

RECENT NEST MEETINGS

THE OTHER APARTHEID

That's how Jerusha Castley, herself a Kenyan, described the situation of women in Africa to a meeting of NEST in January. By detailing how women are treated throughout each stage of their life, she showed that the second form of apartheid in Africa will take many changes to eliminate. But women are beginning to organise into their own groups to resist their exploitation.

In childhood, many girls are circumcised and they take second place to boys when it comes to schooling, feeding and household tasks. As brides, they may have little say in choosing a husband, they are exchanged for a dowry, and frequently suffer from giving birth before their muscles are strong enough to cope.

As an adult, it is common for a woman to have as many as ten births, only six of which survive beyond infancy. They may have to accept a polygamous husband. Many men have affairs, with all the dangers that presents to their wives of sexually transmitted diseases. His adultery does not give her grounds for divorce. In old age, since there is no social security to provide a pension, grandmothers are expected to look after grandchildren.

Development may make life harder for her. Her own village got electricity long before piped water. Deforestation and desertification increase the burden of fuel gathering and water collection. Lack of land-ownership rights means that the husband benefits from the woman's labours, and if the marriage fails, she is trapped.

But women are no longer accepting all this passively. They are forming their own grassroots organisations in the rural areas, sometimes just at the local level, sometimes with international NGO partners. They suffer most from 'development'; becoming organised gives them a better chance to have a say in decisions which affect them directly.

Jerusha herself works in Akina Mama wa Afrika, a London-based voluntary development organisation for African women. They publish a substantial journal, African Woman, and raise money for women's groups in

Africa. This spring, they will meet the wives of African presidents who are meeting in Geneva, to try to persuade them to contribute financially.

FAIR TRADEmark

Everyone knows the Woolmark. Why not a symbol for produce and goods conforming to practices which respect the producers and/or the environment?

Paul Johns spoke to a NEST meeting on February 19th about a project to label goods from the Third World showing that they were produced under conditions of fair trade. In Holland, a coffee guaranteeing that a fair price has been paid to the producers has appeared on supermarkets shelves, and in three years it has captured 2.5% of the market.

Building on this example, a consortium of agencies (including Traidcraft which Paul used to manage) has formed the Fairtrade Foundation to launch the symbol on at least four products. It is hoped 'go public' in the autumn and, although this is a national venture, there may well be a special Nottingham angle to it. Watch this space!

NEST (Nottingham Earth Summit Talks) is a development and environment forum drawn together by the approaching Earth Summit. We aim to

- improve our understanding of the links between development and environment issues by links with informed speakers, especially those representing grassroots organisations from the South,
- empower a local network of people and groups to campaign for policies which put the needs of future generations first.

To receive the Newsletter monthly, send your name and address to the Co-ordinator, Jonathan Silvey, 10 Lime Grove Avenue, Beeston, NG9 4AR (tel: 258900). A contribution towards its costs would be appreciated.

Meetings are open to all - see front page for details.



Nottingham Earth Summit Talks Newsletter

No. 3, March, 1992

DIARY OF EVENTS

MARCH

Sun, 8 International Womens Day

Mon, 9 4th Earth Summit Prep Comm opens in New York

Fri 13 UK UNCED for Youth Conference -Details: UNA, Whitehall Court, London SW1A 2EL (071 930 2931)

Sat 14 Nottingham's Earth Summit, University Medical School, Queen's Medical Centre
Main speaker: David Bellamy. Details from Tim Gray, 11 Wilkinson St, Beeston (tel 431145)

33rd anniversary of Tibetan uprising and Dalai Lama's escape to India. Demonstration at Chinese Embassy, Portland Place W1, followed by rally at Westminster Cathedral Hall with Tibetan food, singing, dancing, stalls, etc. Contact Tibet Support Group UK, 43 New Oxford St, London WC1A (071 240 2493)

Thurs 19 7.30, St. Peter's Church, Nottingham, Jonathan Porritt

Mon 23 6 and 8.15 Romero: the story of Oscar Romero's three years as Archbishop of San Salvador, which ended in martyrdom in 1980. Off Broadway Cinema, 24-32 Carlton St, Hockley, Nottingham

Tues 24, 7.30 Romero. Off Broadway Cinema, 24-32 Carlton St, Hockley. Followed by talk by Kate Roberts, Christian Aid Project Officer for Central America.

22 - 29th Central America Week Celebrating this year the resilience of the people and the survival of their culture over 500 years. For Action Pack (1.50), contact CAW, 82 Margaret Street, London W1N 8LH

APRIL
Fri 10 Earth Summit Rally, London. Details from UNEP-UK, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1

Weds 22 NEST Meeting, ICC, 61b Mansfield Road. Catherine McCloskey of UNEP-UK
The 4th (and final?) Preparative Commission for the Earth Summit in Brazil

MAY
Sun 3 Six weeks of One World '92 TV and radio programmes begins

Tues 5 NEST Meeting, ICC, 61b Mansfield Road. Mohammed Suleiman, of the Institute for African Alternatives, on *The Impact of the Greenhouse Effect on Africa*

16 - 24 Environment Week Contact Angela Carrill, Civic Trust, 17 Carlton House Terrace, SW1 5AW

Sat 16 Walk for the Earth leaves Manchester for London. Details from Penny Eastwood, 10 Broughton Street, Hebden Bridge, West Yorks HX7 8JY

Fri 29 Walk for the Earth reaches London. Manifesto for the Earth petition will be presented to whoever is Prime Minister by then, before his departure for Brazil.

Sat 30 One World Day Local authorities are invited to create temporary car free zones as homes for One World Carnivals. What is your Council doing? (Nottingham and Broxtowe are considering ideas as time of printing). More information from One World Support '92, 2 Ferdinand Place, London NW1 8EE

"WHY THE RICH SHOULD POLLUTE THE POOR" (Guardian headline)

One of the reasons why the global commons are being degraded is that polluters do not have to pay for the costs they create. Cars and smokestacks can belch poison into the air, rivers can be used as sewers, the soil can be used to store toxic and radioactive waste, species can be hunted to extinction. The only curbs are a sense of responsibility and/or some regulations in some countries (which may not be enforced adequately).

Some economists talk about "making the polluter pay". They then have to find some way of putting a price on the air, the seas, the rivers and lakes.

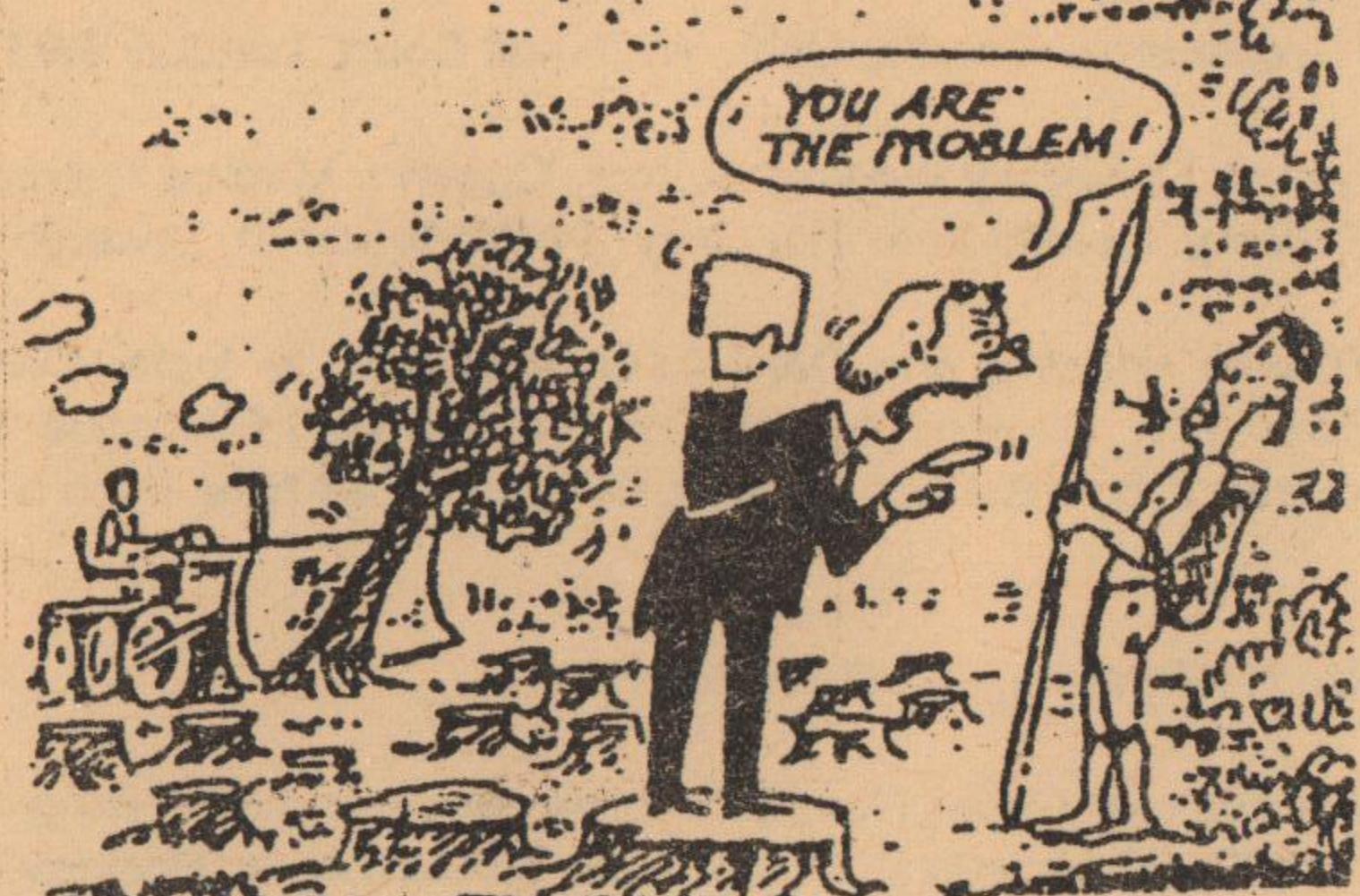
But the problem with prices is that, if they are to mean anything, somebody must be able to afford them. Are we prepared to accept that the extinction of a species should be affordable? In making polluters pay for damage to the commons, how can a price be put on the degradation which permanently diminishes the planet's resources?

Economists' calculations always have to include a time-span, but what about our children's children's children?

Now the chief economist with the World Bank has come up with the suggestion that some countries are 'under-polluted'. "The economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage countries is impeccable", he wrote in a leaked internal memo which the Bank is now trying to dismiss by saying it was meant "ironically".

The problem is that logic can't be dismissed as ironic; it is either true or false. In a free market economy, regulations are

undesirable and responsible behaviour may be at the expense of profits or even survival.



The Bank's logic is that economists calculate the costs of harmful pollution by estimating the total value of all the earnings lost due to ill-health or shortened life. Therefore the place in which "health-impairing pollution should be done ... [is] in the country with the lowest wages". Trade in polluting wastes would promote economic growth in poor countries and would therefore be "welfare enhancing" for them.

This is nonsense, even if it is dressed up in moral terms like "welfare enhancement".

First, let us concede that it might raise the statistical indicator of economic growth, the increase in GNP per capita.

But GNP per capita is an average which indicates nothing about who gets the increased wealth within the economy. Is it likely to be those who are forced to live nearest to the waste dumps? Will it be the peasant households and urban squatters whose daily lives are most dominated by the struggle for survival?

Second, taking wages forgone as the measure of harmfulness is a very crude measure in itself, but let us ignore that point since it is not easy to come up with a satisfactory alternative indicator. Should the least unsatisfactory measure available be used at all when it ignores all those who do not receive any wages, above all generations as yet unborn? Amongst the living it excludes the unemployed, the young, the old, those outside the cash economy.

This criterion would be applied to count-

ries in which there are many more people who are unwaged than waged. Do free market economists really believe that the quality of the lives of people without wages don't count?

Trade in toxic wastes is happening. Europe, the US, Japan and Australia are exporting increasing amounts of waste to Eastern Europe, the Philippines, and Latin America.

There is even a Pacific island which imports Californian waste in order to increase its height above sea level in an attempt to protect itself against the rise in sea levels caused by global warming. And what is the principle cause of global warming? The lifestyles made possible by industrialisation, which are probably most evident in California itself.

The Organisation of African States has managed to prevent much waste importing, but the World Bank memo suggests that African countries there are "vastly under-polluted", and the Bank has plenty of economic muscle. It dominates the administration of the Global Environmental Facility, the major dispenser of global funds for environmental projects, and will be battling to control any new global funds that emerge from the Earth summit.

The Bank doesn't like having to listen to arguments that oppose the logic of free market economics because they undermine its basic principles. In the words of the memo, "the problem with the arguments against all of these proposals for more pollution in less developed countries (intrinsic rights to certain goods, moral reasons, social concerns, lack of adequate markets, etc) is that they could be turned and used more or less effectively against every Bank proposal for liberalisation."

If you are interested in questioning the tenets of an economics which only values what it can measure, contact the New Economics Foundation, 88/94 Wentworth St, London E1 7SE.

Jonathan Silvey

Well Done
Last year Birmingham City Council announced that it has been persuaded not to host any more Defence Components Exhibitions at the NEC.

Well done, those who wrote letters to the Council leader or attended the peaceful demonstration!

THE RAINBOW CENTRE

180-182 Mansfield Road (585666)

Nottingham's resource and information centre covering green issues - environment and development, peace, human and animal rights - is open Mon to Sat, 10 to 6. A comprehensive library of Green magazines and books is used by students and public.

There are also office facilities and meeting space for local Green groups. A shop at 182 recently opened sells a wide range of cruelty-free merchandise and can supply any green book. The existing shop at 180 sells vegan frozen foods and is a base for Veggies lunchtime snack stall at Clinton St. West. catering is also provided for many Green events.

Profits go towards running the centre which is largely run by unpaid volunteers. The workers choose to take low wages - putting into practice the slogan Live simply that others may simply live.

The centre is the base for many campaigning initiatives. As part of an expanding recycling project, there is an aluminium can-crusher at the back of the shop. Each month there are exhibitions: for February a display on the Earth Summit and the Tree of Life.

The centre already provides a free information service on any Green issue to all enquirers - work is now starting to extend this service to Nottinghamshire schools and colleges.

Help of any kind is always appreciated - more income is particularly needed to meet the running costs. Please spread the message, and if you can afford it, why not become a Rainbow Centre supporter by sending a donation or regular standing order?

Rob Preston

Still to be Done
NATO country companies are exhibiting in the 'Eurocavitory '92' arms fair in Paris from June 22-27. The European Anti-Arms Trade Network is calling upon all governments to stop the fair, or to refuse the export licenses necessary for military equipment to go there. Write to Campaign against the Arms Trade, 11 Goodwin St, London N4 3HQ (071 281 0297)