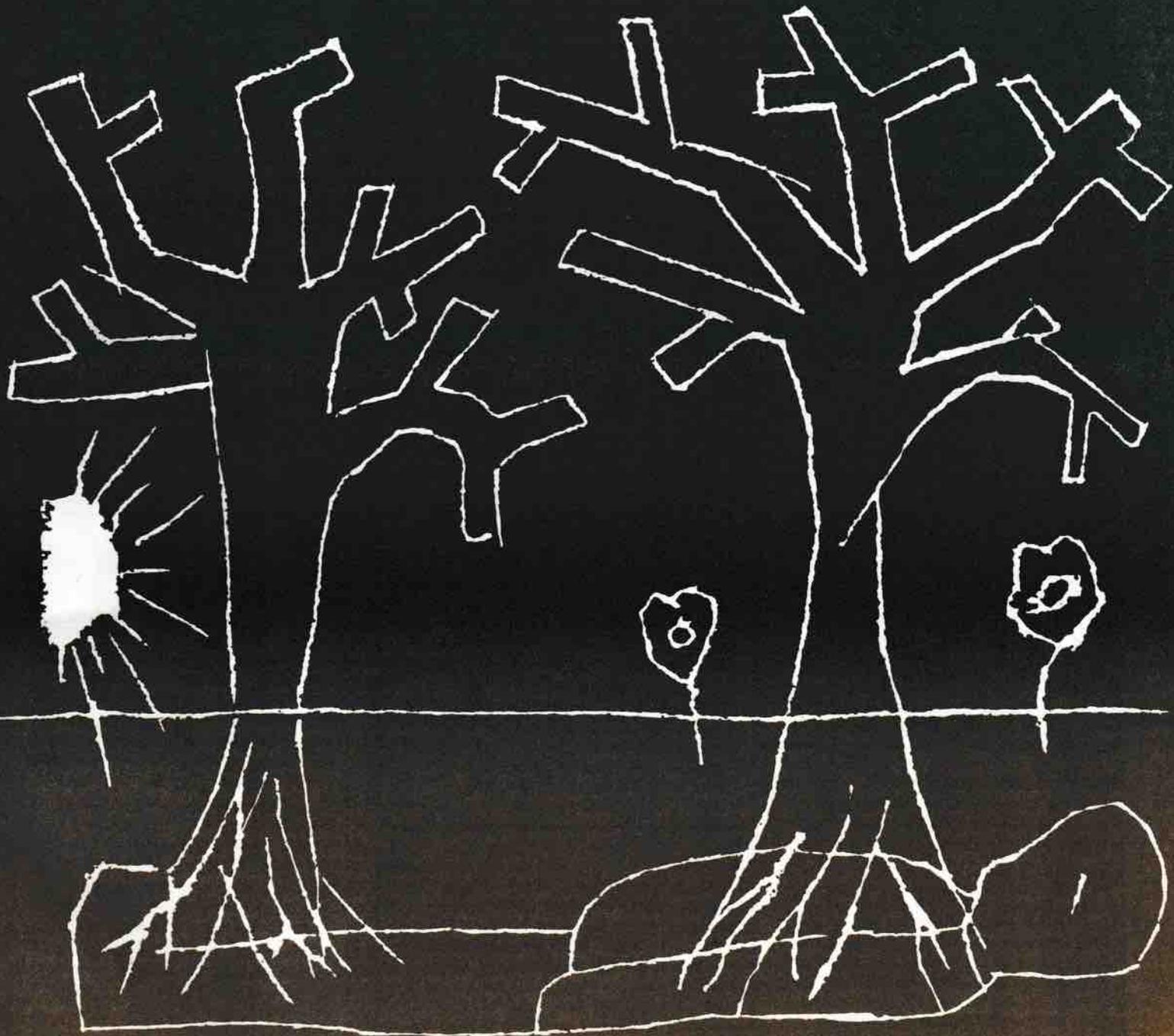


GREEN LINE

Forests or famine?
'Class' and the Greens
Land in trust
Alconbury trial
Third world starvation

No.35 Aug / Sept 1985 40p



GREEN LINE

34 Cowley Road, Oxford
OX4 1HZ
Tel: 0865-245301



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NEW MEMBERS NEEDED at Lower Shaw Farm to help us in collectively organising events and caring for our house, organic garden and animals. Further details from Lower Shaw Farm, Shaw, Swindon, Wilts. (SAE please).

Green Line

Where you come in... We'd always welcome more 'network' material - info and reports. The Network section is very popular. Do send us recipes too: the only reason we've printed none recently is that you haven't sent any in! And we're planning a recipe booklet using vegan ingredients which are grown in this country: write for more information and with ideas for recipes, etc.

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5p/word

SUFFOLK HOME FOR CRAFTSPEOPLE. We have workshop facilities and house adjacent to small studio pottery and 'green' family. Would suit weaver, leather worker, woodcarver, etc. Write or ring Chris Southall, 27 The Green, Barrow, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP29 5AA. Tel 0284 810961.

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Forests or famine?



The pressures on the land that are causing the destruction of rain forests and their millions of species are the same as those that are causing famine and poverty in the Third World.

TROPICAL FOREST ECOSYSTEMS are complex yet fragile. They contain half the world's species but are being destroyed at an alarming rate - such that every day one species of plant, insect, bird or mammal becomes extinct.

The tribal peoples who understand the forests and the uses of plants and animals in them (that could be of benefit to us all) are also being decimated. In Brazil for instance it is not a crime to kill an Indian.

Beefburgers and corned beef from Latin America result from the most wasteful herbiciding and burning of huge areas of forest by multinationals such as Volkswagen. For a few years cattle graze the area; then, in most cases, the soil becomes completely infertile.

In Ecuador and Malaya forests are being cleared to plant oil palms for margarine and soap; in Brazil, coffee; and elsewhere banana production is replacing forests. Projects such as these, and the drowning of forests for hydro-electricity production, are often funded by western or UN aid or are carried out by the multinationals (e.g. Unilever).

In South-east Asia the main problem is logging of tropical hardwoods - e.g. mahogany and meranti. Tropical timber and products containing it are flooding western markets, and the Japanese are even using such timber for pulp. The logging destroys the forest: unlike a temperate forest it does not recover, but ends up as useless tussock grassland.

Across the Third World cash crops such as cotton, peanuts, sugar, tobacco etc. are planted on the best land forcing the population to move on to steep mountain slopes and rainforest soils not suited to agriculture. Ethiopia exports lentils, melons and coffee to the west. Forty years ago 30% of the highlands were forest; today the figure is 3%. The soil exposed to the elements is either baked to brick or washed away. Ethiopia's soil is now silting up the Aswan Dam. Nepal's soil is silting up the Ganges in Bangladesh, causing rivers to burst their banks and destroy crops and villages. The loss of the forests also causes the climate to deteriorate, and you end up with desert and massive poverty or famine. Unless the Third World's environment is conserved the Ethiopian holocaust will be repeated throughout the tropics.

Forests ameliorate the climate by holding water in the soil and maintaining air around them, thus creating a good environment for agriculture and rivers that neither flood nor dry up. The global as well as local climate is being affected by forest loss. As the deserts advance, the weather belts change and the

carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere rises. Some believe that this is causing another ice age with massive temperate crop failures likely in the near future. Others think that it will cause ice-cap melting and rises in the sea level, flooding coastal plains and cities.

The African drought shows that change is certainly occurring - and whatever the result, it will have dire consequences. It is a dire 'tragedy of the commons' situation: the individual peasant or politician benefits in the short term, but many suffer and the whole planet becomes weaker.

What you can do about it

Our purchasing habits are a major cause of pressure on Third World land. For your own health and the planet's, the ideal situation would be one where communities were largely reliant on timber and wholesome foods grown in their own area. Vegetarianism and reduced meat consumption reduces pressure on the global environment, due to the fact that it takes one tenth of the land to provide for a vegetarian diet that it takes to provide for a meat eater. (Many animal feeds are imported from the Third World.) Cheap beef products such as burgers and corned beef which usually come from Latin America, and tropical hardwood products at timber yards, DIY stores and furniture outlets, should be boycotted. But tree crops such as apricots, figs, nuts and carob beans are at least maintaining a tree cover; and by purchasing brazil nuts you are actually supporting native Indians who collect them from virgin rainforest, doing it no harm in the process.

You can write to MPs, the EEC, the government, embassies, the UN and the World Bank - demanding bans on certain imports, and aid programmes designed to foster self-reliance, sustainable agriculture, and fuel and timber production in both the Third World and Europe.

You can join or support some of the following groups:

Friends of the Earth, 377 City Road, London EC1, have just published 'Rainforest' by Charles Secrett, price £3.50. Thorough examination of what is going on, who is doing it, and how to campaign to protect the rainforest. A 'must'.

Green Deserts, Rougham, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. Doing community forestry in the Sudan. Membership £10.

Forest: magazine of the forest network, subscription £3 for 4 issues from 15 Tadmore Street, London W12.

Malcolm Samuel

** The above article is available as a leaflet at £2 per 100 (also car stickers 30p, or 10 for £1.50) from Malcolm Samuel, 99 Prospect Road, Portstewart, N Ireland. Phone 026583 2301.

Action on tea



Boycotting cash crops like tea and coffee could, it is argued (see article on GL 33), lead to the release of land in the Third World for the growth of food crops. CHRIS BULZACKI argues that this is not necessarily the case.

WHEN YOU MAKE yourself a cup of tea, you are linked to a long chain of events in a massive industry which spans the globe. As Britain is the world's biggest importer of tea (taking about 25% of world exports) a successful boycott campaign would have an enormous effect on people connected with the \$2,000 million a year tea trade.

As Erik Damman, founder of The Future in Our Hands, writes in 'Revolution in the Affluent Society', it is necessary 'to withdraw from the existing international structure of production and trade... The production of agricultural products for the rich countries is clearly not acceptable for people who need all the land they have for their own food production.' Yet, he says, a reduction in our trade with the Third World and in our consumption of Third World goods would, if not combined with economic support, have an immediate catastrophic effect for the many poor countries whose entire economy is based on exporting a narrow range of raw materials. 'The existing elite, who will still hold power when any such change begins, have enough power to make sure that the decline hits the majority before themselves.'

Erik Damman cites the vice-director of FAO, stating: 'It is necessary to acknowledge the poor countries' need to sell their agricultural products to industrialised countries in order to obtain the foreign exchange necessary for the imports on which they are still dependent: "Reduced consumption in the rich countries scarcely helps them. In all probability a reduced consumption in the rich countries would only compel them to go over ... to other cash crops for export."'

The tea trade does provide foreign exchange. If the ruling elites decide to spend this on luxuries or instruments of repression then it is little use. Their spending it on reform and social facilities, however, may enhance both the quality of life of the poorest as well as future development. In this case the tea trade could be a godsend - e.g. in Nicaragua.

As the article in GL 33 vividly portrayed, many tea estates have appalling conditions. But despite this exploitation by multinationals of the plantation workers, the tea trade does provide many people with valuable employment in what might otherwise be a hopeless situation where the labourer would have no work and no food and the landowner, unable to make profits, would end up by leaving land uncultivated.

Cash crops boost employment and are beneficial especially where smallholders are concerned. In Kenya for example about 125,000 such smallholders grow tea in addition to crops for their own consumption: there is now more land under tea on the smallholdings than on the large estates.

Tea cultivation does not necessarily take land away from food production. Suitable areas for tea growing are limited; it will only grow in areas with high and

well distributed rainfall and specialised soil requirements, preferably at higher altitudes.

I have talked to several people directly involved in development. Nigel Harris (author of 'Of Bread and Guns'), Rajes Bala (of the Tamil Women's Action Group) and Solomon Inque (chairman of the Relief Society of Tigray) all believed that Britons should drink more tea, not less. Nigel Harris has stressed the principle of comparative advantage whereby countries can obtain more food (say, rice) by growing and selling a cash crop and then cheaply importing the rice with the money, than by growing the rice on the land used for the cash crop.

85% of world tea exports are sold by multinational companies and a boycott campaign would be aimed at exposing their disgraceful record on working conditions and profit for profit's sake. Unilever, which recently acquired Brooke Bond, had profits in 1984 of £924m: it seems to me that this would hardly be affected by an reduction in consumption.

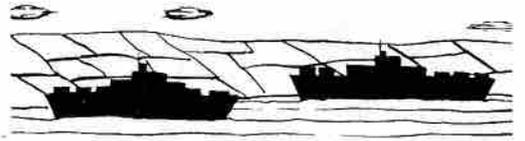
Not all companies are involved in the tea business just for profit. Oxfam has recently started to market 'ethical' tea and it's now available in some of their stores. Traidcraft is a non-profit-making Christian trust determined to make changes in the way trade is done with developing countries, giving supporters the opportunity to distance themselves from exploitative products. Since it started in 1979 Traidcraft has supported thousands of jobs and put many thousands of pounds into the hands of ordinary people in the Third World, not as aid or a handout but as wages. Traidcraft buy their tea from selected estates and smallholders. The Waulugala estate in Sri Lanka for example offers workers better than average conditions and a generous profit-sharing scheme. The wholesale conversion of land used for food production for local needs to the growing of exotic produce for export - with small farmers and tribespeople being evicted by large landowners or multinationals - is wholly unacceptable to Traidcraft and they do not knowingly buy from such sources. Traidcraft also markets WDM (World Development Movement) tea, of which 10% of the selling price (£11,743 in 1983/4) is allocated for projects among tea workers.

UN officials say that the underlying problem for the tea industry has been that, overall, farmers have been growing tea faster than people can drink it: this has kept prices low. Tea revenues have consistently fallen in real terms. Further reductions in consumption will hurt the poorest, as well as others in the trade.

People should practise positive discrimination. Getting people to buy alternatives and campaign against the multinationals is more realistic than expecting them to stop drinking tea and coffee altogether. For those who do decide to boycott tea and coffee the suggestion that people send the money saved to campaign groups in the Third World is both excellent and necessary if the reduction in consumption is to have any long-term effect.

** The Traidcraft catalogue, and/or details of your nearest representative/salesperson, is available from Traidcraft, Kingsway, Gateshead NE11 0NE.

Third World starvation



Kathleen Jannaway

WHICH ARE our most dangerous exports? Armaments? Nuclear power? Pesticides and other chemicals? ? ? I would put high on the list our feeding habits and the agro-industry and the false economics that support them. These we are spreading fast through the developing world with potentially disastrous effects on the world food situation and hence on world peace.

Most of the world's poor are vegan, or nearly vegan, simply because they cannot afford to be anything else. It is now conceded that if they get enough of their traditional grains, beans and vegetables they will not suffer from malnutrition; but wasteful Western-type diets are competing for basic resources and thus depriving the poor.

The cost of meat

Much publicity is now being given to the fact that there is now enough plant food grown (chiefly grain) to support all the world's people; and that the reason why nearly 500 million live on the edge of starvation is their lack of purchasing power. Even in India, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, we are told, there is enough food for those with the money to buy it. This horrendous fact must be blazoned from the rooftops until the millions who decide where to put their crosses on the ballot paper are motivated by more than the answers to the question "What's in it for me?"

Yet to blame market forces alone in only another example of the dangerous simplification that has bedevilled solutions to the world food problem through the decades. Let's think this one through:

Suppose all the world's people were suddenly given enough money to compete successfully in the world grain market. Would the one third of the grain produced that now goes to livestock be allowed to go to them? Would the millions in the developed nations tolerate such a drastic drop in their meat consumption?

Suppose it were possible to grow enough extra grain to maintain both the "high standard of living" of the affluent and to give the poor their cereal ration: would the poor be satisfied? With the new vigour springing from adequate food would they not go on to demand prestigious animal products? Through the ages the rich and powerful have had animal products and the poor have had to be content with mainly vegetables. This has lent a false prestige to meat. What recipe for justice would it be to confine the highly prized animal products to the few, and condemn the rest to their lowly vegetables?

Enough primary plant foods may now be grown to feed all on a simple, near-vegan diet; but what hope would there be of growing the extra EIGHT times as much which would be necessary to feed all on a Western-type diet? Even if it could be managed for a time, what prospect is there of maintaining such a wasteful diet for all in view of the following facts:

+ There will be nearly twice as many people to feed by the turn of the century.

+ Modern agricultural methods that have produced the abundance of grain are heavily dependent on irreplaceable fossil fuels that are being used up at a profligate rate.

+ There is rapidly increasing desertification and soil erosion, and growing failure of agro-chemicals to deal with the power of pests to acquire immunity.

So at the same time as we envisage putting in greater resources, those resources are growing less!

Moreover, if the poor are to have a fair share of those resources, it is more than animal products that the rich will have to give up. It is all kinds of luxuries now produced on the land and with the resources that should go to feed local people.

There is only one solution. We must change our feeding habits! Moreover we must change them with such verve that we convince people that the really prestigious diet is one that is based on compassion for both people and other animals.

Thought is moving slowly in the right direction. The theme for 'One World Week' (September 21 - 29) is 'Recipes for Justice'; and the focus for the world-wide FAO-sponsored 'World Food Day' (October 16) is to be on rural poverty and forestry. However the many who will give money generously - and the lesser, but still commendable, number who will campaign for change in government policy - are in the main totally unprepared for making changes in their own lifestyles. We must do all we can to convince them that not until we are willing to change our own feeding habits to those attainable by all the world's people and sustainable within the natural cycles of the planet, will justice be achieved and the peace dependent on it become possible.

At the moment we are doing the opposite and arousing a revolution of rising expectations that cannot possibly be satisfied in a world of limited and diminishing resources. We must decide now to change our lifestyles and we must spread far and wide the reasons why we are doing so.

The change will not be easy. It will be still harder to get the majority to understand that animal products require on average eight times as much land, twenty-five times as much water, and (with modern high-yielding methods) three times as much fossil fuel energy. The coming 'One World Week' and 'World Food Day' will offer opportunities that we must not miss. See my advertisement in the Small Ads of this issue of GL for helpful materials.

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People, nature, hope.

What Green means to me

In this occasional series, we ask people to give a personal view of "What GREEN means to me".

WHEN I FIRST thought about writing an article on 'What Green means to me' I thought about the books and articles I have read, the ideas which excite me: ideas about green consciousness, politics, wholeness and Earth Spirit. To try to add to the abundance written, to wrestle with the philosophy, the rights and wrongs of practice, lifestyles, etc. seemed an unappetising task, especially when others have often expressed so well much of what I myself think and feel.

Then I thought that what green means to me has another, very personal dimension. Something someone says or does, a poem, a landscape or a vision sparked by any of these leads me to think, to feel again and again: that is green.

These occasions are frequent, sometimes big, sometimes small and often not apparently linked to each other. However taken together they are my hope for the future and the life of this planet.

In order to make some sense of some of these isolated incidents, I have tried to think of some of the linking themes or similarities which underlie them.

Firstly, there are the meetings I have had with people in the 'green movement' (in the broadest sense of the word). Meetings with individuals or groups who have given me an insight into new ways of working within many spheres of life, whether through alternative medicine, organic gardening, community living, education, politics, celebrations, etc. There are also the meetings in the more structured sense. Meetings which differ from the norm, however, in that they include attentements, games, cooperative activities such as working on the land, cooking a meal, or suchlike. The links such meetings form between people, and the way such links are formed and maintained, are one part of what green means to me: the 'weaving of webs' between people who share common ideals, and the 'building of bridges' where there are divisions.

The insights gained from these meetings all show aspects of a new consciousness, a striving to find ways of working which are more in harmony with ourselves, each other and the Earth. I live in a society which largely divorces or anaesthetises itself from real and conscious participation in the cyclical processes of Nature - of living, growing and dying - through the disempowering apparatus of bureaucracy and institutions. In hospitals, where some of the most important experiences of our lives - contact with birth and death - increasingly take place; where it is still not uncommon for babies to be washed and 'sanitised' before being given to their mothers to hold for the first time (see 'Birth Reclaimed', Mary Field, GL 29); where grieving friends and relatives are 'shushed' or given tranquilisers so as not to cause any upset.

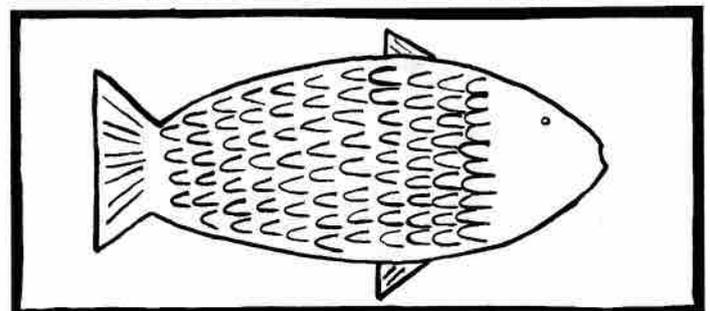
In contrast to these experiences, I have in the last year experienced a birth and a death of people close to me which were very different. Both took place at home. There were no uniforms, no authority saying what should happen next. Each process took its natural course. Emotions could be freely expressed, and on

both occasions the moment was experienced intensely, the people involved surrounded by people they knew and loved, with no fears, no fight, but with instinctive sense. Through the green people I know I have also been able to learn about natural healing. I know that I can take responsibility for the health of my body, by being conscious of my diet and my lifestyle and by using remedies which help my own healing forces to do their work. That is part of what green means to me.

My awareness of what is green is also heightened by contrasts in education. My work in a school in a system which often seems so stultifying and opposed to any form of growth, creativity, individuality and cooperation, contrasts greatly with my experience of education in the free, unstructured environment of an adventure playground, where cooperation not competition is the norm and success is not determined by intellectual prowess.

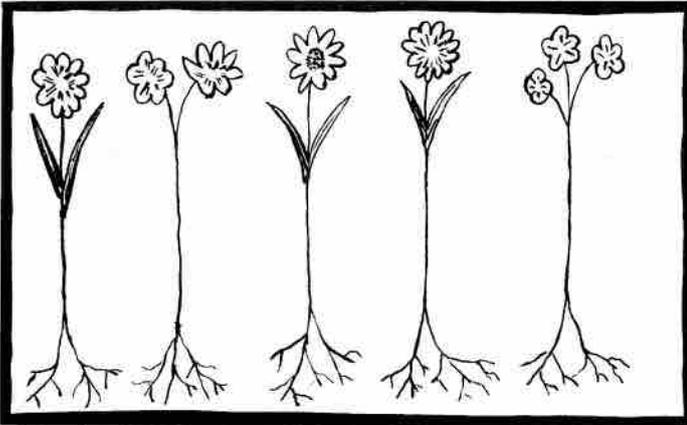
However, even within the institutional bastions of the 'grey' world, I can sometimes see glimmers of the green. Hospitals are taking notice of natural child-birth techniques, encouraging 'hospice at home' support and patient participation. This is largely due to the work of individuals with new (or awakened old) ideas, such as Leboyer and Kubler-Ross. There is a tremendous sense of empowerment when someone stands up and breaks through the (de)fences of the symbols or power centres of the grey world - 'cutting wires' literally or metaphorically, allowing truth and hope to enter closed walls.

The separation and alienation from life's processes, Nature and her Elements, is for most of us an accepted fact of our daily life. We are protected from an awareness of our interrelationship with and dependency on the Earth and the effects of our consumption and waste with houses, clothes, cars, electricity, sewerage, waste-disposal, etc. I switch on a kettle to make a cup of tea; but recently, waking up after a



night in a tepee, I chopped the wood and built the fire to boil a kettle and felt a sense of achievement, a closeness to the processes involved in working with the Elements to prepare food.

It is in such a seemingly insignificantly activity as this, a walk in the woods, turning over a compost heap, or observing dandelions forcing their way through the cracks in a concrete playground which personally renew my awareness of our close inter-relationship with Nature. One which is spiritual as well as physical. That our survival depends on the preservation of Nature's resources, raises questions about our purpose, the nature of the Earth, and our



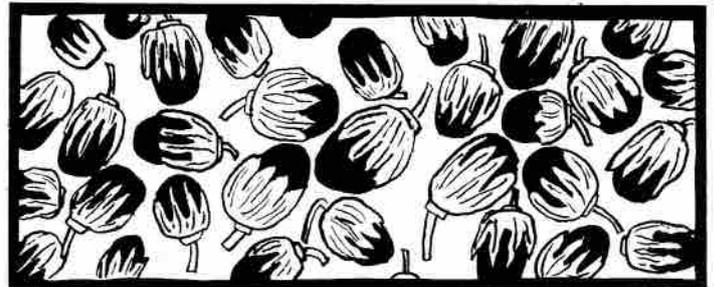
place in the Cosmos. Even traditional scientists are having to reconsider accepted beliefs in relation to these questions, through the work of Lovelock, Capra and others. Thus the second aspect of what green means to me concerns this relationship with Nature.

It is perhaps because our Planet is now threatened by possible total annihilation from so many forces that people are becoming conscious of the effect their lifestyles are having on the Earth and its future. Pollution and waste, the conflicts created by the greed of consumer societies exploiting and maintaining control over limited resources, and the threat of weapons of inconceivable destruction, are so critical they can no longer be ignored. For some time people such as Schumacher and many others in the green movement have been pointing the way towards change: change of consciousness as well as lifestyle. Change which rejects what is stale and destructive, but reawakens and brings to consciousness the seeds of old wisdoms.

Change is not always easy to effect, even in one's personal life where one may become trapped by habit, complacency, greed, or the need for security, but it is an essential ingredient of life and growth.

I have already described some of the many experiences I have had that show to me that change is taking place in a green, growing way. Therefore the final aspect of what green means to me is that of hope. Not vain, helpless hope, but strong, positive hope. Hope which is faith in the same way that I have faith that the bugs will appear again in the spring. Each plant must go through a kind of death before it sheds its seeds and gives new life. Old systems and thought patterns must crumble and die to allow new ones to grow from the remains. Green is traditionally the colour of hope, and I often see the cracks which are showing in the systems of fear and oppression, of competition and corruption, cracks through which the seeds of the future are beginning to sprout - just as the small dandelion survives in the mass of concrete and gradually, very slowly, begins to spread and flourish.

Anne Davy



"Class" and the greens

RECENTLY A NUMBER of reviews have appeared of Jonathon Porritt's book 'Seeing Green'. Criticism coming from the left is along the following lines: Porritt is guilty of 'evangelism' and fails to understand the economic structure of society and class oppression. I think that, in order to gain clarity about this and to resolve the debate - if that is possible - we ought to be as clear as we can as to what is meant by the term 'class'.

It seems to me undeniable that class is an economic concept. It is a way of talking about the economic relations of people to the means of production. There is a tendency on the left to extrapolate from this and to reduce the struggle for socialism - in this case also for a green society - to economics. Lenin criticised this tendency in relation to socialism as 'economism'. I would add to this that the main interest of current economism is which class should come out 'on top' and control the material wealth of society. It is obviously important who controls the means of production - which is why the doctrine is a compelling one for some - but where in all this is there any concept of a green society?

It may perhaps be argued that once the working class is in power, everything will change. But what evidence is there that actually existing socialist societies have got such an excellent track record on environmental questions? To the contrary, some of them are the worst offenders against the environment.

No, it seems to me that something is wrong with this sort of analysis, and this is where the 'evangelism' comes in. We need to evangelise both in and out of the working class for a fundamental change of values

in relation to the planet we inhabit. We need to be motivated by more than a lust for power, even if we think we are the 'good guys', because good guys can quickly turn into bad guys once they have had a taste of power. The struggle has got to be about more than economic positions in society.

From the economic point of view any struggle of the working class is a good struggle if it brings power closer. As I see it, the struggle of the human race is the pre-eminent one. If a given struggle militates towards human improvement, that struggle is to be encouraged. If not, it should be discouraged. In saying this I am not setting up a false dichotomy between workers and human beings. In fact, workers as human beings want clean air and water, healthy food, their children's survival, the development of their children's and their own human potential, even if they don't always know how to get these things. If we forget this we are only doing the same thing as the capitalists; accepting that workers are only cogs in the wheel of economic growth. I believe that it is only possible in theory to pretend that workers are just interested in economic gains for themselves.

In practice workers do not simply follow narrow, corporate class interests. They also struggle for the survival of their communities, they make links between the closing of mines and plutonium production, and against the dumping of nuclear waste. These are the sorts of struggles we need to encourage.

Greens in this country will be making a mistake if they fail to grasp the economic structure of society. Socialists will be making a mistake if they fail to see the class struggle as a manifestation of human and not just economic needs. This is why reds and greens need each other.

Bob Glaberson

Food for action

The Liberal Ecology Group organised a Food Conference in London recently. Some 70 people attended, and it was chaired by Lord Beaumont of Whitley. Our summary of the proceedings is by ROBERT HUTCHISON.

THE OPENING SPEAKER was Prof Colin Spedding, of Reading University, on 'Overproduction and Starvation: Food in the Global Context'. He pointed to the marked discrepancy between the rich, developed countries (the 'North') and the poor underdeveloped countries of the 'South'. The North is characterised by overproduction, overeating, high yields and high inputs, as well as affluence. The South is characterised by underproduction, starvation, low yields and low inputs, as well as by extreme poverty. Such a situation is unstable and, to most people, intolerable. Help is needed in the South both to survive current crises - which will not be short-term - and to produce more food locally.

Prof Spedding argued that the North has an extensive agricultural research capacity and, rather than cutting it down, we could deliberately use it as a channel for aid; and that what is needed is a partnership between relevant organisations in the UK (and the EEC) and institutions in developing countries to carry out relevant research and development.

Speaking on 'Food Production in the UK', Frank Raymond (formerly chief scientist of MAFF) said that contrary to popular belief farm prices have steadily fallen since the UK joined the Common Market: farmers now get about one third less in real terms for a tonne of wheat than in the mid-1970s. But they have largely been able to maintain their incomes against falling prices by farming more intensively so as to produce more units of output. Farm output has grown faster than the demand for the food itself, leading to the well-publicised EEC food surpluses. There is now wide support, in principle if not in detail, for the aim of the EEC Commission to bring farm output more closely into line with effective demand. There are two broadly distinct ways of controlling output: price cuts, and quotas.

Price cuts tend to encourage production on better land and to accelerate the move towards larger and more 'efficient' farms; in contrast quotas, applied at the farm level, tend to sustain the existing pattern of farms and farm production, but at an overall reduced level of farming intensity. Quotas are already applied to potatoes, sugar beet and milk, and are being considered for cereals, now increasing in surplus. Agriculture policy differs markedly from that in other sectors of the economy - for example coal, steel and textiles - in which production is being concentrated into the most efficient units and the rest closed down. If this agriculture policy is to be continued the reasons must be spelled out more clearly and explicitly than has yet been done. Society requires more from the farming industry than just food production, and recognises that the rundown of agriculture, particularly in marginal areas, would have even more serious social and environmental consequences than the closure of coal mines and steel mills.

Thus agricultural policy must seek an acceptable balance between the apparently conflicting demands of society: on the one hand that farming should develop as an efficient, low-cost industry producing just the amount of food that is needed, and on the other that it should maintain the countryside in terms of access and amenity, landscape and wildlife, while at the same

time improving standards of animal welfare and food quality. It is suggested that this will require further steady reduction in farm prices, coupled with selective quantitative limitation of output, but with farm support being transferred from activities which encourage still higher output (land reclamation and drainage, equipment investment allowances, and tax rules which encourage larger farms) towards those which will sustain smaller and medium-sized farms, encourage rural employment both on and off farm, and give greater protection to the rural environment.

Turning to the subject of 'Food, Health and Disease', Caroline Walker (co-author of *The Food Scandal*) gave a full account of changes in diet and eating habits in Britain in the last 30 years. She pointed out that in 1984 the food industry in Britain spent over £300m on advertising compared with £4m allocated to promote healthy eating through the Health Education Council. She argued that any responsible government in Britain should now do six things:

- (1) Abolish secrecy in government committees concerned with food; all evidence submitted to such committees must be available to the public; decisions on national policies on nutrition must be arrived at openly using the advice of independent scientists not reached in secret by committees dominated by representatives of the major food conglomerates.
- (2) The Ministry of Agriculture's brief should be extended so that it should be required to ensure a supply not only of safe and clean food, but also of healthy food. (As part of this extension of responsibility, Caroline Walker suggested that there should be a tax on sugars.)
- (3) National nutritional guidelines should be laid down and utilised in all public institutions such as schools, hospitals and prisons.
- (4) There should be a levy on the food industry to pay for more independent research on all aspects of nutrition.
- (5) Foods should be labelled with a full contents list which is easily readable. (There are over 3500 food additives in use in the UK of which only 277 are regulated.)
- (6) A revival of the fishing industry, since fish protein is extremely nutritious.

After lunch the conference split into discussion groups. The group on 'Food, Health and Education' (led by Frances Alexander) endorsed Caroline Walker's six conclusions and added a number of other recommendations:

- i) that there should be a stricter code of practice for food advertising and particularly for confectionery;
- ii) that planned health education should take place throughout school life, ideally to include the school dinner as part of education, and gardening as part of the curriculum;
- iii) that all medical students should study nutrition;
- iv) that GCE and CSE home economics courses should contain more emphasis on food for healthy living.

The link between health policy and agricultural policy was made in the discussion group on 'The Liberal Party's Agricultural Strategy' (led by Peter Fane). Food quality was suffering as a result of the intensive methods encouraged by the Common Agricultural Policy. The group discussed the effects of the price support mechanism of the CAP on the rural environment, on relations with our trading partners (especially in the

Third World), on the consumer, and on animal welfare; and the disproportionate benefit of price support to the larger farmers. It was agreed that in all these areas the CAP had a major effect, even if it was not central to all of them - and that its effects were harmful since a policy of price support is only appropriate to increase farm incomes (which it does indiscriminately) and to increase farm output (which is no longer a rational objective).

For these reasons it was felt that a move towards prices closer to world levels (whatever those would be once the distortion induced by CAP price support was removed) was appropriate. But it was recognised that support for smaller farmers and those in hill areas would still be necessary, and that this should be in the form of direct payments to the farmers concerned.

The group went on to consider the effects of the cost-price squeeze on farmers and how this could be prevented from leading to a further 'shaking-out' of farm labour. It was felt that extra workers would be needed for conservation and other work which would be required, and to this end farming should be regarded as an 'employment area' and some part of the cost of additional labour should be subsidised without enshrining the policy of overmanning. Support should also be extended to other small rural industries and to cooperatives.

It was agreed that agriculture was by its nature diffuse and must remain so; it would never be sensible or helpful to seek its concentration only in those areas to which it was most economically suited.

There was discussion as to the most appropriate policy for conserving the rural environment: as to whether it was best to 'educate' and encourage farmers through the voluntary approach, to rely on financial incentives, or to restrict them with further planning controls. It was agreed that positive measures rather than just restrictions were needed; that a distinction must be made between financial incentives to take such positive action (such as the direct payments to farmers considered earlier), and financial incentives to desist from damaging operations which should never have been considered in the first place. In order to concentrate the limited money available onto the former, reserve powers were needed to prevent the latter. It was felt that these reserve powers could fall short of full planning control: thus Forestry Commission control of felling licences might be extended to hedgerows, with local planning authorities being given stronger consultative powers, possibly including the power of veto over such operations.

Overall it was felt that our policy should be to encourage positive measures, not just to discourage the harmful ones. But restrictions were needed to restore the balance in favour of the majority of farmers who are benevolent towards the environmental objectives shared by the rural community.

The discussion group on 'Britain and the World's Hungry', led by Rose Stimson, argued that there was no justification for the creation of food surpluses in Europe, and that food aid should only be provided in absolute emergencies. The group was concerned with the need for land reform in Third World countries, with the importance of ecological balance, and the need for a much wider recognition of the resource constraints - land, water and energy - in many poor countries. The group saw the amount of money devoted by Third World countries to the purchase of arms as a major inhibition on their developing sustainable agricultural policies, and recommended that Britain

should withdraw from involvement in the arms trade.

The group agreed that fluctuating commodity prices very much affected the stability of agricultural policies and food production in many countries, and the international economic community needed to explore new ways of stabilising these prices.

The fourth discussion group, led by Basil Goldstone on 'Food and Animal Welfare', included members of the Farm and Food Society and Compassion in World Farming. It accepted the European Convention for farm animals. It interpreted Article 3 (which states, 'Animals shall be housed and provided with food, water and care in a manner which is appropriate to their physiological and ethological needs') as entailing the phasing out of the more extreme forms of animal husbandry such as battery cages for hens, and crates for veal cows and sows.

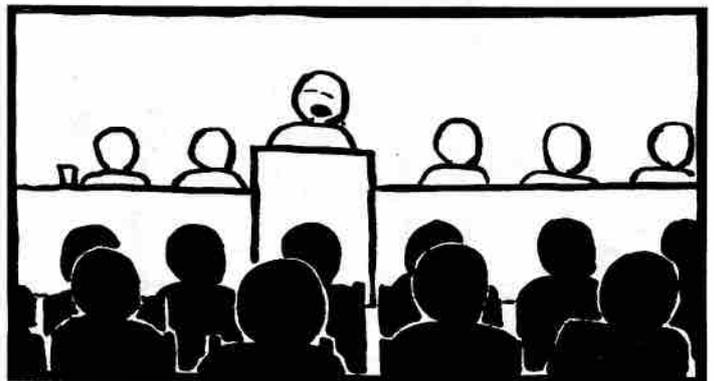
The group considered the labelling of eggs with their method of production to be a matter of high priority. Sainsbury's sell and label free range eggs but refuse to tell customers that the other eggs on sale are provided by the battery system. Liberal Party policy calls for the banning of the export of live animals for immediate slaughter. This should include veal calves for further fattening. One further extension to Liberal Party policy was suggested: that buildings used for intensive systems of animal husbandry should be classified as 'industrial' for rating and taxation purposes.

The closing plenary session of the conference explored some of the links between the various concerns and recommendations of the discussion groups, and listened to closing addresses from Robin Grove-White (Director of the Council for the Protection of Rural England) and Michael Meadowcroft MP.

Robin Grove-White spoke of the marked change in outlook that has taken place in agricultural policy in the last eighteen months, and of the CPRE's successful campaign to get conservation values built into the heart of the system of official EEC and MAFF financial incentives for agriculture. He spoke of the real difficulty of reconciling some of the conflicts of interest between, for example, consumers and environmentalists.

Michael Meadowcroft MP said that politics was all about harnessing a wide range of forces to achieve desirable ends. Liberal politics must derive from Liberal values. In the areas of food and agriculture that challenge is to put as much emphasis on education as on regulation; the problem for Liberals is how to help people to make decisions for themselves.

Three days after the conference the Wimbledon Liberal Constituency Association approved a motion to go forward to the 1985 Liberal Assembly based on many of the recommendations made at the conference.



SINCE THE ENCLOSURES and throughout the developments of the Industrial Revolution, the accumulations and manipulations of power, capital and information have maintained a vastly imbalanced distribution of land-ownership in this country. 1300 people between them 'own' more than one third of Britain, while over 50% of the land resource is 'owned' by 1% of the population.

BRUCE MACKENZIE writes in response to Richard Hunt's attack on land tax in GL 31.

Further statistics could follow, but we are generally familiar with the picture. Imbalances in the distribution of land rights inevitably affect the equity of any system of economic practice that is imposed upon the resource base of the nation. Though this is more self-evident in predominantly agrarian societies, it is equally true in Britain. As the second Industrial Revolution encroaches upon the remnants of our economy, so the distortive effects of underlying patterns of ownership/investment will become more apparent, more extreme.

If the principle of private rights in land and property has long been accepted in our unwritten constitution, details of ownership remain obscure. In England and Wales the register of land ownership is incomplete and access is strictly limited, particularly for urban landholdings. The veil of secrecy under which the land market operates is carefully camouflaged to avoid detection. Whereas the dealings in company equity are fully and openly available on the Stock Exchange hoardings, there is no free display of information for dealings in land.

The last complete record of landholdings in Britain was the Domesday Book of 1086, in which the feudal social structures were clearly outlined. Since then only two full attempts have been made to repeat the exercise. The first, in 1873, was shown to contain many inaccuracies, and more recently, in 1979, the Northfield Committee was surprised to find that data was limited and very difficult to obtain. With the 900th anniversary of the Domesday Book coming up next year, perhaps it is time indeed for a full and complete record of land ownership, value and use to be made,



Community re

with full right of public access. We are one of the few countries in Europe without such a record, and with a view to effective regional planning, such information is vital. With the aid of computerisation such details could be made available at local regional centres, once the initial cadastral survey had been completed.

Within the scenario of a decentralised, regionally governed or administered nation, with a central authority existing only to coordinate such national functions as defence, foreign policy, pollution control, resource management, etc., regional autonomy will obviously require the democratisation of the processes of capital/credit formation, land ownership and information dissemination. Transition towards this scenario will be slow and uneven, and there is obviously a diversity of view as to how best to effect this development, whilst recognising that the possibility of its instigation will increase as the formal economic scenario becomes enmeshed in its increasingly intractable problems.

In the political sense, land reform might be of particular value in that it bears upon many aspects of the economy and could therefore yield effective leverage according to its circumstances, rural or urban. Prevailing patterns of land use are heavily influenced by tenure and ownership, and until the imbalances of ownership are redressed existing schisms in society will, I feel, but deepen. Though there are factors emerging which will help to shape fresh attitudes towards land use - e.g. the slow erosion of MAFF and CAP subsidies, the slow turning towards the concept of a 'community architecture', etc. - they remain peripheral influences.

How to redistribute

Redistribution could come about through three possible methods. Directly, through some form of nationalisation, which in my opinion would be an almost bureaucratic impossibility, a nightmarish exercise full of unpluggable leaks, corruption and pseudo-ownership. The second method, of which there has been some element practised in the past (though at considerably lower levels of population than today) would be that of communal rights in land. Though there are small groups of people in Britain today who are practising this ideal, they are a very small minority. For it to become a widespread practice would require, I think, the development of a far wiser disposition than we collectively exhibit as a nation, at present.

This leaves the collection of the community land value which, as a means towards the ideal of communal rights, might be the only workable solution. This community value is that attaching to the land, apart from any improvements. Confusion often clouds the idea of land value, often through the variety of description it is afforded. Sometimes referred to as land tax, others call it site value rating, or community rent, or ground rent, or the economic rent - all the same thing. In truth, it is not a tax as such, merely the straight collection of a true and natural value.

Historically there have been forms of a 'land tax' applied in this country, yet since the introduction of taxes on income and capital, land tax has been largely forgotten. Earlier this century Lloyd George's People's Budget of 1909 and Philip Snowden's Finance Bill of 1931 both included a form of land value tax, but on both occasions it was blocked through political

at: Land in trust

circumstance.

The collection of land values as a public revenue would be relatively simple. Land is both visible and unmistakable. Evasion is thus impossible, and refusal to pay would simply lead to relinquishing right of use. Evaluation is a straightforward process, with collection being effected locally. Hector Wilks, who successfully conducted the Whitstable site value rating experiment in 1963 and again in 1973, held it to be one of the most easily collected 'taxes' as well as being cheap to administer.

Valuations in all regions could be carried out by local evaluation boards, as presently exist within Inland Revenue. The rate of evaluation would be set at a full 100% for full effect, though probably initially at a lower rate, and progress to the maximum over a number of years. Revaluations could be carried out every 2 - 3 years on a full basis, to ensure a true reflection of current values. Where planning permission is granted for change of use in the interim, revaluation would be made accordingly. Any other application for reassessment could also be made locally. Doubtless in the initial years of its possible implementation, there would have to be adjustments made as teething problems were encountered.

The overall effects of the collection of land values would be various:

(a) it would serve as an almost total disincentive to land speculation, delivering planning from the clutches of 'developers' and assisting in the possible liberalisation of the planning process.

(b) it would lead towards a renewal of the investment scenario, with enterprise being placed more in the context of local need.

(c) more land would become available for use, with prices tending to fall progressively. Agricultural landholdings would tend towards their optimum productive capacity, with more small holdings available.

(d) it would allow the radical restructuring of the entire taxation system, with considerable tax relief on labour and capital, particularly for those at the lower levels of income. The extent to which our present tangle of taxes could be replaced would only become fully known as knowledge of land value revenues grew. It would serve to replace our present rating system for sure, though I doubt whether it is the reform that Mrs Thatcher has in mind.

(e) the break-up of the large rural estates would allow increased rural populations, with subsequent beneficial effects for rural communities and employment. It would also assist in the establishment of small-scale communities.

(f) thousands of acres of derelict inner city land would be brought into use, allowing housing schemes (at lower prices and rents), community facilities and amenities (allotments, urban farms, ecology parks, etc.), and more local employment. Coupled with the application of a more democratic planning process, this would bring about a considerable increase in the overall wealth of living for many people.

(g) the real value of wages would increase, with the inflationary element due to land speculation, high rents, etc. removed from the economic cycle.

(h) the freeing of inner city land would allow a more

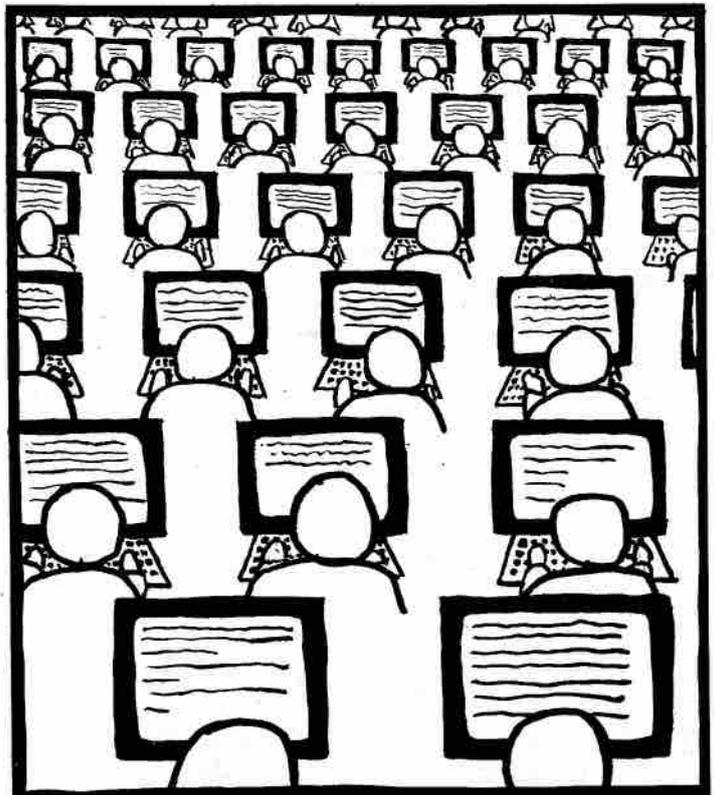
compact planning process, with subsequent relief on marginal and urban fringe farmland.

(i) the formation of land trusts could facilitate the wider distribution of land as necessary.

In summary, the overall effect would be towards a more accountable and responsible land use scenario than is the case today, allowing a greater capacity for effective regional planning in the gradual process towards the decentralised future. Though there would not necessarily be an immediate large-scale redistribution of land, it would initiate an accelerating process. Perhaps the movement towards the land would tend initially to be a predominantly middle class phenomenon, but is that of consequence? For many years to come, the greater majority of our sedentary population will live in cities and towns, and the benefits gained by the community overall - as outlined above - would represent considerable redistribution of wealth as well as growth in the equality of enterprise opportunity and overall wellbeing.

Greater access to land and more community say-so in planning would enhance the empowerment of rural and urban communities and lead to a greater economic self-reliance. There would also be the impetus given to mixed/organic farming, mixed forestry, a lessening of the corporate hold on food production chains, and linked with the national income scheme - an impetus for informal economy. Much if not all of the influence and power of land-ownership would disappear. The land monopoly would be broken. Misuse of land could be checked through eco-sustainable planning law with conservation/community criteria applied as an inherent quality of all land use. Gradually, communities would begin to reflect their true wealth as proprietorial rights were restored to the community through the sharing of the natural revenue.

If the Earth, and thus the land, is our sacred trust, then it is the common 'property' of all generations past, future and present. If we see the right of responsible use as the only right, then it is the context within which 'ownership' is commonly seen that we wish and seek to alter.





If you have an area of special interest or expertise, and would like to review books or pamphlets for Green Line, please drop us a line. (We supply the books!).

Nuclear pieces

Will they thank us for this? Ecology Party, 50p
The Valley Path: CND and the Cold War. Rip Bulkeley.
Fox and Lantern Press, 38 Lonsdale Road, Oxford.
£1.25.

CONSIDERING THE TASK the authors of "Will they thank us for this" set themselves, the end result is a pretty fair job. In 26 pages they not only present the main aspects of the nuclear threat, but do so in an engaging way with plenty of good graphics, photos and appropriate quotes. As an overview of what the Ecology Party sees as symptomatic of Britain's (if not the planet's) current ills - namely everything nuclear - this is sound manifesto stuff. Whether what the authors would like to do about it - i.e. over and above conservation and changing everything over to wind, water, biomass and sun - is actually achievable within our present social, economic and political framework is perhaps more debatable.

Leaving that one aside, what I find least successful about this pamphlet is its tendency, in 26 pages, to encompass life, the universe and everything! We get nuclear weapons and nuclear waste, nuclear winter and nuclear power, and just for something different the potentially deleterious effects of computer error triggering off both gross electricity bills and global catastrophe.

The moral of the story; you can't always do justice to a subject in a paragraph, particularly if what you end up saying is either a half-truth or, perhaps even worse, not what you really intended.

The suggestion, for instance, that the Russians (I told you everything is here!) are not likely to invade Britain because of our failing economy in a discussion supposedly about weapons and defence (but note, not alliances) utterly misses the point. The Soviet Union can and ultimately would in a nuclear show-down obliterate Britain and all of Western Europe whether or not it wanted to invade us. Possible occupation, which the authors see as the alternative, is not a realistic scenario, except in the minds of old-fashioned and jingoistic newspaper editors and, it appears, some greens. If it did ever happen, however, the authors' blithe notion that it cannot "kill the spirit of the people" could well be in for a nasty shock.

While the Ecology Party pamphlet is therefore wide-ranging and indeed all-embracing and as a result at crucial moments tends towards naivety or wooliness, Rip Bulkeley's "The Valley Path" while still very much about nuclear matters is tight, rigorous and single-minded in its determination not to avoid unpleasant truths about the Russians or anybody else.

The crux of Rip's thesis is however straightforward enough. If the peace movement in Britain, and by that Rip is thinking particularly of CND, is to continue campaigning against nuclear weapons, its stance on those weapons must be consistent and hence uncompromising. If they are "absolutely useless for any sane and justifiable military purpose," if they are not only illegal but a moral outrage, if the

theory of deterrence which sustains them is false and politically bankrupt - all arguments we fairly apply in the west - then the same arguments must be equally and unreservedly applied about nuclear weapons elsewhere.

Readers present at last year's CND annual conference will recognise here one side in a debate (though many will remember it more as a pitched battle) in which Rip and friends attempted to steer CND policy towards a clear and unadulterated non-aligned stance.

What Rip means by this is not always trying to redress every action we take against American bases or cruise missile convoys with a balancing act outside the Soviet embassy. It does however presuppose a CND position vis-a-vis the Soviet Union not of equivocation sometimes amounting to "let's pretend the Soviets don't have nuclear weapons", but rather one based upon the same principles we apply to our own weapons systems.

Moreover, while the Soviet Union may put forward proposals which we ought to scrutinise for positive contributions to the disarmament process, Rip insists that it is no less averse than its superpower rival to dressing up propaganda ploys as the genuine article in order to use us, the peace movement, as dupes in its Cold War posturings.

As he himself admits, there underlies Rip's thesis here a deeper political concern to liberate Europe east and west from superpower hegemony. This as much as the overriding nuclear message may be the reason why his efforts at Sheffield last year were stonewalled by a disparate if predictable crew of old-style Stalinists and self-styled militant ideologues of various left fractions.

In "The Valley Path" the spectrum of apologetics, myths and arguments used by these people in defence of Soviet nuclear weapons and policy are tackled and toppled one by one. Which is why, given the imminence of yet another annual conference, this pamphlet is so timely. Read it!

Mark Levene

Not forgetting the politics

Uprooting War. Brian Martin. Freedom Press, £4.

WITH 270 PAGES of clearly written and stimulating arguments, with a useful bibliography, and at £4, this book is good value for money. Brian Martin is not a professional writer or a professional peace researcher, and this helps make the book readily accessible to anyone involved in the peace movement.

The main body of the book is concerned with identifying the institutions that perpetuate war, and with putting forward an alternative way of running things based on decentralised self-management. I found it interesting because it's essentially about strategy - how to develop a programme of action for changing things. Such a programme is something that the peace movement and the green movement both clearly lack.

We all know what we are against in this society, some of us have a clear idea of what an ideal society would be like, but very few of us have an idea of how we get from here to there. If we reject revolutionary socialism and electoralism, then surely it is vitally important to define our own path. Of course this is extremely difficult, and I think many people give up trying because it seems so hopeless. There seems to me to be a dangerous trend amongst greens to over-emphasise personal change and ignore politics. 'Uprooting War' usefully reminds us that we cannot ignore the institutions of our society:

"Setting out to live the alternative of self-management is vitally important, but it is not enough. So long as self-managing social action groups remain small and isolated, they provide little threat to dominant institutions. The military can tolerate, or squash if necessary, a few conscientious objectors or non-violent groups on the fringes of society. Likewise, so long as self-managing social action groups remain separate from the day to day experience of most people working in large-scale bureaucracies, there is little chance that these bureaucracies will suddenly collapse and transform themselves."

The challenge to us must be to find a way of bringing together personal change with political change. For example, the large number of people now becoming vegetarian or vegan is having an effect on levels of meat consumption. However the response from meat producers has been to start an enormous propaganda campaign to try and persuade people to eat more meat - red meat in particular. There is no talk of changing from meat to vegetable production. The EEC, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Farmers' Union, multi-national fertiliser and agrochemical companies are all institutions with strong interests in the status quo - not to mention the meat industry itself! Land ownership, the world economic system and our political system all reinforce and perpetuate our present system of food production. Becoming a vegetarian/vegan does not seriously undermine or challenge these systems and institutions, even with millions of people doing it as they are in Britain today.

We really must think seriously, hard and long about just how we can make political change. It is painfully obvious that our efforts so far have been all too inadequate. And those efforts have revolved around two strategies. (1) Convincing/persuading elites of the need to change their policies (particularly governments). (2) Making changes in our personal lives. Brian Martin explores the possibilities of a different approach and gives his opinion that "the idea is simultaneous institutional and personal change," and that "it is much more important that strategies be based on promoting institutional transformation. Participatory campaigns with this goal will promote changes in attitudes as they proceed."

Changing your lifestyle is OK but don't forget the politics. Power to the people!

Chris Savory

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Red and green 'intertwined'

Dear GL,

Speaking as a green, an ecological socialist, I find the present red/green debate in GL wasteful in time, in energy and in trees. I write therefore not to fuel the debate, but to close it.

Whilst I would argue for diversification of opinion, I can state with conviction that green politics must have their roots implanted in ecological socialism.

Those who fail to acknowledge a class society are blind to the world. Greens may refuse to recognise class divisions, but that does not change reality. The fact is, we live in a class-ridden society. It is far easier to be a middle-class feminist than a working-class feminist. Trendiness and liberation do not transcend class barriers. Working class people are all equal in the eyes of society: they are all equally shat on, but it is hardly organic. The ecology parties because of their middle class origins have failed to face up to the problem and as a consequence ecology is regarded as a middle-class phenomenon. It is the very existence of class divisions which is restricting the spread of the green movement.

At present the UK ecology parties are politically disoriented. This is primarily due to the centralist, vertical administration system which constricts innovation and political initiative. The situation is not helped by the 'holier than thou' clique (green?) at the centre, who appear to suffer from an excess of hot air and an inability to perceive reality.

The reality is, we live in a dying world. Multi-deprivation and social injustice are rife, complacency and apathy are growth industries, and time is fast running out. The green movement needs the politics of inspiration and action - not empty, though eloquent, words. The ecology parties of the UK must look to ecological socialism for guidance. We must rid this world of class division and multi-deprivation as the first steps towards an ecological society. Ecology and socialism will always be intertwined, and the sooner this is universally acknowledged the better. I question the motives of those who would have it otherwise. The green movement has no place for those with closed minds and bigotry in their hearts.

Some green politicians have already achieved a new awareness, a new perspective. During the last 12 months ecology parties throughout

the UK have taken their first tentative steps towards full autonomy. Fundamental green principles are being put into practice, not just talked about. The momentum and inspiration is now coming from the grassroots instead of the centre. We are fast approaching the turning point, the vertical is tilting horizontal.

I urge the greens to gather in Dover this September to banish apathy, pessimism and bigotry to the Badvibe wastelands. Let Dover be the release of a fresh green realism with the hunger and drive necessary to change our society now!! - for next year may be too late.

(To those unable to perceive the realities of life, spare the trees! I can be slagged off face to face at the Radical Green fringe meeting in Dover. Us real greens can take it.)

Ian Smith
11 Forth Street, Edinburgh EH1 3LE

Conceptual confusion

Dear GL,

With concepts like 'greening political parties', 'eco-fascism' and 'class struggles' there seem to be two very different disasters that we have to avoid. One is to language, the other to society.

There is no meaning to a phrase such as 'green fascism', only destruction of the meaning of words: which is only too common in advertising and tyranny. Whereas a tyranny that followed the policy of having a sustainable economy is a meaningful concept.

My feeling is that most people use a grossly oversimplified view of politics that can all be fitted into one dimension - or axis - of left and right. 'Neither left nor right but forward' is a little better, with two dimensions; but I think at least six axes are needed for even a broad description of the very different parties and sects.

On the axis of liberty, from anarchy to tyranny, green is towards the end with freedom: fascism towards the other end. So, if I interpret green correctly, green cannot be repressive or fascist - only used improperly.

On an axis of sustainability, however, the green aim of a sustainable economy need not exclude others from aiming for a sustainable economy. While almost all governments as yet aim for 'growth', there could be a

dictatorship that sets up a sustainable economy. Hence there could be a choice between a policy of liberty without sustainability (the usual proposal in England as yet) and sustainability without liberty.

Another important axis is the size of group that is favoured, from individuals to states or larger. Green favours small groups, whereas tyrannies usually favour larger ones. Left and right is the axis of favouring public (state) or private firms; and another axis is favouring real people (as greens do) or corporate bodies - whether public or private. The sixth axis is that of population numbers; the higher they are the more difficult it is to have a sustainable economy and, I suspect, to have liberty.

Henry Cox
3 Church Road, Alsager
Stoke on Trent ST7 2HB

Anarchist solution?

Dear GL,

I am a music teacher who from time to time has been developing in an anarchist direction. I am concerned at the moment that I cannot maintain my principles and excuse myself for having a job in the state machine, especially in a part of it that seems designed to destroy people's souls.

Could you (or any readers) give me an idea of what most anarchists would do in this situation, and why, bearing in mind that healing may only take place by working inside the problem?

M.T. (write c/o Green Line, 34 Cowley Road, Oxford.)



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Findhorn: another view

Dear GL,

As a member of the Findhorn community my first reaction on reading Daphne Francis' article on Findhorn (GL May/June) was very mixed. On the other hand I was very excited because the article has been printed at a time when some of the issues it raises are being re-evaluated in the community. I found it an excellent mirror and point of conversation. However, I was also dismayed that it wasn't made clear to readers that it is an historical account of one woman's personal experience and not a factual account of Findhorn today. I have no intention of attacking Daphne or the article or even responding point by point. I only say that I value, accept and acknowledge Daphne's pain, frustration and anger, and I truly resonate with much of what she had to say. And, I haven't had the same experience.

I am writing as an individual. I don't speak for the community: I just happen to live in it. My reality and experience is as unique as the reality and experience of the other 200 plus people here. Findhorn like every other place on the planet is in a state of rapid change. Members come and go. One hundred guests a week in the summer bring 100 different energies to the community. Our self-definition and purpose (whether we are a conference center, demonstration community, etc.) are being examined along with our decision-making structures. We are not a perfect community, but I feel the intent is to move towards growth and perfection.

My primary work here is gardening and working with the earth festivals and the feminine energies of the Goddess. At times, I feel the same frustration that Daphne must have felt at the resistance of the community to some of those energies. But I see Findhorn as one of those special places on the planet where the marriage of earth and sky can happen and I trust it will happen, however painfully slow the process sometimes seems. And, because the planetary process of feminization and healing seems so slow and fraught with tests and blocks, I feel it is crucial that we realize that we simply don't have any more time to give energy to "us and them-ism", pointing of fingers, and focusing on our differences. I see the work of the feminist movement, the earth mysteries movement, the ecology movement, etc. to be the movement towards cooperating in finding our interfaces and commonalities and to recognize that we are all trying to get to the same place.

Findhorn isn't an enemy. The New Age movement for all its faults and biases isn't a force that seeks to destroy women or the energy of the feminine. I don't believe that the current suppression of the dark, of the feminine, of the Goddess can any longer be looked at as a plot by male supremacists to gain power. Rather I see it as in-grown acculturated fear, ignorance and avoidance - and men certainly don't have the only corner on the market. That's not to deny the violent repression of the earth religions or to forget that the witch hunts happened. More it's to acknowledge that we all have been painfully damaged and distorted by our history, and now is the time to heal the wounds, find the scattered pieces, and re-member our vision of our sacred Mother Earth.

"There are women everywhere with
fragments
gather fragments
weave and mend

when we learn to come together we
are whole
when we learn to recognize the enemy
we will know what we need to know
to learn how to come together
to learn how to weave and mend

.....
I know the many smiling faces of my
enemy
I know the pretense that is the
weapon used.

I have been the enemy
and learn to know myself well."

(Anne Cameron: 'Tales of Copper Woman').

What excites me, what encourages me is the idea of creating a soup in a giant cauldron - a soup in which you can taste the cayenne and the ginseng and the corn; a soup in which the flavours don't meld into nothingness but are heightened and strengthened and complemented by each other. Findhorn has its own unique ingredients and it may not be to everybody's taste. But it's in a prime location for a cauldron and I encourage those who can to taste the soup for themselves and season the pot.

I trust my honesty and my intuition. And I know that I couldn't love and choose to live in a place that didn't offer the hope and possibility of the re-emergence of the Goddess and the marriage of spirit and "mater". All over the planet the Goddess and the Mysteries are calling us to once again hold hands in the circle and remember how to weave and mend. It's time. Blessed be.

Tima Priess
Findhorn Foundation
Drumduan House, Forres IV36 ORD

Gnostic tradition

Dear GL,

Although I agree totally with some of the faults in the New Age ideology described by Daphne Francis in your June issue, there is one small point of symbolic content I would like to attempt to rectify.

Traditional Christians would not meditate on the full moon, but I have reason to believe that this symbolism derives from the Gnostic tradition.

In this case the full moon symbolises the lower self reflecting the light of the higher self, the sun. This symbolism however has in my own experience been used as an excuse for patriarchal chauvinism. The argument runs along the lines of 'the positive masculine side dominates in esoteric symbolism and so it is in life!' This is however similar to the distortion of the Bible by the Christian churches to repress and control people by saying, 'It is so, because of Divine Will'.

Anyway, where do you go drinkin' then?

A ritual head
c/o Room 56
YMCA, 56 Peter Street, Manchester



Blavatsky

Dear GL,

There is so much worthy of further comment in every issue of GL that I must confine myself to one point in the article on Findhorn by Daphne Francis.

Daphne stated that H P Blavatsky's work was 'very popular with the Nazis,' implying that this in some way invalidates the value of that work.

Perhaps as a psychic without equal before or since, HPB should have foreseen such unwelcome support. Nazi interest however did not prevent their burning Blavatsky's books, along with all the Theosophical libraries and Society premises which existed to propagate her work.

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831 - 1891) was a most remarkable woman, and neither time nor scientific 'progress' has invalidated the value of her epic writings.

Bill Whitbread
18 Mannoek Road, Wood Green
London N22

letters

Community's credit

Dear GL,

Richard Hunt comments (GL33, p 15) that 'the causes of depression are overproduction of commodities (sic), so we have to produce fewer goods to buy our food. The fall in commodity prices has always preceded, not followed, a depression.'

While the last sentence may be true, his deduction overlooks that the fewer the goods produced, the lower the total of wages distributed 'to buy our food'. Andre Gorz is partly right in his attribution of the crisis of capitalism to 'over-accumulation of capital' together with 'under-consumption', but Richard is right to criticise his solution as 'simply transferring the spending power from rich to poor.'

What both fail to appreciate is that the dilemmas produced by capitalism stem from the financial system on which it is built, and which determines its nature. It is this which inevitably channels resources away from meeting society's needs, into 'too many factories', and then denies them effective markets by draining away purchasing power, so leaving the population chronically short of the money it needs.

It is inherent in this system that it will produce the oscillations of booms and slumps, as the (relative) 'flood' of money it pours into 'the market' in periods of boom is debt-based, and inevitably leads to slump when it is recalled by the banks and is then cancelled out of existence.

Richard's thinking on 'machines saving labour' is very restricted and unscientific. The facts he quotes are interesting; but they show not that 'machines do not save labour', but firstly that primitive agriculture involves more work than primitive hunt/gathering, and secondly that 'the workers' have been increasingly imposed upon by their masters/the system; despite the vast increases in productivity through use of machines.

We are now nearing the physical limits of possible extension of this combination of trends, and we have to challenge and alter the system producing these disastrous trends; and Gorz is right to demand a 'social wage' (or National Income). Richard's objection - that automation, in abolishing workers, also abolishes 'the taxpayers needed to pay ... the social wage' - indicates the need to reform the financial system to remove this dilemma and ensure that enough money is maintained in the system (and under control of the community) to pay 'the wages of the machine' to the population as a

whole as a 'social wage' and ensure that what is physically possible is financially possible.

Essentially, this implies ending the banks' monopoly-privilege of the right to create credit (to make money - literally!) and transferring it to the community, or its elected, accountable representatives

This privilege has given the banks, collectively, power over governments and the rest of society. To challenge it will be hard, since they hold all the aces, but this reform is vital to the future of this planet.

Brian Leslie
12 Queens Road, Tunbridge Wells
Kent TN4 9LU

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THE OTHER ECONOMIC SUMMIT (1984) Report and Summary. 40pp. 70p.

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Alconbury trial

AT THE END of the trial of the Alconbury 9, the judge meted out sentences included suspended prison sentences, fines of up to £500, and community service orders to five of the defendants who were found guilty. Angela Needham writes:

From the start of the trial the judge was determined to insist that it was in no way a political trial. The prosecutor endeavoured to maintain that the defendants were criminals without any serious motivation to their alleged acts. Nonetheless an MoD officer did admit under cross-examination that one of the defendants was handcuffed face downwards with her arms behind her back by a USAF officer; and defence also alleged that she was then picked up by her handcuffed arms, that they were held at USAF gunpoint, and that one man was lifted by his testicles.

USAF Alconbury is clearly a very sensitive base and on several occasions protest has been prevented there by the authorities taking action outside the due process of law - for example the eviction of the first peace camp by the stratagem of arresting all residents without warning and impounding all their possessions, although no eviction order had been made. Other abuses of the law included use of restrictive bail conditions as, in effect, a punishment before the trial. Thus the bail conditions of the '9' prevented them from taking part in otherwise perfectly legal demonstrations at USAF Alconbury: an

initial requirement to sign on daily at a police station effectively placed them under town arrest.

In spite of all these implications the judge announced before the defence opened that the defence counsel and the defendants were not to include any statements of a political, ethical or philosophical nature, in an attempt to silence their rights to free speech and place the whole trial in a context far removed from reality.

In the light of continued attempts to criminalise, divide and silence our protest, as further demonstrated by the invention of new and proposed laws to prevent previously lawful avenues of protest (e.g. the byelaws at Molesworth and Greenham and the proposed public order bill which will make illegal a large proportion of our demonstrations, vigils, etc.) it is crucial that we remain united in our support for one another - although there may be disagreements about things between us. The words of a song often heard at Molesworth in 1982 apply to us in our own movements as well as in our message to the world: "We must learn to live together with our differences without instances of hate, before it's too late."

We note with horror the treatment of people on the way to Stonehenge last June and recognise that the police now feel able to use brutality even in front of TV cameras. We can best prevent this by not allowing any sections of our diverse community to be marginalised. The Alconbury 9

and the peace camp itself, as a relatively new set-up which had not had time to develop the kind of network possessed by the older peace camps, may have been chosen by the authorities as a group they could try to scapegoat, and it certainly slowed down the campaign in the early months after their arrest last year. Ironically, however, these events have now done much to put Alconbury on the peace movement map and many actions have since taken place at Alconbury and around the country in support.

Many towns have been leafletted about the significance of Alconbury and the use of conspiracy charges. In many places groups have attempted to hand themselves in as fellow conspirators at their local police stations, and obtained local media coverage for their action and for Alconbury. One person using Inlaw material attempted to take out an injunction for conspiracy under the Genocide Act against Margaret Thatcher and Michael Heseltine. He linked this with the conspiracy charge against the 7, and the clerk of the court advised or instructed the magistrate not to read the evidence.

A goodly number of actions have also taken place at Alconbury itself, including the spreading of messages with paint, pen and leaflet on the theme "Who is conspiring at Alconbury?" The leaflets were also used elsewhere. Christian CND have held worship services on the base; other groups have entered the base and succeeded in reaching planes. One group entered the base on the eve of the trial to leave paint messages, and a 12-hour peace camp was set up during the trial on the old site. It seems important that actions should continue at Alconbury. Hopefully a peace camp can succeed in establishing itself there; partly because it is such an important base, and also because it can in no way be separated from the anti-cruise campaign at Molesworth.

Indeed, more resources are being poured into Alconbury by the Pentagon than into Molesworth itself; and as there is no runway at Molesworth it is presumably to Alconbury that cruise will initially be flown if we fail to prevent its arrival altogether. If we do not allow such methods as conspiracy charges to frighten us away, then we must expect a new level of attempts to silence our protest. This case, along with others currently taking place in the peace movement, will I hope spur us all to more and varied action for peace and justice.

Molesworth/Alconbury Land Trust

ABOUT £25,000 is needed very quickly to buy a piece of land right on the proposed line of a new road linking the A1 and M1 which would serve as a dispersal route for Cruise missiles from Molesworth. The plan is to sell the land in small plots at £1 per square yard: this delays and complicates compulsory purchase! Forms to buy a piece of land are available for a SAE from: Molesworth/Alconbury Land Trust, c/o Old School House, Clopton, Kettering, Northants NN14 3DZ.

Once purchased the land will be available as a campaigning base and for crop planting.

Eirene under threat

THE MOD have withdrawn the piece of land on which the Eirene chapel stands from sale: plans are to build the new main entrance across the site. Vigils are held daily at Peace Corner at 11 am and 4 pm; and Eirene's birthday will be celebrated on September 1.

Action Group

A COLLECTION of people who live at the various vigils and camps around Molesworth have formed themselves into the Molesworth Action Group. They are looking for increased support for direct action at the base and the picketing of contractors' lorries when silo and bunker construction begins in August.



Greens at Glastonbury

Patrick Whitefield writes:

At this year's Glastonbury CND festival there was not so much a Green Field as a fragmented green presence. The original plan was to combine the package put on by the Green Collective with contributions from Greenpeace, the Centre for Alternative Technology, and others. It seems that the organisers suffered from last-minute Convoy paranoia. Fearing that the Stonehenge Convoy, denied access to the Stones, might descend en masse and park up with their close relations the greens, they shunted the Green Field off to the furthest corner of the site, where the straight punters wouldn't be upset by their presence.

This enforced migration did not include any of the practical green elements. The CAT, Windmill Steve, and the hot shower unit - this year complete with display - were left on the old Green Field which in all other respects became just like any other part of the festival. Greenpeace and FoE had stalls in the main market areas. Meanwhile the Green Collective managed to make the new Green Field, far off in its secluded spot, as ever the only really pleasant part of the festival to be in.

You could say it was a good thing to spread the green presence as wide as possible through the festival. But it was an unnecessary split between the 'mystics and mechanics'. If the green approach represents anything it's a holistic way, one which cares for the physical and the spiritual in the same breath. To artificially separate the two does no good either to us or to the people we're trying to communicate with. Both 'green' parts of the site felt incomplete.

The Green Field itself was blessed with its usual delights: Peter the Potter's raku kiln, the roadshow kids' area, women's space, healers, drumming sessions, Sunflower book-stall, wholefood stalls, a beautiful garden, Dib-Jak, and other familiar faces and attractions too numerous to mention. But the biggest attraction of all was the only large open space on the entire site not churned into mud on this excessively wet weekend. It was free of mud because it was so far away from the hub of things that it didn't get the pounding everywhere else got. It remained empty due to the efforts of the Green Collective. This aroused a bit of resentment, as some people were allowed to camp on the field but many more were turned away. The name 'Green Selective' was heard on

the lips of one outraged wit. On the other hand, that open green space was enjoyed by far more people than those who felt downgraded by not being allowed to pitch with the nobs. Do we have a new, green solution to dilemmas like this?

Basically, the Green Field was a warm friendly, clean space, and to create it in the unsympathetic atmosphere of a major commercial rock festival took a great deal of work and sensitivity on the part of members of the Green Collective and others. Two years ago there was no recognisable green presence at the CND Festival, last year there was a Green Field, this year more than a single field. It's a sign that we're growing.



Acid Rain

EIGHTEEN COUNTRIES have already joined the '30 Club' - agreeing to cut sulphur dioxide emissions by at least 30% of 1980 levels by 1990. But not Britain. And this despite the findings of a government-commissioned report which concluded that 80% of sulphur deposition in the UK originates here, that 77% of all UK sulphur emissions are exported abroad, accounting in 1982 for an estimated 14% of all sulphur deposited in Sweden.

Other countries are well ahead of the UK. France plans a cut of 50% by 1990, Belgium and West Germany 50% by 1993. Four East European countries have pledged reductions of sulphur exports of 30% by 1993.

In an indignant letter to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Patrick Jenkin, FoE's Acid Rain campaign organiser Chris Rose says that even if the UK cut emissions by 30% by 1990 we would remain the biggest polluter in Western Europe.

Wales FoE are organising a 'stop acid rain' demo on August 3 in the form of a fishing competition on Llyn Brianne, one of Wales' many dead lakes. And the first nationally organised Acid Rain demo takes place on Saturday September 14 at Didcot Power Station (assemble at the railway station at 1 pm.). There will be a rally and entertainment, with 'a massive release of sulphur coloured balloons'.

Other FoE actions

The London Dumping Convention meets from September 23-27, and there are real fears that it will approve the

resumption of dumping of 'low-level' radioactive waste at sea (halted since 1983). FoE has decided to make 'a major input' into the Convention this year and to use its observer status to full effect. In particular it wants to bring representatives of the Marianas Islands in Micronesia (where the Japanese are threatening to dump waste) to form part of the delegation. A special appeal has been launched to fund such a representation, and donations can be sent to 'Pacific Women's Appeal', Stewart Boyle, FoE Ltd., 377 City Road, London EC1V 1NA.

Research being carried out by FoE US will establish the precise links between the hamburger and beef industry and rainforest destruction. When it is known exactly how much beef is involved, where it comes from and goes to, and how much destruction is involved, a campaign will be launched in this country too. FoE and Exeter FoE are holding an intensive weekend workshop on tropical rainforest in London on September 21/22. FoE also have campaign materials to back up their TRF day of action planned nationwide for September 28.



Eco's campaign trail

AFTER A 2000-mile nationwide tour, Lindy Williams and Danny Powell (Ecology Party 'Nuclear-Free UK' campaign organisers) feel that the media are at last beginning to take Eco seriously as THE anti-nuclear party. Now is the time, they say, to promote the party's positive and related policies so that it does not come to look like another anti-nuclear faction. Experience on the tour showed that public meetings of this kind work best when local interest has already been generated (preferably around a local issue).

Copies of the energy exhibition which was taken on the tour are hoped to be made available at A3 size for around £4 a set.

Contact Lindy and Danny at Prospect House, Long Preston, N Yorks BD23 4QH. Lindy is now convening the Eco working party on peace, and is particularly hoping to focus on peace education and arms conversion.



Sheffield Green Fair

takes place on Sunday Sept 15 2 - 6 at Tintagel House, Nether Edge, Sheffield. Organised by Sheffield Ecology Party: info 554951.

Eco conference

THE ECOLOGY PARTY will hold its main annual conference at Dover from September 19 - 22. Members will debate voting papers on forestry, housing, and social credit: subjects to be taken at a 'discussion only' level include the broadcasting media, the party's constitution, and the question of whether conferences are best way of formulating policy (Hastings Eco taking the view that all policy should be determined by postal ballot).

There are various proposals to amend the party's name: options on the agenda include "The Ecology Party - The UK's Green Party", "The Ecology Party - The Green Party", "Ecological Green Accord", "The Green Party" - or just plain "Green Party".

Other motions for debate include opposition to the YTS scheme, to animal dissection in schools, to the nuclear abuse of Pacific peoples, to restrictive terms of reference for the Dounreay inquiry, to police brutalisation and excesses and the extension of police powers towards the establishment of a police state.

Ulster Greens

THE NORTHERN IRELAND Ecology Party is to be relaunched in September, possibly under a new name ('Ulster Greens' has been suggested). A conference is to be held in Portstewart from September 27-29. Details from Malcolm Samuel, 99 Prospect Road, Portstewart (026583 2301).

Brambles for peace

DESPITE OPPOSITION from the local council, organisers of the Brambles Farm Peace Festival (Waterlooville, Hants) are going ahead with the event on August 9/10/11. Camping starts on the 6th; the line-up of entertainment is impressive; and admission is free. Info: 0705 252887.

SERA and PR

AT ITS AGM in June SERA narrowly passed a motion calling on the Labour Party to pledge a binding national referendum on the principle of PR in its next election manifesto.

Sussex Green Group: Anna Johnson, 2 Brunswick Sq., Hove, E Sussex (T20752). They are holding a green fair on September 28, and launching a Sussex Green Link magazine.

Green challenge to Dounreay

Michael Collie writes:

THE SCOTTISH Ecology Party, currently seeking to establish its credentials as the political cutting edge of the green movement, is campaigning strongly against the proposed demonstration reprocessing plant at Dounreay in Caithness.

Our message to the people of Caithness as well as to the various pressure groups involved has been that whatever the environmental issues, the problem is a political one; and it is only by approaching it on a political level with a comprehensive and coherent analysis that you have any chance of winning the argument and in turn the war.

This is not to denigrate the role of the pressure groups and of the many local groups which have been formed in response to the proposals. Indeed we regard all such groups as a vital part of the political process. Rather we see our role as complementary to theirs, while playing the vital role of taking the green argument onto the political stage in its own right.

From the start Scottish Eco has sought to place the problem not only in its political but also its European context. The plant would after all reprocess plutonium from French and German fast breeder reactors as well as British.

In June we made contact with our colleagues in the various green parties on the continent who are fortunate to have representation in the EEC parliament. Francois Roelant MEP of the Belgian Ecolo party agreed to speak for the Scottish party and also to liaise on our behalf with the other greens in the parliament. Fifteen MEPs, just like that.

The Euro connection is likely to bear fruit very soon when we receive answers to a series of written questions put down by us to the Commission. It may very well be that the UK government will be found to be in breach of the Euratom treaty. At best, embarrassing, at worst a case for action at a European level and possible withdrawal of EEC money.

We have also been active on the ground - or, more precisely, the water. George Morton, in conjunction with members of the Orkney Ecology Party, launched some 250 capsules into the sea close to the site of the proposed plant. These bore messages requesting anyone finding the bottle to return the slip to us, informing us of where and when they found it.

Thanks to the political ineptitude of Robert MacLennan MP we are still getting useful publicity from this. He insisted upon a chemical analysis of 'liquid' found in one of the bottles. So far the result has not emerged and increasingly we suspect that the findings are being suppressed to spare the embarrassment of Mr MacLennan, or even that the water contained something which ought not to be there and which clearly came from a source not unconnected with Dounreay. The plot thickens.

Another current story and potentially the most explosive of all is that we have uncovered what on the face of it is intimidation of the workforce by the management. What other explanation is there for the fact that almost 40 members of Thurso CND, all of whom just happened to be employees at Dounreay, withdrew from a demonstration against the Vulcan test establishment which they themselves had organised. The management deny the allegation and it is impossible to find a Dounreay employee who will make the accusation in public; but we are certainly in no doubt about the truth of the information passed to us in confidence.

With George Younger yet to announce a date and a remit for the public inquiry, it is still very early days. The situation on the ground is politically very volatile indeed. The pro-Dounreay lobby would seem to be genuinely surprised at the strength of organised opposition to their proposals; and perhaps most of all they must be worried that there has already been a significant shift of local opinion. Initially this was almost 100% for the development, but is now nearer a 50/50 split.

In the weeks and months ahead we shall be seeking to keep the political initiative. Certainly no one else seems to want it, and we shall be hoping to convince all concerned that the green analysis is both correct and the best one suited to their needs.

Pure green

THE EUROPEAN Green Coordination decided in May to stay distinctively green, and not to align itself with any of the 'radical left' parties. Only Die Crunen opposed the motion. Green parties are now considering the possibility of joint European campaigns, with 'Alternatives to NATO' and 'Chemicals in the home' as likely starters.

END comes of age

The END Conference was held in Amsterdam from July 3 - 6. Peter Cadogan reports:

END CAME OF age at Amsterdam. The East-West divide was firmly and finally bridged and there was no more "Poland to Portugal" nonsense. The Chinese and Japanese were there and the problems of Central America and South Africa were taken on board. For the first time we felt impetus coming directly from East of the curtain - the most important document before the convention was the Prague Appeal. Vitali Barbash, the latest exile of the Moscow trustbuilders (only a week from home) was taken straight to the platform, and right in the middle of the convention the news came from Poland that the first independent peace group in Poland - "Freedom and Peace" - has been set up.

All the official Peace Committees of the Soviet bloc, except that of Rumania, chose to stay away. Moscow cannot accept the non-aligned terms of reference of END as set out in the 1980 END Appeal, and they refuse absolutely to breathe the same air as the Moscow Group, Swords into Ploughshares, Solidarnosc, etc. "The leading role of the party" has been extended to the leading role (i.e. the monopoly) of the World Peace Council and the Soviet Peace Committee. END baffles them - it ought not to exist! So they stayed away and put the boot in to prevent their independent co-nationals attending.

Every morning and afternoon in the spacious premises of the Free University the 1000+ delegates divided into 10 - 16 workshops. This means of course that single-bodied delegates could attend at best less than one tenth of the convention. But the plenary sessions were good and made some amends. Outside the main hall, just about all the peace literature on earth was laid out in a brave show of stalls. There were serious dangers of peace indigestion. Most of us stayed for free in the homes of our hospitable Dutch friends and the organisation overall was outstanding. The organisers, having taken a hammering at Perugia last year, made no mistake about sex ratios on the platform, and 4/3 in favour of women seemed to be the rule.

The speech of the convention (to judge by the applause) was made by Rebecca Johnson of Greenham Common with her vivid description of Cruise-watch; and of the busload of women who went to Moscow heralded as "heroes of the struggle against

American imperialism" and then sat down in front of the flat of Olga Medvedkova, defeating the KGB! In conclusion, climactically, she got the whole convention to sing. To sing! It was sheer delight.

The Dutch movement is girding its loins for the final struggle over Cruise deployment in November. Our friends in Spain are making massive preparations for the referendum over membership of NATO next March, if it is not sabotaged in the meantime. The Munich greens have at last produced a draft peace treaty for the two Germanies (without which the Soviet and allied troops will stay there for ever!), but the END organisers have a hidden agenda, it seems - the Garman question is taboo, neutralism is taboo, and the evils of party-politicking likewise. Petra Kelly, in the best green style, rocked that boat a little when she remarked that some greens in Germany preferred wheeling and dealing with the SPD to serving the peace movement. Germany is the place to watch. The American movement has shifted its attention from the freeze to Central America. There is widespread agreement that issues are deeper matters than weapons and should have more of our attention.

At last there was a stall and two workshops on Afghanistan put on by the Dutch, the French and the Afghans themselves. I brought back some first-class briefing material in English - available to those interested. From Britain only the doctors have moved so far.

Big conferences are a drag, but sometimes the suffering is worthwhile!



SDP's greens

Mike Bell writes:

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE to give a full account of the change taking place in SDP thinking since I last wrote this column. Suffice it to say that, along with the other major parties, the SDP has at last realised that there is such a thing as the 'green vote' and, unfettered by history and vested interest, is making remarkable progress. (Except of course on nuclear issues.)

Around September 1984 something changed. All of a sudden it was no longer cranky to call yourself green. SDP Greens ran a stall and fringe meetings this year; and membership has leapt from a solid 40 / 50 to over 100.

The main effort at the moment is the completion of the White Paper on the Environment, to be debated at the Assembly in September. As a political document it impresses even green Liberals by its breadth and approach which, to over-simplify, shows how environmental considerations should be integrated into various aspects of policy-making, rather than the usual catalogue of 'bits of mess to be cleared up'.

Cynics should note that the majority of amendments suggested by individuals and organisations who were asked to comment on our draft have in fact been incorporated. The response from the Ecology Party, which consisted of one sentence, is a further illustration of my contention that political parties' failure to listen is largely the result of the green movement's failure to speak.

The first of many joint meetings with Liberal environmental policy-makers took place in May. All sides remarked on the fact that differences tended to be more between individuals than along party lines.

The best bit of news is that the subject of economics is now firmly on the 'environmental' agenda. The term 'green growth' was first coined by Tom Burke to describe those bits of growth which environmentalists favour - like insulation, sewer repairs, tree planting, etc. It has now taken on a life of its own, and has absorbed the general objection to GDP-type growth highlighted at the recent TOES conference. I'm keeping my fingers crossed and working on the committee to get 'green growth' defined as such on the first page of the White Paper - which, together with an innocuous looking resolution passed at the last Assembly which charged the party with integrating environmental considerations into all policy decisions, should provide a lever and a door for an assault on present preoccupations with 'economic recovery'.

This upsurge of interest in green ideas has completely reversed my attitude to Ecology Party candidates. I have argued in the past that to stand for Eco is a waste of time because of the near impossibility of getting elected. My experience since the County elections is that nothing has done more to force politicians to re-examine their ideas than the existence of an Eco candidate. It's not so much that Eco have won the votes, it's that green ideas are winning the argument.