



unherd

conspiracy theory
kissing in kingston
alternative currency

pg 3



pg 8

michael crummey
4 marney mcdiarmid
pg 6 ian stewart

consurrealism
gag reflex
a gesture of goodbye
working for The Man
corporate hegemony and the
etiology of hunger

pg 9
pg 10

mel clancy
sunny kerr
abé barreto soares
pg 13 anna kim



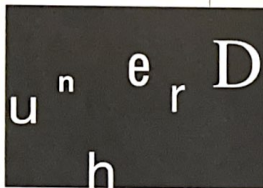
Feb. p. 131

pg 14 colin stewart

contents here

an apple a day?

pg 15 kristen campbell



is free

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<http://www.ams.queensu.ca/OPIRG>. this magazine depends on the support of queen's students. please don't opt out.



Call us conspiracy theorists

We don't believe that one of our volunteers-being-bashed near campus last year (or looking "like a fag" in an isolated incident) We don't buy it when people claim Marc Lepine's rampage at Ecole Polytechnique on December 6th was an isolated incident. To our eyes, there's a lot more than a deficit behind the recent spate of cuts to social programs in Ontario, cuts which are sending children to food banks and closing shelters for battered women. And let's not even mention the decision of Premier Harris to gut existing environmental legislation because "corporate Canada can be trusted to take care of the environment themselves" -- hey, don't get us started.

Well, welcome to **unheard**, the magazine of the Ontario Public Interest Research Group. Among other things, you'll find articles here about workforce, local currencies, consumer surrealism, agribusiness, the politics of hunger, and deficit hysteria. It may look to some like a mish-mash of unrelated material, but that's not how we see it. Go ahead, call us conspiracy theorists. We say everything is connected.

Here at OPIRG, we're helping students work on a variety of social and environmental issues, from human rights in East Timor to energy conservation to the emotional and physical health of teenage women. But we're also trying to educate our volunteers, and the general public, about the connections between these issues, about the way that Power shapes -- and often mis-shapes -- the society we live in.

We live in a world of competing interests, and the competition is often split along the line of the public vs the private: the public right of all people to live free of harassment and violence vs an individual's decision to batter a partner or insult someone because of the colour of their skin. The "right" to private profit conflicts with the public right to a healthy environment or a social safety net that protects the public as a whole.

And too often these days, the Private wins out over the Public. Government policy is set by bankers on Bay Street/Wall Street resulting in lower taxes for corporations and less services (for those who need them most. The last 1% of old growth pine in Ontario is opened up for logging in the name of economic development. One of our volunteers gets his nose broken on the way to the Grad Club because his hair-is-too-long.

So regardless of how unrelated the stories you'll read here may seem at first, take a few minutes to think about it. How does Power get played out? In the competition between the "public interest" and the "private", which wins out and why? It may be that you start to get a sense, like us, that everything is connected.

The International OPIRG Conspiracy, Part I

by Michael Crummey

\$200 GRANT for graduate research on environmental or social justice issues. Submit proposals by Friday, October 11, 1996. Call 549-0066 or drop by the Earth Centre, JDUC.

homophobia is a curable disease

PUBLICIZING PRIVATIZATION

On July 16, Education Minister John Snobelen, appointed a committee to review the university and college system in Ontario. The 5-member panel includes experts on education like a Manulife Financial vice president; the panel's chair is former Queen's principal David Smith. One issue they will be investigating is privatization, which would likely create a two-tiered system composed of elite high-tuition schools and low quality, low-tuition schools. Snobelen has suggested that universities could specialize in different subjects, eliminating program duplication among schools to increase efficiency. The good side: you'd never have to worry about choosing electives. The bad side: no one will get an actual education beyond one subject. The committee's report is due in December.

GAP BOYCOTT...THE LATEST:

Mandarin International, the El Salvadoran manufacturer of GAP clothing has been accused of human rights abuses of its mostly female workers. On March 22, Mandarin International signed an agreement with the union executive board and the four Salvadoran human rights organizations. This agreement commits Mandarin to begin rehiring workers that were fired for forming a union, beginning with the union's executive board "when the company receives sufficient funds to do so." The bad press has scared away business, leaving Mandarin without enough work to bring any of the fired workers back. Companies such as Eddie Bauer and J.C. Penney, which had produced clothing by Mandarin, pulled out last fall and have not returned.



GAP



Kissing in Kingston

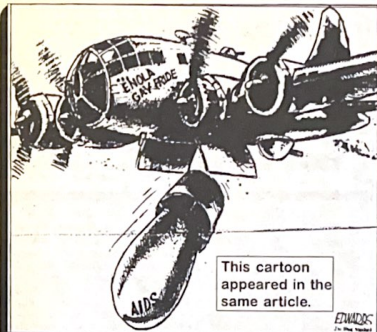
On Friday August 9th, 1985 two men stood on the steps of Kingston's City Hall... and kissed. "For all the crap that had been going on in the media leading up to this," recalls gay activist Nancy Tatham, "you know, *this shouldn't be happening, this is disgusting, our fair city, blah blah blah*, and then there's mom and dad having brought their aluminum folding chairs and their box lunch, camping out... they weren't going to miss this!" Over 400 people congregated across the street to gawk as organizer Françoise Lachance read some verses from the bible, as the two men embraced and kissed. The "anti-nuke kiss-in", part of a three day commemoration of the bombing of Hiroshima, was an attempt by members of the gay community to draw a connection between nuclear disarmament and gay rights. "There is a need not only to disarm the world," claimed gay organizer Françoise Lachance, "but to create space for peace." The steps of City Hall were chosen because the City had recently rejected both Gay Pride Day and a proposal to make Kingston a nuclear-free zone. "People don't really seem to have a problem when two men are killing each other," notes Tatham, "but when two men are showing affection for each other..."

"They're giving peace a bad name."
Councillor Ken Matthews

"It seems to me that the connection is blatantly obvious. Homosexuals and lesbians kissing each other in public are the products of sick minds and emotions, disarmament by North America in the face of the ideologies of communist Russia is also the product of sick minds and emotions."
- Rev. C.G. Votary

"It just made me feel like throwing up."
- Susan McIntyre

"...and this woman, ran across the street, with her "male" behind her, right into his [Françoise Lachance] face, just screaming at him *how dare you be using the bible and I remember this pickup truck going by and gunning its engine and honking its horn and screaming you fucking asshole*... just screaming this... it was a beautiful day (laughs)... all this hostility..."
- gay activist Nancy Tatham



This cartoon appeared in the same article.

"It is very unfortunate that this sad occasion (the 40th anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki) should be drawn in comparison with the problems faced by the gay community."
- John Gerretson

"Homosexuals may have their rights, but why advertise it? ... We have toured many, many such weird, ridiculous behavior."
- Christine McIvor, Elizabeth McGuire, Bonnie S. Shaver, William E. Slack, New Brunswick

"Some of the reactions I have been reading from the genteel and upright citizens of Kingston remind me how much hatred and fear there is out there, just beneath the surface, and how enormous are the risks that we owe a debt of gratitude to those brave individuals who by their public actions are forcing us to look at these questions."
- Helen Forscy

(Material used in this article has been obtained from *The Kingston Whig Standard*, August 8th -20th 1985, and an interview with Nancy Tatham, winter 1996)

Did you live in Kingston during the 1950s, 60s, 70s, or early 80s? Marney McDurand is currently seeking interviewees for an oral history of gays and lesbians in post-war Kingston. For more information contact 546-6694, all calls confidential.

HARRIS VS. LIFE

The Ontario government has approved a plan to open the embattled Temagami area to logging and mineral exploitation. The Owain Lake stand is North America's third-largest old-growth white-pine forest. Rejection of the Temagami Anishabai land claim will pave the way for land-scarring open pit mining.

ETHICAL SHOPPING NOW ILLEGAL

The Canadian arm of the Japanese pulp and paper company, Daishowa, has resumed large scale destruction on the sacred lands of the Lubicon Cree. The 1991 nationwide boycott has been credited with shutting down the saws. Daishowa claims revenue losses of \$ million as a result of the boycott. Rather than clean up their act, Daishowa proceeded to take legal action against the organizers, the Friends of the Lubicon. In January, an Ontario divisional court charged the Friends of the Lubicon with "economically threatening" Daishowa, and ruled that the boycott must be put to an end. The Ontario Court of Appeals followed in April, ruling that the Friends of the Lubicon may not appeal the decision. This ruling has ramifications on all boycotts, since "economically threatening" unethical corporations is, obviously, the motive behind all boycotts.

BLOCK FUCKBUSTER: FIGHT CENSORSHIP

Blockbuster, one of the largest video rental chains in North America, has continually refused to carry uncut versions of such mainstream films as *Bad Lieutenant* and *Henry and June*. They have also refused some controversial films altogether, like *The Last Temptation of Christ*. Boycott organizers state that this policy unduly influences the types of films the major motion picture studios create, because the video rental market has become so lucrative. By boycotting Blockbuster, we will be sending the message that their contempt for artistic and moral integrity is unacceptable.

The Alternative Currency Primer

Anyone who tries to understand the money question goes crazy.

—Frank Vanderlip

Canadian monetary policy is set by the Bank of Canada. Our money used to be backed by gold, meaning that you could trade your coins and bills for gold bars at the bank, a one dollar bill was just a note from the Bank of Canada that said "we owe you one dollar of gold." That's all changed. Now Canadian money isn't worth anything. Money is backed only "by our national debt," as the economists say nebulously.¹ And it's totally out of control.

Monetary policy ultimately affects every aspect of our economic lives, interest rates, inflation, and money's availability all contribute to our overall wealth and material standard of living. And yet we leave monetary policy entirely in the hands of the Bank of Canada, a body completely free of public accountability in elections, and we continue to trade with the worthless Canadian dollars. Why? Largely because no one has come up with anything better to use.

Well now something better does exist. A new currency is being introduced into Kingston this fall. Instead of being called "Kingston dollars," they will be called "Kingston Hours," where the value of one Kingston Hour is fixed to the value of one hour of work. It's easy to understand, it's totally legal, it has a clear immutable value, and is inflation free. It's like Canadian Tire money for the Kingston community, but it's better. Two questions need to be answered at this point. First, can this be done and has anyone else done it? Second, why would anyone want to go to the trouble?

First, the question of plausibility. Alternative currencies have a long history. During the Great Depression, local money was produced in over four hundred communities to insulate them from the devastation of the national economy.² A local economy based on a community currency doesn't depend nearly so much on the national economy, so these currencies provided economic stability. The Second World War distracted everyone from community projects, and created absurd amounts of wealth on this continent. In recent years, perhaps the most famous alternative currency program has been the LETS system which began in Vancouver in 1983, and now exists in over 200 communities around the world. LETS (Local Exchange Trading System) is a computer co-ordinated program to facilitate barter among individuals.³ The problems with this debt-based system prompted a grassroots coalition in Ithaca, New York, to look for a better solution, and in 1991 they decided to start printing their own money. They called

the money Ithaca Hours. Each Ithaca Hour is intended to be worth one hour of labour. The value of each Hour was set at ten dollars US, the average local wage. Over the past five years the currency has become increasingly popular, and is now accepted by 300 businesses and thousands of individuals. Some people in Ithaca no longer use American money at all. They are able to pay their landlords, buy food and clothing, rent videos, get legal assistance, massage, medical help, chiropractic, and computer repairs only using Ithaca Hours.

Currency projects based on the Ithaca model have been introduced to a number of other communities. In Canada the most significant program of this type operates in Nova Scotia with a currency called the Maritime Hour.

So why do people want to do this? Alternative currencies create wealth, especially for people without a lot of Federal money. Ithaca Hours have made it easy for people to barter, and a bimonthly newspaper called *Ithaca Money* gives people an opportunity to list services they are willing to offer in exchange for Hours. So Hours create all kinds of odd jobs for people who otherwise would not have work. Also, the currency has given residents control over their economy. All of the decisions regarding the Ithaca currency are made democratically by community members at monthly meetings. The underground big banks no longer have exclusive control over granting loans, setting interest rates, and creating money; now the community becomes the bank. At the Ithaca meetings, grants of Ithaca Hours are awarded to people and organizations who are doing underrewarded work that benefits the community.

The advantages for small business, are numerous. The currency creates wealth for local businesses, because the traditionally underpaid and underemployed now have money to spend in stores. Also, federal dollars tend to leave small communities through interest payments to the larger banks. A lot of the money now in Kingston will end up in New York State. If the Local currency doesn't leave the area, keeping Kingston's wealth in Kingston. The local currency also promotes economic growth because it gets spent faster than federal money. A lot of our Canadian money is locked up in RRSP's and term deposits, and changes hands for economically non-productive reasons like speculation, for local currency, no bank will offer interest, so people spend it quickly. As any economics course will tell you, increased spending means economic growth and increased wealth.

The Ithaca Hour system is only five

years old, and has been so successful that it has spawned over twenty-five imitations in communities as diverse as Indianapolis, San Antonio, Santa Fe, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Halifax, Calgary and Nelson BC.⁴ Kingston Hours are the newest Hour-based currency, and will soon be rolling off the printing presses, to get in on the excitement of trading with Kingston Hours, all you have to do is sign up. Signing up is easy, you just come to Kingston money to start, and an opportunity to list any services you're seeking or willing to offer in exchange for Hours. These listings will appear in a free bimonthly newspaper called *Focus on Kingston Hours*. You can pick it up and find out how you can spend your Hours. And you can find out about the monthly meetings where decisions are made about the currency. Each Kingston Hour is worth one hour of work, or twelve Canadian dollars. Kingston Hours will help thousands of people in the Kingston area who are having trouble finding work and paying their bills. They will also help local businesses, and will create a local economy that responds to the needs of the community. If you're interested in participating in this project, please call OPIRG at 549-0066, or stop by the OPIRG office in the Earth Centre, 10-4 pm, Monday to Thursday.

—Ian Stewart

¹ Lewis Solomon writes in *Balancing Out Centralized Monetary Systems* (1996): "the U.S. government systematically, from 1933 to 1971, obliterated any notion of a value standard by refusing to permit the acceptance of its paper money into gold and forcing the acceptance of its inferior paper currency. The way was opened to abuse on a grand scale" (13-14). In 1933 and 1934 the U.S. government abolished gold coin and gold clauses in contracts. In 1971, Nixon dismantled the Bretton Woods system which had made gold an international currency standard. The situation in Canada is similar.

² See Paul Glover's *Limitations to Money*, page 33.

³ not a footnote

⁴ For more information about LETS, see Solomon, pp. 38-43; *Shelter*, Sept. 1994; *Prize Magazine*, May/June 1994, or *New Internationalist*, May 1987.

⁵ See *Ithaca Money*, April/May 1995, for a report on the Halifax system.

⁶ See Glover, pp. 33.

⁷ A package assembled by member Don Findlay from Statistics Canada information reports that 30 000 people in the Kingston area receive assistance, among whom nearly 20 000 are adults who would benefit from local currency.

For more information, check out the local currency folder in the OPIRG/USEN resource centre in the Earth Centre.

Consumer Surrealism Contest! Submit your photos! Prize 2 Kingston Hours (worth \$24)! drop stuff off at the Earth Centre before December. oprig will not be responsible for any bad shit resulting from consumer surrealist escapades. oprig does not endorse unlawful actions.



Shopper's Guide to Consurrealism:

Social critiques exist in many forms and places. A rather innovative arena for radical commentary is your local supermarket. No...not Rebellion beer, Envrighetti, Freedom Maxis or those "You've Come a Long Way, Baby" cigarettos. Rather, in the presentation of products: that is, by a manoeuvre called Consumer Surrealism. Consumer Surrealism derives from the (recently trendy) surrealist art movement. Yet as kitschy as surrealism has become (Dali prints are probably as common in dorm rooms as those insidious "sensitive" mar-will-a-baby posters), the mandate that many Surrealists advocated has been largely forgotten.

The Surrealists were "passionately attached to those events marked by the eruption of the marvelous into ordinary experience: stunning and haplessly ridiculous moments in which

the fantastic surprises a world of mundane causality."¹ Consumer Surrealism uses a basic surrealist tenet: incongruity. Juxtaposing incongruous items can jar the consumer's consciousness, eroticize the banal shopping experience, propel the consumer to question the need of certain purchases, and reveal the constructed nature of capitalist society. **Education on animal rights issues...gives the bird to straddling boneless chicken breasts**

The result? Also cans in the beef stew section. Ee-z Cheese conversing with aerosol anti-perspirants, Buns of Steel videos seated beside Salisbury steaks, etc. The supermarket shopper, stoned from the muzac being pumped into her/him like heroin, and staring listlessly at those "names we trust", suddenly awakes. A bikini girl against a lamb chop stands: "I demean women!"; the fuzzy bird from the pet toy section, pecking on a Butter Ball turkey, cucks: "Yes...meat IS animals!"

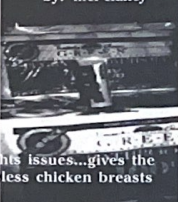
The message can be blatantly obvious, intellectual, or simply ridiculous: the choice is

up to the artist. Of course, Consumer Surrealism leaves the employees to re-bellish these rebellious items. And so, consurrealists take heed: make responsible choices with intense impact,

and hope the employees have a sense of humour. Moreover, Consumer Surrealists will reap more benefits if they couple their supermarket escapades with education. For instance, education on animal rights issues and the environmental benefits of vegetarianism/veganism gives the bird toy straddling boneless chicken breasts more impact; education on how women are commodified by our patriarchal society allows people to further appreciate the bikini girl leaning beside the pan of beef.

Clearly a can of Aipo in the pants of a dogless dissenter may not change the world, but it will make people question what is staring at them from the shelves...and that's not bad for a jaunt to the grocery store.

by: mel dancy



Genocide in East Timor

...In twenty years, the Indonesian army has killed 200,000 East Timorese, one third of the entire population, reduced vast numbers to dreadful poverty and taken over the Timorese economy ... The Indonesian government assiduously plies a soft-core genocidal program, otherwise known as family planning for the Timorese whose numbers have already been decimated by napalm bombing, mass executions, and sadistic murder. -Carolyn Xia (ETAN)

What You Can Do:

1. Boycott products made in Indonesia and companies that do business with Indonesia
2. Write to the Canadian government, demanding that they withdraw \$46 million in aid to Indonesia until the following have been satisfied:
 - (i) An immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of Indonesian troops from East Timor.
 - (ii) The positioning of UN peacekeeping forces in East Timor.
 - (iii) UN-sponsored negotiations between independent Timorese representatives, Portugal, and the Indonesian government.
 - (iv) An internationally supervised referendum in East Timor.

to learn more visit OPIRG and find out about ETAN Kingston (East Timor Alert Network)

Yoga is derived from the root to bind or yoke. It means to bring together all parts of ourselves, to come into wholeness. For women, yoga takes on new meaning. Women separate from their bodies and selves in response to unrealistic body images presented by the media, as a coping mechanism for sexual abuse, and for many other important reasons.

OPIRG Kingston is hosting a Women and Yoga course in the Fall. It will be a time for women to be together to breathe, stretch and strengthen the body, meditate, relax, and share in discussion.

Classes will be led by Maya Hammer. Maya is a Kripalu Certified Yoga Instructor who has been teaching yoga in Kingston for a year. She has led a Moon Circle workshop for women, as well as classes for the OPIRG Women's Collective and the Queen's Women and Empowerment Committee. The classes will be Wednesdays October 2-November 20 5:15-6:45 pm \$40 (\$35 for OPIRG volunteers) For more information, call OPIRG 549-0066.



A GESTURE OF GOODBYE (The story of a Timorese girl)

The soul of my daddy
already hanged around
somewhere in another world
His corpse was a companion to me
that night
in the brushwood

His head was cut off
and brought into the town
for showing to the crowd
that my daddy, the rebel-
his life already taken way
from him

Seemed my daddy
still with me
Not a single teardrop rolling down
on my cheek
It was fun talking with him
in that cold night
by myself

Morning broke. I dug a grave
I buried his corpse
I scattered my grief
along with a bundle of flowers
on his grave. A teardrop began
rolling down on my cheek as a gesture
of saying goodbye

Abé Barreto Soares

Abé Barreto Soares is a political refugee from East Timor.

OPIRG working groups

ANIMAL RIGHTS: OPPOSING THE USE OF ANIMALS IN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION AT QUEEN'S. PROMOTING AVAILABLE ALTERNATIVES. ACTION ON VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN ISSUES

GLOBAL AWARENESS/LOCAL ACTION: ADDRESSES LOCAL IMPLICATIONS OF GLOBAL ISSUES. INTERNATIONAL FILM/SPEAKERS SERIES, AND FUNDRAISING FOR LOCAL SERVICES FOR THE POOR.

ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVES: DEDICATED TO ESTABLISHING SUSTAINABLE, EMPOWERING, ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC SYSTEMS (LOCAL CURRENCY, SAVINGS CIRCLES) IN KINGSTON.

MEDIA ISSUES: ACTIONS ON MEDIA ISSUES, FOCUSING ON BIAS IN MASS MEDIA. ALSO INVESTIGATES REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN IN ADVERTISING, AND CORPORATE CONTROL OF INFORMATION.

HOUSEWARRIORS: RECEIVE TRAINING IN THE BASICS OF HOME ENERGY CONSERVATION AND COORDINATE A PROGRAMME TO WINTERIZE STUDENT AND LOW-INCOME HOUSING.

OPQ'S COLLECTIVE: ACTION ON A VARIETY OF ISSUES-SELF-DEFENSE WORKSHOPS, BREAST-CANCER AWT, WORKSHOPS/EDUCATION ON TOXIC TAMPONS & ALTERNATIVE WOMEN'S HYGIENE, ORGANIZING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENTS.

ANTI-RACISM: ACTIONS AROUND RACISM AT QUEEN'S AND IN THE KINGSTON COMMUNITY. THIS IS A NEW OPIRG WORKING GROUP.

ACTION FORESTRY: ACTIONS TO OPPOSE LOGGING IN TEMAGAMI AND ALGOMA, AND IN OTHER ENDANGERED AREAS

TEENAGE OPQ'S HEALTH INITIATIVE: ORGANIZE WORKSHOPS IN LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS DEALING WITH SEXUALITY, DATING VIOLENCE, SEXUAL HEALTH, EATING DISORDERS, AND SELF-ESTEEM

E.T.A.N. ACTION AND EDUCATION CONCERNING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS OCCURRING IN EAST TIMOR - PART OF INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE TO END THE REPRESSIVE INDOONESIAN OCCUPATION.

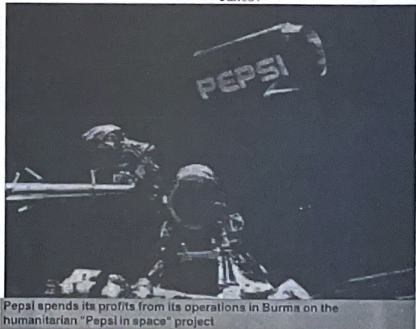
CENTRAL AMERICAN SOLIDARITY: ORGANIZES THE ANNUAL DEVELOPMENT WEEK DINNER 1994. SENT VOLUNTEERS TO ACT AS INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS DURING THE EL SALVADORIAN ELECTION THROUGH PROJECT ASSISTANTMENT. ACCOMPANIES GUATEMALAN REFUGEES RETURNING TO THEIR COUNTRY.



EDUCATION ON EDUCATION: ACTIONS AGAINST PRIVATIZATION AND TUITION INCREASES. TO EXPOSE AND DEPOSE CORPORATE CONTROL OF EDUCATION.

PEPSI/BURMA MISINFORMATION

Recent reports that Pepsi has pulled out of Burma are misleading, say the Canadian Friends of Burma/ BurmaLinks (June-July 1996). Apparently Pepsi sold their operations to their Burmese partner, U. Their Tun., and will continue to profit from the sale of their products in Burma. At the same time, they will continue to support, at least financially, the murderous SLORC regime that now holds power in Burma. Burma has the worst human rights record in the world; the military government has forced millions into slave labour, women are repeatedly raped by Burmese soldiers, and thousands have been killed or have "disappeared". There is some reason for hope with Pepsi; they have a new CEO who pulled Prito-Lay out of South Africa during apartheid. But, until Pepsi stops supporting SLORC, Pepsi products are still on boycott. Pepsi owns Prito-Lay (Hostess, Tostitos, Doritos, etc.), Pizza Hut, Taco Bell, KFC, and other low-quality foods, drinks, and restaurants.



Pepsi spends its profits from its operations in Burma on the humanitarian "Pepsi in space" project

OPIRG Calendar

SEPT. 11 **POETRY READING** the
Grad Club. It's gonna be crazy.

SEPT. 12 **KELLY DEAR** at the
Union Gallery. Dyke with a mike.

SEPT. 17-18 **CLUBS NIGHT.**
Check out the opirg table.

SEPT. 18 **(M)EARTH CENTRE**
OPEN HOUSE. Acoustic tunes,
coffee, treats, and conversation.

SEPT. 19 **VOLUNTEER**
ORIENTATION. 7:00 Oak
room, JDUC. Come see
what's up with OPIRG.

SEPT. 25 **SLIDE SHOW** by the
Wildlands League; 7 pm Ellis Auditorium

SEPT. 26 **GROOVE NATION**
RAVE AGAINST
RACISM all ages. Call 549-
0066 for venue and info



working for The Man

Workfare, like all political matters, is not a black and white issue, as the proponents of the Ontario government's common sense would like us to believe. The general scheme of More consists of providing so-called job training to people on welfare so that they can "earn" their social benefits checks and supposedly, in the long run, find work. Workfare may sound sensible, but the arguments in favour of the program arise out of the view that these people are not rightful citizens but "free loaders" who are simply lazy and unwilling to work.

The public discourse on workfare vilifies people on welfare and simplifies a complicated socio-economic condition. This hostile stance has altered the terms that negotiated the concept of social goods in the first place. By social goods, I refer to elements necessary to citizens, such as economic security, which help to ensure a healthy functioning society. The public debate on workfare has ignored, if not avoided, understanding welfare as a collective effort to help people secure a dignified standard of living. Instead, those who are socially in need are targeted and vilified as the cause of society's economic woes. This detracts from the compassion of a social welfare safety net, a sentiment that has become unpopular and unprofitable. This approach only further displaces people as citizens and contributes to an individualistic stance voiced in the "we" and "they" division. This echoes a kind of social Darwinism that tries to justify an economic hierarchy where the "naturally stronger" - those who are at the top of the ladder - because they "deserve" to be - reign, while the "weaker" ones who cannot compete must simply try harder. This is certainly an odd way to frame a society whose members are dependent upon one another.

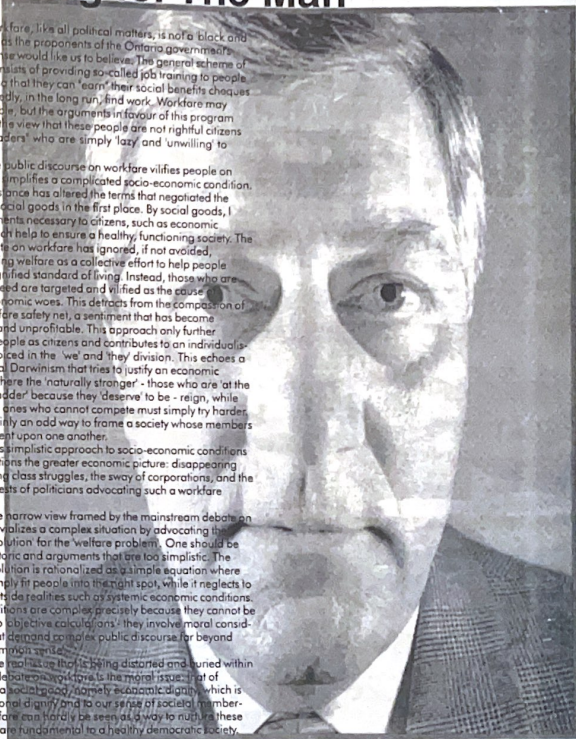
This simplistic approach to socio-economic conditions hardly mentions the greater economic picture: disappearing jobs, swelling class struggles, the sway of corporations, and the vested interests of politicians advocating such a workfare policy.

The narrow view framed by the mainstream debate on workfare trivializes a complex situation by advocating the workfare solution for the welfare problem. One should be wary of rhetoric and arguments that are too simplistic. The workfare solution is rationalized as a simple equation where we must simply fit people into the right spot, while it neglects to consider outside realities such as systemic economic conditions. Social conditions are complex precisely because they cannot be subjected to objective calculations - they involve moral considerations that demand a complex public discourse far beyond "obvious common sense."

The real issue at hand is being distorted and buried within the public debate on workfare is the moral issue of preserving a social good, namely economic dignity, which is tied to personal dignity and to our sense of societal membership. Workfare can hardly be seen as a way to nurture these goods that are fundamental to a healthy democratic society.

by Anna Kim

in protest of the policies and practices of the Ontario government, community and labour groups are organizing the general shutdown on October 24th. The city-wide strike and October 24th mass rally will be the climax of the Metro Days of Action, October 22-27. Sponsored by the Labour Council of Metro Toronto and the Metro Network for Social Justice, the Days of Action will feature various events that give voice to the diverse communities who are witnessing the impact of current government activities. Call OPIRG, 549-0066, for more information on transportation to Toronto. Join this positive, non-violent act of resistance.



colin stewart's

Corporate Hegemony and the Etiology of Hunger

The world's 800 million hungry have just experienced another scare. Due largely to the failure of the Kansas winter wheat crop, international grain prices rose dramatically in the first half of 1996.¹ Fortunately, the promise of more successful crops this year may prevent price increases comparable to those during the scarcity of the early seventies.

Who stands in gain from these increases? Not surprisingly, it is the multinational agribusiness giants who can expect the greatest benefits. While families in the developing world that could barely afford to eat before will now starve, the agribusinesses are bound to have exceptional profits.

Food scarcity has often been used as a planned strategy for boosting agricultural earnings, exemplified clearly by the low supply of the early seventies. As a result of reasonable food prices in the late 1960s, the government of the United States ensured that between 1967 and 1970 acreage allotment was reduced by 25 per cent.² The huge quantity of land taken out of production could have tripled the annual grain imports of the developing world in the early seventies. It means while food prices were skyrocketing, people in the developing world were struggling for a bit of rice to eat, and agribusinesses were recording excellent profits.³

One might expect that small farmers could also be in a position to profit from high prices. However, truly poor farmers cannot afford to store their crops, and are forced to sell at harvest time, when supply is good and prices are low. It is only those wealthy enough to store their grain and play the market who are in a position to maximize their scarcity-driven profits, namely, the multinational corporations.

Here in the North, since groceries comprise a much smaller portion of our personal budgets, we will not be affected by price increases the same way that Third World laborers will be. Our tendency to purchase "value-added," nutritionally deficient food products rather than unprocessed grains will also translate to a smaller proportional increase in food bills. However, the prominence of highly processed value-added "goods" in the North results from the huge

profits that the agribusinesses collect by selling them. The corporations skim profits at every step along the way: from selling pesticides and fertilizers to contracted farmers, to exploiting consumer ignorance by marketing 25 cents worth of corn as a four dollar box of breakfast cereal. Although most of us do not starve in the North for the sake of corporate profits, we instead suffer from obesity, heart disease and cancer that result from highly processed foods containing thousands of toxic additives.

In fact, the greatest price increases in the supermarkets have been for value-added "biomachines" — pigs, cows and fowl — who consume a full 38 per cent of the world's grain.⁴ This grain is then converted by biological processing into pork, beef, etc., reducing its edible mass by up to 85 per cent.⁵ When these animals traditionally subsist on foods inedible to humans, why are they fed precious grain? Again, in the name of profit. Grain-fed livestock gets fatter faster, thereby increasing the efficiency of the factory farm. Feeding the cows grass would help keep grain affordable to the hungry, but as long as doing so hurts the food corporations' bottom line, it won't happen.

Clearly massive crop failure is an excellent way to boost food prices and keep the poor hungry. So what are the underlying causes of crop failure? Around the world agriculture has been rapidly evolving towards monocultures of "high yielding varieties" (HYVs) of grains and other crops. These consist of genetic strains specially developed (largely by agribusiness) to give high yields under ideal conditions good weather, irrigation, and a copious supply of toxic chemicals — pesticides and fertilizers.⁶ Since the corporations own these seeds, as well as the chemicals required to use them, they are certain to profit at the expense of farmer, consumer, and environment long before the harvests even come in.

The extent to which millennia of evolution have been overturned by modern agriculture's destruction of genetic diversity has been firmly established: in India it is expected that fewer than fifty varieties of paddy will be in use at the end of the century, down from a staggering fifty thousand

just a few decades ago⁷ (prior to the introduction of HYVs), by the late 1980s, a mere four out of 250 known varieties of wheat accounted for 75 per cent of Prairie wheat⁸ in the United States, out of 2000 species of potato, only one is grown commercially.⁹

Were growing conditions always ideal, these statistics would be little more than farmer's trivia. However, biodiversity is nature's way of resisting large-scale crop failure, for each genetic strain has different strengths and weaknesses. There is a reason that each strain survived through the rigorous test of evolution; certain strains resist certain pests or survive more extreme weather conditions. Thus planting a variety of strains will help prevent a single factor from destroying the entire crop. Scientists now widely believe that the Irish potato famine was due in large part to lack of genetic diversity.¹⁰ Today a new strain of the same fungus which destroyed Ireland's potatoes is attacking Canada's potato monoculture.¹¹

It remains a widely held view that technology will rescue the world's growing population from suffering starvation. On the contrary, technology that promotes monocultures of pesticide-drenched livestock feed in the interests of corporate profit could only help the hungry by some accidental miracle. Only in a system in which multinational agribusinesses do not profit from feeding the rich and starving the poor will there be any chance that we will see an end to hunger. And such a system is long overdue.

¹ "Low grain supplies may mean high grocery bills", *The Globe and Mail*, 9/6/7/19

² Lappé, Frances Moore, and Collins, Joseph. *Eat Fat Kill*. Ballantine Books, New York, 1984, p.55.

³ *Ibid*

⁴ see, for example, George, Susan. *How the Other Half Died*. Penguin, London, 1986. The chapter entitled "Starved Scarcity" provides an excellent summary.

⁵ Brown, Lester R. et al. *State of the World 1996*. W W Norton & Co. New York, 1996, p.93.

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ see, for example, *Eat Fat Kill*, p.12.

⁸ Salsbrook, Jeremy. *The Myth of the Market*. Black Rose Books, Montreal, 1991, p.173.

⁹ Kneen, Brewster. *From Land to Mouth*. NC Press Services, 1989, p.60.

¹⁰ *Ibid* p.93.

¹¹ *Eat Fat Kill*, p.157.

¹² "Fungus threatens potato harvest", *The Globe and Mail*, 9/6/7/25

We don't need more information, we need different information

An Apple a Day...?

by Kristin Campbell

Does it really keep the doctor away? Considering the scientific evidence linking pesticides on the food we consume to cancer, this old proverb may not hold true in today's world of large scale agribusiness. An apple which is certified organically grown may be another story. Today chemicals are used in every stage of food production. While this leads to perfect looking produce and cheaper meat, the ramifications of such practices extend from personal health to global environmental degradation.

Health problems that have been linked to pesticide and other chemical use in food production, range from cancer, birth defects, and allergies to a decrease in fertility. Despite the fact that the cumulative effect of widespread, chronic, low level exposure to pesticides is only partially understood, the American National Academy of Sciences estimates that pesticides in the food supply may cause more than 1 million additional cases of cancer in the United States over our lifetime. The increasing number of people, particularly children, affected by allergies has also been linked to the ingestion of foods tainted with pesticides and chemical fertilizers. The food itself has less nutritive value. After decades of abuse, the soil in which the produce is grown can no longer provide all the nutrients it once did. Genetically engineered strains of produce have been bred to pro-

duce the highest yield, not necessarily the best quality food.

Chemical farming also has monumental effects on the environment. Top soil, nutrient-rich soil that holds moisture and feeds the plants, is being lost at an alarming rate. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that the productivity of the nation's cropland is down 70 percent. This is due to overuse and farming techniques that only consider short term yields, rather than sustainability. With increased use of chemicals, insects, weeds and fungi have become more resistant, thus requiring more chemicals in order to continue the same level of production. Since the 1940s pesticide use had increased ten times, but crop losses to insects doubled. Pesticides, and other chemicals, such as antibiotics, given to factory farmed beef cattle, find their way into ground and surface water sources. This has made the well water of many heavily farmed rural areas unsafe for use and has had a large impact on wildlife.



bread, p. 48

agribusiness to realize that chemicals are not the answer to sustainable food production: chemicals only cover up the problems while causing environmental havoc and numerous health problems. By buying certified organically grown foods, people are making a choice for better health and preventing further pollution of soil, air, and water. Creating a market for organically grown foods will help to further availability and profitability.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Visit Queen's University, you can get organic foods through the Organic

Food Co-op. It operates out of the Earth Centre in the JDUC. This organization places orders monthly and new members are welcome. Natural health food stores often stock certified organic foods, and organic produce can be ordered from *To Your Health* (542-4861).

Other suggestions to avoid foods contaminated with chemicals:

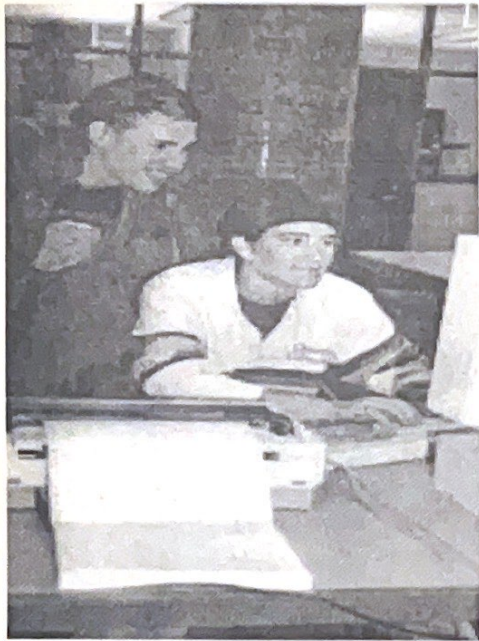
- buy domestically grown products, since many other countries do not have the stringent guide lines for use of chemicals that North America has
- avoid eating animal fats which often contain residual pesticides and other drugs
- grow your own produce or join one of the cooperative farming programs in this area such as *Annandale Farms* (549-4800)

- be aware of perfect looking food.
- If consumers begin to look for and demand safer food, farmers will be forced to reduce their use of pesticides and make changes that will benefit our health and protect the environment.

This is only a brief overview of the issues surrounding responsible agriculture and healthy food choices. For more information try these books, all of which are available in the Earth Centre Resource Library:

- Kneen, Brewster. *From Land to Mouth: Understanding the Food System*. NC Press Limited, Toronto, 1989.
- Return to the Good Earth: *Damaging Effects of Modern Agriculture and the Case for Ecological Farming*. The Third World Network, Malaysia, 1990.
- Robbins, John. *Diet for a New America*. Stillpoint Publishing, Walpole, 1987.

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