

# letters

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and Conceptual Enclosure". This letter is to bring out some of my reasons for opposing sustainable development - which Liberals, Tories and the NDP support - to a wider audience.

Sustainable Development permeates environmental discussions in Canada. It is my belief that sustainable development brings with it a world view and a terminology, namely "conceptual enclosure", that can shut out some realities.

"Development" implies unfolding of a "potential", so that the existing situation becomes devalued. As it is popularly understood today, development has come to mean economic growth. This, because an economic system, the market economy i.e. capitalism, requires economic growth and unending consumerism, and development becomes equated with this.

We find with the use of the concept of sustainable development, that indicators of "development" are used which clearly reflect the dominance of the "developed" countries. Thus indicators, like per capita income, can be easily marshalled to show the superiority of industrialized, high-consumption societies, compared to Third World countries. Yet, measuring other indicators, such as family cohesiveness and responsibility for the care of elderly members, respect and protection of nature, etc. could show entirely different rankings.

In Canada, environmental indicators are selectively chosen to illustrate the perspective of sustainable development, that economic growth can con-

tinue along with economic protection. For example, graphs put out by Environment Canada, on the pulp and paper industry, show falling figures for BOD (bio-chemical or biological oxygen demand) and TSS (total suspended solids), and rising production for pulp and paper. However, this information is selective because other environmental indicators for pulp and paper mills, that do not show the ideological message, "everything is known and under control/getting better" etc. are ignored.

In Nova Scotia, "development" means local environmental degradation and destruction, plus erosion of community power from the community to provincial, national or international centers. Conflicts become "resolved" using the criteria of the developers, which means the local affected community, if it can participate, can only do so using an alien language, e.g. cost benefit analysis, which does not reflect its concerns. Environmentally, destruction takes place and no one can be directly held accountable. Overall, with "development", a minority benefits at the expense of the majority. Internationally, a Western economic development model is imposed on the Third World.

Sustainable development will not change how we relate to the natural world. We will continue on the destructive path. Economics has to become subordinate to ecology. We have to move from a psychology of "I consume therefore I am", to identifying with the natural world, so that an injury to nature is an injury to oneself. Development and its clone, sustainable development, must be opposed. To successfully oppose ongoing envi-

ronmental destruction, means to move power from the market and the state back to the communities.

David Orton

## Breathers beware

To the editor:

About a week ago I arrived at the School for Resource and Environmental Studies (SRES) to go about my regular business. However, when I entered the building, I found it had been completely dishevelled by some painters who had come to spruce up the place. It has since become impossible to occupy the building for more than a few minutes at a time. The university has chosen to use heavy oil-based paints - the cheapest no doubt, and also probably the most toxic. The fumes from this paint are so noxious that after a period of only 10-15 minutes, eyes begin to water and heads begin to ache. Recently I discovered compelling, although circumstantial, evidence of the toxicity of this paint.

The buildings that house SRES have long been known to also harbour a small but thriving population of mice. Nobody pays them any mind, as they normally restrict their activity to nights and weekends when the only other creatures sharing their abode are a few unfortunate grad students.

However, last Thursday as I was occupying the bustle of the photocopier amidst the myrtle of a regular workday, I noticed a movement out of the corner of my eye. Looking down, I spotted one of the resident mice very slowly

ambling across the hall. I made a move towards the animal and it scarcely acknowledged my presence. Instead, it continued its lethargic pace, slowly wandering down the hall toward the reception area, oblivious of the bright light, workday surroundings normally so hazardous to the survival of a mouse.

Could the aberrant behaviour of this one mouse be related to the pervasive, noxious paint fumes in the building. Possibly. Possibly not. Empirical evidence is far from conclusive. Clearly the conduct of the mouse was highly irregular. In the absence of any obvious physical debilitation, some neurological disorder, possibly caused by external environmental factors such as toxic fumes, seems to be the logical explanation.

If the paint is having such a rapid effect on the mouse population, then how is it effecting the human population that must work in the building. At SRES, most people take a direct interest in such issues. Given the choice, we would prefer a more sensible and sensitive product. Unfortunately, being part of the larger university community, we are denied the choice. It is symptomatic of one of the larger problems facing society as a whole. Positive change is often stifled because the political and social institutions that frame our actions are so solidly entrenched. Waste reduction versus incineration is a relevant example. Ultimately society must overcome these barriers so that people can make well informed choices. We must be able to choose, for then can we hope to achieve effective political and social transformation.

Todd Keith

## We've gotta talk

To the editor:

I am very pleased to see that there are more people spending more time/

Chris Andrews

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