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13 THE END OF THE NATURAL WORLD
by Ian Grayson
What kind of future can we expect from Biotechnology

16 ARRESTING THE ARMS RACE
by Jo Valentine
Action in the Nevada Desert as US peace campaigners try to stop the testing of nuclear weapons.

17 THE ANTI-NUCLEAR WARRIOR
by John Dixon-Jenkins
Non-violent terrorism and life in prison. The reasons behind the actions.

18 MOUND SPRINGS
by Ila Marks
The Roxby Downs uranium mine is drawing its water from mound springs in South Australia. The end result, the springs are being destroyed.

19 WHERE THEORIES FAIL
by Jeyaretnam
Nuclear energy cannot work because the very theory upon which it is based is flawed.

20 LAND RIGHTS...
by Judith Wright-McKinney
Mining companies are trying to blame the Aboriginal community for the downfall in the mining industry. In truth it is they that are creating any problems that exist.

21 ANOTHER PARADISE LOST?
by Paul Greco
With the end of the Marcos reign in the Philippines the USA is looking for alternative sites to base their forces. The unspoilt islands of Belau seem to be a possibility.

22 OILS AIN'T OILS
The FOE Soft Energy Action Group looks at the effects of coal to oil technology.

26 DEVELOPMENT, DISARMAMENT AND SURVIVAL
by George Venturini
Whilst half the world starves the super powers spend more and more on weapons and export these to starving countries rather than food.

31 MINE FEVER
by Galavan Thompson
Should FOE get involved in the election process and a ‘Green’ party?

32 RESHAPING AUSTRALIAN POLITICS
by Dr Joe Camilleri
Does the future in politics lay outside the party structure or is it an organised non-party oriented organisation?

CONTENTS
The Year of Shame

1988 should be called the year of shame and those who celebrate the Bicentennial should think of what they are doing. What if we really are done in two hundred years? We forget all those nasty things we don't want to remember. The re-employment of the First Fleet is a sickness event. Do we ever consider what the Aboriginal people must have thought when their country was being invaded? Who were the convicts who were treated like sub-humans on the ships that they came on and what for? Stealing food, clothes etc. Is this how proud we are of our treatment of the Aboriginals?

Foolish! How can people just turn their back on their situation and just say nothing at all? But what do we expect when some environmental groups are joining in the Bicentennial celebrations? These people and groups should feel ashamed of themselves. I feel quite ashamed myself and have opposed it all the way. What I cannot understand is that we can get along without these funds. I think that these groups have a lot to think about and need to come face to face with the issue at hand — sovereignty for the Aboriginal people.

When will the environmental movement wake up in its slumber and come to terms with the situation?

John Renshaw
Canberra ACT

Food irradiation
— A Footnote

There are two points regarding food irradiation which I have not seen raised yet so I thought I had better make them. They have nothing to do with whether the food thereby becomes dangerous for human consumption — they relate to the economic motivations and consequences of extending the shelf-life of foodstuffs and the unhealthiness for doing so.

Food irradiation would lead to greater centralisation and capitalisation of the food retail industry. Since one of the main limiting factors on the size of supermarkets is shelf-life, huge quantities cannot be put out. Extending the shelf-life would allow larger stocks and larger buildings. The humble shelf packer would be made redundant as stores were stocked by one or two workers driving forklifts. The result: more unemployment and larger profits going into fewer hands.

This food is probably bunker food, nuclear war fallout stock! It would probably help prepare public consciousness to facilially accept nuclear war, firstly by softening up the whole radiation issue (begun with the advent of the microchip) and secondly by holding out the carrot of survival.

Justin Moore
Collingwood Vic.

Help in India

In India the environment and conservation of natural resources is still to be taken up seriously. The population pressure and a loose political system have brought havoc in the country. We have only ten per cent of our land under forests though the conservation states that 35 per cent of the land must be under forest cover. Hence we are experiencing droughts and floods all over the place. There are very few pockets of virgin sholas (tropical rain forests) in our hills. Most of the sholas were and are being cleared for commercial plantations. I am a member of a local conservation group and we are trying to save these remaining forests. But I am not sure how long we will last against the big companies like Swedish Match-Winmo and for pulp and paper like Viscose fibre. If you have access to any data on ecological monocultures like rubber, effect on land, soil fertility and climate, kindly send me the same. India is still committed to develop nukes and is the source that is seen to convert the big companies like Swedish Match-Winmo into rubber and pulp and paper like Viscose fibre. You have read some brief pieces on radiation issues (begun with the advent of the microchip) and secondly by holding out the carrot of survival.

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Tamil Nadu, India

An Answer and a Question

‘Why is the British Government so keen to suppress Peter Wright’s memoirs?’ asks John Moore in his review of Richard Hall’s Spy’s Revenge (CR46). ‘Can we only speculate?’

My speculation is, however, quite baseless. The Atlantist hegemony that has dominated Europe for the past forty years, effectively conscripting its nations into the service of the US as proxies for its foreign policy goals, has weakened the British bureaucratic and military establishment almost indolently to its American counterpart. Only if the US withdraws from Western Europe — as it shows signs of doing — would such a conspiracy be broken. In that case, the British establishment is more likely to seek closer ties with its counterparts in the Commonwealth to construct an alternate nuclear security system as an option of signs of doing. But an Anglo-Soviet rapprochement of the kind envisaged by Justin Moore, welcome though it may be, is not likely to happen.

The reason for Thatcher’s attempt to suppress Wright’s book is not that it will be an embarrassment to her, but that it reveals the way a group of rogue operatives in MI5 and MI6 attempted to destabilise the Labour Government and for that reason; Harold Wilson and James Callaghan during the 1970s — tapping machines, surveillance, planting evidence, manufacturing, the whole gamut of surveillance and dirty tricks methods — very often with the connivance of the senior civil servants involved. In itself, this was not historical interest, but what makes it damaging for Mrs. Thatcher is that the information obtained was fed straight to the Conservative Party via her friend the late Airey Neave MP. If it can be shown that the same opposition worked with supposedly impartial security services to violate the Constitution, the Tories will obviously suffer colossal political harm.

What I can’t understand is that they are trying to save the same information may be emerging from another route in any case. Two former army officers who served in Northern Ireland in the 1930s, Fred Holroyd and Collin Wallace, worked for a time in a ‘black propaganda’ office established there by MI5 and MI6 to undermine the Wilson/Callaghan initiatives on power-sharing and cooperation with the Irish Republic — a sideline to Wright’s wider destabilisation campaign.

But a particular interest in their work was taken by the very same Airey Neave, then the opposition spokesman on Northern Ireland.

Vigorously pursuing Peter Wright, the Government seems to have overlooked the Holroyd/Wallace allegations, which have been surfaced in small circulation magazines for the last couple of years but are now being taken seriously by the British national press in particular. The Observer of 5 July 1987 proved that the paper and ink used by Wallace for his anti-Wilson forgeries dated before 1976 and that Harold Wilson has been using these inventions. At the very least, this helps substantiate Wright’s own story: at best it steps up the pressure for the Full-Scale inquiry Mrs. Thatcher continues to resist. Because such an inquiry has only one outcome: Mrs. Neave to destroy her completely.

Joseph Nicholson
London UK

PS. I’m afraid I couldn’t make head or tail out of Eric Mack’s letter about John Dixon-Jenkins (Letters CR50). Wouldn’t it have been better for Mack to explain precisely what ‘threats’ Dixon-Jenkins made, and what he was charged with, before launching into a tirade about our failing to campaign against him allegedly unjust imprisonment.

Peter Williamson
Maryborough Vic.

We hope to have some information about this very topic in our next issues.

AIDS

Thank you for publishing such a thought provoking and informative article about AIDS in your latest issue (Kenton Penley: ‘We can only speculate’). We have an opportunity to clarify one point! The author, Mr Penley, who has described himself as an ‘AIDS counsellor’, has for sometime been associated with the Auckland Council of South Australia in important areas of work. The opinions expressed in the article referred to, however, are those of Mr Penley himself and do not necessarily reflect those of the AIDS Council of South Australia.

Edward Dudzinski
Chair, AIDS Council of SA

Ted Trainer
Replies

I think Bren and Lois (Letters CR50) are illustrating one of the most encouraging things happening now, which my ‘Getting Red and Green Together’ article was to support. I am referring to the incredible focus on the need for fundamental change to a more simple and self...
LETTERS

sufficient society before we can solve the big problems facing the growth and greed society.

Brexit calls for synthesis of Marxist analysis and feminist perspectives, but I would stress that the first element in the mix must be one that many Marxists still do not recognize — the importance of simplicity. The good, sustainable society cannot be an affluent one. There is absolutely no chance of all people in the world rising to the present Australian level of per capita resource and energy use. Lois is rightly concerned about the money system but I see that as just one more absurd consequence of a capitalist economy. There is ceaseless pressure to reinvest ever-accumulating wealth and it is now very difficult to find sufficient profitable ventures. As a result we now have vast quantities of speculative investment plumping on any casino in sight. Mr. Keating has recently leased to Boeing and opened the Australian door to them, driving one of the last nails into the coffin of our capacity to contain our capacity to run our own economy for our benefit. In a sane world and all other economic phenomena would be organised within small local regions with little flow between them, let alone between nations. The savings of the people in Fairfield should be mainly used to enrich the quality of life in Fairfield, but at present they are probably being used by Boeing to make more bombs. It is the need of late capitalism for maximum global success and economic integration that produces absurdities like our financial casino and the coexistence of poverty, wealth, unmet needs and unemployment in Fairfield. This connects with Lois’ point about the Democrats. It is not good enough for them to make nice but vague statements about being for democracy and a sustainable society without spelling out the fact that to achieve such goals we must abandon affluence, growth and therefore capitalism (and lots of other nasty things like big state socialism). Of course, if the Democrats said this clearly hardly anyone would vote for them. And this gives us the clue for where to put our efforts, a clue which I hope the current movement for a new political force in Australia will follow. As I see it by far the most important thing we should be doing is grinding away at the long and slow process of raising a public awareness about the fact that this is not a sustainable society and that only eventual change to a more simple, self-sufficient and co-operative one can solve our problems. Unfortunately, at present most of the energy of socially concerned activists seems to be going not into this purpose but into fighting specific noble causes, such as stopping woodchopping, and it is quite conceivable that even when such campaigns succeed they make no contribution to helping people realise that fundamental social change is needed. My plea is not that we should reduce our efforts on these campaigns (that we should see them as platforms which give us ideal opportunities to work on for the most important task, that of getting the majority of Australians to see that transition to a sustainable society is needed.

Ted Trainer Sydney NSW

Another Reply... to Senator Bolkus

I have the greatest respect for Senator Bolkus and did not intend my comments to be an attack on him personally. My comments were just the introduction to further musings on the proposals for the ALP policy be adopted but also that the candidates elected will adhere to the policy. In South Australia this means not only the control of sub-branches, but also of the delegates to the State Conference and the preselection of appropriate candidates. This is a major undertaking, and it is not surprising that some activists have decided that it is more productive to work towards the election of a new ALP to form their own party (e.g. Joe Camilleri). Another question is whether the ALP can be considered to be a moderate, liberal or (at best) a radical, but few could claim that as the present ALP. Where was the courage to stand for a new kind of Australia when they were under attack from the AMIC and the New Right? Subsumed to the policy be adopted but also that the candidates elected will adhere to the policy. In South Australia this means not only the control of sub-branches, but also of the delegates to the State Conference and the preselection of appropriate candidates. This is a major undertaking, and it is not surprising that some activists have decided that it is more productive to work towards the election of a new ALP to form their own party (e.g. Joe Camilleri). Another question is whether the ALP can be considered to be a moderate, liberal or (at best) a radical, but few could claim that as the present ALP. Where was the courage to stand for a new kind of Australia when they were under attack from the AMIC and the New Right? Subsumed to the

continued on page 47

EARTH NEWS

Chain Reaction 5

Rainforest traded for debt

Bolivia has agreed to protect millions of hectares of tropical rainforest in the Amazon Basin in return for a reduction of its foreign debt. The agreement involved the bank Citicorp purchasing outstanding Bolivian debt at a discounted market price and selling it Conservation International, an ecological organisation.

Conservation International then took the note which is valued at $400,000,000, over to the Bolivian Government which then agreed to set aside and protect 1.5 million hectares in the northern part of the country.

The agreement seeks to deal simultaneously with two critical and interrelated global problems: the huge debt pressing down on many developing countries and the rapid destruction of tropical rainforest.

Government is selling its 35.2 per cent holding in BP shares from October this year. Photo by Helen Toms

Canadain pushes food irradiation

Canada is involved in projects to provide food irradiation units to some Third World countries even though the government has not sanctioned the widespread use of the controersial technology on foods consumed by Canadians.

Canada has approved use of irradiation only to inhibit sprouting of potatoes and onions and to de-infest wheat and flour.

Nevertheless the External Relations Minister recently signed agreements under which Canada will provide Thailand with a semi-commercial and multi-purpose food irradiation.

Source: Consumer Currents

Cadmium ban

Officials from the EEC are seeking to ban cadmium pigments from paints that are 'designed to come into contact with humans'. They say that in several European countries levels of cadmium, a toxic heavy metal, exceed those considered tolerable by the World Health Commission is also keen to enter Europe in phosphate fertilisers imported from the Third World.

Source: New Scientist

Source: Sydney Morning Herald

 britain's biggest share of nuclear business

On the back of British Greenham women in protest at BP's role in the nuclear fuel cycle, BP is one of the major backers of the giant Downie Downs uranium mine at Olympic Dam in South Australia. The British

Source: Washington Post

XS Widowmaker

The US Air Force, already struggling with delays in the deployment of its highly-scientific MX strategic nuclear missiles, has decided to suspend all MX flight tests and empanel a special study group to resolve new questions about the missiles' accuracy.

Source: Washington Post

4 Chain Reaction
Brazil's nuclear test site

Brazil plans to turn a remote rainforest into an underground nuclear test site and storage dump for radioactive waste from the country's nuclear power industry. Already the Brazilian Government has built facilities for the test site in the Xachirino mountain region. Since 1983 the military has blocked off a 100 kilometer stretch of highway and introduced tight security over more than 40,000 square kilometres of land adjacent to the Xachirino air base. In July last, Brazil finished building a well over 300 metres deep. The plans will be finalised by 1991. Survival International, an advocate for the protection and rights of indigenous people, claims that 8000 forest Indians live within a 600 kilometre radius of the site. The area is also inhabited by farmers and mineral explorers.

Source: Not Man Apart

Recycling a necessity

Recycling is now compulsory in New Jersey. In an effort to cut non-industrial garbage by 25 per cent in the next two years legislation passed in April requires households and many businesses to sort at least three of four materials — glass, aluminium, paper or plastics. As the State’s ten remaining tips fill up rapidly with the 17 million tonnes of non-industrial garbage thrown out every year, Governor Thomas Keane warned that New Jersey could soon 'choke' on its own garbage.

Source: Not Man Apart

Rainforest or hamburgers

In the last thirty years, Central America has lost almost two-thirds of its rainforests to cattle ranching. The forest soils are thin and quickly overgrazed and often within five to ten years the ranchers have to abandon the deforested areas and move on to destroy new part of the forest. Most of the beef is exported for North American hamburgers.

Source: Panos

Don't visit Kakadu

The increasing popularity of visiting wilder regions such as Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory is having an effect on the regions in question. The NT Government wishes to build an airport at Kakadu to accommodate the 170 per cent increase in visitors to the park. More than 200,000 are expected to venture to Kakadu over the next twelve months. Kakadu is controlled by the Aboriginal Land Trust and the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service (a Federal body, most National Parks are run by State National Park Services). For most disgruntled at the powers that oppress them. The latest Indian elephant uprisings include the stampeding of a logging company boss near Sungai Besar, Malaysia; the stampeding of nine villages in northern Sumatra, Indonesia; and the crushing of 63 houses in southern Sumatra. The Malaysian uprising occurred when the timber executive and three others entered wild elephant territory. A herd charged them, allowing the less guilty three to escape but stamping the boss into the dust in disgust. One Indonesian inscription occurred when oil company helicopters and explosions so enraged a herd of forty that they charged through an electric fence out of their nature reserve and ran amok through villages, scattering (but not hurting) residents and crushing buildings.

Source: Earth First

Nuclear medicine

Brazilian Police have indicted three doctors who own an abandoned radiation therapy unit. All began in September this year when scavengers found a low-encased capsule containing Cesium-137 in a partly demolished medical clinic. They sold it to a scrap metal yard for $439. The owner of the yard then smashed the container to reveal a glowing powder. Residents rubbed the powder over their bodies and the yard owner’s six year old niece ate some. Now 243 people have been contaminated, forty of whom are in hospital, ten in a critical condition. A total of 24,000 people have been screened for contamination officials from Brazil’s Nuclear Energy Commission have begun plastering over the contaminated areas in the city of Goiania in central Brazil. Several residential areas have been sealed off and evacuated, sports events and congresses due to take place there have been cancelled. It will be 30 to 50 years before all traces of the contamination have gone.

Source: The Age

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Source: Not Man Apart

Toxic dinners

Food is the major non-occupational exposure pathway for humans to persistent toxic chemicals. Dr Kate Davies, a chemist at the US Department of Public Health, reached this conclusion based on analyses of food samples from Toronto food markets and numerous other studies of human exposure to contaminants. Dr Davies determined that 86 per cent of non-occupational exposure comes from food; 11 per cent from drinking water and 3.5 per cent from breathing air.

Calculations based on average dietary intakes suggest that the average annual intake of selected contaminants from food would be around 36.5 mg of PCB's, 5.6 mg of all organochlorines and 0.2 mg of dioxins and dioxefuran. Almost one third of the organochlorines and PCB's are taken in from eggs and meat; milk and leaf vegetables are responsible for another 20 per cent. Fruits are by far the largest source of dioxins and dibenzofurans, over two thirds.

Source: Infotext

Food irradiation

The European Economic Community (EEC) has accepted recommendations made by the European Parliament to restrict importation of all irradiated food products. The decision could severely restrict Australian food imports if irradiation goes ahead in this country.

Source: Greenpeace

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Source: Greenpeace
An eye on Roxby

A Uranium Information Coordinator (UIC) is to be employed to monitor the mining of the world's largest uranium deposit. The UIC will monitor accidents and breaches of regulations and provide this information to the public. Has the Government decided to look out for the environment or has the mining company had an attack of the guilt? Neither. The position is being funded by concerned individuals (like yourself) and will be accountable to a steering collective consisting of a broad range of environmental and political groups and trade unions. And it will be funded through the donations of concerned individuals (like yourself). If you would like more information you can contact The South Australian Uranium Information Fund, 24 Rankine Road, Torrensville 5031

Return of the milk bottles

The milk corporations in three West German cities have started selling full cream milk in refillable glass bottles. These new refillable deposit bottles are being advertised as non-polluting but the milk carton producers who stand to lose business if the bottles become popular claim that the aluminium bottle tops will cause pollution and the milk will turn sour. The bottled milk is 35 per cent dearer than the milk in cartons.

Waste below 'regulatory concern'

The United States Nuclear Regulatory Committee (NRC) has proposed new regulations that would effectively deregulate the disposal of radioactive wastes which the NRC considers 'below regulatory concern', allowing it to be disposed along with regular garbage.

US Boycotts UN disarmament conference

The US boycotted the 128 country UN Conference on Disarmament and Development held in New York during September 1987. All other Western countries participated in the three week conference which examined the link between military spending and spending for economic development. Third World diplomats who initiated the conference hope that cash saved by disarmament agreements could be used to finance Third World development.

Source: The Guardian

Our common future

The change needed in our relationship to the environment is going to require a revolution as daring as the ones against slavery and colonialism, and as vigorous as the ones for workers' rights, women's rights and human rights. To realise our common future we will need some uncommon action. It is not just international economic orders that have to be changed. More so, it is national economic orders that have to change because so much of global misery is rooted in a poverty of vision and action, and an abundance of corruption and violence at national/state level.

Anner Fazlul, speaking at the Nordic Conference on Environment and Development, Sweden 1987

Source: Consumer Corvette

Tribal blockade halts logging in Sarawak

We will soon be testing new 'Supercards' which will not only include debit and credit facilities but may have other features such as a calculator, a digital clock, security access to buildings — even personal medical information. Despite evidence that consumers are having trouble with plastic money, financial institutions are determined that it is here to stay. Meanwhile, little is being done to educate consumers of the dangers. Australia's consumer debt rose to $20.714 billion in 1985 and is rising.

Source: Consumer Views

Supercard

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Source: Consumer Views
FRIENDS OF THE EARTH GROUPS

FOE Collingwood becomes FOE Fitzroy

Friends of the Earth (Collingwood) and the Organic Fruit and Vegetable Co-operative are now joint lessees of a building in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, in a move which promises much for the environment movement and for people who enjoy organic fruit and vegetables. The building is emerging as a focus for much activity, combining campaign offices with ecologically aware businesses and includes a venue space which has already been used for an art exhibition, parties and discussion nights.

The sale in late 1986 of the Smith Street Collingwood building which FOE had leased since 1978 came at a time when many people at FOE had been discussing moving to a better location. They began sharing premises with the Organic Fruit and Vegetable Co-operative, and expanding to give a number of new campaigns a bit of room. The large rent increase proposed by the new owner gave FOE, the Organic Fruit and Vegetable Co-op, the Anti-Uranium Collective, the Food Irradiation Group and the Hazardous Chemicals Campaign much activity, combining campaign offices and discussing moving to a better location. The large rent increase proposed by the new owner gave FOE, the Organic Fruit and Vegetable Co-op, the Anti-Uranium Collective, the Food Irradiation Group and the Hazardous Chemicals Campaign much activity, combining campaign offices and discussing moving to a better location.

We decided in early 1987 on a great building at 222 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, started renovations in July after an Informal Party on election night, and moved there in mid August. Our new home comfortably accommodates all of the FOE Campaigns, the FOE Bookshop, the FOE Dry Foods Co-op, the Organic Fruit and Vegetable Co-operative, Chain Reaction, the Alternative Technology Association, the Anti-Bases Campaign, the Food Irradiation Group and the Hazardous Chemicals Campaign. The building is emerging as a focus for much activity, combining campaign offices with ecologically aware businesses and includes a venue space which has already been used for an art exhibition, parties and discussion nights.

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Investment in biotechnology runs into billions of dollars and now investors are pushing for their returns. To obtain these, agribusinesses plan to create and market strains of genetically engineered bacteria for use on the world's food crops. These strains do not exist in nature and could well wreak havoc on the environment. Tropical rainforests are under specific threat. In June 1987 guidelines were sent to research groups around Australia concerning the release of genetically altered bacteria. Australia, one of the world's major food exporting countries, released its own first batch of artificial bacteria that same month. Ian Grayson reports on this new technology and some possible consequences.

The first authorised release of a genetically altered organism into the environment took place on 24 April 1987 in California when a small field of strawberries was sprayed with a product named 'Frostban' by scientists from Agricultural Genetic Services (AGS). Frostban, it is claimed, can retard the formation of frost on food crops until temperatures drop to around minus -5 degrees Celsius.

The testing of Frostban, or ice-minus bacteria, aroused much opposition. Environmental groups challenged the tests in the courts and managed to delay the release for a staggering four years. During this time AGS carried out a secret, unauthorised outdoor test on the roof of its building. The public outcry that followed its discovery forced the company to move to another location. This same company is now negotiating with the Victorian State Government to test there. When the US courts finally gave permission the test patch was sabotaged, the plants being ripped out of the ground. The spraying went ahead however with increased security including barbed wire fences and floodlights.

AGS proclaimed the test a success, claiming that their genetically altered organisms did not spread to neighbouring plants. But spraying is, by its very nature, a random release — so how can such a claim be proved? The spread of such organisms is a major environmental concern and such a statement can only be seen as public relations of the worst kind.

Since this release another has been carried out in California on a small plot of potatoes. Tests have now moved to the southern hemisphere and the world's third outdoor release took place at the Waite Agricultural Research Institute in Adelaide on 15 June 1987. Nancy Mills, Chair of the Recombinant DNA Monitoring Committee, claims that the bacteria is only gene deleted and that 'there is no novel information being put into the system'. Such rationalisations are reminiscent of the arguments put forward by the nuclear industry and the food irradiation lobby. It is the commercial patentability of genetically altered organisms that makes the technology so attractive to corporations. The same arguments were used by AGS for...
Frostban. On the one hand they claim patent rights for their artificial organisms while on the other they claim that it is perfectly safe and really nothing new. Such double talk only hinders rational debate.

Biotech on the Land

At first glance many people may welcome the introduction of this new type of technology, after all, frost, disease and injury caused by pesticides. More often than not workers are denied protective clothing and the dangerous nature of the chemicals is not stated on the labelling. The profit motive overrides everything.

Under such a scenario the claims about the benefits of biotechnology should not be believed or at least regarded with a healthy cynicism.

A biotechnology lobby is now where cotton, rice, peanuts, sorghum, millet and a host of other crops are grown in the United States. These forests once covered more of the earth's surface than the tropical rainforests. Where dry forest once stood is now where cotton, rice, peanuts, sorghum, millet and a host of other tropical crops grow. According to Daniel Junge, a biologist from the University of Pennsylvania, in a letter to the journal Science, 5 June 1987.

"Within one to three decades organisms modified through genetic engineering will be capable of making agriculture profitable at any time to the public. This 'non-visibility' of rainforest land is the single most powerful conservation force. Wherever land can be converted to agriculture, wilderness has disappeared.

That such misleading arguments can be presented in prestigious scientific journals is a clear indication of the power of the biotechnology lobby. Studies show quite clearly that this is a false and expedient assumption. The size of a species source pool can determine whether or not it will proliferate or spread. The larger the pool, the greater the chance. In a few years' time, if the biotechnology industry has its way, the source pool will be large and will give manufacturers a stranglehold over all the fertile regions of the world.

The patentability of organisms which do not exist in nature has resulted in a flood of research companies now queuing up for authorization to use and market their strains. In the USA for example, Biotechica International have applied to field test three genetically altered strains of the bacterium Rhizobium meliloti said to increase nitrogen uptake in alfalfa sprouts improving yields up to 15 per cent.

In many cases the companies have their marketing campaigns all worked out and ready to go. Such corporate pressure will inevitably open the flood gates for this dangerous and unproven technology as it has for many other industries. As history clearly shows, once a new industry becomes established it is much more difficult to get rid of no matter how dangerous it is – witness the entrenchment of nuclear power even after Chernobyl.

Goodbye Rainforest

Apart from the risk of ecological disaster there is another indirect but unavoidable threat – the threat to the world's remaining rainforests.

These still exist because humanity is not yet capable of converting them to profitable agriculture. This 'non-visibility' of rainforest land is the single most powerful conservation force. Wherever land can be converted to agriculture, wilderness has disappeared.

This can be easily seen in the case of the tropical dry forests which are now almost obliterated except for a small area covering parts of Nicaragua and Costa Rica. These forests once covered more of the earth's surface than the tropical rainforests. Where dry forest once stood is now where cotton, rice, peanuts, sorghum, millet and a host of other tropical crops grow. According to Daniel Junge, a biologist from the University of Pennsylvania, in a letter to the journal Science, 5 June 1987.

"Within one to three decades organisms modified through genetic engineering will be capable of making agriculture profitable on virtually any tropical land surface. The power to finally obliterate the wildlands that have always been an integral part of our traditional lives has finally appeared and is undergoing intense development.

The company claims that there are advantages from testing in the Southern Hemisphere because, they claim, it takes six months rather than twelve halving the time it takes to get a product to market.

However it is clear that opposition in California to testing is strong and has successfully delayed company research.

Ian Grayson is an activist living in Adelaide.

The developers of Frostban, are planning to test their products here soon. They are negotiating with Danatech, a company owned by the Victorian Government, to speed the introduction of biotechnology into the Australian food industry.

The company claims that there are advantages from testing in the Southern Hemisphere because tests can be completed in six months rather than twelve halving the time it takes to get a product to market.
participated in. Demonstrators went across the line to be arrested. Against deployment of the eighth Trident missile, violent civil disobedience. The first was at Ground Zero Bangor, near Seattle, on the 20th anniversary of the Catholic Bishops’ statement on nuclear weapons. One of the bishops, Archbishop Hunthausen, spoke at a devotional rally which preceded the action. It coincided with the fourth annual Mothers’ Day action at the Nevada test site. The action was of self-defense against non-violent resistance that wasn’t courteous.

It was also a carefully organised and well disciplined action. Only those trained in non-violence were included in the civil disobedience. Others formed supportive affinity groups for all arrestees. Everyone was reminded of the principles of non-violence.

Obviously a great deal of liaising had taken place among the ‘authorities’. Mutual respect was evident — the authorities would look rather foolish responding to gentleness and principled protesters with behaviour that wasn’t courteous.

Many of the same themes were evident at a Mother’s Day action at the Nevada test site. Because of the desert heat, the action began at dawn with the erection of tents and support facilities. Three thousand people gathered to commemorate Mothers’ Day as a peace day, as it was intended when it was declared in 1870. An American woman wrote a poem to the effect that women do not bear children to kill other mothers’ children. A Western Shoshone Indian woman invited us all to bear witness to the land considered by that tribe to be still theirs. The crowd received its training in non-violence were included in the civil disobedience. Nearly 2,000 people arrived on the land. A Western Shoshone Indian woman invited us all to take a number of people hostage in Bendigo prison where he was being held. Here, Dixon-Jenkins explains the reasoning behind his actions.

I wish to unambiguously state my position, leaving no doubt as to where I stand. I say that the use of the drastic tactics of terrorism can be legally justified as a means to put an end to the steadily dire and possibly imminent nuclear threat. Given the insane conditions created by the nuclear threat, which must be introduced into human decision making, the concept of legal justification has expanded beyond all legal boundaries. The logic of the situation dictates that there is virtually no act, no matter how terrible, which would not be legally justified if it could be used to put an end to the nuclear threat; a threat which, unless stopped, will destroy all life on our planet.

When resorting to such extreme measures there is the compelling obligation to take the least harmful course of action that can successfully achieve that goal, ending the nuclear threat. Happily, as it turns out, there is a course of action, admittedly radical, which, through large scale, though non-violent, social disruption, can bring a quick end to this terrible nuclear threat. It is to this end that I propose, and have taken public action in accord with, the tactics of non-violent terrorism.

Government leaders quickly realised there was no way to argue against the logic which supports this proposition. It was for this reason that government authorities denied me the opportunity to present my defence to a jury. It became immediately clear that a jury, upon being allowed to hear and consider the legal justifications for my actions, would find me guilty of no crime. Government officials have been willing to disregard the most basic tenets of justice in order to ensure that the people do not have a chance to hear and judge for themselves whether my actions, directed to bringing about the end to the nuclear threat, were legally justified in the eyes of society.

The ‘danger’, seen so clearly by those who wield power, is that the successful defence of my actions would not only publicise vital arguments for peace and disarmament, it would also establish a landmark precedent of law. The existence of such a precedent, allowing legal justification for action taken by workers for necessary social change, establishes a principle of immense importance for activists struggling in the future as a means to bring an end to the nuclear threat; a threat which, unless stopped, will destroy all life on our planet.

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John Dixon-Jenkins is presently serving a six year sentence for charges relating to a series of bomb hoaxes in 1984 which involved the planting of fifteen imitation bombs. The Crown alleged that his acts caused ‘feare and disruption’. Dixon-Jenkins claimed the defence of necessity (which was not allowed to present), that his actions were of self-defense against the nuclear insanity going on in the world. More recently, in an attempt to make public prison conditions, he took a number of people hostage in Bendigo prison where he was being held. Here, Dixon-Jenkins explains the reasoning behind his actions.

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All of us serving prison sentences are being punished by the government for our actions. Who gave the government the right to punish anybody? I certainly never gave the government the right to punish me. I resent the government punishing me so much that sometimes I feel like I can't stand it. If the government thinks punishing me will result in me feeling sorry for my actions and will 'reform' me they are indeed foolish. Being punished angers me; I want to escape. I want to strike back. I'm sure I'm not the only one who feels like that.

Perhaps the government will consider such an attitude to be wrong thinking, but what can they expect? There has been lots of psychological research into the effects of meaningless existence, suffering, the harm and sadness its cruel punishing to pass off the brutal exercise of power. Any government which sincerely believes people can behave positively which have any success in reducing the crime rate of repeat offenders. For myself, I am perfectly willing to reform, but no matter how willing I am I cannot reform so long as the government maintains its insane and cruel punishment. I often wonder if governments actually want to reduce the crime rate. Crime provides the ideal opportunity and justification for governments to increase their authoritarian and totalitarian control over the individual. The police, the courts, and those running the prisons are the lackeys of the rich and powerful, serving their selfish needs at the expense of those who have so little.

While satisfying its appetite for revenge the government cares nothing for the wrongs perpetrated against those of us caught in its unfolding grasp. The government steals important years from our lives, forcing us to live a boring, meaningless existence, suffering emotional and occasionally physical indignities at the hands of prison authorities. As we are not cared about, neither does the government care about the harm and sadness its cruel punishment brings greater harm to society. I often wonder if governments actually want to reduce the crime rate. Crime provides the ideal opportunity and justification for governments to increase their authoritarian and totalitarian control over the individual. The police, the courts, and those running the prisons are the lackeys of the rich and powerful, serving their selfish needs at the expense of those who have so little.

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the Roxby bores. Venable and Beatrice
Springs are estimated to have a 100 per
cent reduction in the aquifer water
recharge rate per year. RMS do not have a very good record in their treatment and maintenance of the
springs. At a site, identified by the
Department of Mines and Energy as
being some 500 metres from a spring
complex known as Gosse's Springs,
during the drilling of Bore MB 1, very
high water pressures were met and they
were unable to control the flow. The
drilling was abandoned. Pressure
cementing was unsuccessful and the
road has also been built up over salt flats, creating mud traps for
cattle and local fauna. A test bore has
been fenced in close proximity to the
ruins of buildings that housed Aboriginal,
European and Afghan communities and
close to large Aboriginal meeting places
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Australia. Unique plants have been
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at a particular spring have been potted,
moved to other springs and hidden from
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the permission of the Arabanna people or
the owners of Finnis Station who these
springs lie.

RMS, in an environmental impact study
found that there were over 25
springs in the wellfield area likely to be
affected by the pumping of 33 ML per day
from their bores. Venable and Beatrice
Springs are estimated to have a 100 per
cent reduction in the aquifer water
recharge rate per year. RMS in their draft Environmental
Impact Statement state that ‘...if this
resource were to be developed to its full
potential, the flow rates of existing bores
and springs would be progressively diminished ...’ and that proper
management of the basin is required to maintain ‘...levels sufficient to sustain
existing users’. Further, that 150 ML per
day is wasted from bore discharge. Without establishing who is responsible for ‘proper management’ of the basin,
apart from stating that the South
Australian Department of Mines and
Energy commenced a bore rehabilitation
program in 1978, RMS use the wastage argument to support their claim to 33 ML per
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springs. At a site, identified by the
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springs lie.

When we visited the area in June
members of the Arabanna community and
local environmentalists were most
concerned with the reduced flow at many
springs. During regular visits to the
various springs they have observed less
surface water, dying reeds and grasses
and less energetic flow at the springs
sources.

RMS have undertaken to ensure that
existing users of the water are not
disadvantaged. This undertaking does not
satisfy the Arabanna community or local
conservationists. The Mound Springs are
more than just watering holes. They are
unique ecosystems supporting rare flora
and fauna, they are places of significance
to the traditional owners, they are places
of beauty and wonder that offer water to
animals and people in an otherwise dry
land and they have historical links for
Europeans and Aborigines. The springs
have a tourist and educational potential
that the traditional owners may wish to
promote. Spring destruction and reduced
flow can only lead to further
desertification of the area.

A further concern is the fact that,
although RMS have an obligation to
monitor the wellfields and report to the
State Government, they are under no
obligation to make their findings public.
Nor is their monitoring supervised by an
independent body. The RMS Draft
Environmental Impact Statement states
that insufficient data are currently
available to accurately assess the impact
of the Roxby bores on the Mound springs.

I wish to thank Benny, John, Saul and Reg
Dodd for their assistance and encouragement in the production of this
article. I also wish to recognise and pay
tribute to Kerry Martin who died tragically on Friday 11 September.

Ila Marks is a member of the FOE Flinders
Anti-Uranium Collective.
Until recently most people would never have heard of the Belau (Palau). Nut now events there have made front page news. This tiny Pacific republic is engaged in a full scale battle with US military interests. Paul Greco reports.

Belau is an archipelago of 343 islands 800 kilometers east of the Philippines with a population of 15,000. Since 1947 it has been a United Nations Strategic Trust Territory administered by the United States whose responsibility it was to prepare the islands for economic and political independence. However since this time the once self reliant non-cash system has been deliberately transformed into an economy almost entirely dependent on US dollars. The people are addicted to imported goods, cars, VCRs, canned food and beer. Fifty per cent of the work force is employed by Government departments which are 90 per cent funded by the US.

The purpose of the US policy is to ensure the cooperation of Belau with US military aspirations. The 'Colonial Administrator' has determined that no agreement with Belau would in any way constrain the Military. There was a problem in 1979 when Belau, in preparation for independence, became the first country to draft a nuclear free constitution. This prohibited the use, testing, storage or disposal of 'harmful substances'—nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and nuclear reactors and waste. Obviously this was going to severely constrain the Military! Although 92 per cent of Belaus approved their new constitution the US declared it invalid and drew up another without nuclear free clauses. This was rejected by 70 per cent. The 'Nuclear Free Constitution' was redrafted and approved by 78 per cent. It also required a 75 per cent vote for any further amendments to the nuclear clauses, an implementation of the traditional process of consensus.

The constitution has remained a source of enormous conflict as the US has tried to seek approval for the 'Compact of Free Association'. Under this agreement Belau receives a $US1.4 Billion package. The US buys the right to operate nuclear capable or propelled vessels. It also gains access to virtually all land it wishes for military purposes as well as denying Belau any action incompatible with US defence interests. The compact provides for the building of an air and naval base and a jungle warfare training area. Belau's economic zone is also then limited to twelve miles (twenty kilometres) instead of the current 200 (320 kilometres). The US military sees the Western Pacific as vital to its security interests. In recent years Belau has become even more important because of the unstable situation in the Philippines. It may well provide an alternative to the Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Base. For this reason the US are determined to win Belau. It also fears that the nuclear free status would encourage other friends to request the same privilege. Finally, Belau's deep water harbour at Malakal is very attractive for use as a Trident Submarine base.

Whilst opposition to the Compact is strong among traditional leaders and grass roots groups the President and younger political leaders are pro-US. The
President Salli is facing several suits charging him with misappropriation of funds. He greatly desires the Compact money to strengthen his hold on the Government and finance expensive investments negotiated with foreign companies.

In the last four years there have been five referenda on the Compact. In each of the referenda, the necessary 75 per cent vote has never been obtained.

The current situation began in June this year when the eighth Compact vote occurred. As usual the 75 per cent approval was not obtained. Some argue that it was not even expected and that the purpose of the referendum was to orchestrate a crisis. None the less we can see a campaign of intimidation. Prior to the vote there were water and power cuts and reductions in social services. Counterfeit money was produced for bribes.

On 21 August, the other on 21 August. The Washington lawyer, the President require only 50 per cent approval for a change in the nuclear free clauses. The second was to vote for the Compact.

Under fear for their lives and safety, nine of the sixteen OEK members approved legislation for the 4 August vote, two voted against and five were absent. The legislation requires only 50 per cent approval in three-quarters of the sixteen states of Belau. Needless to say the result of the vote was a foregone conclusion. There was no public campaign against the vote. In the by now familiar atmosphere of fear and disinformation 71 per cent voted in favour of the amendment.

The compact was approved on 21 August by 70 per cent of voters although only half the eligible voters participated.

All of the violence, pressure and intimidation has been allowed if not encouraged by the US Administration who are still responsible for the well being of Belau. Of course it is in the US interest to turn a blind eye. The Interior Department which is responsible for Belau does not even have a representative there. I don't see it as a crisis point.


With the decline in oil output from Bass Strait and our deteriorating terms of trade, the question of future oil supplies has a new significance. The late seventies saw an interest in oil shale and coal to oil technologies and it is expected that authorities will once again push for this option. Apart from direct environmental impact of such technologies, there is the problem that oil to coal plants proposed for the Latrobe Valley in Victoria will reduce the expected life of that coal resource. Further, if coal to oil is seen as more pressing than coal for electricity, where will future electricity supplies be generated from? The Nuclear Power Station eventually go nuclear? We continue our series by the Soft Energy Action Group.

How Much Coal? There is some dispute as to how much coal is economically winnable. The Australian Year Book (1986), the State Electricity Commission Victoria (SEC) and the Coal Corporation of Victoria all state that there is at least 350,000 million tonnes (Mt). The Brown Coal Study Group, in Fuel for Generators disputes this and claims the pre-1977 official estimate of 12,000Mt is closer to the truth.

The SEC Annual Report of 1983-6 forecasted an electricity consumption growth rate for the period to 2001 of between 2.1 and 4.8 per cent per annum, depending on the extent to which conservation and co-generation are adopted and whether aluminium smelting proceeds. Using the mid-point (3.5 per cent) and projecting that growth rate past the forecast period, if coal is only used for electricity generation, a 12,000Mt resource will last 75 years and a 35,000Mt resource about 104 years.

However the SEC has a history of overestimating the growth in demand. Using consumption figures for the period between 1982 and 1986 as a guide, an average compounded rate of just under 2 per cent is calculated. Using this figure rather than the SEC’s figure of 3.5 per cent means that the 12,000Mt resource has a life of 104 years and the 35,000Mt resource, a life of 154 years.

Coal to Oil It takes around 1 tonne of brown coal to produce 1 barrel of oil. Australia’s oil consumption since 1982 has remained about 600,000 barrels per day. It can be assumed that oil consumption will remain constant throughout the forecast period — this is not unreasonable as cars become more fuel efficient and higher mooring costs, in real terms, counterbalance the marginal increase in registered motorists. If Australia’s total oil requirements were obtained from Victoria’s brown coal reserves, it would require 289Mt per year. This would reduce the brown coal life expectancy from 104 years to 44 for the 12,000Mt estimate and from 154 to 54 years for the 35,000Mt estimate.

As dramatic as this may seem, it is misleading. One commercial coal to oil plant of 100,000 barrels per day costs about $6 billion and takes 10 to 15 years to build. To build six simultaneously would be prohibitively expensive even if the aim was to supply Australia’s entire oil requirement from brown coal conversion, the lead-up time and staggered construction schedules would extend the coal resource life considerably beyond the figures stated here. Further, there is no intention even amongst the most gung-ho proponents of coal to oil to supply Australia’s total oil needs from brown coal.

New South Wales and Queensland have 34,000Mt of black coal equivalent to 338 years of oil supply (black coal produces two and a half times as much oil as brown coal). With the possible loss of export markets for our black coal, a coal to oil plant may seem a ‘rational’ use for this resource.

Oil shale contains the equivalent of 23,000 million barrels of oil (305 years worth) in demonstrated resources. A cheaper process than coal to oil, it would be expected to be adopted in conjunction with, if not prior to, coal to oil developments.

Consequently, a more realistic scenario is one commercial coal to oil plant in the Latrobe Valley producing 300,000 million barrels of oil a day and consuming 37Mt of coal per year. It would have the effect of reducing the life expectancy of our coal supplies from between 6 and 14 years. In short, it would make little difference. The environment and anti-nuclear movements would therefore be more effective in opposing all syn-fuel developments on the basis of the immediate environmental hazards posed by these industries, not on the marginal acceleration in depletion of our finite energy resources.


by Jeyaretnam Thillaimuthu

The well publicised and documented catastrophic reactor failure at Chernobyl last year has resulted in serious thinking about the future of the nuclear fusion process. The installation can never be rebuilt and recent reports that the Soviet authorities hope to put back into operation the undamaged unit is either a mistake or propaganda. Explosive scattering of fuel material, graphite and liquid and gaseous radioactive substances with inordinately long half-lives over a wide area will render the site unapproachable for tens of thousands of years. Ironically, the fall-out from storm bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was, relatively speaking, short lived compared to the fall-out from radioactive wastes. The USA’s Three Mile Island reactor, now sealed off following a far less violent leak, is a monument to the folly of science and technology.

The ethos of science in assigning catastrophic reactor failure at Chernobyl to technology.

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The ethos of science in assigning catastrophic reactor failure at Chernobyl to technology.
The present situation is that over 400 nuclear power plants have been constructed worldwide producing power and a great deal of radio-active wastes. Apart from the three disastrous failures there are four or five nuclear establishments that have been abandoned for one reason or another. The unsavoury fact is that even if reactor failures could be totally prevented, all reactors, like all artificial devices, have limited life times. Obsolete reactors cannot be scrapped and recycled but have to be mothballed for tens of thousands of years!

The Status of Theories

The failure of relativity theory is really part of a more general problem of theories which has bedevilled physics for over three centuries. No solution can be found until we come to terms with the openness of the truth that theories are nothing more than useful tools of technology and not real in nature. By definition a theory was an empirical and artificial supposition of value to teaching and technology. All theories originated in technology and all the models we use are grossly artificial. How can we have been over-extending our theories without thinking all these centuries? The first mistake is medieval in origin; the assumption that useful theories may be real in nature. The second is the tendency to seek out similarities. The third is the arrogance of learning embedded in our examination system.

The last mentioned is an ever present problem and needs an explanation. General science became an introduction to technology and science based professions only in the mid-nineteenth century. In that era there was very little scientific knowledge to be taught. New inventions and discoveries, however, were appearing on the scene. Those in technology were formulating theories so as to teach their apprentices and to communicate amongst themselves. They knew that these theories were artificial and it was natural that these theories were passed into the curricula of the schools. Teachers of that period and ever since, whose primary aim was to get their students to pass exams, began teaching theory as real in nature. Also, in a highly class conscious era it was probably thought that young students would lose interest if theory were taught as a rule of thumb and empirical. Here lies the impediment to the solving of the problem: the Aristotelian syndrome is with us as even in this modern age.

The Principle Rule of Science

From the very inception of organised scientific knowledge two millennia ago philosophers have recognised that the primary rule is that only that which is observable by any of the human senses can be admitted into science. But now that scientific teaching is aimed at teaching technology we use the concepts, models and theories of technology. The photon model of light or quantum theory is an example and has a story that is pertinent to the issues here. Einstien solved the riddle of the quantum theory by statistical methods and was awarded the Nobel Prize for his work in 1922. However, he was never happy with the theory himself. In his book Out of My Later Years written in 1950 he wrote that the theory was liable to mislead us as "it was an incomplete representation of real things." It ought to be obvious that the quantum theory, although of immense value to the technologist, cannot be true in nature.

When the errors of theories have been corrected we may be able to conceive a realistic mechanism for light and related phenomena. Let there be no misunderstanding, those who aspire to go into technologies and engineering have to study the theories as empirical tools and certainly valuable as such. They should also be aware that all theories have limitations and when discoveries revealing contrary concepts are made that these could be of value in arriving at the truth. Einstien himself has had the habit of passing over such discoveries as 'anomalies', in the belief that it would prevent confusion on the teaching side! The laws of science are to be challenged and broken.

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Land rights...

by Judith Wright McKinney

This article should be read as a follow up to the resolution, printed in Chain Reaction 50, made at the Aboriginal and Development conference held in May 1987 in Kurnorra. At that conference, Marcia Langton, representing the National Federation of Land Councils, gave a paper titled "Mining: Telling It Like It Is", which has now been published (Land Rights News, Vol. 2 No. 3). Because this paper is not very likely to be featured in the rest of the Australian press, which is heavily influenced by mining interests, here is a brief summary of the main points of the paper:

Mining companies have been running a media campaign about how Aboriginal people have been holding up the development of Australia...we have been trying to put a stop to the lies and tell our own story.

One of the lies is that only one agreement has been reached on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory. The whole issue is much more complex than that. When miners want to go onto land, say in the NSW wheatbelt, they have to pay compensation for the power lines, roads and damage to the wheat crops. But they believe that there is nothing on Aboriginal land, so that it will be easier to explore...and cheaper. They want to get rid of the "inconvenience" of traditional landowners.

So they have marshalled their powerful resources to sell the Australian public a lie. The lie is that the limited control Aboriginal people have over some of their land somehow caused a 'logjam' in the processing of applications for resource development.

The paper goes on to examine the last ten years of the Land Rights Act — the first years during which there had to be negotiations with proven Aboriginal owners. It concludes that:

• Out of 235 exploration licenses (ELAs) on Aboriginal land being considered by the Northern and Central Land Councils at the end of April 1987, 17.5 per cent were "logjammed" in the NT Department of Mines and Energy itself.

• That 355 claims, having been cleared following the passing of the NT Land Rights Act (1987), there was a freeze on mining which was lifted only four years ago. This resulted in a flood of applications reaching the Land Councils all at once, putting tremendous pressure on their staff and demanding an increase in their finances, which has been refused. Once more, the miners have put the blame on the Land Councils for the situation in which they were too hard pressed to deal adequately with the flood.

The downturn in mining has also been blamed on the Aborigines. Examining this Ms Langton concludes that it is due to:

• ALP policy, which prohibits the development of new uranium mines,

• The NT's isolation, which makes mining expensive,

• Worldwide industrial depression with lowered commodity prices, uranium and other surpluses, high interest rates and low demand.

• Desecration of the Australian dollar leading to increased costs for imported equipment and goods and foreign debts becoming too expensive to service.

Land Councils, the paper states, have found it easier to negotiate with foreign companies, which have negotiated fairly and quickly, while Australian Mining Industry Council members have been reluctant to come to the negotiating table at all. Moreover, the Federation believes, the NT Government has been deliberately interfering with such processes, for instance in opposition to agreements between Land Councils on a two-stage basis of agreement, the first for exploration and later on actual mining. The Federation considers this process less complex and quicker than the one-step method.

Aboriginal people in the Western Desert have had little contact with the outside world, the first sustained contact coming from the establishment of the Canning Stock Route in the early 1900's. As cattle drovers increasingly used the route, so too did the Aboriginal people, in search of trading centres where they could trade commodities for food and material goods. However many Aboriginal people did not remain at these centres until they were forcibly removed to European administered missions, stations and reserves.

In the early 1980's, after decades of land locked up on their lands, the Aboriginal people, with traditional ties to Karlamilyi began returning. The community of Punmu, on the edge of Lake Dora, was resettled in 1991 and three years later about 80 residents of Jigalong relocated to Punngurr in the...
While most of the Aboriginal people who speak for the country now being damaged by CRA live at Punmu and Pangurru, they have only recently had an opportunity to discuss the impact of a mine in their area. They have not been able to negotiate an agreement with the company.

CRA exploration sites cover almost a third of the Rudall River National Park, Western Australia's largest. CRA officials at a meeting at Pangurru said that there is plans to have a fly-in-fly-out camp for 150-200 workers servicing a mine pit 80,000 metres square and 150 metres deep. An on-site plant would produce pitchblende concentrate and refine uranium oxide (yellowcake). A tailings dam would also be built. Hundreds of kilograms of ore have already been crushed and sorted in experiments during the exploration phase. It is estimated that the area will produce around 3000 tonnes per year.

Only recently has the Department of Conservation and Land Management established guidelines for the company to comply with. Others like the ACF and state MLC Tom Helm who have been flown over the area have been very surprised at the high level of exploration activity. The ACF reported visible damage to the flora and fauna in 1996. The remoteness of the park makes the policing virtually impossible.

The main failing however is that although the park has existed for ten years and CRA have been exploring for some period there is still no management plan and no established involvement for the traditional owners.

In addition, the Federal Government's uranium policy allows no new uranium mines or uranium mines in National Parks would appear to be quite contradictory to this policy. Will Rudall River be the first Park sacrificed to the national debt?

Rick Humphries is an activist with the Australian Conservation Foundation in Perth.

Three years ago the second United Nations conference on population policy took place in Mexico City. The stark details of population growth were updated. We now know that the world population, 4.8 billion in 1994, increases by over a million each five days and that the bulk of this growth is in the Third World — up to ninety per cent.

The number of people suffering from malnutrition is 500 million and the number of those living in absolute poverty is around 300 million. (This is not 'Australian poverty', it is Third World poverty and a comparison between the two is neither fair nor imaginable.) Enough food is being produced, there are greater supplies than for many years past and international food reserves have grown. But famine disasters — such as in Africa — still occur. Every minute thirty children die from lack of food or clean water or largely preventable diseases.
The export to the Third World of the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, and the increased militarisation of the Third World severely undermines development and wastes a great deal of money as well as talents and creative minds; it is estimated that one out of five scientists is occupied with arms technology research, who could be employed to solve much more meaningful problems.

Robbing the Poor
Latin America now has a collective debt of over US$400 billion. This is shared by the four largest debtor countries: Brazil over US$100 million, Mexico US$100 million, Argentina $50 billion and Venezuela over $35 billion. On this sum of $400 billion of debt could have come into being. The Latin America cannot pay.

The United States' high expenditure on armaments is known to be extensively financed by budget deficits — as at the time of the Vietnam War. Budget deficits in turn send interest rates through the roof, and the result that the developing countries are encumbered to the tune of several billion dollars more. At the meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1984 even leading figures in the World Bank rejected the Reagan Administration's contention that the activity set off in the wake of the budget deficit compensated for the major burden of high interest rates and that the Third World must invest more resources and labour in exports. The reports of the IMF remark critically upon the fact that the United States is solving its problems at other peoples' expense, importing capital that weaker countries need for their development.

This is a flight of capital based on rates of conduct other than national responsibility. Those who are constantly demanding performance speculate on interest rates and capital movements. Ramification of the credit crisis is then upon the debtors — the very victims. While one out of five suffers from absolute poverty and one out of ten from malnutrition, some US$50 billion from Latin America will end up in New York, London and Frankfurt this year. One suggested metaphor is a 'blood transfusion from the sick to the healthy'.

Along with this material and visible poverty there is another which does not catch the eye but is no less degrading. Three years ago 29 per cent of the world population was unable to read or write. In 24 countries over 70 per cent of adults were illiterate and it has been estimated that at least 300 million children between six and eleven do not attend school. Owing to rapid population growth one must expect this number to increase, despite the great and persistent efforts which are being made.

Adding insult to injury, during the 1984 Brazilian elections, some 200 million people were not allowed to vote because of their illiteracy. In Peru almost 20 per cent of the electorate are illiterate but still allowed to participate, falling prey to manipulation. One should not, however, overestimate the value of formal education as a guarantee of political wisdom and social balance. If that were the case, how could one explain the Germans allowing Hitler to come to power?

Defence Food into Debt
The arms race is related to these problems. The debtor countries, unable to pay their debts when they fall due, have no other recourse but to go to the International Monetary Fund. The Fund lends the dollars alright, but under very strict conditions. Among them is the surrender of economic policies to the Fund's demands for programs and other forms of social spending, which are essentially 'unproductive', are cut back — as are important health programs. But wage freezes and devaluations are very popular with the Fund. These measures increase poverty and economic difficulties. The poor, whose food becomes dearer and scarcer, suffer. Starvation, instability and riots threaten the governments. That means more spending on weapons for security. Meanwhile, the rich invest their money abroad — mainly in the United States — the interest rates mount further. Third World countries borrow more money, or reschedule their debts, the round is completed and the process starts again.

Military spending in the Third World has increased five fold over the last twenty-five years. The number of countries ruled by military governments has grown from 23 to 57. Meanwhile the budget for the United States Air Force is larger than the total educational budget for 1.2 billion children in Africa, Asia (excluding Japan) and Latin America. In one year the Soviet Union spends more on military defence than the governments of all developing nations spend on education and health care for their 3.6 billion people.

On average the developed nations spend 5.4 per cent of their Gross National Product for military purposes but only 0.3 per cent for development assistance to poorer countries. While there is one soldier for every 43 people in the world, there is only one physician for every 1,030. While an American missile can travel from Western Europe to Moscow in six minutes, an African woman must still walk several days a year for the family's water supply.

Arming Everybody
A United States Congress research study has calculated that United States arms sales to the Third World decreased from the record level of US$K2 billion in 1983 to US$7.3 billion in 1984. But noted that this reduction was due to market saturation and scarcity of money in the Third World. The statistics, however, remain frightening. In 1983 the monetary value of the arms trade was set at US$135 billion of which some 70 per cent was the responsibility of the two superpowers.

Alarmingly, a number of the so-called 'newly-industrialised countries' such as Brazil, India and Singapore have become important manufacturers and opened up a new arms bazaar. Fewer political strings are attached and, in this buyer's market, governments are successfully demanding state-of-the-art weaponry.

There are at present at least thirty governments engaged in arms sales with an annual turnover of between US$25 and 35 billion. As with the United States, the...
The policy pursued by these countries is one of "military Keynesianism".

The United States has the longest list of customers, more than twice that of the Soviet Union with 39 customers compared to 16. (The United States is also more generous in allocating production licenses to Third World countries.) Next come France, the United Kingdom, the Federal Republic of Germany, Czechoslovakia and Italy. Australia is twelfth on the list with almost two-thirds of our exports going to the Third World. The list continues with Poland, North Korea, Brazil—a country with 30 million illiterate, non-voting people exported US$3 billion worth of arms in 1984—Spain, South Korea, Israel and Switzerland.

The details as to who imports arms are, of course, secret. The Stockholm International Peace Institute and the American Arms Control Agency seem to agree in their estimates that the leading importers of arms are Syria, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Egypt and Algeria. India and our neighbour Indonesia are also thought to figure prominently.

By now a quarter of the accumulated debt of the Third World is due to arms imports. The financial difficulties of the countries affected have had some moderating effect on arms sales. But there is still no doubt that the extent and nature of a country's military equipment have become a status symbol in many parts of the world. At the same time—and why not acknowledge it—a country's military organisation has sometimes had some beneficial effect on literacy, infrastructure building and other forms of modernisation; there is even a name for it—repressive developmentalism! In a world that seems inured to the greatest form of violence—poverty—the acceptance of a military regime may be tolerable if it can bring some form of relief. The truth is that such an acceptance may set the stage for a dance macabre of violence and counter-violence, terror, persecution and poverty.

In the next edition of Chain Reaction George Venturini looks at Australia's role in the arms race with respect to its position as part of Asia.

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In the next edition of Chain Reaction George Venturini looks at Australia's role in the arms race with respect to its position as part of Asia.

36 Chain Reaction
It would appear to be a good time to reassess FOE’s political strategy in light of two events. Firstly the third successive election win for the conservative ALP Government and secondly the probability that a new, national green/red political coalition will be launched in the next twelve months.

Before the election there was much coming and going by ‘heavies’ of some environmental and peace groups and disenchanted socialist/ALP activists at invitation only meetings (it is believed that FOE had no representation). For debate was the platform of this new coalition with the clear objective at that time of running candidates at the coming election.

The ‘surprise’ election blocked any chance they had of getting it off the ground in time. When I suggested, half seriously, to some ALP members that the election was brought forward to head off this new force, they laughed and pointed out that Hawke was only interested in the centre of the electorate, the left/alternatives he can still take for granted.

The election campaign and the result itself reflected this through the near obsession with the materialism of the swinging voter. The real issues facing us and the planet: nuclear annihilation, environmental destruction, poverty, malnutrition, economic exploitation and community disintegration (to name a few) were ignored.

FOE and other peace, environmental and social justice groups, using the time honoured strategies of lobbying, protest, education and agitation, appear to have little influence on those with power: the Federal Cabinet. We have been thrown a few crumbs in the last few years but there appears to be less commitment now than there ever was, particularly on nuclear issues.

Those few ALP parliamentarians who appear to offer us support and hold out to us some hope now appear silent and powerless within the right wing dominated ALP juggernaut. Any support at the branch level for environmental and socialist policies has meant nothing at the cabinet level. The likes of Gerry Hand, Stuart West and Peter Duncan were publicly silent about the real issues (issues they claim are close to their heart) before, during and after the election. I am now convinced that agitation to reform or shift the ALP towards implementing an enlightened legislative program while in office is quite futile.

What advantages would be offered by a strong, national green/red coalition campaigning in elections? It promises more than the few Senate seats it would most likely win. Perhaps its biggest impact, irrespective of the seats it holds, would be to force political parties towards, for example, non-nuclear and environmental positions in order to protect previous support bases. From West Germany we have seen the positive effect that the Greens have had on Social Democrat anti-nuclear policy. Another benefit would be forcing the mainstream media, at least at election time, to report the real issues more, in a way separate from and additional to the coverage we get from our campaigning at present.

The disenchantment and disaffiliation with the ALP at the green and red fringes of the old support base were obvious at election time, and yet the Democrats have not been able to gain from this. So many people have expressed their distress at being forced to vote Democrat for want of a better alternative. So there appears to be the possibility of considerable support for a new coalition and once the four per cent vote is reached there is guaranteed public funding. The German Greens have been able to use their public funding wisely so that campaigning has not cost the earth. From them we can take much inspiration and learn many valuable lessons.

One blessing of the early election was that the new coalition was not launched too hastily. Now we have the opportunity and time to decide whether to get involved and, if so, in what way. When the new, national, biodynamic Green/Red coalition (one mooted name was ‘Common Ground’) sprouts what will FOE’s collective position be? Do the gains outweigh the risks?

One thing is certain: the new coalition will only succeed in being ‘not left, not right but in front’ if a great many activists ensure that it attempts to be non-hierarchical, non-patriarchical, participatory and process orientated. Otherwise it will become another power base for the more expert political operators and again we will become the ‘followers’ instead of the ‘leaders’.

Gavan Thomson is an active member of FOE Fitzroy.

by Gavan Thomson
The present moment represents an important political watershed. Side by side with the symptoms of global crisis — the widening gap between rich and poor, the threat of nuclear extinction, the transformation of the global environment — many are experiencing, perhaps for the first time since the Depression, an acute sense of economic insecurity. The profit-oriented application of science and technology is depriving personal and social relationships of the dignity, autonomy and privacy to which they are entitled. The ensuing emotional and mental stress, anxiety and neurosis add to the general sense of foreboding which even middle class access to the material rewards of the 'good life' cannot entirely obscure.

The success of the New Right in Australia owes much to its privileged access to the media and other powerful institutions. Equally important is the fine-tuning of its analysis and proposals to take account of the insecurity, powerlessness and general crisis of identity that characterise the Australian psyche. The conservative reaction has been to blame the crisis on trade unions, dole bludgers, greenies, feminists, Aborigines, immigrants and homosexuals. The scapegoat strategy conveniently externalises the source of the problem and places the organisation base and legitimacy of their cause. Most have little faith in political and economic solutions that appeal to the conventional sense.

The central task is to connect issues to people, to strengthen the bonds of community, to empower people to take charge of their own destiny. The ALP Left is too firmly tied to party structure and electoral objectives to act as a viable and independent force while the smaller Left parties are lacking the perspective, policies, structure and language to communicate with the public. Organised Labour remains a potent force but in the short run is unlikely to take a significant initiative outside the industrial arena.

Many social movements have waged important campaigns with occasional victories. But, partly because of the political climate, which is largely determined whether demands can be met. This is not to detract from the important role that the movements have played but if they are to gain momentum a great deal of innovation may be necessary.

The question arises: Is it possible to conceive of a purposeful response to the current set of dangers? The conditions appear to exist for a major new initiative that is alive to the enormity of the problem and free of the stifling priorities and practices of established parties. The time may be ripe for the emergence of a political movement which builds on the finest traditions of the Labour Movement and the experience of the social movements.

Yet what is produced, how it is produced and distributed, who controls investment, production and exchange are central to the concerns of many. They are largely determined by the nature of economic systems. These systems are based on a fundamental illusion of control over a finite, exploitable environment. The illusion rests on the assumption that all is a market, with prices to be set by the interaction of supply and demand.

In determining the demands, strategies and educational content of any campaign, a key consideration must be to arrive at a mix that combines local initiative, national co-ordination and effective pressure not only of the specific issues involved but of the wider commitment to the democratic transformation of political life.

Electoral strategies must play second fiddle. Success cannot be measured by votes. The battle for hearts and minds mainly takes place between elections, in the work-place, where people live, in the social settings where people come together. Only an on-going process of reflection and education can sustain the momentum of a political movement in the face of the vigorous opposition to which it is likely to be subjected.

The political movement would be to support rather than duplicate these efforts. There are other areas where activity is less developed, more fragmented, where the issues are less sharply focused. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the economic arena, particularly at a time when the trade union movement as a whole is unable to offer coherence to the broader thrust to change society.
Because of stratification and atomising social influences there will be many within this broad grouping who will not wish to identify with the movement's policies and campaigns. On the other hand, a large cross-section of society is likely to find them attractive to the extent that they offer a credible strategy for achieving personal fulfilment, physical security, satisfying work and a convivial human and physical environment. A carefully constructed program which married long-term and short-term objectives is likely to appeal to unemployed, youth, women, Aborigines, ethnic communities and other sections of society and also to other blue-collar workers and to a substantial section of the middle-class who have been radicalised by the peace and conservation movements.

By virtue of its size and diversity this support will periodically experience divisions between different regions, industries, ethnic, racial and religious groups, different levels of skill, status and income, between men and women. The function of the movement will be to probe tensions before they escalate, to encourage a process of dialogue that respects the interests of each group and to arrive at a program which preserves diversity but overcomes fragmentation. In this sense the movement will not be an amorphous rainbow coalition but a cohesive political formation whose defining and unifying goal is the abolition of all forms of domination and exploitation.

It is clear, accurate and user-friendly. The second part of the book describes why the technique is used, how it works and how you go about employing it. The apparatus needed for the introduction, however, it is suggested placing a copy in your local library. Exploring the Environment is a book for school students or people who wish to carry out their own investigations into environmental matters. Environmental investigation, as with much scientific investigation, has a tendency to be mysterious, alien, unemotional, factual, tedious, dogmatic, etc. etc. Exploring the Environment has overcome this tendency. It is clear, accurate and user-friendly.

Exploring the Environment doesn't bombarding you with scientific theory and techniques and then think up real life applications for your knowledge. It invites you to discover a natural environment in which you are interested and then it offers methods for exploring and investigating this environment in a methodological manner.

The book is divided into two sections. The first section — Investigative Techniques — sets out 45 activities and techniques which have been suggested in part one. For each of these...
Green Politics in Australia: Working towards a peaceful, sustainable and achievable future. Edited by Drew Hutton, Angus and Robertson 1987

Reviewed by Terry Callahan

To most Australians, the phrase 'Green Politics' is associated with the European, Australian green politics through the voices of those most qualified to speak - prejudicially, with little or no attempt to stereotype - those trying to save the ecological/conservation issues. A 'who's who' of green activism and representatives. The word 'greenie' has been appropriated by a mainstream political furce, with its own biographical threads in the strong biographical movement as a powerful coalition of unions and residents. He pleads for a critical approach to 'development' and the humanising of the urban environment. The detailed and thoughtful piece on ethical work and investment by Merv Partridge provides another angle. We must understand how business works better than the capitalists, but must restrain the accumulation of wealth and avoid unethical and destructive investment. Greening Education, by Noel Gough, argues that the present paradigm shift in education — towards generative thinking which is holistic and systemic, and which tries to integrate theoretical, practical and technical thinking — actually converges with much of 'green' philosophy. Greening education does not mean teaching ecology and peace studies, it means an entirely new integrated approach to learning, which is evolutionary, exploratory and participatory. Perhaps the most inadequate essay is "Christianity and Green Politics". While John Cribb correctly points us back to the historical Jesus and the gospels, rather than the institutional church, for inspiration, and while his mention of liberation theology, basic Christian communities and the charismatic movement are of interest, he seems oblivious of the rediscovery of "creation theology" in recent times. In creation theology we have a deep and permanent reclamation of a Christian spirituality which affirms the beauty and integrity of all creation, and of the human person as part of and responsible for, that creation, based on the simple belief that God 'saves'/makes whole all creation, not only human beings.

Drew Hutton poses the obvious question: What is green politics? While mentioning the famous 'Green Bans' a la Munday, Nelder, Franklin, anti-uranium and anti-Vietnam war movements as possible seeds, he moves on to identify the 'interconnectedness' of the personal, political and ecological, the anthropocentricism in traditional humanist approaches, and the need for a new synthesis which Marxist and left politics in this country has failed to provide. Green politics is about the transition to a new paradigm, away from a mechanistic, dualistic and technocratic world view, the logical outcome of which is the present stresses the world as an indivisible dynamic whole, with interconnected parts. Human provides a very informative comparative table outlining features of the old and the new, emergent 'green paradigm'. Green politics, for Hutton, is a new self-consciousness has been appropriated by the mainstream media and is often used prejudicially, with little or no attempt to understand the deeper philosophical or political roots of those involved in ecological/conservation issues. Green Politics in Australia goes a long way towards remedying this situation. It presents a clear, diverse and optimistic description and analysis of homegrown Australian green politics through the voices of those most qualified to speak — green activists, politicians or unionists. The contributors to this anthology are a 'who's who' of green activism and thinking in this country — Bob Brown, Jo Valentine, Burnam Barnum, Jack Munday, Drew Hutton, to mention a few. Most of the essays are a satisfying mix of biography, history, political and philosophical analysis, which demonstrates convincingly that the 'personal is the political' and vice-versa. The strong biographical threads in the book also show the transition and growth of most of the contributors, their "greening" if you like.

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Fluoride In Australian: A Case to Answer, by Wendy Varney, Hale and Irommong, 1986, $2.95.

Reviewed by John Drummond.

Monorails, nuclear power and other questionable projects have made me wary of any scheme bulldozed through by vested interests. And yet this is the basis on which the proponents of fluoridation have outlined the case for fluoridation in Australia. Australasia is one of the world’s most fluoridated countries. Europe, which was abandoned to fluoridation in the first place, gave birth to the scheme, and why should we not expect to gain from the fruits of that scheme? Other books have outlined the dangers of fluoridation and have been launched by people who have claimed benefits and risks and claimed benefits dealt with elsewhere.

The next two chapters are riveting. Hale and Varney are the risks? The answer is – like so many answers – political. Yet this is the first book to tackle the matter of fluoridation from that angle. Other books have outlined the dangers of fluoridation and have been launched by people who have claimed benefits and risks. Hale and Varney are the risks? The answer is – like so many answers – political. Yet this is the first book to tackle the matter of fluoridation from that angle. Other books have outlined the dangers of fluoridation and have been launched by people who have claimed benefits and risks. Hale and Varney are the risks? The answer is – like so many answers – political. Yet this is the first book to tackle the matter of fluoridation from that angle. Other books have outlined the dangers of fluoridation and have been launched by people who have claimed benefits and risks.

It is not complicated to see a left critique emerging, including junk food manufacturers. For them, fluoride is a saviour in that it can exempt their products from the dental carries connection. Carries are seen to be due to a ‘lack of fluoride’ rather than resulting from a poor diet.

The chapter on fluoridation’s chief protagonists not only shows the parts played by a small number of dental authorities in having fluoridation introduced, but also a concise and thought-provoking critique of the medical establishment, placing it squarely in its political and sociological context. Another chapter on the State’s part in fluoridation brings the whole picture together.

One of the more interesting aspects of the book is that, though this deals specifically with fluoridation, it has much relevance to a number of other issues. Food irradiation springs to mind. There too are vested interests (the nuclear industry and agribusiness), industrial (nuclear) waste, experts trying to foist it on us, and consumers who will, hopefully, resist.

It was heartening to see a left critique of fluoridation. The deliberate pollution of our water supply is not merely a matter of individual rights, though clearly this is a serious aspect, especially if you are intolerant to even minute amounts of fluoride. More importantly, it is an environmental and health issue. It points to some of the areas that consumer groups should concern themselves with, rather than getting bogged down, as some sometimes do, on matters such as which brand of margarine is the best value.

Overall, this book is highly recommended.

John Drummond is a Bachelor of Science and a peace activist with an interest in the politics of science and technology.

From page 4 desire not to rock the boat in WA. I maintain that the only way we can trust the ALP to implement progressive policies is to elect candidates who will implement those policies. If we wouldn’t elect a progressive Liberal candidate, however ‘liberal’ because the dries control the Libs, why should we elect a progressive ALP candidate if the right wing controls the ALP? Given the treatment of George Georges by the ALP I fear that the only way progressive candidates will be allowed to represent their electorate is to stand as independents.

Personally, I feel that fundamental change will not arise through parliamentary politics, although much publicity can be gained from that area. I prefer to channel my energy into education, direct action, publicity and research. I wish Senator Bolkus all the best in his crusade to reform the ALP. We certainly could do with more Senators of his ilk.

Roman Orzanski
Adelaide SA.

There is still the problem of the ‘Liberal’ origins of the Democrats (although the recent resignations reflect the changing nature of the Party) and the question of how clear and radical an alternative they offer. As you note, they are not seen as a radical alternative.

Two other possibilities for a green electoral movement are seen in the USA: individuals who may join a ‘Green Lobby’ whose purpose is to educate and lobby both major parties in an effort to change existing policies: also, there are the ‘Green Caucuses’ within each party through which party members gather to influence their party’s policy.

Personally, I think the extra-parliamentary movement is most important; direct action and community pressure are more likely to change society. A changing society will do more to be reflected in a changing government if our electoral system reflects the electorate.

Read Any Good Books Lately?

If you have, or if you have seen a film that you think people might be interested in hearing about why not write a review for Chain Reaction. Or you can write to us and tell us what topics you are interested in Environment, Education, Women’s Issues, Land Rights, Third World Development, Peace or whatever and we can send you copies of books or tickets for film previews so that you can review them for Chain Reaction. If you are interested, write to:

Reviews Editor
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46 Chain Reaction
Well, I'm back from overseas to find that Chain Reaction now has a partially built office on the ground floor of the new building. I'm now sitting at a desk - not my desk yet - but certainly a great improvement on the situation before my departure on Sept. 3rd.

I returned just in time to help with the final work on Earth News, so I feel much less guilty about contributing so little to this edition. We now have a busy time ahead catching up with the backlog of office work, accounts etc. but feel sure that by Christmas the office will be organized enough to be able to put our hands on things fairly quickly.

The business part of my trip was spent in Amsterdam and Brussels - a Soil Degradation Conference from Oct. 6-8 in Amsterdam and then one day (Oct. 9) in Brussels at the Tropical Rainforest Conference - a very professional event held in the European Parliament Building. Then a different experience and to me the highlight - The Friends of the Earth International Conference in Amsterdam from Oct. 10-12. This was well attended and it was so exciting to find that all the FOE labels on the mailing list for overseas subs are really and truly people. The experience of meeting and getting to know each other amazingly well in such a short time is a great incentive to keep up the FOE Link. A report on the business of the Conference will appear in the next edition of Chain Reaction.

Meanwhile a thanks to those who sent material. Please keep sending, also your comments. Also we greatly appreciate the correspondence we receive - it makes everything worthwhile.

Eileen Goodfield
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