

chain
reaction

The national magazine of Friends of the Earth Australia

Issue #98 Spring 2006
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Strong Communities, Sane World

CHALLENGING THE G-20'S
NEOLIBERAL AGENDA

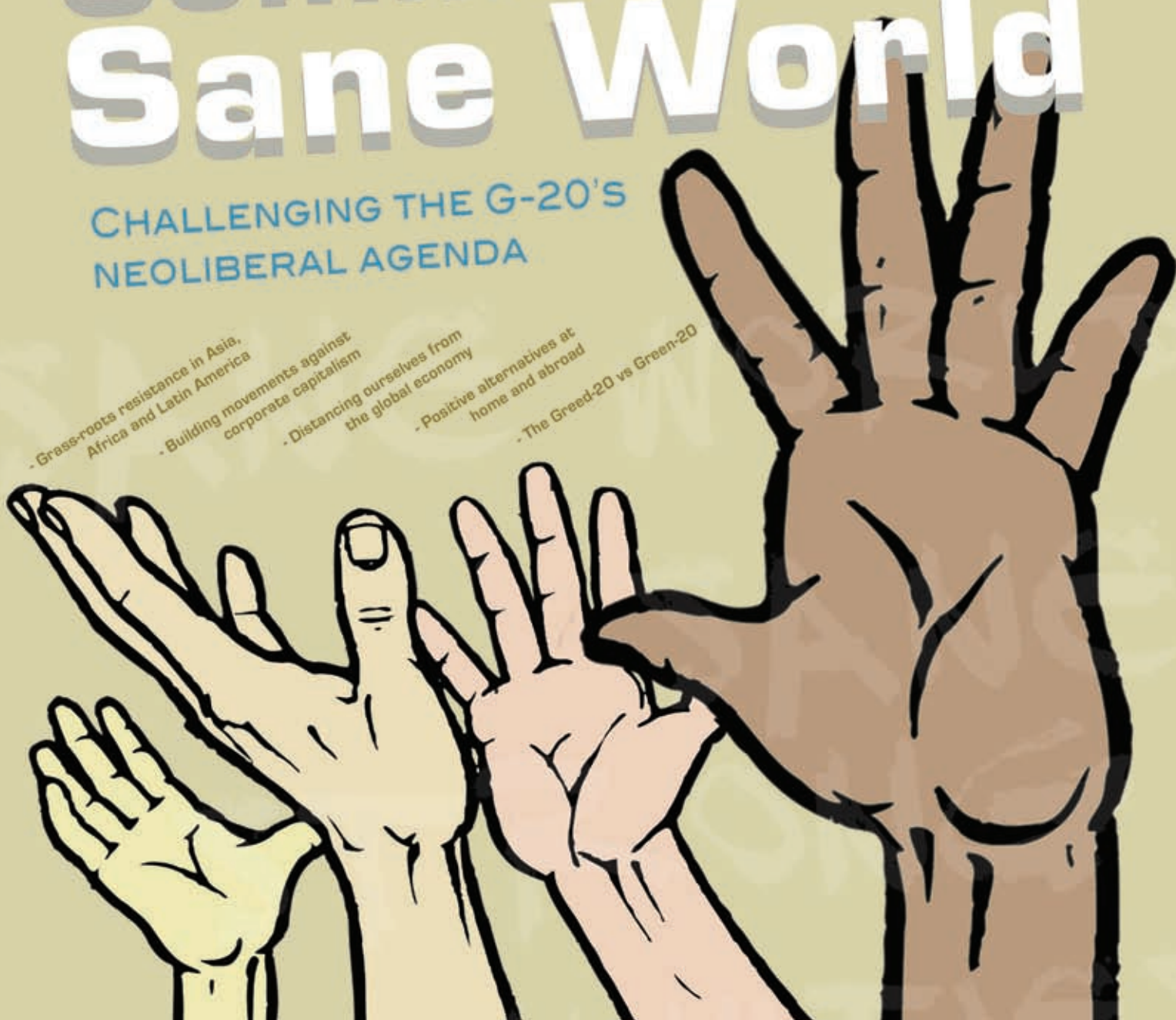
• Grass-roots resistance in Asia,
Africa and Latin America

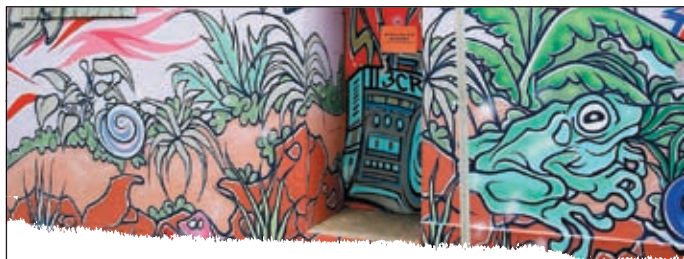
• Building movements against
corporate capitalism

• Distancing ourselves from
the global economy

• Positive alternatives at
home and abroad

• The Greed-20 vs Green-20





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Guest editors trade edition
Rodney Vlais
Elizabeth Wheeler

with special thanks to
Victoria Stead
Damian Sullivan

Chain Reaction Team
Jim Green, Cam Walker

Layout & Design
Natalie Lowrey

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Hannah Caygill, Mara Bonacci,
Josie Lee, Pat O'Neill

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Subscription Enquiries
Chain Reaction, PO Box 222, Fitzroy
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(03) 9416 2081
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Cover Design:
Natalie Lowrey
& Tom Civil
civil@antimedia.net
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Chain Reaction is produced in Melbourne and
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broader range of sectors/ constituencies are represented in the articles.
The CR editorial team are still responsible for content, editing and
design and so any problems, omissions or other failures are ours!



EARTH NEWS

Tell ANZ: Say No To Gunns' Destructive Pulp Mill!

ANZ is one of Australia's leading financiers, and has supported many destructive projects, from toxic mines in Laos to clear-cutting in Indonesia. It is currently considering funding a pulp mill project for one of its most controversial clients: logging giant Gunns Limited.

Gunns is Australia's largest logging company. It logs 44 football fields of native forests every day in Tasmania, including some of the oldest and tallest trees in the world. Gunns also uses napalm to firebomb clearfells, as well as a poison banned in many countries, 1080, to kill native wildlife which might browse on regenerating trees.

According to the US-based Rainforest Action Network (RAN), Gunns plans to build a chlorine-bleaching pulp mill in the Tamar Valley in northern Tasmania that would "accelerate destruction of Tasmania's native forests while polluting the atmosphere and local marine environment".

RAN is calling on ANZ to drop this destructive project. There is an action alert at: <http://ga3.org/campaign/taz_anz>

Meanwhile, the Sunday Tasmanian has announced that there are 22 registered Aboriginal sites in the area proposed for the pulp mill, as well as along the corridor for the effluent pipe from the mill and the water supply route to the mill.

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council has said that it was "far from happy" with the level of consultation with the Aboriginal community. It is not yet clear what impact this discovery will have on plans to build the mill.

Sources: Michael Brune, Rainforest Action Network
<http://www.ran.org/> <http://www.treesnotgunns.org/>
Simon Bevilacqua, Sacred sites a hitch for mill, in the Sunday Tasmanian, August 20, 2006.

Land Sale Upsets Indigenous Community

Land owned by the Department of Defence at Hill 60 at Port Kembla, on the New South Wales south coast, has been advertised for sale, angering members of Illawarra's Aboriginal community.

The land was taken away from the Aboriginal community during World War II to help defend the port, and was never given back.

Aboriginal groups have been planning to construct a walking trail along the coast through the land earmarked for sale.

Annalise Voorhouse from the Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation says it may make an official claim for the land.

"Somewhere in the transfer of sale that land will have to be declared vacant and at that time a native title claim could very well be put across that land."

Source: ABC ONLINE, July 25, 2006
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200607/s1696064.htm>

The Wave Hill Walk Off – 40 years on



Freedom Day banner

On 23 August 1966, Vincent Lingiari led a walk off of workers and their families from

Wave Hill cattle station in the Northern Territory. This action taken by Gurindji, Mudbura and Warlpiri families greatly assisted in the move to:

- grant equal pay to Indigenous workers in the pastoral industry
- return land to Gurindji ownership in 1976
- recognise Aboriginal land rights nationally.

Freedom Day is the name given to the yearly commemoration and celebration of the walk-off from Wave Hill cattle station.

Freedom Day 2006 was the 40th Anniversary of the Wave Hill Walk Off and a particularly special occasion. People from all around Australia were invited to help celebrate and recognise the significance of the walk off and the events that followed.

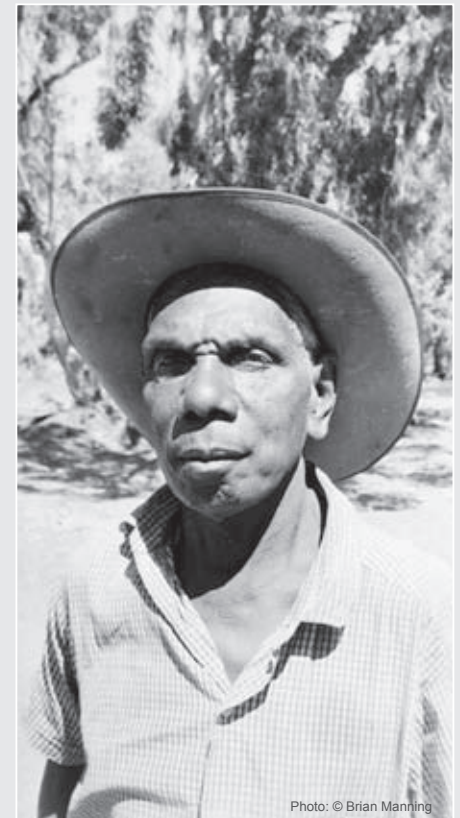


Photo: © Brian Manning

Vincent Lingiari, the Leader of the Gurindji during the Wave Hill

<http://www.freedomday.info/>

Aboriginal Land Rights Act Amended

The Northern Land Council (NLC) Chairman, John Daly, expressed deep surprise and disappointment when the Indigenous Affairs Minister, Mal Brough, stated that he intended to force amendments to the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 through the Senate on Tuesday 8 August 2006. There had been an enormous public campaign to ask the government to wait until there had been thorough consultation with Aboriginal Traditional Owners.

Prior to this, the NLC had expressed very serious concerns to the Committee responsible for reviewing the Act regarding proposed amendments which:

- "...appear to breach and/or repeal the Racial Discrimination Act 1975;
- ...appear directed at effectively implementing the 1998 Reeves report model by breaking up Land Councils and by removing financial independence (through removal of a statutory funding guarantee), and forcing them (in effect) to publicly disclose confidential minutes and to "delegate" or divest functions to small and unrepresentative corporations;
- ...terminate non-contiguous land claims to the intertidal zone and rivers (so as to limit the ambit of current Federal Court proceedings regarding fishing rights at Blue Mud Bay in Arnhem Land), and enable termination of claims to NT Land Corporation land; and
- ...enable the NT Government to meet its rental and administration costs for community leasing from the Aboriginal Benefits Account (generated from mining royalties on Aboriginal land)."

Greens senator Rachel Siewert said "This will be marked as a tragic day for land rights in Australia" after the amendments passed through the senate.

sources: <http://www.rachelsiewert.org.au/>
<http://www.nlc.org.au/>

Vital Signs Released

The Worldwatch Institute has released its latest edition of Vital Signs for this year, 2006-2007. The popular series aims to document the world trends that are already and are likely to shape our future.

This fourteenth volume of Vital Signs makes clear that time is running short if we are to address the world's looming environmental

and social problems. For instance:

- over sixty percent of the world's ecosystem services are being degraded or used unsustainably,
- five of the last eight years have been the hottest on record, with 2005 being the hottest ever recorded,
- twenty percent of the world's coral reefs have been destroyed and another fifty percent are threatened.

However, Vital Signs also points to positive trends that, if accelerated, could put us on a new, sustainable path, for instance:

- the total number of wars and armed conflicts declined to thirty nine in 2005 – the lowest since peaking in the early 1990s.
- in 2005, solar power production grew forty five percent, wind power capacity by twenty four percent and biofuels production by twenty two percent.

Vital Signs 2006-2007 provides the reader with the information needed to understand where humanity is heading and what is needed to change this course in a straightforward and reliable manner, while still delivering the stark message that government leaders and private citizens will have to mobilise in an unprecedented way if we are to have any chance of passing a healthy and secure world to the next generation.

Visit www.worldwatch.org to order your copy.

Earth Matters Turns 10

Earth Matters was founded to give local grassroots perspectives on environmental concerns from around Australia and the world. The show first went to air nationally in July 1996 to fill the gap created by the downfall of Watching Brief – a national environment program for community radio.

The show quickly became popular within the community radio sector. Earth Matters presents a wide variety of stories from nature conservation and environmental justice perspectives. It campaigns for a more sustainable future. A key aim of the program is to highlight the connections between Indigenous people's land justice struggles and environmental issues and to air the voices of community activists.

Juliet Fox, who at the time was active with groups such as The Wilderness Society and

Friends of the Earth, established the program. In 2001 environmental campaigner and broadcaster Indira Narayan joined the show, followed by Gabrielle Reade in 2003.

Juliet, Indira and Gabrielle continue to produce the weekly show, which is broadcast on over 40 stations throughout Australia.

While campaign issues and a sustainable future dominate Earth Matters' content, the presenters have also looked at environmental film festivals, eco-psychology, non-violent action and theories on environmental activism. Off air the presenters continue to be active on environmental campaigns and contribute to forums and conferences around the country.

With the demise of Radio National's Earthbeat program, Earth Matters is the only dedicated, national radio environment program in the country, fulfilling a vital role in prioritising conservation and sustainability issues.

Earth Matters can be heard on 3CR in Melbourne (855 AM) on Sundays 11am – 11.30am and Wednesdays 6am – 6.30am.

Big, Easy Money. A CorpWatch Report

Disaster profiteers make millions while local companies and laborers in New Orleans and the rest of the Katrina-devastated Gulf Coast region are systematically getting the short end of the stick, according to a major new report from the nonprofit CorpWatch.

A CorpWatch analysis shows that "fully 90 percent of the first wave of (the post-Katrina reconstruction) contracts awarded - including some of the biggest no-bid contracts to date - went to companies from outside the three worst-affected states. As of July 2006, after months of controversy and Congressional hearings, companies from Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama had increased their share of the total contracts to a combined 16.6 percent." The CorpWatch analysis shows that more federal reconstruction contracts have gone to Virginia and Indiana - usually large, politically connected corporations - than to any of the three Katrina-devastated states.

The report can be found at: <http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=14023>

News *Friends of the Earth Australia*

Friends of the Earth Australia is a federation of independent local groups. You can join FoE by contacting your local group. For further details on FoEA, see: <http://www.foe.org.au>. There is a monthly email newsletter, which you can subscribe via the FoEA website.

Alliance Against Uranium – Alice Springs

July 29-30 2006

The meeting was attended by members from Arrernte, Luritja, Adnymathahana, Arabunna, Warlmanpa and Larrakia/Wulna Aboriginal Nations, Engawala and Atitjere communities and environmental, public health and social justice groups including; Friends of the Earth, Medical Association for the Prevention of War, the Anti Nuclear Alliance of WA, Australian Conservation Foundation, The Wilderness Society, Arid Lands Environment Centre, Environment Centre NT, Beyond Nuclear Initiative, Australian Student Environment Network, Canberra Region Anti Nuclear Campaign, and the Queensland Nuclear Free Alliance.

The meeting was held on Athenge Lhere land at Mt Everard near Alice Springs in Central Australia. This is one of the areas now being targeted by the Federal Government as a potential Commonwealth radioactive waste dump, along with sites at Harts Range, Fishers Ridge and Muckaty Station – all in the NT.

The meeting opposed plans to dump radioactive waste at any site in the Northern Territory and condemned the imposition of a nuclear dump anywhere in Australia. The meeting recognised the strong opposition from Traditional Owners and committed to actively campaign against the dump across Australia.

The meeting affirmed the right of Traditional Aboriginal Owners to enjoy clean country and clean water and practice strong culture, and called on all political parties to oppose moves for more uranium mining, radioactive waste dumping and other nuclear developments.

The meeting heard the deep concerns by Indigenous people over the impacts of nuclear activities on land, water, bush tucker and culture.

Participants at the meeting undertook to build networks, share information and campaign together towards a safe, clean, nuclear free Australia.

Friends of the Earth acts as the secretariat of the Alliance. For further details, please contact Michaela Stubbs in the FoE Melbourne office (see inside back cover).

National Meeting

The FoE mid year meeting was held in Dorroughby, near Lismore. After our baking in the Barmah forest during the January meeting, this mid winter event saw cool, mild days, lots of discussion and many locals in attendance. Many thanks to Binnie O'Dwyer, Steph Long, Natalie Lowrey and the others who organised the meeting.

A campaign strategy discussion was held on the national anti nuclear campaign as well as planning for continued membership development programs and ways to better support staff and unpaid activists. Other items included fund-raising and our campaigns in the Asia Pacific region. It was decided to hold the Wildspaces film festival over until early next year. Hannah Levy is the new co-ordinator for Wildspaces. Many thanks to Karrina Nolan for her efforts over the last few years.

The next meeting will be in January and hosted by FoE Adelaide.

The meeting was preceded by a highly successful public meeting in Byron Bay which saw around 90 people attend to hear about the campaign against nuclear power.



Alliance Against Uranium meeting near Alice Springs. Photo: Joel Catchlove

Stawell Friends of the Earth turns 6

Our group has recently held some functions of which we feel proud. The first was an Eco House Tour where participants visited five homes built on sustainable living principles.

Each home was unique and provided incredible examples of how much can be done to reduce personal ecological footprint with thoughtful planning. Well over forty adults joined in, and the enthusiasm shown was splendid.

Quite a different group attended our Climate Change (CC) Conference, held on Sunday 4th June to celebrate World Environment Day. Michelle Braunstein, FoEA Climate Change Coordinator, and Terry White from the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance both gave outstanding updates of what is achievable when a group of people have the will. Terry's group has approached the CC problem with business strategies and acumen. He reported on the numbers of schools and businesses that they have enlisted, and have adopted power efficient measures, which have already reduced costs dramatically.

Our Stawell FoE group formed in 2000 following the frustration felt with the threat of an open pit gold mine virtually in town. The Big Hill Action Group had requested the help of FoE Australia to quash the plan.

Thanks to them (particularly Anthony Amis), good luck, and a change in State Government, permission for the pit was withheld. Many of the Action Group members have now moved away, died, or suffer from such extremes of nervous tension that the mention of more campaigning can make them physically sick. Those remaining thought 'never again should we be caught so unprepared'. We had won a round but we still have our wonderful environment, the Ironbark forests, and the Grampians to protect.

How must other communities feel when their homes and livelihoods are bulldozed and their very existence denied? We got together and agreed that we needed a group. FoEA was our

choice, having helped us so effectively when we asked. We liked FoEA's involvement of members at a grass root level, and that social justice, as well as environmental issues are pursued.

We have grown both in numbers and willingness to have a go. The reasons we have survived successfully were written up by Jane Marriott in our latest Newsletter:

- FoE members enjoy the social and intellectual company of like-minded others,
- There is a core of FoE members willing to share the workload when required,
- There is an increasing number of people in the community who support FoE ideals and activities,
- There are many issues to engage the community in, and
- We have delicious food at our meetings and events.

Coming from a small town, our approach is probably quite different from most. We are seen as FoE and often feel like the proverbial gold-fish in a bowl. We are proud however that we are still together and can carry a FoE perspective into the wider community.

Contact Roz Byass, Po Box 628, Stawell, 3380.

Logging monitoring reveals further breaches

FoE led protests in August 2005 over the illegal logging of protected Superb Parrot habitat in the Barmah forest. This led to an unprecedented investigation by the EPA, which found the Department of Sustainability responsible for the breach and recommended a series of improvements in management systems which had failed to avoid the disaster.

Despite the systemic nature of the failures identified by the EPA, their investigation was restricted to one Barmah coupe. Suspicious that DSE failures were far more widespread than the Superb Parrot incident, FoE launched its own coupe auditing program in May 2006 which has so far uncovered 4 confirmed and 4

potential breaches. FoE is working with DSE to examine these incidents.

Further information: <http://www.melbourne.foe.org.au/campaigns/barmah/barmah.htm>

Thanks!

- To our members who responded so well to the autumn appeal and request for support in building subscriptions. Thanks especially to **Petrus Heyligers** from south east Queensland for generating new subscriptions in his region;
- to **Mercy Foundation** (NSW) for supporting our nanotechnology project;
- to **Lonely Planet** for supporting the FoE Indonesia relief efforts following the earthquake near Yogyakarta in May 2006;
- **Australian Ethical Investment** for their support of our booklet on renewable energy;
- to **Poola Foundation (Tom Kantor Fund)** for helping support the Alliance Against Uranium meeting and to **Arid Lands Environment Centre (ALEC)**, and **Alice Action**, as well as **Kath Martin** for hosting the meeting. Big thanks to everyone in the Adelaide and Melbourne anti uranium collectives for all their efforts;
- Radioactive Exposure tour: **Australian Nursing Federation**, Greens Senator **Rachel Siewert**, and **Georgia Stubbs**. Also, to **NSM**, **Mountain Breads**, **Spiral Foods**, **Kingfisher Bakery**, **Edward Zorn & Co** and **KADAC** for food donations for the tour.

Please support FoE!

Friends of the Earth Australia is a national environmental justice network. We work on a range of local, national and global projects and campaigns.

Individuals can support us and get involved by joining their local group (see page 48). We are also seeking direct financial help for our national level work – our campaigns, projects and other national activity (see page 49 for a full list).

For further details, please see: www.foe.org.au/mainfiles/contribute.htm



News

*Friends of the Earth
International*

Friends of the Earth International (FoEI) is a federation of autonomous organisations from all over the world. Our members, in 73 countries, campaign on the most urgent environmental and social issues, while working towards sustainable societies. For further information, see: <http://www.foei.org/>

Campaign Success! WTO / Trade Talks Deadlock Brings New Hope For The Poorest And The Environment

Campaigners from Friends of the Earth International welcomed the collapse of the World Trade Organisation (WTO)'s trade negotiations in July. The collapse provides an important opportunity to review and reconsider the multilateral trading system in its entirety. This will be welcome news to millions of people around the world who feared that a WTO deal would have further impoverished the world's poorest people and caused irreparable damage to the environment. Developing countries, including India, also fear that a WTO deal would cause immense harm to millions of small and subsistence farmers.

Alberto Villarreal, Trade Campaigner at Friends of the Earth in Uruguay and Latin American coordinator said, "The collapse of these talks is good news. The proposals on the table had been driven by certain governments attempting to put the commercial interests of corporations before the needs of workers, farmers, and the global environment." Ronnie Hall, Trade

Campaigner at Friends of the Earth International added: "The delay created by the failure of the Doha negotiations must be used to review past negotiations and analyse the flaws in the WTO system as a whole. It will allow us to reflect on how to develop multilateral governance systems that will genuinely promote fair and sustainable societies that benefit everyone."

EU Emissions On The Rise

New data released by the European Commission shows that overall EU emissions continue to rise, highlighting the fact that the EU 15 countries are off course in meeting their Kyoto obligations of cutting greenhouse pollution by 8% by 2012. The data shows that the worst performers are Spain, Luxembourg, Austria, Portugal, Italy, Finland, Denmark and Ireland. The figures highlight that governments across Europe have still to wake up to the climate crisis, and that they have failed for instance to introduce binding fuel consumption standards for cars. In the meantime, energy demands go up, while renewable energy sources are still stagnating. Friends of the Earth Europe is calling for concerted action by governments in six areas (emissions trading, energy consumption, renewables, transport, nuclear power and subsidies) to avert a crisis.

More information: Jan Kowalzig, FoE Europe, jan.kowalzig@foeeurope.org

Belgium/flanders: Mayors For Peace Campaign Kit

Friends of the Earth Belgium/Flanders has a great new campaign kit for mayors and activists committed to the Vision for 2020 Emergency Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons. The Mayors for Peace Campaign Kit contains 20 practical suggestions concerning communications, education, action and politics and is available in English, French and Dutch. The more mayors and activists involved, the more powerful the movement to stop the proliferation of all nuclear weapons will become!

Download the campaign kit:
In English www.motherearth.org/m4p/actie_en.pdf
In French www.motherearth.org/m4p/actie_fr.pdf

Extent Of Oil Catastrophe In Lebanon

Friends of the Earth has appealed to the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) to send a team from its "Post-Conflict Branch" to Lebanon and Israel in order to undertake an independent assessment of the environmental impacts of the the recent conflict involving Israel and the Hizbollah group.

Image below: Damage caused by oil spill, Ramlet al-Bayda Beach, Beirut, Lebanon



Image Source: http://www.foeeurope.org/activities/oil_spill_lebanon/oil_spill_photos_page.html

Brazil: Fighting The Expansion Of Tree Monocultures

In November 2005, Friends of the Earth Brazil became the first organisation in the south of the country to question the expansion of exotic trees in the province of Rio Grande do Sul when they organized a seminar to alert society to the negative environmental impacts of monocultures. Following the seminar, the media and different sectors of society began to discuss the issue, and the government started to collect data about monoculture expansion. In May, the Public Ministry restricted environmental licensing for tree plantations until December of 2006. In June, a proposed judicial action by FoE Brazil resulted in the government of Rio Grande do Sul being forced by the federal government to stop spreading propaganda about the benefits of exotic tree plantations.

Contact: Elisangela Soldatelli Paim, FoE Brazil, elisangela@natbrasil.org.br

Paraguay: Violence Triggered By Soy Expansion Denounced

Friends of the Earth Paraguay and the Global Forest Coalition presented an open letter to the Paraguayan authorities in June denouncing the impunity of big soy companies, which through their pesticide spraying expose local communities and the environment to danger. Local people are often forced to sell their land or risk dying of poisoning. The letter proposes the creation of a new management model for the country that would promote sustainability, and demands respect for human rights and security for social and environmental rights activists.

Contact: Pablo Valenzuela, FoE Paraguay, biodiversi@sobrevivencia.org.py

Friends Of The Earth Boat Sets Sail For Climate Action

A new yacht, the Friends of the Earth, set sail in June from Cape Town, South Africa to highlight the need for national and international action on climate change. The yacht is undergoing sea trials before taking part in the one of the world's most challenging solo races – the transatlantic



La Route du Rhum - in October. The boat, sailed by British-born Jonathan Crinion, has been designed with state of the art renewable technology, powered by solar panels, wind energy and one small diesel engine for getting in and out of port. With Crinion demonstrating the power of renewable energy, Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland is calling for the government to introduce a climate law that will commit it to cutting the UK's carbon dioxide emissions by three per cent each year.

More information: <http://www.thebigask.com>

France: Progress In French Banks Campaign

There has been good news in the last months from the Friends of the Earth France campaign "French banks: save the climate!". Credit Agricole has launched a national "environmental offer". It will now offer low interest rate loans for energy efficiency and renewables, low interest rate loans for green investments and renewables for small companies, farmers and local public authorities, and finally an investment fund for green technologies for small companies. Societe Generale launched a new offer for shareholders, to invest exclusively on solar companies.

Additionally, Calyon (Credit Agricole) has committed to make public its procedure to implement the Equator Principles. These are all exciting steps forward in the campaign! Contact: Sébastien Godinot, FoE France, finance@amisdelaterre.org

It's A White Elephant

Friends of the Earth Scotland has launched a Scotland-wide campaign to halt plans for a new national nuclear power program. The 'nuclear white elephant' campaign (photo above) aims to highlight the many problems associated with nuclear power and provide more sensible solutions in the fight against climate change. The campaign was launched on the 26 April in front of the Scottish Parliament.

The campaign will include a national 'nuclear white elephant' tour that will visit Scottish towns, cities, public events and nuclear facilities. It will run from April until September.

Scotland: Renewables Target To Be Met Three Years Early!

Scotland will meet its renewable electricity target three years earlier than expected. The original goal was to generate 18 percent of electricity from renewables by 2010. It is now expected that by 2020, half of Scotland's electricity needs will be met by renewable energy. Friends of the Earth Scotland says the increased use of renewables and improved energy efficiency will make plans to generate new nuclear energy unnecessary.

More information: http://www.scottishrenewables.com/data/reports/SRF_Route_Map_Full_Document.pdf

Strong Communities, Sane World



RESISTING THE NEOLIBERAL AGENDA OF THE G-20

The G-20 is coming to Australia! Meeting in Melbourne on November 18-19 this year, it offers an irresistible opportunity to express our dissent against neoliberalism and corporate-led globalisation, and to promote and celebrate alternatives.

But what is the G-20? And how does it differ from the G8?

The G-20 (www.g20.org) is a yearly forum of the finance ministers and central bank governors of the G8 and 11 other economically powerful countries. It also includes the president of the European Union, the leaders of the IMF and World Bank, and other key officials^[1]. It is administered by the host country with help from the country that held the meeting the year before (in this case China) and the subsequent host (South Africa).

The G-20's goal is to promote the global acceptance of neoliberal policies, as outlined in the G-20 Accord for Sustained Growth. These policies include privatisation, global trade liberalisation, elimination of restrictions on the international movement of capital, and enforcement of intellectual and other private property rights. In the past, the G8 has attracted considerable attention, but the G-20 has the potential to become increasingly important in 'managing' the global economy in the years to come.

The G-20 includes representatives of large 'emerging' economies such as Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa. The acceptance of neoliberal policies by these countries' governments is critical for the continuing dominance of corporate-led globalisation. Faced with poverty and environmental

destruction, social movements in these and other Majority ('Third') World countries are striving to stop neoliberalism and to build alternatives. The G-20 meeting in Melbourne this year is a vital opportunity for us in Australia to express our solidarity with these movements, and to act against neoliberal policies here.

The agenda for this year's meeting includes improving the efficiency and security of 'energy and resource commodity markets', domestic economic policies and principles, and the 'reform' of the IMF and World Bank. The G-20 will not be talking about the kinds of change that hundreds of millions of people around the world want: meeting the challenges of climate change and peak oil in ways that are equitable and fair; dismantling international financial institutions and the World Trade Organisation; reducing the power of corporations; and supporting the alternatives that are sprouting everywhere — or managing to survive — in the cracks of corporate-led globalisation. The G-20 will not be addressing transnational corporations' colonisation of the earth's ecosystems and indigenous peoples, or how to ensure the dignity, creativity and collective spirit of us all. Nor will it be confronting policies that perpetuate the military industrial complex that yields profit from horrendous war crimes (and from war itself).

In this feature of *Chain Reaction*, we provide analyses, inspiration and positive alternatives to corporate-led globalisation. We start with Burnum Burnum's Declaration to remind us of the context of corporate capitalism here in Australia, where every cent of profit is derived from the occupation of Australia's lands and

seas. In Australia and elsewhere in the world, the struggle against corporate-led globalisation cannot be separated from the urgent need to end the genocide of indigenous peoples, to recognise their sovereignty and to make treaties (see www.blackgst.com).

In **Changing the Story**, Doyle Canning and Patrick Reinsborough offer us ideas for a story-based strategic approach to social change that can be used in planning actions and events to coincide with the G-20, and for campaign work in general. **Women Striving for Food Sovereignty in WTO Member States** by Asha Bee Abraham and **When Women Unite** by Liz Branigan focus on the particularly harsh effects of neoliberalism on women, and their efforts to protect local custodianship over the commons. Patrick Bond writes about the environmental and social effects of economic apartheid in South Africa, where the G-20 will be held next year.

Climate change and **peak oil** are gaining importance in the context of social and environmental justice, and Stephanie Long and Adam Fenderson challenge the G-20's flawed assumptions to offer us new perspectives on these issues. Karen Iles updates us on the ways that the **World Bank and IMF** are foisting corporate capitalism onto the world's people, and on the destructive conditions placed on impoverished countries to qualify for debt relief. Damian Sullivan focuses on the **collapse of the latest round of WTO negotiations** and explains why this is a good outcome for the world's poor. Expanding this feature's emphasis on alternatives, the Latin America Solidarity Network focuses on **inspirational resistance in Latin America**, while Chris Ennis explores the growth of **food relocalisation** movements.

The belief that global capitalism is invincible rests on the idea that continual **economic growth** is achievable and desirable. Amy Lang and Rodney Vlasis challenge this and offer alternative ways of thinking and acting both locally and globally. Finally, Elizabeth Wheeler contrasts neoliberalism's **Greed-20** with suggestions for a **Green-20** to ground **actions against corporate capitalism** in our own lives and communities.

A number of networks and groups are planning convergences and events to coincide with the G-20 meeting (see www.stopg20.org, www.melbourne.foe.org.au, www.makepovertyhistory.com.au, www.melbournesocialforum.org and www.aidwatch.org.au). These convergences and events are a vital opportunity to name and condemn the effects of neoliberalism on communities and the environment — locally as well as globally — and to build skills and networks for ongoing work towards social and environmental justice. For all of us, challenging the G-20 provides an opportunity to further our efforts towards a just, ecologically sustainable and sane world.

[1] Note that this G-20 is different from another grouping also named 'the G20', which formed among Majority ('Third') World nations during the Cancun WTO ministerial in 2003.

THE BURNUM BURNUM DECLARATION

England, 26th January, 1988

I, Burnum Burnum, being a nobleman of ancient Australia do hereby take possession of England on behalf of the Aboriginal People.

In claiming this colonial outpost, we wish no harm to you natives, but assure you that we are here to bring you good manners, refinement and an opportunity to make a Koompattoo – 'a fresh start'.

Henceforth, an Aboriginal face shall appear on your coins and stamps to signify our sovereignty over this domain.

For the more advanced, we bring the complex language of the Pitjantjajara; we will teach you how to have a spiritual relationship with the Earth and show you how to get bush tucker.

We do not intend to souvenir, pickle and preserve the heads of 2000 of your people, nor to publicly display the skeletal remains of your Royal Highness, as was done to our Queen Truganinni for 80 years. Neither do we intend to poison your water holes, lace your flour with strychnine or introduce you to highly toxic drugs.

Based on our 50,000 year heritage, we acknowledge the need to preserve the Caucasian race as of interest to antiquity, although we may be inclined to conduct experiments by measuring the size of your skulls for levels of intelligence.

We pledge not to sterilize your women, nor to separate your children from their families.

We give an absolute undertaking that you shall not be placed onto the mentality of government handouts for the next five generations but you will enjoy the full benefits of Aboriginal equality.

At the end of two hundred years, we will make a Treaty to validate occupation by peaceful means and not by conquest.

Finally, we solemnly promise not to make a quarry of England and export your valuable minerals back to the old country Australia, and we vow never to destroy three-quarters of your trees, but to encourage Earth Repair Action to unite people, communities, religions and nations in a common, productive, peaceful purpose.

Wurundjeri activist, author and actor Burnum Burnum (1936–1997) planted the Aboriginal flag above the white cliffs of Dover for the 200th anniversary of Invasion Day.

Changing the Story

STORY-BASED STRATEGIES FOR DIRECT ACTION PLANNING

Doyle Canning and Patrick Reinsborough



This article shares some of the lessons that the smartMeme Strategy and Training Project (www.smartmeme.com) has gleaned from its involvement in organising mass actions over the past decade. Specifically smartMeme has focused on strategies to build movements with the power to change the stories^[1] that shape popular culture. We hope that these strategies will inspire creativity and strategic thinking for groups planning actions around the G-20, and for anyone else involved in social change and environmental campaigns.

The power of story

SmartMeme's work is based on a *narrative power analysis* — analysing how specific narratives work to maintain the current state of affairs. Stories are embedded with power — the power to explain and justify the status quo, as well as the power to make change imaginable and necessary. Which stories define cultural norms? Which stories are used to make meaning and shape our world? Who are portrayed as the main characters, and whose stories are ignored or erased? These questions are the narrative components of the physical relationships of power and privilege, the unequal access to resources, and the denials of self-determination that define much of the global system.

Story-based strategy

Narrative is a lens through which humans process the information we encounter. Thus one of the most effective ways to change attitudes and provide new information is by telling a good story. Movements and campaigns that push for sweeping changes in current policies must first and foremost win in the realm of ideas by changing the story that the public has around the issue. They can do this by combining an understanding of narrative power with traditional movement building skills to create *story-based strategies*. The power of story can thus be used to develop an integrated strategy with the goal of changing a dominant cultural narrative. By placing story at the centre of a campaign or action, organisers can amplify their effectiveness by articulating their political vision through a common narrative that ties together messaging, media, advocacy and organising strategy.

Direct action at the point of assumption

Across the planet, people from all walks of life are taking action to intervene in the systems of domination and control.

These interventions occur at many points — from the *point of destruction* where resource extraction is devastating intact ecosystems, indigenous lands and local communities to the *point of production* where workers are organising in the sweatshops and factories of the world. Solidarity actions spring up at the *point of consumption* where the products that are made from unjust processes are sold. Inevitably, communities of all types also take direct actions at the *point of decision* to confront the decision makers who have the power to make the desired changes.

All of these physical points of intervention (and many more) are essential. However, our direct actions must do more than just temporarily disrupt business as usual, because business as usual is a lot more than any one corporate meeting, event or specific destructive policy. Beyond the economic and political connections of the global system, business as usual is a dominant story told by the power holders that normalises and justifies their actions. A story-based strategy reminds us that when we are intervening at a physical point of intervention (a global finance summit for instance) we must be intervening in the power holder's story as well.

One way to think of this story-based component of action planning is to target our actions at the *point of assumption*. Assumptions are the unstated parts of the story that you have to believe in order to believe the larger story. Thus assumptions are the vulnerable spots in a story — the glue that holds the narrative together. When we think of direct action as story telling, we must ask ourselves how the action will change people's understanding of the issue, its impacts and the possible alternatives. This could mean exposing hypocrisy or lies, re-framing the issue, amplifying the voices of previously silenced impacted communities or even revealing that the power holder's story is based on destructive assumptions.

Using story-based strategies

A simple way to create a story-based strategy is by applying the basic elements of good storytelling to an action or campaign narrative. At smartMeme we use four main elements of a good story to help design a story-based strategy: 1) Frame the conflict; 2) Speak through sympathetic characters; 3) Show don't tell; and 4) Foreshadow your desired future.

1. Framing: meta-verbs and action logic

Mass mobilisations provide the conflict, drama and sensationalism necessary to attract attention. But to be effective, activists need to present their issue in a way that simultaneously defines the agenda and engages with viewers' own, broader narratives. This is called framing, and when done effectively, means that organisers set the terms of the debate.

Campaigns around logging provide a good example of framing. For years, the issue was framed by timber companies, in a paradigm of jobs versus the environment. More recently, environmentalists have seized the initiative, by simultaneously recognising people's desire for economic security (e.g. jobs) and identifying ways — beyond chopping down trees — that

this can be achieved. They have emphasised how a world without old growth logging can promote sustainability, longevity of employment and the possibility of expansion rather than contraction of jobs.

Cynics might view framing as another word for 'spin', but it's really very different. Framing only works when it is consistent with the values expressed in the desired outcomes (see 'Show don't tell' below).

Two related concepts that help with understanding the notion of framing are *action logic* and *meta-verbs*. Action logic means that the form and approach of a mobilisation (the logic) represents its desired outcome. Often this logic or goal is summarised through



Image created by Mona Caron for San Francisco-based Direct Action to Stop the War.

the shorthand of a single action-oriented meta-verb that is part of how the action is publicised. Usually these meta-verbs — Shut down! Confront! Disrupt! Counter! Mobilize! Resist! — are a challenge to the power holders.

A meta-verb will likely become the benchmark of an action's success, not only to participants but to media observers and the general public. Thus, it's helpful for organisers to be intentional about using their meta-verb(s) to communicate a clear action logic that expresses a broader narrative about their intentions, demands and world-view.

SmartMeme helped design a mass direct action at the point of assumption that involved 5,000 people 'turning their back' on George W. Bush's second inaugural parade. This may seem like a trite meta-verb given the scale of Bush's crimes against humanity, but it was very effective at challenging his narrative that the election had provided him a mandate. Also, it was such a simple action logic that thousands of people were able to self-organise and clandestinely infiltrate the parade route security checks to take part in the action.

2. Characters: the messenger is the message

Messengers are often just as important, if not more important, than the message. The messengers embody the message by putting human faces on the conflict, and putting the story in context. In order for our stories to resonate, they need to be told by people with whom the audience can identify and trust (most often, this does not mean merely 'activists'). Articulate, passionate, well-briefed representatives from multiple constituencies should be the face of a mass action.

Frequently, power holders will claim that their policies are intended to help whatever marginalised group is challenging them. Thus it is essential that actions amplify the voices of those most impacted by the issue. If the action is about small farmers, it is far more powerful for organisers to support a small group of farmers taking a direct action than for a larger group of non-farmers to act on their behalf (although that has a place). One of the key successes of the 'Turn Your Back on Bush' action mentioned above was the way the action spoke through sympathetic characters. The action profiled key constituencies rejecting Bush's leadership — particularly Iraq war veterans, young people, faith leaders and representatives from different communities of colour.

3. Show don't tell: engage with values

Good storytellers don't just tell the story — they *show* the story. Inevitably, a mass action has far more spectators than participants, so make sure that the pictures and images your action generates capture the action logic and tell the story of your mobilisation. It's great if viewers can understand how your action connects with your desired outcome.

The concept of show don't tell means avoiding spoon feeding a world view to people. Speaking in terms of values doesn't mean merely using the dogmatic rhetoric of right and wrong — it means connecting our issues to the bigger concerns that shape people's lives. Our actions must connect our own values and ideas for change with what people already know and hold dear.

In practice, for example, this might mean focusing on the desires that people have for love, companionship and security when talking about the rights of same-sex couples to legal recognition.

4. Foreshadow: tell the future

In the advertising industry they say, "People can only go somewhere that they have already been to in their minds." This rings true for action organising too. When using a story-based strategy, work to incorporate the aspect of 'foreshadowing' into the action. Articulate how your conflict will come to resolution, and describe your vision for a solution to the problem.

When we foreshadow the future we desire through our messages and our images, we help people embrace a visionary solution. Often the power holder's side of the debate relies on inertia — the belief that change can't happen. What better way to challenge this than by making alternatives real and visible? This is particularly powerful when the foreshadowing is part of the action logic — the occupation of the government office transforms it into a day care centre, the empty lot becomes a guerrilla garden, the site of the planned juvenile prison becomes a playground.

Towards New Stories

Across the planet, inspiring campaigns of resistance and transformative social movements are quite literally changing the stories that structure our lives. Our collective efforts are expanding the frame to make many injustices that have long been invisible visible at last. Organising and direct action campaigns are changing the characters in the dominant narratives by amplifying new voices and showing the alternatives that lead us towards different futures.

In the place of the failed universalised story of colonisation, assimilation and corporate monoculture, a multitude of new stories are appearing and taking root. Now it's up to all of us to nurture these new stories of a just, peaceful, and ecologically sane future with our actions, our organising and perhaps most importantly, our imaginations.

Patrick Reinsborough and Doyle Canning are grassroots organisers and direct action strategists who work with the U.S. based smartMeme Strategy and Training Project. SmartMeme works with a wide range of grassroots movements to build a culture of strategy and to experiment with story-based strategies. They would love to come to Australia and learn from all the work happening down under but unfortunately Phillip Ruddock banned Doyle from visiting Australia in 2000, for allegedly "inciting discord in the Australian community" by mobilising folks to demonstrate at the World Economic Forum. To find out more about smartMeme's work or to get more tools for changing the story, see www.smartmeme.com.

[1] The term 'stories' in this article does not refer to fiction, but rather to the set of ideas or narratives underlying the viewing or describing of something.



Photo: Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

Women Striving for Food Sovereignty

IN WTO MEMBER STATES



Asha Bee Abraham

Photo: Damian Sullivan

The following three articles focus on examples of the impact of corporate-led globalisation on Majority ('Third') World communities, and how these communities are resisting. Two focus specifically on women, due to the gendered nature of capitalism and its disproportionate effects on women. In the first of these, Asha Bee Abraham draws on her experience of working with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (www.apwld.org) to outline the destruction caused by World Trade Organisation agreements in Asia, and how women are organising to resist.

WTO: marginalising the marginalised

"Now we are landless, and impoverished more than ever," says Carmen Buena, a rice and vegetable farmer from Pampanga, Philippines. Carmen was one of the witnesses in the Women's Tribunal^[1] that accused the World Trade Organisation (WTO) of committing crimes against humanity in December last year. While the WTO held its ministerial conference, rural and indigenous women gathered in Hong Kong and charged the WTO with causing displacement and loss of livelihood, resulting in poverty, malnutrition and death among women and children.

International trade occurs in the context of gender and class inequalities, which are arguably the greatest in certain parts of Asia. Women produce the majority of the world's staple food crops, providing around 90% of the labour involved in rice cultivation across South East Asia^[2]. However, despite being primary agricultural labourers and food producers, women are generally first to lose their food security in times of income or food shortages. The Women's Tribunal on the WTO called for food sovereignty — the right not only to the security of a regular meal, but also involvement in decision making around food production and agricultural development to ensure the well being of the family and community. The WTO, women say, erodes these rights.

Export oriented agriculture

Until very recently, the majority of farmers throughout Asia would grow a range of seasonally varied crops for their own consumption, along with extra for trade at local markets. Now, with a switch to export oriented agriculture, they are required to generate products that fit into the narrow constraints of the global market. What's more, their production is expected to be large scale, uniform and highly specialised.

In her testimony to the Women's Tribunal, Yaowapa Promwong related that until a decade ago, families within her village in northeast Thailand exchanged seeds with each other. Most families would grow rice as their main crop, each usually growing several different varieties. Different families therefore had different harvesting seasons, allowing for community members to help each other in the harvests. Through such activities, production costs were kept low and community spirit was strong. In addition to their primary crops, families would often farm fish, prawns and shellfish in the rice fields, grow vegetables, and raise livestock around their homes. They produced enough food for their own consumption, often with surplus to trade at local markets.

Around ten years ago^[3], however, many farmers, including Yaowapa's father, were personally invited by Thai government officials to attend workshops on how to industrialise their farms and raise productivity for export. Several multinational agribusinesses attended these workshops and gave out gifts of seeds, fertilisers and pesticides, which farmers immediately began using with enthusiasm. Yaowapa describes the resulting changes in her village as socially and environmentally devastating.

The decline of seed saving

In much of rural Asia, women such as Yaowapa have traditionally been seed savers and plant breeders. Their knowledge of seed selection and conservation has enabled villagers to grow produce appropriate to the land. Thus, heritage seeds have been passed down over generations along with the family land itself. When growing for export, however, the produce must fit certain characteristics defined by Western marketers. Many farming families have now discontinued seed saving, turning instead to seeds from multinational agribusinesses that supposedly know market demand.

In addition, the WTO Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement allows multinational agribusinesses to patent local seeds and life forms. Multinationals such as Monsanto and Syngenta are now able to patent centuries of breeding by Asian peasant women. The staple foods of both Thailand (Thai jasmine rice) and India (Indian basmati rice), for example, have both been patented by multinational corporations.

Chemical intensive agriculture

The move towards large-scale monoculture farming makes farmers more vulnerable, as their seasonal income depends on the outcome of only one or two crops. In order to facilitate fast and uniform growth, fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides have been promoted to farmers by agribusinesses in the place of the local, natural and generally free agricultural inputs, such as manure. According to Carmen, the costs of agricultural inputs have increased by 200-300% over the last 10-15 years while the selling prices of produce have not matched this.

"Our land, water and the environment are poisoned", described Shanthi, whose family are of the Dalit caste, the lowest rung of India's caste system. She explained that because it is women, or specifically Dalit women, who usually apply the pesticides, they have been most harshly impacted, with many in Shanthi's village suffering from breast and cervical cancer, infertility or intellectual/physical disabilities in newborns. To make things worse, these people find it difficult to obtain appropriate care because health services have been privatised through the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)^[4].

Imports and subsidies

The introduction of the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), along with the resulting drop in import tariffs and regulations in Majority World countries, has seen more and more small scale farmers unable to compete with the influx of cheaper, subsidised foreign products. The consequences of this are exacerbated since being encouraged to farm just a few varieties of produce makes these farmers vulnerable to price fluctuations of the particular produce.

Purevdulam, from Gobi province in Mongolia, like most families in her soum (village), trades dairy products. In the spring, she sells wools and cashmere. However, since Mongolia joined the WTO in 1997, the influx of subsidised foreign products has forced large numbers of local and national processing factories out of business and, along with other local herders, Purevdulam now sells her wool, cashmere and skin products to export agencies at a loss.

Feminisation of rural poverty

The Asia-Pacific region is home to two-thirds of the world's undernourished^[5], the majority of whom are women and girls. The socio-economic hardships caused by the WTO have a disproportionate effect on women, and compound the effects of existing gendered discrimination and the disadvantages of rural life.

Carmen's story, for example, is one that can be heard in varying forms throughout Asia. At the end of a harvesting season, Carmen was generally able to earn around P54,000 (AU\$1,362) for her produce. However, 67% of this went directly to repay the usurer for her loans on upfront capital for agricultural inputs. After additional payments such as hire fees to the owner of the rice thresher, and rent to the landlord, Carmen's family of six was left with P5,505 (AU\$139) for the next four months, or P45.87 (AU\$1.16) per day. On top of her long days on the field and caring for her family, Carmen supplements the family income by cooking and selling rice cakes in the village. At the end of 2005, however, the landowner reclaimed the land from Carmen's family, saying she had not been paying enough rent. The landlord soon began plans to divide the land and sell it as residential lots. This is a growing trend around the barangay (village), and has caused a shortage of land available for food production. Meanwhile, Carmen's family is currently landless, impoverished and hungry. Their lack of food, poor nutrition, and inability to afford adequate medicine have caused serious illness amongst her children and grandchildren.

During such hard times, increasing numbers of women in Carmen's barangay are turning to prostitution in exchange for rice and vegetables for their families. This pattern can be found throughout many communities in rural Asia, causing vulnerabilities to outbreaks of HIV/AIDS.

Women resist

Although the stories of Carmen, Yaowapa, Shanthi and Purevdulam are just four, similar stories can be heard millions of times over in rural communities throughout Asia. During the eleven years of the WTO's existence, women throughout rural Asia have been facing heightened economic, health and social problems as their governments have enforced trade liberalisation policies, and as local farms have shifted to capital intensive export oriented agriculture.

With the support of campaigns such as Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development's *Don't Globalise Hunger*

(<http://dontglobalisehunger.org>), rural and indigenous women have come together from around the Asia Pacific region to share their experiences, and thus realise that their problems are not isolated. Women around the region have been organising local meetings to disseminate their understanding of trade liberalisation and its impacts on their communities, and to discuss how they can resist corporate control of their villages and livelihoods. The women in Yaowapa's village are reverting their farms to organic agriculture systems and are encouraging a community shift towards self-reliance in production and consumption. Farmers in Kerala, India are holding organic bazaars as alternative trading markets in which farmers sell their produce independent of the middlemen, at prices affordable to consumers (see www.thanal.org/organicbazaar/index.html). The bazaar connects small, marginalised farmers with consumers in ways that build mutual trust and local accountability.

Women are also forming farmers' coalitions for lobbying governments around food and agriculture policies. On top of her 18 hour work days, for example, 60-year old Carmen also acts as the national chairperson of the National Federation of Peasant Women in the Philippines (AMIHAN), a non-government organisation that supports peasant women to advocate for agrarian reform in ways that respond to their situations as peasants and as women. Rural women are also forging alliances with other regional organisations, such as the Asian Peasant Women Network, the Asian Indigenous Women's Network, the International Gender and Trade Network (www.igtn.org), and the Pesticide Action Network (www.panap.net).

Although such forms of resistance may be considered small scale in the face of the huge power structures of the WTO, US, EU and multinational corporations, these actions have had the immediate effect of replacing feelings of frustration, isolation and depression with community spirit and hope. Through these means women are not only acting defiantly against the global corporate system, but also powerfully towards their own needs and visions for food sovereignty at the local community level.

[1] The Women's Tribunal on the WTO, organised by the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, was held as part of the part of the People's Action Week.

[2] Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) (1994). Gender and Food Security: Division of Labour. www.fao.org/Gender/en/lab-e.htm.

[3] Thailand became a member of the WTO in January 1995.

[4] India joined the WTO in 1995, but was a signatory to GATT since 1991.

[5] Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) (2002). Food Insecurity: When People Must Live with Hunger and Fear Starvation, The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2002. www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=/docrep/005/y7352e/y7352e00.htm.

* This article is also being published in the *Permaculture South Australia magazine*.

When Women Unite

THE WOMEN'S ANTI-ARRACK MOVEMENT IN ANDHRA PRADESH

Liz Branigan

The Indian economy was liberalised via the central government's New Economic Policy in 1991. Soon after, much of the land dedicated to subsistence rice cultivation in the south-eastern state of Andhra Pradesh was flooded to make way for the lucrative practice of 'aqua-farming' — growing the cash crop of prawns for Japanese markets. These changes led to a scarcity of affordable food, the loss of jobs and income for rural women, a greater reliance on male wages for the family livelihood, and an increase in drinking and violence in local communities. By 1997, much of the land dedicated to prawn cultivation had been destroyed by salination and the local capitalist buccaneers had moved on to their next endeavour.

This article details the 'anti-arrack' campaign — a grassroots women's movement that used public and private acts of resistance to fight the environmental and social degradation of their villages. Women resisted through community and domestic based modes of shaming, as well as rallies, sit-ins and strikes. Family and domestic considerations were integral to the forms of resistance that women chose to take up. Their activism protested the encroachment of global capitalism while being firmly grounded in the realities of their everyday lives.

The background to an uprising — domestic strategies of resistance

Rural Andhra Pradesh has a hierarchical class system, largely grounded in land ownership. Traditionally much of this land has been leased out in small family holdings dedicated to rice cultivation. The bulk of the lowly paid and strenuous labour involved in rice cultivation has been undertaken by women. When

large areas of land were flooded for aqua-farms, there was both less land available for subsistence rice growing and also far fewer jobs available to women. The few newly created jobs in aqua-farming were mechanised and thus went to men, as gendered conceptions of labour meant women were viewed as 'not skilled enough' to operate machinery.

At the same time, some landowners, many of whom were also keen investors in the state's many breweries, began the practice of paying a portion (or sometimes all) of men's wages in small yellow plastic sachets that contained 'saara' or 'arrack' — a potent liquor. This resulted not only in less money being available for the collective use of the family, but also greatly increased drunkenness and family violence.

Although changes in land use, labour and wages were significant, women's protests focused on the more accessible and direct target of men's resulting over-use of alcohol. Producing and consuming manufactured spirits was a relatively new phenomenon directly resulting from capitalist expansion into rural areas. It was viewed by local women as part and parcel of the same problem as aqua-farms — an exploitative wider economic practice that took scarce resources away from their families.

Women constructed their struggle as being rooted in their right as mothers to act for the good of the family. In their homes, women focused on shaming their husbands into refraining from alcohol. A rich repertoire of songs, poems and chants against alcohol consumption were developed in the regional language of Telugu that women sang in their homes and when going about their work at sites such as the village drinking well and washing laundry at the river. Women commonly upended pots of cooked rice in village arrack shops, stating 'your business takes the food from our mouths'.

The struggle widens

Although there was no organised leadership to start with, collaborations were critical to the expansion and ultimate success of the movement. First and foremost, was the support of progressive literacy educators running the National Literacy Mission in the Nellore district. These tutors wrote the issues of alcoholism and family violence into their curriculum, which was soon adopted by the other districts of Andhra Pradesh. One of these stories was titled 'If all women were united' and began:

"We are hard working people. We harvest gold from the earth. But what is the use? All our hard work was going to ... arrack ... The men won't be calm after drinking. They will be abusing and cursing. They will quarrel and they will beat their children and wives. They are making our lives unsafe. What can we women

do? Then came the night schools. They gave volunteer training in our village. They read out stories that are exactly the same as in our village. We fell into thinking about them. We women were all united then. Daily we are talking about the danger of arrack. We discussed it when we are cutting the chilli crop in the fields and at the drinking well ... The next day a hundred of us became a group. We walked for a mile outside the village. We stopped the cart coming with arrack and said we won't allow it in the village".

Many of the literacy tutors came from the Jana Vignana Vedika (People's Science Forum), a local non-government organisation that worked to spread knowledge of science, health and literacy amongst the rural poor. It helped to spread the movement by organising large scale rallies, strikes and sit-ins in urban areas such as Nellore town and the state capital, Hyderabad. One of the most impressive of these was the solidarity strike by truck drivers that saw mountainous roads deadlocked for tens of kilometres for days on end.

From protest to progress?

As the movement gathered momentum, political parties entered at the very last stage, and a state election was won largely on the basis of the issues highlighted by the anti-arrack campaign. The campaign was hailed by governments, the media and non-government organisations as an historical step forward for women. It led to transformations in gender relations in families, local communities and the social structures and hierarchies within which the activism was enacted.

In many parts of the world, the acceleration of neoliberalism over the past two to three decades has fuelled patriarchy and accentuated injustice for women. As the anti-arrack campaign demonstrates, challenging neoliberalism and its effects requires addressing gendered power relations, including within social movements.

The need for both women and men to challenge men's power and privilege is no less relevant in Australia than in India. The disproportionate effects of the new industrial relations laws on women, the corporatisation of child care, and the under-valuing of women's paid and unpaid work are just some of the ways in which neoliberalism places tremendous burdens on women in Australia.

Liz Branigan has been involved in activism around the family for many years. She has lived in India, and currently works as a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for Applied Social Research at RMIT. For information on the continuing struggles by women in India against neoliberalism and patriarchy, see www.vshiva.net and <http://india.indymedia.org>.



Economic Apartheid

IN SOUTH AFRICA

Patrick Bond

The G-20 — which will be hosted by South Africa in 2007 — includes an important layer of junior imperialists, amongst which the South African government looms large in Africa. The African National Congress is imposing neoliberalism onto its own people and extending the reach of South African corporations as colonisers in other parts of Africa.

Playing deputy sheriff to George W. Bush, South African president Thabo Mbeki assured that by mid-2004 Pretoria and Washington had fully 'normalised' their military relations, according to deputy foreign minister Aziz Pahad. Mbeki's plan for Africa's subjugation by the West, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), was termed "philosophically spot on" by the Bush State Department, and Bush anointed Mbeki his point man for relating to Zimbabwe. At home in South Africa, Mbeki's economic and development policies were uniformly neoliberal, and the environment is in worse shape today than during apartheid.

Indeed, the last major government study of inequality showed that ANC neoliberal policies — amplified from those of the late apartheid regime — had reduced black families' income by 19% from 1995-2000, while white families' rose by 15%. Unemployment soared from an official 16% in 1994 to 32% ten years later; by expanding the definition to include those who gave up looking for a job, the number rises to 42%. Women's pay fell in relation to men, and poverty for women-headed households rose.

Environmental injustice

Post-apartheid South African ecology is degenerating in many critical respects. More than a dozen huge dams are currently in planning, with destructive environmental consequences downriver. In the case of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, the high costs of water transfer — made yet higher by rampant

corporate/state corruption — deter consumption by poor people. Africa's highest dam, Katse, supplies Johannesburg water across the Lesotho mountains, and the next mega-dam in the scheme, Mohale, began in 1998 even though government officials admitted it was unnecessary.

In some of the most hedonistic suburbs, daily water consumption is 30 times greater than in low-income townships. The swimming pools and English gardens of the wealthiest urban (mainly white) families are often tended by workers from water-poor communities. Each year an estimated 1.5 million people are unable to afford water from the neoliberal state (with some being evicted because they cannot pay their water bills). Millions have had their water supply disconnected since the end of apartheid. Meanwhile, rural (black) women queue at communal taps in the parched former bantustan areas for hours. Access to natural surface and groundwater remains skewed towards white farmers due to apartheid land dispossession and the post-apartheid government's failure to redistribute land to black South Africans.

As for the air, on a per capita basis, South Africa contributes more to global warming than nearly any economy in the world, if CO₂ emissions are corrected for both income and population. The situation is worsening because Pretoria is promoting (and subsidising) vast new investments in metals smelters. Notwithstanding good solar, wind and tides potential, renewable energy is scandalously under-funded. Instead, vast resources continue to be devoted to nuclear energy research and development, especially irrational investments in next-generation pebble-bed nuclear reactors, which internal documents admit are dubious from a financial standpoint.

Pretoria also allowed South Africa to become a World Bank guinea pig for a carbon trading pilot project — methane gas will be extracted from a Durban toxic waste dump that is causing cancer in neighbouring black neighbourhoods and should be closed down. The pro-corporate carbon-trading strategy will not reduce overall emissions, and instead furthers the commodification and privatisation of the air (see the article *Climate Justice and the G20* in this edition for a critique of carbon trading).

Other ecological problems include numerous unresolved conflicts over natural land reserves (the displacement of indigenous people continues), deleterious impacts of industrialisation on biodiversity, insufficient protection of endangered species, and generous state policies favouring genetic modification for commercial agriculture. Marine regulatory systems are stressed and hotly contested by overseas fishing trawlers. Expansion of gum and pine timber plantations (largely for pulp exports) are destroying grasslands and forests — leading to soil adulteration

and flood damage downriver that has affected, for example, Mozambique — and spreading alien/invasive plants into water catchments across the country.

Meanwhile, South African commercial agriculture remains extremely reliant upon fertilisers and pesticides, with virtually no attention given to potential organic farming markets. Pretoria is also fostering a dangerous Genetically Modified Organisms industry, while regional neighbours like Zimbabwe, Zambia and Angola have imposed bans on the dangerous technology. Furthermore, in an illustrative case of biopiracy, Pretoria's main science agency has patented the diet medicine known as hoodia, with scant regard for the needs of the Bushmen (San) peoples from whom it was taken.

Defending the interests of global capital

The combination of neoliberal economics, ecological insensitivity and regional subimperialism is lethal. Given Pretoria's 1998 decision to invest \$6 billion in mainly offensive weaponry such as fighter jets and submarines, there are growing fears that peacekeeping is a cover for a more expansive geopolitical agenda, and that Mbeki is tacitly permitting a far stronger US role in Africa — from the oil rich Gulf of Guinea and Horn of Africa, to training bases in the south and north — than is necessary.

In return, the international political power centres have invested increasing trust in Mbeki and finance minister Trevor Manuel (who will be attending the G-20 meeting in Melbourne). As multilateral institutions came under attack from global justice movements, they have sometimes attempted to reinvent themselves with a dose of new South African legitimacy. Pretoria's lead politicians were allowed, during the late 1990s, to preside over the United Nations Security Council, the board of governors of the IMF, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the World Commission on Dams and many other important global and continental bodies. Simultaneously taking Majority World leadership, Pretoria also headed the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of African Unity and the Southern African Development Community.

Since 2001, Mbeki and his colleagues have hosted, led or played instrumental roles at a number of major international events. Aside from propping up the status quo, virtually nothing has been accomplished. For example:

- At the UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban (2001), Mbeki colluded with the EU to reject the demand of NGOs and African leaders for slavery/colonialism/apartheid reparations.
- The launch of NEPAD in Abuja, Nigeria (2001) provided merely a home-grown version of the Washington Consensus.

- At the Doha, Qatar ministerial summit of the World Trade Organization (2001), trade minister Alec Erwin split the African delegation so as to ensure that the ministerial was more 'successful' than the previous one at Seattle in 1999.
- At the UN's Financing for Development conference in Monterrey, Mexico (2002), Manuel was summit co-leader (with former IMF managing director Michel Camdessus and disgraced Mexican ex-president Ernesto Zedillo), and legitimised all ongoing IMF/Bank strategies.
- At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (2002), Mbeki undermined UN democratic procedure, facilitated the privatisation of nature, and did nothing to address the plight of the world's poor majority.
- While hosting a leg of George W. Bush's first trip to Africa (2003), Mbeki avoided any conflict over Iraq's recolonisation.
- At the Cancun WTO ministerial (2003), the collapse of trade negotiations — catalysed by a walkout by African negotiators — left Erwin 'disappointed'.
- At World Bank and IMF annual meetings from 2001-05, with Manuel leading the Development Committee, there was no Bretton Woods democratisation, new debt relief or Post-Washington policy reform.

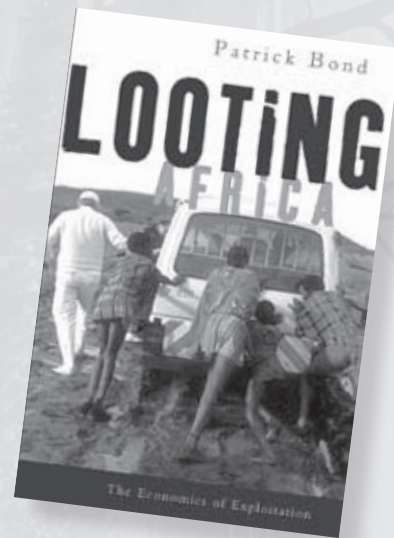
Further failures can be reasonably anticipated in 2007 when South Africa hosts the G-20. Meantime, Mbeki will try to use G-20 financing rhetorics as a last gasp for NEPAD.

Resisting privatisation and other neoliberal policies

In reaction, in the late 1990s, progressive groups established a new, independent left network of social movements and sections of the labour movement. There is broad unity in their objectives: free anti-retroviral medicines to fight AIDS; at least 50 litres of free water and 1 kiloWatt hour of free electricity for each individual every day; extensive land reform; prohibitions on service disconnections and evictions; free education; renationalised telecommunications; the right to employment; and even a monthly 'Basic Income Grant'.

Grass-roots networks such as the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC) have directly challenged privatisation. With electricity disconnections being forced upon impoverished township residents due to privatisation, the SECC has assisted thousands of households to reconnect to the grid. Numerous grass-roots networks have also established to protect people's access to water and housing in township areas in the context of the dehumanising effects of neoliberal policies.

The apartheid era ended with the ANC government forming an alliance with the Congress of South African Trade Unions



(COSATU) and the South African Community Party (SACP). Recent disputes over COSATU's alliance with the ruling party have been a barrier to unity among the broad left. However,

with the trade union movement denouncing Mbeki's 'dictatorial' orientation and SACP leaders publicly opposing his 'Bonapartist' strategy to boost business interests, the alliance is fracturing.

Independent left forces such as the new wave of Durban social movements, the Johannesburg Anti-Privatisation Forum, the Environmental Justice Networking Forum and other members of the Social Movements Indaba will continue fighting Mbeki's neoliberal project at home and abroad. With labour, they have rolled back some of the worst privatisation policies. But a full reversal, enhanced by stronger solidarity with grass-roots groups in Africa, G-20 nations and across the world, remains on the agenda.

For further information on resistance by South African grass-roots groups against neoliberal policies, social injustice and environmental destruction, see: www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs, <http://southafrica.indymedia.org>, www.earthlife.org.za and www.groundwork.org.za.

Patrick Bond directs the University of KwaZulu-Natal Centre for Civil Society in Durban, and also teaches at York University in Toronto, Africa University in Zimbabwe and Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. His books include Looting Africa: The Economics of Exploitation (Zed Books, 2006), Talk Left, Walk Right: South Africa's Frustrated Global Reforms (University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2006) and Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa (UKZN Press, 2005).

Market 'Solutions' to Climate Change:

A FAR CRY FROM CLIMATE JUSTICE

Stephanie Long

Friends of the Earth Australia has been campaigning for climate justice for over six years. Climate justice is a positive vision of the future, where all people enjoy equitable and sustainable access to the world's carbon resources. Climate justice also refers to the right to compensation and protection against the impacts of climate change for the peoples of the world who have not produced excessive amounts of greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate change is a result of systemic overconsumption of natural resources by the 'enriched' peoples of the world (the Minority World), which has also created vast inequalities of wealth and associated power across the globe. This is perpetuated by the financing mechanisms and conditions imposed by international financial institutions and trade practices, enabled by the global neoliberal economic system. Any strategies to address climate change and achieve climate justice must be based on actions that redress global structural inequalities in the use of carbon resources, within the limits of what the atmosphere can absorb.

A range of market mechanisms have been developed (with strong support from the corporate sector) claiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the most significant being carbon/emissions trading and the Clean Development Mechanism in the Kyoto Protocol. These schemes allow corporations to 'offset' their emissions by either purchasing credits in a trading scheme or investing in 'clean development' projects in countries that don't have emissions reduction targets under the Protocol.

Both schemes rely upon a series of flawed assumptions, including that markets will enable us to trade our way out of pollution, when the very nature of human-induced climate change is rooted

in the quest to generate profits. Furthermore, they assume that governments are effective environmental regulators, when environmental regulation is reduced by laws inspired by the WTO and developed through bilateral free trade agreements, and when most contemporary conservative governments are ideologically opposed to regulation.

In essence, these schemes enable corporations to maintain (or even increase) their pollution by obtaining credits through projects in Majority World settings that rarely benefit the local people. A notorious example is the Bissard toxic waste dump in Durban, South Africa. The dump was to close due to high levels of cadmium and lead, but has remained open with World Bank funding in order to provide carbon credits through methane gas extraction. As a number of excellent reports by Carbon Trade Watch (www.carbontradewatch.org) demonstrate, carbon trading and the Clean Development Mechanism appear to be more about maintaining profits for corporations at the expense of the Majority World, rather than any concerted and ethically responsible attempt to address human-induced climate change.

Contraction, convergence and compensation

The contraction and convergence model was originally developed by the Global Commons Institute (www.gci.org.uk). The model assumes that all peoples have a right to a fair share of carbon resources within ecological limits. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimated that the atmosphere can absorb 1.46 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents per person annually (currently Australians produce about 6.7 tonnes per person) without lasting harm. The Pew Centre on Global Climate Change reported that in the year 2000 the global average for 'developing' (Majority World) countries was 0.9 tonnes per person^[1].

Under the contraction and convergence model, a number of Majority World countries could increase per capita emissions — with Minority World countries needing to significantly cut back theirs. The model argues that at a defined point in the future, all nations need to reach the same level of per capita emissions — the level that the atmosphere can sustainably absorb.

When assessing equitable emissions levels it is also necessary to consider historical and future responsibilities. While the Minority World has been producing greenhouse gas emissions for over 150 years, 1967 is recognised by the American Institute of Physics as the year when credible scientific evidence was published about the greenhouse effect. It is therefore reasonable to use a 40 year period to calculate the amounts due to the Majority World for compensation and damage mitigation. As for future responsibilities, the lag-time of emissions in the atmosphere

(carbon has a life of 50 years and methane 14 years) means that the carbon emissions we produce today will contribute to human induced climate change for decades to come.

The contraction and convergence concept has been extended to take into account ecological debt models with a third component of 'compensation'. The Minority World owes Majority World communities a major commitment of resources and assistance to mitigate the effects of human-induced climate change, given that the former has caused most of the problem and that the latter is most vulnerable to its effects. Furthermore, the requirement of Majority World countries to pay debts to international financial institutions and Western banks is ludicrous given the huge debt they are owed after centuries of colonisation by Western governments and corporations, who have stolen immense amounts of their labour and resources.

Currently there are limited legal options for Majority World countries highly vulnerable to climate change to seek compensation or redress. Where they do exist, the burden of evidence rests on the affected peoples rather than the historical polluters. Moreover, Majority World countries are generally aid recipients and dependent on international financial assistance from the World Bank, regional development banks, private banks and the IMF. The unfortunate reality is that these institutions do not assess the greenhouse footprint of their funding, and have developed reputations for financing climate intensive projects at a significantly higher rate than renewable energy or climate change adaptation projects. For example, the Sustainable Energy and Economic Network reported that the World Bank funds fossil fuel projects over renewable energy at a rate of 18:1^[2].

False solutions to climate change

When reading the popular press you could be forgiven for thinking that the mining industry in Australia is deeply concerned about climate change. The greenwash on the urgent need to find climate solutions is the result of a desperate attempt to protect profits in the face of an internationally carbon-constrained future and a declining nuclear industry.

A sustainable energy future for communities, nations and the world will be a combination of eco-sufficiency and eco-efficiency using decentralised renewable energy generation options. This absolutely means reducing consumption and moving away from centralised energy production. False solutions such as nuclear energy and 'clean coal' technology will only increase the political and economic power held by the uranium/nuclear and coal industries in Australia. Further expansion of these industries risks millions of tax-payer dollars in centralised energy infrastructure,



short-sighted research and development, and construction of power plants that lock us into dangerous energy generation for 30-50 years per plant — not to mention the enormous burden of decommissioning and rehabilitating sites, and dealing with nuclear waste for thousands of years to come. Such false solutions are a dangerous and expensive distraction from the real task of addressing climate change through sustainable energy consumption and decentralised renewable energy generation.

Stephanie Long is Friends of the Earth (FoE) Australia's international climate justice spokesperson, and works on FoE International's climate change campaign. For more information on FoE's climate justice work, contact Stephanie on stephanie.long@foe.org.au.

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The End of the World as We Know it (And I Feel Fine)

STRATEGIES FOR THRIVING
AT THE END OF THE AGE
OF GROWTH



Adam Fenderson

Photo: 'Peak Oil' by Pierre Pallez Source: <http://www.hotpix.ch>

That sinking feeling

As the leaders of some of the world's richest and most populous nations bring their collective wisdom together in Melbourne in November for the G-20 meeting, we know that they'll have at least one thing they can once again agree on: the need for 'strong and sustained economic growth'.

We've all made mistakes. And so I think we're all familiar with 'that sinking feeling'. The one that comes after a momentary and critical lapse of judgement. The type that comes with consequences.

From an historical perspective, pursuing 'sustained growth' may be seen as a momentary and critical lapse of judgement. Continuous growth on a finite planet stands in rude contradiction with the laws of physics and ecological systems. Indeed, the central guiding principal of our world leaders is essentially an oxymoron.

So inevitably, be it sooner or later, the world economy will experience the dull dread of that sinking feeling. The most immediate and acute challenge to endless growth is peak oil — the peak in global oil production — and it is being talked about

by everyone from Bill Clinton^[1] to Vandana Shiva^[2]. The decline looks set to begin by the end of the decade. Cheap fossil energy is the lifeblood of industrial society, and without a growing supply, the economy will no longer be able to expand.

Within our current economic model, contraction is so unthinkable that economists have termed it 'non-growth', to be avoided at all costs. Non-growth creates a worsening feedback cycle of loss of economic confidence, while destabilising the money supply. If uncontrolled, it leads to recessions and depressions, much like the Asian economic meltdown, the event which led to the G-20's formation. So for many, peak oil can only be seen as an overwhelming disaster. Yet while some hardships might be inevitable (and while we need to work hard to make sure they don't disproportionately affect those who are marginalised), it need not necessarily be that way.

If the juggernaut of economic growth is on the way out — and soon — we have to begin to ask ourselves the question, one unthinkable to our leaders: so what comes next?

Popular culture offers few answers. Perhaps the most prevalent vision it provides of the post oil age are the brutal desolate scenes of Mad Max. I think we can do a lot better. Informed by both the

fear of inaction and a sense of opportunity inherent in crises, this may represent the best moment we've had to accelerate the work/play of imagining and creating revitalised local communities, and abundant and inclusive relocalised economies. Several communities around the world have begun the process already.

Energy descent

Instead of the general trend of greater year-on-year 'material progress' (for those with economic privilege), we can expect to experience less and less, for perhaps decades into the future — the flip side to the 100 year burst of oil-fuelled growth.

Some have seen this coming for a while. Australian permaculture co-originator David Holmgren coined the term 'energy descent', and explains "I use the term 'descent' as the least loaded word that honestly conveys the inevitable, radical reduction of material consumption and/or human numbers that will characterise the declining decades and centuries of fossil fuel abundance and availability."

Permaculture is a functional design system for human settlements, a philosophical and practical toolbox for sustainable productivity. It focuses on saving effort by working with the patterns of nature rather than against them. More than that, Holmgren says "permaculture is the wholehearted and positive acceptance of energy descent, as not only inevitable but as a desired reality."

Community Solution to Peak Oil^[3] (a non-government organisation based in Ohio) promotes a return to small local communities and has produced a documentary, *The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil*. The story of Cuba is perhaps the best (though not totally ideal) working example we have of a post-peak society, as the island nation lost most of its oil imports essentially overnight when the Soviet Union collapsed. Through a focus on community and local organic food production, Cuba managed not only to survive but to "transform their entire society to a sustainable, low-energy-use system."

Relocalisation

Corporate-led globalisation is a product of an era of cheap fossil fuels. As we find that we have less fuel for transportation, relocalisation becomes not a choice, but an inevitability. This doesn't have to mean an end to cultural exchange as neoliberal critics pretend. As John Maynard Keynes wrote in 1933, "I sympathise, therefore, with those who would minimise, rather than those who would maximise, economic entanglement between nations. Ideas, knowledge, art, hospitality, travel — these are the things that should of their nature be international. But let goods be homespun whenever it is reasonable and conveniently possible, and above all, let finance be primarily local." Problems as multi-faceted as peak oil and climate change demand

holistic societal responses, rather than technological fixes alone. Many commentators, including Helena Norberg-Hodge^[4], have promoted relocalisation on environmental and social justice grounds. "In fact, 'going local'", she writes, "may be the single most effective thing we can do."

Relocalisation can be as multifaceted as the problems we face, and in this way it can offer (in the lingo of the Melbourne-based 1970s energy crisis text "Seeds for Change") 'solution-multiplying solutions'. For instance, if our food is grown locally, some of it by ourselves, we burn fewer food miles, and with less transport we need less refrigeration. In gardening we have a common cross-cultural interest on which to build friends and community, and through which we get some physical exercise. We therefore need less medical assistance because we are healthier, fitter and happier, and as such we desire fewer consumer goods - and so on and so on.

Two major regional wildcards affecting whether peak oil will manifest primarily as a disaster or as an opportunity are the levels of connectivity and support for diversity within local communities, and how well we vision and plan for descent.

Moving forward — Energy Descent Action Plans

One especially useful way of approaching the problem is to work towards what's known as an Energy Descent Action Plan (EDAP).

An EDAP, as concept originator Rob Hopkins writes, "sets out in a timetabled way, a pathway by which an area might descend gracefully from the peak". In doing so the plan goes well beyond issues of energy supply, to look at across-the-board creative adaptations in the realms of health, transport, education, local economy, youth and community, and so on.

The first EDAP was developed in 2005 in the small Irish town of Kinsale by Hopkins and the students of a practical sustainability course. Their plan, radical in vision and scope, suggests turning the supermarket carpark into an eco-centre, an overhaul of building and planning codes, schemes to greatly increase local food production, new community consultation and involvement processes, food gardens and permaculture studies in high-schools, and much more. The vision of their community is a contagiously positive one, and their approach, both fearless and practical, has met with success: as of November 2005 it has been officially adopted by the Kinsale town council, and various aspects are now beginning to be implemented.

As Hopkins describes, "While it is unlikely that the Plan would actually be carried out to the letter, its power lies in its offering a path down from the peak, rather than necessarily the path, but ...

a compelling vision that life beyond oil could be superior to the present, and is achievable in practical steps.”

One EDAP effort is under way in Maleny, another is planned for somewhere in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, and several others or similar projects are happening around the world. The Kinsale plan was written by students, not professionals or experts, yet its influence has been immense both locally and globally.

We can not wait for our world's political and financial 'leaders', chained to an outdated philosophy, to lead. The G-20 meeting in Melbourne will further entrench the insane dogma of growth, the group unable to appreciate either the dangers or opportunities of peak oil. But we can begin working now with local councils and community. Every relevant plan, project, skill and friendly connection forged now will be a place to turn as the crisis begins to hit home, not so long into the future.



PEAK OIL AND THE GEOPOLITICS OF AGRICULTURE

Before the age of fossil fuels, something was fundamentally different about agriculture: it was an energy source — the primary energy source for most of the world's societies. And we lived, more or less, within the annual energy budget of the sun.

Now our energy overwhelmingly comes from fossil fuels. Industrial agriculture, the so called 'green revolution' of the 50s and 60s, has even turned the energy balance of agriculture on its head. Agriculture has become a system of turning fossil fuels, more so than sunlight, into food. We now burn about 10 kilojoules of non-renewable energy to produce every one kilojoule of food energy that is delivered to the supermarket (www.dieoff.com/page69.htm).

We are about to begin moving past peak oil and down the energy curve, moving back towards the annual energy budget of the sun. Our agricultural system has to adapt

and de-industrialise to once again become an energy source, rather than an energy 'sink'.

However, the seed system has become dominated by transnational corporations, protected by intellectual property rights and the WTO, aggressively promoting their products at the expense of traditional knowledge and agricultural biodiversity. This makes our task more difficult, and raises the question "will the seed transnationals be the equivalent of the oil companies of the future?" Some in the U.S. military have been thinking ahead.

In "From Petro to Agro: Seeds of a New Economy" in the October 2002 edition of *Defence Horizons*, Robert T. Armstrong considers agriculture in the context of peak oil. He foresees moving from the 'Age of Geology' to the 'Age of Biology' (www.ndu.edu/inss/DefHor/DH20/DH_20.pdf). "Before the rise of cheap oil," he writes, "agriculture was the dominant source of our raw materials. Indeed, when the U.S. Department of Agriculture was established in 1862, its motto proclaimed, 'Agriculture is the foundation of manufacture and commerce.'"

"Just as we currently demand assured access to sources of hydrocarbons," he writes, in the context of the Carter Doctrine, "in the near future we will demand assured access to a broad-based, diverse supply of genes."

"Agricultural fields will assume the same significance as oil fields."

There is now so much more urgency to protect indigenous farmers, traditional seeds and knowledge — and for ourselves to begin learning their skills. They are our lifeline to the future.

Adam Fenderson is the founder and co-editor of *EnergyBulletin.net*, a popular peak oil news clearinghouse. To learn more about the EDAP process, check out the primer on the new *Eat The Suburbs!* website www.EatTheSuburbs.org. If you'd like to be involved in such a process or have funding suggestions, please contact adam@energybulletin.net.

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WARNING!

Conditions Attached

WORLD BANK & IMF DEBT RELIEF

Karen Iles - AID/WATCH



AID/WATCH protesters marked the 60th anniversary of the World Bank in 2004 by calling upon it and the IMF to retire!

Champagne glasses clinking, slaps on the backs of suits and crowds cheering to the voice of Bono. The 2005 agreement of the G8 in Gleneagles to cancel the debt of some impoverished countries was met with celebration. Have the G8, World Bank and IMF really assisted these impoverished countries by ‘relieving’ them of their debt burden, or is the problem getting worse?

The United Nations has committed to reducing poverty by 2015 through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These include halving the number of people living on less than US\$1 per day and without sustainable access to safe drinking water, and achieving ‘significant improvement’ to the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers (www.un.org/millenniumgoals).

The 2005 debt relief program agreed to at the G8 — now called the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) — resulted in 18 (now 19) Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) qualifying for debt relief from the World Bank, International Monetary Fund & African Development Bank. The deal stipulated that 20 other countries would be eligible for the debt relief once they reached the so-called ‘completion point’ in the HIPC initiative.

The HIPC initiative was introduced in 1996 by the G8, World Bank and IMF, with the intention of providing limited debt relief so that impoverished countries could maintain a ‘sustainable’ debt. This program was widely criticised as countries were still contributing more to debt repayments than to essential services. A revised HIPC scheme was announced in 1999 — but did not improve significantly upon the previous arrangements.

The 2005 deal promised “100 per cent debt relief”, but sadly this has not come about. The exclusion of the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has meant, for example, that Latin American countries who have qualified for the MDRI debt relief still owe money to these banks as well as having bilateral debts. In real terms less than 30 per cent has been cancelled for Latin American countries.

Dodgy dealings and environmental disasters

The HIPC initiative is limited by its conditions and scope. The initiative only includes countries with an annual per capita income less than US\$965, resulting in many missing out on the chance of MDRI debt cancellation. Countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines, for example, have massive debts and will be highly unlikely to achieve the MDGs by 2015, leaving millions in extreme poverty.

The debts owed are not only due to irresponsible lending and the dominance of global market forces. They are also the result of loans taken out for dubious projects, often by corrupt regimes. World Bank and IMF loans have funded, among others, dam projects through the Mekong basin (including through HIPC member Laos), the Narmada river in India and the Kedung Ombo dam in Central Java. The latter, for example, forced 5,300 families (20 villages) off 6,700 hectares of land and resettled them in areas in Sumatra. The World Bank itself admitted that the resettlement plans for the villagers were highly defective, as the living standards of 74% of families declined after their relocation^[1]. Even though the dam was completed in 1989 (through a loan taken out by the Soeharto regime), the Indonesian people are still paying for the ‘benefit’ of this project.

The West African Gas Pipeline project was funded despite opposition from local communities and despite the World Bank Extractive Industries Review in 2003. The review recommended that no further World Bank support be given to extractive industries in countries that are corrupt, do not respect human rights or where local people oppose the project. Just this year the World Bank announced a US\$125 million loan for a gold mine in HIPC member Ghana despite local opposition. Furthermore, the World Bank decided in mid-2006 to disband the Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development (ESSD) Network within the Bank^[2].



On World Debt Day 2006 AID/WATCH held a mock game show protest out the front of the World Bank offices in Sydney. Activists called on countries to say "No Deal!" to conditions in World Bank loans, grants and debt relief.

The financing of loans to corrupt governments is similarly problematic. In our region the World Bank and IMF (along with the ADB and bilateral creditors) have lent to the regimes of Soeharto in Indonesia, and Marcos and Estrada in the Philippines. In both countries the previous leaders have embezzled and misappropriated billions of dollars^[3] yet the people of Indonesia and the Philippines are still paying off these illegitimate debts long after these leaders lost power.

As a result of the Paris Club Agreement much of the debt owed by Iraq has been cancelled. Iraq is not a HIPC country. The willingness to cancel the debt of a non-HIPC country on the grounds of the debt being accrued by a dictator is welcomed. This approach should be extended by the Australian Government and by international financial institutions to other countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines who have odious debts.

Warning! Conditions attached

The HIPC initiative has not just failed to live up to its promises — the conditions attached are concerning. For a country to

qualify for MDRI debt relief it must reach the HIPC completion point. The road to the completion point is marked by a staggering number of conditions strikingly similar to the structural adjustment policies of old, such as trade liberalisation and privatisation that prevent Majority World governments from establishing their own economic policies.

Since the G8 deal, countries receiving MDRI debt relief have had conditions imposed on them: facilitating the sale of national banks in Tanzania & Ghana; privatising the telephone system and tea factories and joining the East African Trade Agreement in the case of Rwanda; and establishing a private water supply in Uganda^[4]. Furthermore, for every World Bank dollar allocated to debt relief a dollar is withdrawn from new International Development Association funding (the IDA is part of the World Bank).

Examples of the detrimental effects of World Bank and IMF conditions are numerous. As part of a 1997 World Bank loan Bolivia was compelled to privatise its water system in El Alto. Unsurprisingly the price of water increased by 35 per cent and

the connection costs amounted to approximately 6 months wages (US\$445)^[5]. In exchange for IMF loans Haiti agreed to decrease its agricultural tariffs — over 830,000 people were estimated to have had their incomes slashed as a result^[6]. Mozambique was forced to privatise both its national banks in order to receive loans, even though the process was marred by a corruption scandal and was in opposition to public opinion.

Alarming, the number of conditions attached to loan agreements is rising. In a recent Eurodad study of 20 HIPC countries, the number of conditions within World Bank loans has risen on average from 48 per loan to 67 between 2002 and 2005^[7].

Where does the IMF fit in?

The International Monetary Fund has lent with similar conditions to those attached to World Bank loans. In many cases the IMF has duplicated or propped up World Bank conditionality. For example, Mali's 2005 World Bank funds required an agreement to privatise the national bank, while IMF funding for the same year was conditional on tendering the bank for sale.

Like the World Bank, the IMF has had a stranglehold on Majority World countries and has bullied and coerced its way into imposing neoliberal policies and making sure that they are enforced. If an impoverished country dares to suggest policies such as increasing deficit spending beyond an IMF-imposed limit to raise meagre public service wages, for example, the IMF has a track record of threatening to withdraw its funding — with the possible consequence that other creditors would withdraw their funding from the country as well.

This represents completely unacceptable interference in local people's rights to choose economic policies of their own making. Not only have wealthy countries and corporations caused much of the impoverishment of the Majority World in the first place — through stealing their labour, land and other natural resources over hundreds of years — now the World Bank, IMF, development banks, WTO and Export Credit Agencies are continuing the long history of colonisation through the guise of free market and trade liberalisation policies.

The role of the IMF as the global enforcer of neoliberal policies is coming under increasing threat, however. A number of countries over the past three years have paid off much or all of their previously large debts to the IMF, including Thailand, Indonesia, Argentina and Brazil, and are signalling their intentions to not engage in any new borrowings from the Fund^[8]. Consequently, the IMF has relatively few (in historical terms) funds in circulation with corresponding low levels of interest repayments to fund its operational activities. With large-scale Majority World countries hesitant to continue relations with the IMF, the opportunities for

people to challenge the very legitimacy of the organisation have perhaps never been greater.

What can we do?

The G-20 meeting in Melbourne provides us with an opportunity to pressure for the removal of neoliberal economic conditions from loans, grants and debt relief. The HIPC initiative should be expanded to include more countries and the 100 percent debt relief they were promised should be delivered. The bilateral debts owed to G-20 countries by countries struggling to meet the MDGs should also be immediately cancelled.

However, this may not go far enough. In reality, the World Bank and IMF serve to enforce neoliberal policies in ways that open Majority World economies to the colonising interests of transnational corporations. It is not surprising that the very legitimacy of the World Bank and IMF has been called into question by people worldwide.

While the 'reform' of the IMF and World Bank is on the G-20 agenda, it is most unlikely that the meeting would do more than tinker at the edges to give the neoliberal governments of some large 'emerging economies' a slightly greater say in how these institutions operate. It will be up to people on the streets to demand that these institutions be dismantled.

Karen Iles campaigns on debt, International Financial Institutions and multilateral aid for AID/WATCH. AID/WATCH (www.aidwatch.org.au) — Action on Aid, Trade & Debt — has been campaigning on the effects of World Bank and IMF programs and policies for over 10 years. Based in Sydney, AID/WATCH is an independent watchdog of the Australian aid program, and works towards ensuring that trade policies and loan agreements are not to the detriment of Majority World countries.

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[5] As above, p12.

[6] As above, p4.

[7] Eurodad (2006). World Bank and IMF Conditionality: A Development Injustice. www.eurodad.org/articles/default.aspx?id=711, p9.

[8] Focus on the Global South. The IMF: Shrink it or Sink it: A Consensus



Photo: Bette Lee Source: <http://portland.indymedia.org>

WTO Negotiations Collapse

A NEW OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP ALTERNATIVE TRADE SYSTEMS

Damian Sullivan

The Doha Round negotiations of the World Trade Organisation collapsed in July this year. With the collapse came a chorus of accusations that the biggest losers will be the world's poor. However, ongoing protests by millions of people worldwide against trade liberalisation and the WTO indicate that not everyone agrees.

In the coming months, the WTO and many of the world's most powerful countries will seek to restart the Doha negotiations. The main media story will be the significant 'global benefits' at stake. Australia will be a key player, as part of the 'Group of Six' (the others being the EU, US, Japan, Brazil and India) that will attempt to restart negotiations.

Trade negotiations are not directly on the agenda for the G-20 meeting to be held in Melbourne in November. However, trade

liberalisation forms a key policy backdrop to the G-20. At the G8 meeting in Russia in July this year, the world's most powerful economies called for completion of the Doha Round negotiations. The G-20 is likely to do the same.

Disputing the benefits of trade liberalisation

Trade liberalisation has become a primary tenet of a remodelled neoliberal economic development paradigm. Majority World countries are encouraged to open their markets and to focus on exporting their way out of poverty. Trade has become the new aid.

Proponents of this argument point to World Bank predictions of global gains of US\$100 billion from even a modest Doha Round agreement^[1]. Stripping back the gloss however reveals the winners and losers from such an agreement. Researchers from Tufts University have unpacked the World Bank figures, demonstrating that the biggest winners would be wealthy countries, who would gain \$80 billion. Majority World countries are predicted to gain just \$16 billion^[2].

These relatively small gains for impoverished countries would come at a cost, a fact rarely reported in the mainstream media.

Under negotiations for non-agricultural market access (NAMA) being pushed by the EU, US and Australia, Majority World countries would be forced to cut tariffs on numerous items. Tariffs provide an important means to protect local industries and also generate much needed revenue for many countries. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has estimated that Majority World countries could lose US\$60 billion in tariff revenues from the NAMA agreement^[3].

Perhaps more importantly, NAMA would be like a straitjacket on Majority World policy options. Key policy instruments such as tariffs and subsidies, which all countries including Australia have used to develop their economies, would be restricted. Many Majority World advocates argue that NAMA would lead to de-industrialisation as Majority World countries reduce barriers to industrial goods from wealthy countries. As Mehdi Shafaeddin (formerly a senior economist in UNCTAD) stated, if NAMA goes ahead Majority World countries will find that their "industrial development will be blocked, and they will be locked into production of primary commodities and simple resource-based and labour intensive products."^[4]

NAMA would also restrict industrial policy development that could otherwise be used for sustainable development. China, for example, has recently introduced laws that include measures to develop a domestic wind generation capacity. The OECD has already foreshadowed the potential for a challenge to these laws through the WTO^[5].

NAMA negotiations also pose a more direct environmental threat. Friends of the Earth International has highlighted 212 potential challenges under the NAMA negotiations to country laws and regulations that are designed for environmental protection^[6].

Upholding the national interest of the rich and powerful

Alongside NAMA, the Doha Round includes negotiations on a revitalised GATS agreement, the General Agreement on Trade in Services. Like NAMA, the main beneficiaries of services negotiations would be Minority ('First') World countries and large transnational industries, rather than the Majority World.

Don't be misled into thinking the unequal results are an aberration, or a bad moment in the WTO's history. On the contrary, the history of the WTO is resplendent with agreements that entrench the power of Minority World countries at the expense of the Majority World.

Take the WTO's intellectual property agreement (TRIPS). Even prominent pro-free trade academic Jagdish Bagwhati has argued that TRIPS should not have been included in the WTO. As Joseph Stiglitz, who was formerly chief economist at the World Bank points out, US pharmaceutical and entertainment corporations were instrumental in developing TRIPS.

TRIPS forces Majority World countries to adopt a complex and extremely expensive intellectual property rights system based on US intellectual property law, which has little historical, political or cultural relevance to their societies. It is clear that the agreement is more about promoting corporate interests than free trade.

These problems are not the WTO's alone. Rather they reflect the fundamental imbalances in the global economic system. Minority World countries, and particularly the big players, have vastly greater economic, political and often military resources at their disposal. A number of Majority World countries who are members of the G-20, such as Brazil, India, China and South Africa, have also become key players as their economic power has grown.

Developing alternatives

The collapse of the Doha Round provides an opening for rethinking the current trade trajectory. As with Seattle and Cancun before it, the latest collapse is based on Majority World countries standing firm for their interests and saying 'no deal is better than a bad deal'.

In seeking to oppose the current world trade system it's clear that many of the alternatives on the table are based within the

framework of the nation state. For example, many opponents of the WTO point to the need to re-empower the nation state and make it work in the interests of its citizens. Within this model, some argue for the need to promote national self-sufficiency over exports. Others argue that countries should develop an economy with a large export sector, and that this will be in the best interests of the individual countries and the world as a whole.

The development of cooperative trade relations between Majority World countries, based on policies that are quite different to trade liberalisation (and neoliberalism in general), is seen by many as an important component of challenging the current system. The Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America (ALBA) proposed by the Venezuelan government is one example of how a regional trade agreement could make a paradigm shift, by denouncing a number of the features of the neoliberal global trade system. The proposal emphasises bottom-up development and national food self-sufficiency, protects local cultural and biological diversity, and prioritises social justice concerns and solidarity with relatively weak economies over the profits of transnational corporations.

One question that is rarely addressed in these debates, however, is whether the nation state system can ultimately provide a workable framework to address inequality, impoverishment and disadvantage. Given the multiple ways that the 'national interest' is used to suppress the rights of Indigenous people, asylum seekers, local ecosystems and people marginalised by corporate capitalism, we need to consider whether reaffirming the nation state is the best way to secure global justice.

Looking beyond the nation state is often seen as idealistic and impossible. Yet with the dramatic concentrations of money and power in the world and the growing levels of inequality, developing alternatives that occur outside the nation state are perhaps just as realistic as expecting change within the current system.

Damian Sullivan works on Friends of the Earth International's Trade, Environment and Sustainability campaign (www.foei.org/trade/index.html), and is also a member of the Reclaim Globalisation collective of Friends of the Earth Melbourne. For information on either of these, email Damian at damian.sullivan@foe.org.au.

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Photo: Communities in Costa Rica raise butterflies for income source: http://www.foei.org/trade/costa_rica.html

The Only Struggle Lost is the One that is Abandoned

MOVING BEYOND NEOLIBERALISM IN LATIN AMERICA

Latin American Solidarity Network

We are still searching for a world of happiness and plenitude. Technological revolutions and scientific advancement notwithstanding, we still face the same old human dilemmas and problems: poverty, imperial looting of entire peoples, the injustice of inequality, and the scourge of war unleashed by the powerful on defenceless peoples.

The people of Latin America have for over 500 years endured and fought against imperial domination and exploitation. The Americas have witnessed long centuries of battles, numerous attempts at libertarian construction and many exemplary lives lost of the children of its soil. Today, after accumulating much experience, the struggle for social justice in Latin America is undergoing deep changes. Changes in the way people do politics, in the way decisions are made, and above all, in the importance given to participation and internal democracy within people's movements and activist organisations.

The struggle against neoliberalism in Latin America is being defined along many paths, including electoral processes that the ruling classes have been forced to permit and where popular organisations have recovered their historic influence. In Venezuela, for example, the government is developing a politics that seeks redistribution of wealth and is opening up spaces where the social movements, the marginalised and excluded can exercise their power and confront capitalist abuses. In similar circumstances the Bolivian people have elected Evo Morales, who has declared that the country's gas and hydrocarbon reserves are owned by Bolivian people. Other elections like those experienced in Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay have resulted in governments that maintain their progressive face while not instituting deep changes.

Growing numbers of people are searching for answers outside of neoliberalism and capitalism. There is huge disenchantment with neoliberalism after it had been sold in such a grandiose manner throughout the continent, and popular disgust with anyone who is viewed as having peddled it.

The people of Latin America are proposing alternatives with their actions of resistance, through new and autonomous ways of struggling and organising at the grassroots. Today it simply isn't enough to voice leftwing slogans. We must also be the change we wish to see on a daily basis. Solidarity among ourselves, and respect for those we struggle side by side with, should be a non-negotiable factor in how we organise. In this context, politics takes on another meaning. It is no longer the business of specific people and becomes a real, enriching collective experience.

Today's struggle is above all one in defence of human values. We are faced with the need to rescue humanity from self-destruction, with restoring a love of equality, fraternity, justice and freedom among human beings.

Like our sisters and brothers in Latin America, we must also understand that the struggle should be for the rights of all those who are excluded and oppressed by the system — children, women, people who are same-sex attracted, the elderly, indigenous peoples, those discriminated by virtue of their ethnicity or religion, migrants, young people, the world's poor and the exploited millions of working people in the cities and on the land.

We struggle for an end to poverty, hidden or otherwise, for an end to repression and impunity. For an end to the 'flexibility' of labour, and for unions and other workers' organisations to fulfil their role of protecting working people and to cease being an instrument of political parties. We struggle so that indigenous peoples are able to maintain their culture and sovereignty over their territories and their lands, and so that small-scale farmers have the right to grow food for their families and communities. We struggle to stop the criminalisation of people's peaceful resistance, to stop the growing misuse of the word 'terrorist'.

There are no hidden agendas here. Today those who aspire and strive for dignified social change in Latin America are not an enlightened few but millions of its poor.

As more and more people around the world mobilise in support of humane ideals, we feel there is a great need for progressive organisations to socialise and share these and similar concepts. And given the current, heightened imperial policies of the United States, any opportunity for discussion among those actively involved should be grasped with both hands.

The United States has set itself once again the task of destroying the revolutionary projects of the peoples to its south. It is engaging in a military and ideological invasion hidden behind so-called plans for continental economic reform, such as the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA), and bilateral and regional blocks such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

Other initiatives such as 'Plan Colombia' are nothing other than US attempts to destroy or control grassroots people's movements under the guise of combating drug trafficking. And on a daily basis, its blatant interference in Venezuela and its push for military bases throughout the continent are examples of its escalating intervention in Latin America.

While Australia is geographically far from Latin America, social movements here can be guided by a spirit of solidarity — we can aim to collaborate with and support those popular, grassroots organisations in Latin America who are leading by example. In Australia little is known about these movements and their advancements in grassroots participation and mobilisation, and of the vital role of indigenous peoples in the creation of these platforms for the future.

We issue a call for the Second Latin American and Asia-Pacific Solidarity Gathering in Australia in support of popular and indigenous struggles, in solidarity with those who have not given up their struggle for human rights and against repression and impunity. We issue a call for us to work closely so that these struggles, and their goals of social justice and dignity, are made known. We call for a sharing of experiences among individuals and organisations who have contributed to solidarity work and who today are part of the struggles against corporate-led globalisation. We hope for a continued renewal of the solidarity movement around the world and for projects such as these to become more than isolated events.

Our aim is to help generate a wider solidarity movement with grassroots and indigenous struggles in the Americas and Asia-Pacific region, and to assist the coordination of this movement with those in other parts of the world. We hope that this will be a contribution to the people's global resistance and struggle against war and injustice.

Because the only struggle lost is the one that is abandoned. ¡Para todos, todo! For all, everything!

The Second Latin American and Asia-Pacific Solidarity Gathering will occur on October 21-22 at Victorian Trades Hall in Melbourne, and will involve an exciting range of speakers from grass-roots social movements in Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region. For details, see www.latinlasnet.org or email lasnet@latinlasnet.org. For further information on the amazing resistance to neoliberalism and the alternatives being built in Latin America, see <http://upsidedownworld.org> and www.zmag.org/weluser.htm.

Relocalise the Food System



Food exports gone mad: On the shelves of Melbourne's food stores you can find Nature's Path Canadian organic breakfast cereal, while in English health food stores you'll see boxes of Morning Puffs, an Australian organic breakfast cereal that is unavailable here. The English distributor for Morning Puffs recently offered to re-export the Australian cereal back to the Australian market.

Chris Ennis

What's wrong with our current food system? In Australia and around the world, food system players from farmers to retailers are participating in a 'get big or get out' food arms race. Farms have become miserable feedlot factories where animals are fed on grain and soy while people in impoverished nations starve. Food is treated like a commodity to be refined and shipped thousands of kilometres to increasingly obese city dwellers, all while the number of corporations controlling food production and distribution dwindles each year. Five companies now control 90% of the world grain market and almost half that grain goes to inefficiently fatten livestock.

Farmers are being squeezed out as mega-farms grow and the price for produce is pushed lower by the big retailers (for example, Victorian specialty lettuce farmers currently receive as little as 10 cents a head for a product retailing for as much as \$1.50). Low farm gate prices compounded by the need to continually upscale operations are resulting in farmers being unable to afford to take the best care for their soils or pay workers reasonable wages. To

survive farmers are pushed by their bankers and government advisers to use “industrial agricultural” solutions like inorganic fertilisers, biocides, genetically modified seed and expensive machinery – resulting in degraded soils, polluted water supplies, shrinking rural communities and an endless farm debt spiral. Coupled with the frenzied drive to export at great cost to local rural economies and the environment, we have a system seemingly intent on cannibalising itself.

In 2005 Peta Christensen and I went to Brazil, Canada, USA, Denmark, UK and Cuba to visit communities that are relocalising their food systems – empowering farmers and consumers through creating local markets, community gardens and food security projects in ways that bring healthy fresh food to low income communities. This is a small taste of what we saw.

Belo Horizonte, Brazil

Belo Horizonte is Brazil's fourth largest city. In 1993 at a time when one-fifth of all children were malnourished, Belo Horizonte became the only city in the capitalist world to declare food a right of citizenship. In Belo Horizonte many organisations are involved in inspiring food security projects. However, it is the City of Belo Horizonte (local government) which has initiated a number of interconnected large and small scale programs aimed at breaking the hand-out cycle and invigorating the local farm economy that really stands out.

‘One Bag’ fruit and vegetable stores were set up in low income communities across the city. Charging a blanket per kilo price for all produce (roughly half the market price), these markets charge very low rents and buy produce direct from farmers (often sourced as surplus that would otherwise have been ploughed under). Supporting efforts to keep food affordable, the City publishes weekly average price lists of basic foods to inform consumers and prevent retailers from profiteering.

Near the centre of town in Belo Horizonte's two Popular Restaurants, we had the experience of sitting down with thousands of people for a delicious meal for about AU40 cents (subsidised considerably by the City). Like the One Bag market, The Popular Restaurants are open to the general public, from street people to office workers. The manager believes that a big part of The Popular Restaurants' success is having a payment involved, even though a small one, as this takes away the hand-out stigma for customers as well as for staff (who have an extremely low turnover rate). The food we ate was sourced locally where possible and was selected and prepared with a great deal of pride and care.

The City also runs other food security programs including community and school gardens and garden education programs, targeted community nutrition programs, permanent spaces for farmers market stalls, and a program that connects institutional food buyers with local farmers. The scope of these projects is amazing and a regular catchcry for the City workers is “We may not have a lot of money but we have a lot of imagination”.

Toronto, Canada

In 1991, in the absence of federal and provincial leadership on food security, the City of Toronto created the Toronto Food Policy

Council (TFPC). Out of the TFPC came the Toronto Food Charter, a document now used by city administrators and planners to build food relocalisation into purchasing programs and designs for new and redeveloped communities. This ranges from the provision of land for community gardens to situating food stores within walking distance of residences, to buying local, healthy and organic when possible for any council food purchases including its school lunch program.

Today Toronto has a comprehensive web connecting local farmers, government and educational institutions and non-government organisations across the Toronto food system. Ryerson University runs courses in community food security, which include field work in cities like Belo Horizonte. The local non-government organisation FoodShare distributes around 3000 low cost fruit and veggie boxes (locally sourced in the growing season) to 200 neighbourhood drop-off points each month. This program has spawned specialist food boxes for the Toronto African community and boxes for women with breast cancer.

FoodShare also operates a community kitchen to assist local food businesses, and supports a network of 110 community gardens including an urban agriculture site and a community market in a mental health facility. Toronto also boasts community pizza ovens in public parks, numerous farmers markets, a Composting Council and the amazing PAR GAR (“Plant A Row Grow A Row”) – a volunteer based program where community gardeners grow an extra row of vegetables to donate to their local food bank, soup kitchen, school or shelter.

What's occurring in Australia?

In Australia many groups are responding to the food system crisis: the number of community and school gardens is rapidly rising, new local and state government initiatives are occurring, and there is increased interest in neighbourhood cooperatives, city farms, farmers and community markets and community groups dedicated to creating thriving local food systems.

To find out what's happening in Melbourne (where we are based), get onto the Food Security Network website at www.vlga.org.au and follow the ‘Food Security’ link under ‘Issues’. Helpful Australia-wide sites include www.communityfoods.org.au, www.communitygarden.org.au and www.geneethics.org. Peta's report on our whole trip can be found at www.churchilltrust.com.au (see ‘Fellow's Reports’ then click on ‘Agriculture’). For other resources on food relocalisation, read *Eat Here* by Brian Halweil, *Hope's Edge* by Francis Moore Lappe & Anna Lappe, or visit www.isec.org.uk, www.globalpolicy.org/socecon/hunger/economy/index.htm or for serious fun www.thematrix.com and www.storewars.org.

Chris Ennis manages the Organic Farm and Training programs at CERES in Brunswick East, Melbourne: email chris@ceres.org.au or see www.ceres.org.au.

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Beyond Growth Economies:

CREATING POSITIVE
ALTERNATIVES
IN OUR LIVES AND
COMMUNITIES

Amy Lang and Rodney Vlasis

Photo: Chris Ennis

Amy Lang is working on a book about overconsumption in wealthy societies and the economic changes that might help to reduce it. Rodney Vlasis (rodney@foe.org.au) is a member of the Reclaim Globalisation collective at Friends of the Earth Melbourne (www.melbourne.foe.org.au). In this article Amy and Rodney explain and critique growth economies — a central pillar and outcome of capitalist societies — and present some of the alternatives that we can work towards.

Ideally, people would experience conversations about growth economics and alternatives as accessible, exciting and friendly, and they would draw on these conversations for inspiration to action in the same way they do with conversations about other forms of social change.

The first part of this article aims for accessibility, using a question and answer format to summarise some of the major issues in thinking about growth economics and alternatives. Excitement and friendliness really start to kick in towards the end of part one. From that point onwards, we focus on outlining some of the many possible steps we can take to support a transition towards more sustainable and just economies.

Part I: Thinking about growth economics and alternatives

Q1 What is the relationship between growth economies, growth economics, capitalism and neoliberalism?

'Growth economies' are economic systems that grow over time, producing increasing quantities of goods and services. Growth economies demand evermore resources, far exceeding what the earth's ecological and social systems can

sustainably provide. Growth economies can be contrasted with subsistence economies: economic systems that sustain human life, but where levels of resource use remain stable over time. The term 'growth economics' refers to theories that seek to explain and justify growth economies.

Capitalism is the dominant form of growth economy, and is based on competition driven by the profit motive. Within this economic form, individual businesses that don't offer a superior range, product or service to their competitors risk losing customers and going out of business. When an aggressive competitor exists within a market, growth becomes a defensive strategy for all other businesses in that market. Over time, the consequences of such growth tend to be: (a) the centralisation of power as companies merge into transnational corporations to gain a competitive edge, and as businesses that are more successful take over and absorb their less successful rivals; and (b) growth in the overall production levels of the economy.

Under capitalism, the owners of a business receive profits when they are able to sell the goods or services produced by workers for a greater return than the cost of production. This is sometimes known as a surplus. In capitalist thinking, profits are justified as a return on the capital the owners have invested in the business. Anarchists, socialists and a number of other theorists see profits as socially exploitative, since they can only occur when workers are paid less than the full value of their work.

Growth economies do not necessarily have private agents of capital. There are plenty of past and present examples of growth economies where a central state demanded growth in the volume of goods and services produced and (theoretically) insisted that the fruits of production be evenly spread around the population (or spread equitably according to different people's needs). In principle, this could be less exploitative.

However, the hierarchy implicit in a central administration still creates exploitation, and historically, growth in production has been very environmentally damaging. In the case of both corporate-driven and centralised state economies, growth economics combines with unequal social relations (through which some people maintain power and privilege over others) to cause significant social and environmental injustice.

Neoliberalism is the political ideology that advocates the spread of 'free markets' across the globe. Neoliberalism argues that capital, insofar as possible, should be free from government-imposed regulations and social and environmental responsibilities. Neoliberal policies advantage the demands of capital and business over the needs of the earth and her people.

Q2 People sometimes describe the banking system as inherently unstable and unsustainable. What do they mean, and is it related to growth economics?

The core issue here is what is known as the 'reserve requirement'. This specifies what percentage of the money lent out by banks must actually be held by them in savings deposits. Governments set reserve requirements in order to legally enable banks to lend money that they don't actually hold in savings deposits. The banks do this by using alternatives to actual legal tender money (such as cheques and electronic banking) when they provide loans.

It is easiest to demonstrate this with a simple example. Imagine that a very small economy has a single bank that holds \$100 in deposits, and its reserve requirement is only 10 per cent. The bank can legally lend out up to \$1000, as it holds 10 per cent of this (\$100) in deposits. So the bank can effectively 'create' and loan up to \$900 that it does not actually possess. Governments set small reserve requirements because the more money banks can create, the more potential there is for the economy to grow.

This process creates several problems. First, when there is a 'run' on the banks (as happens during major financial crises) there is never anywhere near enough legal tender to go around, since most of the 'money' circulating in modern economies has been created by banks. This is a major source of economic instability. Second, the charging of interest creates considerable social inequality and concentrates wealth and power among institutions that have the capacity to lend. Third, the creation of huge levels of debt puts pressure on individuals, economies and nations to expand their economic activities to pay off or at least continue to service their debts. This in turn fuels continued growth, until such a time as confidence in the economy drops, or — as is rapidly occurring — until growth reaches its ecological and social limits.

Q3 Why do we need alternatives to growth economies?

(a) Growth economies cause a great deal of harm as a result of their ever-expanding exploitation of ecological and social life.

(b) Growth economies are inherently unstable (the boom-bust cycle), and will become increasingly so as a result of climate change and the end of cheap oil. Some people argue that advocating for alternatives is irresponsible because withdrawal from the growth economy would lead to a fall in consumer demand and trigger a period of economic downturn. However, economic downturns can — and already do — happen for a host of other reasons. The most responsible thing to do is to work towards economic alternatives in ways that provide safety nets and economic support mechanisms when downturns inevitably happen. (c) We can create alternatives that are more lifeful, dignified, humane, creative and fun!

Q4 Who is affected by growth economies? Who needs alternatives?

Growth economies are by definition global, and as such, they affect all human beings and communities one way or another. They influence people's jobs, livelihoods, food, housing and consumption. They are increasingly affecting other factors, such as climate and access to the commons. They shape our options and our choices.

Yet not all existing forms of economic organisation in the world are based on growth. Subsistence economies remain relatively strong in many places. Indigenous and peasant communities are resisting the advances of neoliberalism and pressing their own demands (see, for example, www.viacampesina.org). Those of us who live in the urban areas of the industrialised world can support and learn from the amazing resistance of these communities.

Q5 Is green capitalism an alternative?

Not in the long term, although it might have a place as part of a transition to something else. Proponents of green capitalism say that new technologies could end physical economic growth (and accompanying environmental damage) whilst allowing financial economic growth to continue unabated (see for example www.natcap.org). However, even if some form of green capitalism could do away with ecological exploitation (which is far from clear), it would not address the social and economic exploitation caused by the owners of capital profiting through the appropriation of the surplus created by workers' labour.

Share prices (of companies large and small) generally only increase when the growth economy is working well, and when transnational corporations are acting in self-benefiting ways. While changes to the market system (e.g. internalising the full social and environmental costs of production) could curb destructive growth, the whole system of creating surpluses and continuously needing new places and opportunities to invest these surpluses is inherently destructive. Putting an economic value on what has been exploited and made invisible by the capitalist system would be a positive development, but is not in itself sufficient to end ecological and social exploitation.

Q6 But doesn't profit drive innovation?

Profit might have motivated many innovations that have benefited humanity and the planet. However, it has motivated many more innovations that are noxious and harmful. Humans have successfully and creatively innovated for millennia without the motive of profit, and without always needing to rely on 'technical fixes'.

Q7 What role could nation states and international institutions play in a transition to sustainable and just economics?

Existing nation-state forms and international institutions are inherent to the global growth economy. The advance of technologies over the last few decades means that communities no longer need to exist in isolation. Sharing of produce and ideas is possible now like never before. The challenge for all of us is to develop new ways of coordinating production and sharing wealth internationally, in ways that are fully democratic and participatory. This means we need new systems, processes and structures, preferably ones that are decentralised.

Q8 What would sustainable and just economies look like?

The short answer is, we don't know exactly. In that sense, it's a big adventure! They will probably look very diverse, involving different local communities making different decisions to suit their particular needs. However, some kinds of agreements would be needed at bio-regional and global levels to ensure that those who have benefited from corporate capitalism over recent centuries provide restitution and compensation for those who have been exploited.

We have some idea of what sustainable and just economies might look like through the diverse experiments in relocalisation and self-determination springing up everywhere (see Part II below). Similarly, we can look to alternative forms of economic organisation that are surviving despite centuries of capitalist onslaught.

Q9 How can we work towards a transition from growth economies to sustainable and just economies?

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the dominance of assumptions based on growth economics in public policy and discussion, and by the fact that growth economies are the norm in the industrialised world. However, it is useful to remember that what is 'normal' to readers in the Minority World is not normal everywhere, and there remains some aspects of all of our lives that have not yet been captured by the capitalist market.

There are cracks and contradictions in the system everywhere! Whenever we engage in household production (growing our own food, making our own entertainment), whenever we barter or participate in cooperatives, or

contribute to campaigns for change, we act outside the realm of the growth economy. We need to inch further towards transferring more areas of our lives, and to greater degrees, to the alternatives, and to disentangling ourselves from the global capitalist system.

Part II: Creating and nurturing alternatives

Below, we list some of the options for change at different levels: from the household through to the global. In any individual life, it takes time to become engaged with all of these, and you might decide you would be most effective concentrating on one or two that you feel passionate about. It is important however to have a sense of all levels of change, so that efforts at one level support those at the others.

We have provided some web links for each level of change, but inevitably, these barely scratch the surface. We hope these sites will be starting points, taking you along new paths in a journey of discovery about the exciting efforts towards change being made in Australia and around the world.

1. Household-level options

It's important to raise awareness about how growth economies are damaging us all, but we also need to understand the ways that we are all personally implicated in systems of exploitation and unequal power relations — being at once exploited ourselves, but also involved in systems and structures that exploit others.

The Greed-20 versus Green-20 article to follow in this edition offers many suggestions for what you can do in your daily life to nurture alternatives to global capitalism. You could consider framing these activities within the concept of voluntary simplicity, which basically means consuming fewer goods and services from the global economy. This saves you money or frees up resources to support social change action (via a one-off donation or regular giving). See www.simpleliving.net.

2. Community-level options

In a sustainable and just economy, communities would have more control over the commons — water, soil, air, vegetation, biological materials, human genes, etc — and more control over their labour. Decisions about the commons would be made by the people who are potentially most affected by them. Subsistence-oriented economic forms would be developed that do not involve interest or profit, and therefore are not dependent on the growth economy.

Cooperatives and other systems of relocalisation

You could form cooperatives for land 'ownership', such as community-land trusts (see www.schumachersociety.org) or housing, such as community housing cooperatives, cohousing, or ecovillages (see www.arch.asn.au, www.cohousing.org.au). For other kinds of co-ops, see www.australia.coop. Activities towards relocalisation become stronger when they coexist, because people tend to become involved in more than one and in the process, decrease their dependency on the growth economy.

Communities of interest

Communities don't need to be geographically close to enable mutual support for things that are less-capitalist than the norm. See, for instance www.maternitycoalition.org.au or www.lovemakesafamilyaustralia.org.

Worker-owned / worker solidarity initiatives

There's lots of debate about the place of worker-controlled enterprises in the capitalist economy. There are also associated issues such as balanced job complexes (where workers generalise rather than specialise, and take a wider range of roles); paying people for effort rather than their privilege or skill; and businesses where decisions are made through worker councils. A useful overview of these is provided by the Participatory Economics (Parecon) model, see www.zmag.org/parecon.

3. Some intercommunity options

Already, grass-roots communities are networking with each other to form new associations that foster community and economic self-determination. Indigenous and other local and regional social movements are increasingly linking with each other across the world, forming international solidarity networks of grass-roots resistance to capitalism.

Some examples of fair trade arrangements between producer cooperatives in the Majority World and consumer cooperatives in the Minority World are at www.fta.org.au. More locally, community-supported agriculture links urban consumers with rural producers, see www.foodconnect.com.au.

4. Options for systemic change

There's only so much that individuals and communities can do to step outside of the global economy. Ultimately, systemic level change is needed, and there are many different networks of activism and social change theory that operate at this level. Some see capitalism and the exploitation of labour as fundamentally problematic, others argue for modifications to the way the capitalist system works.

Below is a list of some alternative policies to global, corporate capitalism. Some are mutually exclusive, others are complementary. At a national level, we could:

- Adopt alternative indicators to GDP for measuring and defining the health of an economy (see www.gpionline.net/index.htm, www.neweconomics.org).
- Introduce different approaches to taxation, including the idea of taxing 'bads' not goods (see www.greens.org.au/policies/economics/taxandvenue).
- Set up interest free banking (see www.feasta.org/money).
- Expand the legal responsibilities of corporations, for example, by revoking their limited liability (see www.corporatewatch.org, www.corpwatch.org, www.poclad.org).
- Reduce subsidies to big corporations, and instead use tariffs, quotas, and regulations to protect local communities and economies.

Internationally, we could:

- Dismantle international financial institutions (e.g. World Bank, IMF, regional development banks, Export Credit Agencies), the WTO and other free trade agreements that only benefit corporations and wealthy nations. Replace them with new agreements and ways of cooperating that protect the commons, privilege democratic and participatory decision making at the lowest appropriate levels, and which allow impoverished nations the space to use international trade to grow their economies while stopping wealthy nations from using trade to maintain imbalances (see www.foei.org, www.aftinet.org.au, www.tradewatchoz.org).
- Provide restitution and compensation for the ecological and social debt that the rich nations owe impoverished nations after hundreds of years of colonialism (see www.foei.org/ecodebt).
- Cancel the debts of impoverished nations (see www.aidwatch.org.au, www.makepovertyhistory.org.au).
- Control investment flows with measures that penalise currency speculation (see the Tobin tax at www.ceedweb.org/iirp).
- Use 'Contraction, Convergence, Compensation' as a way to address human-induced climate change (see www.gci.org.uk and the article by Stephanie Long elsewhere in this edition).
- Change the international monetary system so that no nations can generate big advantages at the expense of others (see www.globalpolicy.org).
- Provide economic and political space for grass-roots social movements across the world to work together to develop non-hierarchical systems that support and privilege local subsidiary economies.

Several authors and organisations have made suggestions for new international economic institutions to replace the current ones: Colin Hines (*Protect the Local, Globally*), George Monbiot (www.monbiot.com), the People Centred Development Forum (www.pcdf.org) and the International Forum on Globalization (www.ifg.org). The Friends of the Earth International publication *Towards Sustainable Economies: Challenging Neoliberal Economic Globalisation* also provides principles and suggestions for working towards alternative economic arrangements that are socially just and ecologically sustainable (see www.foei.org/publications/pdfs/sustain-e.pdf).

As we have seen, there are already many people working on a vibrant range of efforts that form some of the pieces of more sustainable and just economies. This article is a very incomplete sketch of this activity, but we nonetheless hope it reminds readers of how their own participation in various efforts fits within an important bigger picture. We'd like to close by acknowledging all those who are currently working (and playing) in this area, apologising to those whose websites didn't make it into this article, and encouraging readers to keep up their own participation. A better world is happening!

Elizabeth Wheeler

It's all too easy to catalogue the woes arising from global capitalism and neoliberalism (we'll call them 'Greed-20'). But what of alternatives?

'Green-20' summarises some of the ways — big and small, personal and systemic — that people can challenge neoliberalism. The ideas here recognise that there are personal, emotional, systemic, pragmatic and practical dimensions of our collective work to overcome corporate dominance and to build strong viable alternatives to global capitalism. None alone will bring down the monolith of global capital, but each has a valid place in a patchwork of action.

Of course this is not an exhaustive list ... each person and community brings their own creativity and experience to the change process. We hope you will use the Green-20 as a source of inspiration, ideas and encouragement.

1. The global economy depends on keeping us vulnerable. When we fear for our livelihoods and homes, we are more easily exploited and divided. When we can't make/do/build things ourselves, we spend precious resources obtaining them. Future generations of kids are in danger of growing up with more dexterous thumbs but ignorant about how to grow carrots.

Swap skills with others: gardening, building, sewing, cooking, desktop publishing. Write and talk about what you're doing and learning. Mentor someone or take on an apprentice. Foster real and lasting connections between people so that reciprocal assistance can become a reality. Work towards neighbourhood trust, not neighbourhood watch, by creating opportunities for sharing and learning by doing.

2. Corporate control over food harms our health and the environment. Seeds and ancient knowledge are patented by corporations, and farmers across the world can no longer freely save and share them. GMOs are increasingly widespread — as weeds and as a deliberate mechanism for controlling what, when and how farmers plant. The global food market means precious oil is spent bringing us strawberries out of season.

Buy food that's organic and locally produced. Supporting local farmers and food networks — such as community food gardens, farmers markets, food co-operatives, city farms and seed saving networks — is good for your health, the earth and local communities.
www.communitygarden.org.au www.seedsavers.net

The Greed-20

VERSUS

Green-20

3. The global economy exploits people's labour and the earth's ecosystems to make money. This money is used to make more money in a never-ending spiral of exploitation. Debt is encouraged because it generates consumption as well as profit for banks.

Withdraw your money from the major banks. Use a community-based financial cooperative or credit union. Join a LETS scheme (Local Exchange Trading System), barter or set up other systems that are outside the monetary system. Save when possible rather than use credit, and buy collectively where appropriate.

www.abacus.org.au www.fccc.com.au
www.malenycu.com.au www.smallisbeautiful.org

If you have surplus money that you don't need to use in the short-term, invest it for change in a radical way. You could invest in ethical investment (e.g. www.austethical.com.au) and give most or all of the proceeds to a social justice or environmental group to support their change work, or you could directly invest in infrastructure for such a group — not having to pay rent for office space would make a lasting difference to progressive and collective-based non-government organisations.

4. Climate change and peak oil will weaken the global economy — perhaps irreversibly. It's all too easy to underestimate how dependent our economy is on oil. Many forecasters predict slowing or contraction of the global economy due to sustained rises in the price of oil. We are so hooked onto the current system we might be facing very difficult times ahead.

Relocalise! This involves returning food, money, banking, renewable energy, work, leisure, land and housing to the control of local communities — thereby starting the process of taking these things out of the global economy. Through relocalisation we come to value in the local environment what the global economy commonly devalues and steps upon — such as women's unpaid work in the home, Indigenous people's connections to the land, teenagers making their own culture, and time for family and friends.

www.communitysolution.org www.postcarbon.org
www.gaiavic.org

The Greed-20 VERSUS Green-20

5. Globalisation undermines accountability and control by the real stakeholders — ‘ordinary’ people. National laws are increasingly irrelevant, except where they serve global capital, and we have fewer and fewer opportunities to make our views heard. If you express ‘dissident’ views you’re increasingly likely to go to jail.

Get involved in local organising and build local systems of decision-making. Help foster strong, accountable and democratic local governments by advocating for your local council to adopt Green-20 strategies.

Inform yourself about ‘anti-terror laws’ and speak out against people who are being persecuted by them.

www.communitylaw.org.au www.civilrightsdefence.org
www.amcran.org

6. The military-industrial complex is a key player in the global market. It has a vested interest in stirring up distrust, competition and conflict — between nations and between communities. It also subsidises its activities via seemingly ‘harmless’ enterprises — Transfield Corporation, for example, has a 50% stake in Australian Defence Industries and also manages and operates Melbourne’s Yarra Trams.

Openly question what’s being fed to you about ‘other’ regimes and belief systems. Find out and share information about cross-ownership and the ways that the military is entangled in our lives. Withhold your money from businesses that profit from war.

www.vicpeace.org

7. Privatisation of essential resources increases environmental destruction, and the gap between the rich and the poor. It rarely results in better quality services, and lessens the accountability of service providers. Privatised assets — such as water or electricity — are less accessible to people with limited financial resources. Collectively, we are more vulnerable when a corporation controls access to something as fundamental as water.

Defend water and other essential community assets — from privatisation, pollution and commodification. These are our commons: we must distribute them equitably and take care of them for future generations. Learn from how others have opposed privatisation.

www.upsidedownworld.org www.apf.org.za

Collecting your warm-up water might not make a huge difference to water supplies in real terms (irrigated agriculture comprises 72% of Australia’s total water use), but the practice of conservation helps us to understand and value the place of water in our lives.

8. Corporate-led globalisation is continuing the exploitation and impoverishment of Majority World communities. This takes so many forms — ‘resource’ stripping, pollution, privatisation, poor working conditions and low/no wages, indebtedness of families/communities/nations, etc.

Learn about what grass-roots groups around the world are doing to resist corporate capitalism. These bottom-up social movements are increasingly networking within and across regions. They are developing systems of mutual solidarity that could eventually develop into new regional and inter-regional agreements that support relocalisation and self-determination. Be inspired!

9. Neoliberalism is taking exploitation of the earth’s wealth to new levels. Plants, animals and earth herself are being sacrificed at ever-increasing rates to the neoliberal machine. Communities whose livelihoods and spiritual identities are inextricably linked with the land are also suffering. The ‘cheap’ products we buy already come at a huge cost to someone else, and eventually, we’ll all pay the price.

Take a look around your home and your neighbourhood — how much of what you eat/wear/possess comes from other nations’ resources? Think timber, think minerals, think forests cleared for farmland, and above all, think oil. Make some sacrifices yourself and send the money you save to an environmental or social justice non-government organisation, or to a grass-roots movement overseas. This can’t repay y(our) ecological debt, but it’s a valuable reminder of what we owe the earth and Majority World communities.

10. Neoliberalism places a particular burden on women throughout the world. Even in rich countries, generation of new wealth is largely achieved by strictly policed gender roles — these are expressed in violence, exploitation and control of women’s bodies and lives. In impoverished communities, women experience greater poverty and ill health, and have fewer choices than men.

Regardless of your gender, be vigilant about perpetuating gender roles and inequality in what you say and do — at home, at work, and in activist and community settings. Inform yourself and speak up about the different impacts that the global economy has on different women — individually and collectively. Remember that there’s violence against women in a house down the street, as well as across the seas. In either case, your silence equals complicity.

www.xyonline.net www.ntv.net.au
www.wire.org.au www.dragon-amazon.net/wilpfaustralia



Graphic: Tom Civil

11. Neoliberalism falsely assumes that economies can grow forever. We are asked to buy into the myth, and sacrifice our time, cash and wellbeing to the god of Growth.

Question and challenge the assumption that constant economic growth is desirable, let alone achievable. Ask what the cost of growth is — to you, your family, your community, people in other nations, and the earth herself. Learn about alternative ways of meeting our needs without relying on an expanding economy.

12. Here in the Minority World, the corporate-led global economy makes consumers of us all, every day. Our hyper-consumption is unsustainable and unjust. As well, it saps our spirit. Corporations would have us express all human emotions via the almighty dollar, with our financial and material wealth defining our overall worth as people.

Buy less, recycle and re-use more. Discuss with friends and colleagues how to support each other to reduce consumption and build community through skill sharing. Organise a clothes swap, car pool, babysitting club, tool library ... the possibilities are endless.
www.freecycle.org

Talk about money with your friends and seek to understand how you're hooked into the global economy — emotionally as well as economically. Notice and challenge the way that corporations try to commodify everything. A black texta is a handy tool.
www.adbusters.org

13. Corporate-led globalisation is founded on the theft of land and resources from Indigenous peoples. Every cent of wealth here and throughout much of the world can be traced back to colonialism — not just as an historical force, but as a continuing system of domination and oppression.

Recognise the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples, work towards treaties and talk with others about what it means for non-Indigenous people to live on stolen land.

www.blackgst.com www.antarvictoria.org.au/treaty/WhatCanIDo.html

Learn about how the mining industry in particular continues to enrich itself at great cost to the health, wellbeing and sovereignty of Indigenous people.

www.nukefreeaus.org

14. Capitalism has always enslaved children, but the effects of unregulated global capital on children are increasingly multi-layered and widespread. Here in Australia, children of outworkers are enlisted into helping their parents meet unrealistic deadlines for little money. Elsewhere, they are drawn into conflict as child soldiers or into factories and mines as child labourers. Across the world, children bear the scars of violence and environmental pollution.

In the Minority World, children are also increasingly seen as consumers in their own right. Born in the reign of neoliberalism, children are growing up in a user pays system where the idea of collective responsibility is a thing of the past.

Ensure that the products you buy aren't made by outworkers or child labourers.

www.fairwear.org.au www.fta.org.au
www.melbourne.foe.org.au (Food Co-op and Bookshop)
www.oxfamtrading.org.au

Support campaigns around kindergarten teachers' pay, quality childcare, protection of workers' leave entitlements and work hours ... all these have ramifications for children's quality of life — now and in the future.

www.rightsatwork.com.au

Speak out about the effects of war and warfare on children, but recognise the racism underlying many narratives about child labour and child warriors. Global corporations are responsible for this, it's not inherent in culture.

www.hrw.org www.dci-au.org

Inform yourself about how global capitalism is affecting children you know. Find new and creative ways to spend time with children and young people, to counteract the messages of the corporate machine. Help children learn about culture, nature and earth sciences, and model positive ways of communicating and resolving conflicts.

www.youngmedia.org.au www.naturalparenting.com.au

Make activism child friendly — choose meeting venues that are fun for kids and ask everyone to share responsibility for 'childcare'.

15. Capitalism depends on continuing to extract profit from workers. This usually means work more, work harder. Successive governments (Labor as well as Liberal) have cajoled and coerced workers into closely identifying with Australia's economic growth and 'economic interests'. Overseas, workers continue to labour in substandard conditions for little pay. Unions are often illegal or coopted by government.

If you're not in a union, sign up today! Join other workers, unions and communities as they try to overturn the Howard Government's industrial relations laws.

www.unionsolidarity.org

Talk with your workmates about their rights; demand collective agreements in your workplace; form a contingent of colleagues to participate in union rallies; donate time, food and money to pickets and strike funds. At the same time, challenge those unions that have bought into the global economy and the idea that we need economic growth ... if we were working to produce what we need, not what corporations want us to buy, almost everybody would be better off.

Unions can be very hierarchical and patriarchal: **consider trying to introduce consensus-based processes and ways of working into your union meetings** (and if you think that means letting the one liberal voter on the shop floor dictate to everyone else, check out www.starhawk.org/activism/consensus.html).

Frame your own union work in the context of international solidarity by helping to build links with unions overseas.
www.aawl.org.au

When shopping, ask 'Who made it, where, and under what conditions?' Support not-for-profit cooperatives and small ethical businesses over large corporations.

16. Big corporations make bad public citizens, yet their interests and actions are strongly intertwined with government. Governments subsidise large corporations (for example, Alcoa in Victoria) and in turn, receive huge donations to political parties.

Challenge corporate dominance. Find out about campaigns that aim to change the very nature and structure of the corporation, and which work towards building a healthy and sustainable post-corporate society.

www.pcdf.org www.zmag.org/parecon/indexnew.htm

Demand an end to direct and indirect subsidies to large corporations, and a ban on corporate donations to political parties.
www.democracy4sale.org

17. Borders might be permeable for capital, but the movements of people fleeing war, climate change and famine are strictly policed. Governments and corporations can't afford people being able to move freely around the globe, so asylum seekers are punished for having the temerity to ask for refuge.

Be alert to how racism and nationalism work hand in hand, and scrutinise your own views about being 'Australian'. Challenge the concept of border policing — who's being kept out, and what right does any non-Indigenous person have to bar others from this land? Share your resources with asylum seekers.
www.safecom.org.au www.asrc.org.au

18. The WTO, World Bank and IMF perpetuate global economic and political systems for the benefit of the wealthy. How? Read the rest of this edition of *Chain Reaction*!

Learn and speak out about how the WTO, World Bank, IMF, regional development banks and Export Credit Agencies operate.
www.focusweb.org www.brettonwoodsproject.org www.eurodad.org

Join local and international campaigns to challenge them.
www.aidwatch.org.au www.aftinet.org.au
www.tradewatchoz.org

19. The current system depends on people thinking there's no alternative. There are ever fewer spaces for networks and NGOs to present alternatives in the public domain, especially for those that eschew corporate sponsorship and/or government funding.

Be active in groups and organisations that are challenging neoliberalism and working towards alternatives at the local, regional and global levels ... ask around til you find a way of organising and doing that suits you.

Consider regular or tax-time financial support of your favourite dissident organisations. If you're writing a will, consider a bequest.

20. Corporate capitalism uses power and privilege to maintain oppression, and to cut us off from noticing and caring about the effects of our actions (on others and on the earth). It dehumanises us and — if we're not careful — robs us of possibilities for change.

Nurturing ourselves and each other is fundamental to reclaiming our lives from the grip of global capital. Take time for sleep and good food, love-making and laughter. Go camping or walking, build a vegie garden, look around you more often, grow plants that are indigenous to your area. Connection to land is important for billions of people — find your own special place and get to know its moods and rhythms.
www.starhawk.org www.joannamacy.net

In the movement for social change, understanding self is as important as understanding capital. Ask people about their experiences and talk about yours. Acknowledge your own and others' homophobia, racism, financial privilege or other forms of power-over. Use processes and practices that embody the qualities of a better world — be respectful, supportive and open to challenges and change. Be honest about your fears, distress and despair.

Above all, honour and hold dear the web of life that connects all beings and earth. We will not triumph with spirit alone, but it surely will help.

Elizabeth Wheeler has shared in building alternatives to global capitalism for twenty years, and continues to struggle with finding a balance between personal responsibility and systemic change. After writing the Green-20 list, she vows to stop beating herself up about what she doesn't do, and instead celebrate the many opportunities that activism gives for living a rich and productive life.

feature essay



Didipio northern Luzon

JP Alipio

Large Scale Mining in the Philippines has not been a sustainable enterprise. In the past hundred years the country has experienced numerous mine spills and other environmental disasters not to mention the associated social ills mining brings to the host communities.

The Didipio community is in Northern Luzon in the Philippines. It is currently threatened by a mine being developed by Australian company Climax Arimco. In March this year, members of the Community of Baranggay Didipio filed a court case against the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to force the agency to cancel the environmental compliance certificate (ECC) issued to Climax Arimco/ Australasian Philippines Mining Inc (CAMC/APMI) which would allow the mine to proceed.

This case focuses on the right of local government units to determine their own development plans within their boundaries to suit the specific circumstances of their local economic, social and environmental situations.

JP Alipio worked with the Legal Resource Centre (LRC/KSK - Friends of the Earth Philippines) on this issue and now works with the recently formed local NGO the Cordillera Conservation Trust (CCT).

There is a weariness in their eyes as the villagers mill around the parish complex in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya on Luzon island in the Philippines. Their's is a protracted war that has been raging on for almost ten years. It seems it is a battle whose end is still long coming.

The village of Didipio is in the heart of Northern Luzon's Caraballo mountain range, where the forests still sing each morning and the waters and mountains still echo the history that has long kept this land pristine. The people of these mountains are migrants from the Cordillera Mountain range; Ifugao, Ibaloi, Kalanguya, to name a few of the distinct ethno linguistic groups that now call these mountains

home. Didipio is composed mostly of farming households. Crops include rice, bananas and oranges.

The stillness of this mountain was broken in 1994 when an Australian mining company was given mineral rights to explore and develop the land for large-scale mining. The mining rights covered nearly 37,000 hectares in areas that serve as water reservoirs for the agricultural lands of Nueva Vizcaya, with Didipio as the centre of its mining operations.

For the community this development would be a disaster for future generations. Thus the conflict began. Now a whole generation has past and the conflict still remains unresolved, with the mining company enforcing what they hold as the Philippine government's consent to operate.

This consent was contested by the community through the judicial system of the Philippines through the Supreme Court, but only recently in March 2006, the court decided in favor of the Mining Company. Not surprising considering the government's current efforts to promote the mining industry as a way out of the economic problems in the Philippines, promoting large scale exploitation of the rich mineral resources to gain quick profits. However, they failed to consider that people and communities called these mineral rich mountains their home.

The Supreme Court's decision on Didipio is a sign of an ailing legal system in the Philippines. The judicial doctrines have left the courtroom and entered the arena, not of legal statutes but of political and economic maneuvering reminiscent of the upper and lower houses of the Philippine Congress. In the case of Didipio, the laws did not serve the Filipino people - they took on a legal illness of looking at words with a monochromatic and constrained view. One may contend that we have bad laws yet we still know

the difference between good and bad. The laws, judiciary and the lawyers seemingly make the problem into a complicated mix of words. When the argument is reduced from black and white to gray then we lose sight of why we are fighting this cause. It is not because some word in a contract violates a word in the law but it is because the very nature of Large Scale Mining violates the rights of individuals and communities. And for the people of Didipio it is as simple as having a roof over their heads, having the freedom to walk, play, and work in the land they have grown up in, and to gaze upon the forests and feel the mist each morning as they open their windows to the world.

For the people of Didipio poverty is a symptom of an ailing environment and large-scale mining will not solve but only serve to increase this illness as the local environment is ravaged beyond repair.

For those weary eyes the conflict has dragged on for too long. Loneliness and isolation is what many in the community feel today. Peter Duyapat, a councilman of Didipio and the community's leading activist against Climax Arimco Mining has been in a frantic race to save his community from succumbing to large scale destruction. He has become one of the icons of the anti-mining campaign in the Philippines. He is an activist whose stake in the conflict is not merely a shared passion but a genuine love for a home that he himself built, tilled, and loved all his life. For the past ten years he has been from one forum to the next looking for those who will help further the cause.

Recently he seems more weary than usual as the strain of the conflict seems to have gotten to him. Lines now etch the once young Ifugao face. He says that he has gone to so many forums where all he sees are the same faces over and over and the same words being spoken from the podium. He has attended hundreds of conferences but the situation in Didipio remains.

The recent events have been flash points to spark more intense conflicts in the community. Only hours after the court's ruling came out, the Climax Arimco Bunkhouse in Didipio was burned down. Weeks previously the small-scale miners took up arms to protect their claims from the Mining firm. With no end in sight this conflict is bound to worsen as inside the community internal conflicts have arisen. Stories of mothers and sons disagreeing over mining and separating homes is not uncommon and many relatives and friends now hold an enmity for each other as the lines of pro and anti mining have been drawn, with the Climax Arimco Mining Corporation fueling the flames.

The plight of the community of Didipio seems quite hopeless yet little glimmers seem to crop up every so often. Little victories that when put together create a potent force. Recently the Didipio community has been getting help from their fellow Cordillerans who sympathise with the cause they are fighting for. At a recent

International Igorot conference held in Sydney Australia where thousands of Igorots came together to discuss common issues, members of the conference adopted Didipio as one of their causes. Many of these people have relatives and friends living in the Nueva Vizcaya area. In Australia, the Solidarity Philippines and Australian Network or SPAN and Friends of the Earth are now actively campaigning for the cause of the people of Didipio.

Yet with all this support, recent developments in the Philippines have only served to degrade the morale of the local population. For many Australians some, of whom may be shareholders in Climax Arimco, what happens in Didipio seems as far removed from their homes as the next continent but they must remember that their actions at home in Australia have a profound effect on people living in other lands. The people of Australia, especially those who hold stocks in Climax Arimco, and the Australian government have a responsibility not only to themselves but also to the people who Australians and Australian companies affect. It is within their power to ensure that these companies and people operate in a manner that respects peoples and communities rights to their own lands and environment.

For the weary eyes and minds of Didipio they only wish for rest from this struggle. A wish that involves waking up each morning and opening your windows to a land you do not fear to lose, coming home each night from your own fields without fear of losing a roof to sleep under, and dreaming breathtaking reverie of a future for your children and grand children who live, play, and grow in this land you call home.

You as an Australian and fellow Filipinos have within you the power to grant this wish you have only to act and act together to make it come true for the people of Didipio.

For information on the Didipio campaign, please see:
http://www.foe.org.au/nc/nc_corporate_dipidio.htm

JP Alipio, Coordinator Cordillera Conservation Trust, email: jp.alipio@gmail.com. JP Alipio was recently in Australia. In Brisbane he was hosted by the Students of Sustainability conference and in Melbourne by FoE and the RMIT Globalism Institute.



letters and feedback



Chain Reaction #96

– environmental racism

dear FoE

congratulations on a thoughtful and thought provoking issue – looking at environmental racism in Australia. I thought perhaps you were a little too kind to the Wilderness Society (TWS) – asking them to answer the question of whether ‘wilderness’ is racist. Not to diss the Cape York work, but as the basis for a philosophy, ‘wilderness’ can only be racist in a place like Australia given the history of the last 60 – 100,000 years. I would have liked to have heard an indigenous take on the TWS approach.

There are various key points where indigenous and green interests converge – especially over uranium mining (and its associated problems), in the far North, and in forests campaigning. Perhaps it is in the forests that the relations have been most strained and the issues most fraught. It would have been great if you had also addressed this topic (but I do accept you can only cover so much in a single mag).

A great effort, and thanks again for being the conscience of the green movement and asking the questions that must be asked.

Stevie

[by email]

You can't please all the people ...

We mostly get ‘good on you’ type letters to CR. The feedback on the last two editions – environmental racism (cr96) and nanotechnology (cr97) – has been overwhelmingly positive, and the nano edition got 3 times the average number of downloads from the website compared to other editions. Given the relentlessly supportive nature of the current feedback, we thought we'd share some trawlings from those who are less than fans of FoE.... Here's some of our recent favourites (you know what they say, “if you're not annoying someone, you're not doing anything”).

FoE propagandists

In the Victorian Parliament (July 19), the Hon WR Baxter (National Party member for North Eastern Victoria) was working himself up over the ‘favouritism’ of the Bracks’ government:

“I express my concern that this government is again playing favourites in its quest for Green preferences at the coming election. Recently two policy advisers to the Minister for Environment journeyed to the Barmah forest, with a view to meeting with cattlemen, timber-getters and other interest groups. These two women took up with them ... an apparatchik from the Friends of the Earth organisation.

My concern is: why should a propagandist from the Friends of the Earth organisation have the opportunity to put his case and influence these two relatively inexperienced policy advisers, whereas the actual interest groups in the Barmah forest itself had so little time to put their case and have it tested? It is an absolute disgrace that the minister would allow this behaviour by his policy advisers, because it sends a wrong message to the community: that fairness is not being applied.”

(For anyone that knows Jono, the Barmah campaigner in question, “apparatchik” is not normally a word that comes to mind).

The happy planet index

In July, the UK-based New Economics Foundation and FoE-UK launched the Happy Planet report (see http://www.foe.org.au/mr/mr_12_07_06.htm). Some conservative commentators were duly infuriated, here's one great example:

Writing in the Pittsburgh Tribune Review, Dimitri Vassilaros, wrote: “the Happy Planet Index, a new global measure of human well-being and environmental impact, will sadden unemployed satirists of liberalism. This latest self-parody by “progressives” continues to make satire redundant. And the progressive movement that crowned the Republic of Vanuatu as paradise while ranking the U.S. 150 out of 178, farce.

The new economics foundation, a far-left organization in the United Kingdom ..., and the Friends of the Earth had to deconstruct happiness before publishing the rating system.

Dimitri was overwhelmed by complex ideas in the report, like the ecological footprint: which he saw as “progressive-speak for measuring ‘the extent to which the ecological demand of human economies stays within or exceeds the capacity of the biosphere to supply goods and services.’

His response: Huh?” (its really not that complex!). His attitude to Vanuatu is illuminating:

“Vanuatu is a little nothing nation in the middle of nowhere. ... As of 2004, the nation had one television station. This,

say the world's progressives, is heaven on Earth. This also says something about the condescending arrogance of the left since liberals act as if they know what's best for Planet Earth and its inhabitants.

And yet whenever the world's great unwashed had the chance, they did whatever they could to reach, to touch the knob of the golden door of the New Colossus to become Vanuatians, er, um ... Americans.

The flow of immigrants -- legal and illegal -- has yet to slow. In fact it seems greater than ever. Have these mostly uneducated or undereducated aliens no concern about their new homeland's troubling economic footprint?

And if the nonstop foot traffic from every part of the planet into this republic does not make a statement about heaven on Earth, imagine the tens, no, the hundreds of millions of immigrants who would be here tomorrow from China, India, Indonesia and everywhere else except, of course, Vanuatu if the U.S. allowed everyone to enter instead of almost everyone it allows now.

The index is a must read for anyone claiming to be a liberal, leftist, progressive or other euphemism for the hopelessly out of touch with reality. Redefining the abject misery in the top 10 as happiness demands redefining progressives as regressives."

From the Tribune Review, July 28, 2006
http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/opinion/columnists/vassilaros/s_463675.html

Duncan Campbell, writing in the UK Guardian on July 12 was far more positive:

"The innovative global measure of progress, the Happy Planet Index, has been constructed by the New Economics Foundation (Nef) and Friends of the Earth using three factors: life expectancy, human wellbeing and damage done via a country's "environmental footprint".

The United Kingdom does not even make it into the top 100, according to the survey, which has been compiled to draw attention to the fact that it is not necessary to use up the earth's resources to achieve long life and happiness.

Vanuatu comes top because its people are satisfied with their lot, live to nearly 70 and do little damage to the planet. "Don't tell too many people, please," was the response of Marke Lowen of Vanuatu Online, the country's online newspaper, to the news that Vanuatu had topped the poll. "People are generally happy here because they are very satisfied with very little. This is not a consumer-driven society. Life here is about community and family and goodwill to other people. It's a place where you don't worry too much."

Chain Reaction #97 - nanotechnology

Meanwhile, we were awarded a NANOHYPER AWARD for the June Chain Reaction by Prof. D. M. Berube:

"While at the International Risk Governance Council Conference (IRGC) Meeting in Zurich, I met a representative from Friends of the Earth - Australia. She informed me ... that the new issue of CHAIN REACTION ... was dedicated to nanotechnology. Though I haven't given out a NANOHYPER AWARD in some time, this issue of CHAIN REACTION deserves it."

Some highlights from the Professors assessment:

Page 16 - "We propose that a public participation steering group, comprising representatives from research, industry, union and non-government organizations, is established to oversee this programme (meaning all nanotechnology) and to ensure its transparency." AND "Resources should be provided to enable all participants to take part in these processes in a meaningful way." RESPONSE - Huh? (ed note: conservatives seem to say this a lot). Who is on this steering group? Is it international? How does it have jurisdiction over private industry? Is it regulatory? If so, EHS? Or more? I enjoy reading anarchist literature but this is beyond the pale of reason. Resources for ALL participants - who pays? The public? The government which is the public? The industry which would kill the growth associated with employment and health?

Page 18 - "The public may also be exposed to nanoparticles as a result of nanopollution...." HUH? What is this about?

And it goes on and on. Toward the end of the issue we get warnings about globalization and human enhancement.

Page 45 - "Stakeholder groups who will be impacted by nanotechnology (e.g., labour groups, public health organizations, disability rights advocates, civil liberties advocates, consumer organizations, environmental organization, farmers associations, medical groups, specialist and industry organizations) should also be involved... HERE'S THE RUB. Who is not a stakeholder? If everyone is involved, then we have a plan to completely shut down the industry by bureaucratic dampening. This strategy of over-participation isn't fooling anyone. If enough folks get involved nothing happens. Why hide a complete moratorium under the guise of false democratic theory?

Finally, nanotechnology offers the anti-globalization people a wonderful pulpit to resurrect their claims to a decentralized, tribal society where industry is run by collectives. Folks, we did learn a few things about these phenomena. First, tribalism or small barter economies can be very nasty. Second, when socialism is centrally planned most of its promises are short-circuited.

In conclusion, I am beginning to question how well self-reported non-governmental organizations represent anyone but themselves at times. While there are some outstanding exceptions, such as Environmental Defense, Greenpeace, and others, there are too many other groups that are a website and a federal ID number run by a handful of folks overclaiming their representativeness. At other times, there are huge loosely coordinated groups, with members like FOE Australia, who represent a very small number of its members when they advance socialist agendas in international meetings.

Stakeholders cannot include everyone since everyone does not have a stake. Most of the public have more to worry about than science policy and do not care an iota about policy decisions in this area.

[The professor may need to decide if we are tribalist anarchists or centralist socialists but you do get the sense he doesn't entirely agree with us!]

The full posting can be read at: <http://nanohype.blogspot.com/>
For Rye Senjen's report on the conference (Rye works with the FoEA nanotech project), please see: <http://nano.foe.org.au/blog/5>

Letters to CR are welcome: please send to foe@foe.org.au marked 'letter for CR'. Brief is good.

book reviews

RESPONSE ABILITY



Response Ability

Frank Fisher

So many people are relieved to witness the advent of this book *Response Ability*, a selection of writings by Professor Frank Fisher. Frank has been pondering, writing and acting for several decades and we were concerned that so much water had flowed under the bridge and now might be headed to the open sea. How timely to dam the flow and trap in one place so many new ideas.

As a past student and tutor at Monash, I have had the pleasure and challenge of knowing Frank Fisher over the decades. Hundreds of us in Melbourne alone have taken his ideas into action in government, business, community and academic spheres. We have had the pleasure of his frugal and principled living and teaching and have been challenged out of our disciplinary and social comfort zones by his frank and original analysis.. The wider world needs to know of Frank and *Response Ability* and so at my work place, CERES, we are planning to popularise these writings of Frank on the website under the heading –Living Sustainably... Lets be Frank.

As a social constructivist theorist, Frank works to demonstrate that looking after the environment means looking after physical, mental and social well-being rather than just objectifying some other world phenomena like animals and forests. Through writing, projects and campaigns he consistently shows that everyone is capable of transforming their social and mental contexts: to be Response Able for their relationship with the environment. This has not been an easy task for Frank who has had to battle serious illness and serious blockages in academia over most of his working life. Perhaps this is why the book fuses philosophy with action and analysis with concern.

Response Ability covers the following:

- General definitions of responsibility and the social construction of reality

- Environmental science
- Social construction of energy, transport and other environmental issues
- Social construction of illness and disability
- Taking effective action for social change

Using this framework Frank discusses issues such as energy, transport and other environmental concerns; illness and disability; and taking effective action for social change. The thrust of this book is to demonstrate that people can take responsibility in their relationships with their environment in some interesting and transformative ways.

The genuine experiences of Frank guarantee no academic treatise. This is a man who never really recycles as he only produces a pocketful of waste a year; he is a human carbon sink [quickly Alcoa, buy him as an offset] as his cycling /train combinations and his micro energy use over decades have avoided hundreds of tonnes of CO₂ to the atmosphere; he is a philanthropist in his support, financially and organisationally, for so many other groups; he is a closet humourist who incorporated Leunig into many lectures and has now invented the 'Understandascope' at Monash.

I encourage everyone to follow the recommendation of Professor Ian Lowe: 'I welcome this book, which should be on the desk of every thinker and in the shoulder holster of every activist. We should be taking responsibility for our futures; this book, as the title suggests, provides us with *Response Ability*.'

Reviewed by Eric Bottomley, Team Leader-Sustainability Projects, CERES

You're History

Eds. Michelle P. Brown and Richard J. Kelly
Continuum Books. London 2005

This compilation was developed out of the coming together of several forces: the development of the UN Millennium Declaration, the anniversary of Live Aid, the approaching 2005 G8 summit at Gleneagles and Bob Geldof's call for an "Intellectual Live Aid". Geldof wanted activists to elucidate and to explain, to make their case, to intellectualise their actions and to reason their arguments. In his foreword, the former punk star says that this "...powerful book...will not whisper...be discreet or polite". This book is indeed a tirade; against war, genocide, environmental and human destruction, poverty, injustice and greed. These messages must be shouted to nullify the racket induced by profligate consumerism and mainstream culture. The envoys of 'dissent' are too often told to mollify their message. But no-one ever says that to the marketers, who scream at us from all angles. The average punter seems 'happy' to be yelled at

by their TV's, DJ's and their bosses, but not by others. Is it the message, the messenger, or both?

The best thing about a book such as this is the exposure one gets to a diverse range of ideas and thoughts.

It seems slightly unjust to highlight particular contributors to the book, but Simon Counsell's entry is required reading. It focuses on our failure to adequately 'manage' wilderness zones because we tend to exclude those peoples indigenous to these areas, ultimately at the expense of these groups and the land we proclaim to defend. Counsell highlights the ecological relationship between indigenous communities and their environment, and that any 'conservation' effort must involve them. He presents a compelling argument for conservation enmeshed with human rights, justice and equality. Marie-Roger Biloa's article entitled 'Twenty Years with Aids' takes the reader through the utter despair that is Sub-Saharan Aids, its past and its future, yet the reader departs the story with a beautiful, albeit small, sense of lightness and hope.

A number of the essays deal with history; of war, equality, justice and of protest. The book seeks to make us history as well, pointedly asking how history will judge us and our endeavours? The contributors are mostly academics and 'intellectuals', the writing is sharp and accessible, with the words jumping from the pages. The effect is like that of an explosion. Innumerable propositions and ideas scatter from the book, and one is sometimes unsure which to follow.

Geldof concludes in his foreword, "There should be more of this", ...indeed so.

Review by Patrick O'Neill



Inspiration



Bert King

1923 - 2006

I am grateful to Bert's family for the opportunity to speak today as Bert had a great many friends and enjoyed a high level of respect in environmental and anti-nuclear circles. I have been involved in anti-nuclear work for over two decades and this is the first week where Bert has not been an active part of that journey. His work for a sustainable and nuclear free future was a big part of his life and he made a real and important contribution to this work and to our lives.

I started work with Friends of the Earth (FoE) in 1986 and Bert stood out from the crowd from the first. He was older than most, not immediately easy going and had extensive mining and mineral processing industry expertise. This trifecta made Bert a lot different from the big end of town stereotype of 'greenies' as hapless, hopeless and gullible hippies. I was intrigued and from the start Bert was on my radar screen – over the next two decades his blip grew steadily stronger.

In those early days I was struck by Bert's precision - when I saw the scrutiny he would give to proof reading the FoE

newsletter I understood why the Port Pirie smelter never blew up on his watch. I was struck by Bert's practical nature – each week saw fundraising on the agenda with the reminder that “it's all well and good but it's not much point unless you've got a few dollars” and I was struck by his matter of fact gruffness.

In 1988 because of a combination of affairs of the heart and a desire to avoid the continuing self-congratulatory excesses of the bi-centennial year I left Australia to live and work in Europe for a couple of years. FoE's anti-nuclear collective had a farewell during which the fulsome speeches started to sound like I was departing this existence rather than this city. I was starting to squirm until I was saved by Bert's contribution – “Dave's a useful enough young colt but we need to be talking about how we're going to keep this show on the road”.

Bert used to sign off his frequent notes and news clip filled letters with a variety of by lines – The Green Guerrilla, Up the Bulldogs – or most commonly – Bert the Kiwi. Bert was proud of his New Zealand heritage, especially in the areas of that country's approach to indigenous issues, regional relationships and nuclear politics.

One of my favourite images of Bert comes from a story he told about his early days after arriving from across the Tasman to go to school across the Maribyrnong at Williamstown High (“I was a strong, fit young bloke Dave..”). The whistle blows, the Sherrin is bounced and Bert the Kiwi grabs it, tucks it under his arm, puts the other arm out in the classic stop me at your peril pose and sprints from the centre of the ground to finish with a diving flourish between the goalposts. He gets up thinking that Aussies are soft; everyone else thinks that he is mad and a red faced umpie is shouting “holding the bloody ball”.

For me there's a lot of Bert in that story – often running against the tide, following his own set of rules, always with pride in his jumper and never dropping the ball.

Bert might have called himself the Kiwi but he was a true internationalist. His concerns and his activism spanned a planet, not merely a postcode. He had a keen interest in global affairs past and present. He often championed lesser known injustices before they gained the headlines, like support for Cuba, Central American liberation struggles and East Timor or his concern over the legacy of nuclear weapon tests in Kazakhstan and Soviet central Asia.

His personal interests were also broad and he was as comfortable in the Whitten stand at the Western Oval as he was at an exhibition opening at the Counihan gallery.

There is an environmental adage that runs “think globally – act locally” and Bert embodied this approach. He became involved in Friends of the Earth in Port Pirie over concerns about the impact of radioactive seepage from a uranium tailings dam from the former Radium Hill located on the outskirts of town. When he moved to Melbourne in the early 1980's these concerns came with him. Luckily for us so too did his attachment to FoE. Bert was actively involved in FoE's food coop and was never short of a comment, a suggestion, a critique or a hand. He was an unforgiving proof-reader and a very giving provider of specialised expertise and industry insights.

Friends of the Earth is also known as FoE – and this ‘friend or foe’ dichotomy is appropriate for Bert as his politics were not just ‘anti’. In those areas where he was anti then Bert was unapologetically anti. He was anti-nuclear, anti unfettered free trade, anti US militarism and empire – but his politics also had a common, constructive and constant thread of the positive. He was a friend as well as a foe with his collections and aid parcels to Nicaragua, demonstrating solar cookers at festivals in Sydney Rd, sending reminder notes for openings, meetings and rallies and active input to a saner future through his involvement with CERES and many local government initiatives. He was always busy and engaged and Bert far preferred to unite communities than to divide atoms.

Bert's life touched and interacted with many others. He lived with principle and passion – with dignity and decency – he was a true friend of the earth. He lived long and well and he will be missed.

On behalf of people working for a nuclear free and equitable future – from Moreland to Managua – I wish Bert's family comfort, Bert's friends good memories and Bert's unique spirit ease and rest.

Dave Sweeney

Dave is anti nuclear campaigner with the ACF.

This column seeks to acknowledge some of the inspirational people in our movements. Please feel free to send stories for future editions to Chain Reaction.

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National Liaison Officers:

Sam La Rocca (Brisbane):
0424 610 038
sam.larocca@foe.org.au

Natalie Lowrey (Katoomba):
0431 194 083
natalie.lowrey@foe.org.au

Cam Walker (Melbourne):
0419 338 047
cam.walker@foe.org.au

National Liaison Office:
Box 222, Fitzroy, 3065

National website:
<http://www.foe.org.au>

International Liaison Officers:

Josie Lee (Melbourne):
josie.lee@foe.org.au

Damian Sullivan (Melbourne):
damian.sullivan@foe.org.au

National Campaign Reference Group:

Contact point:
Derec Davies, FoE Brisbane
07 3846 5793
office@brisbane.foe.org.au

National Campaigns & Projects:

Climate Justice

– Emma Brindall (Brisbane)
emma.brindall@foe.org.au

Environment and Population project

– Cam Walker (Melbourne)
0419 338 047
cam.walker@foe.org.au

Nanotechnology

– Georgia Miller (Hobart)
0437 979 402
georgia.miller@foe.org.au

Nuclear

– Jim Green (Melbourne)
ph 03 9419 8700, 0417 318368
jim.green@foe.org.au

and Michaela Stubbs (Melbourne)
0429 136 935
michaela.stubbs@foe.org.au

Nuclear Weapons

– John Hallam (Sydney)
nonukes@foesydney.org.au

Trade

– Damian Sullivan (Melbourne)
damian.sullivan@foe.org.au

Transnational Corporations

– Cam Walker
0419 338 047
cam.walker@foe.org.au

Wild Spaces environmental film festival

– wildspaces@foe.org.au
<http://www.wildspaces.foe.org.au>
wildspaces.regionals@foe.org.au

Local Groups:

FoE ADELAIDE

Postal address:
c/o Conservation Centre,
120 Wakefield st, Adelaide, SA, 5000
Office: (08) 8227 1399,
Sophie Green
sophie.green@foe.org.au,
Joel Catchlove - 0403 886 951
joel.catchlove@foe.org.au

FoE BLUE MOUNTAINS

Postal Address:
PO Box 44 Katoomba, NSW, 2780,
Ph: (03) 4782 1181
Email: foebm@riseup.net

BRIDGETOWN GREENBUSHES FRIENDS OF THE FOREST

Postal Address:
PO Box 461, Bridgetown, WA, 6255.
Ph/fax (08) 9761 1176.
Email: bgff@wn.com.au
Website: <http://www.wn.com.au/bgff>

FoE BRISBANE

Postal address:
PO Box 5702, West End, 4101.
Street address:
294 Montague Rd, West End,
Ph. 07 3846 5793, Fax: 07 3846 4791,
Email: office@brisbane.foe.org.au
Website: <http://www.brisbane.foe.org.au>

FoE CENTRAL VICTORIA

Postal address:
C/- Pat Finegan, 11 Koomba St,
Bendigo, Vic, 3550
Ph: (03) 54 444 595
Email: wilbwiz@hotmail.com

FoE KURANDA

Postal address:
Di Horsburgh, Secretary, PO Box 795,
Kuranda, QLD, 4881
Ph/Fax: (02) 4093 8901
Email: dianne.horsburgh@bigpond.com
Website: <http://www.foekuranda.org>

FoE MELBOURNE

Postal address:
PO Box 222, Fitzroy, 3065

Street address:

312 Smith st, Collingwood
Ph: (03) 9419 8700 Fax: (03) 9416 2081
Email: foe@melbourne.foe.org.au
Website: <http://www.melbourne.foe.org.au>

FoE MARYBOROUGH

Postal address:
191 Pallas st, Maryborough, QLD, 4650.
Ph: (07)4123 1895

FoE STAWELL

Postal address:
c/o Rosalind Byass
PO Box 628, Stawell, 3380, VIC
Ph: (03) 5358 1125
Email: rosbyas@netconnect.com.au

Regional Contacts:

Tasmania

Northern Tasmania:

"Shoshin", Lorinna, 7306
Ph/fax: (03) 6363 5171
Email: lorinna@vision.net.au

Southern Tasmania:

Georgia Miller
georgia.miller@foe.org.au

Tas Forests contact:

Carol Williams
Email: cawillia@iinet.net.au

Northern Rivers

Postal address:
PO Box 368, North Lismore, 2480
Ruth Rosenhek
Ph: (02) 66897519
Email: ruthr@ozemail.com.au

Perth

PO Box 37, Maylands, 6009
Tristy Fairfield M: 0411 220 704

Affiliate Members:

FOOD IRRADIATION WATCH

Postal address:
PO Box 5829, West End, Qld. 4101
Email: foodirradiationwatch@yahoo.com.au
Website: foodirradiationinfo.org
Robin Taubenfeld, M: 0411 118 737

PEDAL AUSTRALIA FOR CLEAN ENERGY (PACE)

website: <http://www.pedalaustralia.org.au>

REVERSE GARBAGE

Postal address:
PO Box 5626, West End, QLD, 4101.
Ph: (07) 3844 9744 Fax: (07) 3844 6905
Email: info@reversegarbage.com.au
Website: <http://www.reversegarbage.com.au>



WEALTH WARNING

THE G20 IS COMING TO TOWN!

The 2006 G20 meeting of finance ministers, reserve bank governors and heads of the World Bank and IMF will take place in Melbourne on November 18-19. This will be the most significant gathering in Melbourne of people responsible for pushing corporate-led globalisation, neoliberalism and capitalism since the World Economic Forum in 2000.

MAIN IMAGE: Parkes gold mine, Central Western NSW, where in 1999 massive blasts killed four miners.

Currently under threat from a similar proposed open pit, cyanide leaching gold mine is Lake Cowal located in the heartland of the Wiradjuri Nation. Lake Cowal is NSW's largest natural inland lake. The mine is operated by Barrick Gold, a transnational mining company.

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