



EVENTS IN MAY

- All month *Recycling Exhibition* at the Rainbow Centre, 180 Mansfield Road, Mon - Sat, 10-5
- Tues 5th, 7.30 NEST meeting: Mohammed Suleiman from the Institute for African Alternatives on *The Greenhouse Effect on Africa*. International Community Centre, 61b Mansfield Rd
- Fri 8th, 7pm *New Hope in El Salvador*: slide show and talk
- Sat 9th *Tree of Life* at Christian Aid Fair, Old Market Square
- Sun 10th Sponsored walk, talk, and drink around Lathkill Dale in aid of CIT, a Nottingham charity arranging short placements for technically trained volunteers in Nicaragua. Contact CIT at CODA, 7b Broad Street, NG1 3AJ (470906)
- Mon 11th *Tree of Life* at Christian Aid stall in Victoria Centre
- Fri 15th, 7.30 Satish Kumar, editor of *Resurgence*, a leading green magazine, will speak at the Friends Meeting House, Clarendon Street. £2, or £1 concessions.
- Sat 16 - Sat 24 Environment Week
- Sat 16th Friends of the Earth Day of Action on the Earth Summit
- 3 pm *The UN and the New World Order: a Time For Reappraisal*. Myriel Davies, Deputy Director of UNA in the Community Hall (next to the Parish Church), Bridgford Road, West Bridgford
- followed by *The Tree of Life: a reflection on its symbolism in different cultures, with the participation of representatives of many faiths.*
- Fri 22 Children's Play at Hyson Green (Buttermarket)
- Mon 25 Children's Play at Wollaton Park Community Festival and other environmental events
- Sat 30th *One World Day and Broxtowe One World Carnival: Tree of Life with Children's Play*, Broxtowe Centre. Carnival in Beeston Square, with Green Rocket Theatre group.
- Sun 31st An occasion to celebrate the Earth Summit organised by Churches Together in Nottinghamshire in Southwell Minster:
- 4.30 Dr John Biggs, Moderator of Free Church Federal Council, *The Earth Summit: the churches' response*.
- 5.30 Bring your own picnic and eat in the Bishop's Garden (not normally open to the public)
- 6.30 *Ecumenical pilgrimage of prayer* for the Earth Summit in the Minster.
- 8.00 Tree planting ceremony to commemorate the occasion in the grounds of the Cathedral School.

Stop Press!

Mon 11th, 6.30

David Bellamy will give a public lecture, open to all, on "*Big Sticks or Carrots: a Botanist's View of the Way Ahead to Sustainability*" in the Lecture Theatre, Department of Life Science, University. All are welcome. (Enter University Park at South entrance. Life Sciences Building is 200 yards in, at the bend)

Have you 'Pledged for the Planet' yet? This is the ready-made way to exert some pressure on our government to act responsibly at the Earth Summit. All over Britain organisations, churches and individuals are circulating the Tree of Life leaf pledge. A copy also appears in the Radio Times for 2-8 May.

The pledges returned to Nottingham Community Radio team by the end of May will be sent off for forwarding to Brazil. If you haven't already done so, please complete the enclosed leaflet and send one section to the Prime Minister (asking for a reply) and another to 33 Mansfield Road, Nott'm NG1 3FF

regional conferences, to be attended by more than 100 world leaders.

NEW YORK PREPCOMM

The April NEST meeting heard from Catherine McCloskey (UNEP-UK) who attended the last week of the final Preparatory Committee preparing the agenda for the Earth Summit. She told us how the Prep Comm works, what the role of NGOs there is, and of the achievements and failures (so far).

In theory, PrepComms are where the real work of UN summit conferences gets done. All UN member-states are entitled to send delegations, though many Southern governments were not able to afford to take a full part. The PrepComm was charged with producing the final documents for the Summit, hopefully reducing the number of points of disagreement which the heads of states have to settle to a minimum.

The bad news is that the agreed documents are filled with brackets. Sections which are bracketed are the points of disagreement.

THE EARTH CHARTER

One of the aims of the Earth Summit is to produce an Earth Charter setting out the principles which all governments agree to abide by when taking any decisions with environmental and/or developmental impacts. Although, like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it would not be binding, these principles have some moral force, putting states that violate them onto the defensive.

'Progress' so far

The 'precautionary principle' that the global community must take action to stave off potential large-scale environmental disasters

TIMETABLE TO RIO

- 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment establishes UNEP, United Nations Environment Programme.
- 1983 UN sets up World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) to recommend 'a global agenda for change' and a strategy to allow sustainable development to be achieved by the year 2000.
- 1987 WCED, chaired by Mrs Bruntland (Prime Minister of Norway) publishes its report, *Our Common Future*.
- 1989 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) established by UN General Assembly to put sustainable development into practice.
- 1991 Europe's Regional UNCED conference held in Bergen.
- 1992 June: UNCED (Earth Summit) in Rio, the culmination of world

without waiting for scientific proof about their extent or cause, and that wealthier nations must help poorer countries to protect their environments for the sake of the global community, was included. The importance of women's role in these issues, especially their need for empowerment at the grassroots and for health care and family planning, has been written in.

But there is to be no reference, at American insistence, on the threats posed by militarism or nuclear power. There will be an ominous sounding clause recognising the right of states to exploit their 'own' resources which could prove to be a crucial 'let out' clause for states to go their own way.

The Earth Charter will lose its high profile title and simply become the Rio Declaration. Who will have any idea what that means in a few month's time?

Scientists, diplomats and environmentalists are for once united in saying that it would represent responsible, precautionary and symbolic evidence of a genuine commitment by nations to address the global environmental crisis seriously.

A [climate] convention without targets ... would set back international environmental diplomacy many years, be roundly condemned as next to futile, alienate the developing world which is demanding compensation for past pollution and scupper the best efforts of the UN to rescue the faltering June Earth Summit.

Guardian, 30 April 1992

Blaming each other

The Charter was the focus of the North/South conflict which permeated all the negotiations. The North accused the South of using the rain-forests as a bargaining chip to force concessions. The South accused the North of 'green colonialism' (forcing them to put the environment as a higher priority than their fight against poverty, when the North had already destroyed most of its own forests and achieved a high degree of affluence).

The South sees environmental degradation as the fault of the North with its high levels of consumption and neo-colonial practices. The North retorts that it is too easy to blame the colonial past and puts the blame on Southern mismanagement. It demands that the South find ways of using any financial transfers to benefit the poor, not the rich elites.

Many NGOs attended the PrepComm as observers of plenary sessions. They worked together to devise the most effective lobbying strategies and had some impact. The women's caucus were the most active of all: they managed to get gender issues into Agenda 21 and changed the wording on population issues. Youth groups were also eloquent and effective, having held a preliminary conference in Costa Rica attended by representatives from three quarters of the developing countries.

AGENDA 21

This is supposed to list the actions to be taken in preparation for the 21st century. The news is not good: it has been reduced considerably in its scope. There is to be no major effort towards sustainability, there are no commitments on how to implement its recommendations nor how technology

is to be transferred from North to South. The UK accepted the principle that its aid should rise to the target of 0.7% of GNP (currently less than 0.3%) but refused to say when this would be achieved. The USA, Canada, Japan and the UK refused to discuss controls on the behaviour of trans-national corporations.

"You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor person. You are handing over to him what is his. For what has been given in common for the use of all, you have arrogated to yourself. The world is given to all and not only to the rich."

St Ambrose

GREEN FUND

A 'Green Fund' for development, democratically controlled, was wanted by the G77 countries, but any global funding will continue to be through the Global Environmental Facility, handled through the World Bank. This is controlled by votes allocated in proportion to the amount put into the fund, thus giving the rich nations the most powerful voice. Its Chief Economist is the author of the leaked memo inventing the concept of *under polluted countries* (see out last issue).

INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

The NGO community wanted a UN Commission on Environment and Development which would act as an ombudsman and be able to respond to crises (similar to the UN Commission on Human Rights) with their participation, but it was not favoured, particularly by the UK. On the other hand, the UK was keen on national sustainability plans and strengthening links with relevant NGOs at the national level.

NGO PESSIMISM

- No evidence of agreement on how to implement sustainable development.
- Sustainability is not on the agenda of most governments.
- Consumption patterns have been ignored.
- No regulation of international trade or trans-national corporations.
- No Northern nation has moved on the debt crisis.
- The United States will not back Agenda 21.
- The US, Brazil, and India want national sustainability plans to be voluntary.
- Malaysia is fighting any reference to the role of NGOs.
- The US has bracketed the reference to reducing high levels of energy consumption per capita.
- The US has refused to accept that there is any link between environment and development.

By 2022, the Marshall Islands may be "nothing more than two platforms in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, one holding the national airport and one featuring the government infrastructure and housing."

Guardian, April 30, 1992.

WHAT CAN WE STILL HOPE FOR?

- 102 leaders do not attend a world summit and come away empty handed. They must be able to show back home that something was achieved. So far, President Bush has not agreed to go, for that very reason. There is intense lobbying pressure on him in Washington to attend.
- There will be some additional financial flows and some new institutional arrangements at

the UN.

- The UK is going to use its Presidency of the EC from August to get national sustainability plans adopted throughout the Community.
- The Earth Summit is a stage in a process, not its end.

WHAT SHOULD WE BE DOING NOW?

We must lobby now, this month, to show the government that public opinion would back some short term sacrifices for long term gains. Our politicians need to feel supported if they make 'concessions' to the South at the Summit.

Catherine thought it important to lobby for:

- a fixed date for achieving the overseas aid target of 0.7%
- cancelation of the debt burden on developing countries
- implementation of national sustainability plans, with a democratic review process with NGO participation
- getting the arms trade, disarmament, and per capita consumption patterns back on the UNCED agenda

Your leaf pledge, or letters to MPs and the PM, can be used to tell the government what we want done.

ONE WORLD '92

Six weeks of TV and radio programmes about the future of the planet, leading upto the Earth Summit, begin on Sunday May 3rd. More than fifty programmes are being broadcast to raise awareness of environmental and social problems through drama,

documentary, music, art, satire and humour.

There's the *Happy Families* series showing how five families in Britain, Japan, US, Germany and Norway fared when they accepted the challenge to live greener lives. *Developing Stories* gives directors from the South a chance to present issues from their perspective.

If you missed it, there's a second chance to see *The Comic Relief Snappily Titled Totally and Utterly Sponditious Stab at Explaining Why So Many People in Africa Are So Damn Poor* (4.10, Tuesday, 6th, BBC2)

Don't just sit there: video it!

Aiding Development

John Clark, *Democratizing Development*, and Andy Crump, *Dictionary of Environment and Development: People, Places, Ideas and Organizations*. Earthscan Publications, 1991

Joe Remenyi, *Where Credit is Due: Income generating programmes for the poor in developing countries*, and John Madeley, *When Aid is No Help: How projects fail and how they could succeed*. Intermediate Technology Publication, 1991

We need to be prepared for disappointment but not cynicism when we see the outcome of the Earth Summit. The scientific, political, and economic issues at stake are so complex that we should welcome the final communique as a success if development and the environment are linked, and high, on the international agenda.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have long been aware that authentic development must be environmentally sustainable and

that environmental degradation is caused by the survival needs of the poor as well as the greeds of the rich. In *Democratizing Development*, John Clark has given us a thought provoking introduction to the world of NGOs like Oxfam, his employers. Voluntary organizations have to steer a path between so many pitfalls: empowering people to help themselves without being paternalistic or antagonizing local power structures irreparably, raising money from a rich world which prefers to relieve disaster than prevent it, accepting government aid money without allowing the piper to call the tune - these are but a few examples of the dilemmas NGOs have to face.

NGOs can also represent the poorest in international fora, which is why so many activists from movements worldwide will also be meeting in Rio. Many will be from grassroots movements: of women, indigenous peoples, environmental campaigners, trade unions, while some will be international in membership. John Clark reminds us of how much we can do by raising awareness and campaigning at home, sometimes empowering our politicians to take stands in the knowledge that an informed public opinion supports them.

To sustain the linkage between environment and development, we need a common vocabulary shared by those who often find it difficult to be on speaking terms: those who regard 'progress' and development as the enemy, and those who consume the environment in the name of

development. The Dictionary (usefully subtitled 'People, Places, Ideas and Organizations') will broaden the knowledge of anyone browsing through its 800 keywords. A random page gives the flavour: Right Livelihood Award, rinderpest, river blindness, Rongelap, and rubber, with cross-references to coral, cancer, radioactivity, and Greenpeace.

Whether it will promote the most useful connections is more doubtful. The author is an ecologist, and it shows. Many of John Clarke's key concepts are missing from the dictionary: poverty, women, participation, grassroots, market, incomes, even NGO is missing. But despite its entries on Brundtland and sustainable development, there is not enough to help one think about how to enable poor people to put their own priorities first instead of having 'solutions' delivered at them.

Two ITDG books discuss the realities of helping the poorest. Madeley asks what is the most appropriate form of official aid to the poorest, and concludes among twelve guidelines that NGOs must be involved from the start and that "Projects must trust the poor". Similarly Remenyi, in examining the importance of credit facilities for income generating projects, stresses the role of NGOs in reaching the poorest. Their track record for repayments is often better than those with more assets to pledge. This is not coincidence; being credit worthy is a source of dignity.

NEST is a development and environment forum of local groups and individuals drawn together by the forthcoming Earth Summit. Our meetings are open to all and are held in an informal atmosphere. Speakers who can link the issues of poverty and environmental degradation, especially at the grassroots are usually from the developing world.

Items for the next Newsletter should reach Jonathan Silvey, 10 Lime Grove Avenue, Beeston, NG9 4AR (Tel: 258900) by the end of May. If you wish to receive the Newsletter, send your name and address to the above address. A contribution towards the costs would be appreciated.