

Victory for pollution?

Environment Act Attacked



In 1972 the Nova Scotia legislature passed an Environmental Act that was regarded as probably the best in North America. It was never made law by the Regan government. Instead, a new Environmental Act was introduced a little more than two weeks ago. Ecology and environment groups throughout the province have criticized the new Act as a step backwards. The man who will soon be

Environment Minister, Glen Bagnell, says that the legislation has three purposes. They are the consolidation of the government's environmental functions, more active control of land and air and citizen participation. The new Act's critics say that none of the purposes have been advanced by the changes.

Regarding the tying together of environmental functions, it was pointed out at March 28 meeting of the legislature's Law Amendments Committee that the only section dealing with land use had been removed. Thus, the present situation

where land in municipalities is zoned and land use elsewhere is virtually uncontrolled will remain.

In fact, at the present time, it is possible for persons injured by a development near their property, to sue, and either be paid for the damage or have the nuisance removed. If the new act goes into effect, polluters wishing to build new facilities or add to existing ones will have to get a permit from the government, with pollution standards in the permit. However, the changes make the issuing of permits and the standards they contain a secret process. It is up to the minister whether such matters will become public, or whether they will be reported to the Environment Control Council. It is not clear whether private citizens will be able to sue polluters anymore.

Regarding the active control of land and air, many doubt that the practicalities of the new Act's operation will permit this. Under the 1972 Act the Environment Control Council had to approve the issuing of permits before they went out. Now, it gets to make recommendations to the minister only when he refuses, cancels or suspends a permit.

There is also the fact that according to environmental law experts under the changed Act the only persons who will know that a permit has been applied for will be the hopeful polluter and the Department's civil servants. After negotiating with polluters only, anyone would become conscious only of the polluters' position. Other

groups have no opportunity to state their opinions and attitudes to the civil servants who will do the actual negotiating of standards. The public in the area concerned will likewise go voiceless.

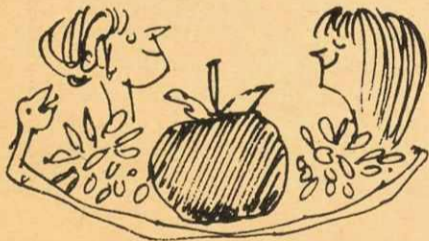
The Act is still presented as a citizen participation venture. However, the main arena for this, the Environmental Control Council, is now so weak that effective participation appears hopeless to most ecology groups. Under the 1972 Act it had to meet 12 times a year. Now it is three a year. There will be a 3-person Executive Committee chosen by the minister who will perform most of the day-to-day work of the Council. However, the Minister is the person who would suffer most from having an active, critical Committee, even if the criticism was bi-partisan and constructive. Even though Glen Bagnell is active in encouraging citizen participation and contribution to government, he will not always be the minister. Many experts feel that most future Environment Ministers will appoint an independent-minded Executive Committee.

Only a few of the questions raised by the watering down of the Act that is supposed to protect our environment have been raised here. The Act, if not already given third reading by the House of Assembly, will be soon. The Law Amendments committee was not giving a favourable hearing to those who presented briefs on the Act last Tuesday. We can only wait to see if any good is to come from the new act.

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Zimbabwe must be Free!

by Dave Smith

Africa Freedom Day was observed on Friday, March 16, in the Weldon Law Building. It was a day of celebration but at the same time a day of solemnity because Angola, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe (Rhodesia as it is called by the white minority) still exist under fascism.

Speaking on behalf of the Zimbabwe National Union was Edison Zvobgo of Lusaka, Zambia. Mr. Zvobgo had been a political prisoner under Ian Smith's white racist regime. He forses a violent revolution occurring within five years.

A newspaper entitled "The Nationalist" from Zambia (Dalhousie Killam Library has now ordered it) can inform any interested Canadians on the latest incidents of Zimbabwe (Rhodesia). The week-by-week details of the Zimbabwe movement can be obtained by writing to Zimbabwe Week, A.N.C. no. 330, 14 Whittier Place, Walden Square Road, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02140, U.S.A.

That same day (March 16) the Halifax Chronicle-Herald carried the accompanying advertisement.

Surely any decent democratic newspaper would reject such an ad. The Canadian government has fully backed all U.N. sanctions against this fascist

country. What country doesn't? Yes, Richard Nixon's United States of Amerika! The U.S. is presently buying chrome from Zimbabwe in opposition to all U.N. resolutions.

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