

GUARDIANS OF THE

In 1985, Margaret Thatcher referred to environmentalists, along with miners and trade unionists, as "the enemy within". Four years later her contempt for the "so-called Greens", as she called environmentalists in her recent speech to the U.N., is still apparent. What is more frightening, however, is the Conservative government's contempt for Green issues in general and the fact that beneath all their Green rhetoric lies a total lack of action.

The Greenhouse Effect

In the last 150 years the average air temperature has increased by approximately 1%. Within the next few decades this temperature has been predicted to rise by another 1%. The effects of this could be catastrophic with major climatic changes resulting in a possible rise in sea levels as the ice caps begin to melt.

The temperature rise has been caused by excessive Carbon Dioxide (CO2) in the atmosphere which acts like a blanket, trapping heat which would otherwise escape into space. Internal government figures estimate a 73% increase in CO2 emissions over the next 30 years.

There is obviously an urgent need for the reduction of CO2 emissions. This would be best achieved by energy efficiency, however the government has conspicuously failed to invest in the promotion of this. For example, the budget of the Energy Efficiency Office has been halved over the past year whilst grants for such measures as loft insulation have also been cut. Furthermore, the government has refused to put any specific commitment to energy conservation in the Electricity Privatisation Bill; a Bill which, while likely to fatten the government coffers, is unlikely to reduce CO2 emissions as it attempts to sell as much cheap electricity as possible. Profit, as always, being the major priority.

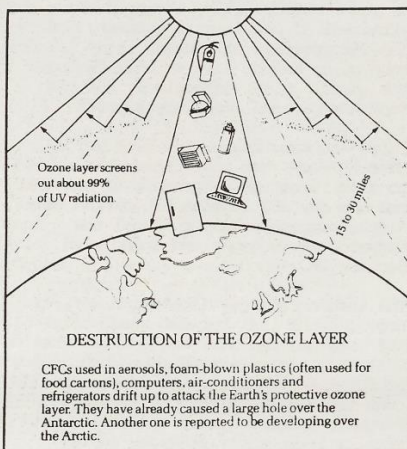
Vehicle Pollution

Whilst much of the CO2 emission results from power stations, a great deal is emitted from vehicle exhausts. Despite this, the government has made no attempt to discourage the use of private cars, for example by expanding and subsidising public transport, the use of which is more environmentally efficient. Instead, the government is committed to a major expansion of Britain's road system, in spite of its disastrous consequences for the levels of CO2 and other pollutants in the atmosphere.

If the government really cared about the environment they would be taking action to cut CO2 emissions by promotion energy efficiency and the use of public transport. Their solution seems to be the expansion of nuclear power. This industry has its own environmental problems concerning safety and the removal of waste whilst the economics of nuclear power may preclude further development.

Ozone Depletion

The ozone layer screens out about 99% of ultra violet radiation from the sun; this protection is necessary to prevent skin cancers and other diseases. Ultra violet radiation also threatens plankton and consequently the ocean food chain as they are a source of food to fish.



The ozone layer is being destroyed mainly by the production of Chlorofluorocarbons (CFC's) which are used in aerosols, fridges and plastic foam. In 1987, the Market Protocol was signed which aimed to cut consumption by 20% by 1994 and 30% by 1999. This agreement does not go far enough as it will only slow down the rate of depletion. Stronger measures are needed but they do not seem to be coming from the government. Instead of banning CFC's in aerosols and food firms they have relied on voluntary withdrawal. In addition, western governments, led by Mrs Thatcher, have refused to set up a fund to help Third World countries develop alternative technology and reduce their use of CFC's.

Deforestation

Every year it is estimated that an area of tropical rainforest the size of Great Britain is destroyed, with major environmental consequences. In absorbing CO2, the rainforests play a major role in reducing the CO2 level in the atmosphere. Also, as many as half the world's animal and plant species exist in the forests.

Deforestation occurs mainly due to poverty as people are forced to destroy the forests in order to have enough land to make a living. This is often encouraged by national governments who desperately need the foreign exchange from exports of timber and cash crops to pay off their debts to the west. Also, as many multinational companies own large portions of

land in Brazil for cattle production, peasants are forced to move further into the interior, thereby threatening the forests.

Some of the problem could be solved by western governments tackling the problem of debt and providing financial and economic aid so that people are not forced to destroy the forests for short term gain. In a recent U.N. speech, Mrs Thatcher promised £100 M aid over three years. However, this money will be channelled mainly through the U.N. Tropical Forest Action Plan which is orientated towards logging and commercial plantations and does not focus enough on conservation.

Acid Rain

Britain is known as "the dirty man of Europe" and our record of environmental pollution is appalling. Sulphur Dioxide (SO2) pollution from British coal-fired power stations is a major problem in Scandinavia and Germany where acid rain has attacked forestry and lakes. The government has known about the problem for many years but has refused to accept the evidence and has only now started a desulphurisation programme. By 1993,



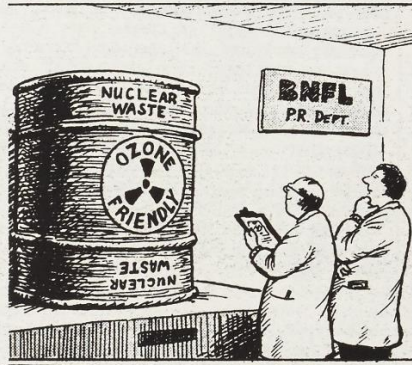
if the present trend continues, a 30% reduction should be achieved. This will still mean, however, that Britain produces as much SO2 as France, West Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg and Holland put together.

Water Pollution

In 1979, the government was given five years to meet EC water standards; ten years later Britain faces European Court action over the quality of its drinking water for having failed to meet these standards. The directive set levels for more than 60 environmental standards, including water colour, oxygen content, pesticides and heavy metals. Only last month, however, it was revealed that over 95 water supplies in Scotland exceed the 200 microgrammes per litre EC maximum allowable aluminium level.

In addition to this, reported river pollution incidents have risen. Between 1980 and 1985 there were 12 500 reported incidents. Between 1986 and 1987 this figure rose to 21 095. The main reason for this pollution is farming and oil industries yet the government has refused to promote organic farming which could cut the nitrate level. Furthermore, nearly 200 out of the 690 beaches studied by the Coastal Anti-Pollution League are affected by discharges of totally untreated sewage, including Blackpool and Scarborough. Nicholas Ridley's solution to sewage disposal was to build longer pipes into the sea.

It is clear that despite government rhetoric its record on actual action is



EARTH

VIVE A LA FRANCE

abysmal. It has constantly scuppered international agreements and has failed miserably to promote energy efficiency, to clean up our rivers and to cut down on pollution. In short, the government has failed the environment and must change course before it is too late.

include CFC's. If possible, avoid using disposable cups. Avoid excessive packaging and re-use plastic bags. Buy biodegradable washing powder - brands such as Ark and Ecover. Beware false environmental claims. All aerosols contain ozone damaging chemicals - try to avoid them. Use a roll-on deodorant. If possible, buy organic food - presently not stocked by Tesco's.



HOW NOT TO COST THE EARTH

Whilst recognising that the protection of the environment needs strong international and government action, there is much that can be done on an individual and collective level to minimise our impact on the world around us. The following is a brief guide to Green Consumerism.

Recycling

This saves both physical resources and energy. The most common recycled products are papers, aluminium cans and bottles.



Waste Paper - This can be taken to the Cottrell building where it is collected every Wednesday for recycling. Alternatively, it can be left in the flats or Murray Hall foyer on Tuesday evening where it will be collected by members of the Green Forum and helpers. In addition the Environmental Society have a stall on the Link Bridge every Thursday where you can deposit any waste paper. Recycled paper can be bought in the SUSAS shop and other shops in town.

Bottles - these can be taken to Tesco's Bottle Bank. Hopefully, there may be a bottle bank set up on campus soon.

Aluminium Cans - Check that they are aluminium by using a magnet; they won't be attracted. Then take them either to the Environmental Society's stall or to the bank which Tesco's is in the process of introducing.

Shopping

Ensure when buying fast food, vendor coffee etc, that the packaging does not

Energy Conservation

When buying electrical products, ask for information about energy efficiency and choose the most efficient product e.g. long life lightbulbs and batteries. Switch off lights, radio etc. when not in use.

Transport

Always use lead free petrol. If possible use public transport, walk or cycle rather than using the car. If you can afford it, fit a catalytic convertor to your car.



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The Stirling Green Party meets fortnightly in the Cowane Centre on Tuesdays at 7.30 p.m.



ALAN HOPKINS (Green Party)
RACHEL BLACKBURN

ECOVER



Well this is it, the year out, here in the land of Vanessa Paradis and bad breath: France. After weeks of trekking around travel agents and endless phone-calls, I finally made it. Let me give you a few words of advice. Go to Paris, it's the only French place anyone has ever heard of. If you have to go elsewhere book a package tour, trying to find bus and train times within France is about as easy as trying to see your local M.P. if you're a Stirling student.

The journey at the end of the day was tiring but pleasant (mostly due to the fact that I met a fellow exiled Stirlingite on the ferry and caused consternation in the bar by sitting down on the floor to sup our drinks.) Sixteen hours after leaving London, I arrived in Grenoble for an initiation course. It concentrated on how to cope with French bureaucracy (if you don't have six copies of your granny's cousin's birth certificate you've had it), and the all important "How to teach and what to teach them". No, the lot of an assistant is not a happy one, especially if you're stuck with a class of 14 year olds at their snottiest. However, two days and its equivalent in hangovers later, I found myself in Annecy, my home for the next eight months.

So how am I adapting to life across the channel? So far it's not been too difficult. I'm living with two English girls (so not too many language problems there), the English teachers at my school are having "ze time of a whale" practising their English and when I'm taking classes I'm obliged to speak in my mother tongue. Actually I'm beginning to question my mother's nationality. When the French have a go it doesn't sound at all English: "My sing ger favoreet eez Killie Minmog". Still, I have to admit I was quite impressed when pupil confessed to liking The encers.

Having failed miserably to find anyone to speak French to I decided to listen to some instead. I turned on the TV, a fatal mistake. French TV is akin to The Sun on screen: just as many boobs and about as much news. You can see "quality" programmes such as L'incroyable Hulk and Les Voisins (!!), and the rest of the time seems to be filled with inferior quiz shows; to quote a friend, "not half as good as 'B please Bob Busters'".

I switched off the TV, having decided instead to have a look round town. The streets were deserted - had there been a bomb scare? Had Mitterand died? No, it was lunchtime. You can forget trying to do anything in France between 12.30 and 2.30 pm, except eat. Everything shuts except for the restaurants. Food in France is a passion and not a necessity. I knew there was at least one reason for me coming here! Yes indeed, there are advantages to the Year Out: for one I'm sitting on the balcony, in the sun, with a glass of Peach Schnappes (it's November) For another I don't have any essay deadlines, I don't even have any essays. Oh, yes, and I get paid for this. Santé!

KIRSTEN CAMPBELL