

ECO-JOURNAL

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March/April 2001

The True Cost Of Power:

Manitobans Join Cross Lake Cree in Protecting Environment

By Will Braun, Mennonite Central Committee

The price that appears on your monthly electric bill in Manitoba is not the actual price of the power you use. The figure listed represents a conveniently narrow calculation of what is involved in producing those kilowatts. As with so many products, the true costs are hidden; in this case, hidden behind hydroelectric dams that are destabilizing vast areas of northern ecosystem, and infringing on the human rights of Pimicikamak Cree Nation at Cross Lake.

The province's two largest rivers and largest lake have been re-engineered for the sake of our daily electrical convenience. For 25 years, unnaturally fluctuating water levels have eaten away at thousands of kilometres of shoreline. Entire islands are eroding off the map and shorelines are not expected to restabilize for 200 to 300 years.

What can Manitobans do about the fact that their power rates are, in effect, subsidized by environmental destruction and the resulting suffering of Cree people? *The True Cost Campaign* offers a substantive way to address the inequitable distribution of the costs and benefits of hydro dams.

Customers of both Manitoba Hydro and Winnipeg Hydro (which buys about 60% of its power from Manitoba Hydro) are invited to pay a 10% "energy tax" to a PCN community trust fund. The 10% symbolizes how much higher our bills might be

if the social, economic and environmental costs of our power were accounted for. As PCN is currently forced to bear those costs, the tax is a way to redistribute costs and benefits.

If this action is combined with a 10% (or more) reduction in consumption of electricity, the costs of the tax can be recovered, leaving monthly expenses relatively unchanged.



Pimicikamak Cree Nation citizens clean up mess created by a hydroelectric dam in their traditional territory. Photo by Jackson Osborne

Addressing Deadly Cost of Doing Business

In reference to Hydro being found responsible for the death of a PCN fisherman, Hydro president Bob Brennan said, "Well, we'll have to sit down and work this out, but it's just the cost of doing business." In response, PCN Chief John Miswagon says, "If the cost of doing business is the lives of our people and the well-being of our community, we are no longer willing to pay those costs. Is business more important than the lives and dignity of my people?" *The True Cost Campaign* says socio-economic externalities are not acceptable and that there is some-

thing more important than cheap electricity.

The campaign is a response to the PCN Hydro Payment Law which allows PCN citizens to pay their hydro bills directly into the trust fund rather than to Manitoba Hydro. This is a way for PCN to collect on the utility's admitted, outstanding debt to them for addressing impacts of the dams. For each such payment, Hydro receives a receipt stating that the customer has paid for power used and that Hydro's net indebtedness to PCN is reduced by the given amount. In this way the utility receives full value (reduction of its debt) and the backward flow of money from creditor to debtor is stopped.

Manitoba Hydro recently announced that it is suing PCN for some of the money in the trust fund. That case, along with PCN's

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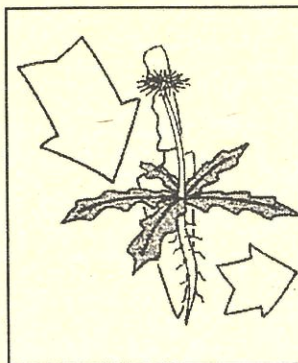
The opinions expressed by contributors are their
own and do not represent the views of the
Manitoba Eco-Network or its member groups.

Another Organic Lawn Care Workshop Opportunity

As part of our Pesticide-Free for Health
Campaign, Manitoba Eco-Network is of-
fering another of our Organic Lawn Care
education workshops, this
time on Wednesday, May
2 at 7:00pm, Dakota Com-
munity Centre, 1188 Da-
kota Street. Call 947-6511
to register for this informa-
tive session. Two other
Spring workshops were
held March 24, at
Henderson Library, and
March 28 at Riverview
Community Centre. The
response has been excel-

lent, and we're hoping to extend the
project into the summer months.

Once again, we'd like to thank the ma-
jor sponsor of this project,
the EJLB Foundation in
Montreal, for their gener-
ous and timely support.
And thanks also to our
project partners, Campaign
for Pesticide Reduction!
Winnipeg and the Chemi-
cal Sensitivities Information
and Exchange Network,
and to volunteer resource
person par excellence,
Dan Moroz!



ECO

Thanks Ken!

Our thanks to long-time Manitoba Eco-
Network member, Ken Emberley, for his
recent donation of books and magazines
to our Library. Many people will know
Ken for his dedication through the years
to a host of environmental, peace and
social justice issues, and his commitment
to rooting out information and participat-
ing in public processes. His book collec-
tion certainly reflects this lifetime of inter-

ests with subjects ranging from farming to
labour to nuclear issues, and everything
in between. Ken was one of the first recipi-
ents of the Manitoba Eco-Network's Envi-
ronmental Award, and has been a staunch
supporter of ours in all of our endeavours.
Ken hopes that his books and materials
will be welcomed by our Library patrons,
and we're sure that they will be put to
good use in their new home.

ECO

More Good Reading

Also new in the Library: "Softwood
Lumber", an excellent overview by Gary
Gallon of the softwood lumber trade dis-
putes in which Canada is involved against

the United States. The roots of the dispute,
Canada's role, key players, and the latest
developments are all covered in this com-
prehensive piece.

ECO

Thank you to the **George Cedric Metcalfe Charitable Foundation** who have
provided a grant to assist in the publication of Eco-Journal.

Eco-Network Steering Committee, 2000 - 2001

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Christina Waddle - U of M Recycling & Environment Group
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Connecting your health, your vehicle's health and environmental health

by Laurie Ankenman, Resource Conservation Manitoba

Personal health issues often lead to a reflection on personal choices—like what and how we eat, where we live, how much time we spend at work and how we spend our leisure time. What we rarely consider is the significant impact our transportation choices have on our health. How we choose to get to work is as important as our food and recreation choices we make in our day to day living. That's because how we choose to get around directly impacts on the costs to:

- our body (from sedentary commuting),
- our emotional and mind states (stresses from road rage, increasing vehicle costs)
- our pocket book (increasing gas and vehicle costs)
- our collective natural environment

Over the past nine months, Resource Conservation Manitoba's Green Commuting Initiatives program area has focused its energies on responsible car ownership and maintenance as a way to advance sustainable transportation, a cleaner and healthier environment and healthier lifestyles. Its integrated *Turn-Off, Tune-Up, Take a Friend* campaign focused first on a reduced idling public education outreach effort involving TV and radio commercials as well as billboard and street ads. The message was simple: turn off your engine if idling for more than 10 seconds and get into the habit of reducing your idling time when warming the car up after a cold start.

Transit - a friend!

A workplace based transit promotion pilot "Bus It!" worked with 13 volunteer single occupant vehicle commuters who took the bus for a week and logged their daily experiences and stress

levels. This pilot also promoted Winnipeg Transit's new *Employer Sponsored Bus Pass* program. A radio commercial promoting transit as a "friend" also received wide coverage in both paid and public service announcements slots.

Recognizing the importance of a vehicle's health and its obvious relation to air quality and human health provided the means to offer to co-host the *Vehicle Emissions Clinic* with the Manitoba Lung Association. Knowledge of your vehicle's tail pipe emissions will determine your vehicle's health and attending this free clinic fosters responsible vehicle ownership. The clinic runs from May 3-5 at Kildonan Place Mall. Look for the billboard and other media promotion.

It's Challenge Time Again!

Finally, the staff team is about to launch the second annual *Winnipeg Commuter Challenge*, taking place June 4-8, during Canada's Environment Week. Building on the first three components of the *Turn-Off, Tune-Up, Take a Friend* campaign the Challenge theme for this year is "Take a Friend—take the Challenge!" A friend can be the bus (your own chauffeur), your feet (your two best friends), your bicycle or roller blades (your wheeled friends), your rideshare friends or even your canoe/kayak (your buoyant friend).

We're aiming to double the number of workplaces (goal of 70) registered and triple the number of registered participants (4,500) this year. In addition, we are introducing a 'Future Commuters' pilot in three elementary/middle schools this year following the wonderful success of a middle school last year whose Outdoor Education Teacher mobilized not only the staff but the entire student population as well. That initiative at John W. Gunn Middle School garnered them a gold award in the 30-60 staff category.

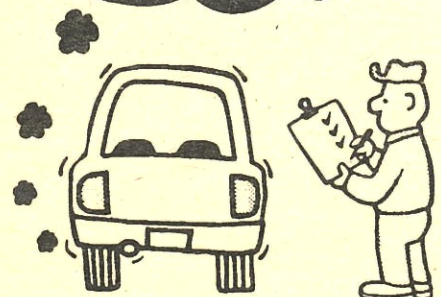
The Commuter Challenge is an annual corporate event happening in all major Canadian cities. Last year Winnipeg placed first for new city entries (12 in total) and earned fifth place for cities over 100,000 which included several municipalities with extensive previous involvement in Commuter Challenges.

The excitement is beginning to build as the organizing and promotional pieces, which include major billboard, TV and radio promotion and a celebration event at Old Market Square, fall into place. To all readers who choose an active, sustainable transportation mode now for their daily commutes—do encourage your workplace to register and co-workers to participate. Corporate participation is not only a green business decision; it has its key payoff in promoting a healthy, and productive workforce.

Take a friend, Take the Challenge for fun, prizes, for a healthy environment and a healthier you!

For more information and free Challenge Workplace Coordinator Kits, posters, flyers and registration information, call 925-3773 or email laurie@resourceconservation.mb.ca

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TUNE-UP Your Tailpipe!

May 3, 4, 5
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KILDONAN PLACE
May 3 10am - 7pm
May 4 10am - 7pm
May 5 10am - 6pm

*testing can not be carried out on diesel vehicles

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What's Happening

April 6 - On The Water Front: An open public forum on our future water security. 7 pm 'til 9 at Crossways in Common, 222 Furby Street. Hear Bill Blaikie, Elizabeth May and Paul Moist. Register for additional workshop sessions taking place all day Saturday by calling Glen at 224-0915.

April 11 - Is There An Alternative To Capitalism? Political discussion, 7:00 p.m. Mondragon Coffeehouse and Bookstore, 91 Albert St. Organized by Winnipeg Structured Movement Against Capitalism. For more information call 947-2220.

April 26 - Free Tree Pruning Workshop. Learn when, how and, most importantly, why we prune trees. Discover tips on hiring a professional arborist to do the work for you. From 7 pm 'til 9 at the East End Cultural and Leisure Centre, 575 Larsen Avenue. Register by contacting Coalition to Save the Elms at 832-7188 or email: elms@mb.sympatico.ca

April 28 - Project Peacemakers Annual Eco-Friendly Dinner with guest speaker Danny Blair, Professor at University of Winnipeg. He will tackle the topic: Climate Change: A Threat To World Peace. Evening starts at 6 pm at Charleswood United Church. Call 775-8178 for more information.

April 29 - May 5 - Compost Awareness Week. Resource Conservation Manitoba is again scheduling informative, free workshops on backyard composting in a variety of Winnipeg communities. Call 925-3777 to find out which date and location is best for you.

May 2 - Organic Lawn Care Workshop - 7 pm at Dakota Community Centre, 1188 Dakota. Learn how and why to avoid chemicals and pesticide-free techniques to apply on a seasonal basis. Admission is \$5 which covers handout material. Call Manitoba Eco-Network at 947-6511 to register.

May 3-5 - Vehicle Emissions Clinic. RCM's Green Commuting Initiatives and the Manitoba Lung Assoc team up to offer this free clinic at Kildonan Place Mall. Call 925-3773 for info.

May 10 - Woody Plants For The Prairie Landscape. A free session demonstrating a new and valuable guide on woody plants that grow on the prairies. Learn how to go about choosing the right trees and shrubs for your yard. From 7 pm 'til 9 at Room 130 Agriculture Building, 66 Dafoe Road, Uni-

versity of Manitoba, Fort Garry Campus. Register by contacting Coalition to Save the Elms at 832-7188 or by email: elms@mb.sympatico.ca

Date, Time And Place To Be Announced - Tree Planting. Learn the steps involved in transplanting your tree ... right from selecting it at the nursery to caring for it after planting. Details available by calling Coalition to Save the Elms at 832-7188 or by email: elms@mb.sympatico.ca

Through To April 28 - The Dispossessed: Living With Multiple Chemical Sensitivities, a photo exhibit by Rhonda Zwillinger. Severe reactions to common chemicals in the home and workplace are rapidly growing. The Dispossessed unfolds the drama and presents a story both compelling and vital. Those with families, co-workers or patients having asthma, allergies, chemical sensitivity or other respiratory diseases will find this exhibit exceptional. Showing at the Main Access Gallery, 121 - 100 Arthur Street, 956-2089.

June 4-8 - Second Annual Winnipeg Commuter Challenge. Call RCM at 925-3773 for information on getting your workplace signed up!

Summer Dates - Canoe Mantario, 2001 Wilderness Odyssey. Contact the Manitoba Naturalists Society at 943-9029 for detailed information.

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To Spray Or To Spray:

City considers biological alternative for mosquito control

by Anne Lindsey

The melting snow signals that Spring is once again on its way to Southern Manitoba, and so, of course is mosquito season. At City Hall, discussions are underway on the mosquito issue, triggered by a report by City Entomologist, Randy Gadawski, making a number of recommendations on the topic of mosquito control. City Council has (on March 21) approved Gadawski's formal recommendations.

The main thrust of the proposed changes to City policy is around the subject of larviciding. Mosquitoes spend their immature larval stage in water, particularly standing water, of which there often is a surfeit around the City of Winnipeg, given our heavy clay subsoil. Larviciding is the application of a substance toxic to mosquito larvae directly into standing water bodies. The theory is that effective larviciding programs will reduce the need for adult mosquito control later in the summer.

Toxic chlorpyrifos

In recent years, the City has utilized the organophosphate chemical, chlorpyrifos (Dursban) in its larviciding efforts. This chemical came under the scrutiny of the US Environmental Protection Agency last summer when tests showed that it was likely more toxic to young mammals than had previously been recognized. EPA instituted a ban on most uses of chlorpyrifos, especially in applications where children were likely to be exposed. It is expected that Canada will follow suit.

Winnipeg's Campaign for Pesticide Reduction! Group and others quickly called on the City to end the use of chlorpyrifos for both mosquito larviciding and elm bark beetle control, so the suggestion that use of the chemical will be phased out is welcome.

The City will replace chlorpyrifos with the biological pesticide known as Bti (*Bacillus thuringiensis*, var. *israelensis*), widely

considered to be a more environmentally- and people-friendly product, for most applications. But even Bti does not come without some baggage. First, while much more selective than chlorpyrifos, it does in fact impact other, non-target species, all of which are important in ecological food chains. Second, it may have some health impacts, especially for chemically-sensitive individuals, and third, it costs about four times as much money as its chemical alternative.

Access to private property sought

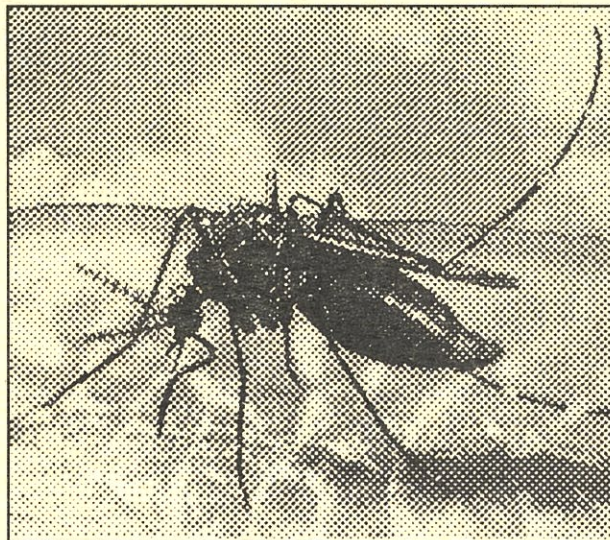
More controversial is the plan to change a variety of policies with respect to mosquito control. It is suggested that the buffer zone on or adjacent to private property during mosquito larviciding activities, be eliminated and that the Province of Manitoba amend the City of Winnipeg Act to give the City the authority to control larval mosquitoes on private property.

While the intent of this proposal is to gain access primarily to outlying, mostly commercial properties, many people feel that such a provision could open the door to city use of pesticides on residential property (for example, in swimming pools or backyard ponds) thus increasing the possibility of exposure. This can be particularly problematic for chemically-sensitive individuals.

Buffer zones

Perhaps the most contentious issue broached in Gadawski's report is that of Anti-Pesticide Registrations. One of the conditions of the City of Winnipeg's Pesticide Use Permit (issued by the Province) is the ability of citizens to register their residence and an adjacent buffer zone against pesticide applications. Buffer zones are meant to be an additional measure to protect those who object to pesticide use, for health or other reasons,

see "Buffer Zones ..." on page 6 ►



Say No to Pesticides Around Your Home: Send These in Today!

INSECT CONTROL BRANCH

3 Grey Street
Winnipeg, MB R2L 1V2 Fax: 986-4868

Please register my residence against all City of Winnipeg pesticide applications, including all insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Signature: _____

WEED CONTROL BRANCH

2000 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3J 0K1 Fax: 986-3860

Please register my residence against all City of Winnipeg pesticide applications, including all insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Signature: _____

Cross Lake Takes On Hydro

continued from page 1

countersuit, is currently in limbo.

With a few exceptions, Hydro has not acknowledged payments to the trust as a legitimate payment, but no one has been cut off.

Manitoba Hydro customers outside Cross Lake also have the option of paying their actual bill to the PCN trust as a way of paying off their utility's debt and sending a clear message of non-cooperation.

Expenditures of monies in the PCN trust account are determined by appointees of the Elders, Women's, Youth and Executive Councils, and safeguarded by financial accountability measures more stringent than those applied by Indian Affairs.

The True Cost Campaign is organized by Mennonite Central Committee, which already pays an energy tax, and Consumers for Responsible Action, made up largely of university students. It is done in tandem with a comparable initiative in Minnesota, where an array of groups are addressing their reliance on power imported from Manitoba.

PCN: Defenders of Manitoba's Environment

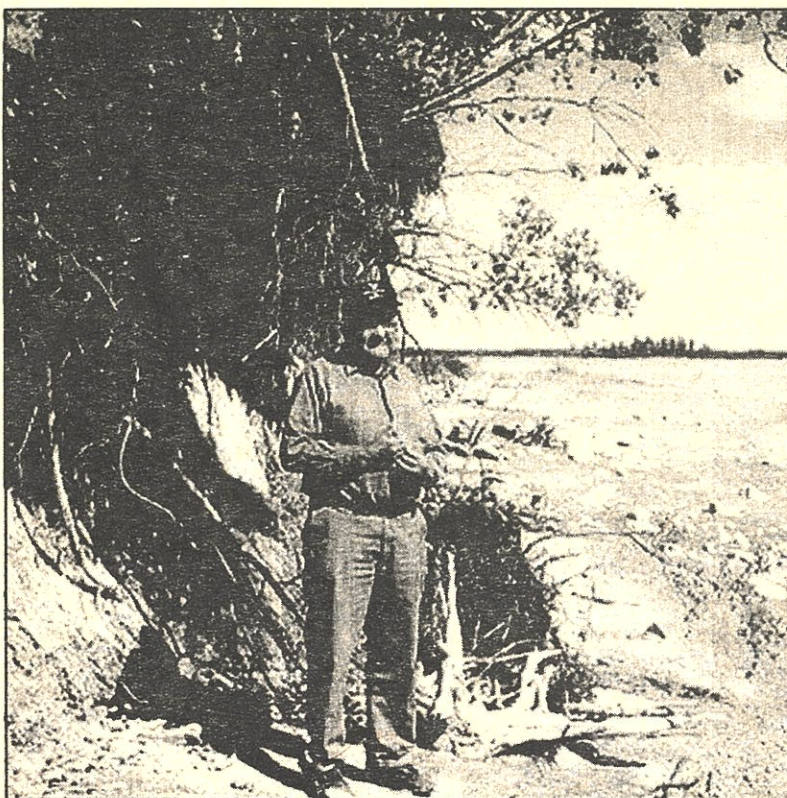
Over the past three years PCN has emerged as the prime defender of a large northern portion of this province's natural wonder (the entire area covered under the Northern Flood Agree-

ment). They have worked with creativity and courage to protect the lands and waters of the province we all share.

In 1999, Roland Robinson, PCN Chief at the time, said, "Pimicikamak Cree Nation has experienced the nightmare of Hydro development and its effects on the environment. Pimicikamak Cree Nation and its citizens are now first-hand experts in the human rights, social and environmental impacts of such undertakings... We have resolved... to assume the role of the environmental and human rights conscience that the Governments of Canada and Manitoba do not have."

PCN will not be able to protect and restore affected watersheds alone. Newly deregulating, kilowatt-hungry US markets only increase the pressures on our province's resources. *The True Cost Campaign* is one way for hydro users to ally with PCN, and with the trees, beavers and waters for which they speak. It is about a coordinated, on-the-ground manner in which to address one of many consumer/environmental/human rights issues that face us. It is one handle by which we can together grasp a more equitable and respectful reality.

For more information on *The True Cost Campaign* contact Will Braun at 261-6381 or <wjb@mennonitecc.ca> **ECO**



Cross Lake Elder Charlie Osborne stands by a shoreline wasted away by hydro flooding. Photo by Jackson Osborne

Buffer Zone Restrictions Planned

continued from page 5

from the spray drift. The buffer zone provision was what enabled residents of Wolseley to exempt their entire neighbourhood last summer, creating a media furor as some residents who actually favoured fogging claimed that a small group was hijacking public process.

Gadawski wants Council to request that the Province insist that henceforth only "individual, self-composed" letters be accepted for registration, not the form letters which are often currently utilized, and which are available from the Eco-Network and other community groups. This recommendation has not come formally before Council, but it is expected that Gadawski will be lobbying the Province for this change. Legally, such a move may not be possible, since form letters, duly signed, are

utilized all the time in all manner of affairs.

At time of writing, the City is still in the process of applying for its pesticide use permits from the provincial Conservation department. It's our understanding however, that residents will still be able to register their property, and a buffer zone surrounding it, against pesticide spraying, as long as the letter is duly signed by the resident of the property.

You may utilize the form letter provided on page 5. It can also be photocopied for the use of friends and neighbours. You may also wish to contact the Minister of Conservation, the Hon. Oscar Lathlin at phone: 945-3730 or fax: 945-3586 to let him know that you support the continued use of buffer zones and duly signed form letters for Anti-Pesticide Registration. **ECO**

Terminator and Traitor Technologies Very Much Alive!

With information from RAFI, the Rural Advancement Foundation International

Syngenta, the world's largest agribusiness firm, was formed on 13 November 2000 with the merger of AstraZeneca and Novartis. The next day the company won its newest Terminator patent, US Patent 6,147,282, 'Method of controlling the fertility of a plant.' (The patent was issued to Novartis, but the company's intellectual property goes to Syngenta.) With pro forma 1999 sales of US \$7 billion, Syngenta is the world's largest agrochemical enterprise, and the third largest seed corporation.

"Syngenta's newest Terminator patent should set off alarm bells for governments concerned about biodiversity and Farmers' Rights," said Julie Delahanty of RAFI. "Some governments and civil society organizations (CSOs) mistakenly assume that the threat of Terminator is diminished. The reality is that the Gene Giants are winning new patents, and Terminator seeds are moving closer to commercialization," warns Delahanty.

Sterile seed

'Terminator technology' refers to plants that have been genetically modified to produce sterile seed; it is designed to prevent farmers from saving and replanting their seed, forcing them to buy new seeds every year. Terminator has been widely condemned as an immoral technology that threatens global food security, especially for 1.4 billion people who depend on farm-saved seed. In 1999, due to mounting opposition to Terminator seeds, both Monsanto (now Pharmacia) and AstraZeneca (now Syngenta) vowed not to commercialize genetic seed sterilization technology.

Syngenta now controls at least six Terminator patents and a host of new patents on genetically modified plants with defective immune systems.

Traitor technology

If the Gene Giants get their way, warns RAFI, sterility is just one of many traits that could be controlled by the application of

external chemicals. 'Traitor' technology or genetic trait-control allows companies to engineer crops that depend on the external application of a chemical in order to develop into fertile, or healthy plants. Using inducible promoter systems, a plant's genetic traits can be turned 'on or off' with the application of an external chemical catalyst. RAFI and other CSOs warn that a new generation of chemically dependent plants will be among the next wave of genetically modified crops unless action is taken to ban them.

"Terminator and Traitor seeds are a real and present danger for global food security and biodiversity," said RAFI's Hope Shand. "The Biodiversity Convention's scientific advisors (SBSTTA) meeting in Montreal can't afford to let genetic trait control technology—or GURT—slip beneath their radar." A new report to be released by RAFI points out that Terminator patent portfolios have changed hands in the latest round of industry mergers and acquisitions. RAFI's new report on Terminator technology examines new patents, identifies the Gene Giants who control them, and offers recommendations to policymakers. Highlights include:

Syngenta's New Terminator Patent: US Patent 6,147,282 is the latest in a

series of Terminator patents won by Novartis. The patent describes a complex system for chemical control of a plant's fertility. The application of a chemical inducer can be used to either abolish or restore a plant's fertility.

Syngenta's New Traitor Patents: CSOs are particularly alarmed by Syngenta's new patents which involve the engineering of plants with weakened immune systems. The new patents were identified in October 2000 by Action Aid, Berne Declaration, GeneWatch and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation. (1) RAFI identified earlier AstraZeneca and Novartis patents for see "*Frankenfood vs. GModzilla*" on page 8 ►



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Frankenfood and GModzilla

continued from page 7

'chemically dependent' plants. If companies can successfully engineer seeds to perform only with the application of a proprietary pesticide or fertilizer, it will reinforce chemical dependencies in agriculture—and both farmers and food security will be held in biological bondage to the Gene Giants. The inventors claim that they are developing 'immune-compromised' plants for research purposes only. But CSOs cannot ignore the specter of chemically dependent plants in the hands of the world's largest agrochemical corporation.

Delta & Pine Land to Commercialize Terminator

US-based Delta & Pine Land is the world's largest cotton seed company and jointly holds three patents for Terminator technology with the US Department of Agriculture. Harry Collins, Vice-President for Technology Transfer at Delta & Pine Land, told RAFI that his company is continuing research on genetic seed sterilization with the goal of commercializing Terminator seeds.

For SBSTTA's scientific advisors meeting in Montreal, the handwriting is on the wall: Research and development of genetic trait control technology—including Terminator seeds and the development of plants with weakened immune systems—is moving forward. Unless governments take action to ban these technologies, they will be commercialized, with potentially dev-

astating impacts on farmers, biodiversity and food security. If present trends continue, farmers will become trapped in a pattern of biological controls that lead to 'bioserfdom.' National seed sovereignty will be destroyed, and food security endangered.

For more information:

Julie Delahanty, RAFI: 819 827-9949 julie@rafi.org

RAFI is the Rural Advancement Foundation International with headquarters in Winnipeg, Canada. RAFI is concerned about the loss of biodiversity and about the impact of intellectual property on farmers and food security. www.rafi.org

Notes:

1) Warwick, Hugh. "Syngenta: Switching off farmers' rights?" published jointly by Berne Declaration, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, GeneWatch UK, Action Aid, October, 2000. While this publication identifies many additional patents, some initially identified by RAFI, we categorize only three of the new Novartis patents as 'traitor' technologies. These include: US 6,057,490; US 6,091,004; US 6,107,544. (RAFI makes a distinction between those patents that involve primarily male sterility to facilitate making hybrids. We also do not include patents which we classify as more 'generic' inducible promoter patents.)

ECO

Saskatchewan Municipalities Oppose Registration Of Gmo Wheat

The following resolution was passed unanimously by the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) in Saskatoon at their annual convention, March 15, 2001:

WHEREAS, the growing of genetically modified wheats, also known as transgenic wheats, could seriously jeopardize present wheat markets;

WHEREAS, GM wheat may be on the market as soon as 2003 and logistics and segregation systems may not be in place to deal with the introduction of these crops by this time and;

WHEREAS, the growing of GMO wheats could seriously jeopardize present wheat markets;

WHEREAS, testing of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) should be carried out by publicly funded research institutions;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM vigorously oppose the registration of GMO wheats in Canada; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Canada ban the introduction of any and all GMO wheats into Canada.

Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities office is at 2075 Hamilton Street, Regina, SK. S4P 2B1. Phone 306-757-3579; fax 306-565-2141, website: <http://www.quantumlynx.com/sarm>



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- Science & Research
- Water Legislation
- Water Monitoring
- Action 21
- Pollution Prevention
- Publications/Brochures
- Environmental Protection
- Environmental Assessment

Environmental Alchemy

A Conversation With Abby Rockefeller

by Anne Lindsey and Steve Rauh

Two years ago, the US Department of Agriculture circulated their proposals for new rules regarding Certified Organic Foods. Among their controversial ideas were the notions that it should be permissible to utilize sewage sludge, food irradiation, and genetic engineering in organic agriculture. Fortunately, the proposed rules brought forward a virtual avalanche of letters and comments from outraged consumers and farmers, causing the USDA to back off on their plans. The sad thing is that all of these applications are being regularly used in the conventional food supply. And they are touted as being beneficial to agriculture.

Abby Rockefeller, of the famed US Rockefeller family has a different perspective. "Using sludge on farm lands is simply a way to launder toxic wastes" she says bluntly. Ms Rockefeller is known for her promotion and support of the Clivus Multrum composting toilet, and in her long association with the product, she has come to know quite a lot about sewage sludge, and other human-waste management issues.

Abby was in town to meet with people at the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources, which has 4 Clivus Multrums in its Exchange District office. (See Rodney McDonald's article "Mitigating a Water Crisis with Composting Toilets" *Eco-Journal*, 10:4). We were fortunate to have the opportunity to meet with this interesting and highly-committed woman for a wide-ranging discussion while she was in Winnipeg.

Free waste disposal

Ms Rockefeller has nothing good to say about sewers, asserting that they were created in the first place as a result of industry wanting free waste disposal. Examples abound of how this mentality persists, even in Winnipeg, where City Council last year chose to extend subsidized sewer services to the proposed J M Schneider meat packing plant expansion.

Sewers create a toxic soup of chemicals, heavy metals and a high level of nutrients—conditions, she notes which put enormous stress on bacteria, such that they are susceptible to "horizontal gene transfer", where the exchange of plasmids of genetic material can take place. This sets the scene, she believes, for the creation of virulent new strains of disease, and anti-biotic resistance. The situation is similar to that created in large-scale factory farming, including feedlots, where she suggests that the new strain of E.coli 0157 was probably produced.

Another concern that has become paramount for Abby Rockefeller is the large amounts of suspected endocrine disrupting chemicals—contained in soaps and cleaning products—that are regularly flushed into the sewer system. As she says, there is no telling what the synergistic effects of all these substances are.

Sewers and factory farming are just two aspects of what Rockefeller calls "anti-biotic human behaviour"—'anti-biotic' meaning 'anti-life'.

Source separation

Bacterial stress doesn't have to be the end product of human excretion however.

The composting toilet is an excellent "model of a source separation opportunity" she says, noting that the toilet as a fixture is a key point at which one can do something "very right, or very wrong. The composting toilet makes recycling possible". The end products of the process are finished compost—similar to topsoil and valuable as a soil amendment, and a stabilized liquid fertilizer with no odour.

Abby got into all this because she is a gardener. She grew up with compost heaps and steaming manure piles, and at her own land in New Hampshire, utilizes composted animal wastes in her garden. At one point, she says "I realized I was using all my animals' manure. What's wrong with mine? I had to run back to the house to a flush toilet and it felt absurd". An article in an organic farming magazine led her to Carl Lindstrom, the inventor of the Clivus Multrum composting toilet, and soon she bought one, and liked it. This led to her creation of a company to produce and sell the toilets, because even though she says she dislikes the corporate mentality, she wanted the Clivus to be "semi-mainstream" and available as a product, rather than just something she went around speaking about.

Local examples

The Clivus Multrum is now in many locations in the US and Canada: CIER, the Clear Lake Golf Course, and YM-YWCA Camp Stephens on Lake of the Woods being some local examples. It has also been installed in some Maya communities in Mexico, where an emphasis has been placed on making the actual fixture aesthetically pleasing and compatible with local culture. (See some examples at www.riles.org on the Internet).

see "Tried and True" on page 10 ►

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Tried and True Compost

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However, the company has had only borderline success, she notes and she has had to support it personally. The biggest obstacle encountered has been the regulatory issue around the reuse of "grey water" from the system, a situation which she characterizes as "a war".

So far, there have been no studies of the potential to replace sewer systems with composting toilets on a community scale, but Rockefeller feels that such studies need to be done, and that it is only a matter of time until they are. Such a study would provide information not only on waste, but on the impacts for water conservation as well. Flush toilets mean an average use of 4,000 gallons of water per person per year.

Meanwhile, Abby Rockefeller's goal is to keep the product alive, to build a critical mass of people who are using the technology, and to try and get beyond the regulatory obstacles. In this way, she hopes that the model will help to inform a new social infrastructure which will actually help us to achieve sustainability.

For more information about the Clivus Multrum, check www.clivusmultrum.com on the Internet, or call the Canadian distributor, Lawrence Scott at 1-800-645-4767. If you're interested in seeing what the system looks like and how it works, you can visit CIER's office at 245 McDermot Ave. Be sure to call ahead and set up a time - 956-0660.

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Look Out for a "SEA-change"

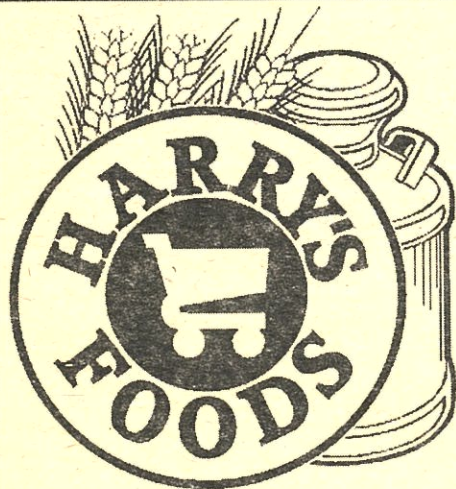
SEA-change (Kelvin Students for Environmental Awareness) is a newly-formed group of young people at Kelvin High, working to promote a better environment. This energetic group has already carried out a number of initiatives at the school, aimed at educating their fellow students. Sales of organic apples on Green Day during Spirit Week was very successful, according to group member Coral Maloney. Students thought that the apples (donated by Organza Foods) "tasted excellent", and wanted to know when they'd be on sale again. On the same occasion, organic vegetarian chili was given out free to people with reusable bowls, to promote a "free store" (or sharing) environment. Information was provided about what organic means and why it is important.

Also on a food theme, the group invited Biotechnology Working Group spokesperson, Doug McKay to give a presentation about Genetically Modified foods. There was a good turnout of both students and teachers, who were interested in hearing more about the issue.

During the waste minimization debates at City Hall, SEA-change mobilized with a team of students who did peer education in the school on what the waste minimization proposal was all about, encouraging students to call councillors to voice their views, whatever they happened to be.

An impressive line-up of activities, and more initiatives are in the offing. This is a group to look out for!

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The World For Sale

Maude Barlow On The FTAA

By Jenna Crowston

I am an eighteen-year-old, grade twelve student living in Clear Lake, Manitoba. I recently had the opportunity to spend two weeks working at the Manitoba Eco-Network and with Resource Conservation Manitoba. Having grown up in rural communities that border Canada's National Parks I have always had a deep interest in environmental issues and organizations promoting environmental awareness and protection. To spend time with the Eco-Network was an incredible opportunity for me to learn and meet inspirational people in the province.

During the two weeks that I spent with the Eco-Network I was fortunate enough to be able to take in some of the events that were happening at the University of Manitoba's Environmental Awareness week. On February 1, Maude Barlow gave her speech: *Earth in the Balance: Globalization versus a Sustainable Future*. I had recently become involved in some local organizations travelling to Quebec to protest at the Free Trade Area of the Americas Summit (FTAA). I was absolutely thrilled to be able to hear Maude Barlow speak.

Everything for sale

Maude Barlow, author, activist, and political critic is the volunteer Chairperson of The Council of Canadians. She is also credited with leading the fight against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, and is a Director with the International Forum on Globalization, a network of individuals and groups from around the world working to take democratic control of the world economy. Also, she is leading the fight to protect public ownership and control of Canada's fresh water. Ms Barlow is a very busy lady.

During her speech Ms Barlow discussed the issues of globalization and the upcoming Free Trade Area of the Americas Summit (FTAA) in Quebec City during April 2001. She spoke about the effects of a global economy with rules set by global corporations and financial markets. A world in which everything is for sale. Ms Barlow discussed the fact that if these forces get their way our federal, provincial and municipal governments will soon be irrelevant. Federal programs that we value, such as Medicare, will be lost and environmental issues will be disregarded in a world where big business makes the rules.

The Free Trade Area of the Americas and the Threat to Social Programs, Environmental Sustainability and Social Justice in Canada and the Americas, by Ms. Barlow, is an in depth article describing the impacts of the FTAA and giving a general overview of what the FTAA entails. In its subtext on the environment several problem areas are touched, which she spoke about during her presentation at the U of M.

No environmental protection

Ms Barlow writes in her article that as it now stands, the FTAA contains no provisions to protect the environment. In the origi-

nal mandate for the FTAA, put together at the first Summit of the Americas in Miami in 1994, a promise was made to promote economic integration of the hemisphere in a way that would "guarantee sustainable development while protecting the environment". In 1996 a major Summit of Sustainable Development was held in Bolivia. This summit was to make sure that previous agreements and principles that were decided upon at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit were added into the FTAA process. Sixty-five initiatives were adopted after that conference, but since the project was badly under-funded and had no clear mandate for action, it has essentially been deemed a failure. Unfortunately, because the process was disregarded, most if not all of the sustainable development goals were thrown out the window during the FTAA's new mandate at the Santiago Summit in 1998.

With George W. Bush now as President of the United States, "it is even more certain that environmental concerns about the hemispheric free trade deal will be set aside" says Barlow. The Canadian government recently published a paper in which the preamble called upon the FTAA to commit to "better protecting the environment in its proposed sustainable development by adopting trade and environmental policies that are mutually supportive." However, since apparently anything written in the preamble in trade agreements is non-binding and unenforceable, promises in this section are fairly meaningless. Ms Barlow states, "in any case, it is not possible to find compatibility between a trade agreement that contains investor-state rights for corporations and environmental stewardship."

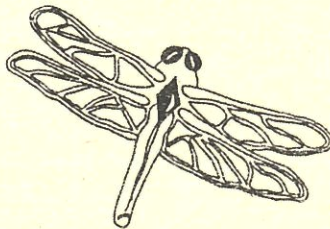
Winnipeg protest

While The Council of Canadians is not in support of civil disobedience it is supporting the protest of the FTAA in Quebec City next month. There are several Winnipeg groups that are organizing a local protest and a bus that is going to Quebec City for the Summit in April. DAISYQ is a direct action group that is providing educational workshops about the FTAA and the threats of globalization. It is also one of the groups helping to send protesters to Quebec City.

Maude Barlow and the Council of Canadians represents over 100,000 Canadians. A non-partisan group, it is a very valuable force for political and social change. To learn more about Maude Barlow and the Council of Canadians you can visit their website, www.canadians.org. Also, if you are interested in learning more about the local protest against Free Trade and Winnipeg initiatives, you can visit www.daisyq.org.

Ed. Note: Having Jenna in our office was an excellent experience for all of us at the Manitoba Eco-Network and RCM. Her enthusiasm was refreshing, and she did some really good work. Thanks, Jenna and best wishes in your future endeavours! **ECO**

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Crate Creations Anyone?

by Jim Waite

At this time of the year, those who patronize the big grocery stores (and smaller stores, I would suppose) may have noticed or sampled the pears that come from Argentina.

These pears are shipped primarily in wooden crates strong enough to hold 40 pounds, which are compacted shortly after the pears are put out—unless customers happen to notice them and ask for them. I personally have noticed and asked for far too many in the past two years and have reached the saturation point.

In early January this year I wrote a letter to the public relations manager at the real Canadian Superstore's head office in Calgary pointing out the waste of 50,000–60,000 of these crates each season in their store chain alone and offering suggestions as to what they could do with them. As of mid-March I had received no reply.

My primary suggestion to them was to offer these crates to the public by having a cage at the front of their stores saying something like "Re-using to help save resources—help yourself". As of this writing my suggestion has not been accepted that I know of—but neither has it been rejected.

In the meantime anyone who is interested in having as many crates as they would like simply has to ask the produce depart-

ment at their local store to save them and they are more than happy to do so. The normal procedure is to ask ahead of time and come back later in the day or the next day to pick them up. The pears arrive virtually every day during the season. If an organization was interested in obtaining a lot of these, it's entirely possible, I would think, that a store or chain would be amenable to setting up a regular pick-up program.



The crates have varying inside dimensions of around 18" by 11" by 9" high, with 2-5/8" thick ends. The sides and ends are sometimes solid wood, sometimes plywood; the sides are sometimes slatted. The wood is soft and stamped with colourful logos of the suppliers. As well as being great crates, they make neat bookshelves, end tables, stereo stands, flower boxes, trunk organizers or recyclable containers. They are also easy to take apart and re-assemble for other uses. I can definitely envision them in apartments, in small stores or at

the hand-made village at the Folk Fest. There could be many crate creations and many trees could be saved.

And while picking up your crates you might want to try the pears—they are delicious.

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Group members are entitled to nominate representatives for a position on the Eco-Network Steering Committee. Group membership is open to any non-governmental, non-profit group which has as one of its objectives the enhancing or furthering of environmental quality, protecting the environment or environmental education.

