



Creating a nation to save the environment

Greenpeace activists form the country Waveland to stop oil development

BY CRAIG SILVERMAN

MONTRÉAL (CUP) — Early on June 15, as the sun crested above the horizon on the Atlantic ocean, a strange flag was raised above a jagged rock off the coast of England, and a nation was born.

Waveland, the world's newest and smallest nation, came into existence as Greenpeace's latest action in its tradition of establishing campaigning countries. The international environmental organization claimed Waveland after a six day occupation to save the surrounding oil deposits from

development. They had initially applied for the oil licence to the area, but had lost to an oil company.

"Four nations want the oil around [Waveland], we do not recognize their right to develop it," said Chris Rose, deputy executive director of Greenpeace. "We have told [British Prime Minister] Tony Blair that we don't want [Waveland] itself, but that the oil should be set aside for the common good. We are borrowing it until it is freed from the threat of development."

The new nation's capital is Rockall, a flat plateau on the rock.

It's a mere 70 feet above sea level and is only 14 by 8 feet, making it the world's smallest capital city. Three Greenpeace activists, Peter, Meike and Al, are living on Rockall inside a solar survival capsule. They were the first to be granted citizenship in Waveland.

Only identified by his first name, activist Peter spoke from Rockall on the day of its inception.

"There is another way to manage the Earth's resources: it is for the common good," he said. "Waveland gives people who share that conviction a means of demonstrating it and of joining the campaign to achieve it."

"For these purposes, we no longer recognize the jurisdiction of the British government, or any other government, over this territory and we call on our citizens to support our commitment to its protection."

Joseph Abbott, whose citizen name is Slowbean, was among the first to gain citizenship. He also believes governments must start making tangible efforts to protect the Earth's resources.

"I am tired of our government saying they care about global warming, but never doing anything substantial to stop it," he said. "They spend billions of dollars subsidizing the oil companies, but when it comes time to, say, pay off the debt — they say they have no money and must cut funding to health care."

Though Canada's Fraser Institute recently held a conference seeking to debunk the "global warming myth", British Petroleum and Shell Oil recently stated in a Vancouver Sun article that global warming is happening because of human activity, and that the world must switch to alternative energy sources.

These sources include solar and wind power. The latter has been proven to be capable of producing as much energy as fossil fuels or nuclear power, if the subsidies to nuclear and fossil fuels were to be cut.

"To explore for more new oil will only cause pointless destruction of a pristine area to produce oil we can never afford to burn," said Slowbean, who is a Web-page

designer and teaching assistant at the University of British Columbia. Although Canada is not among the nations striving to develop the oil near Waveland, our record when it

comes to global warming and environmental issues is less than stellar.

In 1992, Canada (along with the other developed nations attending

the Rio Earth Summit) signed the Climate Convention that committed it to freezing greenhouse emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000. But today, greenhouse emissions are up 9.2 per cent over 1990 levels, making Canada the second largest per-capita producer of greenhouse gases.

The appropriation of Waveland is the latest move in Greenpeace's campaign to protect the Atlantic frontier from oil exploration. The organization argues that the world has to begin the phase-out of fossil fuels and the phase-in of renewable energy sources to preserve the climate.

Greenpeace welcomes anyone anywhere to apply for citizenship in Waveland. The only requirement to obtain citizenship is to take the following pledge: "Without violence and by bearing witness, to defend nature, to protect the global commons, to reform industrialism, and to secure peace, believing in action, rather than words."

Applications can be made through the Waveland web site at <http://www.waveland.org>. Once a citizen, you can take part in discussions on the Website with other citizens and vote in upcoming elections.

New garbage rules

BY SHELLEY ROBINSON

Next year, students dumping their Kraft Dinner leftovers will be breaking the law.

The Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has instituted a ban on all organic material in landfills by November of 1998.

The ban began as an answer to the provincial government's target of 50% landfill diversion from 1989 till the year 2000.

The waste will be collected curbside, every two weeks, in large green carts.

The Green Cart Program, a 2000 household testing project, has already begun. In Halifax, some green carts are being used and collected between Quinpool Rd., Connaught Ave., and Oxford St. — an area with many student apartments.

Robert Orr, a project engineer with the HRM, said that although

it is harder to reach students — because they move so often — he is confident students will participate.

"It's the timing...more than the commitment. As long as [students are] aware, they [are] participating," he said.

The construction of a larger composting centre is underway, slated to be completed within the next ten months.

The choice to eliminate organic waste relates to the problems created in the landfill by organic material, as well as the benefits of reclaiming the waste.

Crushed by the weight of the landfill, organic food and yard waste decompose without oxygen, creating leachate, a poisonous liquid that can contaminate groundwater.

But organic waste that has been composted, can be sold as commercial soil.

Although the ban on organic

waste is law, there are no plans to punish those who don't abide by the new program.

"We haven't imposed penalties, we don't have fines...we look at it as an education challenge, not a regulatory challenge," Orr said.

Dave Redwood, co-interim executive director of the Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group (NSPIRG), said that it is the universities' responsibility to promote student awareness in the program, as well as to participate themselves.

"[The universities' should be] putting some attention and resources towards an on-campus composting system...green carts visible in important locations like residence cafeterias and the Student Union Building cafeteria," Redwood said.

"If universities were involved, students would jump on — no one doesn't want to compost."



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