



Stories from Down Under

BY WAYNE GROSZKO

I recently returned to Dalhousie after being away on a journey since October of last year. Along the way, I had some unexpected first-hand experiences with environmental issues in Australia.

I stayed with friends in North Balwyn, a suburb of Melbourne. From their back porch I could see down into a beautiful green valley, where the Koonung Creek wound its way through the neighbourhood. The trees and lush grassy areas were refreshing and inviting, so I walked down the hill into the valley and along a narrow trail beside the creek.

While walking, I saw some fence posts lined with posters declaring, "Resist the Freeway." I found out from my friends that the Victoria state government, under Premier Jeff Kennett, had decided to put a freeway right through this little valley.

In the quiet stillness of the afternoon, I went out onto the back porch again, slowly surveyed the green valley below, and tried to picture six lanes of pavement and huge, concrete noise barriers down there. The image of devastation and loss made my stomach sink down to my toes.

On a sunny Sunday morning, about 150 people gathered in the Koonung Creek valley, a five minute walk from the home of my Australian hosts. The gathering was organized by the Koonung Mullum Forestway Association, and included representatives from the Yarra Bend Protection Society, Save Albert Park, Save Princes Park, and the Coalition Against Freeway Extensions.

It became apparent that parks and green spaces all over Melbourne were in danger of being destroyed. Consider Albert Park, a public park in a residential suburb, about 500 metres from the Albert Hospital. The state government chain sawed many trees in the park, and intends to put in an automobile racing track to host a Grand Prix race in March of 1996.

Studies showed that the noise from race car engines and overhead TV helicopters would be audible within a radius of ten kilometres which, in this instance, would include the homes of thousands of people. In addition, race-track announcements would be made over a speaker system set at 130 decibels, 10 decibels above the human pain threshold. The excessive noise would be particu-

larly distressing to patients and health care workers at the nearby Albert Hospital and the several nursing homes in the area.

Residents are also outraged about the concrete pit buildings that would deface their park. People have been arrested while participating in protests in Albert Park, and according to the Albert Park Guardian, 2,500 members of the Victorian State Police are expected to be on hand to police the Grand Prix race if it is actually held.

Many Haligonians are familiar with the sound of automobile racing in residential areas, as the Moosehead Grand Prix was held near the Halifax Citadel and Commons until only a few years ago. The race has since been moved to Shearwater.

At the gathering in the Koonung Valley, people opposed to the destruction of park lands in Melbourne were looking forward to Victoria state government elections and Australian federal elections, both expected to be called in the first half of 1996. They took inspiration from a recent election in Queensland, where a proposed freeway was cancelled after the election.

After the speeches, all of us worked together to spread out the Parkland banner — a huge flag of blue, yellow, and green — as a symbol of unity among the diverse groups that are trying to save the parkland in the state of Victoria. It took the cooperation of over one hundred people to hold the flag above the ground.

science brief

Universities and governments team up to protect forests

BY LORI TURNBULL

TORONTO (CUP) — The forestry industry has joined with the federal and Alberta governments to look at ways of making forestry practices more environmentally sound.

Launched last month, the Sustainable Forest Management Research network links a dozen forestry businesses with scientists at twenty-two universities across Canada.

Industry and government must share resources in the area of sustainable development says Stan Boutin, a University of Alberta professor who is serving as deputy scientific leader for the research network.

"Society is no longer willing to accept [a company] that just produces lumber. University people need research money and [they] have a social conscience. Government wants to make sure societal interests will be met [and] industry has to come up with the answers," he said.

The federal government has added \$10.8 million to Alberta's contribution of \$3.2 million. Industry sources are responsible for \$2.2 million and \$3.8 million is to be raised from new and existing partners, according to Pierre Normand, chief of communications at the Natural Science and Engineering Research Council (NSERC).

The funds will be jointly managed by university researchers and industry representatives on a board of management. The board will also set priorities for the network, says Normand.

Four research teams will focus on broad areas, including ecology and water quality, impacts of pulp and paper technology, and aboriginal issues. A planning and practices team will apply the research from the other areas to design eco-models and evaluate the repercussions of each.

Rorke Bryan, the University of Toronto's dean of forestry says while the department supports the network in principle, its specific level of involvement has yet to be negotiated. Bryan says this research is much-needed but that more forestry companies need to join, apart from those in Alberta.

Nine of the 12 forestry companies involved are from Alberta.

"Canada needs concentrated research of the boreal forest environmentally, socially and economically. [However] the network needs industry participants from all provinces across the country," Bryan said.

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