



Thou bleeding piece of earth

by Aaron Cosbey

I won't take up much of your time — just three premises, a conclusion, an explanation, and a note at the end on how this affects you personally.

Premise #1: The Earth can only assimilate so much pollution and eco-system degradation, and it has either already taken too much, or it's pretty close to it.

Premise #2: The three billion people who live in the world's "low-income economy" countries have an average Gross National Product per capita about two per cent of Canada's.

Premise #3: All people have equal rights to pollute; that is, I don't have any more or less right than the next guy to produce toxic waste.

Conclusion: Recycled garbage bags aren't enough.

Explanation: It's basic math. Our high standard of living (fifty times the average of half the world's population) is choking the Earth with industrial by-products: ozone-eating, greenhouse enhancing, eco-system-poisoning nastiness. So as the developing world starts to try to pump out just as much

junk per capita as we do (and they are starting to)... well, it's not going to work.

So do we tell China not to burn coal (very bad — acid rain, carbon dioxide, lots of trace toxins) to industrialize? Do we tell Brazil not to lay waste the rainforest (also bad — more carbon dioxide, less oxygen, loss of biodiversity) for mines, forestry and hydro projects? Do we tell Eastern Europe not to use CFCs (nasty ozone-depleters), even if they cost less than the alternatives? How can we? We already did, and are still doing, *all* that stuff, in aces; that's what got us into this mess. And, according to premise #3, they have as much right to do it as we do. So until we stop deforesting (Temagami, Ontario), coal-burning (Point Aconi, Nova Scotia), hydro-destroying (James Bay II, Quebec), using CFCs (the fridge, your place), and all the other nastiness we do, we've got no place telling other countries not to try to reach the same standard of living we've achieved by doing the same. (And even if we do stop, we may not have the right to preach, since we're rich, they're poor, and we got this way by abusing the Earth.)

Part of the solution lies in better regulation

(like the environmental impact assessment process), and part of it lies in improved technology (like recycled garbage bags). But, most of it lies in human behaviour. Either we stop consuming so much, or our children inherit an environmental debt that will kill them.

not using a dishwasher, having spots on your apples — and it involves more than buying recycled garbage bags. But it's morally wrong not to try. Mahatma Gandhi says it better than I do:

"The golden rule... is resolutely to refuse to have what millions cannot. This ability to refuse will not descend upon us all of a sudden. The first thing is to cultivate the mental attitude that will not have possessions or facilities denied to millions, and the next immediate thing is to rearrange our lives as fast as possible in accordance with that mentality."

How this affects you personally: Think about the way you live your life. Could everybody on the Earth live that way without overloading the system? If not, then try to live more simply. It's very inconvenient — not driving a car, not bleaching your shirts,

The only one who can wear a fur coat gracefully and beautifully is the animal to whom it belongs.

...when the last individual of a race of living things breathes no more, another Heaven and another Earth must pass before such a one can be again.

W. Blake

Safer substitutes

by Aaron Cosbey

Barry Commoner's third law of ecology is: "everything goes somewhere." That means if we wipe up oven cleaner with paper towels, and toss the whole mess in the garbage, it doesn't disappear to some wonderful fourth dimension; instead it goes to the landfill, and eventually leaches out into the soil, or water tables. The paint thinner we pour down the sink doesn't cease to exist — it goes straight to Halifax harbour, to join the torrent of other hazardous wastes dumped there on an ongoing basis. It all goes *somewhere*.

The recipes below are safer substitutes for stuff that you might not want to see going *anywhere*. Most of the common commercial varieties are pretty nasty. The whole list is dying to be cut out and posted on your fridge with one of those little magnet things.

All Purpose Cleaner: 1/4 cup baking soda, 1/2 cup white vinegar, 2 litres of water. For tough stuff, or for ceramic tiles, add 1/2 cup ammonia.

Glass Cleaner: 2 tsp. white vinegar, 1 litre water. Wipe with balled up old newspapers instead of paper towels.

Oven Cleaner: Scrub with paste of baking soda, salt and water, let stand 15 minutes, then scrub off. Better yet, use a washable pan to catch the gunk before it gets baked on.

Disinfectant: Good old soap and water, or 1/2 cup borax and 4 litres water.

Laundry Products: Instead of detergent, add 1/3 cup of washing soda as machine

fills, and then 1 1/2 cups of soap powder (Ivory) when full. To whiten stuff, add 1/2 cup borax to the load. To soften fabrics, add 1/2 cup white vinegar to rinse cycle (not necessary if you're using soap instead of detergent).

Stain Removers: For butter, blood, chocolate, coffee, mildew, mud, or urine, dissolve 1/4 cup borax in 2 cups cold water. Sponge on stain, and let dry before washing. (If this doesn't do it, rub with increasingly concentrated doses of vinegar and water.) For grease, rub with damp cloth with borax on it, or rub with soap and baking soda. For grass, rub with glycerine (available at drugstores), and let stand one hour before washing.

Moth Balls: Sachets of cedar chips, dried lemon peels, dried lavender, rosemary or mint. Or store in a cedar chest. To kill moth eggs, put clothes in dryer.

Furniture Polish: For finished wood, buff with one part lemon juice and two parts vegetable oil. For unfinished wood, use mineral oil.

Floor Cleaners: For linoleum, clean with one cup white vinegar, eight litres water. Polish with Club Soda. For wood floors, clean with one tsp. washing soda, four litres hot water. Polish with one part lemon juice, two parts vegetable oil.

Paints and Solvents: Use latex or water-based paints, which can be washed out with soap and water. If you must use solvent or thinner, let it settle, in a closed jar, after use. Then either strain it through a wire mesh sieve, or pour off the clear stuff, and reuse.

Recycling a noble pursuit

by Jeffrey Wackett

Now that we have reached the nineties, people have become more and more aware of our current environmental crisis. Environmental groups that were labelled "left wing" or "radical" have drifted further and further in our minds to "the right" without really changing their views. Yet as terms like "environmentally friendly" and "sustainable growth" become more and more trendy, we run the old danger of not learning anything from our mistakes, simply by ignoring the real causes of the environmental crisis that we are faced with today.

It is simply untrue that by recycling alone we can end the environmental crisis. Large scale recycling programs will work as long as they are cost effective for collectors and convenient to consumers. Although the Blue Box program is successfully operating in many places in Canada and continues to grow, it will be some time before many other countries, many which we ourselves exploit, riddled with poverty, overpopulation, and just plain disorganization, will have the environmental issue on the agenda. Also, not all wastes can be recycled or treated, carbon dioxide for example.

The question we must ask ourselves then is "where does our garbage come from?" The answer is of course "from our consumer needs." So it is simply preposterous to discuss our crisis without being sincere about the term "reduce"; it is not a slogan. Our material

ways reflect a tragic absence of any spirituality in our lives; what makes us think that inanimate objects are so inanimate, and that we can treat our books and our bicycles like our tin cans and glass bottles without any love? A sort of enlightened respect which all things by nature demand, even the pen that I write with and the paper that you read. Every time we move or see or smell, spirituality is implied, every single time; whether it be destructive or constructive is for each of us, one by one, to decide.

It is for this reason that I think recycling a happy pursuit. Whether or not we save the earth does not matter, it is irrelevant. It is love put into the act that will make us sometimes happy, sometimes sad, but never sterile. Many people are dying of preventable diseases and in silly wars today, like others did yesterday, and as more will do tomorrow because of our consumption; maybe we cannot end this suffering, but we can choose, at the very least, to attempt in earnest not to lead ourselves to the evils that are causing these problems.

Thanks to CEAG and the School of Environmental Studies, aluminum and paper recycling projects are in operation on campus. Hopefully after Christmas, the late blooming Science Society's Recycling Committee will continue with glass and tin. I wish the groups success. And as for Christmas, well, instead of buying gifts, "made in somewhere else", why not make them with your own hands.