

Spectrum

FOREST BREEZE
BY MICHELE MACNEIL

Why do we need ecological reserves?

Of all the problems being faced by forest managers and land owners in the 1990's; one of the greatest stumbling blocks is the demand for ecological reserves. Ecological reserves are pieces of land which are set aside and left untouched by humans. The logic behind this is that ecological reserves would act as control areas from which we could study biological, chemical and physical processes in a natural environment. The other point promoting ecological reserves is that these areas would help maintain biodiversity; thus increasing the gene pool from which we may find the next penicillin or a cure for cancer.

One of the drawbacks however is that biological diversity as a scientific concept has no universally accepted definition or at least none that can provide any operational guidance. For example, the Society of American Foresters (1992, p. 42) defines it as follows: "Biological diversity refers to the variety and abundance of species, their genetic composition, and the

communities, ecosystems, and landscapes in which they occur." It also refers to the ecological structures, functions, and processes at all of these levels.

The timber oriented groups, who depend on the extraction of wood for their survival, argue that change is constant whether it is initiated by man or by natural forces, and both have caused the extinction of species. Therefore, if ecosystems were to be preserved, human intervention would seem almost inevitable. Their complaint is a viable one; however the rate at which species are becoming extinct has been greatly accelerated during the last decade.

As a 4th year forestry student, I believe that setting aside ecological reserves is not only important but essential. The reason for preservation of the complex of species is that all of them function together as a machine; in spite of the fact that it is a machine for which we have no owner's manual or spare parts. It cleans the air we breathe and the water we drink, breaks down

waste, stabilizes and generates soil and performs a variety of tasks in a complicated chain of actions and reactions. How can we carry out wise management practices to enhance and promote biological diversity if we do not understand how each part of the ecosystem functions in the natural environment. Aldo Leopold once said, "The first

principle of intelligent tinkering is to save all the parts."

As humans we have the responsibility to inform ourselves through accurate information. We lack basic knowledge about most of our common species, to say nothing for the rarer ones. When we concern ourselves with habitat and other species, our concerns are indeed for man.

"For in the end, we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we are taught." (African environmentalist)

To this end it is important to set ecological reserves aside to save the ecosystems that support life - all life.

METANOIA
BY JOHN VALK

Good without God

The movie *Regarding Henry* (with Harrison Ford) may be one of the new generation of films that promote family values, ethical behavior, even marital fidelity. No doubt we could use them. A recent *Globe and Mail* article spoke of the "40% factor": forty percent of school children are unprepared for learning because they are victimized by broken homes and physical, sexual and emotional abuse. In *Regarding Henry*, the forces that

drove people apart-hubris, infidelity, greed, time pressure-were reassessed, and a different set of priorities prevailed. Moral and ethical virtues won the day, and we again felt good about ourselves.

Is the moral and ethical reversal portrayed in a movie such as *Regarding Henry* realistic? Were we exposed to genuine possibilities for a renewal of moral and ethical values, or were we merely dished simplistic Hollywood sentiments. In any era other than the present a dramatic shift in moral and ethical outlook would not have failed to make reference to something this film took for granted was not necessary. Religion and the spiritual were totally ignored. A question lingered in my mind: "is it possible to be good without God?"

That question is posed also by Glenn Tinder, ("Can We Be Good Without God?" *Atlantic Monthly*, December, 1989-I borrowed his title). According to him, the morals and virtues remaining in our society are a legacy of a Christian past. Today, thanks to secularism, they have been severed from religion. Can secularism then replenish these morals and virtues? Can they be maintained by more than, for example, a mere solitary and meditative walk in the woods?

Can we survive as a society that promotes the rights and freedoms of the individual without particular spiritual roots? "Can we affirm the dignity and equality of individuals without giving them transcendental backing?" How important is the traditional Judeo-Christian concept of God and humankind for replenishing moral and ethical values?

Some will argue concerning the essential goodness of humans. When not encumbered by social environmental, it is assumed that our goodness will naturally surface, occasional setbacks notwithstanding. But surely the atrocities and crimes committed in this century alone, even by the world's most "advanced nations, leave a great deal of doubt about this optimistic liberal notion. The

1990's is replete with interest groups whose agendas, though perhaps laudable in themselves, are nevertheless self-serving. Once in positions of power, it is not infrequent that one's goals are pursued at the expense or exploitation of others-generally the weak and powerless-all the while maintaining the validity of those goals. One need mention only the gun, tobacco and abortion lobbies. Can we then still be good in our pursuits without God?

Christianity has always maintained a paradox, as Tinder puts it. It asserts that all humans, from high or low stations in life, are to be exalted. All humans are precious, and must be respected and treated with care, even if only faint remnants of humanness may remain in the most destitute or criminal. Dignity and worth is bestowed on humans by God, not by others, culture, politics or wealth. Hence, government must ensure the just treatment of all persons. None may be sacrificed for the gain of others.

Christianity asserts also that all humans, though exalted and precious, are at the same time also sinful. All are prone to evil. The Christian concept of sin is virtually ignored today. That may be unfortunate. One is indeed humbled when it is acknowledged that errors of judgment, greed and exploitation lie only a hair's breath away from us all at the best of times, let alone the worst. Our hope of avoiding tyranny and maintaining any semblance of moral and ethical order may very well lie in the realization that though we may intend good, we are nonetheless prisoners of evil. As Tinder states, "Sin is ironic. Its intention is self-serving, its result is self-debasement."

Such assertion are not intended to paralyze one's noble actions. We are called, all of us, to ensure that justice is done and respect of all persons great or small is enhanced. Yet it encompasses the realization that no one has all the answers or solutions, that we are alone capable of righting all wrongs. As the apostle Paul stated: "we all see through a glass darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12).

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THE BLACK TRIANGLE
BY TRISTIS BHAIRD

Building and burning

Peculiar things happen to lesbians in small communities. There is an affliction that they develop. I can't name it here. As far as I can tell no one has ever categorized it to anyone else's satisfaction. I have secretly theorized that the very effort of trying to pin it down is a symptom of the disorder.

Other symptoms are very similar to what some individual heterosexual women get when they first realize they are alone on one side of an argument involving sexism and a roomful of men and women are on the other.

First, you notice frequent rushes of adrenaline, accompanied by flashes of anger at either the situation or another

person (and even you are not sure which). This leads to the next symptom: denying you are angry at any person at all (who is in the room); attempting to assure them it is *definitely* the system.

"Finally you end up quarantined with your fellow sufferers....sniffling, sneezing and wheezing."

Next you notice yourself continually bringing up the subject, sometimes in passing, sometimes as a joke, sometimes when you are having a discussion about something that seemed at first to be totally unrelated.

Unafflicted people in your circle start to avoid you. Either

you have begun to give off an odour, or, more likely, they don't think you are very much fun anymore. In an effort to prove you still have a sense of humour you start to force jokes out of your ever constricting throat, but the cynicism which is a later symptom of your plight, hits your audience like a sneeze, and instead of laughing they wipe their faces and tell you how rude your little explosion was.

Finally you end up quarantined with your fellow sufferers. All the sniffing, sneezing and wheezing over each other in confined spaces does little good, aside from ensuring you all end up with the same conclusion.

You are not the only people who notice this, and the general population coins a name for all of you: The Politically Correct Police. When you hear this you know that your condition has reached a new stage. The label introduces some side effects: a certainty that from this moment on, nobody feels they have to take anything you say seriously; a vague feeling that you might be wrong, or at least should have used a hanky that last time; vertigo from the sudden transfer you've apparently had from being one of the oppressed to inclusion in what you are told is an all-powerful global regime responsible for the slaughter of innocents and the destruction of the free world (none of which seems to get you the little change you wanted in the system); finally an association (even in your own mind!) with the Tories.

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