women face when they participate in activities outside of the home, both men and women in the *seringal* cite the *nordestino* influence — many

*seringueiros* who came to the Amazon during its successive rubber booms were from the northeast of Brazil where the male head of household is deemed to be the family representative in political, social and economic affairs. Women are publicly recognized as household heads only in the case of widowhood. If the husband is ill or prefers not to be active in social functions, the wife may represent the family.

By and large, the family's marketable products (rubber and Brazil nuts) are controlled by the men and cash income passes through the men's hands before being distributed to other household members. Significant numbers of women and children, however, extract and process latex. In Acre, over 64 per cent of the women interviewed had cut and collected rubber at some point in their lives while 78 per cent reported having regularly collected latex tapped by a male household member.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, women's work is devalued because the majority of their tasks, whether in the agricultural fields or in the house, have no market value.

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with neighbours who live an average of one hour's walk away. They also provide one of the first formal opportunities for women's leadership as community leaders; many union leaders, both women and men, started off as CEB monitors, trained to facilitate weekly bible study meetings.<sup>5</sup>

From its outset, however, the union was regarded as a social and political space for men. Some 90 per cent of the first 455 members to sign up were men. Of the 41 rural women who joined as

founding members, close to 80 per cent were already accepted in their communities as de jure or de facto heads of household.<sup>6</sup> For instance, Cecilia, a CEB monitor, tapped rubber while her sick husband stayed close to home; as she had assumed administrative, marketing and social duties for the household, she was the de facto head of household and became the only union member from her family. The union and its members saw no need for more than one person per household to sign up; the head, usually the man, could

speak for everyone. Men in general regarded their wife being a union member as a threat to their head-of-household status (both public and private).

In addition, the majority of women in the reserves believe that because they are illiterate they cannot think or contribute to formal social organizations. Most of them could identify readily with 54-year-old Zelinda, mother of six children aged between 5 and 21. In 1991, I asked her husband, Francisco, if he was a member of the union. "Yes, I am" he responded. "I joined the day the union was founded." I asked the same question of Zelinda. "No, I'm not in the union", she replied. "I don't know how to read or write. I don't know how to think."

The number of women who participated in union meetings held in the *seringal* was low. Many union delegates did not permit their wives to go to meetings because they did not consider it an appropriate place for women. Rosa pointed out in 1994 that "At first, they [the men] didn't want women to go: it was really difficult for a woman to go to a meeting". Those women who did attend tended to gather in the kitchen or listen in from the corridor without actually participating.

The few women like Cecilia who were CEB leaders, heads of household or union members had the space and authority to bring other women slowly into the movement. As Rosa said:

"It wasn't until Cecilia joined and then she started explaining to us what the union was. A few women participated in the meetings and some of them had good ideas and gave their opinions. Then Cecilia was elected [by her community] to be union delegate and it was then that the men decided that women could participate in the meetings."

When the first president of the Xapuri union stepped down in 1981, Sebastiana, also a CEB monitor and one of the few young single women union members, was nominated to fill out the rest of his term. She remembers that her candidacy and election:

"had an incredible impact at the time. Many people were against our slate of candidates because it had a woman on it. But . . . we were able to overcome the feeling of inferiority that people had about me."

## Claiming Space for Women

With a few exceptions, however, women's main involvement in the early years of the Xapuri rubber tappers' movement was as union members (although not actively participating in meetings or discussions), domestic caretakers (staying in the organization's kitchen during meetings or taking care of the home so that the men were free to participate in community activities) or as peacemakers (mediating in potentially violent situations in attempts to avoid escalation of the tension; see Box, pp.50-51) — all fairly typical roles for rural women in rural unions.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, however, Brazil "witnessed the emergence and development of what is arguably the largest, most diverse, most radical and most successful women's movement in Latin America".<sup>7</sup> Women across the country began to fight for their own space in local and national union organizations.<sup>8</sup> One of the Xapuri movement's leaders recalled that in the late 1980s:

"The first one to begin talking about women in the union was Chico [Mendes]. As President, he participated in several union meetings in other states and learned about their work with women. He started talking about women's role in the

union during the assemblies and other meetings [in Xapuri]. He was interested in the issue but didn't really know where to go with it."<sup>9</sup>

It was not until several women from Acre's capital, Rio Branco, began to hold women's meetings in the *seringais* that women began to be actively drawn into meetings and discussions about the movement. In 1994, one of the organizers recalled:

"In 1986-7 . . . we were the only women who went with the union delegates to the meetings [in the *seringal*]. People thought we were really strange because we stayed in the front room for the meeting while all the other women were in the corridor or back in the kitchen. Afterwards we'd go back into the kitchen and the women would ask us things — about the meeting, their problems, health and so on."<sup>10</sup>

In December 1987 at the first Municipal Meeting of Women in Xapuri, the women decided to create a women's group informally linked to the union:

"We went to talk to Chico [Mendes] about the importance of working with women and what our ideas were. I remember that he asked us, 'How can the women's movement help the union? I'd like to know'. For us, the question should have been vice versa — 'How will the union help the women's movement?'"<sup>11</sup>

One of the greatest challenges for the women's group was that Mendes did not want his own wife to participate. "Many times when I expressed my interest in joining the women's group or the union", recalls Ilzamar Mendes, "Chico was against it because he thought that I should be taking care of my duties as wife and mother, caring for the children, washing the clothes, and cooking the food."<sup>12</sup>

The women's group did slowly grow, however. It met every two months to reflect on the importance of women's participation in the struggle; their role in the union; the historical domination of women by men; and the value of women, their health and sexuality. The leaders of the women's group met several times in 1988 with Chico Mendes and other union leaders to discuss the feasibility of establishing a women's secretariat as part of the union's constituted structure.

The women's group was not, however, a priority for the union at this time. In a violent environment, the union was struggling with a myriad of complex issues including the extractive reserves, *empates*, scarce financial resources, increasing international attention and visits from foreign journalists, the day-to-day survival of its members and continued clearing of the forests. The women's group's demands for a stronger voice, its concerns about domestic violence, social pressure, illiteracy and women's low self-esteem, and its challenge to the status quo were regarded by many as issues that could wait until after the crisis of the extractive reserves was over. That crisis led to Chico Mendes's death in December 1988.

## Carrying the Struggle Forward

In a meeting shortly after Chico Mendes was killed, a member of the women's group, Graça, said, "Chico has died defending the union and our struggle. He strove to make the movement grow. The women can't let this fail". Another organizer recalls how "the women decided that, from then on, it wasn't just a movement for the men but that the women also had to carry the struggle forward."<sup>13</sup>

The Xapuri women persuaded the movement's leaders and

# Projeto Seringueiro

## Rubber Tapper Project

The defence of the forest is just one priority for the rubber tappers' movement in Xapuri. It also seeks to improve the lives of the forest-dwelling rubber tappers.

From 1981 onwards, the union worked together with advisers to build schools and clinics which were practically non-existent in the *seringais* (not least because the bosses did not want the rubber tappers to be able to read and calculate their monthly accounting sheets, which almost always showed a debt to the boss).<sup>1</sup> By 1988, there were 19 schools providing basic literacy and numeracy skills, and political consciousness-raising, key elements in strengthening householding marketing and stimulating more community action.

Women's participation in these

activities has paralleled that of their involvement in the union: there have been a few exceptional women leaders but most are effectively excluded.

In 1988, 32 per cent of the teachers were women. There were few adult women in the classroom, even though 59 per cent of the women surveyed in the *seringal* that year were illiterate and the project's main goal was to increase adult literacy. Women who wanted to study found it almost impossible to do so because of their childcare responsibilities, distance from the schools and the class schedule which was designed to accommodate the male rubber tapper's daily routine.

In addition, many women felt that they had no need to learn to read and write because their husbands marketed all their produce and dealt with whatever documents the family needed.

They were adamant, however, that they would secure schooling for their children. The educational experience of Maria, an elected member of the union council, parallels that of many women and men in the *seringal*:

"As a little girl I studied only until the second grade. My dad took me out of school because I couldn't study because I had to cut rubber . . . Then I got married and I was stuck. I wanted to study, but my husband wouldn't let me and then we had kids right away."

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members that they had no desire to divide the *seringueiros'* movement, as some of them thought. Union delegates agreed to have members of the women's group accompany them to union meetings in their respective areas. An organizer recalled in 1989:

"It was approved in the union's general assembly without any dissenting votes. The women could go together with the delegates. Up until now, it's been very difficult to hold a meeting [in the reserves] just with women. Whenever there's a meeting of the cooperative or the [Church's] base community, we can always get a few minutes to talk about women, women's situation, the role of women in the union and so on, but there isn't space for a meeting just about women out there . . . The men are very jealous. They question us, 'What is this?' It's something strange for them. That's why I think this work with the women will have to go very slowly. The women know we have to go slowly to win them [the men] over."<sup>14</sup>

In 1989, a women's secretariat was established as part of the union's Council, its formal structure. Yet the women from the reserves elected to the secretariat had little training or organizing capacity, few leadership skills or resources to sustain smaller, rural activities (such as holding fairs where women could sell artisanal goods, the proceeds of which went towards paying union dues). There was also a lack of support from the union leadership. Even though interest was high, it became difficult to maintain the women's group. Soon, there were no longer women's meetings out in the reserves, and the women's group came to a standstill for over two years during 1990-3. Several attempts were made during this time to reactivate the group by meeting with union leaders and with the women, but to little avail.

This experience reflects to a certain extent the difficulties that women and men face in attempting to increase and diversify women's participation in movements such as that of the rubber tappers, as outlined by academic researcher Elizabeth Jelin:

"The organization of the family and the sexual division of labour hinder women's public participation because of their responsibilities and the ideological burden of being female. It would seem, therefore, that women more frequently participate in protest movements at critical moments than in long-term, formal, institutionalized organizations that imply taking on responsibilities, dedicating time and effort to the organization and also — why not say it? — the opposition of men."<sup>15</sup>

### Women in the Movement Today

Even though the women's secretariat and the women's groups in the reserves were more or less inactive, the number of women becoming union members began to increase as younger women joined up. Whereas widows constituted 21 per cent of women members from 1977 to 1991, this percentage fell to five per cent between 1991 and 1994. In the same time frames, the percentage of single women rose from 25 per cent to 52 per cent of women's membership.

There are clear differences in priorities and concerns among the different generations of women in Xapuri. These differences parallel the two approaches observed by Jelin towards increased participation of women in social movements:

"Women can either enter the public domain by adopting masculine codes, behaving like men — demanding equality — or they can set out to transform this domain by incorporating the knowledge and experience of their own sex, an historically difficult task."<sup>16</sup>

The earlier generation of women in the Xapuri movement took the first approach: the widows and de facto women community leaders filled positions in the movement equal to those of men, such as church base community leader, union delegate, school teacher, union president or cooperative vice-president, without

# Women and Children Defend the Forest

The *empates* or forest demonstrations were the rubber tappers' non-violent means of preventing forest clearance and the eviction of rubber tapper families. Before his assassination, Chico Mendes recalled that the rubber tappers of Xapuri and the neighbouring municipality of Brasília carried out 45 *empates* between 1975 and 1988:

"These have led to about 400 arrests, forty cases of torture and some of our comrades have been assassinated, but our resistance has saved more than 1,200,000 hectares of forest. We've won fifteen and lost thirty of the *empates* but it was worth it."<sup>1</sup>

*Empates* were rapidly organized when a forest tract was threatened. Large numbers of rubber tappers and their families would gather at the site of a clearing and converse peacefully with the ranchers' workers in an attempt to persuade them to set aside their chainsaws. They often appealed to common class interests — both the rubber tappers and the ranchers' hired hands (mostly small farmers who had lost their land) depended on access to the forest for their livelihoods.

Chico Mendes emphasized that, "when we organize an *empate*, the main argument we use is that the law is being flouted by the landowners and our *empate* is only trying to make sure the law is respected".<sup>2</sup>

## Women's Participation

In the early 1980s, few if any women took part in the *empates*. Most stayed at home, not wishing to break traditional expectations of how they should behave. Those women who did join in were mainly female heads of households who had to prove themselves capable of participating in a male-dominated defence of the forest.

Cecilia, a teacher and elected union delegate for her community, recalls how one Sunday morning in 1989 during a CEB meeting, a union runner appeared with a message from union president Sebastiana saying, "We need you there at the *empate*." Cecilia left the meeting immediately without hesitation.

"I had to go because, earlier, when the community was deciding who should be the new union delegate, there was an old man who spoke up against my nomination. He told everyone that they better choose a man because when a man gets called, he'd go right away and wouldn't hide behind the tree stumps. So I had to go just to prove that old man wrong."

Cecilia took her 11-year-old daughter with her and used a jar of kerosene as a lamp to light their way through the forest. They arrived at the house of the *empate* at 1.30 in the morning. At daybreak, she prepared to go to the clearing site; her daughter insisted on going with her:

"We both got arrested that day along with everyone else. There were seven women and 112 men. They took us all into town. After an hour or so, they let us women go but they kept the men in jail. We left the jail and went looking for some food to take to the jail for them."

## On the Front Line

As ranchers began to use their connections with local law officials to bring armed police into the forest areas that they sought to clear, the rubber tappers' leaders decided to employ perceived "traditional" roles by putting women and children in large numbers on the front of the *empate* line, face-to-face with armed police, knowing that their presence would defuse the tension and potential for violence. They also used nationalism and motherhood in the

*empates* with women carrying their children, holding the Brazilian flag, or singing the national anthem in defence of their homeland and livelihood.

During an interview in 1986, Chico Mendes recalled the process that led to the decision to put women up front:

"At first our strategy was to place ourselves between the forest and the rancher's hired hands to force them to stop clearing. But the rancher ran to the police and then we had to decide how to confront them. We didn't have enough force to go armed and face them and, besides, our primary goal was to avoid conflict; to have a pacifist movement. So we called the women and children to go up front because we knew that the police would think twice before shooting them."<sup>3</sup>

One participant, Graca, recalled her experience of a series of three *empates* at a contested forest site in which women formed a visible and crucial front line:

"At the first *empate*, my husband went with the other men, and I stayed home to wait for him. We [women] didn't go because we didn't have any experience with what the *empates* were all about and we had that fear of contributing and going together with our *companheiros*. At the second one, we were right out in front. We said that we shouldn't let our *companheiros* go alone. We got a bunch of men, women and children together. There was a bunch of police with carbines all running toward us, to surround us and take our arms away but no one carried any guns. Our *empate* is just to collaborate by talking with them. It's peaceful. It's not to provoke anyone by shooting or that kind of thing. We want peace: what would you carry a gun for? We talked with the police and told them what we wanted, to stop the clearing. I was out in front holding the Brazilian flag."

paying particular attention to women's distinct needs and interests. In a certain sense, the women carried out their duties as if they were men. Older women tend to speak of social and political difficulties, such as not being allowed to leave the house, conduct market transactions, participate in meetings, or to have the opportunity to voice their interests.

The second generation of women is taking the more difficult route of working within the movement in an attempt to transform it by bringing in their unique histories and experiences as women. Having defended the forest, built schools, established

and maintained the base communities of the Catholic Church, and seen the establishment of the extractive reserves, this generation is increasingly aware of their rights and those of their daughters to access and control over the forest resources — rights that may conflict with the rights and interests of their husbands and sons.

By establishing a women's secretariat in the union, gaining votes in the cooperative, and electing women to leadership positions with the intent of addressing specific women's interests, women in the Xapuri movement today hope to create and

Daniela remembered the key role that women played at this time:

"There were lots of women there. They put us out front because the police were armed there. Sending women to the front was a way of asking for peace."

Gabriela recalled:

"If women hadn't participated, [the *empate*] would have been weak — we would have had only half the number of people there. Women have more of a calming influence . . . The police came running down the hill pointing their guns at us. It was us women and the children in the front — and the men all stayed behind us. I wasn't afraid. If one dies, we all die."

When the conflict moved into town for further demonstrations, two *mulheres seringueiras*, older women who had been vocal in representing their families and serving as CEB leaders, participated in the negotiations at the forestry office.

### Cachoeira Empate

The outcome of the a lengthy *empate* in 1988 in Cachoeira, an area which rancher Darli Alves had paid for, illustrates the effects of women's presence. During this *empate*, many women stayed at home taking care of the children, livestock and agricultural fields so that their husbands and sons could participate in the prolonged demonstration. Other women housed and fed over 200 rubber tappers at the *empate*, many of whom brought their families with them. One woman recalled that she watched as the main beam in her house sagged every night as the rubber tappers slung their hammocks from the rafters. Alba remembered:

"At first it was mostly men, but the *empate* lasted so long that it became a family affair. The people in charge of organizing the *empate* [Chico Mendes, other union leaders and two women from the movement] held a meeting out there and put it to a vote

what was the best way to go ahead once the police had arrived. They came up with the idea of putting women in front and put it to a vote. Everyone agreed. The objective of putting the women up front was to show that it was a peaceful thing."

Even though the rubber tappers always tried to be peaceful, the women were convinced that it would have been violent had they not participated in such a visible and effective manner. As Suely said, "They would've shot at us because they were there with their machine guns. It was then [when we started singing and Chico called some of the police to one side] that they decided to go into town and negotiate there."

In town, the *seringueiros* occupied the yard of the local Forest Service in an attempt to persuade local officials to address their protest against the forest clearing. Women did not participate in this occupation in such high numbers and the ranchers responded violently to the rubber tappers' demonstrations. A team of three men met with the police and federal officials during the negotiations. Ilzamar Mendes, Chico Mendes's wife, later said:

"The men were in the yard and some of them were laying down on the brick wall that runs between the office yard and the street. I went down there and brought the kids who were there over to the house to sleep. A little while later that night, they [Oloci and Darci Alves, two sons of the Alves family] drove by and shot at them."

Judging from earlier *empates*, it would be reasonable to assume that, had the *mulheres seringueiras* participated in the negotiations and occupation of the Forest Service office, the violent attack might not have occurred.

The shooting drew the attention of national officials and spurred the discussions which eventually led to the expropriation of the area from Alves and the declaration of Cachoeira as an extractive settlement. Although Alves was indemnified by the government, he

issued a death threat against Chico Mendes in retaliation for losing his rights to the Cachoeira area — a threat that was carried out on 22 December 1988.

### Still on the Front Line

The union in Xapuri still puts women on the front lines of the *empates*, although younger women are more actively involved in determining the course of action.

In 1994, for instance, the union became involved in defending a rubber tapper's forest holding. There was a heavy police presence at the site of the proposed clearing and legal proceedings to resolve the conflict were underway. The union president instructed a union member to go to the area and talk with the rubber tappers who had gathered there in an attempt to dissuade them from proceeding with forest demonstrations and confronting the police.

At meetings in the forest where they discussed whether to go ahead with the *empate* and face the police, Raimunda was one of those who put forward her ideas about what to do. Her non-confrontational approach, which was accepted, advocated waiting to hear from the lawyers involved in the case. Another plan would have placed the *seringueiros* in confrontation with armed federal police in direct violation of a judge's order to stay clear of the area while litigation was in process. Thus women's negotiation skills, in the few cases that they were called upon, as well as their physical presence at several key *empates* reduced the likelihood of violent confrontation.

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maintain a more gendered space for themselves and their daughters. This younger, perhaps less radical, generation of women seek to work within the household, the union and the cooperative and to incorporate their own interests and abilities effectively. They do have social and political demands, but their economic concerns are paramount (*see* Box, p.52).

The newer generation of women in the movement still faces basic challenges in its attempts to participate effectively in the movement's organizations. Maria, elected to the union's council together with three other women, recognizes that:

"The women on the council, they're mostly quiet. Because of the system of the husbands, that the women always trust that the men have to have their turn to speak. So many women are timid because of the custom with their husbands. I'm one of them. I go to the meetings. I understand what's going on but I don't say much because of the system of my husband and that's the way that I was brought up. One of the most difficult things is that he wants to raise our children this way — within this fear. This is going to take a lot of work to change. I was always afraid. It's tough to take the

# Xapuri's Agro-Extractive Cooperative

*Seringueiro* families rely mainly on latex and Brazil nuts for their cash income. Traditionally, Brazil nuts were gathered on each family's forested tract and sold to the boss who controlled a particular forest estate, or to an itinerant trader.

By the late 1980s, the price for rubber was plummeting, and women and men were seeking alternative sources of income to secure their families' livelihoods.

On 30 June 1988, the rubber tappers founded the Agro-Extractive Cooperative of Xapuri (Cooperativa Agro-Extrativista de Xapuri — CAEX), the first such association formed by producers in the region without external financial support. The cooperative sold rubber and Brazil nuts to a variety of buyers. Of the 30 founding members of the Cooperative, three were women: union member Cecilia, who was elected Vice President of the cooperative, and two widows.

The cooperative went on to establish a factory in town in which Brazil nuts are shelled, dried and packaged before being shipped to domestic and international purchasers. More recently, the cooperative has set up mini-processing centres in the extractive reserves around Xapuri. The decentralized processing reduces the cooperative's transportation and other operational costs, provides employment in the reserves, and adds value locally to an established forest product.

## Women's Income

The cooperative provides some economic alternatives in the extractive reserves, including a new economic opportunity for women — the decentralized drying and shelling of Brazil nuts. Most of the people working as processors are women, many of whom say that this is the first time they have had access to and control over their own cash income.

During one small group discussion in 1989, for instance, nine out of thirteen women stated that although they harvested rubber, their husbands demanded half the cash from the sale of the latex because, in the men's words, "the land is mine". Raimunda stated that income from "rubber and Brazil nuts always ends up in the man's pocket". Many women need the permission of their

husbands to cut a trail of latex trees or to sell some of the small livestock.

The markets are weak for "women's" produce such as chickens, eggs and craft products. Without access to their own income, many women find it difficult to keep up with union dues; in October 1994, these came to US\$0.85 a month.

For most women involved in the Brazil nut project, making visible contributions to household income has increased their decision-making power. As the husband of one of the women said, "women have more of a voice now".

The control that the women have over their income varies, however. Most of their income is spent on purchases of household goods and clothing. As Luiza said: "Sure, it's more work. But before, we were working all the time anyway and not getting paid for it".

The self-confidence and respect gained by most of the women involved in the Brazil nut project has encouraged them to express their desires for stronger roles in the union and the cooperative. As Raimunda put it when referring to administrative problems at the cooperative such as delayed paychecks:

"right now they tell us at the office that we can't say anything because we're not members. I want to pay the dues and join the cooperative so that I can go into town and complain."

Suely wants to become a member of the cooperative so that she can set up an account in her own name — "that autonomy is very important to me".

Raimunda is also starting up a project to market Brazil nut soap that she and several other women produce from the nuts left over from processing.

In 1994, there were 222 members registered in the cooperative office. Of these, only three were women, one of whom was a founding member while the other two joined in 1991 and 1993.

## Gradual Change

While the Brazil nut project provides an important economic opportunity for a few women, the majority of families in the reserves do not have access to it. The cooperative's initial dues of 100 kilogrammes of latex (or its equivalent in another product) are beyond the reach of almost all women and some men in the reserves. Most of the families in the reserves do not participate in the cooperative at all, although

the movement is attempting to broaden the cooperative's services and establish new producer associations. The process of building local institutions capable of addressing basic social and economic needs is a "time-consuming and elusive one",<sup>1</sup> but is essential for the extractive reserves to be successful and to market the non-timber forest products on which the reserves depend.<sup>2</sup>

Since the Brazil nut project currently reaches a relatively small number of families in the reserves, the majority of women there see little opportunity in future for them to earn their own income and use that income for their families or for cooperative or union dues. José, an elected official at the cooperative, said in 1994 of its plans to work with women "At present we haven't yet laid out a work plan, a policy or any thoughts directed toward women; we don't have one for the men either. She sells [to the cooperative] of her own free will", implying that the cooperative is a gender-neutral space.

This is a similar attitude to that of the union leaders who maintain that the movement in general will assist the whole family without acknowledging or even being aware of the differential benefits that result from addressing the specific gender needs or interests of women or of adolescents.

Yet economic roles for women in general are slowly changing. Rosi noted in 1994:

"Before, the husband used to do business or make a deal and wouldn't even say anything to his wife. Not today. Before he buys or sells something he arranges it with his wife and kids. If the wife doesn't like it, she'll tell him. Women go to the stores and strike their own bargains. She goes in and talks to the owner. It's a big difference from the days of my mother-in-law."

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fear away and because of this we don't speak up very much — remembering the fear. To be singled out, to have a *sompanheiro* say that you're wrong — imagine the shame if he were to say that you'd said something wrong. This is why I think women don't speak up."

In the early years of union organization, it was just as difficult for most men from the *seringal* to speak at community meetings. Many men went to meetings for years and years without saying a word. This process of gaining a confident voice is more difficult for women who face societal constraints in the household and in public spaces. Raimunda remembers her experience in the movement:

"In the beginning, I just started participating and now I'm elected to the union council. I didn't used to understand a lot of things. I didn't know what was going on but I kept to the meetings, and now I give my opinion so that I'm not sitting there without saying anything."

In 1994, Bernadete related her union experience:

"I went to the meetings all the time before. I spoke up a lot and I paid attention, because it's like the lyrics in that song — if the woman just stays at home listening to what the husband says, then you can forget it — she won't know how to speak up at all."<sup>17</sup>

## Social and Political Space for Women

The road from the kitchen to the union hall to the speaker's podium at an assembly meeting is a scary and difficult one for women who have low self-esteem, husbands or mothers-in-law adamantly opposed to their participation, and a community that does not value their voices and opinions. It took many years of long conversations for Chico Mendes and others to convince the *seringueiros* to form a union. It took 18 months of meetings in the *seringal* before 30 rubber tappers joined together to form the Xapuri cooperative.

It also takes time and patience to change engendered customs and ideas embedded in the social fabric of the rainforest. Women need a safe environment in which to begin to express such self-confidence and resistance to a domineering husband.

Even women who are able to attend union meetings or other gatherings outside the home face structural and ideological barriers to participating as active and effective social change agents. In part, this is because people see the movement, its history and the opportunities that it offers women in different lights. At a women's meeting, a union official spoke of the important role that women have played throughout the unionization movement. He stated that, "the women decided to go in the front [of the *empates*] with their children" and that "the women helped in the discussions about creating the cooperative and now many of them are members".<sup>18</sup> An organizer of the women's group sees it differently:

"The union is still a man's place today. The majority of women don't identify themselves as *mulher seringueira* or a *colona* [colonist farmer] or a rural labourer. They identify themselves as housewives and if their husband is a union



Older and younger generations participate in the women's group.

member, there's no need for the woman to join. There is a lot of non-identification of themselves as rural workers. This will take a long time to change."<sup>19</sup>

Learning about one's rights and responsibilities can be a confusing and frightening process as traditional gender roles change. One of the elected women leaders in the union, Maria, said:

"We women have women's rights — to participate, to one day have the possibility of going out and defending those who live in the forest. This is very important — women senators, state deputies, town councilwomen — these are the women's rights that I'm talking about. The right to do her own marketing, to help her husband at home, to buy stuff at the store . . . And we have the right to have our glass of wine too . . . we sometimes have meetings with pizza and beer but we don't overdo it."

The majority of women in the extractive reserves have not had the opportunities of participating in the women's group, the union, the cooperative's Brazil nut project (*see* Box, p.52) or the educational project (*see* Box, p.49). For them, their lives may have not changed significantly. One woman observed in 1994, "In this movement, the *seringueiro* got free of the boss man, but the *mulher seringueira* didn't get free from her boss — her husband."

Yet as two researchers, Karen Kainer and Mary Duryea, have argued, "The success of the extractive reserves as a development model . . . depends on the recognition and positive exploitation of differences in gender".<sup>20</sup>

The challenges that *seringueiro* communities, their representative organization and project workers face in successfully implementing the extractive reserves are just as daunting as those faced by many *mulheres seringueiras* who "are prisoners in their own homes," as a rubber tapper leader put it. Many of them have been able to identify and use opportunities to change their lives slowly and strengthen the Xapuri movement.

Some researchers and others believe that there is "room for cautious optimism" with regard to the future of Amazonia. "The challenge is to identify and exploit those limited but potentially significant degrees of freedom that permit new direction".<sup>21</sup> Successful implementation of the extractive reserves is one such new direction that joins those on the rubber trails in the forest, in the kitchen and on the front lines at *empates* with

others in union offices, universities, and policymakers' offices.

The women in the Xapuri movement are "redefining and transforming their domestic role from one of private nurturing to one of collective, public protest, in this way challenging the traditional seclusion of women in the private sphere of the family".<sup>22</sup> They are slowly gaining a stronger voice in their homes, the union office, and in national and international gatherings. As extractive producers, agriculturalists, home-

makers and community leaders, they are actively engaged in moving their community "from protest to production",<sup>23</sup> a process that will in large part determine the success of the extractive reserves.

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## Notes and References

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# The Cultural Construction of Environmental Policy Paradigms and Politics in Ethiopia

by

Allan Hoben

*After the 1985 famine in Ethiopia, Western donors, NGOs and the Ethiopian government instituted a massive food-for-work programme in support of local level environmental rehabilitation projects. The justification for a significant investment of funds, time and effort in activities that have, at best, had a marginal beneficial impact was a belief that the underlying cause of Ethiopia's famines was environmental degradation caused by population increase, poverty and poor farming practices. Taking no account of Ethiopia's distinctive physical and institutional environment, its agrarian reform programme in the 1970s and civil strife, this narrative and its supporting data misrepresent the nature of degradation and the ways in which human activity is causing it. They also preclude examination of alternative hypotheses and distract attention from the many and varied ways in which local people have coped with their environment. The programme floundered when the Ethiopian regime fell in 1991, yet the neo-Malthusian policy narrative that informed it has proved surprisingly resilient.*

In the wake of the 1985 famine, the Ethiopian government launched an ambitious programme of environmental reclamation. It was supported by Western donors and non-government organizations, who shared a common discourse about the interactions between population, environment and famine in Ethiopia, and was backed by the largest food-for-work programme in Africa. Over the following five years, peasants constructed more than one million kilometres of soil and stone bunds on agricultural land and built almost half a million kilometres of hillside terraces. They closed off more than 80,000 hectares of hillside to most forms of use so as to foster the regeneration of naturally-occurring plant species, and planted 300,000 hectares of trees, much of it in community wood-lots.

It is clear today that much of this effort was wasted or counterproductive. The long- and short-term soil conservation benefits of the structures and trees are uncertain. Under most conditions, terracing has lowered agricultural production instead of raising it.<sup>1</sup> Farmers have been unwilling to construct or maintain structures without food-for-work or coercion, and many of the structures have fallen into disrepair. Most community wood-lots have been harvested or destroyed. The best built hillside closures tended to reduce household income from livestock, to cause environmental damage by concentrating livestock on the remaining pasture, and to harbour wild animals and pests.

Many factors contributed to the reclamation programme's poor performance, not least the neo-Malthusian environmental policy narrative used by government and donors alike to justify

the rapid, massive and widespread use of standardized environmental management "packages", with little regard to regional or local agro-ecological conditions. These packages were based on inadequate scientific and technical knowledge; little or no research had been carried out into their environmental impacts or economic costs and benefits. In addition, the views and interests of the rural men and women the programme was intended to benefit were not solicited or heeded. Instead, implementation was top-down and authoritarian.<sup>2</sup>

## The Narrative

In the aftermath of the 1985 drought and famine in Ethiopia, Western donors and NGOs needed a justification for the continuation of food aid to the country, a blueprint for what to do with such aid, and a way to coordinate their aid with the Ethiopian regime, for which they had little regard. The idea that the underlying cause of Ethiopia's periodic famines was environmental degradation due to population increase, poverty and poor farming practices had great appeal.

The core narrative behind this idea is quite simple: "Long ago when there were fewer people in Ethiopia, indigenous farming systems and technology enabled people to make a living without seriously depleting their natural resources. Over the present century, however, human and animal populations have grown. Indigenous farming systems have been unable to keep up. Population has exceeded carrying capacity, causing ever-increasing and perhaps irreversible environmental damage. Only a massive investment in environmental reclamation can reverse

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this process. People are unable to make this investment without outside assistance because they do not know how to and because they are too poor to forego present for future income or to provide for their children.<sup>3</sup>

A number of "corollary narratives" set the basic narrative in its Ethiopian context by "explaining" the processes that have caused degradation in the country and establishing the magnitude of the impending disaster. These supporting narratives, in varying combinations, are concerned with soil, trees and water. So the story goes, in the past — a period seldom defined more precisely than "before the present century" — environmental degradation occurred around human settlements, but communities could always move on to new land which was abundant. There was little need for conservation. The landscape was generously covered with trees, brush and grasses. A higher proportion of rainwater percolated into the soil. Erosion was held in check and woodfuel was abundant, easily obtained and cheap.

Over the present century, we are told, population increased as a result of the partial control of epidemics and relative peace. New land was no longer easily available and fallow periods in agricultural cycles shortened until land was under continuous cultivation. At the same time, forests are said to have been cut for firewood and agricultural expansion. A decrease in forest cover from 40 per cent to less than three per cent in the present century is an oft-repeated figure. The increasing scarcity of firewood has caused peasants to use cow-dung as a household fuel instead of using it to replace the organic matter in the fields. Steeper hillsides have been cleared and denuded of vegetation. Cultivation and overgrazing have left the soils exposed to Ethiopia's heavy rainstorms, causing severe soil erosion, reducing the nutrients available to crops and letting water run freely into the streams and rivers. Increasing livestock pressure has led to overgrazing and the deterioration of the ever-shrinking pasture land.<sup>4</sup>

## The Actors

This neo-Malthusian environmental degradation narrative appealed to each of the major actors involved in the environmental reclamation programme for a variety of reasons. It enabled the major Western donors, including the UN's World Food Programme, the European Economic Community (EEC) and the United States, to justify a massive food-for-work programme on the grounds that they were addressing the long-term underlying cause of famine, rather than merely alleviating its symptoms. This enabled them to meet the criticism that they were only keeping people alive to die in larger numbers next time the rain failed. The donors were also able to counter the argument that food aid would make people lazy. In addition, the narrative provided the donors with a rationale for maintaining high levels of food aid after the famine was over and for delivering food to areas that had not been affected by drought or famine.

The US administration, under President Ronald Reagan, had initially opposed giving humanitarian aid to Ethiopia on the grounds that it would strengthen a government that was violating human rights, pursuing a protracted civil war in the North of the country, following bad economic policies (*see* Box, pp.60-61), and was aligned with the Soviet Union. But domestic political pressure from NGO lobbies and the general public (who had watched the harrowing footage of famine victims on television) compelled it to provide food aid. Under these

circumstances, the reclamation programme was a "least bad option" because it was narrowly technical, appeared to by-pass the Ethiopian government because it was delivered through the World Food Programme and NGOs, was targeted directly to the rural poor, and would be welcomed by the growing environmental lobby in Washington.

For Western NGOs, the rationale for the reclamation programme fitted well with their ideals of helping people directly, teaching while helping, working with communities rather than the private sector or government, and with their domestic constituency's concern with the "environment". Indeed, the humanitarian, community and environmental emphases in the programme helped the NGOs live with, and even appreciate, the top-down and authoritarian way in which the Ethiopian government expedited the programme. After all, it was "obvious" that something had to be done and that the peasants were not doing it on their own. The scale of the reclamation programme and the central role NGOs, both foreign and domestic, played in its implementation also meant that there were considerable organizational and financial rewards for participation.

The Ethiopian government, meanwhile, was hard-pressed on a number of fronts at the time of the famine. Per capita food production had been falling. The costs of the protracted civil war in the north were mounting. The authorities needed food aid to feed the army, keep the urban population from becoming restive and to bolster its legitimacy in rural areas. The Soviet Union, on which the regime depended for arms, could not supply significant food aid or economic assistance; the Western powers were in a position to help in these areas but for ideological and strategic reasons were reluctant to do so in ways that would support the war effort. Like the Western donors, the Ethiopian authorities needed a common definition of the problem and a rationale for a massive food aid programme that could be conceived in narrowly technical terms and could provide the basis for close cooperation.

## The Programme

The reclamation programme's technical components made sense to Ethiopian and expatriate experts and bureaucrats because they represented the vast expansion of a set of assumptions and an approach to soil conservation with which they were already familiar. Terracing and afforestation had first been undertaken in the province of Eritrea, with the support of USAID, in the late 1960s. After the 1972-4 famine, conservation was supported by the World Food Programme (WFP), initially involving only physical measures. In the early 1980s, when the WFP first supported environmental rehabilitation programmes on a large scale, the emphasis was still on stone and earth structures.

The programme's top-down approach seemed reasonable to ministry officials and urban dwellers who traditionally have held rather negative stereotypes about peasant agriculture, intelligence and ingenuity. Farmers' reluctance to accept new practices is often attributed to their traditional attitudes, rather than to their socio-economic circumstances. For example, the fragmentation of household land holdings is attributed to inheritance rules rather than the peasant's desire to diversify his or her farming enterprise and reduce his or her risks.<sup>5</sup> The strengths of indigenous farming and environmental management systems are overlooked. Indeed, even when visible, they are often not "seen".

## Fragile Riches

Ethiopia is relatively well endowed with natural resources by African standards. Propitious conditions for indigenous agriculture are concentrated in the highlands above 1,500 metres which comprise 43 per cent of the country. A combination of favourable rainfall and soils has fostered a variety of farming systems which have supported major concentrations of population and complex societies for several millennia.

In spite of this natural endowment, the Ethiopian landscape does show signs of degradation. Although the neo-Malthusian environmental narrative exaggerates the rate and magnitude of this degradation and misrepresents the role of human agency in causing it, there is serious soil erosion in highland Ethiopia.



*Ploughing in Wallo province in northern Ethiopia.*

Much of the north has a dissected, sloping terrain, fragile soils and is subject to highly erosive rainstorms during the main agricultural season. This area has little natural tree cover; its soils are low in organic matter and are subject to severe soil erosion. The plough-based mixed farming system

contributes to soil erosion through fine tilling, mono-cropping, and a lack of vegetative cover during part of the heavy rains.

On the central and southern highlands, where rainfall is higher and distributed over more of the year, soils are generally higher in organic matter. Land form is less rugged and there is more natural vegetative cover. During the twentieth century, extensive natural forest has been reduced and grasslands brought under the plough by a combination of conquest, spontaneous small-farmer migration, government-sponsored resettlement, expanding commercial and state farms, and private and state exploitation of the forests. Soil erosion in the centre and south appears to be less severe than in the north.

The top-down approach also fitted well with the Ethiopian regime's political approach to rural development, which emphasized radical social and economic transformation, communal rather than individual incentives, and crash mobilization programmes (*see* Box, pp.60-61). It was an approach that assumed peasants did not know what was good for them and would not necessarily participate in bringing about change without political agitation, education and, if necessary, coercion.

In sum, the environmental narrative; its supporting narratives; the technical package of bunds, terraces, wood-lots and closures; and the top-down, crash mobilization programme approach to implementation made sense to all the key actors — except perhaps to the Ethiopian peasants who were not asked. But they, too, proved willing to go along with the programme and, at times, to agree with the narrative because they appreciated the grains and edible oils they received at well over market wage rates and because they had learned that it was politic to agree with official views.

### Difficulties with the Data

There is little doubt that the population in Ethiopia is increasing at a rate of over 2.5 per cent per year; that many Ethiopians are poor, hungry and vulnerable to famine; and that soil erosion is a serious problem in many highland areas (*see* Box above). What is in question, however, is whether a neo-Malthusian environmental degradation paradigm provides an adequate framework for understanding the genesis of these phenomena, their causal interrelations, or what could be done to alleviate them.

Famine, for instance, is not a new phenomenon in Ethiopia.

It was first recorded in the ninth century, and ten major famines occurred within the two centuries following the expulsion of Muslim invaders in 1540. The great famine of 1888-9 caused widespread death and devastation. More localized but no less lethal famines occurred in 1916-20, 1927-8 and 1934-5. This recurring pattern of famine in itself calls into question the narrative that attributes it primarily to recent environmental decline.

A 1984 Ministry of Agriculture and FAO study concluded that in the densely-settled regions of Wallo, Gondar and northern Shoa — the “frontier” of serious degradation — soil erosion and a decline in organic matter were reducing crop yields at an estimated rate of two per cent per year. Based on current trends, the study held that land incapable of supporting agriculture would increase by the year 2010 from two million to 10 million hectares — 17 per cent of highland Ethiopia. Another study indicates that by the same date three-quarters of all districts would be chronically food deficient.<sup>6</sup> But estimates such as these are considered to be 10 to 15 times too high,<sup>7</sup> while the data on soil erosion and nutrient loss in Ethiopia is thin and circumstantial.

The thesis that deforestation of the central highland plateau has played a major role in recent environmental degradation and famine is also problematic. A careful review of historical sources reveals no significant change in tree cover in the northern highland landscape over the past century and a half, though there has been a decline in natural forest in some of the canyons that dissect the plateau.<sup>8</sup>

In the southern half of the country, however, serious though overstated natural forest loss has occurred, but the denuded hillsides and barren landscapes in the narrative are found only in the northern regions where the FAO report locates the “frontier of serious degradation”.

# Indigenous Environmental Management

Northern Ethiopians have long practised some forms of conservation. Historically, however, political, institutional, and economic conditions did not give landed elites or peasants strong incentives to invest in agricultural intensification and labour-intensive conservation measures, such as terracing. In any case, the main recurrent environmental problems in the northern highland environment were animal and human disease, crop-destroying pests and adverse weather conditions.

The dominant secular ethos of northern Ethiopian (Amhara and Tigrean) society was military, rather than agrarian. At many times, security could not be guaranteed by the state, and warfare was not uncommon. For lord and peasant alike, the path to upward mobility lay in combat and command, not in cultivation, commerce or the accumulation of capital. Members of the secular elite held quasi-feudal land rights over peasant communities that entitled them to rule and tax their subjects, but not to treat the peasants as tenants or tell them how to farm.

Many types of feudal land grants were of short duration. Even where grants were in principle hereditary, patterns of secession and inheritance militated against the formation of transgenerational interests in improved land management. With limited exceptions, there were no clearly defined ruling families grounded in the possession of particular landed estates, titles or offices.

Nobles and local notables enjoyed the taxes, tribute, labour and military services of their peasants, but their economic strategy was primarily oriented towards increased extraction, not investment. Significant increases in revenue were to be secured by obtaining control over additional land grants. The Ethiopian landed gentry and great lords did not sponsor public works designed to maintain and enhance the long-term productivity of the land.

If the nobles and gentry did not have strong incentives to make long-term investments in the land, neither did the peasants. Peasants enjoyed

reasonable security of access to a share of their ancestral lands, but not to particular fields. The periodic reallocation of land, the scattered and changing composition of the parcels that constituted a household's holding, and the division and redistribution associated with inheritance all militated in northern Ethiopia against the concept of a family farm or homestead.

Neither was there a religious attachment to ancestral land, nor a named, status-bearing family line to be perpetuated to the glory of a father or the honour of his sons. Indeed, if they could, most men hoped to build their own homestead rather than to live in their father's house. This weak sense of familial continuity, together with the facts that land parcels might be reallocated to distant kin and that farmers could not sell them for a profit or be certain of leaving them to their heirs, reduced a farmer's incentive to invest in long-term improvements in land.

Northern peasants have been well aware of soil erosion and traditionally have had a number of techniques for coping with it. Peasants in Wallo, for example, were familiar with bunding, terracing, contour ridging, hedging, strip cropping, ratooning and mulching. They had little incentive, however, to use these techniques, especially those that required major, long-term investments, as a part of a strategy of agricultural intensification. As one peasant remarked in explaining why he did not use these techniques, "we are lazy here because money is too expensive".

## Southern Ethiopia

The indigenous farming systems of southern Ethiopia did not cause serious environmental degradation. The densely populated south-western highland areas were characterized by intensive, highly-integrated horticulture based on a complex mix of annual and perennial crops, including roots and tubers. *Ensete*, a banana-like plant with a trunk that is processed into a starchy staple food, was grown in thick stands around each homestead. Agricultural techniques included hoeing, mounding, mulching and, in some areas, terracing and irrigation. The systems were labour-intensive. Victors in local wars sometimes claimed the labour rather than the land of those they vanquished.

The south-eastern highlands of Arsi and Bali were largely populated by agro-pastoral peoples with comparatively low population densities. There were also extensive forested areas to the west and south-west in Wellega and Illubabor-Jima. Farther to the south and south-west, in the lowlands, tribal groups practised various combinations of agro-pastoralism and shifting cultivation.

The conquest and occupation of what is now southern Ethiopia by the northern Ethiopian armies in the last decades of the nineteenth century brought with it new pressures on the environment. Large numbers of northerners settled in the agro-pastoral regions, taking their plough-based agricultural system with them. In the densely-settled regions, indigenous peoples were forced to give labour and tribute to northern overlords and local notables. The introduction of the plough and of grain crops to meet northerners' demands appear to have contributed to soil erosion. Northern settlers also moved into forested areas in the west, clearing the land and introducing plough agriculture.

On the eve of the 1974 revolution, a majority of farming households in the southern highlands worked as serfs or sharecropping tenants. Tenants had little security and might owe as much as three days' labour per week or half their crops plus other gifts and services to their landlords. In some parts of this region, small farmers enjoyed something approaching freehold, but overall the more accessible parts of the south were characterized by an unequal distribution of land and great inequalities of status and security.

In the more peripheral areas of the empire, tribal groups continued to use land and pasture under more or less indigenous arrangements, except where disturbed by government or private development initiatives. The 1960s saw the beginning of large and small-scale commercial farming in the corridors along the roads to the south and west of Addis Ababa. This process was largely stopped by the revolution and agrarian reform programme of 1974.

## Questions Not Asked

The influence of the narrative has prevented planners from examining alternative explanations of Ethiopia's environmental and food-security problems and from adequately testing reclamation technologies and approaches.

The denigration of indigenous agriculture has led experts and planners to overlook and filter out information about the strengths of indigenous resource-management practices. There is, for example, virtually no mention in the narrative of the fact that agro-forestry is almost universal in highland farming systems. On much of the northern plateau, eucalyptus trees have been integrated into the farming system since they were introduced in Ethiopia in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Indeed, in much of the north, it is hard to

find a homestead that lacks a stand of these trees and does not use them for construction and some of its fuel needs.<sup>9</sup> The fact that trees have been integrated into highland farming systems without government expansion programmes raises doubts about the narrative that maintains that peasants lack the ability or foresight to plant trees without environmental education, training, and access to subsidized seedlings from nurseries.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, there is little discussion in the narrative of indigenous techniques of soil amelioration, including manuring, spreading ashes from manure which has been burned, and the use of leguminous crops in rotation, except for the occasional claim that these practices are dying out. There is little discussion or even acknowledgement of indigenous terracing, which is extensive in some areas, or of indigenous run-off ponds or irrigation. Densely-settled areas in the south-west are always said to be at environmental risk, with no investigation of the distinctive, highly-integrated intensive farming systems that appear to have sustained such densities for centuries (*see* Box, p.58).

Equally damaging, the neo-Malthusian narrative rests on an essentially undynamic view of peasant behaviour in which it is possible only to make linear projections of the rate at which Ethiopia is heading towards environmental collapse. Instead, what planners need to know are the circumstances under which peasants do and do not use the resource-management techniques of which they are aware so that policies and investments can help to make these circumstances more common.

They need to take into account the effects of the traditional political and economic organization of the empire; in the north of the country, for instance, a lack of security of access to land meant that neither the elite nor the peasantry had strong incentives to invest in agricultural intensification or land conservation (*see* Box, p.58). They need to know the effects of the changes in the political economy brought about by the Imperial regime in the twentieth century, such as a change from share cropping to fixed cash rents.<sup>11</sup> What were the effects of the



*Members of an Ethiopian peasants' association working on an erosion control programme supported by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).*

Ethiopian regime's programme of agrarian reform during the 1970s and early 1980s (*see* Box, pp.60-61), its limitations on private grain trade and restrictions on the movement of people? Several decades of mobilization for war have also taken their toll. All these changes have affected particular groups of rural Ethiopians' incentives to manage the environment and their access to food in ways which policymakers need to be aware of.

Asking these kinds of questions would focus attention beyond the physical processes taking place on the land and broaden the inquiry to include questions about transportation, marketing and trade; food processing and storage; land tenure and land markets; and about the relationship of many of these factors to demographic issues. Indeed, one could develop a counter-narrative that would "explain" Ethiopia's environmental crisis in terms of a failure to intensify agriculture resulting from political insecurity and bad policy or, alternatively, from too little infrastructure and capitalism.

## Problems in Implementation

The neo-Malthusian narrative fostered a major investment in technologies and activities that did little to address environmental degradation or farmers' needs. In the wake of the 1985 famine, existing government reclamation programmes were expanded. Activities on peasant lands were organized by the Community Forestry and Soil Conservation Development Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, which was responsible for all food-for-work programmes. The WFP, EEC and United States donated grain and edible oils, while other donors provided technical equipment and tools. Non-governmental organizations played a major role in implementation, each being assigned to a particular geographical location.

Project sites were selected by extension workers from the Ministry of Agriculture. The peasants were organized in large work teams to do the actual digging, pitting and planting.

# Agrarian Reform

Between 1974 and the late 1980s, the military regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam (the Derg) pressed an ambitious programme of agrarian reform intended to transform rural social, economic and political institutions and spur agricultural development, increase food security and address environmental problems, including deforestation and soil erosion.

The programme included the nationalization of natural resources, land tenure reform, the promotion of production and service cooperatives, the establishment of state farms, the imposition of production quotas, state intervention in pricing and marketing, forced villagization, large-scale long-distance resettlement and environmental reclamation programmes. As the Derg struggled with the prolonged and ever more costly civil war he was fighting with Eritrean and Tigrean insurgents, it also imposed taxes, required voluntary contributions and requisitioned unpaid labour, demands which often exceeded those experienced under the previous regime.

Ironically, the net effect of the Derg's actions was to lessen farmers' incentives for good natural-resource management by decreasing both the security of land tenure and the profitability of agriculture. At the same time, it appears to have reduced, instead of increased, food security in many areas.

## Land Reform and Expropriation

The Derg's land reform programme, launched in 1975, eliminated large

holdings, absentee landlordism and landlessness. It redistributed land within peasant communities on a relatively equitable basis, though it did not address inter-community or inter-regional inequalities.

In most areas, land reform did not solve the problem of acute land shortage. The size of peasant holdings continued to dwindle as new households pressed their claim to land. Over time, the repeated redistribution of land and the disturbance of holdings for a series of new government programmes undermined peasants' security over particular parcels of land and decreased their incentives to use existing or new land-management practices.

Under the 1975 reform, all customary and other pre-existing land rights were extinguished, and all land was declared to be public property. Individual households could farm up to 10 hectares of land. In practice, they received much less, often less than three hectares. They had only usufruct rights over the land they cultivated which they could not transfer by sale, lease or mortgage. The land was subject to periodic reallocations by Peasant Associations to balance inequalities or to accommodate new claimants.

Government policies and actions also created the widespread impression that trees belonged to the state and could not be harvested without the permission of the authorities. The reform also abolished tenancy, agricultural wage labour and other forms of peasant dependency on the landed classes. Large holdings were confiscated and turned into state farms, settlement schemes or cooperatives.

In the southern and western part of the country, land reform was welcomed

by former tenants and serfs who hoped they would have secure tenure over their holdings. In the northern highlands, there was some resistance to reform by better-off peasants, though it was generally welcomed by poor and young households and landless artisans.

Ethiopia's new leaders were committed to moving away from individual control over land towards producers' cooperatives (collectives) and state farms. Throughout the 1980s, the central government used its increasingly top-down control to institute a series of programmes intended to move rural society in this direction and achieve other central government objectives.

The dictum that all land belonged to the state led the government to expropriate land for many of its new initiatives. Programmes that resulted in the dislocation of peasants and decreased land security included the expansion of state farms, a large-scale resettlement programme in the wake of the 1984-5 famine, the expropriation of land without compensation for government projects, and crash agro-forestry and enclosure projects.

Ultimately, it was the arbitrary exercise of top-down authority by party cadres competing with ministry officials to institute reform that reduced the security with which peasants held their land. By the early 1980s, Peasant Association leaders were regularly taking land from their members for new government programmes or requiring them to relocate their homes. There was no law or procedure concerning compensation in such cases. Over the decade, the Ministry of Education evicted approximately 80,000 house-

Generally, this was done by contracting with an individual who was responsible for hiring the workers and making sure the work was done on a particular section of the project. The peasants contracted for the job were entitled to a daily payment of 2-3 kilogrammes of wheat and 120 grammes of edible oil, delivered each month on the basis of the project work completed.

The programme grew rapidly to become the second largest food-for-work programme in the world (after India) and the largest in Africa. At its height, the programme was active in nine regions and provided 100,000 tonnes of food to up to 800,000 people. By the beginning of 1990, the peasants had constructed more than one million kilometres of bunds on farm land and had terraced almost half a million kilometres of hillside. In addition, 80,000 hectares of hillside had been enclosed and it was claimed

that 300,000 hectares had been planted to trees.<sup>12</sup> Hundreds of tree nurseries had been established with the capacity to produce 100 million seedlings per year.

All parties proceeded with the reclamation programme on the assumption that the explanatory model of degradation was correct, that peasants were unable or unwilling to take action without outside support, and that they had no indigenous knowledge or techniques for managing their environment that were worth taking into account. Based on these assumptions, donor willingness to implement the programme and let the government spearhead the effort, using its top-down and authoritarian approach to rural development and administration, seemed to make sense. After all, "the problem was urgent". It was obvious what had to be done and done quickly. There was no time to wait for time-consuming research.

holds for its school-building programmes. The Ministry of Coffee and Tea evicted over 15,000 households, water projects evicted 29,000, state farms over 90,000 and the Ministry of Agriculture 38,000 (for forestry and extension). These figures are dwarfed by the two million households (an estimated 8 to 10 million people) who were evicted and relocated by collectivization and villagization, and the more than one-half million households who were moved to the western lowlands in the resettlement campaign triggered by the 1984-5 drought.

### Production Cooperatives

The most direct challenge to individual rights in land was the establishment of production cooperatives which were organized, with the backing of party cadres and Ministry of Agriculture officials, by "progressive" members of a Peasant Association. They were able to appropriate the best land in each community and valuable natural resources, such as pasture land and water points, for their agricultural and other enterprises. They were also able to command unpaid labour from members of their own and nearby communities.

The formation of production cooperatives often involved evicting large numbers of households and relocating them elsewhere, often on marginal land. Members who later wished to leave the cooperative forfeited their right to the land and other capital assets they had brought into the cooperative enterprise. Production cooperatives were unpopular among their own membership, as well as among the surrounding peasantry. Although at their height cooperatives worked less than 15 per cent of the agricultural land, the programme

was perceived by peasants as a major threat to their security of tenure. Just how unpopular the enterprises were became evident when Mengistu announced a policy shift towards a mixed economy. Within a week, all but a few of the nation's 3,732 registered production cooperatives had been disbanded.

### Rural Economic Policy

A number of economic policies decreased peasant food security still further. The Derg's agricultural investment and marketing and pricing policies reduced the profitability of agriculture. State farms received priority in the allocation of land, machinery, credit and chemical fertilizer. Although in the late-1980s they occupied only two per cent of the cultivated land and contributed only 10 per cent of marketed agricultural production, they received approximately 70 per cent of agricultural credits. Within the peasant sector, the bulk of the Ministry of Agriculture's support went to producers' cooperatives, though their membership probably never exceeded five per cent of all peasant households. Throughout the 1980s, only 15 per cent of the government's recurrent and capital expenditures on agriculture went to peasant agriculture, including the production cooperatives. Yet peasant farming remained more efficient than either production cooperatives or state farms.

From the early 1980s until the beginning of 1988, severe restrictions were imposed on private merchants. At the same time, production quotas, rigid below-market prices and an ineffective state Agricultural Marketing Corporation reduced farm-gate prices.

Falling per capita food production reduced Ethiopia's ability to cope with

drought, crop disease and war. Rural people's security of access to food was weakened still further by other restrictions on peasants' coping strategies such as labour migration, share-cropping and wage labour in agriculture, trade and engaging in more than one income-generating activity.

### Villagization

Another threat to peasants' security of land tenure was brought about by the Derg's ambitious and hurried villagization programme, comparable in many ways to that undertaken by Tanzania in the mid-1970s. The programme was intended to facilitate agricultural and social service delivery, social and political change, and the formation of production cooperatives.

Instead, it brought about further movement and disruption of individuals' land rights and caused many other problems, including environmental degradation, the loss of livestock through disease and reduced access to pasture, poor sanitation and the de-capitalization, especially in the south-west of farms depending on *ensete* (false banana) and tree crops planted near the homestead.

Together all these policies appear to have depressed agricultural production and discouraged farmers from developing more intensive farming systems in the face of rising population and investing in intermediate or long-term natural-resource management. Indeed, it can be argued that they destabilized local food security systems and made the rural population more vulnerable than ever to drought and famine.

Between 1985 and 1990, the programme encountered a number of difficulties and was increasingly criticized by members of the NGO community and experts in the Ministry of Agriculture. Many critics complained about the way in which the programme had been implemented. Some found fault with various components of the package. Few, however, questioned the validity or adequacy of the underlying environmental narrative.

In their eagerness to expand their programmes and dispense food stocks, donors and NGOs were not always able to ensure that their activities focused on localities that were experiencing unusual food deficits or environmental problems. Indeed, project design documents indicate the extent to which the environmental degradation narrative was mapped onto the local landscape to justify uniformly the need for food and conservation work.

By the end of the 1980s, experience and evaluations had revealed a number of fundamental technical and organizational problems with the rehabilitation activities. An impact evaluation carried out for the WFP and the Ministry of Agriculture reported mixed views among peasants.<sup>13</sup> Many said they liked the soil bunds which retained soil and moisture. Most complained that the stone bunds and terraces reduced arable land and harboured rodents. Some peasants complained that terracing reduced yields by raising subsoil to the surface, making it hard to plough, and reducing field size. Others complained bitterly that the terraces and *fanyaju*, a special type of terrace designed to channel rainwater run-off, increased problems of soil erosion. Their complaints were generally ignored by local authorities.

Meanwhile, a major project of research and experimentation

in soil conservation measures at seven experimental research stations in different agro-ecological zones was begun in 1981.<sup>14</sup> It was found that farmers did not find physical conservation works attractive, and additional social and economic research was undertaken. A decade later, it had become clear that production on control plots was significantly higher under most crops and conditions than it was under any of the conservation measures.<sup>15</sup> In other words, contrary to expert opinion and to what extension agents had been telling farmers, the conservation measures *lowered* production, income and food security. The main contributing factors to this drop were the loss of 10-20 per cent of the cropped area, even more on steep slopes, to the conservation structures; the infestation of bunds by rodents whose habitat would normally be destroyed by ploughing; weeds; water-logging; and the difficulty of ploughing and threshing in narrow spaces.<sup>16</sup> These were, of course, the same problems of which peasants had complained of in the WFP/Ministry of Agriculture study.<sup>17</sup>

Hillside closures generally achieved impressive results in terms of vegetative regeneration, but species unpalatable to livestock and trees tended to dominate fodder grasses. This intensified destructive grazing on hillsides adjacent to enclosures.<sup>18</sup>

Community forestry was not popular nor, in the long run, successful. In some areas, farmers resented setting aside land for community forestry when they did not have enough land for themselves to grow food. In areas of the south where naturally-occurring trees were still abundant, farmers could see little point in planting trees. Where wood-lots were planted, farmers often complained that the trees reduced agricultural production through shading, root interference and attracting anti-crop wildlife, such as birds.<sup>19</sup> It was also unclear who would benefit from the wood-

lots, which were viewed by the peasants as belonging to the NGOs or the state. Nor did their experience lead them to believe otherwise, as they had to get permission from Ministry officials to harvest their trees. It is not surprising that tree-lots were not tended or guarded well, that sapling survival rates were low, and that farmers generally refused to work on community forestry or other rehabilitation activities without continuing payments in food.

The magnitude of farmer displeasure with community wood-lots and many other communal aspects of government policy was brought out clearly in the events that followed a speech by Chairman Mengistu Haile Mariam (the Derg) in March 1990. The speech was widely interpreted by farmers to mean that they were free to dissolve production cooperatives, repossess their former lands, live where they pleased and generally ignore the more onerous aspects of the agrarian reform programme. In the weeks and months that followed, there were widespread reports of farmers cutting trees and uprooting seedlings for a variety of reasons, including the desire to reclaim land lost to production cooperatives, community wood-lots and major reforestation projects; the desire to expand land under production or to reduce the negative effect of trees on adjacent fields; and the belief that by clearing and cultivating land they might establish a claim to long-term use or ownership.<sup>20</sup>

Ultimately, only a small part of the degraded highlands near the roads had been "rehabilitated", and even those that were appreciated by some farmers were not considered worth the effort or were destroyed out of resentment.

After 1990, as the Derg began to lose his grip, critics began to complain openly about the top-down approach to the programme. Participants at an NGO-sponsored workshop on community forestry held in October 1990 drew attention to the programme's reliance on government-imposed institutions and their leaders. They pointed out that small farmers generally were not involved in identifying their own needs and problems, establishing priorities, evaluating alternative solutions, or planning how they were to be implemented. As a result, indigenous farming systems, technical knowledge and common property institutions were ignored, and farmer incentives for participating in community forestry projects were poor.<sup>21</sup>

## Conclusion

A particular neo-Malthusian narrative came to play a central role in the way donors, the Ethiopian government and NGOs conceptualized the causes of the 1985 famine and attempted to address its underlying causes with food aid. The narrative and its corollaries enabled these powerful organizations with divergent interests and values to overcome their differences, craft a common policy and coordinate their activities. The resulting crash programme's success in mobilizing and deploying resources for environmental reclamation in Ethiopia was not matched by success in meeting rural people's agricultural needs or halting degradation. In retrospect, it seems clear that addressing Ethiopia's environmental problems will require better scientific and technical research, a region- and site-specific approach, and the active involvement of rural stakeholders in all stages of programme development and implementation.

This is an edited version of an article which appeared in *The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment*, edited by Melissa Leach and Robin Mearns, James Currey Publishers (73 Botley Road, Oxford OX2 0BS, UK).

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- Herweg, K., "Major constraints to effective soil conservation: Experiences in Ethiopia", paper presented to the Seventh International Soil Conservation Conference, "People Protecting Their Soil", 27-30 September 1992, ISCO, Sydney.
  - A.O. Hirschman argued in 1968 that effective development policies and programmes (that is, ones that mobilize funds, institutions and technology) rest on a set of more or less naïve, unproven, simplifying and optimistic assumptions about the problem to be addressed and the approach to be taken. Without such a cultural script for action, it is difficult for donors and aid recipients to mobilize and coordinate concerted action in the face of the many uncertainties that characterize processes of economic, political and institutional change. More recently, E. Roe observed that these optimistic "enabling assumptions" are generally encoded in what he calls "development narratives". The power of these narratives is enhanced through the incorporation of dominant symbols, ideologies and real or imagined historical experience of their adherents. In this sense, they are culturally constructed and reflect the hegemony of Western development discourse. To the extent that a particular development narrative becomes influential in donor community development discourse, it becomes actualized in specific development programmes, projects, packages and methodologies of data collection and analysis. All of these constitute the "cultural paradigm" associated with the narrative. The cultural policy paradigm is thus based on concrete exemplars as well as on a set of ideas. It is not merely a set of beliefs or a theory but a blueprint for action as well. See Hirschman, A.O., *Development Projects Observed*, Brookings Institute, Washington, DC, 1968; Roe, E., "'Development narratives' or making the best of blueprint development", *World Development* Vol. 19, No. 4, 1991, pp.287-300; Hoben, A., "Agricultural decision making in foreign assistance: an anthropological analysis" in Barlett, P., (ed.) *Agricultural Decision Making: Anthropological Contributions to Rural Development*, Academic Press, Orlando, FL, 1980, pp.337-69; Hoben, A., "USAID: Organizational and institutional issues and effectiveness" in Berg, R.J. and Gordon, D.F., (eds.) *Cooperation for International Development: The United States and the Third World in the 1990s*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, CO, 1989, pp.253-78; and Hoben, A., "The cultural and political construction of environmental policy in Africa: Some theoretical considerations", paper presented at the SSRC Workshop on the Dynamics of Production and Transmission of Development Ideas, 13-15 May 1994, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.
  - This narrative is not new; it was current in Ethiopia before the famine and fitted well with traditional Ethiopian elite attitudes towards the peasantry. Nor is it peculiar to Ethiopia. In the 1930s, it came to play a central role in East African soil conservation and forestry policy. It has been re-enunciated, reinforced and Africanized in the wake of the environmental movement in the West, as it fits well with the movement's interests, understandings, sentiments and with the deeply-rooted Western image of Africa as a spoiled Eden. See Anderson, D.M., "Depression, dust bowl, demography and drought: the colonial state and soil conservation in East Africa during the 1930s", *African Affairs*, Vol 83, No. 332, 1984, pp.321-43.
  - Although the data supporting all these assertions are admittedly thin and circumstantial, powerful conclusions have been made about the rate, magnitude and direction of agro-environmental decline in Ethiopia. A 1984 Ministry of Agriculture and FAO study concluded that in the densely-settled regions of Wallo, Gondar and northern Shoa on the "frontier" of serious degradation, soil erosion and a decline in organic matter were reducing crop yields at an estimated rate of two per cent per year. See Ministry of Agriculture and FAO, 1984, cited in Ståhl, M., "Constraints to environmental rehabilitation through people's participation in the northern Ethiopian highlands", United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Geneva, Discussion Paper 13, 1990, p.3.
  - For a discussion of the reasons for fragmentation, see Bruce, J.W., Hoben, A. and Rahmato, D., "After the Derg: An assessment of rural land tenure issues in Ethiopia", mimeo, Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI, 1994, pp.28-29.
  - See Ministry of Agriculture and FAO, 1984, cited in Ståhl, M., op. cit. 4, p.3.
  - Personal communication with Peter Sutcliffe, former Senior Technical Advisor to the National Conservation Secretariat in Ethiopia. Over-estimation of losses in production due to soil erosion are commonplace in Africa, due in part to methodological problems.
  - See McCann, J., *People of the Plow: An Agricultural History of Ethiopia 1800-1990*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI, 1995.
  - In the past two decades, an imported species of juniper and bamboo have also been extensively planted around house sites in Dega Damot, Gojjam where I conducted research in the early 1960s. Indeed, when I went back to the district after almost two decades, what struck me most vividly was the increase in tree cover on the farmed high plateau. The increase of tree cover with population pressure is not surprising and has been observed in Kenya. See Shipton, P., "Land and the limits of individualism: population growth and tenure reform south of the Sahara", IIID Development Discussion Paper 320, Harvard Institute of International Development Cambridge, MA, 1989.
  - Ironically, the surge in concern with fuelwood as a national issue can be traced back to the mid-1970s, when peri-urban plantations of eucalyptus declined sharply shortly after they were nationalized by the Derg. A great increase in tree planting on individually controlled land was noted by NGO workers in central and southern Ethiopia in 1990-1, immediately after the Derg abandoned key features of the agrarian reform programme and relaxed control over the private sector.
  - For an analysis of the linkages between changing government policy, environmental management, food and population movement in the first half of the twentieth century, see McCann, J., *From Poverty to Famine in Northeast Ethiopia: A Rural History 1900-1935*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1987.
  - Ståhl, M., op. cit. 4, p.5.
  - Yeraswork, A., "Impact and sustainability of activities of rehabilitation of forest, grazing and agricultural lands supported by World Food Programme Project 2488", report to WFP and to the Natural Resources Main Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Addis Ababa, 1988.
  - The Soil Conservation Research Project was carried out with Swiss funding and technical support from the University of Berne. See Herweg, K. and Grunder, M., "Soil conservation research project, 9, Eighth Project report, Year 1988, Soil Conservation Research Project, Berne, 1991.
  - Herweg, K., op. cit. 1.
  - Herweg, K., "Problems of acceptance and adaptation of soil conservation in Ethiopia", unpublished paper, Soil Conservation Research Project, Addis Ababa, pp.11-12.
  - Yeraswork, A., op. cit. 13.
  - Fruhling, P., *Utveckling Bättre än Nödhyll: Om Röda Korsets Katastrofförebyggande arbete i Wollo*, Röda Korset, Stockholm, 1988; Hultin, J., *Farmers' Participation in the Wollo Program*, Swedish International Development Authority, Stockholm, 1988.
  - Christian Relief and Development Association, Proceedings of the Community Forestry Development Workshop, Addis Ababa, 4-5 April 1990, p.6.
  - The information was gathered through field trips and interviews with researchers from Addis Ababa University, representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, NGOs and major donor organization active in environmental rehabilitation programmes.
  - CRDA 1990a; Proceedings of the Workshop on Environment Impact Assessment, Addis Ababa, 15-16 October 1990.
- Rebels from Tigray toppled the Derg in May 1991, occupied Addis Ababa and formed a new Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE). Yet key elements of the neo-Malthusian environmental policy narrative survived the fall of the Derg and the establishment of a new regime. They still inform thinking and planning in Ethiopia and are likely to shape the way Ethiopian environmental problems are addressed in the future. The new government espoused a policy of ethnic self-determination and decentralization. It introduced formal changes in administration and governance to implement these policies, but these have largely been countered by the re-emergence of a one-party state under the stewardship of the Tigrean-dominated Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The new regime remains committed to addressing environmental problems. While it is considered pro-peasant and stresses the importance of local people's "participation" in all its programmes, it is not clear to what extent it has escaped old orthodoxies. In its home area, Tigray, where it enjoys great popular support, it has actively promoted terracing and reforestation projects by mobilizing local peasant associations. In the rest of the country, where governance has been weak, the reclamation programme has stagnated. The regime has not been eager to pursue unpopular programmes, not even the collection of rural taxes.
- The regime also maintained the previous government's commitment to preparing a National Conservation Strategy (NCS) with the assistance of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Yet despite a conscious effort to obtain peasant knowledge, the environmental policy narrative still exerts a strong influence over thinking about environmental management. Negative views of peasant agriculture held by local task force members filtered out much information about the strengths of indigenous resource management practices. There is, for example, virtually no mention of indigenous soil amelioration. There is little discussion or even acknowledgement of indigenous terracing or of indigenous run-off ponds, or irrigation. Densely settled areas in the south-west are said to be at environmental risk because of population pressure with no investigation of the distinctive farming systems that appear until recently to have sustained such densities for centuries. Similar gaps in regard to the strength of indigenous practice are embedded in some of the reports done by experts for the Ethiopian Forestry Action Plan (EFAP), an ambitious and, in many ways, excellent planning effort incorporated into the NCS. Perhaps the most striking example of this is the EFAP is the estimation of a woody deficit based on estimates that do not include the major source of peasants' woodyfuel: on-farm agro-forestry. In sum, ideas and "facts" from the old narrative were used uncritically, while new information and alternative understandings were screened out. See IUCN, *Ethiopia National Conservation Strategy*, Phase 1 Report, prepared for the Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia with the assistance of IUCN, Addis Ababa, 1990.

# Some Consequences of Cheap Trees and Cheap Talk

## Pulp Mills and Logging in Northern Alberta

by

Joan Sherman

*Over the past decade, several high-tech pulp mills producing pulp for the global market have been persuaded by government promises of cheap trees and infrastructure grants to set up in the Canadian province of Alberta. One of these mills, Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries, was approved in December 1990 and started operations in September 1993. Lengthy public hearings prior to the project's approval considered some of the expected impacts of the mill; other effects, however, were not discussed or were downplayed. Four years on, many of the unanticipated consequences — not only for the environment but also for local democracy — are now transparent.*

Most visitors to Athabasca, a small town of just 2,000 people in the Canadian province of Alberta, perceive the countryside around it as wilderness or relatively unspoiled nature. Like the rest of the northern half of the province, the region is a mix of farmland, bogs, fens, streams, rivers and marshes<sup>1</sup> and of boreal forest — spruce, pine, balsam fir, tamarack, birch and aspen trees — which covers 43 per cent of Alberta. Much of the forested land is Crown (state-owned) land, held in trust by the province. Unlike temperate regions, vegetation in the boreal forest is slow to regenerate; the growing season is 50-100 days; the topsoil is thin; the forest is covered with snow for half the year; and the mean average temperature is 1.6°C. On average, an aspen tree takes eight years to reach a height of four metres, 70 to 80 years to reach a size suitable for logging.<sup>2</sup>

The wilderness, however, is under siege. In the last 20 years, radical changes have taken place in the area: oil and gas companies have cut seismic and gas transmission lines and drilled exploratory wells throughout the forest; timber interests have cut the forest for saw logs, oriented strand board (structural building panels), and, increasingly, for pulp. During the mid-1980s, a decline in coniferous timber because of overcutting, new pulping technology for hardwoods, a cheap and plentiful supply of deciduous timber, and increased demand for pulp in North-East Asia all combined to attract investors to the boreal forest and its abundant stands of aspen — Albertans often refer to the aspen as a weed because when it is cut down, it quickly re-establishes itself from its roots and thrives.

The Alberta government actively promoted the use of aspen to the timber industry, and sought out potential markets and corporations in countries of the Pacific Rim. Today, the province has two Japanese-owned, bleached kraft mega pulp mills

and three chemi-thermo-mechanical pulp mills<sup>3</sup> producing pulp for the global market. These mills were persuaded, in part, to set up in Alberta by promises of cheap trees<sup>4</sup> and infrastructure grants.<sup>5</sup>

One of these Japanese-owned pulp mills, Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries<sup>6</sup> — or Alpac as it has become known — is the largest single bleached draft pulp mill in the world. Located just outside Athabasca in a farming district with no history of pulp mills, it was given the go-ahead by the Albertan premier on 21 December 1990 and started operations in September 1993. The Alberta government committed \$475 million in government loans, debentures and start-up grants to the company which was given the rights to log and manage a 64,000 square kilometre area of Crown forest (roughly the size of the province of New Brunswick, the state of West Virginia or the country of Sri Lanka). In 1997, Alpac pays a royalty of approximately 14 cents for each tree cut down.

Lengthy public hearings, held as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment process during 1989-1990 prior to the project's approval, considered some of the expected impacts of the mill, such as the transportation of hazardous chemicals to the mill, air emissions and exposure of fish and fish habitats to mill effluents which would contain chlorinated organic compounds.<sup>7</sup> Others, however, were not discussed or were explored in such general terms that the mill's effects on the lives of residents in the Athabasca area were downplayed, in particular, how outside forces get to control decision-making within communities. Four years since the mill began operations, many of these unanticipated consequences are now transparent.

### Unfulfilled Promises

Before the mill was approved in December 1990, Alpac's company representatives spent a lot of time and effort courting

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the public; they held promotional forums and coffee-and-doughnut open house sessions and attended public hearings where they promised hundreds of direct jobs and countless indirect construction and spin-off jobs in the region; Native Indian employment; a 50 per cent "local" workforce; that logging trucks would not share the roads with school buses; that there would be no smells; and that the roads would be maintained. Overall, they promised that the quality of life in the local communities would be improved as a result of the pulp mill. Such promises were not written agreements, but considered by many people in Athabasca as oral commitments or public statements of trust and good faith.

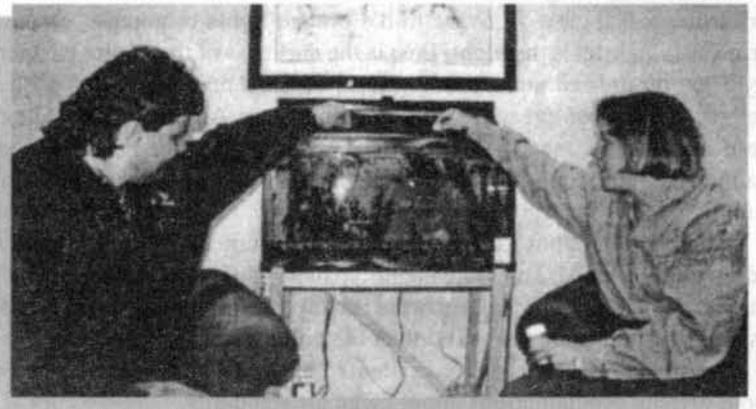
Since the mill opened, many of these commitments have been redefined, denied, unenforced or simply forgotten. While people recognized that much of Alpac's promotional talk was bluster, few anticipated that company representatives would later either deny making key promises or attempt to redefine the commitments.

In the case of jobs for local people, for example, Alpac had defined "local" in 1989 as someone living within an 80-kilometre radius of the mill. In 1993, however, the company claimed that "local" meant anyone living in its 64,000 square kilometre forest management area.

"Local" also appears to include people who move to the area and obtain local addresses. Family members of new employees at the mill often have more skills and experience than local residents, increasing the competition both for new and spin-off jobs and for existing jobs in the community such as those in clerical, teaching or public service employment.

Residents did not anticipate that no one would enforce the company's promises. Although Alpac representatives had said the company would keep its logging trucks off school bus routes when children were going to and from school, it has become common for packed school buses travelling on narrow country roads to meet fully-loaded logging trucks. Concerned for their children's safety, parents appealed to Alpac to keep its promise. The company refused. Instead, it sent a newly-hired truck coordinator to a local public meeting to show a video about high-tech logging trucks and to talk about the safety records of Alpac's drivers. Neither the police nor local government care to enforce Alpac's original promise.

Now, four years after the mill began operating, new employees have begun to replace the mill's "start-up" team, breaking the continuity between community residents and Alpac representatives who made the various promises about the mill's performance and philosophy. Knowledge of the events surrounding the mill's approval and the context of the verbal commitments to the community are being lost as key Alpac individuals move away. Career shifts and employment uncertainties in a transnational corporation such as Alpac have an impact on local relationships, easily leading to a lack of understanding and sensitivity toward community issues on the part of the company and to increasing distrust of the company on the part of the community.



### A perspective on the pulp industry

Environment specialist Rob Butler and environmental manager Carol Fries check out the newest environment team members: a school of goldfish, currently thriving in an aquarium filled with raw, untreated effluent from Alberta-Pacific

## Safest mill in Canada?

*Alpac's newsletter, Forest Landscape, ran a photo story about a school of goldfish swimming in raw, untreated effluent from the pulp mill to illustrate the water's innocuous nature, all above a headline which ran "the safest mill in Canada?". By using a familiar pet, the image domesticates and trivializes the test commonly used by regulators to determine the toxicity of pulp mill effluent. The test, called LC50, measures the survival rate of fish exposed to full strength effluent for 96 hours. If less than 50 per cent of the test fish die, the effluent passes the test. Trout, which are sensitive and native to the Athabasca river, are normally used in the LC50 test. Goldfish, however, are tough and not native. In any event, using death as an indicator of environmental harm ignores the fact that fish and other animals may be debilitated and essentially ecologically dead by conditions far below those which kill it in four days. Alpac's image of a healthy aquarium draws attention away from the actual river where a complex set of natural conditions such as low flow, ice cover and depleted oxygen exacerbate the effect of pollution on fish. It does not consider the long-term and inter-generational effects of organochlorines on the health of fish, and it ignores the cumulative impact of effluent from all the mills on the river system.*

### Sights, Smells and Sounds

The Alpac mill was constructed in the middle of a small farming district of just 300 people, and was championed by industry and the Alberta government as an example of sustainable development. For those farmers displaced by the pulp mill and for many who continue to farm near it, such claims ring hollow.

To service the mill, for example, a new railway line and a new network of roads were built with taxpayers' money right through the existing rural road grid that farmers used to move their equipment from one field to another. Weary of car, truck and train noise and the inconvenience of partitioned farms, many farmers have sold their land. Now a petrol station, cafe, lottery vendor, several truck repair shops, logging truck campsites and other small enterprises dot the agricultural community.

Malfunctioning vents at the mill have given rise to the "fugitive" odours of hydrogen sulphide, the rotten egg smell — prior to the mill's approval, pulp mill engineers assured the community that the mill would not smell. Electrical power surges from the mill have damaged household appliances and refrigerators. Screeching machinery has stressed livestock, pets

and families, creating additional health and economic concerns for farmers. The glow from the mill's orange lights brightens farm yards and steals the night. Lost is the darkness of the night sky with its myriad star constellations, Aurora borealis and meteors, all part of everyone's home in northern Alberta. All these unexpected aspects of technology act "as a filter . . . gradually eliminating and shutting off nature's direct sensual stimuli."<sup>8</sup>

The government has failed to enforce environmental standards in relation to these new and unanticipated sights, smells and sounds. When odours are reported to the government, for instance, residents are told to contact the pulp mill. In the face of government inaction, many residents have become cynical about official proclamations about clean air standards.

Living with constant noise, smells and an orange glow while vigilantly monitoring and reporting the mill's activities to regulatory agencies can slowly grind down community resolve and determination. After three years of the mill's operations, one farmer who lives near the plant said in April 1996:

"The smell on Saturday was something else. It was all through the house, it was awful, I could taste it. But, you know, I don't care any more. I didn't even report it. You can't fight this mill forever."

Many residents who oppose the pulp mill have gradually been silenced by stress, exhaustion and government inaction, and have moved from the district. No one anticipated that Alpac could cause so much stress, nor that such stress would affect people's lives so much. As another farmer said of the pulp mill:

"It's destroyed families, it's destroyed the community, and it has the potential to destroy everything that was familiar to us and familiar to our lifestyle."<sup>9</sup>

## Alpac's Newsletter

A third unexpected consequence of the pulp mill was that Alpac's newsletter, *Forest Landscape*, would become such a source of "information" within the community. Available free at convenience stores, truck stops, groceries, chemists and cafes, *Forest Landscape* has become, in effect, a second local paper. It attempts to create a favourable "green" image of the forest industry and its activities, and reinforces solidarity among its workers. All the images and messages of success it conveys are intended to reassure residents of northern Alberta that Alpac is a responsible citizen and good neighbour. The communications techniques of *Forest Landscape* aim to draw the public and the press throughout the province into agreeing with Alpac's definition of sustainable development; it seems intended to clear the field of competitive points of view and to plant new concepts, ideas and images of the pulp and paper industry.<sup>10</sup> Attention is diverted from controversy by positive upbeat headlines, images of competition akin to sporting challenges, promotion of teamwork and the company's eco-commitment.

Since it started publication in 1992 when construction of the mill began, *Forest Landscape* has played a key "damage limitation" role in controversial issues. It has downplayed issues of dioxin emissions from pulp mills and of clearcutting, for instance, and has portrayed environmental criticism more generally as extremist.

A less visible impact of the company newsletter is that the previous written source of community news and democratic

debate in the town, the *Athabasca Advocate*, has lost a large measure of its freedom and independence. Staff at the local paper are notified by Alpac when the company is displeased with coverage of either itself or issues relating to its activities. The company has claimed that any "allegations" made about it in the local press cannot go unchallenged. Alpac's "bullying", or implied threats of legal action, has led staff at the *Athabasca Advocate* to become highly aware that their news coverage may land them in court against Alpac; as a result, news items have been reduced to little more than non-controversial human interest stories or reprints of *Forest Landscape* articles. The local press cannot afford to lose its advertising income by offending the business community, politicians — or Alpac. Thus a key local forum for public debate, in which power was well within people's reach, and an essential part of local culture has been lost.

## Logging on Private Land

By 1993, the Alberta government had committed to the pulp and paper industry in general 97 per cent of the softwood stands in the public forest and 83 per cent of the hardwood stands. Yet in need of still more trees, the industry has turned to private landowners as well, particularly those in the north of Alberta where many farms still have tree areas.

Farmers in the Athabasca area have been offered tantalizing sums of money for their aspen and poplar. Timber buyers would cruise the back roads and knock on landowners' doors to make deals; they started to fly over tree covered land and to contact owners of strips that looked promising. The market came right to the farmers' doorsteps, and it has been hard for farmers to refuse \$10,000 or \$20,000 or more for standing timber. Bank payments, spring seeding bills and such offers all combine to make the sale of trees attractive.

Thus a public unaware of the logging taking place in remote reaches of the Crown forest was suddenly sharing roads with a stream of logging trucks, or having to stand by as the clearing of neighbours' forested lands disrupted the local ecosystem and altered the landscape. In 1993, Alpac reported that 15 per cent — some 256,000 cubic metres — of its "start-up" stockpile of timber came from private land.<sup>11</sup>

Logging on private land is not covered by any legislation in Alberta. In 1994, I proposed that, to regulate the amount of logging taking place on private land, the county council require landowners to have a development permit, set guidelines for logging in a variety of terrains, and allow people other than landowners to discuss the implications of cutting down forested areas. The council rejected the ideas out of hand, arguing that "you can't tell farmers what they can do with their land". Both Alpac's search for wood and the council's attitude reinforce the ideology of unrestricted free enterprise and anti-government regulation.

Less visible than the clearcuts on private land is the change in community attitudes towards trees. Alpac is effectively transforming perception of trees as an ecological part of the forest, bush, or even windbreaks into a perception modelled after its own fashion: trees as a valuable economic resource. The long-term consequences of thinking about trees solely as a commodity will reveal themselves as more land is cleared, wind and water erosion are exacerbated, and biodiversity and wildlife habitats are lost.

## Influencing Local Government

Alpac was quick to establish a working relationship with key people in local agencies and government. Initially, for instance, it hired six family members of one county councillor, a daughter of another, two ex-councillors and the son of the premier of the province. This practice of rewarding key people to ensure their future support is common. As a result, it has altered the process of local government and now influences how decision-makers see issues and weigh the outcomes of their decisions.

Citizens, often as friends and neighbours of local officials and councillors, used to speak to them in lay terms in a relaxed process. Now, when they approach local government with concerns that affect mill operations, residents can expect to deal with Alpac. For instance, Alpac has brought in city lawyers and experts with volumes of facts and figures, overhead projections of graphs and flow charts — all the trappings of power and formality. To appear similarly “legitimate” to local authorities, residents have had to find their own experts and lawyers. Local authorities now take their role as decision-makers more formally, and have learned to be more bureaucratic and more cautious as they hear appeals from the public or representations from Alpac’s legal counsel.

In another instance, the effort of the local environmental group, Friends of the Athabasca Environmental Association, to promote a safer pulp mill waste dump began with appeals at the local government level. Alpac challenged the environmentalists’ right to appeal the construction and design of its waste dump. The local authorities agreed with the company, a decision which led the environmentalists to seek a judicial review of their right to appeal. This resulted in two court cases in the provincial capital, Edmonton, which the group lost, and the enactment of tough provincial rules that severely limit who may appeal government decisions on health and environment.<sup>12</sup>

## Influencing Provincial Policy

A transnational company such as Alpac has much more formal political clout than any one individual or clusters of individuals. For example, mill area residents petitioned the government for three years for a toll-free telephone service throughout the county but was unsuccessful; the service only became available when the mill was approved. Rural mail delivery increased from two days a week to five days a week when the mill started operations.

More contentiously, political boundaries have been redrawn to include the mill and its forest concession within the jurisdiction of one government member of the provincial legislature, thus streamlining Alpac’s access to government. Forest boundaries have also been altered so that Alpac now deals with one instead of three forest districts and directors. Even the county boundary has been extended to include more of the company’s operating area.

At the provincial level, Alpac influences government through the forest industry representatives who serve on the various boards which advise the Albertan premier on economic policy, funding for post-secondary education, forest conservation strategies and northern river basin research. At the educational level, Alpac makes presentations to primary and secondary schools, supplies them with videos and print materials, and hosts science

teacher tours of its operations, thus shaping the way forestry issues are presented to school children.

Having been hailed by government as a source of economic diversification and a financial “shot in the arm” for rural high-unemployment regions, Alpac and the forest industry successfully lobbied the government to eliminate taxation on machinery and equipment. This will save Alpac more than \$3 million annually in local taxes — money that local authorities use to operate schools, libraries, recreational facilities and to hire staff. Losing this tax revenue, combined with the increased demand on municipal services, has left the county in a worse fiscal shape than before Alpac was built.

In a similar move, the Alberta Forest Products Association (AFPA), the umbrella organization for Alberta’s pulp mills, presented a plan to the provincial government to redirect a percentage of the royalties paid to the province for trees cut on public land into a fund<sup>13</sup> to finance industrial forestry activities such as research, reforestation, vegetation surveys and infrastructure. The government approved the plan in 1994. Details of these projects are confidential, closed not only to the public but also to members of the provincial legislature, because industry deems the information “proprietary”.

In a parallel process influenced by industry advice, the government has reduced funds and staff in its forestry and environmental protection departments and, increasingly, has allowed industry to “self regulate”. Politicians publicly rationalize the removal of government workers, the replacement of regulators with industry monitoring of effluent discharges, logging practices and environmental performance by claiming that the forest industry in Alberta uses the best available

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technologies and has adopted a new code of ethics, exemplified by its Forest Care programme (another AFPA initiative).

My own enquiries to the provincial forestry department illustrate how far the department has removed itself from its traditional role of forest stewardship, protection and information. When I asked the department for the length of time it takes a tree in the boreal forest to grow four metres, the local forester contacted Alpac for the answer; she went on to suggest that I telephone Alpac if I had further questions about tree growth, stumpage fees and regeneration. When I have contacted the Departments of Environment or Health for analyses of the material in the Alpac waste dump — data that should be reported as part of Alpac's operating licence for the dump — government employees forwarded my enquiries to the company.

Finally, Alpac is playing a highly political role in defining sustainable development in Alberta. It has rallied science, public opinion, government and academia to support the use of parts of its Crown forest concession to demonstrate "forest ecosystem management." Alpac's environmental manager helped devise the University of Alberta's Sustainable Forest Management Centre of Excellence,<sup>14</sup> which promotes and celebrates research on the effects of logging on the boreal forest. Graduate students, university professors and consultants, all eager for work and funding at a time when public money has been slashed from university budgets, now carry out research for the forest industry.

## Conclusion

Since 1990, Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries has insinuated itself into local and provincial government and into economic,

educational and environmental policies in a variety of ways with significant repercussions on the communities involved and political institutions, environmental values and democracy. Even at the Environmental Impact Assessment public hearings, it was not foreseen that a pulp mill, operating in a rural community, would set the direction of university research or would establish a precedent to deny public interest groups the right to appeal decisions that affect the environment.

Those who have continued to oppose the mill, such as the Friends of the Athabasca Environmental Association, have focused their volunteer work on education, publications, regulations, consultation and litigation. Some members feel comfortable sitting with government and industry at roundtables and consensus-model task forces; others have become more entrenched in their opposition to the new industry-government partnership; while still others have taken the debate about sustainable development to the public and run for political office.

For many, the process of just trying to stay healthy — physically and mentally — to maintain family relationships, and to deal with work life and farm life has worn down the ranks of mill opponents over the years. Slowly they are selling out, moving away, resigning themselves, dying or withdrawing from politics — another unexpected consequence of a nine-year struggle.

Much of what environmentalists, farmers and neighbours of this pulp mill discovered and experienced, including the unanticipated consequences of a development project, may be relevant to others confronting the increasingly sophisticated industrial public relations depiction of sustainable development, the collusion of government, and the loss of power that local people experience.

## Notes and References

1. The sole source of moisture in bogs or muskegs is precipitation, whereas fens have streams or ground water flowing into them. For discussion of the boreal forest see Boreal Forest Conference Committee, *Boreal Forest Conference Proceedings*, Athabasca University, Athabasca, Alberta, 1992.
2. On average, an aspen growing in the boreal forest of Alberta would take 83 years to reach a height of 27.7 metres, whereas a balsam poplar would take 16 years to reach a height of 4 metres, or 65 years to grow to 23 metres tall. See Peterson, E. B. and Peterson, N. M., *Ecology, Management, and Use of Aspen and Balsam Poplar in the Prairie Provinces*, Special Report 1, Forestry Canada, Minister of Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, 1992, p.17.
3. The new chemi-thermo-mechanical pulp mills in Alberta are Millar Western Pulp Limited in Whitecourt; Alberta Energy Company Slave Lake Pulp in Slave Lake; and Alberta Newsprint Company in Whitecourt. The new bleached kraft pulp mills are Daishowa-Marubeni International near Peace River and the Mitsubishi-controlled Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries near Athabasca.
4. Forest industries pay the Alberta government between 25 cents and \$2.50 per cubic metre for timber cut for pulp in their Crown forest concessions. (See 18 October 1995, letter from the Director, Forest Management Division, Land and Forest Service, Alberta Environmental Protection.) In 1997, Alpac pays 46 cents per cubic metre for pulpwood. According to an Alpac representative, 3.2 aspen trees would equal a cubic metre; therefore, each aspen logged is worth about 14 cents in stumpage fees paid to the government. Furthermore, a seven-axle logging truck hauling 30 tonnes of poplar (32 cubic metres) would cost Alpac approximately \$14.72 in stumpage fees. Alpac is licensed to process 2.7 million cubic metres of timber annually.
5. The Alberta government committed more than \$1.35 billion in financial assistance to the forest industry. See Pratt, L. and Urquhart, I., *The Last Great Forest: Japanese Multinationals and Alberta's Northern Forests*, NeWest Press, Edmonton, 1994, pp.4-7.
6. Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc. is owned by a joint venture partnership comprising Mitsubishi (41 per cent), Honshu Paper Co. (11 per cent), Hokuetsu Paper (5 per cent), Kanzaki Paper Canada Inc (25 per cent) and public shareholders (18 per cent). See Crestbrook Forest Industries, Ltd., *Final Prospectus*, 29 October 1991.
7. See Richardson, M., Sherman, J. and Gismond, M., *Winning Back the Words: Confronting Experts in an Environmental Public Hearing*, Garamond Press, Toronto, 1993. In March 1990, the EIA Review Board recommended that the proposed pulp mill not be approved "at that time", citing the need for further study of its health and environmental effects. The Alberta government and the company argued that the report was biased and inaccurate; the government approved the mill in December of that year.
8. Rowe, S., "Technology and Ecology," *Home Place: Essays on Ecology*, NeWest Press, Edmonton, 1990, p.68.
9. Author interview, April 1994. For more detail of the impacts of this mill and how people talked about their concerns, see Richardson, M., Sherman, J. and Gismond, M., op. cit. 7.
10. For an analysis of Alpac's company newsletter, *Forest Landscape*, see Sherman, J. and Gismond, M., "Jock Talk, Goldfish, Horse Logging and Star Wars: How a Pulp Company communicates a Green Image," *Alternatives Journal* 23, No.1 (1997).
11. *Forest Landscape*, 30 April 1993, p.4.
12. See Sherman, J., Gismond, M. and Richardson, M., "Not Directly Affected: Using the Law to Close the Door on Environmentalists," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 31, no. 1, Spring 1996, pp.102-118.
13. A percentage of timber fee royalties paid by the forest industry to the Alberta government is deposited into the Forest Resource Improvement Program (FRIP). The government anticipates that FRIP will receive \$13 million annually. This money is distributed to the contributing companies for forestry-related projects. FRIP information was provided to the author by the Minister of Alberta Environmental Protection.
14. Ninety per cent funded by taxpayers, the Sustainable Forest Management Centre is promoted as a \$20 million partnership of industry, university, and government to produce a research consortium that will drive the policy decision making process. The key theme of the Centre's recent international conference on sustainable forest management seemed to be that technological expertise will define what is good for the forests.

# Development as Colonialism

by

Edward Goldsmith

*The massive effort to develop the Third World in the years since the Second World War was not motivated by purely philanthropic considerations, but by the need to bring the Third World into the orbit of the Western trading system in order to create an ever-expanding market for the West's goods and services and to gain a source of cheap labour and raw materials for its industries. This was also the goal of colonialism, especially during its last phase which started in the 1870s. For that reason, there is a striking continuity between the colonial era and the era of development, both in the methods used to achieve their common goal and in the social and ecological consequences of applying them. With the development of the global economy, we are entering a new era of corporate colonialism that could be more ruthless than the colonialism that preceded it.*

It is customary to trace the origin of the idea of development to a statement made by US President Harry Truman in 1949, who, in his inauguration speech before Congress, drew the attention of his audience to conditions in poorer countries and defined them for the first time as "underdeveloped areas". Truman may have formulated the idea of development in a new way, but it is an old idea, and the path along which it is leading the countries of the Third World is a well-trodden one.

As François Partant, the French banker-turned-archcritic of development, has put it:

"The developed nations have discovered for themselves a new mission — to help the Third World advance along the road to development . . . which is nothing more than the road on which the West has guided the rest of humanity for several centuries."<sup>1</sup>

The thesis of this article is that Partant was right. *Development* is just a new word for what Marxists call *imperialism* and what we can loosely refer to as *colonialism* — a more familiar and less loaded term.

A quick look at the situation in the Third World today undoubtedly reveals the disquieting continuity between the colonial era and the era of development. There has been no attempt by the governments of the newly-independent countries to re-draw their frontiers. No attempt has been made to restore precolonial cultural patterns. With regards to the key issues of land use, the colonial pattern has also been maintained. As Randall Baker notes, "Essentially the story is one of continuity",<sup>2</sup> while the peasants, who as Erich Jacoby writes, "identified the struggle for national independence with the fight for land" never recovered their land. "National independence simply led to its take-over by a new brand of colonialists".

## Same Goals

If development and colonialism (at least, in its last phase from the 1870s onwards) are the same process under a different name, it is largely that they share the same goal. This goal was explicitly stated by its main promoters. For instance, Cecil

Rhodes — Britain's most famous promoter of colonialism in the 1890s — declared that:

"We must find new lands from which we can easily obtain raw materials and at the same time exploit the cheap slave labour that is available from the natives of the colonies. The colonies would also provide a dumping ground for the surplus goods produced in our factories".

Similar sentiments were expressed openly during the late 1800s by Lord Lugard, the English governor of Nigeria, and by former French president Jules Ferry.

But many countries in Asia and elsewhere were simply not willing to allow Western powers access to their markets or to the cheap labour and raw materials required. Nor were they willing to allow corporations to operate on their territory and undertake large-scale development projects such as road building and mining.

In Asia a small number of states were eventually bullied into complying with Western demands. Thus, in 1855, Siam signed a treaty with Britain, as did Annam with France in 1862. However, China was not interested, and two wars had to be fought before it could be persuaded to open its ports to British and French trade. Japan also refused, and only the threat of an American naval bombardment persuaded its government to open its ports to Western trade.

By 1880, European powers had obtained access to the markets of most of Asia's coastal regions, having negotiated special conditions for expatriate residents, such as greater freedom of activity within the countries concerned and the right to build railways and set up enterprises inland.

However, just as is the case today, commercial interests continued to demand and often obtained ever more comprehensive concessions, creating ever more favourable conditions for European corporations. Eventually, in China, Western commercial activities, as Harry Magdoff notes, largely "escaped China's laws and tax collections. Foreign settlements had their own police forces and tax systems, and ran their own affairs independently of nominally sovereign China" — a situation reminiscent of what goes on today in the Third World's Free Trade Zones. "At the same time, the opium trade which had been forced

on the Chinese government militarily was legalized, customs duties reduced, foreign gunboats patrolled China's rivers and foreigners were placed on customs-collection staffs to ensure that China would pay the indemnities imposed by various treaties".<sup>3</sup>

In Egypt, Britain and France managed to obtain even more favourable conditions for their commercial enterprises by imposing the famous "capitulations" on the Ottoman sultan which provided all sorts of concessions to foreigners operating within his empire. In Egypt, they could import goods at the price they saw fit, they were largely exempt from taxes and constituted a powerful pressure group well capable of defending its commercial interests and of ensuring that the interest on the Egyptian bonds of which they were the principal holders was regularly paid. Throughout the non-industrial world, it was only if such conditions could no longer be enforced, usually when a new nationalist or populist government came to power, that formal annexation was resorted to. As D.K. Fieldhouse puts it, "colonialism was not a preference but a last resort".<sup>4</sup>

D.C. Platt, another contemporary student of nineteenth-century colonialism, adds that colonialism was necessary "to establish a legal framework in which capitalist relations could operate". If no new colonies were created in Latin America in the late nineteenth century, it is largely because a legal system "which was sufficiently stable for trade to continue was already in existence". This was not so in Africa where the only way to create the requisite conditions was by establishing colonial control.<sup>5</sup>

Slowly, as traditional society disintegrated under the impact of colonialism and the spread of Western values, and as the subsistence economy was replaced by the market economy on which the exploding urban population grew increasingly dependent, the task of maintaining the optimum conditions for Western trade and penetration became correspondingly easier. As a result, says Fieldhouse, by the mid-twentieth century:

"European merchants and investors could operate satisfactorily within the political framework provided by most reconstructed indigenous states as their predecessors would have preferred to operate a century earlier but without facing those problems which had once made formal empire a necessary expedient".<sup>6</sup>

In other words, formal colonialism came to an end not because the colonial powers had decided to forego the economic advantages it provided, but because, in the new conditions, these could now largely be obtained by more politically acceptable and more effective methods.

## The "Level" Playing Field

This was probably clear to the foreign policy professionals and heads of large corporations that began meeting in Washington DC in 1939, under the aegis of the US Council on Foreign Relations to discuss how the postwar, postcolonialist world economy could best be shaped in order to satisfy US commercial interests.

In 1941, the Council formulated the concept of "the Grand Area" — that area of the world that the United States would have "to dominate economically and militarily" to achieve its purposes, and which would have to include most of the Western hemisphere, what remained of the British Empire, the Dutch East Indies, China and Japan — and which could be expanded as circumstances allowed.

The Department of State was also thinking along these lines and created its own Advisory Committee on Post War Foreign Policy. Like the Council, with which it was in close contact, it was committed to the idea of creating a vast economic empire that would provide US corporations with the export markets they required and the necessary sources of cheap raw materials. Economic development was the means for achieving this goal and it was by promoting free trade that this could be maximized.

Free trade is made out to involve competition on "a level playing field", and nothing could seem fairer. However, when the strong confront the weak on a level playing field, the result is a foregone conclusion, as it was at the Bretton Woods conference in 1944 when the Allies set up the World Bank and the IMF. (The GATT was set up four years later.) At the time of that conference, in the twilight of the Second World War, the United States totally dominated the world politico-economic scene; the European industrial powers had been ruined by the war, their economies lying in tatters, and Japan had been conquered and humiliated.

We must not forget that a century earlier, it was Britain that was preaching free trade to the rest of the world, and for the same reasons. At that time, Britain effectively dominated the world economy. Not only was a quarter of the world's terrestrial surface under Britain's direct imperial control, not only did its navy control the seas, but the City of London was the world's financial centre and was capable of financing the industrial expansion that free trade would make possible. Besides, according to Hobsbawm, Britain already produced about two-thirds of the world's coal, perhaps about half its iron, five-sevenths of its steel, half of its factory-produced cotton cloth, forty per cent (in value) of its hardware and a little less than one-third of its manufactures. Labour in Britain was also cheap and plentiful, for the population had more than trebled since the beginning of the industrial revolution and had accumulated in the cities while there was little social regulation to protect the rights of the workers.

In such conditions, Britain was incomparably more "competitive" than its rivals and free trade was clearly the right vehicle for achieving its commercial goals. As George Lichtheim, another well-known student of imperialism, puts it:

"A country whose industries could undersell those of its competitors was favourably placed to preach the universal adoption of free trade, and so it did — to the detriment of those among its rivals who lacked the wit or the power to set up protective barriers behind which they could themselves industrialize at a pace that suited them".<sup>7</sup>

As a result, between 1860 and 1873, Britain succeeded in creating something not too far removed from what Hobsbawm refers to as "an all embracing world system of virtually unrestricted flows of capital, labour and goods", though clearly on nothing like the scale that this is being achieved today after the signature of the GATT Uruguay Round Agreement. Only the United States remained systematically protectionist, though it reduced its duties in 1832 to 1860 and again between 1861 and 1865 after the Civil War.

By the 1870s, Britain had lost its competitive edge over its rivals. Partly as a result, British exports declined considerably between 1873 and 1890, and again towards the end of the century. At the same time, between the 1870s and 1890s, there were prolonged economic depressions, which also weakened the belief in free trade. Tariffs were raised in most European countries, especially in the 1890s, though not in Belgium, The

Netherlands or Britain. Companies now found their existing markets reduced by these factors and started looking abroad towards the markets of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific, which, with the development of faster and more spacious steamships, had become much more accessible. As Fieldhouse notes, if free trade did not work, the answer was to take over those countries where goods could be sold at a profit without having to worry about competition from more efficient European countries.<sup>8</sup> There followed a veritable scramble for colonies. In 1878, 67 per cent of the world's terrestrial area had been colonised by Europeans. By 1914, the figure had risen to 84.4 per cent.

## Setting up Indigenous Elites

The most effective means of colonising Third World countries is undoubtedly to set up a Westernized elite hooked on economic development, a process which this elite is willing to promote regardless of its adverse effects on the vast majority of its fellow citizens. This has now been very effectively achieved, and, as a result, the interests of Third World governments today, as François Partant says, are "largely antagonistic to those of the bulk of their countrymen". The Third World elites are in fact the West's representatives in the countries they dominate, probably to the same extent as were the colonial administrators that they have supplanted.

The need to create such an elite was, of course, well known to the Western powers during the colonial era. During the debate in British political circles after the 1857 Indian Mutiny, the main question at issue was whether an Anglicized elite favourable to British commercial interests could be created in time to prevent further uprisings. If not, it was generally conceded, formal occupation would have to be maintained indefinitely.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, the elite must be suitably armed if it is to impose economic development on the population, since it must necessarily lead to the expropriation and impoverishment of a very large number of people. Today, this is one of the main objects of our so-called aid programmes, some two-thirds of US aid taking the form of "security assistance". This includes military training, arms and cash transfers to governments that are regarded as defending US interests.

Even food aid provided by the US is security-related. It falls into two categories: Title 1 and Title 2. Most of it is in the former category and consists of low-interest loans to Third World governments "which use their money to buy US food and then sell it on the open market, keeping the proceeds". Such food aid is thus "little more than another transfer of funds to governments considered strategically important". Food aid falling in the category of Title 2 can also help make countries increasingly dependent on US aid for their very sustenance. US politicians have openly stated that food is a political weapon, Vice President Hubert Humphrey once declaring:

"If you are looking for a way to get people to lean on you and to be dependent on you, in terms of their co-operating with you, it seems to me that food-dependence would be terrific".

Most of the governments that have received security aid are military dictatorships such as those in Nicaragua, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Peru in the 1960s and 1970s. These faced no external threats. It was not to defend themselves against a potential foreign invader that all this security aid was required,

but to impose economic development on people who had already become impoverished by it and whom it could only still further impoverish.

## Engineering Coups d'Etat

Of course, when a government unfavourable to Western commercial interests somehow succeeds in coming to power, Western governments will go to any ends to remove it from office. Thus in 1954, the United States organized the military overthrow of the government of Guatemala that had nationalized US-owned banana plantations, and it did the same to the government of José Goulart in Brazil in the 1960s. Goulart had sought to impose a limit to the amount of money foreign corporations could take out of the country. Worse still, he initiated a land reform programme which among other things meant taking back control of the country's mineral resources from Western transnational corporations. He also gave workers a pay rise, thereby increasing the cost of labour to the transnationals, in defiance of IMF instructions. As a result of Goulart's actions, aid was cut off, and an alliance of the CIA, US investors and Brazil's landowning elite engineered a coup d'état which bought a military junta into power which in effect ran the country until very recently. The military, of course, reversed Goulart's reforms and reintroduced precisely those conditions which best satisfied US commercial interests.

During the colonial era, the colonial powers constantly sent in troops to protect compliant regimes against popular revolts. Both France and Britain, for instance, participated in the suppression of the populist Tai Ping rebellion in China and later the xenophobic Boxer Rebellion. Britain also sent troops to help the Khedive Ismail put down a nationalist revolt in Egypt.

The Western powers still do not hesitate to do this if there is no other way of achieving their goals. Thus, when President Mba, the dictator of Gabon, was threatened by a military coup in 1964, French paratroopers immediately flew in to restore him to power, while the coup leaders were imprisoned in spite of widespread popular demonstrations. Significantly, the paratroopers remained to protect Mba's successor, President Bongo,

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whom Pierre Pean regards as "the choice of a powerful group of Frenchmen whose influence in Gabon continued after independence" against any further threats to him and hence to French commercial interests. Neither the United Kingdom nor the United States has been any less scrupulous in this respect.<sup>10</sup>

## Killing the Domestic Economy

If the role of the colonies was to provide a market for the produce of the colonial countries and a source of cheap labour and raw materials for their industries, then it could not at the same time provide a market for local produce and a source of labour and raw materials for its own productive enterprises.

In effect, the colonial powers were committed to destroying the domestic economy of the countries that they had colonized. This was explicitly noted by a delegate to the French Association of Industry and Agriculture in March 1899. For him, the aim of the colonial power must be:

"To discourage in advance any signs of industrial development in our colonies, to oblige our overseas possessions to look exclusively to the mother country for manufactured products and to fulfil, by force if necessary, their natural function, that of a market reserved by right to the mother country's industry."<sup>11</sup>

The favourite method was to tax whatever the colonials particularly liked to consume. In Vietnam, it was salt, opium and alcohol, and a minimum level of consumption was set for each region, village leaders being rewarded for exceeding the quota. In the Sudan, it was crops, animals, houses and households that were singled out for taxation. Of course, there is no way in which local people could meet their tax obligations save by agreeing to work in the mines and plantations or growing cash crops for sale to their colonial masters.

At the same time, every effort was made to destroy indigenous crafts, particularly in the production of textiles. In this way, the British destroyed the textile industry in India, which had been the very lifeblood of the village economy throughout the country. In French West Africa in 1905, special levies were imposed on all goods which did not come from France or a region under French control; this forced up the price of local products and ruined local artisans and traders.

Economic development after the Second World War, on the other hand, was theoretically supposed to help the ex-colonial countries build up their own domestic economies, but such development, by its very nature, could not occur. At the very start, the colonies were forced to reorientate their production towards exports — what is more, towards an exceedingly small range of exports.

A typical example is sugar. Under World Bank influence, vast areas in the Third World were converted to sugarcane cultivation for export, without any consideration for whether a market for sugar existed abroad. In fact, the United States has continued to apply very strict quotas on sugar imports while continuing to countenance the production of corn syrup and the increasing use of artificial sweeteners, while the European Union has persisted in subsidizing sugar beet production among its member states. However, none of these considerations have prevented the World Bank from encouraging the production of ever more sugar for export. Cynics might maintain that this was the object of the operation in the first place since, after all, it was implicitly at least part of the World Bank's original brief to

encourage the production of cheap resources for the Western market.

At the same time, Third World countries that have sought to diversify their production have immediately been accused of practising "import substitution" — a heinous crime in the eyes of today's economists, in particular those who are influential within the Bretton Woods institutions. Indeed, import substitution is precisely what Third World countries must promise not to undertake if they hope to obtain a structural adjustment loan. Not surprisingly, as Walden Bello and Shea Cunningham note in their book, *Dark Victory*, when a country is subjected to such a programme, its exports clearly tend to rise, but not necessarily its GNP, because of the inevitable contraction on its domestic economy.<sup>12</sup>

When Third World countries have nevertheless succeeded in developing a modest domestic economy, the World Bank and IMF, in league with US government officials and transnational corporations, have set out systematically to destroy it, a process that could not be better documented, in the case of the Philippines than by Walden Bello, David Kinley and Elaine Elinson in their book *Development Debacle: The World Bank in the Philippines*.<sup>13</sup> The book, based on 800 leaked World Bank documents, shows how that institution, in league with the CIA and other US agencies, set out purposefully to destroy the domestic economy of the Philippines so as to create in that country those conditions that best favoured TNC interests. Achieving this goal first meant sacrificing the peasantry and transforming it into a rural proletariat. The standard of living of the working class had to be reduced, since, as a Bank spokesman said at the time, "wage restraint" is required to encourage "the growth of employment and investment". Meanwhile, the local middle class that depended for its very existence on the domestic economy had to be destroyed to make way for a new cosmopolitan middle class dependent on the TNCs and the global economy.

Clearly, such a drastic social and economic transformation of an already partly developed country could not be achieved by a democratic government. This explains why it was decided to provide dictator Ferdinand Marcos with the funding he required to build up an army capable of imposing such a programme by force. As Marcos put it at the time, "Only an authoritarian system will be able to carry forth the mass consent and to exercise the authority necessary to implement new values, measures and sacrifices".<sup>14</sup> In essence, this is what he did. Martial law was declared by Marcos, and the people were bludgeoned into accepting the transformation of their society, economy and natural environment.

## Lending Money

Lending large sums of money to the compliant elite of a non-industrial country is by far the most effective method of controlling it and thereby of obtaining access to its market and its natural resources. However, if the government is to be capable of repaying the money borrowed or of paying interest on it, the money must be invested in enterprises that are competitive on the international market, for interest payments must be paid in foreign exchange, usually US dollars. Unfortunately, this is extremely unlikely to occur. To begin with, anything up to 20 per cent of the money will be skimmed off in the form of kickbacks to various politicians and officials. Some of the

money will be spent on useless consumer products, mainly luxury goods for the elite; much will be spent on infrastructural projects which will not generate a direct return for a very long time, if at all; and more will go on armaments to enable the government to put down uprisings by the victims of the development process. So the countries that borrow large sums of money must necessarily fall into unrepayable debt. Once in debt, rather than cutting down on expenditure, they inevitably become hooked on further and further borrowing and thus fall under the power of the lending countries. At this point the latter, through the IMF, can institutionalize their control over a debtor country through structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) that, in effect, take over its economy to ensure that interest payments are regularly met. This arrangement leaves the borrowing country as a *de facto* colony.

This technique of informal colonialist control is by no means new. It was resorted to during the colonial era, as in Tunisia and Egypt in the mid-1800s. In the case of Tunisia, a lot of money was lent to the Bey of Tunis to build up an army so as to loosen his ties with Turkey, not a particularly profitable investment — and, of course, it did not take long before the Bey was unable to pay interest on the loan. Much of the money was borrowed in the form of bonds and most of the bondholders were French. The latter viewed the situation with considerable alarm and appealed to the French Foreign Office for help, which was granted. The Bey's economy was subjected to financial supervision "a technique frequently used by the British and French governments in Latin America" just as it still is today.

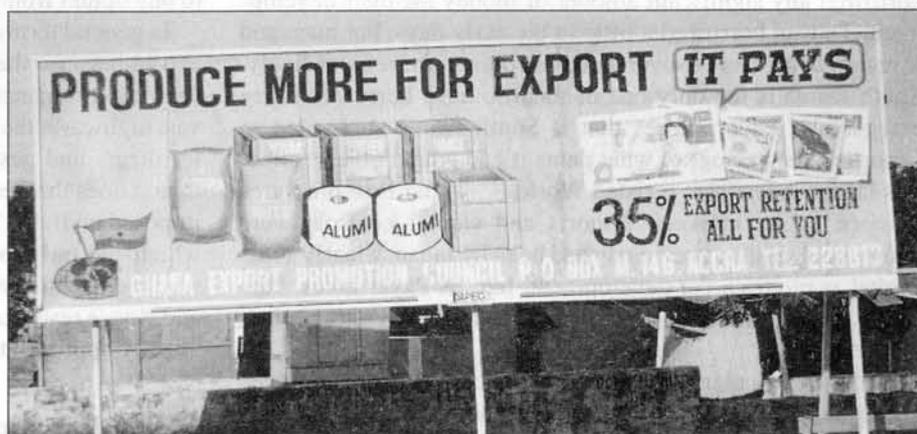
A joint Franco-Tunisian commission was set up in 1869 for such supervision and the conditions it imposed were draconian to say the least. It had the right to collect and distribute the state's revenues so as to assure that the shareholders had precedence over any other debtors. (Significantly, President Clinton recently imposed a similar deal on the Mexican government as a condition for lending it the billions of dollars required to bail out its Wall Street creditors.)

From 1869 onwards, Tunisian "public finance and therefore effectively the government were now under alien control".<sup>15</sup> Tunisia had been reduced to the status of an informal colony. To pay interest on the loans, the Bey had to increase taxes, which gave rise to a popular movement. In order to secure and protect its interests, France finally annexed Tunisia in 1881.

The course of events in Egypt was similar though more complex. Egypt involved itself in trade with Europe as early as the 1830s. During the 1850s, European banks were set up in Alexandria. The government spent a lot of money on modernizing the army and the bureaucracy and also on public works, including the Suez Canal. Inevitably, expenditure soon outstripped receipts and the Khedive was forced to borrow heavily from foreign bankers and eventually to issue Treasury Bonds. In 1862, as Roger Owen notes, Egypt first began to issue foreign loans and by 1875 the country was heavily in debt to European banks.<sup>16</sup> Like Third World governments today, the Egyptian government was forced to increase production for export — in this case, cotton and sugar — in order to earn the foreign currency with which to pay interest on its debts. This meant creating bigger and bigger plantations and, as usual,

expropriating the peasants. The government's efforts, as usual too, were thwarted by foreign competition, in this case by subsidized sugar exports from Russia and Germany.

Egypt's debts rose massively from 3 to 68 million Egyptian pounds. In the 1870s, more than two-thirds of the government's income had to be sent abroad as interest, which is more than most Third World countries have to pay to service their present debts. In 1877, only about ten per cent of the country's revenue



The Ghana Export Promotion Council encourages the export of aluminium, kola nuts, copra, yams, leather products, handicrafts and ceramics.

was left for domestic expenditure. The Khedive had to resort to heavy short-term borrowing and was forced to sell his shares in the Suez Canal company. In 1876, he suspended payments on Treasury bills. Egypt was bankrupt, just as Tunisia had been in 1869. The bondholders then appealed to the British and French governments for support and got it. It took the form of the financial supervision of Egypt along Tunisian lines — very much as debtor countries are supervised by the IMF and the World Bank today.

This failed and more direct intervention was necessary. A Commission of Enquiry into Egypt's Financial Affairs was set up, forcing the Khedive to accept two European Ministers in his cabinet to implement the recommendations of the report. This failed too. All sorts of hopeless solutions were proposed until the country was formally annexed by Britain in 1882. For Owen, "the loss of economic independence not only preceded the loss of political independence it also prepared the way for it".<sup>17</sup> Magdoff sums up the Egyptian experience very neatly:

"Egypt's loss of sovereignty resembled somewhat the same process in Tunisia: easy credit extended by Europeans, bankruptcy, increasing control by foreign-debt commissioners, [milking] the peasants to raise revenue for servicing the debt, growing independence movements, and finally military conquest by a foreign power."<sup>18</sup>

During the era of development, we have perfected the technique of lending money to Third World countries as a means of controlling them. Much of it now goes euphemistically under the name of development "aid". To justify aid, "poverty" in the Third World is made out to be but a symptom of the latter's "underdevelopment", development thereby being taken to provide an automatic cure. However, Third World countries are also seen to be seriously hampered in their development efforts because they have lacked the requisite capital and technical knowledge — precisely, as Cheryl Payer notes, "what the Western corporative system is capable of providing."<sup>19</sup> She quotes Galbraith, who puts it, "Having the vaccine, we have invented smallpox".

There is, of course, no reason to believe that borrowing

money from abroad, even at concessionary rates, is a means of achieving economic success, let alone of eliminating poverty. Nor should we believe that the money borrowed can then be paid off by increasing exports. The countries that are held up as a model for Third World countries to emulate are the so called "Tigers" — the Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs) — which include South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong. Neither Singapore nor Hong Kong, as Payer notes, borrowed any significant amount of money for their development. Taiwan borrowed a little in the early days, but managed to resist US pressure to overspend and borrow more extensively. South Korea is the only one of them to have borrowed fairly extensively. Payer argues that if South Korea succeeded in exporting its way out of what debts it had where others failed, it is largely because it resisted World Bank and IMF pressures to open up its markets. Imports and capital controls were maintained, as they previously had been by Japan. Clearly some capital is required for development, but, as Payer notes, "the truly scarce commodity in the world today is not capital, it is markets".

Aid is a particularly good instrument for opening up markets, because much of it is officially tied to purchasing goods from donor countries. In the same way that colonies were once forced to buy their manufactured goods from the country that had colonized them, aid recipients must spend much of the money that is supposed to relieve their poverty and malnutrition on irrelevant manufactured goods that are produced by the donor countries. If they dare refuse, they are immediately brought to heel by the simple expedient of threatening to cut off the aid on which they tend to become highly dependent.

Thus, a few years ago the British government threatened to cut off aid to the government of India if it did not go ahead with its plan to buy 21 large helicopters, costing £60 million, from a British corporation called Westland — an effort, it is encouraging to note, that was bitterly opposed by responsible elements within Britain's Overseas Development Agency (ODA). This is but a more sophisticated method of achieving what Britain achieved in the previous century when it went to war with China so as to force that country to buy opium from British merchants in India.

In general terms, aid cannot be of use to the poor of the Third World because they necessarily depend on the local economy for their sustenance, and the local economy does not require the vast highways, the big dams, or for that matter the hybrid seeds, fertilizers and pesticides of the Green Revolution, any more than it does the fleet of helicopters that the British government imposed on India. These are only of use to the global economy, which can only expand at the expense of the local economy, whose environment it degrades, whose communities it destroys and whose resources (land, forests, water and labour) it systematically appropriates for its own use.

### World Bank and Colonialism

Significantly at the beginning of the era of development in the 1940s and early 1950s, the Third World countries showed practically no interest in borrowing money from the foremost aid agency, the World Bank. This was interpreted as demonstrating that they lacked the necessary technical and planning skills to draw up suitable projects. The answer was to provide them with these skills and thereby create a demand for World Bank loans. Bruce Rich, in his book *Mortgaging the Earth*, states how in the 1950s a primary focus of Bank policy was "institution building".<sup>20</sup> This usually took the form of creating largely autonomous Bank-dominated agencies within Third World governments, responsible for undertaking large-scale projects for which World Bank funding would be continually solicited. Over the years, such agencies have been set up in most Third World countries. For instance, in Thailand, they include the State Electricity Corporation (EGAT), the Industrial Finance Corporation (IFCT) and the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB). Between them, these institutions have so far obtained 199 World Bank loans of a total of some \$4,374 billion. The World Bank also trains their officials at its Economic Development Institute (EDI) in World Bank techniques for project appraisal and long-term country lending strategies. Many of this institution's ex-alumni have achieved positions of great power in their respective countries. Some have become Prime Ministers or Ministers for Planning and Finance. Rich sees these agencies as vast "patronage networks". They have provided the Bank "with critical power bases through which it has been able to transform national economies, indeed whole societies, without the bothersome procedures of democratic review and discussion of alternatives", and have thereby given the Bank "some of the powers of a surrogate government".

These conclusions are consistent with those of a study undertaken by the International Legal Centre in New York on the Bank's involvement in Colombia between 1949-1972. It concluded that the autonomous agencies set up in that country by the Bank had a profound impact on the political structure and social evolution of the entire country, weakening "the political party system and minimizing the roles of the legislature and of

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the judiciary". Colombia had in effect become a World Bank colony or rather a colony of the US and the other industrial countries that control the Bank.

The IMF, like the World Bank, has done everything it could to persuade countries that still had low debt burdens to borrow more and more money. Payer goes so far as to say that "such countries were wooed by the Fund with what might be called 'special introductory offers'" — loans with only light conditionality attached. Thus, Tanzania since its independence, refused to allow TNCs to operate within its borders. However, in 1974, it received an IMF loan with light conditionality to help it over a temporary crisis. By 1977, the crisis was over and Tanzania had built up "a comfortable 'cushion' of foreign exchange reserves". At this point, the IMF and the Bank advised the Tanzanian government "that its reserves were embarrassingly large and might lead the country's aid donors to reduce their contributions". A poor country should not "hoard its reserves but spend them in order to develop more rapidly". The government was induced to abolish its foreign exchange budgeting system, called "confinement", and lift controls on imports. The Tanzanian officials were convinced that the IMF and the Bank were "virtually creating the crisis which gave them power over the Tanzanian government".<sup>21</sup> They were probably right.

Cheryl Payer notes that even after the oil price rise in 1973, instead of making it clear to debtor countries that their chances of exporting their way out of their growing debts were now dimmer than they had ever been, they went on encouraging them to borrow still more money.

When President Mobutu of Zaire failed to service his country's debts in the 1970s, the IMF installed a representative, Erwin Blumenthal, in a key position in his Central Bank. Two years later, in 1980, Blumenthal resigned on the grounds that corruption in Zaire was so "sordid and pernicious" that there was "no chance, I repeat no chance" that its numerous creditors would recover their loans, the money lent merely serving to swell Mobutu's personal fortune abroad and to import luxuries for his cronies. However, even this did not prevent the IMF, only a few months after Blumenthal's report, from granting Zaire the largest loan ever given to an African country.

Michel Chossudovsky notes just how drastic is the control exerted by the World Bank and the IMF over the economic policies of debtor countries. He explains that countries wishing to borrow money under a structural adjustment programme have to start off by providing evidence to the IMF that it is "seriously committed to economic reform". Before it does this, no actual loan negotiation can be held.

Once a loan has actually been granted the country's performance is monitored four times a year by the IMF and the World Bank and if the reforms are not considered to be "on track", disbursements are immediately cut off, the country is put on a blacklist and runs the risk of reprisals in trade and capital flows. Many debtor countries are forced to write "policy framework papers" under the close supervision of the IMF and the World Bank. The latter is closely involved with the implementation of the programme through its country representative office and its many technical missions. In addition, it has representatives in the country's key ministries such as Health, Education, Industry, Agriculture, Transportation and the Environment, whose policies fall increasingly under its jurisdiction. The Bank also closely monitors public expenditure in each of the government departments under its supervision via its Public Expenditure Review (PEP).

Significantly, the World Bank's job will be greatly facilitated by the fact that many of the key positions in the government of the debtor countries are likely to be ex-World Bank executives, who have been imbued with that institution's economic philosophy and trained to implement its policies. In India, during the recent government of Narasimha Rao, no fewer than 21 key positions in India's Ministries of Trade and Finance were occupied by ex-World Bank executives. Neo-colonial control is indeed incomparably more sophisticated than that exerted by the colonial powers of old.

## The New Corporate Colonialism

After the debt crisis of the early 1980s, there was very little private investment into the Third World and the money provided by the multinational development banks served above all to enable debtor countries to continue paying interest on loans contracted with the private banks.

In the last few years, all this has changed. Private investment in the Third World has increased by leaps and bounds, and it now could be as much as \$400 billion a year — about half of that money representing long-term investments, the other half being made up of short-term speculative funds. This amount dwarfs the World Bank's until-now determinant contribution of about \$23 billion per year and has triggered off stock-exchange booms in the so-called "emergent markets", though admittedly these have been interspersed with crashes such as the one that occurred in Mexico in 1994-1995.

The massive increase in private investment has occurred partly because of the mismatch between the vast sums of US money seeking investment opportunities and the availability of such outlets in the industrialized world. Also, conditions have now been created worldwide that could not be more favourable to TNC interests. Not only have they been provided throughout the world with an abundant unskilled labour force, but also with highly-skilled technical and managerial staff at an insignificant fraction of what they would cost in the industrialized world. TNCs also now have access to whatever finance they require and to the latest computer-based technology and management methods.

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Furthermore, as a result of the GATT Uruguay Round, Third World countries are under obligation to accept all investments from abroad: give "national treatment" to any foreign corporations that establishes itself within their borders, whether it is involved in agriculture, mining, manufacturing or the service industries; eliminate tariffs and import quotas on all goods, including agricultural produce; and abolish non-tariff barriers, such as regulations to protect labour, health, or the environment that might conceivably increase corporate costs.

Conditions more favourable to the immediate interests of TNCs could scarcely be imagined. Many of these conditions were imposed during GATT negotiations by the US delegation and by the delegations of the European Union and Japan who presumably believed the vast bulk of the TNCs were and always would be located in such countries.

However, it seems more and more that this may change. Even strong national governments are no longer able to exert any sort of control over TNCs. If a country passes a law that TNCs regard as a hindrance to their further expansion, they merely threaten to leave and establish themselves elsewhere, which, under the new conditions, they can do at the drop of a hat. Indeed, TNCs are now free to scour the globe and establish themselves wherever labour is the cheapest, environmental laws are the laxest, fiscal regimes are the least onerous, and subsidies are the most generous. They need no longer be swayed by sentimental attachments to any nation state.

Already Volvo, one of the leading Swedish corporations, is Swedish in name only, having shifted nearly all of its operations abroad. What, we might ask, is to prevent General Motors or IBM from becoming German or Chinese, or from merely shifting their headquarters from one country to another as and when it becomes advantageous for them to do so? And what is to prevent them from becoming even larger, more powerful, and less controllable than they already are?

Consider that a monopoly is usually defined as a situation in which more than 40 per cent of the market for a particular commodity is controlled by less than four or five corporations. This is already the case for most of the commodities traded on the world market today and will only become more pronounced as there is no way in which a national government can impose antitrust legislation on stateless TNCs. Nor can the WTO, which they control, be counted on to do so.

As a few giant TNCs consolidate their respective control in the worldwide sale of a particular commodity, so it is likely to become ever less advantageous for them to compete with each other. Competition mainly reduces profit margins; co-operation, on the other hand, enables them to increase their hold over governments and to deal with the inevitable opposition from

populist and nationalist movements and others who might seek to restrict corporate power and influence.

Already, TNCs are resorting to more and more vertical integration, thereby controlling virtually every step in the economic process in their respective fields, from the mining of minerals, to the construction of the factories, the production of goods; their storage, their shipping to subsidiaries in other countries, and their wholesaling and retailing to local consumers. In this way, TNCs are effectively insulating themselves from market forces and ensuring that it is they themselves, rather than competition from their rivals, that determine, at each step, the prices that are to be charged.<sup>22</sup>

Already, between 20 per cent and 30 per cent of world trade is between TNCs and their subsidiaries. Rather than being real trade, this is but a facet of corporate central planning on a global scale. For Paul Ekins, the British ecological economist, TNCs are becoming "giant areas of bureaucratic planning in an otherwise market economy." He sees a "fundamental similarity between giant corporations and state enterprises. Both use hierarchical command structures to allocate resources within their organizational boundaries rather than the competitive market." What, we might ask, is to prevent 50 per cent, 60 per cent or even 80 per cent of world trade from eventually occurring within such "organizational boundaries"? At present, very little, and as we move relentlessly in this direction, so may we be entering a new era of global corporate central planning, one that will be geared to a new type of colonialism: global corporate colonialism.

The new colonial powers have neither responsibility for, nor accountability to, anybody but their shareholders. They are little more than machines geared to the single goal of increasing their immediate profitability. What is more, TNCs will now have the power to force national governments to defend corporate interests whenever such interests are in conflict with those of the people whose interests the governments have been elected to protect. The new corporate colonialism is thus likely to be more cynical and more ruthless than anything that we have seen so far. It is likely to dispossess, impoverish and marginalize more people, destroy more cultures and cause more environmental devastation than either the colonialism of old or the development of the last 50 years. The only question is: How long can it last? In my opinion, a few years perhaps, or a decade at most, for a global economy that will create misery on such a scale is both aberrant and necessarily short-lived.

This article is an uncut version of a chapter in *The Case Against the Global Economy and for a Turn Toward the Local*, edited by Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith, Sierra Club Books, San Francisco, 1996 (Random House, London, June 1997)

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## Books

### Green Realism?

**THE TRUE STATE OF THE PLANET**, edited by Ron Bailey, Free Press, New York, 1995, \$15.00 (pb), 459pp. ISBN 0-0287 40106

**A MOMENT ON THE EARTH: The Coming Age of Environmental Optimism**, by Gregg Easterbrook, Penguin, Harmondsworth, (Viking, New York), 1995, £9.99/\$14.95 (pb), 745pp. ISBN 0-140 154515

Attacks on green romanticism and environmental pessimism have become weapons of the anti-environmental backlash. Indeed, both liberal and libertarian pundits, not to mention some of the more aggressive corporate public relations departments, have taken to pretending that in the green movement's most fundamentalist corners they have found its truest secrets.

Distinct brands of anti-environmentalism now line bookshops' shelves, although few announce themselves as such. Indeed, the more insidious are costumed as attempts by reasonable men and women to reject the "extremes" and "pessimism" of the past in favour of a new, more balanced, less apocalyptic, all round "better" environmentalism. This enlightened alternative is given the name "realism", or even of "science". The most obvious problem is that in many crucial cases, the science most beloved by anti-greens is typically at variance with the most respected view of the scientific community.

A groundbreaker in this unfortunate milieu was *The True State of the Planet*, a compendium of anti-green anti-science published by the Free Press in partnership

with the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a US right-wing libertarian think-tank whose speciality is attacking greens. Editor Ron Bailey, former writer at *Forbes* magazine (the *Reader's Digest* of the business press) and author of *Eco-Scam: The False Prophets of Ecological Apocalypse*, has done his best and given us what, in the end, must be judged as a representative collection of the strongest anti-green narratives concocted to date.

Put together, packaged with optimism and padded with vague, apparently liberal filler, these narratives form an attack syllabus for the friends of "progress".

Some of them — like Bruce Ames's argument that the bulk of all chemical carcinogens are either natural pesticides (such as spices) or cause no harm if taken selectively like (high-fat foods) — will be familiar to connoisseurs of greenwashing. Some, like Robert Balling's claims that global warming is only a doomsayer's myth, are well-known and bitterly dismissed by the majority of climate scientists. Still others, like Dennis Avery's essay, "Saving the Planet with Pesticides", are formulaic rehashes of old technology-conquers-all fairy tales, in this case the tale of the Green Revolution's boundless capacity to increase grain supplies.

*The True State of the Planet* opens with an essay on "Population, Food and Income" by Nicholas Eberstadt. It is a strong lead, because it plays upon the oldest stupidity of environmental reductionism — the confusion of the biological notion of "overpopulation" with the political problems of poverty and sustainable food production. If ever there was a measure of the environmental movement's confusion, it is that so many greens honestly believe that by soberly intoning that there are just "too many people", they somehow cut across all the moral and political agonies of globalization, rising human migrations, mass extinctions, atmospheric instability and the rest.

In fact, "overpopulation" explains none of these things, and as long as we cling to the notion, we remain confused citizens of an incomprehensible world. This is where Eberstadt comes in. With rigorous disregard for the realities of global poverty, he sounds the collection's theme: even for the world's poorest people, life is rapidly improving, and if only markets were left alone to work their magic, it would inevitably continue to do so.

Such "optimism" is anything but new. The core of neo-liberal dogma is the claim that economic growth will bring pros-

perity to all. And indeed, economist Julian Simon, who long ago found fame by wielding this argument against Paul Ehrlich, is the spiritual godfather of *The True State of the Planet*, his voice echoing in its relentless technological confidence. The forests are in no real danger — in fact, ecosystems are incredibly resilient. Even monocultural tree plantations, far from endangering biodiversity, actually protect wilderness by satisfying the demand for wood. High-tech, high-yield agriculture will feed us all, and produce enough meat to provide even the world's poor with the "better" protein that is the reward of "development". At the same time it will actually reduce the amount of land that has to be allocated to agriculture.

In such a stew as this, lies are not simple things. Around the world, human fertility is dropping rapidly. Today's projections of the likely peak of human population worldwide are far lower than those made even ten years ago.

That's the good news. The bad is that the fertility decline in poor lands has, it seems, been caused by what one team of demographers called "the sharp economic contraction of the late 1970s and early 1980s," and by the widespread realization by people throughout the Third World that with more children, "their standard of living fell."

This is not how it was supposed to be. The most widely accepted theory of demographic transition maintained that "development" would bring security and even affluence, and thus, painlessly, smaller families. Instead, insecurity, urbanization, birth control and the cosmopolitanism of a small world in which people have a clear sense of their bad prospects have stepped in to do the job.

Right-wing optimism about declining human fertility cannot last. Too bad, then, that greens, well-schooled in reducing explosive political issues to biological abstraction, only continue to mumble Malthusian pieties. Too bad that the right has become so adept in manipulating the resulting confusion and in constructing a strategic caricature that seeks to tar the environmental movement as a whole with its fundamentalist excesses. Too bad greens are so rarely able to refute the Big Lie that says that, given only time and free markets, the poor will follow the rich into the kingdom of development.

Meanwhile, another book, *A Moment on the Earth*, weighs in at 745 pages and claims the last word on everything from global warming (no problem) to petro-

chemicals (no problem), from nuclear power (no problem) to deforestation (no problem), from biotechnology (no problem) to extinction (no problem) to God (see page 138). This time, the claims are made not in the service of Thatcherite deregulation, but rather Clintonista liberalism.

The book is the creation of Gregg Easterbrook, a clever journalist with an axe to grind and a finger to the winds. His approach is essentially the same as that of *The True State of the Planet* — to paint environmentalism as a pseudo-religious movement abrim with “transrational” souls who cannot tolerate good news.

But unlike Ron Bailey and company, Easterbrook would be a liberal, an “ecorealist,” a prophet of the “coming age of environmental optimism.” He claims the centre by blithely dismissing the Wise Use movement — the child of right-wing populism and corporate public relations — as a “minor fad” (which it is not) and pointing out that the right has done more exaggerating — “Communists running the State Department, fluoride in the water, nuclear weakness” — than the left.

Easterbrook’s strategy is to speak for “logic” and “rationalism,” to demolish easy targets (he finds plenty and makes up others), to overlook the (copious and often excellent) objections to his arguments and to position himself against green romanticism as the voice of the “new” environmentalism. His very marketable conclusion is that heavy-metal development as usual, with some minor green model changes, is the true path of progress and justice.

Easterbrook welcomes solar power, as long as the price is right. He admits that, unlikely though it is, global warming could be a threat — but says it doesn’t matter because carbon emissions will be brought under control soon when liberal eco-realists find profitable ways to transfer clean technologies to the Third World. In fact, it won’t be long until the ecorealists are boasting of:

“having saved capitalism from itself by curbing environmentally destructive aspects of the market system and compelling corporations to become resource-efficient.”

The rest of us, meanwhile, are advised to relax.

In any case, take these two books for what they are — a gauntlet rudely thrown at environmentalists’ feet. And a glimpse into another world, one in which progress

is not dead, nor the ecosystem threatened, in which greens are, at best, over-zealous cryers, overexcited but useful in waking the community’s more substantial citizens to a difficult but unfrighting day, in which globalization is the name of hope, and public relations is not discussed in front of the children.

And in case you’re wondering, the citizens of this other world are buying plenty of copies of *A Moment on the Earth*.

Tom Athanasiou

Tom Athanasiou is author of *Divided Planet: The Ecology of Rich and Poor*, Little Brown, New York (published in UK as *Slow Reckoning*, Secker & Warburg, London)

## Alberta’s Forests

**THE LAST GREAT FOREST: Japanese Multinationals and Alberta’s Northern Forests**, by Larry Pratt and Ian Urquhart, NeWest Press, (Suite 310, 10359 82nd Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T6E 1Z9, CANADA), 1994, Can\$18.95 (pb), 222pp. ISBN 0-920897-77-0

Local/global issues lie at the heart of contemporary analyses of environmental issues, analyses which frequently focus on regional economic, political, cultural and scientific concerns. A thriving avenue for research into these issues is historical regional studies, of which Larry Pratt’s and Ian Urquhart’s extraordinary book is exemplary.

The book’s title, *The Last Great Forest: Japanese Multinationals and Alberta’s Northern Forests*, provides topical immediacy, the social and ecological locale, and the key political and economic interactions of concern. The central point of the book, however, is that the character of the state and the form, content and interplay of interests within public decision-making together determine the development, sustainability and social character of nature. The authors focus on the state’s mediation of economic processes, social movements and the conditions upon which economic and social reproduction depend.

The great power of *The Last Great Forest* derives from an implicit insistence that none of the issues examined occur independently of one another and that the boundaries of environmental and institutional terms have to be understood

as interactive and semi-permeable. The book presents a set of changing relations between three strands:

- forest “development” strategies in Canada tied to the global forestry industry;
- awareness among environmentalists of the different meanings of nature and “multiple-use” to multinationals, regional businesses, state governments, urban Romantics, rural residents and indigenous peoples; and
- critiques of scientific development and its relation to traditions of local and craft forms of environmental knowledge.

Whether addressing the political economic and ecological history of Alberta’s forest industry, the state’s “visible hand” in the regulatory incentives for multinational forms of forest development, or the struggles over the form of political confrontation, process manipulation and ideological hegemony, Pratt and Urquhart refuse to simplify their analysis. This approach is the great strength of the book as well as the great conundrum that all environmentalists face. The text may be hard to follow in places (especially for non-Albertans), but this is because the history provided by the authors is so robust.

The number of actors, institutions, settings and struggles over the development of Alberta’s northern forests is staggering. Despite the fact that the book is written in clear language, many readers will have to work hard to keep track of who is who when, where and why. Nevertheless, the key issue is that environmental activism is hard and good political ecological research no easier. The difficulties associated with reading the book are, then, only the difficulties faced by all people working for a more sustainable future, a search which includes developing new movement strategies and innovative forms of state politics.

The authors recount the important social and political ecology of Alberta’s evolving exploitation of forest resources, historically of secondary importance behind the boom-and-bust cycles of oil and grains. Here, the difference between the populist rhetoric of rural economic diversification and corporate strategies for extractive industries rooted in global cities become clear. However, Pratt and Urquhart stress that scientism, technophilia and market-oriented solutions are embraced on both sides of the populist-corporatist divide.

This is a pivotal point about environmental and community discourse: uncritical acceptance of the language of science engages environmentalists in developmental terms, particularly when scientific results are ambiguous or underdeveloped. Using these languages can be especially contradictory when populists and environmentalists confront international producers in the context of national state institutions. The commonality of scientific and developmentalist language in such settings veils the radically different approaches to sustainability of environmental aesthetes, populist communitarians, corporate producers and state administrators.

To a great extent, then, *The Last Great Forest* is a story of uneven development: a story where the players are acting on paradigms derived from incompatible operating assumptions. What is most impressive about the work is that the players are, in this finally tragic account, not treated as inflexibly good or evil, educated or ignorant, powerful or powerless. The complexity and ambiguity of the account is not only its greatest strength and greatest difficulty, but is also why it is a hopeful book.

Rather than embracing a conspiratorial interpretation which assumes state and business plot to destroy people and nature, and rather than embracing a romantic vision of the strong defeating the weak, Pratt and Urquhart explore the shifting terrain of political contestation. At different points, they emphasize the importance of conflict, coalitions, institutional access, national political relations, international market conditions, charismatic leadership, aesthetic politics, scientific analysis and ideological control of issues in the media. The account stresses the partial successes of the environmental and community development movements, as well as what must be learned from their overarching failure.

It is only through this kind of synthetic, complex and hopeful work that movements for environmental justice and sustainability can begin to generate the public politics and state policies necessary for a better world. This book provides an education for all of us.

Alan Rudy

Alan Rudy is a Research Associate with the Sociology Department at the University of California Santa Cruz who researches the historical political economy of agriculture and environment in the arid regions of the US South-West.

## Colonial Commodity Racism

**IMPERIAL LEATHER: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest** by Anne McClintock, London and New York, Routledge, 1995, £13.99/\$19.95 (pb) 449 pp. ISBN 0-415-90890-6

*Imperial Leather* is another intervention in the debates on the culture of imperialism that have become increasingly prevalent in the academic disciplines of postcolonial studies and cultural studies since the 1978 publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*.

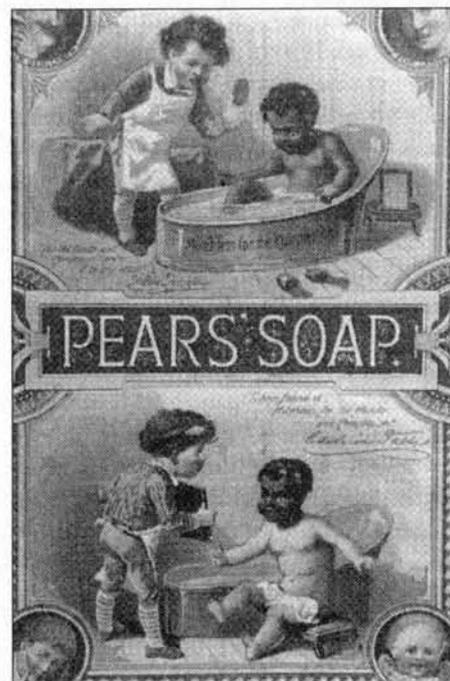
Beginning from the premise that imperialism and the invention of race were fundamental aspects of Western, industrial modernity, but that imperialism cannot be fully understood without a theory of gender power, Anne McClintock sets out to explore the ways in which the social categories of race, class, gender and sexuality have intersected and played themselves out in imperial culture.

The book is organized in three sections, sandwiched between the two parts of an essay, "The angel of progress", in which McClintock analyses the pitfalls of the pervasive and uncritical deployment of the term "postcolonialism" to generalize about vastly differing contemporary situations such that their historical and geo-political distinctions are rendered into (Eurocentric) invisibility. The essay concludes with an apposite critique of the proliferation of "post" words in academic and cultural life over the last few years.

The main body of the text is sweeping in its scope: spanning the past century and a half and moving from Victorian, metropolitan space through to the colonies, in particular Africa, it draws on a diversity of genres and cultural forms for its analyses including photography, diaries, ethnography, performance poetry, advertisements and the imperialist fiction of Rider Haggard.

In the first section of her book, McClintock presents various illustrations of her argument that, in the Victorian era:

"the invention of race in the urban metropolises . . . became central not only to the self-definition of the middle class but also to the policing of the 'dangerous classes': the working class, the Irish, Jews, prostitutes, femi-



nists, gays and lesbians, criminals, the militant crowd and so on."

Particularly fascinating is her discussion of the curious and fetishistic relationship between the British barrister and man of letters, Arthur Munby, and the maidservant, Hannah Cullwick, whom he secretly married, a case study which enables McClintock to demonstrate the bourgeois management of labour — and in particular women's domestic labour — through an exploration of the attendant ideologies which both "naturalized" and "racialized" this labour.

In the chapters that follow, she continues to pursue her claim that "the mass-marketing of empire as a global system was intimately wedded to the Western reinvention of domesticity" by examining how the colonies themselves "became a theatre for exhibiting . . . the cult of domesticity" and "the reinvention of patriarchy" (which was underthreat in the metropole).

Of special interest in this respect is the chapter which surveys the way in which advertising, a cultural form which began to flourish in the Victorian era, took explicit shape around the reinvention of racial difference. Domestic commodities (of which the case of soap was exemplary) were mass marketed through their appeal to "imperial jingoism". By the turn of this century, soap ads, inscribing African culture as unclean and undomesticated, embodied the promise that the commodity alone could convert other cultures to "civilisation".

McClintock contends that, parallel to the pseudo-scientific racism that satu-

rated anthropological, scientific and medical journals, travel writing and novels, a "commodity racism" developed through such advertising which was unique in its capacity to expand, market and distribute ideologies of evolutionary racism well beyond the literate and propertied elite to a mass audience.

Her final section, containing chapters on cultural resistance in apartheid South Africa, holds her most insightful work. Her chapter on the autobiographical narrative of a black woman, Poppy Nongena, the result of Nongena's collaboration with a white Afrikaner, Elsa Joubert, leads to a compelling argument against the practice of divorcing literary texts from their social and political contexts, and an exploration of the resistance, collectivist and dynamic politics that the narrative reveals.

Another chapter on "cultural resistance in the desperate decades" charts the evolution of black writing in English, from the writers of the 1950s such as Lewis Nkosi and Ezekiel Mphahlele whose work aspired to the "universal" literary conventions of the traditional canon, through the increasing radicalization of their aesthetic values, to the emergence in the 1970s of the Soweto poets whose work, "unliterary, incendiary... formally inelegant and politically indiscreet", marked the transition to a cultural nationalist politics.

Like so much of the recent work on imperialism by cultural critics, however, *Imperial Leather* is unable, in the main, to demonstrate the broader socio-economic and political significance of the cultural themes that it explores. This is in part due to the historical and conceptual imprecision of McClintock's use of the term "imperialism". She fails to differentiate, for example, between colonialism and imperialism; she neglects also to situate imperialism vis à vis capitalist development (discussion of commodities and their fetishization substitutes for this), and there seems to be no awareness of the causes of change in the configuration of imperialism during the vast period she scans.

One consequence of this is that she fails to engage adequately with the vastly differing modes and effects of imperialism in different parts of the globe. In the total absence of a rationale for her concentration on South Africa, one can only assume that she supposes it to be representative of imperialist and anti-imperialist culture as a whole. This imprecision

curiously effects, in fact, a similar homogenization of cultures to that which the term "postcolonialism" brings out, a practice she herself so succinctly critiques.

McClintock fails to convince that the examples she surveys have much to do with the central mechanics of imperialist domination or that her documentation of individual instances of women's social and political agency and cultural resistance — offered to counter "the historical definition of family and female as outside politics proper" — amounts to a theory of collective, anti-imperial resistance or socio-economic power.

Ultimately, the text remains a series of loosely-connected essays that offer local and sometimes interesting insights into the culture and counter-culture of imperialism.

Tamara Jakubowska

Tamara Jakubowska is a principal lecturer at Middlesex University.

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## Money Talks

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**THE ETHICAL INVESTOR**, by Russell Sparkes, Harper Collins, London, 1995, £9.99 (pb) ISBN 0-00627-863-9

**NEW MONEY FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES** by Thomas H. Greco Jr, published by Thomas H Greco (PO Box 42663, Tucson, Arizona 85733, USA) US\$15.95.

Money is the linchpin of modern economic systems and central to the way we live. Charles Dickens described bank notes and coins as the little screws of existence. And when money talks, it talks loudly. It is not easy to sidestep the prism of money values and prices. So it is a pleasure to read two very different books that set out to put money in its place as our servant rather than our master.

*The Ethical Investor* investigates the growing, mainstream social investment movement that originated in US student protest during the Vietnam War and the international struggle against apartheid. Just as a campaign can become a social movement, so a movement can become an industry. In the UK, for example, funds screened or managed under ethical criteria now amount to around £1 billion.

*New Money for Health Communities*, meanwhile, traces the experience and

relevance of alternative currencies. The rise of local exchange trading systems (LETS), of which there are now around 600 across Europe, has drawn attention to the rich potential of local currency schemes and alternative monies.

It is easy to forget that originally, and for most of human history, money has been local, embedded within a local culture and set of values. Both books, therefore, represent an attempt to counter the modern pretension that money is a neutral tool which can facilitate complex and increasingly global patterns of exchange on a fair and efficient basis.

Money plays the central role in late industrial society that religion played in Europe in the late Middle Ages. Then the local church was the most prominent building in most villages; today the prime sites in every High Street are occupied by the branches of banks, building societies and other financial concerns, just as the glass cathedrals of the finance industry dominate the centre of modern cities.

Meanwhile, today's army of accountants, bankers, tax-advisers, insurance brokers, stockjobbers, foreign exchange dealers and countless other money specialists is the modern counterpart of the mediaeval force of priests, friars, monks, nuns, abbots and abbesses, pardoners, summoners and other experts in religious procedures and practices.

*The Ethical Investor* does not see its role as entering into the theoretical debate around new money systems, but in making the case for social investment in its own right, whatever the theory about the wider social or ecological flaws of the money system.

It does, however, cover two categories of social investment: socially *responsible* investment, where investments are screened according to ethical and environmental criteria but still seek a competitive return; and socially *directed* investment, which is promoted more through local schemes than mainstream investment houses, where investments support social economy projects that seek a distinct social dividend rather than a conventional rate of return. It has become a common assertion, even a marketing position, that social investment needs to move from the first, where it has an overwhelming emphasis, to the second.

*New Money for Healthy Communities* goes further in terms of theory, with the aim of understanding why in practice different money experiments succeed or fail. There has been manic activity and

creative energy within the alternative currency movement in recent years, which makes Thomas Greco's work a book for its time. This is also true for the related fields of community banking — the world of community development loan funds, credit unions, micro-credit and development banks. Predominantly this has been in Anglo-American industrialized cultures, although there is also an abundance of local exchange systems across other cultures, either commodity-based or ingrained within systems of social reciprocity.

Even so, developments in alternative currencies, community banking and local exchange systems pale in comparison with the accelerating pace of global capital markets. Anyone who believes that what is needed for social change or ecological improvement is enough money to do the job should think again. Arguably, any money that is freely convertible now plays an extractive role within communities, facilitating the extent to which such communities are drawn into and competing within a global economy.

Pat Conaty, community banker and activist in Birmingham, argues that this means such money is like water that runs straight through stones. He extends the metaphor to suggest that local currencies, recycled within an area, offer water that is held naturally within sand.

So is ethical investment a green fig leaf? A cynical exercise in corporate power to divert attention from the systemic risk and unsustainability of a global political economy that is seeking annual returns of ten per cent or more?

For Russell Sparkes, the answer is no. Ethical investment offers ways forward from where we are now, ways which allow people to reconnect their economic and ethical or spiritual lives.

For Thomas Greco, the answer is yes. Indeed, an embattled tone runs throughout his book, which is dedicated to "all who dare to express the truth".

Returning to the real world from the economist-speak of the subject, I find myself comforted by the optimism and enthusiasm of Sparkes, in that I would not lay charges of cynicism at the door of ethical investment pioneers. But equally, Greco is convincing in his position that it is possible to change the basic rules of the money system and that ultimately no less will do.

Economist John Maynard Keynes wrote that the world will learn more from Gesell, an alternative money theorist of

the 1930s, than from Marx. Given the central role of economics within the destructive paradigm of modern development, I hope we can learn more from Greco than Keynes.

Ed Mayo

Ed Mayo is Director of the New Economics Foundation, a UK-based charity which works for economic alternatives.

## Sustainable Planning

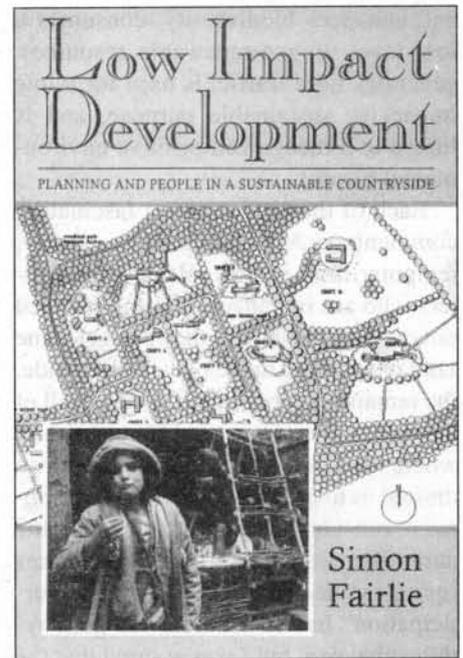
**LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside** by Simon Fairlie, Jon Carpenter (The Spendlove Centre, Charlbury, Oxfordshire OX7 3PQ, UK), 1996, £10 (pb) 159pp. ISBN 1-897766-25-4

Do not be deceived by a slim format and unassertive title into supposing that this book is a slight work. It is a truly massive one. It tackles a huge and ageless subject — the search for a proper relationship between town and country.

The sub-title, *Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, gives a truer portent of its contents than the main one, *Low Impact Development*. Simon Fairlie acknowledges that this self-effacing term "does not adequately cover any form of development that might have a positive and beneficial effect". He quotes Sue Clifford of Common Ground who says, "Low impact' does sound apologetic, doesn't it? We need more positive words ... but I haven't thought of any". "Neither have I," admits Fairlie.

I have no doubt that the word they are looking for is "anarchist" because Fairlie is advocating planned development, freely decided upon by responsible, self-motivated people who are sensitive to place. But I can see that to use that adjective in public would be the kiss of death, such is the widespread ignorance of the anarchist roots of the planning movement. (Before the First World War, for instance, Patrick Geddes insisted that the most important thing about planning was the participation of the citizens.)

I felt much better about the term "low impact" as I read on and understood it more. It does not just mean "of unobtrusive appearance". It is shorthand for "low negative environmental impact [which] either enhances or does not significantly diminish environmental quality".



That quality is ecologically significant as well as visual. The ecological impact of a building or development can be judged in terms of the amount and nature of the energy and materials used in its construction and subsequent operation. The amount of land taken up by most developments usually far exceeds the site area of the development itself, often expressed today as the project's "ecological footprint" — not a good analogy because an actual footprint is usually smaller than the person or animal that made it, whereas the ecological footprint is often so much larger than the building you see.

"This book", says Fairlie "is an attempt to distil the ideas and suggestions that have arisen around the concept of low impact development into a coherent and politically acceptable policy". He does this brilliantly by providing a fascinating history of the 50 years of official, mandatory planning in Britain; vivid examples of its failures in the countryside; four examples of imaginative current schemes to open up new ground; five visions of the directions in which low impact development could go; a revealing survey of "the tools for the job" — existing planning law and practice that can facilitate low impact proposals — and finally suggestions for the quite modest changes of policy that are required.

But precisely what is it that characterizes a low impact development? Right at the core of this densely-packed book is a chapter setting out "Nine Criteria of Low Impact". The headings form a check list: the development is temporary, small-scale, unobtrusive, made from predominantly local materials, protects wildlife

and enhances biodiversity, consumes a low level of non-renewable resources, generates little traffic, is used for a low impact or sustainable purpose, and is linked to a recognized positive environmental benefit.

Each of these generates a fascinating commentary. Although the first quality, temporariness, is most relevant to travellers who are in danger of being planned out of existence unless they can get some kind of foothold in the open countryside, the remainder are of significance to all of us. I am writing from rural Herefordshire where the Deposited Local Plan is so drafted as to preclude nearly all development outside the towns and what the authorities define as village boundaries (quite erroneously drawn). "Public participation" has so far failed to get anything changed, but I was assured that the government inspector had read *Low Impact Development* before presiding at the public inquiry now in progress.

The transport issue is of special importance in the light of the current fashion among planners (as well as organizations such as the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England and even Friends of the Earth) to demand that we live at higher densities, crammed inside village limits or congested towns. This is supposed to be in response to the overuse of the motor car with its attendant pollution — the justification for preventing *all* development in the open countryside.

I have always been sceptical about this theory and its dictatorial overtones. I know the theory flies in the face of many people's desires and conflicts with my own personal experience. Fairlie confirms these suspicions, quoting the Department of Transport's own facts and figures of traffic miles covered by town and country-dwellers. He concludes that high density living "does not necessarily produce an environment where the facilities people use are near at hand, while a dispersed community may still be a close one". Indeed, he suggests that "to reduce transport costs may be a strong motive in wanting to live on the land". He remarks that:

"it is sometimes difficult to dispel the feeling that the countryside lobby is collaborating with the development industry in carving Britain into two: an urban zone within which almost any kind of development is permitted somewhere, and a rural zone where (in theory) nobody but large-scale farmers are allowed to do anything."

He traces the source of this mistake to "a fundamental flaw in post-war planning policy... the distinction between the two opposing poles of 'town and country', 'urban and rural'."

What is now called for is a companion volume on the low impact sustainable town, embedded in a sustainable countryside, which indeed is essential to such a town. The town's "ecological footprint" needs to coincide as closely as possible with its own region. This may not be possible in terms of all the manufactured goods and mineral resources it uses, but a town certainly should obtain most of its food, water and even energy from nearby. The requisite level of food productivity implies an intensive, market-garden type of agriculture employing many people rather than the machine-dominated, wide-range industrial farming system that produces more food (of a sort) per person, but less per acre, and that imposes a very wide ecological footprint.

So, too, the question of scale is vital to both country and city — towns must be small enough for dwellers to have an efficient internal transport system and for the external supply lines to be reasonably short. The town's very relationship with its countryside depends on it not dominating by its gigantic size to such an extent that town dwellers are unable to form a relationship with the rural working environment and can perceive it only as scenery.

Townspeople who are unaware of the seasons, ignorant of the agricultural methods providing their food, out of touch with farm birds and animals but demanding cheap food on supermarket shelves, are not going to be particularly sensitive to issues of sustainability. Town and country need to recognize their inter-relatedness.

All this encourages me to applaud the widespread impulse to outward migration from the monstrously overgrown towns to the under-populated British countryside. I believe that we can live in the countryside in greater numbers than at present, and make it more beautiful and productive. Fairlie helps me hold on to this vision by showing just how little adjustment to the planning mechanisms is needed to allow it to come about.

*Brian Richardson*

**Brian Richardson** is a retired architect turned self-builder, inspired by William Morris's utopian vision.

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## Invisible No More

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**THE FIRST INDUSTRIAL WOMEN**, by Deborah Valenze, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995, £13.99/\$17.95 (pb) 251pp. ISBN 0-19-508982-0

**HOMEWORKERS IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE**, by Eileen Boris and Elisabeth Prugl, Routledge, London 1996, £11.99/\$19.95 (pb) 327pp. ISBN 0-415-91007-2

The last 20 years has seen the rise of the "flexible" worker on a global scale as the patterns of work and of employment for men and women in forms established by the first industrial revolution have begun to disintegrate. The rise of international chains of production, sub-contracting, short-term and part-time work have been paralleled by the increasing numbers of women engaged in paid work — a process often referred to as the feminization of the global workforce.

Yet most discussions of either the historical processes involved in the first industrial revolution or the ramifications of globalization are presented in gender neutral terms. The role of women as workers, if discussed at all, is portrayed as marginal. The strength of these two books is that they place women workers where they should be — at the core of these all encompassing changes.

Deborah Valenze places women at the centre of the first industrial revolution in Britain. This is a discursive survey, clearly and accessibly written. It examines how the process of industrialization for most women workers meant a gradual displacement from being viewed as workers in their own right who were not dependent on male breadwinners.

Earlier characterizations of industrialization tend to emphasize its role in bringing women into formal sector industrial employment. Valenze argues, however, in common with other feminist historians, that the exclusion of women workers from many sectors of industrial development is a more valid way of viewing industrialization. Her chapters on agriculture, domestic service and the textile industry illustrate this point well.

In an important chapter on political economy, Valenze shows how the ideal of the male breadwinner — "a partial and constantly contradicted assumption in relation to the labouring classes before

the industrial revolution" — nevertheless became a part of formal economic theory in the work of theorists such as Thomas Malthus and Adam Smith. This assumption has remained at the core of economic theory today — with all too familiar consequences.

What would have made the book stronger, as Valenze herself admits, is a discussion of the many thousands of women who remained as industrial home-based workers. In a brief introductory chapter to *Homeworkers in Global Perspective*, Eileen Boris explores the historical meaning of homework in Western Europe and the United States. Home-based industrial work for women, especially in garments, textiles and other consumer goods industries, was an integral part of the industrial revolution in core capitalist countries. Boris also emphasizes the ideological separation of the category of "mother" from "worker" and "home" from "work", despite their integral connection in the homework system. The resultant invisibility of homeworkers continues to this day. The series of case studies covered in the book of home-based workers in countries such as Brazil, Iran, India, Finland and the Philippines shows the range of kinds of work, their geographical spread, as well as their reliance on the subordination of women at all levels.

What is significant and invaluable in this book is the emphasis on organizing, illustrated with case studies from the UK, Canada and Australia. To date, homeworking campaigns at a local and at a global level have reflected a very effective partnership between activists, academics and, in some instances, trade unionists. The best example of this is the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India. Such coalitions have begun to map out a new kind of labour organizing which seeks actively to build coalitions across and within communities at a local level and has also begun to develop real and effective organizations at an international level. As a result, they have moved the homeworkers struggle forward: in the summer of 1996, the International Labour Organization adopted a new Convention on homeworking. This will serve as a benchmark for national legislation and provide a focus for future organizing.

Linda Shaw

Linda Shaw is a member of Women Working Worldwide, a UK-based NGO which supports the struggles of women workers internationally.

## BOOKS DIGEST

- **THE CIGARETTE PAPERS**, by Stanton Glantz, John Slade, Lisa A. Bero, Peter Hanauer and Deborah E. Barnes, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1996, \$29.95/£24.00 (hb), 410pp. ISBN 0-520-20572-3.

This is an exposé of the workings of the tobacco industry based on 4,000 pages of leaked internal documents from a leading cigarette company, Brown & Williamson, owned by multinational British American Tobacco. The documents indicate that the company was aware decades ago of the carcinogenic and addictive nature of smoking. "Stall any disclosure . . . as long as possible" reads one memo. Much of the evidence presented here is now being used in legal claims against the tobacco industry for the costs of smoking-related illnesses.

- **CULTURES OF NATURAL HISTORY**, edited by Nicholas Jardine, James Secord and Emma Spary, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1996, £22.95/\$29.95 (pb), 501pp. ISBN 0-521-55894-8.

"If a single vision predominates in Western society," write the editors, "it is that of a passive and disempowered nature, slave and victim of human agency". This was not always so in Western thought. The 24 essays explore the history of natural history and its links with medical, colonial, gender, economic and ecological histories. They illustrate the changing complexity and diversity of attitudes to nature from the sixteenth century to the late nineteenth century.

- **MISUNDERSTANDING SCIENCE? *The Public Reconstruction of Science and Technology***, edited by Alan Irwin and Brian Wynne, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1996, £35/\$59.95 (hb), 232pp. ISBN 0-521-43268-5.

The nine essays in this book explore how the "public understanding of science" has become a key issue in debates over the "social negotiation of power", particularly in areas such as genetic engineering, new reproductive technologies, HIV/AIDS, computers and information technology, pollution, food safety and occupational health, global environmental change and nuclear power. Each case study explores where people turn to for technical information and advice; what motivates them to do so; how they evaluate and use scientific information; and how they relate such "expertise" to their everyday experience and other forms of knowledge.

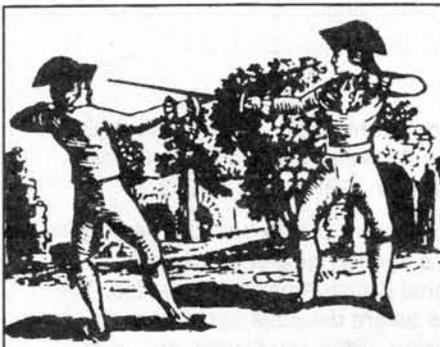
- **HOW THE IRISH BECAME WHITE**, by Noel Ignatiev, Routledge, London and New York, 1995, £12.99/\$16.95 (pb), 233pp. ISBN 0-415-91825-1.

By examining the connections between concepts of race — a satisfactory definition of which "no biologist has ever been able to provide" — and acts of oppression, the author explores how Catholic Irish peasants, an oppressed race in Ireland, became part of an oppressing race in America, a country to which large numbers of Irish emigrated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Initially "thrown together with free Negroes" and working for low wages under dangerous conditions, such as those "where it did not make sense to risk the life of a slave", Ignatiev argues that the Irish chose the socially constructed category of white so as to secure advantages for themselves in a society determined by skin colour.

- **HOW TO MAKE A FOREST GARDEN**, by Patrick Whitefield, Permanent Publications (Hyden House, Little Hyden Lane, Clanfield, Hampshire PO8 0RU, UK, 1996, £14.95 (plus £2.05 p&p) (pb), 192pp. ISBN 1-85623-008-2.

Written by an experienced permaculturalist, this book provides the technical information to design, plan and maintain a food-producing garden of fruit and nut trees, vegetables and herbs, whether in an urban backyard or a large

country garden. *The Ecologist* can be ordered from WEC Book Service, c/o The Wadebridge Bookshop, 43 Molesworth St, Wadebridge, Cornwall PL27 7DR, UK. Fax: 01208 815705. For p&p, please add 15% (20% outside UK) of total cost to order



## Letters

### An Indian Soya State

I read with interest the article, "Biopatenting and Biodiversity" by Ruth McNally and Peter Wheale (Sept/Oct 1996). It gives me a new insight into a growing problem in our state of Madhya Pradesh, the monoculture of soyabeans.

The state government has declared Madhya Pradesh to be a soya state. Now 60 per cent area of some irrigated areas are under soyabean cropping. It is a "male" crop because the trade of soyabeans has raised the income of men. It is not used for consumption within the family.

Our traditional cropping patterns have changed drastically. The area of traditional pulses is now declining; it is difficult to purchase pulses on the open market; and the prices are too high. If genetically engineered soya were to come to our area, it would have a negative impact on our rural economy. The small and marginal farmers would not be able to purchase the seeds at high cost. Now there is a greater need than even to reconsider soyabean cropping in command areas.

**Suresh Diwan**  
Hoshangabad  
Madhya Pradesh  
INDIA

### Vietnam and Cambodia

As someone who cares about the people of Cambodia, I was disturbed to read Mark Curtis's editorial "Democratic Genocide" (September/October 1996) suggesting that Britain should have supported the government in Cambodia which Vietnam installed in the country following its 1978 invasion.

The reason that bitter political enemies were willing to join together in the

Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea to resist Vietnam was summarized by a 19-year-old university student in Cambodia who was quoted in *The New York Times* of 6 February 1995 as saying, "We all think that Pol Pot hates Vietnam very much, and we agree with him on that. Vietnam will eat up Cambodia if it can".

Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia was similar to Indonesia's 1975 conquest of East Timor in that it was accompanied by famine, and an influx of settlers that served to help the military keep control. The real genocide in Cambodia occurred not during the Pol Pot regime, but directly before and after.

There could always be a further incursion of troops from Vietnam. The recent split in Pol Pot's forces seems to have altered the weight of the different political forces in Cambodia, and resulted in speculation about the possible recreation of the anti-Vietnam coalition. The party supported by Vietnam has basically refused to surrender power in Cambodia after losing the 1993 elections — it may need to call upon Vietnam for additional support if its position deteriorates. In this case, will there be countries such as Britain who will assist Vietnam's military efforts as the USSR did in the post-1978 period?

**Milton Takei**  
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USA

### Opencast Mining in Britain

During the recent General Election campaign, various "footballs" were kicked around by the political contenders, but a megaball was forgotten, overlooked and singularly excluded — opencast mining.

In January 1993, an all-party Commons committee recommended that the production of opencast coal should be cut to almost half its then level of 19 million tonnes in view of the "environmental disadvantages".

Last year production was 15 million tonnes but the number of applications for licences for opencast sites had risen from 82 to 364.

Why is Britain still having to put up with a form of coal extraction that is primitive, destructive, economically unfair and extremely dangerous to our health?

Anyone who has had to live near an opencast coal mine, or has been threatened with such a possibility, knows very

well that such mines cause dust, noise, traffic hazards, property blight, loss of amenity, loss of quality of life, the destruction of wildlife habitats and environmental catastrophe. Moreover, the process is unsustainable and ultimately adds to global warming. In one area of the Midlands, just the threat of opencasting was enough to wipe £5 million in total off the value of nearby homes.

Even the key arguments in support of opencast coal — that it provides much-needed jobs and contributes to the national economy — are cruel lies. Opencast mining firms currently employ 4,000 people while the closure of deep pits cost well over 20,000 jobs. The economic "benefits" of opencasting ignore the major disbenefits of social and environmental damage.

The most recent evidence shows that this form of surface mining not only destroys valuable landscapes — and with it archaeological sites, farms and trees — but also poses a major risk to the health of local people. Ironically, the greatest risk from dust particles, which contributes to asthma, chest illnesses and other insidious problems, is not to those living close by. The smallest and most deadly particles travel furthest afield.

The Midlands Opencast Action Group, which gives voice to the views of tens of thousands of ordinary families in Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire and Derbyshire, sent an open letter to all election candidates urging them to support a three-point strategy aimed at curbing this potentially-lethal menace. It asked all political candidates to promise that once in power they would support:

- An immediate appraisal of opencasting which would include *all* the facts;
- The introduction of an Opencast Mining Act to protect both the environment and society fully;
- The introduction of a long-term, holistic energy policy which would urgently seek safe, alternatives sources of power and better energy conservation.

Politicians would have us believe that we should vote for the party with the best economic policies. We agree — but we want *all* the costs to be included in the calculations.

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Ravenstone  
Coalville  
Leicestershire  
UK

# Classified

## DIARY DATES

22-27 June 1997: **EUROPEAN SUSTAINABLE ENERGY NGO SEMINAR**, Budmerice Castle, SLOVENIA. For more information, contact Gunnar Boye Olesen, OVE, Gl. Kirkevej 56, 8530 Hjørtshøj, DENMARK. Tel: +45 (86) 227000; Fax: +45 (86) 227096; E-mail: <ove@inforse.dk>

10 July 1997: **Forest Futures Conference SUSTAINABILITY: THE BURNING QUESTION**. The Royal Institution of Great Britain, 21 Albemarle Street, London W1. For further information, contact Yvonne Courtney PR, 45 Hereford Road, London W2 5AH. Tel: 0171-229 2292; Fax: 0171-229 9891.

8-16 August 1997: **WOMEN ON THE ROAD FOR PEACE ON BIKES**. Cycle tour of some of southern England's military and nuclear sites. For more details, contact Helen, 33 Heron Road, Bristol, BS5 0LT, UK. Tel: 0117 9393746.

9-23 August 1997: **VEGAN CAMP**, Pindale Lane, Hope, Sheffield S30 2RN. Details and booking forms from Box VCTM, The Rainbow Centre, 180 Mansfield Road, Nottingham, NG1 3HW. Please enclose large SAE plus 3 loose stamps.

7-27 September 1997: **TECHNOLOGY, NATURE & GENDER**, course taught by Vandana Shiva & Andrew Kimbrell. Contact Hilary Nicholson, Schumacher College, The Old Postern, Dartington Devon TQ9 6EA, UK. Tel: +44 (0)1803 865934; Fax: +44 (0) 1803 866899; E-mail <schumcoll@gn.apc.org>

28 September-3 October 1997: **World Futures Studies Federation Conference GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS — WHAT YOU AND I CAN DO FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS**, Brisbane, AUSTRALIA. For more details, contact Sally Brown, Institute of Continuing and TESOL Education, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland 4072, AUSTRALIA. Tel: +61 (7) 3365 6360; Fax: +61 (7) 3365 7099; E-mail: <sally.brown@mailbox.uq.edu.au>

6-10 October 1997: **LANDSCAPE ECOLOGY: THINGS TO DO**. Beurs van Berlage, Amsterdam, THE NETHERLANDS. Contact Ingrid Hoek, Secretariat WLO-25 Congress, Postbus 23, 6700 AA Wageningen, THE NETHERLANDS. Tel: +31 (317) 477986; Fax: +31 (317) 424988; E-Mail: <wlo@ibn.dlo.nl>

12-15 November 1997: **ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION AND REGIONAL CONSERVATION STRATEGIES**, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, USA. Contact Society for Ecological Restoration, 1207 Seminole Highway, Madison, WI 53711, USA. Tel: +1 (608) 2629547; Fax: +1 (608) 2658557; E-mail: <ser@vms2.macc.wisc.edu>

## COURSES

**Building a Future from the Past**. Series of one-day courses at Chiltern Open Air Museum. For course details, contact Janet Ahlberg, Head of Adult Education, EVBF Course Programme, Chiltern Open Air Museum, Newland Park, Gorelands Lane, Chalfont St Giles, Bucks, HP8 4AD. Tel: 01494 875542.

**REFUGEE STUDIES PROGRAMME**, Foundation Course, Trinity Term 1997. University of

## WORLDWATCH PAPERS

No. 129

Anne Platt

**INFECTING OURSELVES: How Environmental and Social Disruptions Trigger Disease**. 79pp, £3.

No. 131

Gary Gardner

**SHRINKING FIELDS: Cropland Loss in a World of Eight Billion**. 55pp, £3.

No. 132

Sandra Postel

**DIVIDING THE WATERS: Food Security, Ecosystem Health, and the New Politics of Scarcity**. 76pp, £3.

No. 133

David Malin Roodman

**PAYING THE PIPER: Subsidies, Politics, and the Environment**. 80pp, £3.

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Oxford. For details, contact The Education Unit, The Refugee Studies Programme, Queen Elizabeth House, 21 St Giles, Oxford, OX1 3LA. Tel: 01865 270723; Fax: 01865270721; E-mail: <rspedu@ermine.ox.ac.uk>

4-14 August 1997: Middlesex University's Summer School **Permaculture is not a New Hairstyle**. For more details, contact Jason Sparks, Press Office, Middlesex University, Trent Park, Bramley Road, London N14 4YZ. Tel: 0181-362 5919; Fax: 0181-362 6231.

21 September -11 October 1997: **People's Diplomacy Non-violence and Alternative Approaches to Economics**, Rovereto, ITALY. For further information, contact IUPIP Secretary's Office, Palazzo Todeschi — Via Tartarotti 9, 38068 Rovereto (TN), ITALY. Tel: +39 (464) 424288; Fax: +39 (464) 424299; E-mail: <iupip@inf.unitn.it>

## PUBLICATIONS

**Manifesto for the Planet: Political action needed to ensure the health, security and survival of the planet and its people**, published by Our Common Future — Who Cares? a consortium of concerned organizations and individuals in Bristol. £1.50 to Our Common Future, c/o Christian Aid, St Nicholas House, Lawfords Gate, Bristol, BS5 0RE.

**The Green Guide For London 1997**, a 128-page A4 comprehensive listing of eco-friendly goods and services, campaigning organizations, advice centres, articles on relevant issues and further reading. £5. Contact The Green Guide Company, 82 Windermere Rd, Ealing W5 4TD. Tel/Fax: 0181-579 4432; E-mail <greenguide@cerbnet.co.uk>

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