

You Need Meat (Don't Go No Further)

I eat meat, and have for most of my life. I have had endless debates with numerous articulate vegetarians, but not one has ever made an argument that actually made me think. I fell behind the usual defenses, 'good for protein,' 'What other purpose do farm animals serve?' etc. But it took two words from a friend to actually make me reconsider my carnivorous ways.

Bad Karma.

It wasn't so much the words as the sentiment. My friend felt that it was a bad relationship to have with nature, to raise animals in horrid conditions, slaughter them and use every part of the carcass to save money.

I have always felt that the human relationship with nature is horrendous, but I was unable to break it down to specifics. Growing up as I did, I spent a lot of time outdoors. I was outraged as a child to witness huge areas of beautiful lakefront land completely destroyed by deforestation.

My first years as a university student taught me just how negative the consumption-orientated nature of society actually is, and how many useless products are turned into waste. And now I'm thinking that maybe eating meat is not the best way to cleanse my relationship with the planet.

It takes 2,500 gallons of water, 12 pounds of grain, 35 pounds of topsoil and the energy equivalent of one gallon of gasoline to produce one pound of feedlot beef. 70 percent of US grain production is fed to live stock. 5 million acres of rain forest are felled every year in South and Central America alone to create cattle pasture, and this also makes me think.

Where does it go? Waste, in the form of pollution and environmental decay. If we lived off the land, and had to hunt to feed and clothe ourselves, than the waste is not waste — it is recycled into the ecosystem, but we don't. Right now, waste ends up wrapped in plastic bags and burnt, or it ends up in the nearest harbour — hardly a good relationship.

The idea of Karma may not wash for most, but for me, it puts a label on my discomfort with counter-productive consumption of the planet. It's an idea that everything you do in relationships with nature and people has an impact.

Karma is the kind of thought that, at the very least, gives people power. The shortcomings of democracy are nothing compared to the independent thought of intelligent people. It puts responsibility for the ills of society directly on the shoulders of the individual, and takes away the excuses that keep people from changing.

If you aren't happy, do your part. Changes happen best through evolution, rather than revolution, so don't try and change things in a year. Thinking long-term allows for tolerance, a vital ingredient to change.

There is no doubt that humans are destroying the planet at an alarming rate, mainly because people don't acknowledge the problem. The mindset is that environmentalists are exaggerating the problem, and if there were a problem, somebody of some social stature would point it out. The problem is that very few large corporations would be willing to institute any changes that might compromise profit, and a lot of the more powerful institutions in



North America, and elsewhere, have little to gain by environmental responsibility.

Health is also an issue. A healthy vegetarian meal has all the necessary elements for survival, and new concerns about the long-term effect of eating red meat also makes a potent point. A large percentage of health professionals are now discouraging the consumption of animal fats and red meats that have been shown to increase the chance

of obesity, cancer and other diseases.

I don't know if eating animals is wrong for me, but I now know that I need to think about it. If I am going to decide to completely alter my life based on a principle, then I need to be sure that is the right answer. The trend of not eating animals "because it's bad, man," doesn't work for me. I don't want to join the growing fad of vegetarianism. I want to do it because I feel

that it will result in at least some self-satisfaction and peace of mind that I am not contributing to the global trend of ignorance and apathy.

You can't make decisions without information, and you can't make changes without decisions, so I suggest that everyone re-examine their beliefs. If you think you know something, it's because you haven't really learned anything.

Patrick Blackie

LETTERS

Composting on Dal no good

To The Editor,

Access to composting on campus needs to improve.

On March 17, some members of the Sierra Youth Coalition (SYC is a campus enviro group) sat in the Killam Library Second Cup to observe people's composting habits. This research was inspired by the SYC waste audit where it was discovered that 45 percent of the "garbage" going to landfill was compostable organics.

Following the waste audit, discussions with facilities management indicated that composting locations on campus cannot be increased until contamination is reduced. The three current composting locations — Killam Library, the Life Sciences building, and the Computer Sciences building — have so much contamination with non-compostables (such as Styrofoam cups) that it has to be hand-sorted before being sent off campus. This is a gross job and it is truly unfair to expect anyone to do it.

If contamination does not stop, tuition will simply have to be

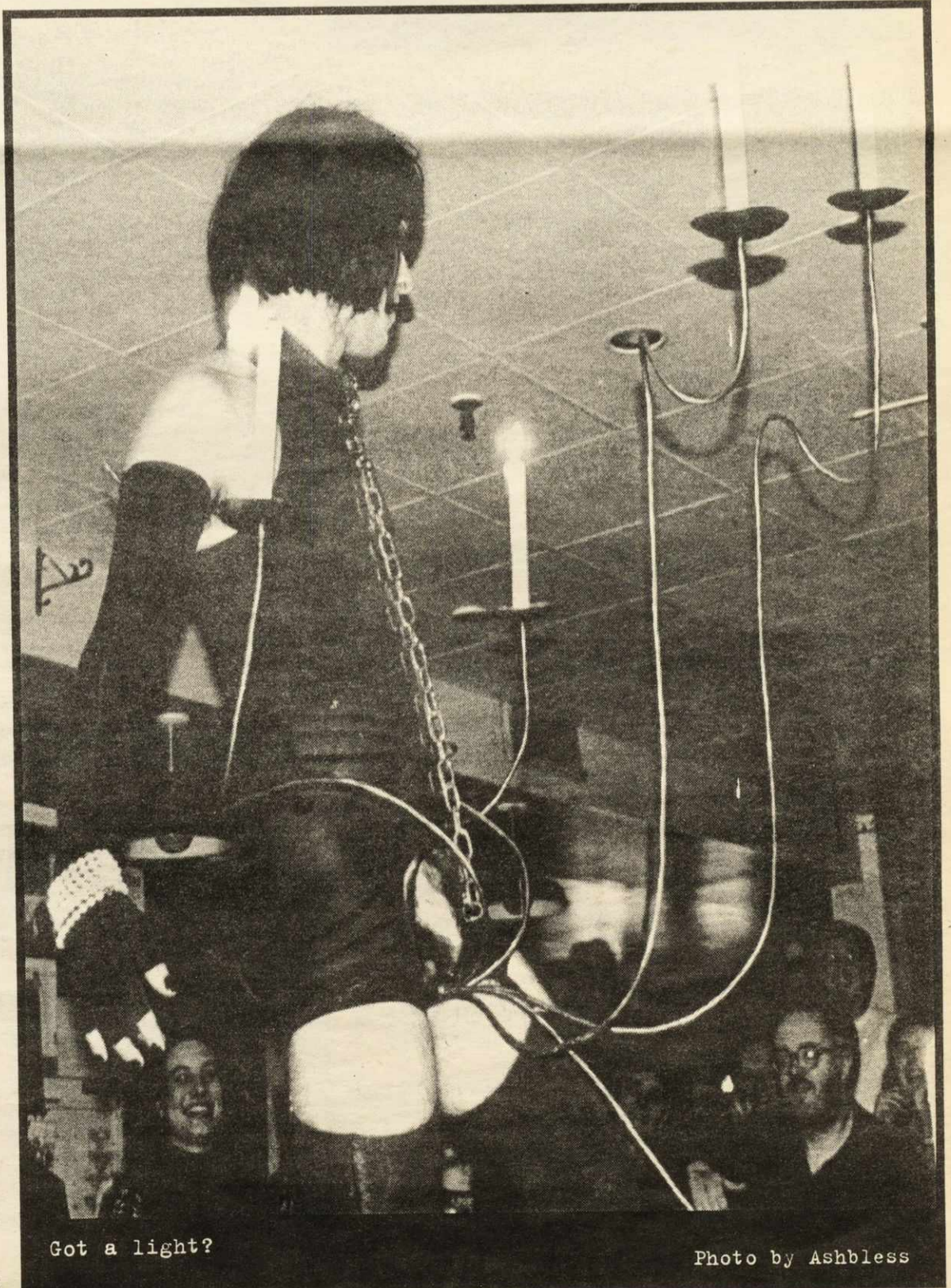
increased to hire garbage sorters.

Compost is, basically, paper products and food. Included are food waste, paper cups, napkins, wax paper, paper bags, and tea bags. Compostable organic material is not permitted in landfill by law in Nova Scotia, so sending the currently contaminated organics to landfill is not an option. Without separating organics at the waste bin, the only solution would be to pay people to sort the contaminated compost, and tuition hikes would have to fund this effort.

Observations at the Second Cup showed that approximately one in 10 people use their own cups (and, thus, create little waste), and about one in five people are not sorting their waste properly.

If you want to reduce the amount of garbage going to landfill, you should request a paper cup at the coffee vendors instead of using a Styrofoam or plastic cup. Paper cups are compostable while plastic and Styrofoam are not. Of course, bringing your own mug is the best option of all.

Amelia Clarke & Kevin Blair



Got a light?

Photo by Ashbless