

Brown's conservation group boycotted the provincial government hearings looking into the environmental impact of a second reactor.

"Building Lepreau has nothing to do with needing electricity, or reducing our oil consumption. It's a welfare project designed to keep the nuclear industry alive artificially on a life support system, with a direct line to the federal coffers," she says.

The nuclear industry fought back hard against Smyth. Yaffe sat through a three year trial to argue over the meaning of one word, 'expert', in a single paragraph of an opinion article in a Halifax paper to make his point. The judge, Justice Peter Richard of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court, said that in his opinion, Smyth's tone in the article could lead someone to surmise that Yaffe was "sort of a hired gun."

Smyth says there is a dangerous gap between the decision-makers in government and industry and the country's voters. "People feel a sort of helplessness that says the government is going ahead with what it wants with no regard to what

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they think. That shows me there is something radically wrong with our democratic system. Voting every four years is not enough," she says.

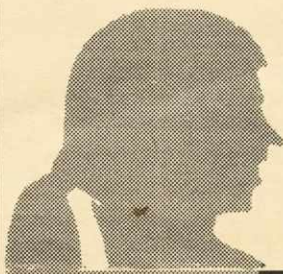
If ordinary citizens are left out of decision-making that affects the environment, it's "doubly true for women."

"It's essential for women to become a part of the environmental movement, and caucus together. Otherwise, we stand to be overwhelmed by men, like the '60s peace movement. We have to be alert for this, and ready to offer alternatives," says Smyth.

Women in the environmental movement bring alternate methods of problem-solving to social action, say Brown and Smyth. "One of the criticisms of the environmental movement is that it is emotional, irrational and value-laden: environmentalists are individuals with no respect for facts and science, people who thrive on creating fear and anxiety in a community, that sort of thing. I guess when someone says something to me about being too emotional, my response is well, it's a pretty emotional issue. If you can't get emotional about an abnormally high incidence of birth defects in New Brunswick's agricultural area, what can you get emotional about," says Brown.

Brown says her critics often use the word emotion in a "derogatory way," but she turns it around to deal with it in a positive way. "You cannot separate values and emotion from the area. It's a value that people put on human life that drives them in these issues."

And that's fair ball, she adds. "If you don't think that the bottom, economic line is an appropriate measuring stick to be put up against the potential health of your child, then you've got to say that." Smyth says women's "lack of respect for authority and hierarchies" makes it easy for them to



"At the moment, the power brokers are men, that's no secret. And it's not peculiar to the environmental realm either. I think a lot of complaints that women have in an area, whether it's social issues, peace issues or human rights, are about who has power and how decisions are made."

challenge those bottom lines established by industry and government.

"It's been my experience that women do the work, along with a number of men, in the environmental movement. Women provide the organizing force and the drive to combat these issues," says Smyth. Since women outnumber the men in the movement, its methods of work reflect women's ways. Smyth says women find it easier than men to question the authority of government and industry, especially when it concerns something close to their own lives.

"People turn out for immediate issues in our own back yards. Little things comprise our lives. I wouldn't say that women's ability to move more quickly on these issues than men's is necessarily better, but we don't have to spend the time they do re-examining and re-evaluating the issue. We get on with it," she says.

Liz Calder, co-ordinator of the Halifax-based Ecology Action Center agrees with Smyth. When women get together they "click", she says. "We're not afraid of looking at things in different ways. Men like to narrow things down, they don't like to tackle broad issues. For them, it's a painful thing to do, to look at things in a wholistic way," she says.

With women in the environmental movement, there is less of an "ego problem" to get in the way, says Calder. Women don't rule out any way of making a point, and they bring creativity and fun and humour to the discussion. She always gets discouraged, but she withdraws and comes back for more. "It's easier if it's emotional and fun," says Calder.

Women want equality in a world that is healthy, both physically and psychologically, a world that doesn't separate emotion and practice. A world, says Calder, that isn't elitist when it comes to the environment.

Calder wants the government to understand, ultimately, just who is affected by environmental problems then take the debate from there. "We finally taked to government and industry about their process. It clearly has to be seen as something that involves all people in the community, and those people have to control aspects of the debate themselves," she says. Once the parties allow community involvement, Calder says everyone will see how everything — business, environment, and government — connects. "That's what the feminist movement has brought to the issue, an approach to the ecology that is wholistic. It doesn't separate peace and the environment," says Calder.

During her second trip to Europe in the summer, Calder spoke to Swedish environmentalists about the pesticide cycle and the effects of pesticides on the Third World's food production. Her travels have made her aware that environmental concerns are shared by people in other cultures. As part of the support group for the seventeen plaintiffs who went to court seeking an injunction to stop the spraying of herbicides 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T on their land, Calder says she has faced "really rough experiences in the movement."

"The herbicide court case was an experience I will never forget. It affected a great many people. But given the same set of

circumstances, I would have to do it all over again."

"It" was demanding the right to control what happened outside her window, over the corporate right to profit from the soft-wood industry. It also meant a month long trial in May of 1983 that saw the corporate interests succeed and the landowners pushed into a no-win situation. The seventeen signed an agreement promising not to appeal if the industry would not impose court costs and damages.

Women are making progress in the environmental movement despite setbacks, says Calder. Since the court decision, the Environmental Protection Agency, a federal government regulating body in the United States, permanently banned, 2,5,5-T and Dow Chemical stopped producing it. Environmental issues are receiving much wider media coverage now as well, says Calder. And Smyth adds that the environmental movement has been crucial in stopping uranium mining in Nova Scotia and forcing the government to re-evaluate its spray program.

Women have more to lose if government and industry won't listen to their environmental concerns, says Brown. She says the "environmental issue of 1985" comes down to one thing: acceptable risk. "In all these issues, some decision-maker has said that this level of exposure is acceptable, and that decision is based on some sort of arbitrary risk-assessment that tells you that one death in 50,000 is o.k." Giving permission for that one death offends Brown's basic sense of justice. "One whose behalf does that person speak? If I'm that one in 50,000 whose lotto ticket happens to come up, I'm certainly not going to agree. They want to trade off lives for chemicals," says Brown.

Women are saying that one death is not acceptable, and if the government doesn't listen, "We're going to make trouble," says Brown.

*I speak for those who live next to nuclear reactors;
who sleep with potassium iodine under their pillows;
who wonder where the next accident is:*

*Chalk River
Point Lepreau
Three Mile Island
Point Lepreau
Pickering*

*Point Lepreau
Why didn't they tell us?
radiation leaks
spills
gas*

*Why didn't they warn us?
cancer
contaminated crops
animals dead and dying
water used to be for drinking
where are the fish?*

*We live next to reactors which make plutonium to make more bombs
WE LIVE NEXT TO REACTORS WHICH MAKE PLUTONIUM TO MAKE MORE BOMBS*

(excerpt from The Memorial Service, a performance by a women's affinity group, written by Donna Smyth)