

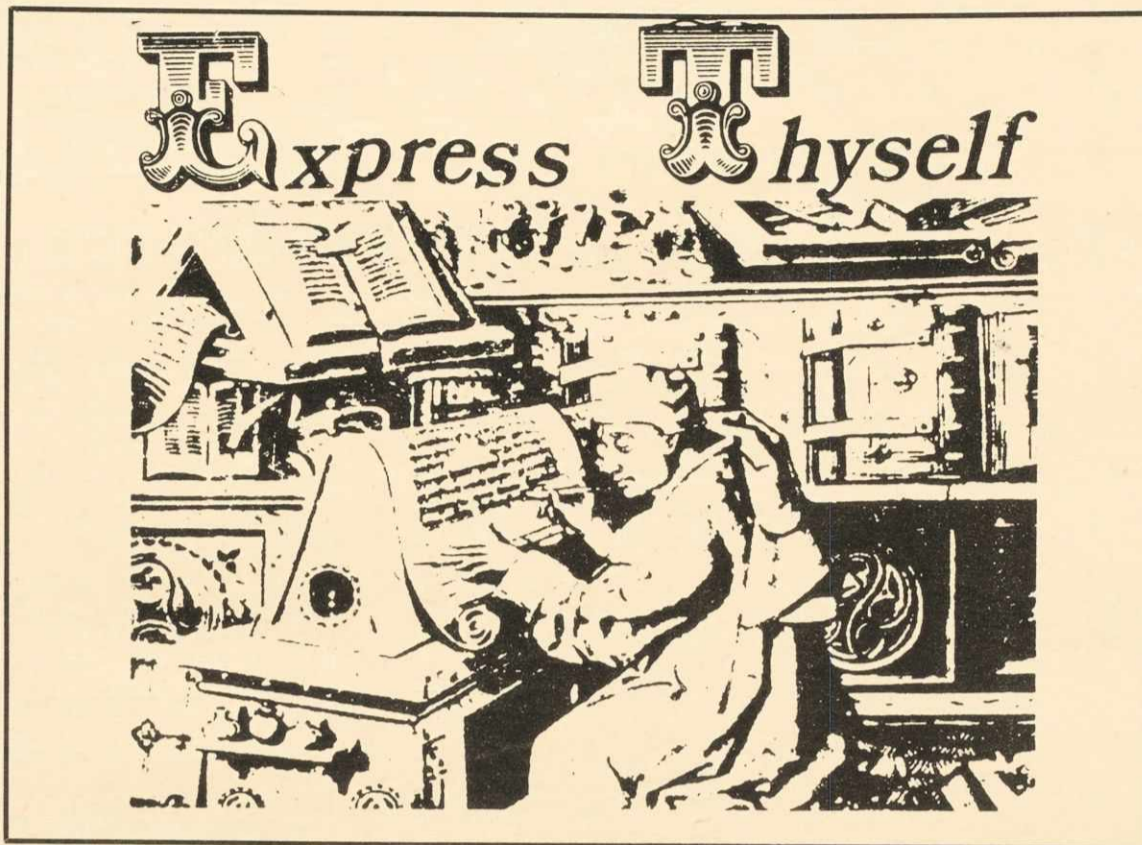
# Clothed in reason's garb, baby

"Who are the realists now? For years, citizens concerned about what we are doing to our planet have been derided as idealists, scare-mongers and meddling do-gooders. It has now suddenly become clear that the 'impractical' worriers have been right all along on acid rain, on the erosion of the earth's ozone shield and on global climate change from our pollution of the atmosphere by carbon dioxide, the greenhouse effect. In all three cases, we and our children will pay dearly for the wishful thinking of the supposedly practical men. Their 'realism' thwarted pollution controls that would have cost us millions at the time, but now confront us with costs of untold billions for irreversible consequences that might yet cause global catastrophe."

"The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man."

"... Our task however is an enormous one; it is also one which flies in the face of conventional wisdom. We are accused of not behaving *reasonably* in the context of patriarchal order.

This is a perfectly understand-



able reaction, for when a society has developed a particular pattern for meaning, those who do not abide by it are being unreasonable in its terms. But unless the pattern for meaning is infallible then the flaw may be in the pattern itself, and not in those who protest. If the patriarchal order

can be shown to be unreasonable, then those who are attempting to dismantle it are behaving in an eminently reasonable fashion."

These three quotations come from three wildly different sources. One is taken from a book called *Man Made Language*, by

Dale Spender, a feminist. Another is by that crotchety old fart George Bernard Shaw. Another is taken from 'Awake!', the Jehovah's Witness publication. Can you guess which is which?

Reason is like beauty; depends on the eye of the beholder. One

man's reason may be one woman's oppression, but it speaks volumes when good ideas emerge from different sources. When one realizes that one need not toe the line, that is to be "reasonable", it becomes easier to be comfortable with what are often called weird ideas.

So when ole buddy Pete (who wrote a strangely glowing letter 'Meet the New Editor') bestows upon me "reason", I cringe a little. Better "unreason". My heart is into change, Pete, and so...

You, yes you, are welcome to bring your ideas, any ideas up here to the Gazette, double-spaced please. "Reason" mustn't be confused with clarity.

The point is, I will be happy to discuss any idea, with anyone, unreasonable or not.

And lest I be accused of clarity in my first editorial, I offer this poem. J'espere que vous l'aimerez.

My blue bagel is limping, her foot is so sore,

Her ears are unhinged, they don't sprout anymore.

If her lips could reach 'round, they would give her a smack;

But they can't. They are lost in the hole in her back.

Selah

Sandy MacKay

## Letters

### Trees

Dear Editor:

In the summer of 1988, there were some protests in Queens county around the issue of Christmas tree spraying. The *Green Web*, an environmental research group of which I am a member, decided to look into Christmas tree cultivation and its environmental impact. This letter outlines some of the things we found out:

**General Situation:** In Nova Scotia, there are about 30,000 acres under Christmas tree cultivation. Estimates of the number of growers range from 2,500-3,000. Acreage ranges from a few acres to many hundreds of acres in size. American ownership and control is important, but precise data is hard to obtain. American-owned firms are the largest exporters and major producers of Christmas trees in this province. The Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia, in its submission to the Forestry Royal Commission, stated that "almost all of the money from the Christmas (tree) industry is out-

side capital, mainly American". Scott Maritimes, told the Royal Commission that by 1976, it had 450 acres in Christmas tree production.

The industry is overwhelmingly based on balsam fir, with about 45% of the trees being grown in Lunenburg county. Guysborough and Antigonish counties are also important for Christmas tree cultivation, although Christmas trees are grown throughout the province. The Forestry Royal Commission noted that 50% of Canadian Christmas tree exports are from our province. The exports are mainly to the United States.

**Chemical cultivation:** While Christmas trees can be grown in a non-environmentally destructive manner, the dominant trend is for

chemical cultivation — the use of pesticides and fertilizers. As revealed in literature put out for Christmas tree growers, there are approximately 40 known pesticides — herbicides (about 13), insecticides (about 19), fungicides (about 6), growth regulators (?), wildlife pesticides (about 2) — recommended for use by Christmas tree growers.

A revealing guide to the Christmas tree pesticide pushers, is the *Christmas Tree Growers Manual: Atlantic Canada 1987*. This was compiled by the N.S. Christmas Tree Council, the Canadian Fore-

stry Service and the N.S. Department of Lands and Forests, government-funded but costing, if you can obtain a copy, \$35 to the public. Apart from the number of recommended pesticides, it is important to note that their use is basically unregulated and unsupervised, because the *application* is considered a farming activity.

**Impact on Wildlife:** It is of interest that, according to the *Pesticides Safety Handbook* (1986 edition), published by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, the following pesticides, which are promoted for use in Atlantic Canada Christmas tree cultivation, are listed as known to be toxic to fish, birds and honey bees.

**Fish:** chlordane, dimethoate, diazinon, fenitrothion, methoxychlor, trichlorfon.

**Bees:** acephate, carbaryl, chlorpyrifos, dicofol, dimethoate, fenitrothion, malathion, chlordane, methoxychlor, trichlorfon.

**Birds:** chlordane, dimethoate, diazinon, fenitrothion, methoxychlor, trichlorfon.

Two wildlife pesticides recommended for direct use against wildlife in Christmas tree plantations, in the *Growers Manual*, are thiram-based taste repellents and zinc phosphide poison bait which, we are told, is "extremely poisonous to humans". Deer,

porcupines, snowshoe hares, squirrels, mice, spruce grouse and pine grosbeaks, are considered threats and subject to "control". This, "may be accomplished by shooting, trapping and removal to another location, or by poison baiting".

**Health:** The use of pesticides and nitrogen fertilizers means that economic, not health or environmental considerations, have top priority. The government, at the provincial or federal level, serves first, capitalist business interests. Nitrogen fertilizers, which can increase tree density from 10-20% and bring about a darker green colour, can also bring about nitrate contamination of groundwater and wells. Water soluble pesticides eg. atra-

zine, hexazinone, simazine, acephate, are particularly likely to cause groundwater contamination. (See the useful 1986 publication by Environment Canada, *Pesticides and Groundwater in the Atlantic Region*, for some insight into this problem.) Any reading of the *critical* literature on pesticides shows about 10 of them that are linked to cancer and/or birth defects, eg. captan; 2,4-D; lindane; amitrole.

**Conclusion:** While Christmas tree growing is a welcome alternative to the pulpwood orientation of forestry in N.S. and provides a relatively high economic return to growers, the industry in its chemical manifes-

