

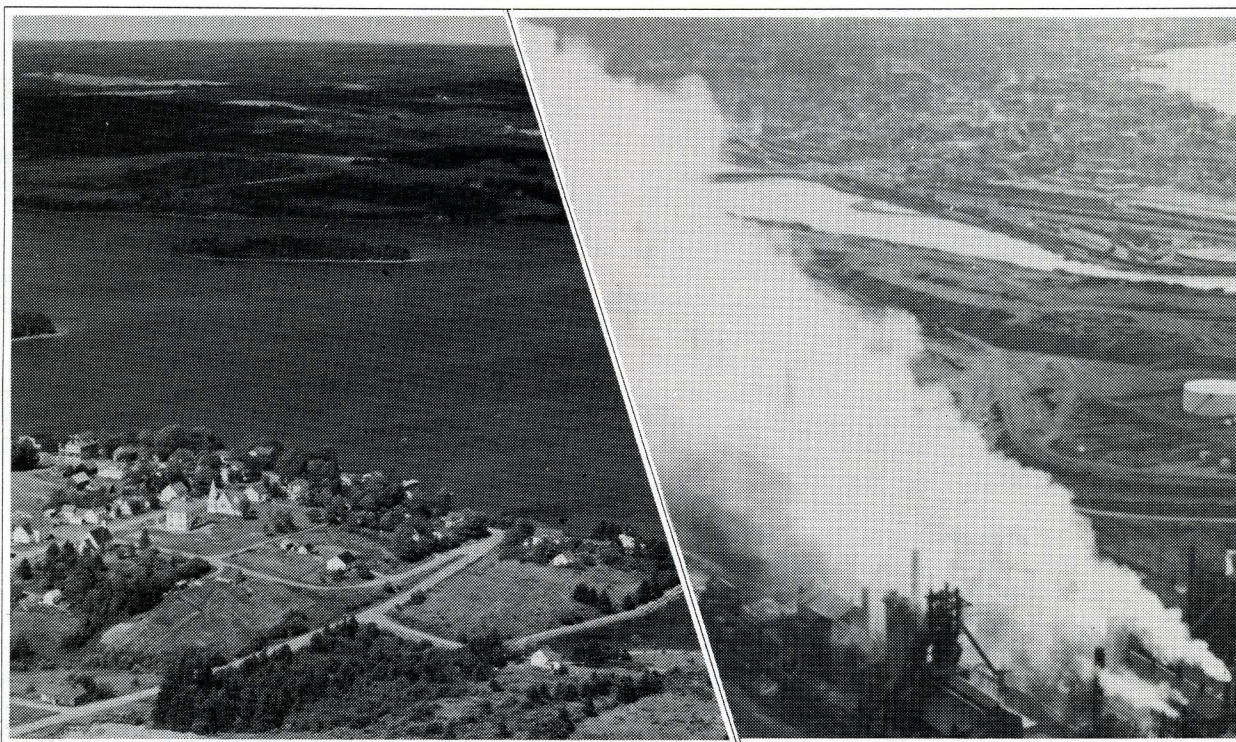
A Special Focus on our Environment

New Maritimes

March/April, 1990

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Our Surroundings:



The Maritimes and the Environmental Crisis

Also Inside:

The Unheralded Legacy of Charles Bruce

Setting Mr. Crosbie Right

Bernard Martin has been a full-time fisherman based in Petty Harbour, Newfoundland for the past eighteen years. In January, he reacted, in a CBC Radio "Commentary," to the crisis in the Atlantic fishery and the resulting plant closures in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. In the interests of public education, we repeat his comments here.

My heart goes out to the thousands of plant workers and trawlermen who are going to lose their jobs in the very near future. Their pain and anguish have come upon them all of a sudden. As an inshore fisherman, I can relate to the fear, the anxiety and the uncertainty that they are going through right now. For the past seven or eight years the inshore fishery in Newfoundland has gone through the most serious decline in its four-hundred-year history. In some areas, the inshore fishery has actually collapsed. Meanwhile, at a time when the inshore fishery was dying, the offshore fishery was enjoying boom times. But it was an artificial boom. Propped up by massive government bailouts in the early '80s and using unimaginably wasteful fishing methods, these companies — Fisheries Products International (FPI) and NatSea — recorded record profits. The chief executive officers and the politicians were ecstatic. People like Vic Young of FPI, John Crosbie and Gordon Cummings of NatSea puffed themselves up extolling the virtues of "free enterprise" and "corporate efficiency": "Look what our hands have wrought! See how great we are," they said. And the media lapped it up with not a word of criticism.

Meanwhile, inshore fishermen and plant workers watched in horror year after year as the fish got fewer and fewer and smaller and smaller. (Keep in mind that the inshore and offshore are fishing the exact same stocks.) In response to the crisis, inshore groups sprang up all over the island, quite correctly identifying overfishing in the offshore as the main problem. Some of us even tried to start our own inshore fishermen's union. We screamed, we shouted, we begged, we pleaded, but to no avail. Nobody was listening. Instead, we were told that we didn't know what we were talking about, that the collapse of the inshore fishery was a "cyclical" thing. The so-called experts even told us for several years that "cold water temperatures" were the reason the fish weren't swimming inshore. Imagine telling a group of people with 400 years of collective experience and wisdom

behind them that they don't know what they're talking about. Imagine the uproar if a bunch of federal bureaucrats went out to the prairies and told farmers that they didn't know what they were talking about, that the drought they had been experiencing for several years wasn't really a drought after all, that it was probably "cold soil temperatures"!

There is something terribly, terribly wrong with our political and economic system that allows corporations like FPI and National Sea — who have fed for years like pigs at the public trough and have raped and pillaged the resource — to suddenly abandon ship with no responsibility other than pleasing their shareholders. There is something terribly wrong with a decision-making process that shuts out the people who catch and process the fish and the communities that depend on the resource.

There is no easy way out of this mess, but we should start rebuilding — first of all by stripping these bloated corporations of their immense power. Fish quotas should be a community asset, not something "owned" by a private corporation. Secondly, the decision-making process has to be taken out of the boardrooms and away from the elite politicians and put where it belongs: in the communities that depend on the resource. If *we* had been making the decisions over the past ten years we could not possibly have done worse than these guys have.

Meanwhile, we should all keep our wits about us and not be fooled by smokescreens and buck-passing. John Crosbie is playing the role of a martyr "double-crossed" by FPI's Vic Young. Young is pretending to agonize under the "awesome responsibility" of deciding which plant closes and which stays open. NatSea officials are probably hiding out in Uruguay or Argentina, where, I hear, they've been investing heavily in new plants.

Clyde Wells and provincial Fisheries Minister Walter Carter, who don't know the war is over yet, have it figured that there's "too many fishermen chasing too few fish," so their answer is to eliminate large numbers of fishermen. Tom Siddon and Brian Mulroney, quite frankly, don't give a damn what happens down here.

Finally, the only ones being "double-crossed" down here, Mr. Crosbie, are the trawlermen and plant workers about to lose their jobs and the inshore fishermen and plant workers who have already been devastated for seven or eight years as a direct result of corporate greed and government mismanagement. •

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Member in Good Standing

OUR SURROUNDINGS: FACING THE CRISIS SQUARELY

As the current crisis in the fishery reminds us, we in the Maritimes are, like everyone else, very much dependent on the physical world around us for our livelihood and well-being. And there can no longer be any doubt that that world is in the midst of a crisis of its own, one whose consequences most people are as yet only dimly aware of. But whether we're aware of it or not, the environmental disaster that threatens the entire planet will come home to roost in the very near future unless we collectively take some very dramatic steps, actions that will affect and change both our day-to-day lives and the way we operate our society as a whole.

David Suzuki, without doubt the best-known environmental activist in the country, was in the region this past January speaking to a gathering of labour leaders from across the Maritimes and Newfoundland. Some observers were expecting fireworks. Their thinking went something like this: representatives of Cape Breton coal miners wouldn't take too kindly to Suzuki's message that we have to stop burning coal; Newfoundland labour leaders, still bitter about environmentalists' successful international campaign against the seal hunt a few years back, would hound him about the contribution of burgeoning seal herds to the depletion of our fish stocks; and, New Brunswick mill workers would be touchy about criticisms of the forestry practices that keep the pulp and paper industry in business.

It didn't work out that way. Suzuki's presentation was, quite simply, masterful. It successfully brought home to the audience the magnitude of the environmental crisis we face. As important as it might be, concern about the job security of miners and fish plant or mill workers seems parochial when discussion turns to wider issues such as global warming, rising sea levels, the large-scale spread of deserts and the impending creation of tens of millions of "environmental refugees" forced from their homes by ecological calamity.

Suzuki says we've got ten years to act, that after that the process will be irreversible unless steps are taken right away. Others say we've got fifteen, maybe twenty years. But to those who heard Suzuki speak, this is quibbling: what is clear is that we're going to have to change our ways of thinking, and our ways of doing things, *right now*.

For most of the two decades or so that environmentalists have been noticeable players on the social stage, they have pretty much kept to themselves, leaving other causes to other people. But as the depths of the looming crisis become more apparent, that is beginning to change. Suzuki is a much sought after orator who has given countless speeches, but his January address marked the first time he had spoken to a gathering of trade unionists. And he convinced them that his cause was theirs also.

In the discussion that followed Suzuki's speech, it became clear that this dialogue between environmentalists and people fighting different battles — trade unionists, feminists, peace activists and others involved in matters of social justice — will have to be expanded very promptly if we going to mount an adequate defence against the powerful forces that have led us down the road of environmental degradation. This issue of *New Maritimes* is largely dedicated to this end. The following pages give voice to environmentalists of various hues and to others who have up to now spent most of their efforts in other directions. Naturally, there is much more to be said, but "Our Surroundings: The Maritimes and the Environmental Crisis," will, we hope, help in a small way towards the synthesis of new ideas that we will need if we are going to face the future squarely, and help to win it for our children.

— Scott Milsom,
Managing Editor

Moving the Movement:

Which Way Forward for Maritime Environmentalists?

Twenty years ago, environmentalists were considered subversive. Now, every Liberal and Tory with an eye on elective office wants to be seen as "green." Having raised environmental concerns to the top of the public agenda, activists across the country are asking "What now?" More and more people are becoming aware of environmental issues and most agree we face common problems, so where do we go from here? Within the movement itself there are diverse answers to this question, some contradictory, many complementary.

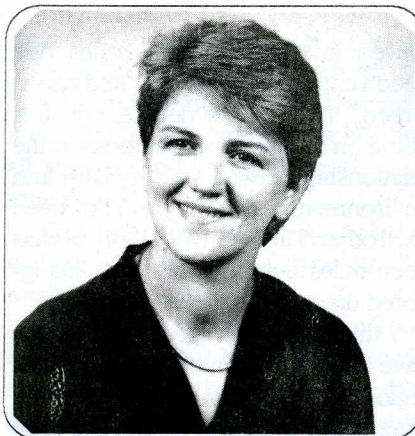
The following is a collection of conversations I recently held with five environmental activists working in the region. Each was asked two questions: "Where is the environmental movement headed?" and "Are there specific concerns for Maritime environmentalists?" This is by no means a scientific survey: there are many others whose views could have been included, and I hope their thoughts can be reflected in future issues of this magazine. Those quoted below have expressed personal opinions that are not necessarily those of the groups with which they are affiliated.

Katbryn Morse

Janice Harvey

The environmental movement in the Maritimes has to begin to build coalitions, to reconcile the environmental agenda with farmers, fishermen and woodworkers. We need to collaborate to create an economic and social structure which protects the environment. The environmental movement's resources are limited, and our ability to make progress here depends on working with other groups.

We have to take on the concerns of fishing communities, for example, and fishing communities have to look



"The environmental issues we are working on are connected to the whole struggle to keep the Maritimes alive."

at the environmental dimensions of the crisis they face. There's no point in environmentalists making an argument for conserving fish stocks without support from the fishing communities themselves.

The environmental movement needs to support efforts to keep coastal communities intact so they, in turn, can be in a better position to support long-term plans for conservation which could bring back their livelihoods. The

problem is that a lack of long-term vision, the lack of proper management, has created a crisis, and the present economic situation of fishermen and other primary producers doesn't allow them the luxury of taking a long-term view.

The environmental movement in the Maritimes won't achieve much without moving into the whole social-change milieu. It has to start aligning itself with other struggles going on. There will be conflicts: it's a process of building trust. In New Brunswick, we are working with certain farmers, certain labour groups, some woodworkers. There's a willingness on the part of these groups to see how environmental issues affect them. The environmental issues we are working on are connected to the whole struggle to keep the Maritimes alive. •

Janice Harvey is President of the Conservation Council of New Brunswick, where she has worked for the past six years.



Susan Holtz

a reductionist, way. Until a few years ago, we were still trying to solve environmental problems by putting them in a box, like, for example, the Department of Environment. But policies which protect the environment have to be made in all sectors of society.

One of my concerns is that there is a whole wave of new people coming into the movement. But will they stay? Because we have so few financial resources, there aren't many individuals who are able to work at the issues long

ties and particular environmental problems here in the Maritimes. In terms of energy, Nova Scotia is in a difficult situation: there are few choices other than conservation. And energy for transportation is especially a problem because we have a high ratio of rural people, and now with the VIA cuts, almost no public transportation as an alternative to private cars. However, I do see opportunities in agriculture in this region. Because ours is so much more diversified than

In the latter half of the eighties, there was incredible growth in the level of public awareness of environmental issues: it's a genuine waking up to the significance of these problems. This interest has to translate into political action. Locally-focussed groups need to keep working, but for real change to take place the movement has to recruit people with a larger vision of institutional change.

By this I mean rethinking whole sectors, like transportation and resource development. Environmental problems cut across all areas of human activity, so therefore environmentally-sound policies have to be made in a comprehensive, rather than

"There is a whole wave of new people coming into the movement. But will they stay?"

enough to develop a deep understanding of them. In this country, groups concerned with gender equality have received government funding for a long time, and so have multicultural groups. Environmental groups haven't received comparable funding. So we aren't recruiting people who can stay around long enough to work from a larger perspective.

We have some interesting possibili-

ties and particular environmental problems here in the Maritimes. In terms of energy, Nova Scotia is in a difficult situation: there are few choices other than conservation. And energy for transportation is especially a problem because we have a high ratio of rural people, and now with the VIA cuts, almost no public transportation as an alternative to private cars. However, I do see opportunities in agriculture in this region. Because ours is so much more diversified than

Susan Holtz is a private environmental consultant and was formerly a researcher with the Ecology Action Centre in Halifax.

David Orton

I see two tendencies in the environmental movement. The first is absorption, or working within the system. Groups which advocate "sustainable development" say you don't have to change your lifestyle for the sake of the environment, you can consume as much as you like. It's human-centered, rather than biocentric, and this is the main tendency.

The minority tendency, which I'm a part of, I call radical environmentalism. It's grassroots, is opposed to growth, and is biocentric (life-centred) rather than human-centred. It promotes development of alternative institutions and it's opposed to capitalism, because capitalism is basically anti-ecological.

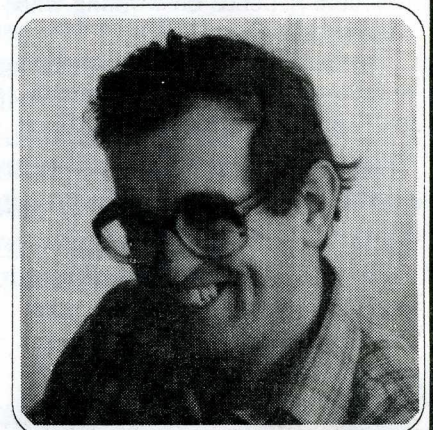
In the Maritimes there are far too few people involved at a deep level in the environmental movement. The left here has to wake up and get in-

involved in environmental issues. We need a critical discussion of "Red versus Green." This kind of debate, which is going on all over Europe, looks at the relationship between the socialist and environmental movements. They need each other. The left in the Maritimes has been miles behind because it has ignored the environment entirely.

I think the issue environmentalists have to get more involved with in this region is the fishery, in particular the aquaculture industry. We need to raise questions about the impact of aquaculture on the rest of the fish population, the potential introduction of parasites, how wildlife will be affected, and the use of chemicals in aquaculture. •

David Orton is active in the Green Web, an independent environmental research group based in Pictou County, Nova Scotia.

"The left here has to wake up and get involved in environmental issues."



Cristina Pekarik

The environmental movement is going trendy. It's at a crucial point. It can be an advocacy movement and a movement for social change, or it can join the ranks of cheerleaders for those who have adopted "green" lingo.

To me, the environmental movement is people criticizing underlying structures. But then, there are the so-called environmentalists like Maggie Thatcher and Brian Mulroney who have no intention of changing social

toward nature which have led to the destruction of rainforests. And it doesn't deal with us as consumers and wasters of the tropical rainforest, nor does it deal with a global economic system that destroys rainforest for five cents off the price of a hamburger.

I think that here in the Maritimes we share with most cultures an exploitive view of nature. We are creating uniformity, creating monocultures, in our communities and in the way we develop our resources. As Maritimers

"The environmental movement has to be on its toes, has to be aware of when it's being co-opted."

structures. The environmental movement has to be on its toes, has to be aware of when it's being co-opted.

The environmental movement has emerged because of a genuine concern for the environment, but it's also been characterized by people trying to alleviate middle-class guilt. For example, buying a \$25-acre of rainforest in the South doesn't deal with the economic systems or the attitudes

resist the loss of our communities and our unique identity, we're increasingly faced with the homogenization of our environment. For example, we are seeing a reduction of mixed forest, through clearcutting and reforestation with a spruce monoculture, for the benefit of the pulp and paper industry. Maintaining this monoculture involves the use of chemicals which are a threat to the environment and to human



health.

Environmentalists have to strength-en ties between environmental protection and social justice. Hope for the future comes from the process of becoming empowered to retain our identity and regain power over decision-making. Hope won't come from some technological fix for environmental problems. •

Christina Pekarik is on leave from her position as Co-director of the Ecology Action Centre in Halifax.

Ginny Point

When I worked at the Ecology Action Centre in the late seventies, we were worried about this particular smokestack or that sewer pipe... then we began to look more broadly, at acid rain for example. Now we are looking at the issues of ozone depletion and the destruction of tropical rainforests.

So, we've gone from a local to a global perspective, and we recognize how our local concerns fit into a global context. Here in King's County, we're very concerned about waste. People want to know what to do with their garbage, as individuals and as a community.

I don't think there are concerns special to Maritime environmentalists. The things people are concerned with here on a local level are the same things people are concerned with across the country. We all have a

similar lifestyle. I think there's a lot of potential for networking across the country and around the world because we are facing the same issues. We are all affected and we all have to work together.

Environmental issues have been getting a lot more coverage in the media in the last few years... it's not a fringe concern anymore. The environmental movement has always recognized that it had to broaden its base, but it's new that the public is so aware, and wants to help. There needs to be continued emphasis on public education. There's so much environmental education now at the grade school level. Kids in general are really concerned. That's a hopeful sign for the future. •

Ginny Point is a member of the Kings Environmental Group in Wolfville, Nova Scotia.



"The environmental movement has always recognized that it had to broaden its base, but it's new that the public is so aware, and wants to help."

Eating the Earth



David Wilson/Environment Canada

Why are we gobbling up the planet's resources at an ever increasing rate, and what can we in the Maritimes, where so much of our collective livelihood depends on resources that are at least in theory renewable, do to stem the tide? Here we present a sobering look at the background to the environmental crisis and a discussion of both how it affects our own region in particular and ways we might possibly see our way clear of eventual disaster.

By Michael Clow

Only all-out nuclear war poses as great a threat to our future as does the environmental destruction of the planet itself. The slow but gathering realization that our economic activities are rapidly destroying the network of living things, along with the air, water and soil cycles that sustains it, has led to widespread public demand for what has been called "sustainable development." But environmentalists' demands for restrictions on economic activities in the interests of collective survival are being resisted by corporate demands for ever-increasing growth and for less and less governmental or public control over their activities. ("Deregulation," a current business buzzword, and the free-trade deal are evidence of the latter demand.)

Today we face a life-and-death crisis whose existence we have only become aware of in the past 25 years. If we hope to escape the environmental collapse that threatens to destroy us in the coming decades, we'll have to take dramatic action. In order to choose the correct way to proceed, we'll have to be armed with knowledge of not only *what* the mess is, but also *why* it now threatens us.

The nature of the environmental mess — the "what" of our problems — is that our expanding economic activities are gobbling up and poisoning an unsustainable and ever-growing amount of the ecosystem. The key phrase in this statement is "economic activities": the connection between them and our environmental problems is direct and is fundamentally important to an understanding of our contemporary quandary. Economic activity is, ultimately, a process in which human work — labour — produces things, from paper clips to

space shuttles, out of the resources the global ecosystem offers us. We have relied on the global ecosystem to absorb our garbage and other wastes and have naively presumed that it would use them to reproduce the resources we have taken from the biosphere, somehow harmlessly disposing of the heavy metals, radioactive materials and artificial chemicals we've either dug from the earth or cooked up in our factories. By now, it has become clear that Nature can't endlessly perform these miracles, and is breaking down.

Fingering the "what" of our problems will ruffle some feathers: identifying the "why" of them is going to get a lot of powerful people hopping mad.

Some would suggest that it's our "instinct" as a species to expand our economic activities, but, instincts notwithstanding, humans were a relatively untroublesome species with small and stable economies for tens of thousands of years. Our troubles began only when we adopted an economic system — a way of organizing work — that requires unending expansion. In this century a global economic system is destroying the ecosystem by consuming it at an ever-increasing rate. It has now run up against the ecological consequences of its own success, and we are currently discovering the limits of human economic possibilities.

Many people put forward the idea that it's our desire for affluence and our belief in an always-increasing ability to control and manipulate Nature that has driven our industrial society to gobble up the ecosystem. Certainly, these ideas are self-destructive and must be discarded, but they are not at the crux of why we're now faced with the realistic possibility of extinction: preaching at people about personal values and habits is not going to save the world, because it's *not* ideas that make the world go 'round. Things work the way they do

because society is organized in a particular way, one that leads to certain types of life experiences and beliefs. We have to look at how we organize ourselves — specifically, how we organize ourselves economically, in our search for an explanation to our ecological conundrum.

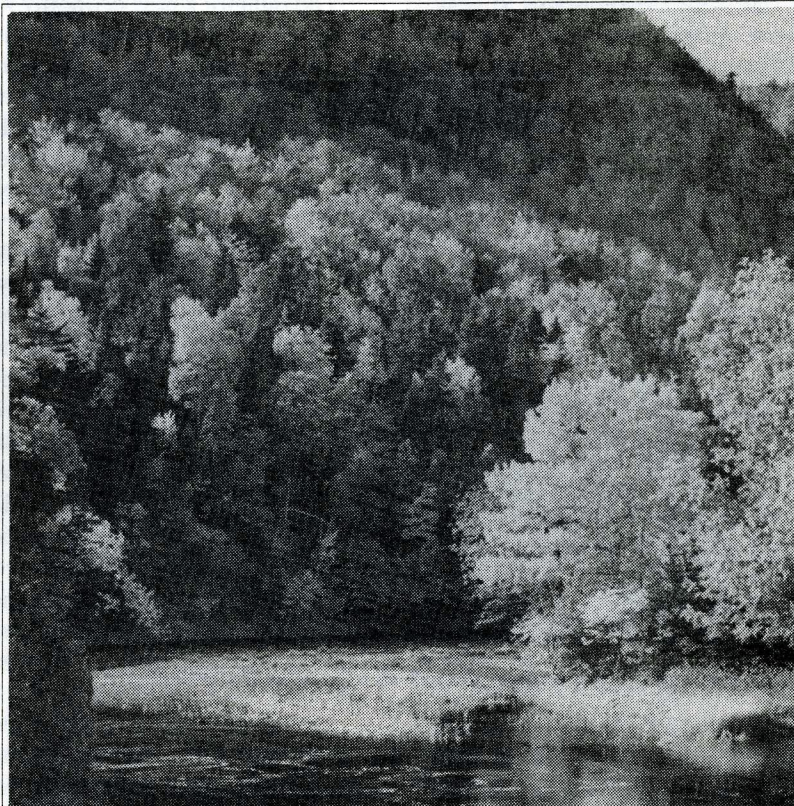
The way our economy is set up, when growth slackens we spiral into a “depression” that throws people out of work and, at the same time, threatens business enterprises with bankruptcy. This last fact is important, because our economy is not organized around the production of goods for everyone’s benefit, nor to employ everybody and allow us to make a decent living. It is, rather, organized around the production of goods to provide profits for business. And the point of these profits is not primarily to provide the corporate elite with their Lear jets and Rolls-Royces — this is just a minor, though very visible, footnote to all this economic activity. The main role of profits in our economy is to allow their makers to invest in another round of production that will result in more profits that can be invested yet again. This never-ending cycle of what economists call “capital accumulation” can happen only if the economy continues to expand, and *that* can happen only if more and more of our ecological resources are gobbled up at a faster and faster rate. The simple reason we are now up against it environmentally is because the expanding accumulation of capital requires us to destroy more and more of the ecosystem as each round of the investment-production-profit-reinvestment process proceeds, and we’re running out of ecology to gobble up.

If you suspect that all this is subversive of the established economic order, you’re right. The contention that capitalism is at the root of our troubles will be attacked by many who point to the historical similarities of our “free-market” system with the “socialist” societies of Eastern Europe. Both have histories of environmental degradation, and both have long accepted the doctrine of economic “progress” as a never-ending process. But, as the recent traumatic events in so many of those countries suggest, there was something profoundly perverse about these “socialist” economies that

have now been shaken to their very core. Arrests and executions of former leaders underline the fact that these societies had a ruling class, made up in large part of state-employed managers and Party officials. As well, there was a “middle class” of professionals, small managers, and the like. At the bottom of the heap was a politically confined working class. And the drive to forever expand, to develop ever-greater control of Nature in order to accumulate capital, was present there just as it is here. Rather than being “socialist” societies, these countries might best be defined as “state-capitalist” (some Marxists would prefer the term “Stalinist”). While the details of social class and the drive for capital accumulation in these societies might have been slightly different from those here, their basic socio-economic features were the same as ours. The present turmoil and uncertainty in Eastern Europe might prompt us to, optimistically, use the past tense in our description (the strength of the “green” movement in most of these countries gives one a certain solace), but one thing is sure: if these turbulent nations opt, *en masse*, for a “free-market” future, as many Western commentators so gleefully predict, the environmental consequences will only lead us all the more quickly to the global funeral pyre.

The economic system that virtually requires environmental destruction is not rooted simply in the ill-will of individual capitalists. Rather, it stems from the logic and structure of the system itself, which is based on competition among capitalists and the relationship between capital and labour. Because “free” workers can’t be easily worked to death, as slaves could be, new technologies are introduced to make the workers’ labour more productive and thus get the edge on the competition. Of course, other companies soon catch on and adopt the new technology themselves. Then, another round of technological “improvements” begins as each company tries to get more of the market than the other guys. Production must expand all the while, so more and more of our ecosystem disappears.

So, given that it’s our economic structure that has, environmentally, landed us in the



Our Maritime wilderness is rapidly dwindling. Economic activity dictates that we consume our environment at an ever increasing pace.

Nova Scotia Bureau of Information

soup, what are we to do now? These days, many environmentalists are enamoured of the solutions proposed in a document that resulted from a United Nations-sponsored study conducted in the early to mid-'80s. It's called the Bruntland Report, and its title is *Our Common Future*. Its authors avoid any analysis of the economic process that is driving us to destruction and fail to name which of our society's social groups are primarily responsible. In effect, Bruntland blamed everyone in general, and, thus, no one in particular. Its basic flaw is that it adopts the erroneous notion that our environmental problems are a result of society's mistakes or failures in managing the ecosystem, rather than a consequence of our very success at being able to exploit Nature so mercilessly in the quest for wealth. Bruntland's approach "environmental management," calls for technological fixes such as improved pollution controls, more recycling, the production of longer-lasting goods, better conservation measures and the like. These are all good and necessary things in themselves and are, of course, to be encouraged, but they are only band-aids. They can help us get better value out of what we draw from Nature but they cannot stop the economic cycle of accumulation that demands ever more of the planet's precious resources.

The hard truth of all this is that we can only clean up our environmental mess by reorganizing our economy, and thus our society, in such a way that it is no longer propelled by the desperate need to expand the accumulation of capital. First, we have to stop the growth of our economic activities and begin to produce only as much "stuff" as the ecosystem can, on an ongoing basis, supply us with. Then, we have to refrain completely from all

be a minor technical adjustment: it will require fundamental social change, the abandonment of our present social system. Clearly, business will resist it tooth-and-nail, because it means the end of its game of capital accumulation. Others who fear a short-term disruption to their economic security or who can be mobilized on an ideological basis will also resist the upheaval that will be an inevitable result of the restructuring of our society.

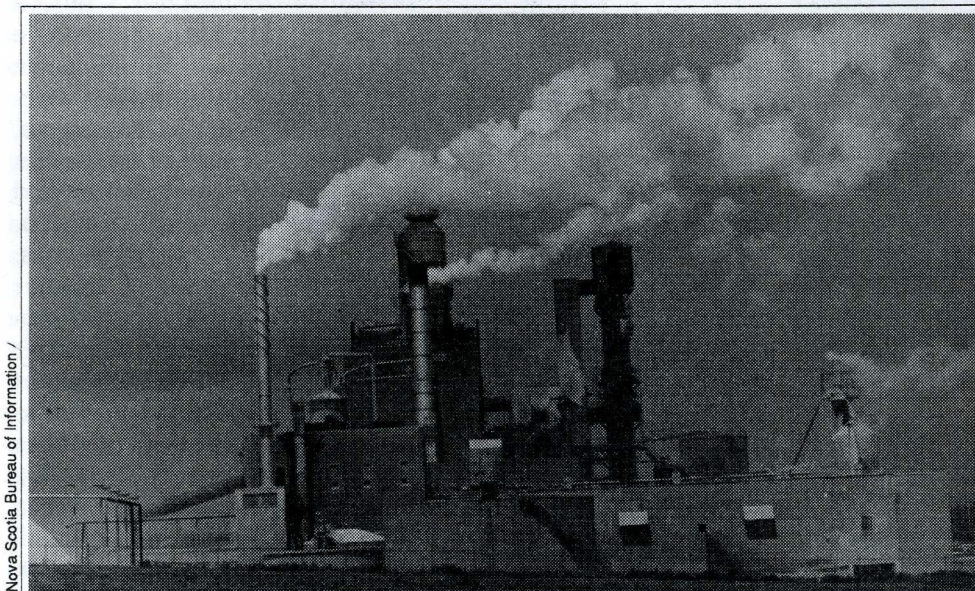
Business and its allies, we all know only too well, are a powerful bunch, and the resistance to change will be bitter. But most ordinary people have a real material interest in reorganizing our economy towards a smaller, more stable, "production-for-use" system that can fit within the limits of the ecosystem's capacity to sustain it. Most of us don't accumulate capital. Indeed, most of us consume only what our wages, salaries or small-producer incomes give us. And although we are all lured by the dreams of affluence portrayed on *Lives of the Rich and Famous*, and fantasies about Lotto 649 often dance in our heads, our real interests lay in a decent living standard, economic security and satisfying work. A scaled-down and reorganized economy could still meet these needs. On the other hand, our present unstable, built-for-capital-accumulation economy denies us not only a long-term future, but even short-term economic security, as corporations seek to go on a last, couple-of-decades-long binge of production before the ecological bust that is sure to follow.

Our Farms and Forests

The fight for a new economy will be every bit as difficult here in the Maritimes as anywhere else. If we're

going to win it, we'll have to know the strengths and weaknesses of those defending the old economy and be aware of how they operate ecologically. Here, the largest players are the primary industries — the fishery, agriculture and forestry. The fishery is now at its lowest point ever, but business interests in the other two are strong and will certainly offer stiff resistance in what will really be a battle for the region's, and the planet's future. And both industries depend directly on the exploitation of ecological processes.

Agriculture is a way of forcing Nature to produce desired plants and animals in large, concentrated quantities. It involves the creation of artificial ecosystems carved out of the natural one. There are five major ecological steps involved in farming:



The Scott Paper mill in Pictou County. The largest players in the regional economy are the primary industries.

those activities which Nature cannot healthily absorb and recycle. Although this will distress some people, the days when we could hope for endless affluence and ever-greater control over Nature are over. Or we are.

This reorganization of our economic activity will not

Nova Scotia Bureau of Information /

- selecting desired plants and animals from the larger ecosystem. For example, we choose to grow wheat rather than poison ivy, and corral cattle rather than wildebeest. Modern science allows us to cross-breed and hybridize plants and animals, but we are still dependent on the raw materials provided by Nature's gene pool;
- destroying the original ecosystem where we wish to farm. We cut down the forest or drain the marsh;
- implanting our artificial ecosystem. What was once a patch of forest becomes a field of potatoes;
- artificially, and temporarily, stimulating the fertility of the land. We enhance the soil's ability to support our chosen plants and animals through fertilizers, irrigation and other measures;

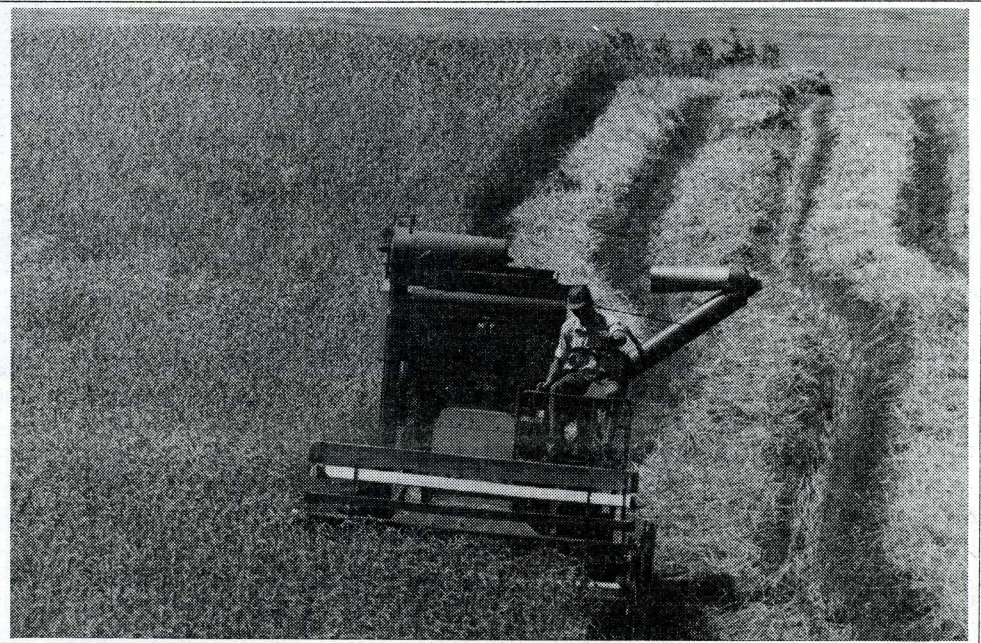
- fighting an ongoing battle with Nature's tendency to replace our artificial ecosystem with a more natural and diverse one. We chemically attack "weeds," insects and other pests that invade our farm and which, if unfettered, would eventually turn it back to its natural state.

Conventional forestry is little more than the "hunting and gathering" of trees. "Progressive" forestry, as taught in North American forestry schools, on the other hand, is attempting to deal with Nature in much the same way agriculture does.

There are many environmental problems that arise from these conventional agricultural and forestry practices, difficulties that themselves limit the future fertility of field and forest and which worsen as production becomes more intense. Agricultural fertilizers and biocides have poisoned the micro-ecology of the soil and there has been widespread damage to the wider ecology from farm run-offs, destruction of insect species and other causes. This has led to a gradual reduction in food quality, an increase in chemical residue contamination and consequent human nutritional and health problems. The farmland itself has been severely damaged. And in forestry, we have reached the stage where we've almost exhausted the wood supply through overharvesting, and corporate notions of "progressive" forestry have started to reproduce the problems of agriculture.

This sounds dire, but environmentalists have done considerable work in providing alternative, sustainable agricultural and forestry practices that can produce better food and good wood with less ecological disruption. These are designed to improve the soil's micro-

ecosystem by a reduction of the use of chemicals, and to build a more diverse, better balanced farm and woodlot environment. Such techniques appear to work, although there is certainly a need for more research and innovation.



Farming in the Maritimes. Agriculture involves the creation of artificial ecosystems.

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But even if these techniques can be improved, they will inevitably require a scaling-down of operations, and this will be resisted by those whose vested interests lie in the continual expansion inherent in the investment-production-profit-reinvestment cycle. In agriculture, these people include the larger local processors and distributors as well as the multinational agribusiness conglomerates. It is only the farmer, and those who might be dependent on him or her, that has an interest in preventing the environmental degradation of the land. For Maritime environmentalists, these farmers should be natural allies.

In the forestry industry, there are more players than there are in agriculture. There are woodlot owners, government, the large pulp companies, mill workers, small sawmill owners, and woodworkers themselves, whether they are employed by contractors, individual woodlot owners or directly by the big corporations. The major players here are government and the paper pulp companies, with sawmill owners, woods and mill workers, and woodlot owners in increasingly subservient positions.

Who, among these, might have an interest in a more diversified and ecologically sustainable forestry? Certainly not the pulp companies, for whom "cut and run," at worst, or "progressive" forestry agriculture, at best, are their means of obtaining cheap pulp wood. Government is not an independent actor: without a dramatic mobilization against corporate forestry — one that threatens the tenure of pro-business parties — it will continue to support corporate interests. Small sawmill operators, if they are not addicted to the investment-production-profit-reinvestment cycle, could be convinced that basic

economic changes are in their long-term interests. But the logical choice when environmentalists are looking for allies in the forestry industry are woodworkers, woodlot owners and mill workers. Their livelihood depends on the continuance of forestry production, and this is threatened by ecological exhaustion brought on by corporate policies. Unlike the companies, they have to live in their communities, and, it is hoped, to continue making a living there. A



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A worker at the Bowater mill near Liverpool. People like him should be the natural allies of environmentalists.

more diversified forest that gives sustainable yields — and, incidentally, a wider and more valuable range of final products — are clearly in their long-term interest.

So, What Now?

For Maritime environmentalists, the upcoming battle to make our region's contribution to saving the planet will be difficult, but it must be joined — here, across Canada and internationally — if our children and grandchildren are to have a chance at living decent lives, or, perhaps, any lives at all. We must do our utmost to enlist the support of the public in general, and of workers in our primary industries in particular.

The seeds of an alliance of environmentalists, primary producers and others to defend our common future are, in the 1990s, developing none too soon. The free-trade debate, in particular, has helped all these groups identify big business and its agenda for our future as something we have to resist. But the inclination of many in the environmentalist movement to disdain conflict and reject political and economic analysis hinders the coalescence of such an alliance, as, of course, does the power that the corporate sector currently holds

in our society. As environmentalists, we can only address the latter of these two problems if we first deal with and solve the former.

If we can achieve this first task, we will then have a realistic chance of successfully tackling the second. Vested interests, though, can be counted on to do their best to convince farmers, woodworkers, woodlot owners, fishermen, mill workers and the rest of us that our interests are really tied to their own. They've been doing this with considerable success in the Maritimes for years, and they're good at it. But recent events have convinced many, most particularly people who have depended on the fishery for putting food on the table, that the investment-production-profit-reinvestment cycle is a dead end. Other primary producers can, with the patient efforts of environmentalists and the evidence before them in their fields and forests, become convinced that the future lays down a new path.

We'd better get to work now. Time is running out — for all of us. •

Michael Clow teaches sociology at Saint Thomas University in Fredericton and is active in the environmental movement in New Brunswick.



From Understanding to Action

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What's Left?

Environmentalists and Radical Politics

Dramatic changes are afoot on the world stage, and it seems that they have precipitated the political left in developed countries like Canada into a state of crisis and transformation. No dominant thinkers have come forward to define what it is we are now experiencing, or to give voice and coherence to the new aspirations which events are forcing us to search for. This doesn't mean that we are simply sliding into chaos, although it may often feel that way to many of us: as Marx observed of his own revolutionary epoch, you can't judge an age by its consciousness of itself.

Traditionally, left politics in the West has tried to raise social awareness of the root causes of exploitation and oppression and lead the struggle to democratize economic and social life. The goal of socialist political activity has been to redirect the use of the immense productive capabilities of a modern industrial society towards socially useful and rational purposes.

One major task of the left has been to challenge the dominance of those elite groups that perpetuate the status quo to protect their own positions of power and privilege. It has also tried to mobilize and educate social movements in order to expand popular control in key areas of social and economic life — to build a new society "within the shell of the old."

Throughout the post-war era, this mixture of analysis and practical political instincts has supplied the Canadian left with its basic goals and strategies. During the long economic boom that stretched into the early '70s, social democratic politics had a particularly clear focus: the massive wealth generated at the center of the economy had to be redistributed. Workers would increase their share of the pie through unionization and collective bargaining. A continually expanding welfare state

Rick Williams

would meet the needs of the poor, the disabled and the elderly. Poorer regions would be helped along through public enterprises, and the community at large would benefit from a vast system of publicly funded services and cultural resources. A strong centralized state, an instrument of popular will, was seen as an essential counterbalance to what remained the driving force of the economy, private corporate capital.

While sharing many of the same basic values, the more radical among us rejected this "redistributionist" politics. Some saw the state as the principal enemy of workers and other oppressed groups, and so opted to work, not to influence or capture state power, but rather to undermine it. The welfare state in particular was attacked as a pervasive machine of social control.

Those with a strong grounding in Marxist theory tended to focus on the "accumulation process" — those basic mechanisms of capitalist economic growth that were seen to produce ever more social, regional and international inequality even as the total amount of wealth produced grew. This radical tradition of political economy has, within the left, always provided the strongest challenge to the redistributionist politics of the NDP, supporting both the struggle to defend the "social wage" (that is, the public sector), and the vision of a strong, progressive and democratic state.

Through its critical analysis of capitalist economic growth, radical political economy has also provided some potentially important theoretical bridges to the environmental movement. But its great weakness, perhaps, has been its failure to put forward a practical political vision of how we might struc-

ture and manage an alternative economic system.

Despite wide differences on many issues, social democrats and more radical thinkers on the left have implicitly shared one fundamental perspective — the certainty of future economic growth. Whether we were for redistribution or for radical restructuring, we have all assumed that expanding economic activity would generate new productive forces which could, if used rationally, provide full employment and raise living standards in the poorer regions of Canada, and even in the most impoverished nations of the world. In this region, for example, there is implicit support on the left for what a friend calls "Stalinist economics" — the view that new steel mills and automobile plants are the only real antidote to our economic marginality.

All of these ideas are part of a more or less unified ideology that is now in crisis as a result of contemporary intellectual and political upheaval. Without going into great detail, I would identify three principal trends in recent history that have given rise to this crisis of the left.

The first, obviously, is the dramatic breakdown of the hegemony of communist parties in Eastern Europe, a collapse brought on both by the failure of the system in practical economic terms and the popular struggles for democratic rights. Although few on the Canadian left have identified with the bureaucratic centralism of the Soviet model, it has always seemed significant to us that so many nations continued to reject the capitalist way of life. As these states now endeavour to restructure their political economies, there seems a strong possibility that the socialist baby may get thrown out with the Stalinist bath water. Until the real shape of "post-communism" eventually emerges, events in Eastern Europe will be a continuing public relations embar-

arrassment for Western radicals.

The second trend leading the left to its current dilemma has been the restructuring, led by the Thatcher-Reagan-Mulroney political agenda, of the Western capitalist economies. Traditional working-class political strength has been seriously undermined by free-trade arrangements, technological change and job de-skilling, policies of high unemployment, cuts to social programmes, freezes on hiring and wages, union busting strategies and the increasing mobility of international capital. Left-wing political parties with their base in the working class have been on the defensive everywhere as capital becomes more and more unfettered and better able to set its own rules.

The third, and perhaps most interesting trend, has been the dramatic shift in the sources of creative political action and opposition in the West. Over the past decade or so, the most profound challenges to the dominant order have come not from class conflict in traditional Marxist terms — clashes between industrial workers and factory owners — but from struggles of groups that Marxists have often depicted as “marginal” or “unproductive”; racial and linguistic minorities, women and independent producers. Oppositional political action has also come from recently forged “single issue” political movements, most importantly the peace and environmental crusades.

The women’s movement in particular has created a new ideological and practical base for political action. It has challenged the left with new values, issues, strategies and methods. Traditional working class organizations are being reformed and revitalized by the expanding presence of women, both in the workplace and the union hall. Slowly but surely, the labour movement is being revitalized by a new set of concerns and priorities that encompass personal and social issues in the community as well as in the workplace. Many old-line leftists will be dragged kicking and screaming into a non-sexist environment, but it seems clear most will get there one way or another.

The politics of the environmental movement are much more problematic: it is not yet clear how the “greens” will interact with the Canadian left and

the popular movements which are its natural constituency. Environmentalism is emerging, almost as a new religion, bringing light and meaning into the lives of upper-middle class people who are burnt out after a decade of hyper-consumerism. Within the movement, with a few important exceptions, there has been little hard-edged analysis of ways to go about saving the world (the task that, in their great humility, the greens have taken upon themselves). Most environmentalists have given little serious thought to the radical economic, and therefore political, changes that their agenda is certain to require. Much work remains to be done in this area.

This challenge before the environmental movement clearly relates to the crisis of the traditional left. Each movement has something the other needs.

Environmentalists have a head start in their recognition of the poverty of growth-oriented politics and economics. They are also leading the defence against impending ecological disaster. In doing so they have made some progress in developing a political base for green politics, mobilizing and inspiring young people and building links to native people and other threatened communities. They are clearly riding a wave of public concern and emotion, to the point where even right-wing governments and big business are finding it necessary to identify explicitly with “green-ness” and ecological consciousness.

But immense naïveté remains. Veterans of the women’s movement and the New Left of the ’60s and ’70s could

teach the greens a lot about the perils of success and co-optation. The language of change, be it “peace and liberation” or “saving the planet,” quickly loses its power when it is used to obscure issues of real political conflict on the one hand, or to sell commodities on the other.

Building a different kind of economy and a green way of life will require a radically new way of making decisions in society, and some powerful vested interests are going to lose out in the deal. David Suzuki argues that we have about ten years to decide to live differently: after that we will have few real options because we will be too busy just responding to accelerating crises. French ecologist André Gorz foresees a new authoritarianism emerging from environmental breakdown. He sees the possibility of a new ruling class emerging, made up of scientists and technocrats who will impose their solutions on a traumatized and forcefully controlled population.

If the long struggle for human rights and participatory democracy is not to be abandoned in the face of ecological crisis, the greens will have to develop a practical politics and build a social base. To accomplish this, they will have to plug into the socialist and feminist traditions of popular struggle and leadership through which the needs and aspirations of particular groups in particular places get linked to wider organizations and are given coherence and focus.

The greens will have to learn that while seals are important they don’t vote, they don’t join in protest marches

New Maritimes

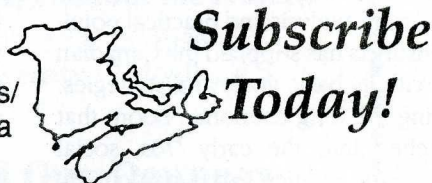
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and they don't sit down together to decide how the world is to be "saved." Human beings do all these things, and as recent events in southern Africa and Eastern Europe so clearly prove, when people get together they can move mountains. It is time the greens stopped waiting for the mountain to come to them. And when they do go to the mountain, they will need a lot of other people with them if they really want to make it move.

For its part, the left's great strength has been its commitment to human freedom and development and its effectiveness in mobilizing popular movements to fight for these things. Most of what is decent and progressive about Canadian society can be attributed in one way or another to political actions that were originally inspired and led by people on the left. These same instincts and capacities now have to be focussed on the tasks of imagining and fighting for a democratic, egalitarian society that isn't dependent on ever-expanding consumption and destruction of the natural world.

The left simply must come to grips with the limits of growth. Democratization of the economy and the redistribution of wealth are still fundamental issues on which to challenge capitalist dominance, but of themselves they are insufficient. The public imagination has been seized with both the dream of a clean, healthy and safe environment, and the fear of ecological disaster. There is a growing confusion on the left about the goals of popular struggle, given the contradictions between economic growth and expanding consumerism on the one hand, and the deterioration of the natural environment and of public health and well-being on the other.

What this country needs is a new synthesis of ideas. We need to combine the popular politics and radical humanism of the socialist left, the creativity and person-to-person effectiveness of feminism, and the energy and future-mindedness of the greens. Feminism and socialism have their intellectual roots in the social sciences — in understandings about how people grow, change and are affected by their social environment. The ecology movement seems to be rooted more in the natural sciences and in understandings about

the strengths and limits of the bio-system as a whole. To conceive a better world, to go out and fight for it, and eventually to win it, will require a merging of all this knowledge and understanding.

I started thinking about all of this at a recent gathering of the region's labour leaders when David Suzuki addressed the delegates (~~discussed elsewhere in this issue~~). At the end his speech, the audience gave him a heartfelt standing ovation. They were then given an opportunity to ask the speaker a few questions. The first person to the microphone was Donnie MacRae, a leader of the coal miners' union in Cape Breton. He said with obvious emotion that he understood now why coal mining would soon have to be phased out, but he just didn't know what he was going to say to his 2,500 union members who had no other way of making a living. Suzuki was unable to offer any real help or advise.

In that question lies the fundamental challenge facing the environmental movement — how to build a broadly based popular movement for ecological transformation that does not exclude and alienate the people who make their livings in industries that pollute and destroy. Environmentalists will have to get together with the left and others if we are to find an answer to Donnie MacRae's question, and we will have to work to make his union members participants in the change rather than victims of it.

In the audience's warm response to Suzuki, I got a glimpse of a potential new role for the left in Canada and beyond. What if environmentalism became a working-class issue, a focus of broadly based popular mobilization and political action? What if we were able to merge longstanding struggles for equality, democracy and economic justice with the battle for a safe and healthy natural environment?

Well, then, Number Twenty-one might just become a pretty interesting century. •

Rick Williams is an Associate Editor of New Maritimes.



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New Maritimes March/April, 1990

Tar Pond Tango

In 1963, Don MacPherson began working in the coke ovens at Sydney's steel plant. When these were shut down in 1988, he began full-time work with the Occupational Health and Safety Committee of the steelworkers' union, Local 1064 of the United Steelworkers of America. (He has been a member of that union for almost 27 years.) Here, he outlines some of the Committee's principal concerns about the environmental impact of years of malpractice on the part of Sysco management, the effects this has had — and will continue to have — on current and former steelworkers, the grave implications of this ecological abuse for people living in the Sydney area and on efforts underway to try to turn the situation around.

In 1986, the federal and Nova Scotia governments signed an agreement to clean up Sydney's notorious tar ponds. The two governments were to provide \$34 million for the project, and the coke ovens, the main source of pollution at the provincially-owned Sysco steel plant, were to be permanently closed by the summer of 1988. This would mark the end of an era in Cape Breton. Since before the turn of the century, basic steel production (the manufacture of iron using raw ore, limestone and coke, and the subsequent use of that iron to make various kinds of steel) had gone on in Sydney. This would now stop, and new technology would be introduced to make steel from scrap metal. The Sysco operation would essentially become a recycling plant, and the result would be the massive loss of at least 1,000 jobs.

Those of us who worked at the coke ovens had always been vaguely aware that there were health hazards involved, but we lacked any real understanding of their scope: we knew little about the quantity and toxicity of the poisons being poured into our air, water and soil. Whenever we brought up the issue of pollution control equipment with Sysco management, we'd be told that acquiring it would be too expensive because the coke ovens had not been designed to carry it. (We have subsequently learned that this was not true.) Then we'd be warned that if we pushed too hard about our health con-

Don MacPherson

cerns, we might all end up losing our jobs. With the signing of the 1986 agreement that would close the coke ovens permanently, the need for plant management to engage in this sort of industrial blackmail with its workforce came to an end. The agreement, however, gave rise to another, new form of blackmail: by tying the tar pond clean-up to the closure of the coke ovens and the introduction of new technology, both governments hoped to use the grave environmental concerns of the people of Sydney as a pretext to make the drastic employment cuts at the steel plant more acceptable. The bitter pill, we were assured, would be sugar-coated. But, given the record of both these governments, along with other facts we have unearthed, even this sugary promise has proven to be a largely hollow one.

We suspect that there will be only a superficial, cosmetic clean-up of the tar pond, and that government and Sysco management will continue to avoid taking responsibility for the environmental disaster of vast proportions that has taken place in our city. There has yet to be a comprehensive environmental assessment done on the tar pond, which was for decades the catch-basin for most of the plant's chemical waste. And while all agree that it contains many tonnes of highly carcino-

genic materials such as benzopyrenes and polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), official statements still make no mention of the much more lethal polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) we know to be present there.

From 1929 until just a few years ago, liquid PCBs were widely used as an apparently ideal insulator and coolant for electrical transformers. Thousands of gallons of it came into the Sydney plant over that time, but Sysco and provincial environment officials now claim that there are only 610 litres stored at the site. What happened to the rest of these PCBs? Having worked as an electrician at the plant for more than a quarter-century, I can answer that question: for decades, when transformer coolant (PCBs) was changed, as happened periodically, it was simply dumped into the plant's sewer system — if there were only 40-50 gallons of the liquid involved — and would empty directly into the tar pond. If much larger quantities involved, it was poured into a 1000-gallon tank, and was taken from there during summer to spray on the plant's roads to keep the dust down.

When we first questioned federal and provincial environmental officials about these PCBs, we were given the absurd answer that there were none in the tar pond. Eventually, after some random testing of a small number of pond samples, they admitted to trace amounts of the chemical being present, but asserted that these involved no risk

to health. A less superficial testing of the tar pond, would, we believe, reveal dangerous PCB levels there.

The current plan for the pond clean-up involves the installation of an incinerator, which will operate at 900° Celsius, to burn the dredged-up sludge. This will successfully dispose of the PAH materials, but PCBs can only be safely destroyed at temperatures of 1,200° or more. Burning them at lower heat levels only causes the chemical to break down into lethal gases of various types, as happened during the notorious 1988 fire at St.-Basile-le-Grand in Québec. The proposed clean-up plan also involves using the incinerated ashes as fill for the present tar pond site. But the noxious materials are mixed with heavy metals and other non-flammable plant wastes, along with mud and rock, and ash is an unlikely result of burning.

Another problem with the clean-up plan as presently proposed is that most estimates of the sludge's depth are in the area of fourteen to eighteen feet. The plan itself is unclear as to how deeply the pond will be dredged. We fear that a merely superficial dredge will take place, the remaining sludge

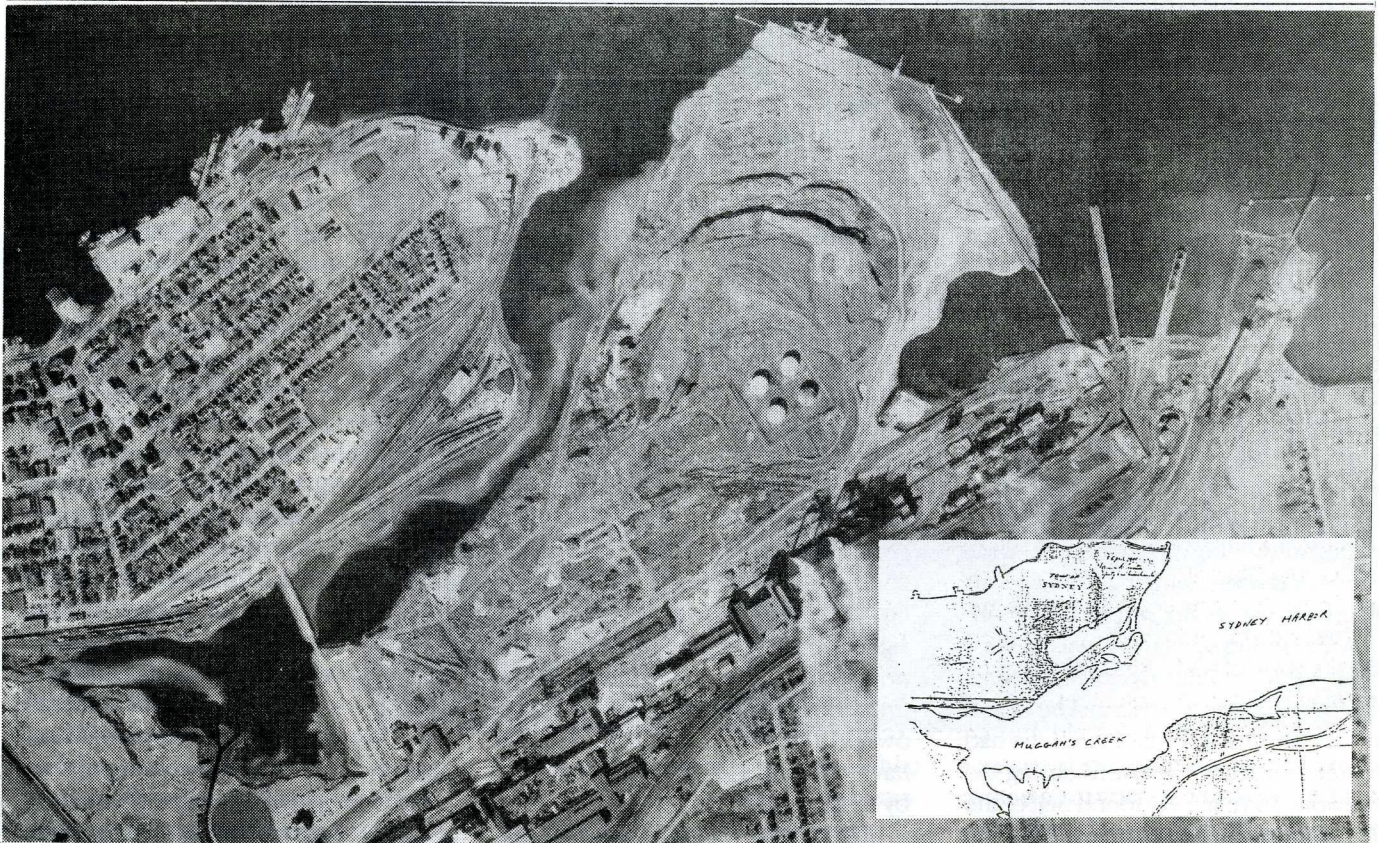
will be thinly covered with fill, and the authorities will then declare the job complete. When we raised these fears with officials from both levels of government, we were told that there is only \$34 million available and to undertake a clean-up of the scope we wanted would cost ten times as much. So, we were given to understand, a complete clean-up was not in the cards.

The clean-up plan is restricted to the tar pond, but there is strong evidence that environmental damage has spread far beyond that small chemical cesspool. The matter of pollution to internationally notorious Boston Harbour was the focus of much attention during the 1988 American Presidential election. PAH levels in Sydney Harbour are more than twenty times those found in Boston's waters. As well, there is no provision in the plan to clean up the area immediately around the old coke ovens. The soil there is saturated with carcinogens and lies above the city's water table, posing a dangerous threat to the community's drinking water.

Officials from Environment Canada have acknowledged that pollution has spread far beyond the tar pond itself and have said they might be willing to

deal with the harbour pollution and the contamination around the coke ovens site, but not before the tar pond project itself is completed, which is expected to take ten years. To date, no serious official investigation into the spread of pollution beyond the confines of the pond itself has been conducted.

Part of the 1986 agreement involved the retraining of displaced coke ovens workers. The federal Environment Minister of the time, Tom MacMillan, initially spoke of 1,400 jobs being created by the clean-up, but a few months later he revised his estimate and began talking of 1,400 "man-years," which translates to only 140 jobs over the life of the project. (Apparently, this was to be a males-only affair.) In contrast to MacMillan's statements, a close examination of the proposed clean-up by a steelworkers' union committee (the Occupational Health and Safety Committee — OHSC) of which I am a member concluded that the best that could be hoped for in terms of employment creation was seven or eight jobs over the life of the project. Of course, none have been created to date, almost two years since the shutting down of the coking operation.



MRMC Inc.

Contemporary aerial view of the Sydney area. Inset is a drawing of the same area in 1901. In the intervening years, plant wastes have filled in a large area that was formerly underwater.

When the ovens were shut down in February of 1988, the OHSC was very concerned about the health of men who had been affected by the unsafe working conditions there. At the time,

cancer-related. This horrifying statistic is about six times the national average.

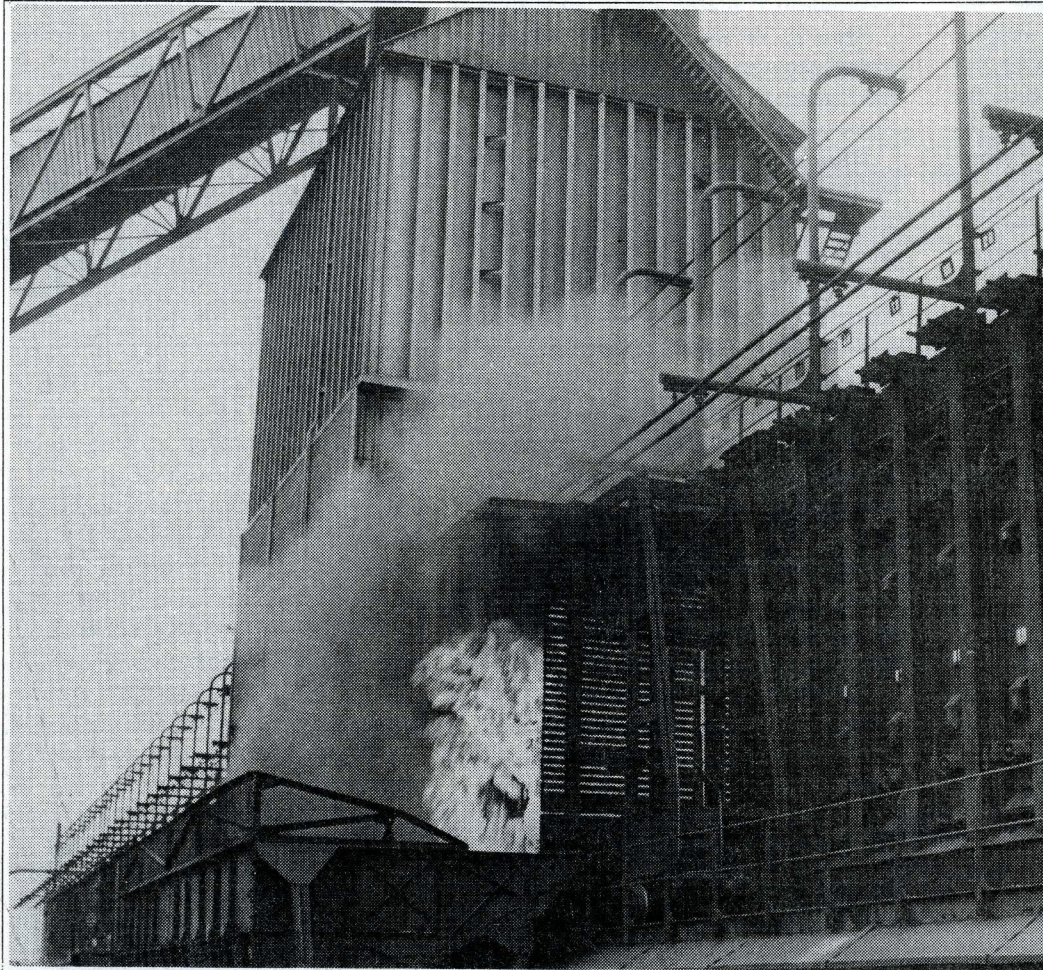
A few months after the ovens closed, the OHSC was anonymously given copies of two Environment Can-

aware of the data and recommendations contained in these Environment Canada reports, but chose to ignore them. The reports themselves were classified as "internal" and "restricted," and were securely kept in Sysco management's files, well away from the scrutiny of workers and the public at large. They remained there until we received our copies in April of 1988. Even after we had come into possession of these reports, Sysco management continued to deny they had ever seen them. During all this time, huge volumes of poisons were being pumped into the air, water and soil, as federal officials turned a blind eye to the environmental carnage.

The laxity of Environment Canada officials when it came to the Sydney plant was in marked contrast to the manner in which regulations were applied in Ontario at the same time. Algoma Steel, which operates a large plant in Sault Ste. Marie, was threatened with closure by federal officials if emissions were not promptly reduced. Improved pollution control equipment was quickly installed there.

Emission studies done during the mid-'80s revealed that cancer-causing emissions of PAHs and benzopyrenes from Sysco's single coking operation were greater than those emanating from all fourteen coking operations at the Dofasco and Stelco steel plants in Hamilton combined.

In 1985, following a break in coke production due to over-supply, Sysco's plan to resume operations were met by open objections from Health and Welfare Canada, which had recently completed a study that indicated re-opening the ovens without proper pollution control equipment would increase cancer morbidity and mortality among workers, and probably among Sydney residents as well. Despite these warnings, coking operations, without pollution controls, were resumed. In all, 66 different gases were being released



The coke ovens in operation.

ada reports that had been conducted at the steel plant in the early '70s. These documented levels of plant emissions that were anywhere from 2,800 to 6,000 percent higher than those permitted by Chapter 47 of the federal Clean Air Act. The reports recommended immediate installation of pollution control equipment at the coke ovens and other plant operations. (Anti-pollution equipment could have easily been installed during construction work on the coke ovens in the early 1950s. Equipment was designed for the ovens at the time but was not installed, presumably as a cost-cutting move, by Dosco, which then owned the plant. Installation would have reduced gas and dust emissions by 90 percent.)

During the 1970s, Sysco management and the provincial Departments of Health and Environment were all

the provincial Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) recognized only one malady — pneumoconiosis, or "black lung," a disease common among coal miners — as work-related, and thus only those suffering through this specific industrially-caused disease were eligible for compensation payments. But many others had spent years in and around the coke ovens and were now being ravaged by a wide range of diseases ranging from various forms of cancer to respiratory problems. Sysco management was still asserting that the coke ovens had been a safe working environment. The OHSC researched the records of men who had retired from the coke ovens during the previous 26 years. We found that of the 111 deaths which had occurred among workers who had spent considerable time there, 71 — or 64 percent — were

into the atmosphere, to be carried hither and yon at the whim of the winds.

All this pollution has taken its toll on the people of Sydney. In 1984, after requests from area doctors alarmed by the high number of cancer cases coming into their offices, provincial Health Minister Gerald Sheehy commissioned a survey on the incidence of cancer in industrial Cape Breton. However, he directed that investigators focus on the role of personal behaviour, or lifestyle, among cancer patients and not address environmental matters. The survey, not surprisingly, uncovered unusually high cancer rates in the city, but, because of its restricted mandate, concluded that this was simply because Sydney residents didn't eat enough green vegetables and had other poor health habits. Environmental factors were not even addressed by the survey, which has been dubbed "The Broccoli Report" by Sydney residents.

Sheehy's survey, while basically designed as a white-wash of our environmental concerns, showed results that lead those of us on the OHSC to suspect that the astronomical cancer levels we found among former coke oven workers might well be reflected in a properly conducted city-wide investigation. Last September, we received indications that officials of Health and Welfare Canada are prepared to conduct such a study, but they need a request from provincial officials in order to proceed. We then approached Health Minister David Nantes about this and were treated to a fine display of bureaucratic buck-passing: he asserted that the matter was solely the responsibility of the provincial Department of Labour because it is responsible for the WCB, and that the high

cancer rates were not a community health issue. Our position is that the fouling of our environment is much more than a compensation problem: it is a community health problem, and it is

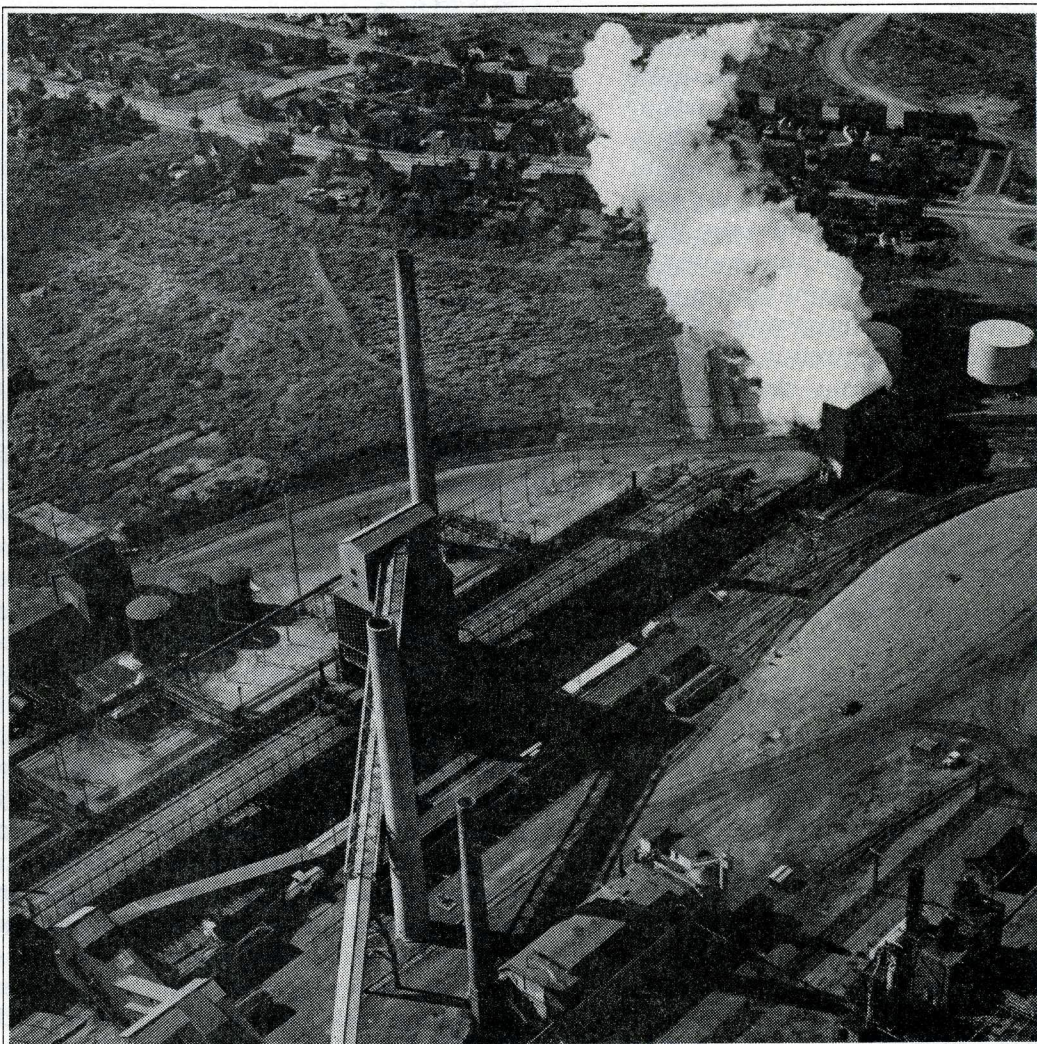
claiming more victims every month. The OHSC has joined with environmental groups in the area to draw attention to the ongoing criminal negligence of Sysco management and the provincial government, as well as to work together on other environmental issues.

The OHSC has had some success in its work. The provincial Department of Labour now at least admits that the coke ovens themselves were a hazardous working environment, although its WCB is still restricting eligibility to those who worked directly on coke production, thus excluding the many maintenance workers, bricklayers, electricians, millwrights, pipefitters and others who worked around the ovens for many years. As well, the only disease the WCB recognizes as

cancer, as well as respiratory and circulatory ailments.

We've been cheered by some recent events: two women, widowed several years ago, have received favourable Survivor's Benefits settlements from the WCB. As well, the broad community support we've received when tackling environmental, health and compensation problems has been very heartening.

All these struggles, however, face a long, uphill road. An ecological and biological crime of vast dimensions has been committed in Sydney, and those most responsible for it were agents of governments that are, theoretically, mandated to *prevent* such things. If the biological and environmental damage that has taken place here is to be rectified and prevented from happening



Beaton Institute

grounds for benefits to victims or their surviving family members is lung cancer, which is far too restrictive. The OHSC is working to have the criteria broadened to include other forms of

again, there must be a tremendous transformation of outlook on the part of bureaucrats and plant managers in the first instance, and of steelworkers and Sydney residents as well. •

Warming Up on Power Politics

Of John Buchanan, the Garden Path and Us

There is no company more aptly named than the Nova Scotia Power Corporation (NSPC). The provincially-owned corporation is all about power. But not in the traditional or popular sense of the word — not in the sense of the “power” that heats our home or brightens our living room. NSPC is, rather, all about “power-over,” power-as-authority, power-as-dominion.

This is nothing new: energy development in Nova Scotia has never been about lights or heat or transportation. Whether it's coal- or oil-fired, energy is politics in this province. The debate over energy has nothing to do with what the public needs or wants: it's a power struggle, plain and simple. On one side are people who want to gain control over the energy they use. On the other are the powers-that-be, fighting to maintain their control.

The editors of *The New Catalyst*, an environmental publication in British Columbia, put it this way: “Control of power-as-energy gives illegitimate political power and ‘authority’ to the ones that continue to operate on the self-interested, greedy path of power-over. The task before us then, is to resist such authority, to build a society based on power-from-within, based on supporting, encouraging and loving the inherent value of every living thing. We can ourselves switch to renewable forms of energy, we can struggle for local control in our watersheds, insist on long-term planning based on the health and well-being of ourselves and the planet, and say no to mega-projects... as well as questioning environmentally-friendly capitalism.... Moving in these directions, we change the structure of the energy industry and of our institutions, empower the local communities — the legitimate authorities — and begin to build a world that rejects power-over.”

Lois Corbett

Premier John Buchanan is an expert in power-over. He has a long history of using energy as a political platform. In 1978, his party turfed the Liberal government out of office after an election campaign focussed on increasing power rates. Since then, Buchanan has never looked back. He has invested a lot of time pushing coal-fired electricity, both in Province House and at national First Ministers' meetings. And he doesn't want to hear anything negative about his grand schemes.

He has accused environmentalists of wanting to shut Cape Breton down, in the process throwing hundreds of miners out of work and threatening the economic stability of Nova Scotia as a whole. And recently, he donned the environmentalists' cloak himself, claiming that the province is planting more than enough trees to combat global warming, so we needn't worry.

That's very reassuring, John, but we'd have to plant trees covering an area the size of Australia to deal with the pollution we're spewing into our skies every day. And on top of that little problem, anybody who takes even a quick glimpse at the province's forestry can see that we're cutting our woodlands at a rate that can't be sustained. Buchanan, in fact, is digging the province, and the planet, deeper into the ditch of environmental degradation: we're producing more and more greenhouse gases because of our reliance on fossil fuels, and we're cutting trees at an alarming rate, removing from the planet its capacity to deal with at least some of man's harmful emissions.

The premier's confusion over environmental issues is not inconsistent with his energy policies. To him, energy development is synonymous with a healthy industrial sector that devel-

ops energy resources as commodities. He sees tax benefits. And, of course, he sees jobs, jobs, jobs. But what he sees most clearly is votes — and votes represent power, the real power of staying in control of the province, directing its economic development and governing people's lives.

It's not as if Buchanan and other powerful people don't have choices. In Nova Scotia, and clear across the country, we could choose to follow what's called the “soft” energy path. This path is “characterized by social control over investment at the local, provincial and national levels,” according to the authors of *The Power to Choose: Canada's Energy Options*. “Energy planning of this kind is achieved by matching actual needs with available resources,” they say, adding that the soft energy approach “emphasizes conservation of non-renewable sources of energy using technologies that are accessible at the community, farm, neighbourhood and family levels. Such an energy path promises a cleaner environment, more stable energy prices, more jobs, safer working conditions and a more decentralized society with greater local or community control.”

The soft energy path option isn't a new idea. Gatt-Fly, a national ecumenical social action organization published *The Power to Choose* in 1981, and environmentalists across Canada have been harping about the path's benefits for decades. But energy policy in this country has taken a different course, one that follows the corporate energy road. Here, energy planning is based on capital-intensive, large-scale projects such as Hibernia, off Newfoundland, or Point Aconi, which will burn Cape Breton coal to generate electricity. This may increase NSPC's profits, but it will also further threaten the already imperiled natural environment.

Every year, the world's energy sys-

tem releases 21 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere as well as substantial quantities of two other important greenhouse gases — methane and nitrous oxide. The Worldwatch Institute says carbon-containing fuels provide almost four-fifths of the world's energy, and their use continues to grow at a rate of three percent every year. Reversing this trend and moving the world gradually away from its massive dependence on fossil fuels are essential to climatic stability. If the use of fossil fuels continues to grow, the earth will become uninhabitable long before all its fuel reserves are exhausted.

The top guys at NSPC tell us that global warming isn't an issue. "Don't worry your little heads about it," they say, "scientists don't agree." But Kenneth Hare, Chairperson of the Climatic Planning Board of Canada, can answer that red herring: "As a scientist, I hence confine myself to saying the best available explanation for the upward trend of surface temperature is the build-up of the greenhouse gases.... As an advisor to my government... I can and do tell them that the greenhouse warming will continue and accelerate. There will always be conservatives who decline to go this far. At the age of 69, I can no longer afford to be conservative."

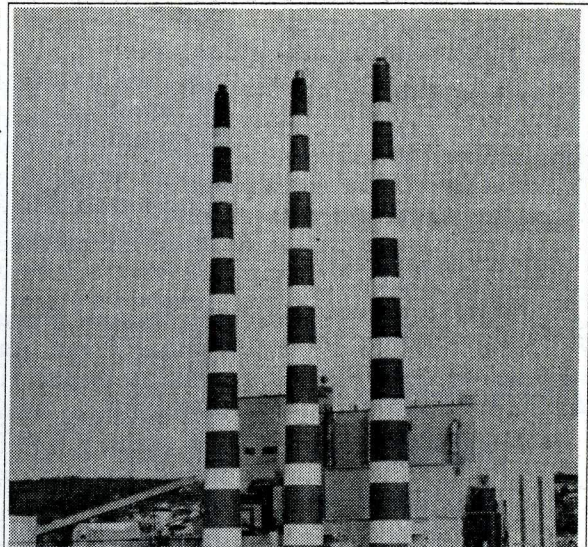
Environmental organizations from across Canada last November launched a ten-year campaign aimed at making the country a leader in the international fight against global warming. The groups' goal is modest: they want a 20 percent reduction in Canadian emissions of greenhouse gases by the year 2005. Unfortunately, the battle they've contracted to lead is far from simple. Canadian politicians, and Buchanan is a prime example, have failed to grasp the urgency that environmental groups and many individuals feel is necessary if we are to escape the heat trap we've set for ourselves. The country's energy ministers, during a September meeting, decided against adopting a target for reducing carbon dioxide emissions, calmly suggesting instead, in that all-too-familiar polite Canadian way, that they "encourage everyone to work towards a reduction of 20 percent" of the 1988 levels. They set no timetable and no targets. Sounds like a sure-fire plan, doesn't it?

But it's typical. In the communique released following their meeting, the ministers noted the growing international awareness of the need to protect the environment and promote sustainable development. But they stumbled over "uncertainties that remain about the role of the greenhouse gases, the magnitude and timing of this effect, and about the impact of atmospheric changes on the climate of individual countries and regions." Our federal and provincial ministers decided to dodge the issue of global warming, saying silly things like "cutting back greenhouse gases could have significant economic and social costs," which, of course, "need to be examined more carefully."

Of course, reducing the amount of fossil fuels we burn *will* have social and economic costs. It might, for one thing, cut into profits made by multinational corporations. Big companies are noted for doing nasty things when their profits are threatened. Many pack up and leave, throwing hundreds of Canadians into the unemployment lines. Others simply roll over the increased costs of doing business to their customers, and force poor people to struggle even harder to heat their homes and put food on their tables.

When politicians talk about "suffering social and economic costs," they're not really talking about people, they're talking about business. Corporate Canada is worried that if our ministers of energy put their concern for the environment over their natural tendency to serve business, mega-projects like the \$5-billion Hibernia oil field off Newfoundland, the \$4-billion OSLO oil sands development in Alberta, construction of Point Aconi and implementation of other schemes will be jeopardized.

But even the editors of *The Financial Post*, one of the country's biggest business boosters, don't like all the implications of energy mega-projects. They recently wrote: "It's a simple rule: if the projects aren't economic, subsidies aren't justified; if they are economic, subsidies aren't needed. And



One of NSPC's generating plants. Buchanan envisions many "carbon" copies of this sort.

whatever the economics of the situation, it is environmentally unacceptable to subsidize the production — and hence the consumption — of fossil fuels. Climatic concerns reinforce those of efficiency."

Last year, Canada released 473 million tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. If we don't set reduction targets soon, it's expected that we'll pour more than 700 million tonnes into the air by 2005. Point Aconi alone will pump 1.1 billion kilograms of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere annually. Increasing levels of greenhouse gases have already raised the planet's average temperature and rapid warming will lead to climatic instability that could disrupt farming, increase the frequency of floods, droughts and hurricanes, move deserts, collapse entire ecosystems and raise the level of the world's oceans.

The battle of the corporate versus the soft energy paths won't, of course, be settled just by looking at environmental issues. The authors of *The Power to Choose* recognize that, without social transformation, there can be no quick technological solutions to our energy problems: "The alternative of a soft energy path is real only if we have, or win, the power to choose our energy future. The choice of an energy path is therefore, at heart, a political question." •

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1/Erik Kristiansen
Time, Memory and Rural Transformation

The Channel Shore is clearly the pre-eminent text in the Maritime literary canon

***The Channel Shore*, By Charles Bruce, Formac Press, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1988; (Re-issued. Originally published, by MacMillan, Toronto, Ontario, 1954.) 398 pages; \$16.95 (paper).**

***World Enough and Time: Charles Bruce, A Literary Biography*, by Andrew Wainwright, Formac Press, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1988; 270 pages; \$16.95 (paper).**

The handwriting is on the wall — and on the dory. The spirit of this Nova Scotia seems to be fast disappearing to wherever the spirit of a countryside flees when others than the planters put their brass and specious touch on it. Whether...an occasion for hurrah or alas — “progress,” the advance spy of Babel and steel, has already begun to infiltrate and infest the land, begun to shoulder its individuality aside and mark it out for parcelment...the juggernaut which levels all things to sameness.

—Ernest Buckler (1973)

Human experience is inescapably historical. We are all social beings inscribed with the realities in which we live our collective existence. Historical inscriptions penetrate our senses to the quick, shaping psyches and entrenching themselves strategically in the very heart of our imagined separateness. We cannot be refugees from history. An awareness of this fact is imperative for the creator of fictional worlds — an inscriber of texts. History is more than background for “the story”; it occupies even the most remote corner of the foreground itself. In every literary text, ways of seeing the world are affirmed or rejected: in each one, we can witness the evaluation and transformation of existing values, behaviours, and utopian impulses.

The deluge of history, this continual presence of transience, forms the very pith and marrow of Charles Bruce’s aesthetic vision. *The Channel Shore* — which, to my mind, is clearly the pre-eminent text in the

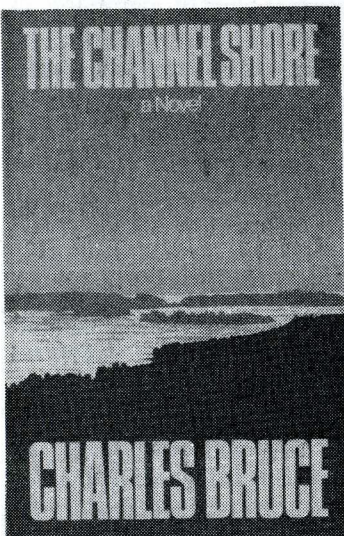
Maritime literary canon — calls attention to the historical transformation of the region. Bruce’s critical gaze focusses brilliantly on both the continuity and the discontinuity of our historical experience.

It focusses, in particular, on the distance which separates urban capitalism’s emergent social, economic, political and cultural realms from the mode of living associated with small Maritime farming and fishing communities. Bruce brings to life the transformation of class and gender relations that accompanied the gradual decline of the small commodity mode of production: he enables us see what was entailed in the far-reaching changes to our mode of work in the rural Maritimes. In his fictionalized *Channel Shore* — situated in the Port Shoreham area of Guysborough County, Nova Scotia — Bruce captures the historic movement away from a culture and sense of community that were suffused with an ideology of kinship relations and a jack-of-all-trades craft mentality.

This historical rupture is situated at the very centre of both *The Channel Shore* (1954) and Bruce’s later collection of thematically connected short stories, *The Township of Time* (1959). Indeed, his consciousness of an historical mutation — and the attempt to overcome it — is the integrating preoccupation of Bruce’s world view. Sadly, the depth of his historical insight, along with the critical edge of his thinking, have been largely ignored.

Early in *The Channel Shore*, we are confronted with a quotation from the first volume of Marx’s *Capital*. Stewart Gordon, a descendant of pre-industrial craft producers, puzzling through the intricacies of Marx’s political economy, discloses the seriousness of his reading: “This Marx,” he remarks to his daughter, “Sometimes, you have to learn a whole new language. Listen to this:

The two phases, each inverse to the other, that make up the metamorphosis of a commodity constitute a circular movement, a circuit: commodity-form, stripping



off of this commodity-form, and return to the commodity-form.

Now," Stewart concludes, "I've got to go back and figure out commodity-form again." It seems unlikely that Bruce would have introduced Marx merely to add a little spice his work. This reference seems, instead, to provide a conceptual key that allows us entrance to a fictionalized Maritime community in economic and cultural transition.

Using the concept of commodity production to map a route through *The Channel Shore* becomes quite reasonable when we examine the political economy of the community described early in the novel. Except for a single month during the summer herring run, nothing remains of traditional fishing life. Those engaged in economic activity "on the Shore" are a mere handful of men — cultural conservatives out of step with their own time — who choose to march to the tune of a distant, long-dead drummer. Describing the historic settlement and use of land and sea around the Shore, the novel's narrator sketches a history of its development:

This was the frontier of an old prosperity. By the opening years of the nineteenth century all the land along the water from Copeland to Findlay's Bridge had been taken up. Later, having served its first purpose by freeing its settlers from the bonds of Europe, the Shore was to become a breeding-place for migrants, men and women who were born there, raised there, and who left the Shore in youth for the States and the West.

But during one golden period, the forty or fifty middle years of the century, it had prospered by the standards of the time in its own right. For a while it had exported products other than its flesh and blood, prospered on the basic economics of salt fish, enhanced at times by lesser pursuits — by vessel-building and coastal trade, cattle and sheep and squared hardwood timber. It was a harsh prosperity, based on circumstances that were not to last; but while they lasted, the Shore overflowed, up its small and crooked water-courses, over the fold in the land, into the standing woods. Younger sons and new settlers chopped out and burned and planted new fields, a mile, two miles and more, from salt water.... but most of the back fields had returned to woods.

Bruce's novel spans the years 1919 to 1946. As soon as they are old enough to work for wages, young people leave the Shore. A few do remain, but, we're told, the best go to Toronto or further west, while the remainder find work in "the Boston States."

The central character of the book is Grant Marshall, an ambitious and talented man who adamantly refuses to leave his life on the Shore for steady work. He combines the clearing and working of a small farm with short periods of work away from the Shore, undertaken only in order to accumulate much-needed cash. Eventually, he hires part-time labourers to cut pulpwood and lumber that he sells for a profit. He then goes on to establish a lumber mill, one of the few distinctly capitalist enterprises along the entire Shore. Grant's business activities contribute to a far-reaching change in the class organization of the area. Around Grant and his foster-son, Alan, will emerge a capitalist class, and their wage labourers will form a part-time working class.

Along with this capitalist modernization and the rapid extension of the marketplace, a cultural transformation takes place as well. *The Channel Shore* explores the waning and eventual demise of pre-capitalist extended kinship bonds, and their replacement by a new capitalist spirit that only *appears* to express the collective interests of a community in transformation. Bruce describes an economy composed of a single small commodity-producing class on its way to becoming part of a more complex society structured around the existence of a highly differentiated class system.

Two fundamentally different points of view emerge in *The Channel Shore* concerning the development of capitalism in the countryside. One is scathingly critical of rural capitalism, while the other accepts it as inevitably necessary if rural traditions are to be preserved. The critical viewpoint is represented by a traditional, pre-capitalist conservatism rooted in the independence of the small farmer and fisherman. These people work for themselves, because, to depend on someone else for wages means a loss of freedom. And, as one character argues, it was to rediscover independence that the Shore was settled in the first place:

Some got pitched off the land when the lairds began to see more money in sheep than people. I'll bet you most of them ended up here because they couldn't stand being

As soon as they are old enough to work for wages, young people leave the Shore

The
intrusion of
hydra-
headed time
never
diminishes.
History fills
every corner
of this work.

pushed around. Highlanders, lowlanders, Irishmen, Catholics, Protestants, Loyalists, all kinds.... Only one thing they all had. They will not take a pushing 'round.... Nobody else is telling them....What they did, getting out, was pull off a kind of rebellion. The only kind they could. Personal independence... For a while it opened out on this Shore. ... Then steam came, and other things, and it wouldn't work any more. A lot went to the States, and west, and some did all right. Then at last there was nowhere to go but cities. When you go to a city...unless you're good, in a profession or the arts, you put yourself under a boss. You're back where you were a hundred and fifty years ago. ...

'That's why I'm back... What could a man do, that had venture in it, and independence? I looked at what I'd got by leaving. Running water and central heat, and something — oh, cultivation...Well, they seemed to me to be cancelled out by the pulling and hauling, the pressure to say "Yes" when you wanted to say "No" ...

In these lines, the novel's dominant but declining ideology — that of the small-commodity producer with a community-rooted, pre-capitalist economic independence as its ideal — becomes quite evident.

Throughout this century, small farmers and fishermen in the Maritimes have frequently encountered economic hardship. We learn in *The Channel Shore* that;

...Years ago things changed in this part of the country. We got into hard times. It's like a tide, only it's years between the high and low. The tide went out because the nature of things changed... Fish got to be business, and the mack' rel scarce... More money for day labour and less for what you could catch and grow. Cheaper to buy than to make...When a man made wages and spent them there was more to show in the house. Boughten carpets, parlour organs... but after a while there wasn't enough work for wages to go 'round. You can't turn the tide, so people had to leave to find what they wanted...

This comparison of the economy to natural movements of the tide is not insignificant. In *The Channel Shore*, a transforming economy is experienced as an object of a hostile nature, intrinsically opposed to the needs of a humane community. And, it appears that societies *are* held hostage by

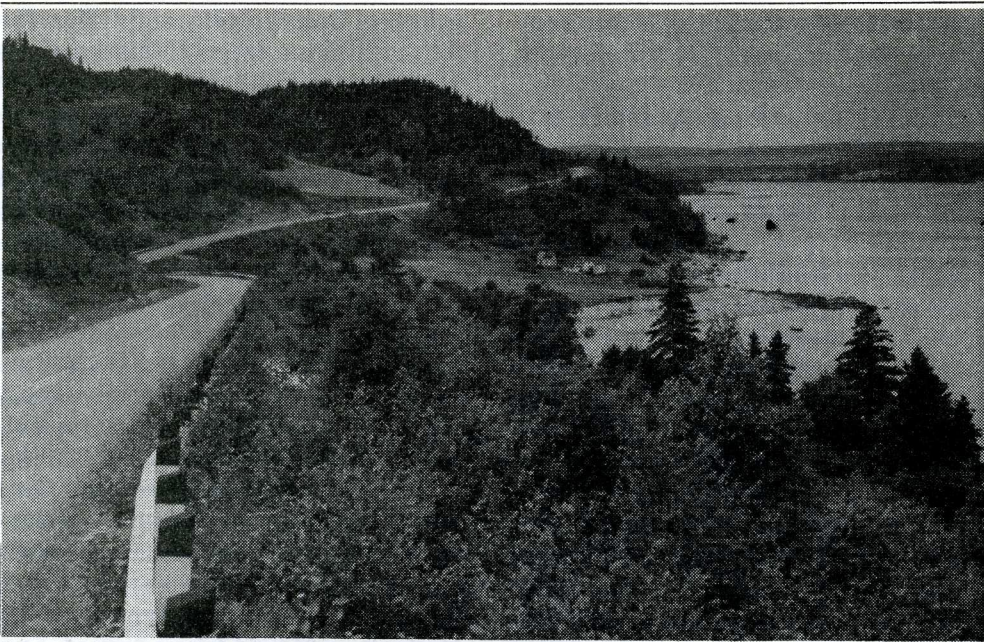
their economic organization. The gradual emergence of a commodity culture — one based on the production of goods and services for exchange in an impersonal marketplace — reinforces this sense of powerlessness in a changing world. And, ultimately, it comes to undermine Bruce's beloved rural community as well.

This perception of an economy as both autonomous and "natural" — rather than "cultural" — establishes the boundaries of Bruce's historical vision. His tidal metaphor betrays the deliberate infiltration of history into *The Channel Shore*. The compelling intrusion of hydra-headed time — the word "time" occurs repeatedly throughout the novel — never diminishes. History, like the all-encompassing and unavoidable movement of the tides, fills every corner of this work. Therein lies its brilliance, but also a significant limitation that weakens this work as a historical novel: we are presented with major economic forces severed from the history of social relations, both along the Shore and in the larger world outside.

Bruce's critique of wage labour draws out the subversive sub-text of the novel and shows that it is, in part, one of resistance to wage labour and the capitalist mode of production that was emerging on the Shore. It is in this context of the emergence of capitalist relations of production and the beginning of a capitalist commodity culture, that Bruce strategically situates his quotation from Marx's *Capital*. However, he presents the budding capitalist, Grant Marshall, in so favourable a light that the blunt critique of capitalism's rural expansion, saved for the last chapter of the novel, is seriously weakened. (It is entirely possible that Bruce was in agreement with this criticism of the social relations of capitalism, but thought the unfortunate transformation of rural Maritime life was inevitable.)

The Channel Shore is, in short, a sophisticated social account of the undermining of a pre-capitalist rural community. With masterful historical insight, Bruce provides us with glimpses of the complex interplay between the major centres of capitalist development and regions on their periphery. That influence is economic, social and very, very cultural.

It is to be hoped that Andrew Wainwright's *World Enough and Time: Charles Bruce, A Literary Biography* will bring to an end the virtual critical void surrounding Bruce's writing. In its conclusion, the author questions this neglect:



Rural Guysborough County: "I'll bet you most of them ended up here because they couldn't stand being pushed around."

"Why this disappearance from the critical scene almost altogether at a time when Canadian literature was coming into its own...?" Why indeed? Wainwright argues that Bruce "has been something of a threat to those whose views of Canadian literature have looked first at Toronto and then west and south from there (with an occasional glance over the shoulder at a few chosen Québécois poets and novelists)."

There is much that rings true in this regionalist critique of Central Canadian myopia. We should, though, remember that until recently Bruce was also completely neglected, not only in Ontario, but in the Maritimes as well: the region's literary intellectuals have generally avoided a serious confrontation with his work.

A more satisfactory answer to Wainwright's question might lie in the fact that, in some respects, Bruce's form of nostalgia has already had its day in the high circles of metropolitan culture. Today, nostalgia for the good old days of a rural pre-capitalist past has little currency among professional literary elites in either an intensively industrialized Ontario or a thoroughly underdeveloped Maritimes. Furthermore, the neglect of Bruce's work seems to fit in with the general forgetfulness of postmodern commodity culture. Forgetting, and, by implication, remembrance — the very foundations of historical interpretation — are far more than the psychological processes of isolated individuals. Memory is a social and historical construction.

The past of any society can be made sense of — constructed — in a variety of ways: it is never fixed by a sole remembered historical interpretation. In every culture, certain memories become dominant, others are forgotten or simply relegated to obscurity. Those who decide what is to be remembered control an enormous amount of "cultural capital."

Bruce's memories of the Shore are troubling to, perhaps even subversive of, a number of crucial bourgeois certainties. His critique of wage labour and the loss of personal freedom under the capitalist mode of production could be easily dismissed as the fantasies of an overly nostalgic mind. On the other hand, such criticisms could simply be read out of the text: thrust beyond the margins of the novel, they might not even be perceived. Such interpretations would produce a shallow and domesticated version of Bruce's memories of the past. Unfortunately, Wainwright's interpretation of Bruce seems to be part of this labour of domestication.

Wainwright's biography succumbs to a kind of historical amnesia. Writing about an unpublished novel he was working on prior to his death in 1971, he tells us that Bruce was "still concerned with the pervasive influence of rural heritage," but that there was now also another part of him which wanted "to write of the here-and-now heat of personal relationships in a larger world shaped by economic and political forces." The earlier Bruce, his biographer tells us, had not

In every culture, certain memories become dominant, others are forgotten or relegated to obscurity

Bruce is
trying to see
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been concerned with either politics or economics. But the concern in *The Channel Shore* with the historical context of the region's development and its subsequent transition to capitalist modernity belies Wainwright's interpretive emphasis on individuals and their personal relationships.

Obviously, the lives of Bruce's fictional characters should not be neglected. Indeed, in a public lecture on his writing, he said that "any writing that really matters is concerned with life, with people, with emotions you can recognize." But he also stressed in the same lecture that the raw materials of life, of lived experience, must be merged in a pattern. He quite rightly believed that this pattern must be rooted in history. He wrote:

No novel... can hold you unless it has the ring of reality and unless it is true to the customs and habits and emotions and the idiom of its age. These are not obtainable in the imagination. They are obtainable only in the life of the period itself.

The spread of capitalism into the countryside — the transition from a community based largely on independent commodity production to one relying increasingly on wage labour — is a part of life on the Shore and is central to any writing whose foundation is "the idiom of its age."

Although Wainwright doesn't ignore the historical context of Bruce's writing, his treatment of it is constricted. He simply avoids any attempt to insert Bruce or his writing into a broader social and cultural history of the Maritimes.

Anti-modernist sentiments run the

gamut of Bruce's poetry and fiction, but they certainly are not peculiar to him alone. The extension of the capitalist marketplace throughout the Western world in the nineteenth century was responsible for much cultural dis-ease, a malaise of memory, a sense of a radical discontinuity with the past. This is not the place to examine anti-modernist thought (something that would include criticism, and even outright rejection, of a capitalist modernity motivated by a "conservative" rather than a "radical" response to a broadly based transformation in the mode of living) in all its diverse manifestations. It should be noted, though, that anti-modern attitudes are peppered throughout Maritime literature. Writers such as Charles G. D. Roberts, Bliss Carmen, Sir Andrew Macphail, Thomas Raddall, Ernest Buckler, Hugh MacLennan, Alistair MacLeod, and David Adams Richards have all offered us critical assessments of modernism.

In this pantheon of regional anti-modernism, Bruce stands out — for the fundamental reason that he, unlike so many other anti-modernist critics of industrial capitalism, rejects any radical discontinuity between past and present. In this, he is not, of course, minimizing the significance of change in the Western world. Rather, he is trying to see past historical change as a key to understanding our present.

For Bruce, poetry and fiction were resources of hope, vehicles for remembering that enabled him to resolve, on an imaginative level, conflicts and frustrations that seemed impossible of resolution outside the bounds of aesthetic imagination. The transformation of his childhood home, to-



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INTERVOX

The Awareness Magazine

spirituality environment transforma-
tion meditation personal development
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deep ecology contribution self actualization information

gether with his long-term absence from the Maritimes, seemed to make him eternally homesick for a way of life which had disappeared. Although he had been a successful journalist and administrator for Canadian Press in Toronto, he thought of his work as part of a rat-race. Indeed, all of modernity seems to have been a rat-race for him. His critique of it is different from those of his contemporaries, because it is rooted in a historical realism and in a belief that the rat-race could be criticized from a standpoint outside of it.

Throughout his biography, Wainwright — to his credit — stresses Bruce's almost mystical sense of time. Bruce wrote that "yesterday, today, and tomorrow are part of a continuing whole." Because of its almost ruthless inaccessibility, time past becomes, particularly during periods of intense change, a preoccupation of time present." Such phrases in *The Channel Shore* as "the eternal present," "the timeless land of memory" and "the stairs of time" suggest that he was trying to overcome a deeply rooted sense of historical estrangement.

However, Bruce's childhood home, Port Shoreham, became more than a memory to him. A close reading of both *The Channel Shore* and *The Township of Time* left me with the distinct impression that he used his remembrance of rural community as a stabilizing influence and ideal in the class-divided world of his later life. The kinship of blood relations is down-played throughout *The Channel Shore*, in favor of "new" and broader kinships:

There was now a kind of kinship for all others isolated in their aloneness, stricken by circumstances, caught without an answer to the riddle of living. A new sense of the future, of being one among many who must move and change with time.

It can be argued that Bruce's understanding of this new type of kinship corresponded to the emergence of a new set of economic arrangements both on the Shore and in Canada as a whole. Later, in an unpublished essay, he wrote:

...the poet's business is with insights flashed from his own experience. Insights that may... begin to weave a frail web of human kinship. Is it not where kinship has failed, or never been, that all hostilities come to monstrous flower? Torture, murder, rape, war, and all the malice and

indifference and indignity with which mankind corrupts itself?

With all its differences and conflict, the Shore itself could be seen as a little nation. The new community growing up on the Shore seems to have been a microcosm of Canada as a whole. Once again, Bruce confronted the broader issues of capitalist transformation, but Wainwright, in his own writing, seems unable to see this.

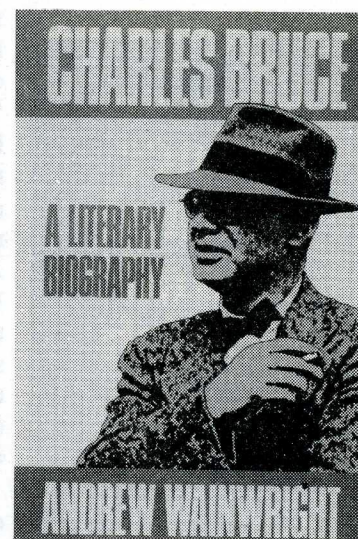
After the late '20s, Bruce lived in large urban areas — Halifax, Toronto, New York, and wartime London. He spent his time in urban centres divided by class tension, poverty, greed, violence and crime. Cities — serving as cages for the rat-race of modernity — in which the individual could easily become isolated and anonymous were perceived to be the very antithesis of small rural community: it's not surprising that Bruce experienced such profound homesickness. Yet, the significance of his criticism is missed if we see his rejection of cities as being independent of their economic organization, based as they were on wage labour. (Grant Marshall, reflecting on the values of his closest relatives emphasizes: "But — working for others; it wasn't necessary, except in the ordinary way of exchanging help.... Self-sufficient.")

Although Wainwright's biography contains a wealth of detail about Bruce's life, it fails to capture the complexity of his aesthetic and historical vision. Both *The Channel Shore* and *The Township of Time* paint a historically accurate picture of a community that, earlier, had little need for capital, in transition to one where the larger capitalist marketplace is becoming a dominating part of day-to-day life. Similar descriptions occur throughout Bruce's poetry.

Memories of an era before capitalism can, and often do, lead to a soothing nostalgia, to a simplistic reverence for golden days lacking in pain and conflict, to a dream of a therapeutic space far from the rat-race. Or they can lead, as they do at least partially in *The Channel Shore*, to critical musings that cut to the very heart of capitalism itself. Such reflections conjure up a fictional world beyond modern capitalism — one from which it can be judged, and judged critically. Bruce's mobilization of memory is a resource for hope. It must not be forgotten. •

Erik Kristiansen is a Halifax teacher and literary critic.

Bruce's early memories were a stabilizing influence in the class-divided world of his later life



2/Errol Sharpe The People's Spoken Word

The words
recorded
here come
directly from
Islanders'
history and
life
experience

Dictionary of Prince Edward Island English, edited by T. K. Pratt, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Ontario, 1988; 192 pages; \$30.00 (cloth).

When, in 1982, Léandre Bergeron released *The Québécois Dictionary*, a condensed English-language rendition of his earlier *Dictionnaire de la Langue Québécoise*, he said that "In Québec, we don't speak 'real' French, we speak much more than that. We speak Québécois..." "The Québécois corpus," he added, "includes most of the words that are found in a French dictionary such as *Larousse* or *Roberts* plus the 17,500 words and 5,500 expressions found in my *Dictionnaire de la Langue Québécoise* (1980) and its *Supplément* (1981)." "What you find in *Larousse* or *Roberts*," says Bergeron, "is a sort of official, generally accepted, sterilized lexicon, a sort of bare minimum baggage of words to communicate normalized concepts, ideas and stereotyped emotions, roughly equivalent to what Latin was for Europeans in the fourteenth century."

It seems to me that Bergeron captures the essence of language. While I'm no linguist and have no claim to any formal knowledge of language, I've always felt that almost any culture with a significant history has both an "official" language authorized by institutions such as governments, schools, and the media, and an unofficial language which forms the day-to-day talk of what, in Canada, New Democrats call "ordinary people." On Prince Edward Island, most ordinary people work either on the land or at sea. It is their unofficial language, or at least a part of it, which makes up the content of the *Dictionary of Prince Edward Island English*. Like Bergeron, Pratt depended heavily on ordinary people to compile this dictionary. He and his research team got information primarily through interviews, questionnaires and mailed surveys, as well as from written works and other dictionaries.

The result of these efforts is a collection of 873 terms which, with alternative forms

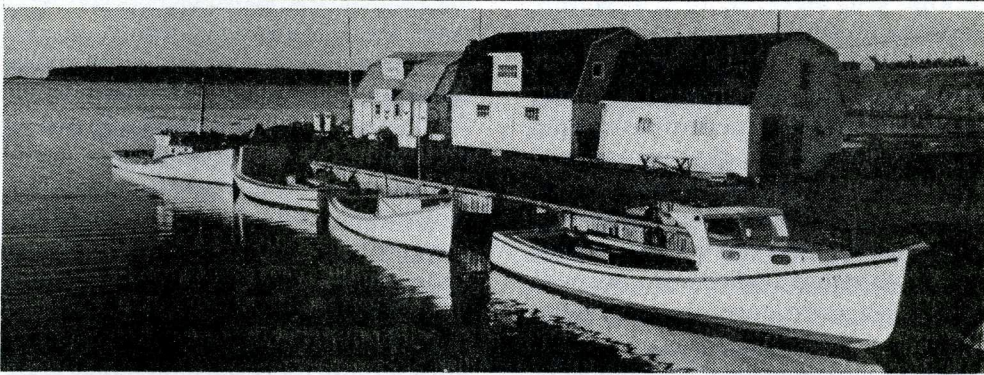
added, number over 1,000. This dictionary, unlike Bergeron's, doesn't include expressions of speech. In his introduction, Pratt refers to the terms in the dictionary as being "non-standard language" which "is not taught in schools, but learned at home or in the local community, where it is transmitted orally. It is thus part of the folk culture."

When I first read this statement I made a note in the margin which reads: "therefore cannot be officially accepted, in fact must be discouraged, lest it empower the people." I still think this is true: it is a fact that the only way any "language of the people" gets recorded is if someone like a Pratt or a Bergeron takes on the task of collecting its words and phrases. If the results then get published, it will be as a separate book — a dictionary — and it will be set apart in the "official" mind and in the media as quaint and folksy, as the "bad English" of the uneducated. Thus, the language of the people does get recognized, but in such a way that it is disempowered and marginalized. When one reads the *Dictionary of Prince Edward Island English*, one is saddened by this fact, and by the further knowledge that television and other modern mass media render many of these terms and phrases to the status of historical footnotes. This not only means that we lose the words — the language itself — but also the history and tradition from which they sprang.

A reading of this book reveals that many of the terms it lists have already fallen out of use. We are fortunate that this work has been published and has rescued many of these words from the ash heap of history. Even if it is not officially accepted, and fails to stimulate any effort directed at reviving or approving the language of the people, this dictionary will live as a record of a culture that grew out of the lives and experience of generations of Islanders.

This collection makes us aware that PEI, a small island of only 120,000 people, has a language distinct enough to warrant its own dictionary. Its publication celebrates the distinct culture and way of life of Islanders: the terms recorded here come directly from their history and life experience.

DICTIONARY OF
**Prince
Edward
Island
English**
T.K. PRATT



Fishing craft at Stanley Bridge. Those who work the sea have developed ways of speech different from Island farmers.

An examination of this dictionary reveals many things about how ordinary people on the Island use language. Many words are taken from other usages and applied to a particular activity. One example is "scuffle," as in "scuffling potatoes." In a standard dictionary, one definition of that word is "a glancing touch or blow." But when Islanders scuffle potatoes, the ground in which the potatoes are planted is lightly grazed to remove the weeds without disturbing the potato seed or the plant itself. Similarly, Islanders speak of "twitching out logs," an activity where a horse pulls and/or jerks long logs out of the woods. Webster's defines "sloven" as "naturally inert or sluggish." On PEI, a "sloven" is a low, and of necessity a slow-moving, wagon used to haul potatoes.

As might be expected in a land dominated by farming and fishing, the weather is a constant concern, and many of the words in this dictionary refer to it. On PEI, one might hear of a "skit" or "skiff," just a small dusting, of snow, or of a "silver frost," "silver thaw" or "silver freeze." These three latter terms all refer to a freezing rain that leaves a coating of ice on everything. Changing weather might be called "streaky weather" and drizzly rain could be referred to as "snotty weather." A steady rain that sinks into the soil is a "sod soaker" — a good thing — but a heavy, short rain that runs off into gullies, flooding them and causing soil erosion, is a "gullywasher" — a not-so-good thing.

This dictionary will interest any Islander at home or "away." Many of the terms took me back to my younger years on the Island. Common terms, or once-common terms, such as "pung" (a sleigh), "tilt" (a teeter totter), "time" (a party), "glib ice" (particularly smooth and slippery ice), "fine up" (clearing weather), "freshet" (a spring

thaw), "gommie" (a silly person), "teddy" (a bottle of moonshine) or "strunt" (to sulk) had almost passed from my memory through lack of use. Reading this dictionary made me realize once again that there is a distinctness about "the Island," one that is captured in these pages.

But no book is perfect. I found that most of the terms which are familiar to me or jogged my memory relate to the land and farming. (I was raised in a farming community.) Most of the terms relating to fishing and the sea are as new to me as they would be to any neophyte. This clearly indicates that each of the two dominant ways of Island life produced a set of terms which became integrated into daily speech. That these remain somewhat separate testifies to the distinctness of these two ways of life. This fact is not noted in the dictionary. I was also surprised that a book so laden with history and tradition would choose the modern federal electoral boundaries to distinguish between parts of the Island. It is also intriguing that when the term "up west," used to refer to that part of the Island west of Summerside, is cited, the corresponding term "out west," used to refer to that part of Canada west of Ontario, is not recognized.

A few terms also seem to be muted of some of the richness of their original meaning. One such term is "grass colt," correctly defined by Pratt as "an illegitimate child." However, the description that follows says, "It's like a colt born out on the pasture, where no one sees it, rather than at home in the barn." In the community where I grew up, the term was also used to describe what often followed after a stallion broke into the pasture with the mares: an unwanted and unplanned colt, often delivered unexpectedly out in the field.

I was also perplexed by the definition

There is a distinctness about "the Island," one that is captured in these pages

In trying to find little things to snipe at in this book, I risk being told that I am “growling”

given for “gate.” As the term was used in the part of the Island where I was raised, it was the entrance to a farm where the public highway met the lane leading to the farm buildings. This definition derives from the fact that there often was an actual gate “out at the road” — “the road” referred to the public highway — to keep the farm animals from wandering away. We would go “out to the gate” to get mail delivered to our rural mail box. In this dictionary, the “gate” is the laneway leading from the road.

It might also be noted that a number of the entries in this collection are probably not specific to PEI, but are common in other rural areas of the Maritimes, or even farther afield. Two examples are “dipper,” a pot or saucepan with a handle often used to ladle water out of a pail, and “kitchen dance,” a dance held at home, usually centred around

the kitchen. The above-mentioned “silver thaw” also falls into this category.

However, it is hard to find fault with this dictionary. By attempting to find little things like these to snipe at, I risk being told by Islanders, “You are growling.”

The knowledge, language and culture recaptured in this dictionary should become a catalyst that spurs ordinary Islanders to reclaim their language and history. It is for this reason that the publication of the *Dictionary of Prince Edward Island English* is a cause for celebration. I only hope that it is soon available in a less expensive paperback edition so more ordinary Islanders will be able to buy it. •

Errol Sharpe, an Associate Editor of New Maritimes, is a Halifax-based publisher and writer.

3/Rusty Bittermann Why Make a Disturbance?

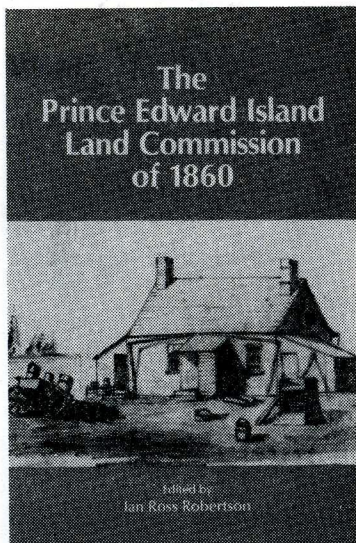
***The Prince Edward Island Land Commission of 1860*, edited by Ian Ross Robertson, Acadiensis Press, Fredericton, New Brunswick, 1988; 214 pages; \$15.95 (paper), \$32.95 (hard bound).**

“What would these lands be without our hard labour?” It is September of 1860 and the man asking the question, James Howatt, is, like most of his fellow Islanders, a tenant. The land, he contends, “was only a good habitation for foxes” when tenants first took up the task of farm-making on Prince Edward Island. The value it had acquired by 1860, he asserts, “results from the toil of the poor man.” He is trying to explain to the three Royal Commissioners before him just where justice lies in the Island’s land question. The task of the three men — John Hamilton Grey, Joseph Howe and J. W. Ritchie — is to investigate the century-old history of proprietary land tenure on the Island and suggest an equitable solution to the conflict between landlord and tenant. This book is an abridged republication of the testimony they heard and their subsequent recommendations to the colonial authorities.

Did the tenants who worked the land, or

the landlord who “owned” it, have the greatest claim to the land? Howatt’s answer to the question, the assertion of a labour theory of value, was familiar to the Island audience at the hearings. The claim that the value of land lay in the labour that had been applied to it by Island residents had been a central tenet of rural protest in the colony in the 1830s and ’40s. Even the language Howatt uses takes us back to the Escheat movement and to the heady days when rural spokesmen who thought like James Howatt sat in the House of Assembly and dominated its proceedings. The Escheat leader, William Cooper, argued then that Island tenants had “planted their labour where the forest grew” and “made a garden in the wilderness.” With their exertions they had built up their homes “where the bear has had his den,” and they deserved the undisputed ownership of the farms that were the product of their labour.

Early Island history was profoundly shaped by the unsettled nature of property relations. Unresolved questions concerning the legitimacy of landlords’ claims to the soil fostered repeated challenges, both from those who wanted to take the place of existing landlords and those who sought to put an end to landlordism altogether. The Escheat movement was the broadest and



most substantial of these. Its advocates had insisted that the government had a right, indeed, an obligation to reclaim ("escheat") all the lands that had originally been granted to proprietors in 1767, and to redistribute them to those who had occupied and improved them. The Island's landlords, they argued, had never fulfilled the terms of their original grants which had required them to place settlers on their lands and to pay annual fees to the Crown. As a consequence, Escheat leaders asserted, their deeds were void. The property rights that merited protection were those of the agrarian population which had, through its labour, made the countryside valuable. At its peak in the late 1830s, the Escheat movement dominated the countryside and held a strong majority in the House of Assembly. Its legislative initiatives, though, were blocked by the appointed Legislative Council and the British government, and the opportunities for successful direct action were limited by the Island's relatively small population and its exposed geographical position. Unlike the Canadas, there was no adjacent American territory that could provide a base of operations for rebels.

Although the Escheat movement proved unable to translate political power in the Assembly and mobilization of the rural majority into effective land reform and it ultimately collapsed, the testimony before the 1860 Commission, indeed, the very fact that the Commission had been called, is a reminder that its defeat had not been total. The agrarian dream embodied in the movement persisted and the structural problems that had engendered conflict remained to haunt Island life. Subsequent governments faced the intractable problem of attempting to reconcile the aspirations of the Island's tenants, who sought freehold control over the farms they had cleared and occupied, with the proprietors' insistence that the land was in fact theirs and that the "sacred rights of property" must not be compromised. The Liberals (Reformers), who grasped the mantle of land reform after the demise of the Escheat Party and who harnessed agrarian demands for economic change to the call for responsible government, proved far more adept at achieving political reform than land reform. Their schemes for buying out the Island's landlords on a voluntary basis floundered in the face of proprietorial intransigence, land agent corruption and insufficient government funds. When the Conservatives replaced the Liberals in the

election of 1859, they, too, were confronted with the challenge of developing a credible solution to the Island's land question. The Land Commission of 1860 was their response.

The significance of the Commission's proceedings lies in what they tell us about this rural history before 1860, not in the final report's shaping influence on the period that followed. The final recommendations of the Commissioners — that there be an Imperial loan guarantee to permit the purchase of landlords' holdings and a compulsory system of land valuation that would ensure that all tenants might purchase free title to their properties — did not become British policy. The value of this edition of the Commission's proceedings and final report lies in the fact that it makes the voices of men (there are only male voices here) such as James Howatt more accessible to the general public. Roughly half of the original material has been removed and those studying the land question in depth will need to refer to the original proceedings.

In order to make sense of the material republished in this volume, the reader needs to have a solid grasp of Island history, as the testimony wanders freely across time and space. The confusion is not alleviated by the Commissioners' own weak grasp of Island realities or by the contradictory objectives and vantage points of those presenting evidence. The volume's editor, Ian Robertson, has made a great effort to deal with these problems by providing a substantial introductory essay and a glossary of names. His discussion of the land question and the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the Commission is the best part of this book. Robertson does an admirable job of summarizing 100 years of Island history and introducing the reader to the central features of the colony's leasehold system.

But even with the aid of the tools provided by the editor, it is not easy to digest the material in this volume. Much of it is tedious and difficult to follow. The task of reconstructing history by sifting through the disjointed testimony of a month-long Royal Commission is not always easy or engaging. There are, however, rewards for such labour. Although those testifying before the Commission did not tend to be a representative cross-section of Island tenantry, one can get a sense of rural grievances and agrarian notions of justice from this transcript. The voices of men like James Howatt

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**The hope
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not die
easily**

and memorials such as that of the inhabitants of Lot 3, requesting escheat of their Township, are reminders of the persistence of the dreams of the Escheat movement. So, too, is the Commissioners' inclusion of a section-long rebuttal of the arguments for escheat in their final report. The hope that landlords' claims to the soil might be set aside with little or no compensation did not die easily.

The testimony of others provides insight into how rent resistance was collectively organized and about the tactics employed by landlords and their agents to undercut protest. There is an engaging vignette of resident landlord, shipbuilder, land agent and Conservative politician James Yeo, issuing 32 post-election writs against people who had voted the "wrong" way. In the same vein, there is an illustrative exchange between a tenant and the Commissioners on one hand, and his landlord on the other. The tenant, Michael Lacey, explained that the rents he once paid to his proprietor in Island currency came to be demanded, in breach of an oral agreement, in British sterling, a move which in effect increased his rents by 50 percent. Asked whether he had had a dispute with his landlord, Lacey responded that there had been none except that he had voted contrary to his wishes. At that point, his landlord, Mr. MacDonald, who was present in the court intervened: "Were you an escheator? I understand you subscribed a certain amount towards sending Cooper home to examine titles." Commissioner Howe's reassurance, that "You had a perfect right, Mr. Lacey, to vote as you pleased, and to subscribe money for that object, if you chose to do so," neglected the hard fact that political independence could be an unaffordable luxury for those who were economically vulnerable. Perhaps the wonder of the Escheat movement was that it lasted so long and achieved so much electorally in the face of this sort of pressure, not that it ultimately collapsed at the polls.

Although the main theme running through this transcript is the land question, the evidence presented here sheds light on other rural issues as well. Testimony concerning farm values and labour procurement reveals a wide range of rural standards of living and says much about rural inequality in the nineteenth century. Some people with large, prosperous farms speak knowledgeably about the costs and difficulties of recruiting hired hands. There are others

who do not appear before the Commission of whom it is said they "do not know the taste of molasses and tea." The relationship between limited farm resources and the necessity of individual and family-organized occupational pluralism is spelled out bluntly: "I have had to put my children out to service," and, "The boys hire out" to make ends meet. The people of Tracadie could not survive "without working at shipbuilding and other occupations." One tenant remarked, "When my family grew up, they used to earn a little wages, and by giving it to me, I often pay my rent in that way."

One of the most revealing passages comes, again, from the testimony of James Howatt, and it brings us back to the central issue underlying the very existence of the Land Commission — the persistence of an agrarian dream of land unencumbered by landlords, of labour gaining the whole of its return, and of a society in which political equality is secured by economic independence. Perhaps goaded by Commissioner Joseph Howe's tendency to suggest that some of the blame for tenant oppression lay in their own lack of industry and gumption, Howatt informed the Commission that Island tenants wanted "to be free" and were willing to fight for their freedom. He then reminded the Commissioners, "But we cannot do that you know without making a disturbance." This observation, though made with humour, underlined a fundamental dilemma of the tenants' struggle. On one hand, agrarian aspirations and popular notions of justice could, at times, find a resonance, not just in the tenant population, but among members of the middle class — from men such as Joseph Howe. But, on the other hand, there were tragically few means available for tenants to achieve their ends and redress their grievances that did not threaten or alienate such allies.

The years following the Commission's hearings would see the rise of the Tenant League, collective rent resistance and military intervention to sustain landlords' interests. In the face of the British government's decision not to implement the Commission's moderate recommendations, "making a disturbance" would again become the order of the day for much of the Island's rural population. •

Rusty Bittermann is an Associate Editor of New Maritimes and a graduate student in history at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton.



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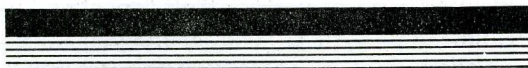
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Helping the Tide to Crest

The struggle for justice in South Africa has been a long and difficult one, and it's still far from over. But the recent unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) and other anti-apartheid organizations, along with the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners does show that progress is being made. It should be understood, though, that Pretoria didn't take these actions out of a suddenly discovered commitment to the rights of a disenfranchised majority. They came about only because of pressure — both internal and external — that has been brought to bear on the white-minority government.

These events may well represent the first really concrete steps toward a post-apartheid South Africa. Anti-apartheid activists are currently expending the bulk of their efforts to that end. But it is also vital that, at the same time, preparations be made for the day when all South Africans, regardless of race or colour, will have an equal voice in their country's future. And the success and prosperity of that non-racial nation-to-be will rely heavily on the educational level of its citizens.

We live in an increasingly interdependent world where our lives are becoming more and more bound together economically, ecologically, politically, culturally, and even spiritually. The future of South Africa will be determined, first and foremost, by South Africans themselves, but the pace of change will also depend, in part, on the actions of the international community. Up 'til now, Canada has shown two contrasting faces in its relationship with Pretoria: the policies of some Canadian banks and corporations give fiscal support to apartheid at the same time the federal government voices condemnation of the South African regime and offers official recognition to the ANC.

Daina Kulnys and Mary Duffy

Most Canadians feel that, as members of the global village, we have a moral obligation to respond to the plight of our neighbours in South Africa. But we also need to understand the links between the causes of oppression in South Africa and that which



takes place in our own communities. As we gain a greater understanding of our own oppression — whether we face it as women, as blacks or native people, or because we belong to some other disempowered segment of society — we can begin to recognize things we have in common: racism, exploitation, underdevelopment, the oppression of the disempowered by the powerful — these all affect our daily lives here, just as they do the lives of South Africans. Any differences are simply matters of degree.

In January, over 125 people came together in Halifax to discuss these and other matters regarding the future of South Africa. The conference, titled "Towards a Post-Apartheid South Africa: Training and Education for a New Society," focussed on ways that people here in the Maritimes — particularly educators — can work with South Africans to help create the educational skills and opportunities that will be needed in a democratic and multi-racial South Africa. It provided a rare opportunity to hear directly from South Africans presently working inside that country: eight educators from that nation shared their knowledge and experience.

The picture they drew of the current

state of black education in South Africa was a bleak one. Of the 250,000 teachers in what the white authorities call the "Bantu" school system, only about 50,000 hold the equivalent of a high school diploma. In an educational system designed to train blacks to serve whites, funding is both inadequate and mismanaged. Classrooms lack books and other basic materials. And dropout rates are high, despite the fact that the only alternative for many students are unemployment and all the attendant social problems and difficulties that arise from a life of forced idleness.

South African educators are reacting to this crisis. Whereas before 1980 teachers' groups collaborated with the apartheid regime, there are now eight independent, national organizations of educators. One of these groups, formerly known as the National Education Crisis Committee but recently renamed the National Education Coordinating Committee (NECC), was formed to develop specific strategies and programs for black education in the face of the crisis in that country's education system.

Mokubung Nkomo, a prominent black South African educator, gave the keynote address to the conference. He disputed Pretoria's claim that apartheid no longer dictates education policies in his country, pointing to the fact that government spending on white students is, per capita, still five times that spent on blacks. In such a system, both racism and crisis are implicit. Nkomo noted that apartheid is feeling the strain of internal and external pressures, and called for an intensification of economic and other sanctions against the regime, for a stronger Canadian foreign policy on South Africa and for economic assistance to that country's majority-ruled neighbours in an effort to reduce their dependence on Pretoria.

The interdependence of politics and education were noted at the con-

ference. NECC member Ihron Rensberg stressed that all aspects of students' training — psychological, emotional, political and academic — have to be taken into account when mapping education strategies in South Africa. He also called for stronger links between Canadian educational institutions and the NECC which would make it easier for that organization and others working inside the country to choose those South African students who might be most helped by education and training in Canada.

A representative of the ANC's Department of Manpower also addressed the conference, outlining the need for vocational training that would allow

South Africans to develop the skills necessary for building a new nation.

Conference delegates expressed the view that the existence of racism in Nova Scotia's own school system is good reason for educators here to work together with their South African counterparts. They also asserted that racist education, wherever it exists, must be rejected by educators and students alike. Finally, they called upon Maritime educational institutions to increase the number of South African students they accept, and to provide them more support services during their stay in Canada.

In South Africa, change is in the air. The recent un-bannings seemed an

almost impossible dream only months ago. After long struggle, hope appears to be on the horizon for black South Africans. That hope must be encouraged to ripen and flourish. •

Daina Kulnys and Mary Duffy were members of the Post-Apartheid South Africa Planning Committee.

Individuals and institutions who wish to help in the South African struggle should contact the Atlantic Canada Society for the Education of South Africans at (902) 434-7113.

The Freedom Charter

The Freedom Charter was adopted at a mass gathering of apartheid's opponents in the mid-1950s, and has become the ANC's guiding statement of its vision for a future South Africa. The following is excerpted from that document:

We, the people of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know: that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people;... that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities; that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief;

And, therefore, we the people of South Africa, black and white together — equals, countrymen and brothers — adopt this Freedom Charter. And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won.

The People Shall Govern!

Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws; All people shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country; The rights of the people shall be the same, regardless of race, colour or sex; All bodies of minority rule... shall be replaced by democratic organs of self-government.

All National Groups Shall Have Equal Rights!

There shall be equal status in the bodies of state... for all national groups and races;... All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride; The preaching and practice of national, race or colour discrimination and contempt shall be a punishable crime; All apartheid laws and practices shall be set aside.

The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth!

The national wealth of our country... shall be transferred to

the ownership of the people as a whole; All other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the well-being of the people; All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trade, crafts and professions....

All Shall be Equal Before the Law!

... The courts shall be representative of all the people; Imprisonment shall be only for serious crimes... and shall be aimed at re-education, not vengeance;... All laws which discriminate on grounds of race, colour or belief shall be repealed.

All Shall Enjoy Equal Human Rights!

The law shall guarantee to all their right to speak, to organize, to meet together, to publish, to preach, to worship and to educate their children;... All shall be free to travel without restriction from countryside to town, from province to province, and from South Africa abroad....

There Shall be Houses, Security and Comfort!

All people shall be free to live where they choose, be decently housed, and bring up their families in comfort and security;... The aged, the orphans and the sick shall be cared for... Rest, leisure and recreation shall be the right of all...

There Shall be Peace and Friendship!

South Africa shall be a fully independent state which respects the rights and sovereignty of all nations; South Africa shall strive to maintain world peace and the settlement of all international disputes by negotiation — not war; Peace and friendship amongst all our people shall be secured by upholding the equal rights, opportunities and status of all; The right of all the peoples of South Africa to independence and self-government shall be recognized, and shall be the basis of close cooperation.

Let all those who love their people and their country now say, as we say here: "These freedoms we will fight for, side by side, throughout our lives, until we have won our liberty."

