

Green

ISSUE 16

the magazine of the Australian Greens

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COVER STORY

Gagging Dissent



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Cover photograph: Kathleen Gordon photographed Kelly-Ann Wickham against an historic brick wall at Epic Cycles, Paddington, Brisbane.

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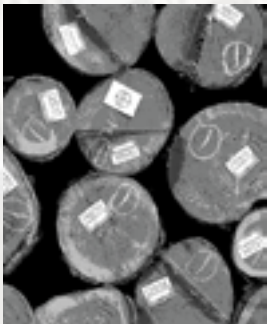
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Gagging Dissent

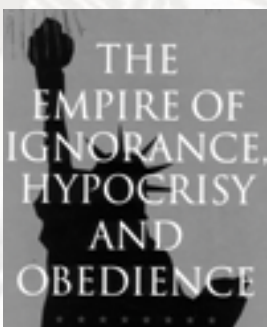
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Contributions welcome. Articles can range from 300-1200 words. Brief items and letters to the editors also welcome. Please provide a graphic if possible. Send article in body of email or as an 'rtf' file.

editorial

Ever since PM Billy Hughes used the War Precautions Act and the Unlawful Associations Act in World War 1 Australian governments have exploited difficult international situations to justify the suppression of free speech and democratic freedoms. Menzies used the Cold War to justify the enormous powers given to his political police and John Howard points to the threat of terrorism and the complexities of today's international arena when announcing his latest round of illiberal practices.

However, the Howard government's aggressively anti-democratic posturing has prompted other players – notably large corporations – to go on the attack against those who advocate in the public interest. This edition of Green looks with concern at the increasing preparedness of large corporations like Gunns and the Murdoch press to attempt to gag, or even destroy, organizations like Greenpeace, The Wilderness Society and the Greens because these groups put a public case for environmental and social justice causes over corporate profits. In fact, as this editorial is being written, news has just come through that Channel 7 and SBS have refused to air an advertisement which criticises the Australian government's insistence on oil revenues in the Timor Strait at the expense of the poor nation of East Timor.

There are other stories we don't have room for in this edition. They include the strident attempts to ridicule and silence 'insiders' wanting to bring vital evidence to light. The cases of Andrew Wilkie and Mike Scafton are just the tip of the iceberg.

The momentum is not all one-way, though. The Greens and many community-based organizations are fighting back. In the following pages you'll find some dramatic examples of their valuable struggles.

We hope you like this issues-focused edition of Green.

Drew Hutton and Brian Hoeppe
Co-editors

letters

Dear Editors,

Just a few words in the immediate aftermath of the Indian Ocean tragedy. Surely an event of this magnitude must convince both Australia and the USA to sign the Kyoto Protocol on climate change. If this doesn't, then nothing will. Australians and Americans must shame both governments over failing to act now to avert a similar (but in the case of climate change, avoidable) tragedy in the Pacific in about fifty years.

Paul Carrick, Bairnsdale Vic

Dear Green Editors,

I found much food for thought in the last issue of Green. In Reflections and Thoughts on the Federal Election 2004 (p17), Jon Edwards made the comment that the 'number one lesson ...is the need to secure uncomplicated (preference) flows from Labor early'.

Then there was Alan Ide in Letters (p3), 'If (policy) is not popular, you don't get to do it, irrespective of how "right" it is'. I was quite troubled by both these comments. It seems to me that, should The Greens embrace these concepts wholeheartedly, we would be going in the direction of all the other political parties who believe that the end (getting elected) justifies the means (compromise of principles and policies).

Despite being rejected by sections of the electorate, especially over the grossly misrepresented drugs policy, The Greens' overall vote and elected representation increased at the last election. Principled policy that demands a disciplined stand today in order to safeguard the future is never simple or easy to sell. But it is the only course of action if we are to remain true to our ideals.

I certainly agree with Alan Ide's point that we need credible, clear policy that is consistent with our Charter. But to ask 'How popular is it?', rather than 'How right is it?' could easily undermine our integrity, values and principles.

The 2004 Federal Election reinforced for me that the number one lesson for

The Greens is to secure votes in our own right. Clearly preferences can be valuable to us, but they can be used just as effectively to exclude us, as we witnessed in so many States last election.

I am delighted that we now have a National Policy Officer and believe this position will be a great boost to our policy development in the future. This, together with candidates of strong community standing, will put us in a better position to secure those primary votes and this should be our purpose and focus.

Yours sincerely,

Ms. Jane Bange, Cygnet, Tasmania

Dear Editors,

Alan Ide's letter in the last edition was spot on. I've been a member of the Greens for 17 years now and for almost the entire period have been trying to get just that message across to the management of the party.

For some inexplicable reason there has actually been a bias against this strategy. Management has doggedly pursued a strategy of almost always preferencing Labor, and pushing policies which are mostly unpopular with voters. I've always found this strange. I find it hard to believe that the management of the party can be so politically naive.

Although, I do take heart from the recent suggestion from a prominent Green that we could oppose immigration on environmental grounds and generally emulate Pauline Hanson.

Better late than never I suppose. I was pushing for The Greens to do what she did way before she did it. We have heaps of controversial but popular policies, but don't push them. The way our candidates cringed and went on the defensive when Family First advertised our drug policies for us on national television last federal election, demonstrates my point.

Frank Brown, Langshaw Qld

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST: EDITOR(S), Green Magazine. Expressions of interest are invited for the position of editors or co-editors, beginning with the Winter 2005 edition. Duties include co-ordinating each issue, sourcing content (including images), editing and overseeing liaison with designers, printers and the Australian Greens' Communication Working Group. The editor plays a key part in defining the theme of each magazine. A modest editorial fee is paid. Green is published three times a year, and the appointment is for two years. For more information, contact Jen Andersen (janderson19@vtown.com.au) Eols close Tues 14 June 2005.

Australia's Human Rights Record

The Melbourne Catholic Commission for Justice, Development and Peace recently launched the 2004 edition of the annual Australian Human Rights Register. The Register records individual reports and accounts of developments and violations and analyses them in the light of the human rights conventions that Australia has ratified. It focuses on individual instances within Australia and contains reports from community legal centres, non-government organisations and the national media. The Register can be downloaded from the Melbourne Archdiocesan CCJDP website at <http://www.melbourne.catholic.org.au/ccjdp/>

The Global Monitoring Report 2005

A new report warns that unless the international community acts now, there's a grave risk the world won't meet international targets to reduce the number of people dying of disease. The Global Monitoring Report 2005: From Consensus to Momentum also warns Sub-Saharan Africa is in danger of not meeting any of the Millennium Development Goals – international targets to reduce poverty, disease and illiteracy by the year 2015.

The report is a joint effort by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Go to the World Bank website at <http://www.worldbank.org/> and follow links to 'News'.

Ukraine thanks Cuba for Chernobyl Children Care

Cuba has treated 18,153 children victims of the radiation fallout from the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster, according to Ukraine's Health Minister Nykola Polischuk. Read more at: <http://www.planetark.com/dailynewsstory.cfm/newsid/30132/story.htm>

Cycling for social action

Anne Fitzpatrick from Adelaide is cycling around Australia and speaking to schools and community groups to raise money for an educational project in India. During six months volunteer work in India, she was moved by the plight of Adivasi (Indigenous) and Dalit ('outcaste' or 'untouchable') children

in the Kodaikanal region of Tamil Nadu, India. The aim of the Cycle of Learning project is to raise \$200,000 for a trust to pay school and hostel fees for young people in Kodaikanal who would otherwise miss out on schooling.

Anne has already cycled from Adelaide to Brisbane. She would love an invitation to visit schools and speak with students. You can find out more at <http://www.cycleoflearning.org>.

Hong Kong a new dumping ground

According to Greenpeace, Hong Kong has become a dumping ground for electronic waste from the United States, Europe and Japan, and soil tests have uncovered excessive lead levels in the soil.

Read about this at <http://www.planetark.com/dailynewsstory.cfm/newsid/30165/story.htm>

The Great Green Web Game

You can play an on-line board game – The Great Green Web Game – on the website of the Union of Concerned Scientists at <http://www.ucsusa.org/game/game.html>. Some of the questions are US-specific, but others are more generally applicable to any developed society. The game focuses on issues of sustainability faced in daily life (white goods choice, commuting, home heating etc). Young and old could enjoy this game.

The Spoils of War

One of the great scandals of the Iraq War was the granting of lucrative contracts to the Dick Cheney-linked company Halliburton. *Vanity Fair* has published a detailed and engaging analysis of this, based on an insider's revelations. You can read about the \$12 billion scandal at <http://www.vanityfair.com/commentary/content/articles/050307roco02>

Raw food vegans: thin but healthy!

People who adhere strictly to raw food vegetarian diets are thin but have surprisingly robust bones, US researchers have reported. Read about this research at: <http://www.planetark.com/dailynewsstory.cfm/newsid/30093/story.htm>

The author of this poem is a number

*I do not know
what will happen after I die.
I do not want to know.
But I would like the Potter to make a
whistle from the clay of my throat.
May this whistle fall into the hands
of a cheeky and naughty child
and the child to blow hard on the whistle
continuously with the suppressed and
silent air of his lungs and disrupt the
sleep of those who seem dead to my
cries.*

*This poem was written by a prisoner at
Baxter detention centre.*



Freedom of speech and political protest

ADRIENNE STONE

The right to free speech and to advocate in the public interest has some constitutional protection but dissenters need to know where that begins and ends. Dr Adrienne Stone reports...

Freedom of speech is one of the few basic rights to receive any constitutional protection in Australia. That was not always the case. For the first 91 years of our constitutional history, freedom of speech had no special constitutional status. Like most other rights, it was protected by the common law and (to the extent they choose to) by the parliaments of Australia.

That changed in 1992 when the High Court recognised a right that constitutional lawyers call the 'implied freedom of political communication'.

The right is described as 'implied' because it is not mentioned in the text of the Constitution. Instead, the High Court decided that the kind of government established by the Constitution requires freedom to discuss political matters. To summarise the argument briefly: we couldn't have an effectively functioning Parliament elected by the people, or a system of ministerial responsibility unless the people are free to communicate with each other and with their representatives about political and government matters.

A revolution stalled

At the time, the High Court's decision seemed nothing short of revolutionary. Australian constitutional law seemed to have been transformed and its traditional concern with the dry stuff of federalism (whose responsibility – state or federal?) replaced with the juicier questions of individual rights.

The subsequent 12 years have disappointed those hopes. Putting aside the first few cases, the High Court has very rarely used the free speech principle to change the law. Indeed until very recently, it was tempting to view the right to political communication as all but toothless. Until this year, the High Court had made only some rather moderate changes to the law of defamation (in response to a case brought by NZ Prime Minister David Lange in 1997) and rejected all other challenges based on the right to political communication.

The right of political communication is weakened by three factors. First, the High Court has readily recognised exceptions to the free speech principle. Second, the right applied only to 'political' communication and the High Court (and other Australian courts) seemed to interpret that concept narrowly. So, for example, in a case that the High Court declined to consider, a satirical song about Pauline Hanson was found by the Queensland courts to involve no 'political communication' at all. There were also some suggestions that political discussions about state politics might not be covered. The right was derived from the federal Constitution and therefore operated only to protect discussion of federal matters.

Reinvigoration?

A recent decision by the High Court seems, however, to indicate that there might be some life left. Earlier this year, the High Court upheld the appeal of a Queensland activist, Patrick Coleman, against his conviction under a Queensland law for the use of insulting words in public. Coleman had been arrested while protesting



against police officers in a Townsville mall and had described one police officer as 'corrupt' and a 'slimy lying bastard'.

Two aspects of the decision are particularly promising for political protestors. One is that the High Court has now made it clear that the discussion of state politics will usually be protected by the Constitution in the same way as discussion of federal politics. Mr Coleman was protesting against state police officers but that was no bar to claiming the protection of the Constitution.

Second, the majority is quite impatient with the idea that government may choose to regulate debate in order to achieve a 'civil' public discourse. In his reasons, Justice McHugh wrote:

...a measure of robust, ardent language and 'insult' must be tolerated ... In Australia, it must be borne for the greater good of free political communication in the representative democracy established by the Constitution.

Justice Kirby was even more expansive:

'From its earliest history, Australian politics has regularly included insult and emotion, calumny and invective, in its armoury of persuasion ... They are part and parcel of the struggle of ideas. Anyone in doubt should listen for an hour or two to the broadcasts that bring debates of the Federal Parliament to the living rooms of the nation. This is the way present and potential elected representatives have long campaigned in Australia for the votes of constituents and the support of their policies. It is unlikely to change. By protecting from legislative burdens governmental and political communications in Australia, the Constitution addresses the nation's representative government as it is practised. It does not protect only the whispered civilities of intellectual discourse.'

The vision propounded here is reminiscent of a famous declaration by the United States Supreme Court that 'debate on public issues should be uninhibited, robust, and wide-open.' That sentiment is a cornerstone of American free speech law and has produced a constitutional right of unparalleled force.

We are a very long way from a free speech right of that strength and it is most unlikely that we would ever end up with something quite as strong. Nonetheless, the Coleman case represents a small step in that general direction. Certainly, the High Court's tolerance for vigorous, caustic and unpleasant contributions should be reassuring for political protestors.

The remaining problems for political protestors

Although Coleman is a hopeful sign, other factors counsel against pinning too much hope on the constitutional right of free political communication or constitutional rights in general.

The implied right of political communication – like most other constitutional rights – applies only to prevent interference with political communication (in

continued next page

'...the Coleman case represents a small step in that general direction. Certainly, the High Court's tolerance for vigorous, caustic and unpleasant contributions should be reassuring for political protestors.'

constitutional jargon a 'negative' right) and it applies only against government (in constitutional jargon a 'vertical' right). It does not entitle anyone to demand a right of access to the means of communication nor does it prevent private action interfering with free speech rights.

'For the wealthy, subjecting your opponents to worry, expense and hassle may in the end be a most effective strategy because the law – constitutional law at least – provides protesters with no practical means of resistance.'

These limits will often be critical to political protestors, especially where protestors are objecting to private rather than government action. Because the right is vertical, it will always be necessary to identify some government involvement in suppressing speech. That is not always as difficult as it sounds because the High Court has recognised that this criterion is satisfied when courts enforce any law, including the common law. Common law actions in tort, trespass and the like will therefore have to conform to free speech requirement. The problem is that it is unclear how much the common law will change.

Even more significant is the negative nature of the right. Because the right is negative rather than positive, it leaves in place the existing inequalities. Those who have more wealth will be able to communicate more freely and will be better able to use their wealth to frustrate their opponents. Many of the cases discussed in this issue bear the hallmark of that weakness. For the wealthy, subjecting your opponents to worry, expense and hassle may in the end be a most effective strategy because the law – constitutional law at least – provides protesters with no practical means of resistance.

Dr Adrienne Stone is Fellow in the Law Program of the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University.



ABC Insiders rob the Greens

BEN OQUIST

'The ABC gives the Greens a very good run.'

'In places like Tasmania the ABC is Green.'

'The ABC is balanced and politically even-handed.'

All three of these common assumptions are wrong.

We are so used to being bashed around in the prime media like the Murdoch press, that ABC coverage, Sunday mornings excepted, can seem fair.

There are blank spots to be sure. Until 2004, Kerry O'Brien had not interviewed a Green parliamentarian for almost a decade. And, of course, the ABC's Sunday morning rally for the right, *Insiders*, has far right guests like Piers Ackerman and Andrew Bolt (both Murdoch opinion runners) to bash the Greens as a given.

However, monitoring of the ABC in the last election shone a rare, measured beam on the public broadcaster's bias. The ABC convened an Election Coverage Review Committee to monitor its performance. The ECRC measured the voice time of candidates and party officials or, online, the number of words given each party. The media watch company Rehame was employed, with stopwatches.

A letter to Senator Bob Brown from ECRC chairman Murray Green on 4th February, 2005 states:

Rehame reported the following for coverage of the Greens from 29 August

until 9 October 2004 by platform:

Radio	Television	Online
5.2%	4.5%	3.5%

Rehame reported the following coverage of the Greens by program in the output details requested in your letter:

AM	2.1%
PM	1.8%
7.30 Report	6.7%
1900 TV News	4.6% (NSW) 7.7% (TAS)
Insiders	0.2%

The breakdown of coverage on the *Insiders* was:

Coalition	40.1%
ALP	58.8%
Greens	0.2%
Democrats	0.2%
Others	0.7%

The Greens scored 8% of the vote but 3.5 to 5.2% of the coverage. On its weekend flagship political show *Insiders* the Greens were obliterated by ABC TV.

In explanation, the ABC said specific election coverage guidelines to editorial staff are that government and opposition should receive equal coverage. Other parties should be appraised on the basis of news value.

The ABC gives the Greens about half the value given us by the Australian voters.

Ben Oquist is political adviser to Senator Bob Brown.

Anti-slapp Legislation for Australian Parliaments

NICK MCKIM

The fight to protect participation in public debate has taken an exciting step forward. On 24 March 2005 the Tasmanian Greens tabled the Protection of Public Participation Bill 2005 in the Tasmanian Lower House.

The Bill is specifically designed to protect the community from those who seek to silence debate. It provides a means by which a court could strike out actions that are unlikely to succeed and that are intended to dissuade the defendant(s) from participating in public debate.

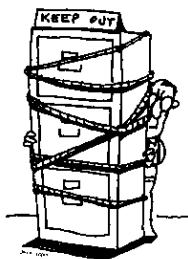
I will be seeking to brief Tasmania's Attorney General and Shadow Attorney General prior to the Parliamentary debate so that the Bill has the best chance of success.

The campaign will be extended nationally as Greens Parliamentarians in NSW, SA, ACT and WA are intending to table similar Bills in their respective Parliaments in the coming months. Senator Bob Brown is also looking at ways that it can be introduced at the Commonwealth level.

The tabling of the *Protection of Public Participation Bill 2005* is a small step in the continual campaign to protect and enhance the foundation stones of our democracy. The Greens have a proud record in this area, which I am sure will continue into the future.

A copy of the *Protection of Public Participation Bill 2005* can be obtained by contacting Nick McKim MHA, c/- Parliament House, Hobart, or emailing greens@parliament.tas.gov.au

Nick McKim is the Greens Justice Spokesperson in the Tasmanian House of Assembly



The *Herald-Sun* attacks the Greens

BEN OQUIST

The Australian Press Council has delivered one of its strongest findings ever - against one of the flagship papers in the Murdoch stable.

The ruling followed a complaint by Senator Bob Brown against the *Herald Sun's* infamous attack on the Greens during last year's election campaign. The News Ltd paper had made a number of derogatory statements about Greens policies: that we backed illegal drugs, that we would force people to eat meat and ride bicycles, that we wanted to cut the population by 2 million and that we wanted the corporate tax rate to be 49% (Greens policy was 33%).

The Press Council found that the claims in the article by press gallery reporter Gerard McManus were 'seriously inaccurate' and the story was 'irresponsible journalism'. The ruling found that Mr McManus and his paper 'seriously misled' their readers.

The damage done by the *Herald Sun* article during the election was considerable. The claims were repeated by radio and TV across the country. And the attacks were not restricted to commercial talk back radio. Heartland green audiences also copped a barrage, with Senator Brown for example suffering a battering from ABC radio in Adelaide after the article. People still come up to Bob in the street to ask whether it is true that we want to give children illegal drugs.

Segments of the article were distributed in thousands of leaflets by the Liberal party. In Tasmania, loggers posted out reprints of the article in a campaign to prevent Christine Milne's election. As recently as the WA state election this year, Liberal party leaflets featuring the *Herald Sun* article were letterboxed. The Greens have estimated that the attacks cost them at least 1% of the vote in that election - enough to make a difference between winning and losing seats.

Not only did the Liberal party use the *Herald Sun* article to attack the Greens, but it generated much of the information on which the *Herald Sun* based its claims in the first place. When writing to the Press Council to defend themselves, News Ltd denied there had been any collaboration with the Liberal Party. However under intense cross examination by the Press Council during the hearing the reporter was forced to admit that he had received and read a document from the Liberal party in Victoria, a document that detailed many claims almost identical to those that appeared in the *Herald Sun*.

So the circle was complete. The Liberal party generated the information and the *Herald Sun* published the misleading information, The Liberal party then used the *Herald Sun* article in its election material as proof of the claims.

Stop Press: the press council has rejected an appeal from the *Herald Sun*.

A full copy of the Press Council ruling is available at www.bobbrown.org.au

Ben Oquist is political adviser to Senator Bob Brown.



The petrochemical and coal-burning industries lie at the heart of the climate change challenge. The Australian government displays a lack of imagination and will in failing to support research and development of alternative energy.

Greenpeace in Howard's Australia

DANNY KENNEDY

In the run up to the federal election, it became clear that the Howard Government offered a multi-million dollar subsidy to a company on the condition that it take legal action against Greenpeace.

According to a Department of Industry, Tourism & Resources email obtained by Greenpeace under Freedom of Information (FOI), 'the Government's decision to put this subsidy arrangement in place was made subject to the company, Southern Pacific Petroleum (SPP), taking legal action against Greenpeace'.

This 'arrangement' was a 2002 decision by Federal Cabinet to provide SPP, the developer of the controversial Stuart Shale Oil Project in Queensland, with a sales grant worth up to \$36.4 million annually.

While the SPP operation has now been shut down altogether, in no small part due to the Greenpeace campaign around its greenhouse impacts, the signal is clear. This government is aggressively pursuing civil society organizations that campaign effectively in the public interest.

Other examples, like the state government-supported suit against 20 activists by Gunns in Tasmania (see www.Gunns20.org) and media attacks by right-wing think-tank, the Institute for Public Affairs, suggest that we are in for a fight not just for oxygen but survival.

Greenpeace will be working to re-assert the right of people to protest against such abuse of power. Please support us (see www.greenpeace.org.au).

Danny Kennedy is the Campaigns Manager, Greenpeace Australia Pacific

The Hindmarsh Island Case

BRUCE DONALD

The Chapman defamation case in SA against the Conservation Council and its members' public protest over the Hindmarsh Bridge came to its end last year after 10 long years. The High Court refused to hear an appeal even though the SA Appeal Court in a 2-1 split decision had found the conservationists liable on only 1 of the 18 publications originally sued over.

This was the publication stating that the Chapmans had failed to consult with Aboriginal people over the bridge, a statement that was wrong in its precise terms even though the Federal Court had held in other proceedings the Chapmans had failed to consult with Aboriginal people on other planning issues. This attack on the Chapmans was found to be defamatory and not permitted under one of the defences of truth, opinion or limited public affairs privilege.

The other 17 publications from the intense campaign included statements that legal action was used to stifle public debate, that the bridge was a reprehensible project, sheer lunacy and a planning disaster designed to deliver quick profits and that the people of Goolwa had been intimidated and had suffered from the actions of the Chapmans. All of these other publications were either withdrawn or thrown out at the trial or on the first SA appeal because they were held not to have defamed the Chapmans or because they were within the opinion or privilege defences under which defamatory statements are permitted in law.

Significantly the SA Appeal Court had rejected the trial judge's finding that the conservationists were motivated by malice against the Chapmans but even this crucial factor, which had so coloured the trial, did not lead the High Court to see its way clear to reviewing the one remaining publication.

The SA Conservation Council was left with a \$50,000 judgment and its own costs of about \$160,000 after 10 exhausting years in which its senior members were hauled through the courts and their motives and bona fides attacked by the trial judge. Had it not been for an extraordinary team of lawyers and public interest groups, the cost would have been even greater.

This was not the only defamation case the Chapmans brought. They sued on over 30 other publications in the public debate about this bridge. All were settled out of court. *The Adelaide Advertiser* estimated these had netted the Chapmans \$800,000.

The Hindmarsh Bridge issue also involved commissions of inquiry and a long list of other litigations in the State, Federal and High Courts. At the end of the day this case demonstrates that public protestors need to learn how the defamation laws work and that with a degree of care, those laws need not stop robust campaigning. It also supports the case for a clear and strong 'public issue debate' defence in the current reform process being discussed by all the State and Federal Attorneys General.

However the case demonstrates equally well that we must always have public interest lawyers and organisations like the EDOs to be there for the long haul when campaigners are sued.

Bruce Donald is a senior Sydney commercial and media lawyer and former Chair of the NSW Environmental Defenders Office.



In the Styx Valley. This beautiful scene is a reminder of what is at stake in the current campaigns to extend logging in Tasmanian old-growth forests.

THE GUNNS 20 CASE

BRUCE DONALD

The Gunns Case against the 20 conservationists, politicians and environment groups is not a defamation case. The case takes the use of litigation against public protest into new areas. Gunns claims these people are liable for what are known in the civil law as 'economic torts or wrongs'. They have claimed a total of a massive \$6m damages.

The claim is in two parts:-

1. Intentional interference with trade by unlawful means. This is a claim covering the direct action of Gunns' opponents at the work sites in the forests, alleging reasonably well known claims of trespass, damage to equipment, impeding work and interrupting contracts.

However the actual itemized damages for this whole segment, (excluding the figures plucked out of the air without any explained basis for the undefined claims for trouble and inconvenience and aggravated damages), only amounts to about \$120,000 at best; and this is over a long period of time

and many different actions involving many people. Gunns would have to prove actual loss as a result of specific unlawful conduct by identified people.

There is much 'sound and fury' in this part of the claim, but it may well be 'signifying nothing' or at least not much at the end of the day.

2. Corporate vilification campaign. The claims here cover the national and international lobbying campaign at the business and bank level and may well not fall within any of the recognized categories of economic torts. Certainly there is no economic tort in any of the case law for 'corporate vilification'.

The conduct alleged by Gunns is not of itself unlawful ie lobbying and seeking to persuade banks, customers and shareholders to influence or not deal with the company.

Furthermore, there is no actual loss or damage specified for any of the conduct other than the un-itemised trouble, inconvenience and aggra-

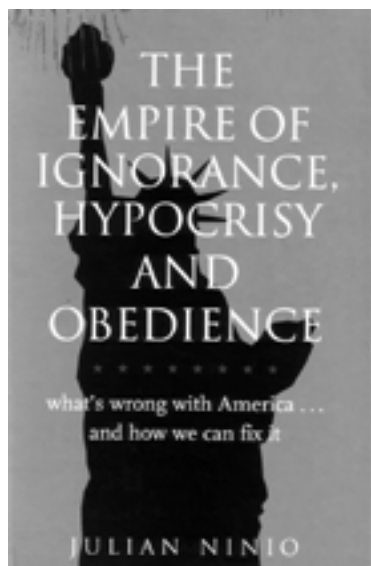
vated heads of loss for which figures are again simply plucked out of the air. In fact, apart from Gunns allegedly losing a Banksia Award, there are no real consequences of this part of the campaign alleged at all! No bank refused them money, no customer cancelled a contract, the share price did not fall, the shares were not sold off by the institutions.

In all, it is hard to see Gunns' case as strong and hard to see much substance in the awesome damages figure of \$6m but that does not mean it is not an intimidating experience for the conservationists to be sued like this. Thankfully there is a good team of lawyers including a large firm, the NSW Environmental Defenders Office and some senior barristers available to represent them.

Bruce Donald is a senior Sydney commercial and media lawyer and former Chair of the NSW Environmental Defenders Office.

Here's a taste of what our reviewers have said about these three books.

You can read the complete reviews on the Australian Greens website: www.greens.org.au



Julian Nino 2004, *The Empire Of Ignorance, Hypocrisy And Obedience: What's Wrong With America...and How We Can Fix It*, Scribe Publications, Carlton North. Rrp \$30.
Scribe@bigpond.net.au

In 2000, Julian Nino watched George Bush steal the US presidential election in Florida. His outrage set him on the path to writing this book. Today, he lives in Australia. His book offers an analysis of the breathtaking ways in which the dominant US self-image is at odds with the everyday reality. While Julian's book is not unique in doing this, it is unusual in its practical proposals for turning America around.

The book has three sections. Part 1 offers a powerful if not wholly original critique of the modern USA. Julian paints evocative scenes of modern America's contradictions and paradoxes ...

In Part 2 Julian's original voice emerges in his claim that the 'Empire' survives (and indeed, in its own terms prospers) because its stability rests on the pervasive workings of ignorance, hypocrisy and obedience (the IHO syndrome! www.ihosyndrome.com) ...

Part 3 proposes a way to challenge and dismantle the Empire! To put it simply, Julian just wants US democracy to work! As the Australian Greens plan ways of reaching the 90% of people who don't yet vote Green, Julian Nino's practical proposals can provide food for thought.

Brian Hoeppe

Jared Diamond 2005, *Collapse: How Civilisations Choose To Fail Or Succeed*, Allen Lane/Penguin.

Monumental is the only word to describe this study of the factors that caused some societies to flourish over a long period and others to collapse and even disappear ...

Diamond ranges widely over time and space to compare the fates of diverse people and cultures and extract the key messages for our modern global society. The analysis is carried out in terms of five factors affecting the survival of any society:

- impact on the natural environment;
- climate change;
- hostile neighbours;
- friendly trade partners; and, very significantly
- the society's responses to its environmental problems

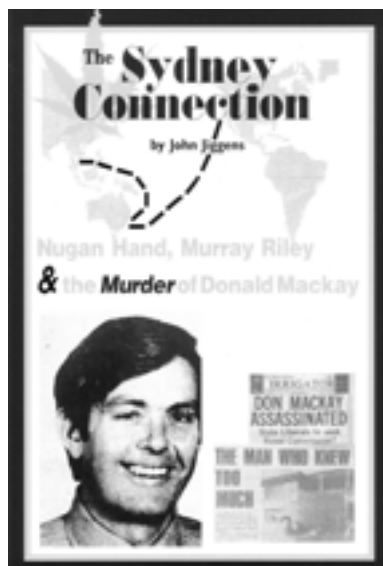
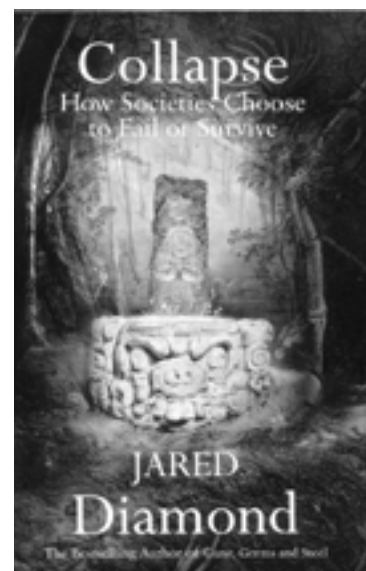
Each chapter, apart from Chapter 9 and the three chapters in Part 4, which are used for synthesis of the findings, is devoted to one culture or a group of cultures, both ancient and modern ...

One of the key messages of the book is the time-scale needed to come to a sound conclusion on whether a society is interacting with its environment in a sustainable way ...

The purpose of the book is to identify and draw out any lessons for today's globalized world. In this it succeeds admirably ...

Collapse, like its predecessor *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, covers issues of immediate importance to all of us and also makes fascinating leisure reading.

The complete review was provided by Bill Godfrey (awwwgod@ozemail.com.au) who first published it on his website: <http://www.change-management-monitor.com>.



John Jiggins 2004, *The Sydney Connection*. Published By The Network To Investigate The Mackay Murder, Rrp \$20.

John Jiggins' latest book, *The Sydney Connection*, reveals the darkest secret of the Black Knights of the NSW police force ... It brings to light some of the darkest themes of the relationship between the Police and big crime in recent Australian history around the issue of the murder of anti-drugs activist Donald Mackay.

Jiggins had examined the Mackay murder in his previous book, *Marijuana Australiana*, and had already developed doubts about the conviction of Jimmy Bazley for the murder. As he continued to investigate the links between the principals of the Sydney Connection, these doubts grew. It seemed to him that the official story of the murder of Don Mackay, the story retold in all the books and newspaper articles, was a lie. Jiggins set out to expose this lie.

John Jiggins' research is in the best traditions of such writers as Evan Whitten and Bob Bottom. His main achievement here has been to show the interrelationship between the Australian and US criminal networks dealing with drugs, a relationship which has its parallels with the political and military relationships we have developed with that country since the days of the Vietnam War.

Drew Hutton

Global Greens gather:

The Inaugural Asia-Pacific Greens Network Meeting, Kyoto

MIRIAM SOLOMON

The recent meeting of Greens from 23 countries in the Asia-Pacific region launched some fascinating initiatives.

'We commit ourselves to promote mutual understanding through dialogue and networking. We exchange views and experiences beyond ... dividing boundaries ... we must form and maintain a network in order to exchange ideas without prejudice and to collaborate towards a common goal.(from Resolution 3, Diversity)'

The global growth of the Greens is accelerating. The 'family' is growing and multiplying. In February this year, at the historic town of Kyoto, Japan, the notion of 'Global Greens' took on added meaning. Greens from 23 countries around the Asia-Pacific region converged in a show of common commitment, mutual support and good-will, to launch a formal Asia-Pacific Greens Network. The Greens are the only international political party and now the Australian Greens can proudly boast membership of a formal Asia-Pacific regional wing with identified member groups, elected representatives of these groups to the Global Greens and Asia-Pacific Greens structures, and a clear way forward to consolidate our growth and our strength in the coming years.

Ten Australian Greens members, including Bob Brown, joined the meeting in Kyoto, coincidentally in the very same week that the Kyoto protocol was coming into force, adding extra symbolic significance to our work in the global political context. Hundreds of people attended, large contingents from both Japan and South Korea, and a wonderful spread across the region, age, religion, ethnicity and indigeneity. Formally, each country was allowed three delegates with speaking rights during the formal decision-making part of the meeting, but in practice the proceedings were fluid and creative.

We exchanged stories, shared ideas, and engaged in collective analysis and problem-solving. Out of this came agreement to the formal 'Simple Rules', elected representatives to the Global Greens Coordination Group and the Asia-Pacific Membership Panel (both with Australian representation), and unanimous support for 11 resolutions on a diverse range of topics:

- climate change through large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions
- peace and security through a cultural approach to actively create peace through non-violent means
- human rights and democracy underpinned by the core principle of mutual understanding through dialogue and networking.

For example, the resolutions called for:

- financial and technical support to developing countries for sustainable renewable energy and energy efficiency
- measures to protect against the destruction of Tasmania's wild and scenic forests, calling on Japanese import companies to buy hardwood woodchips from plantations and not wild forests
- indigenous participation by the Ainu people in the management of a national park
- support for nomination of the coral reefs of New Caledonia to be listed as World Heritage under the World Heritage Convention
- a call on China to dismantle its missiles aimed at Taiwan.

The 'simple rules' we adopted state that members of the APG must be a Green party or like-minded political movement in Asia or the Pacific region. Thus the network consists of Green parties in countries where it has been possible to form them as well as groups aspiring to become political parties. So while it is primarily political party based, it is also grounded in strong connections with Green-minded social movement organisations.

In those three days new relationships were forged, and new specific

networks such as the Asia-Pacific Young Greens (convened by Australian Caroline Ayling) and the Pacific Greens sprang up spontaneously. The meeting was thus an enormous success and an inspiration to us all. The network - and our participation in it - is an exciting development we can be very proud to be part of.

Miriam Solomon is International Secretary and Australian Green representative, Asia-Pacific Greens Network Membership Panel.





Stewart Jackson

At the beginning of my report to the National Conference in November I stated:

'This last year has been a particularly challenging one for the Greens...'

I could not have known that this year would begin with one of the most significant events of world history of the past 50 years. The devastation wrought by the tsunami that struck the coasts of Indonesia, Sri Lanka and numerous islands as far away as Africa is almost beyond imagination.

I am pleased to say that both Bob and Kerry responded early and well to this disaster, calling for relief, increased aid and poverty reduction, all elements now embraced by the world community. As a party, we also made a statement and provided guidance for members and the public alike in where to direct their donations for maximum benefit. That we were able to achieve this and make it known through each of the state parties and on the Australian Greens website was a positive outcome.

Also on the international front, the Australian Greens played an important part in the 2nd Asia-Pacific Green Network meeting in Kyoto in mid-February. This meeting, which was attended by representatives of Green Parties from 23 countries, finalised the establishment of the APGN, and concluded rules for membership of the Network, as well as passing resolutions on a range of topics, including on Tasmanian forests.

The Australian Greens delegation, including Bob, former MLA Kerry Tucker and Senator-elect Rachel Siewert, was instrumental in providing much needed political and campaign experience, demonstrating how integral our involvement in the region will need to be to further Green politics across the Asia-Pacific.

This leads me to a topic discussed at the Global Greens Conference in 2001 – tithing by members and state bodies of western nations' Green Parties towards the building of Green Parties in developing nations. At the Conference the figure of 1% of annual income was considered, as this would provide a funding line for a range of parties struggling in cash poor economies, with few

resources and limited access to the wealth that many governing bodies enjoy. In our own region this would go a long way towards supporting the development of Greens Parties in PNG, Indonesia and the Pacific Islands.

Sadly, however, fine sentiments have not translated into dollars, though for some perfectly good reasons. We need to again consider the forms of assistance we wish to provide to developing Green Parties, and whether we should indeed be setting aside a set amount from each of our annual budgets each year for international work. The Australian Greens sets aside for international work an amount equivalent to approximately 1.5% of our triennial budget, although much of this is spent here in Australia. However, we should again reconsider across all state and local groups how we can help.

The key is, of course, to be outward looking. Whether it is in relation to Australia's indigenous population or the people of the Region, we should be promoting their welfare. Similarly for asylum seekers and refugees escaping oppression and violence. Then there are the looming environmental disasters of this new century, - climate change, salinisation, land clearing, deforestation, and fresh water availability. The important point is that we need to be projecting our message to the mass of Australian people, not just to those we know are already on side or within the Greens.

We should be acting strategically, taking our message of hope and renewal to the rest of the population. Too often we get caught up in our petty squabbles and forget the bigger picture in which we are operating. I hope that 2005 is the year the Greens grab not only the headlines in the newspapers, but the attention of the ordinary mums and dads, and the year our issues are seen as central to the everyday lives of Australians.

A tall order, but maybe one worth pursuing...

Stewart Jackson
Convenor, Australian Greens
convenor@greens.org.au

ACT *Some highs and lows.....*

The year started very sadly for the ACT Greens with the loss of Charlie Pahlman in a snorkeling accident while he was on holidays in Samoa. Charlie was so much to so many of us – friend, inspiration, a voice of reason, a source of boundless energy and good will..... He stood as a candidate in the 2004 ACT election, campaigning hard to promote our (and his) policies and values, winning the respect of all who met him. He is greatly missed and will never be forgotten - we will keep his enthusiasm and love for what we do with us for many many years to come.

In every other way we are on a high, keeping the election energy alive and kicking.....Deb Foskey has settled into the Assembly office and is making herself seen and heard, working hard and speaking out on social and ecological issues in the ACT.....we are scheduling speakers and events both for educational and fundraising opportunities.....we hosted the National Council and enjoyed a vibrant weekend with the good company of our friends from interstate.....we are finalising a project to form a range of special interest groups to learn about, research, and share ideas on issues of interest to members.....and new members continue to join (just enough to keep us on a stable 400+).

Finally, there are changes of guard in the office that we share with the Australian Greens, with both Scott leaving the National Office and Genevieve, the ACT office manager for the last three years, moving on. We realize that they both need to go and have new adventures, but are going to miss them enormously!

If you visit Canberra, do make sure you pop in to the office and say hello – we're right in the center of the city!

Helen Woittiez: Convenor, ACT Greens

QLD *Make-over in non-election year*

A seven-year Greenplan and a Constitutional make-over are in train in the Queensland Greens.

The Greenplan will span the next two election cycles and initial inputs from individual members, branches and State Council workshops have formed the building

Similarly, a special General Meeting of members in May 2005 will sign off constitutional changes that have been generated from member and branch inputs over the past few months. These changes will bring an improved framework for the way members and their representative groups interact and make decisions that carry the Greens agenda forward in Queensland.

On local fronts there's been plenty of activity surrounding the Brisbane tunnels, Townsville industrial developments, koala habitats, peace activism, refugee rights and myriad other issues affecting Queensland. Saving our wild rivers is a renewed priority for us also.

In tandem with this is a process of branch workshops on the roles of members, branch convenors and other office bearers that will start in May and flow through to July 2005 and then recycle at regular intervals over the years.

In Queensland we're using our non-election year of 2005 as a time to get the basics right and to establish a true grass-roots approach to our actions for the future.

Howard Nielsen: Convenor, Queensland Greens

NSW *Celebrating 20 Years!*

Reaching out to communities beyond the inner city and coastal heartland is a focus for the NSW Greens in 2005. In the recent Werriwa by-election we ran a strong campaign in an outer-suburban area that has been difficult for us in the past. We had full booth coverage on polling day, letterboxed multiple leaflets throughout the electorate and had good exposure in the local papers. This will bring dividends as we head towards state and federal elections in 2007.

We also have new groups emerging in the northern tablelands, as well as in Sydney's West. The key challenge is making sure that new members can easily engage with the state and federal parties. One initiative is a series of forums planned for six regional centres, where we will debunk the 'jobs versus environment' myth and elevate the debate on sustainability issues.

On 1 April 2005, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the inaugural Greens party and the 10th anniversary of a Greens parliamentarian in NSW (Ian Cohen). We also pay tribute to Michael Organ, the first Green in the House of Representatives.

Greens NSW MPs and members continue to campaign vigorously against the Howard government's agenda on industrial relations, climate change and voluntary student unionism.

Lesia de Leau: Convenor, The Greens NSW

NT *Some significant firsts ...*

This year is shaping up to be another big year for the NT Greens. With a territory election to be held before mid October we have a lot to do, but planning is well underway. With generous support from the Australian Greens we have just employed a Campaign Manager (Chris Dubrow) and have rented office space, both significant firsts for us.

Preselection is moving along with a number of candidates endorsed and more to follow, and whilst we won't be standing candidates in all 25 seats we do hope to run solid campaigns in up to nine seats. Small electorates of 3500 – 4000 voters mean that doorknocking and personal contact between voters and candidates is more feasible than ever. We plan to strategically build our voter base in key sub-urbs with a longer term view of getting Greens candidates elected to local council in three years time.

Membership continues to grow and is close to 200. Working groups in Darwin and Alice are meeting regularly and well attended. New members are encouraged to get involved, help with fundraisers or just drop into the office (see contact and location details elsewhere in this magazine) to find out what's going on.

Simon Niblock: Convenor, NT Greens

WA *Mixed fortunes in the West*

Those of us in WA are recovering from a successful election on February 26. Our vote remained steady, with only a 0.5% drop. This was despite being shut out of local media except when the media wanted to run stories about who we were preferencing.

We saw a big jump in our vote in some areas, in particular in the Mining and Pastoral region, with the votes doubling to 8.8%. Unfortunately, the way the votes and preferences fell saw us go from five MLCs to two.

We held the seats of North Metro and South West, but lost South Metro (currently held by Lynn MacLaren and formerly by recently resigned Jim Scott), Mining and Pastoral (held by Robin Chappell) and Agricultural (held by Dee Margetts). These results saw Giz Watson remain elected and a new politician Paul Llewellyn join our ranks, taking over from Chrissy Sharp in the South West. A big thank you has to go to those MLCs who will be leaving the parliament for all the fantastic work they have done. It hasn't been easy having balance of power – the workload has been phenomenal and each and every one of them has done us proud.

The campaign we ran was fantastic – despite the WA election overall being very lacklustre. Our campaign materials looked fantastic, and the distribution of hundreds of lollipops with 'Major Parties Suck – Vote Green' on them definitely won us votes when distributed at football games and the Big Day Out.

A big thank you to everyone who was involved in the election campaign, and to Greens from other states who sent us messages of support throughout the campaign.

Corinne Glenn & Paul Davies: Co-Convenors, Greens WA

TAS *Policies and preselections*

It has been a busy few months since the last issue of Green Magazine. February saw the first of our Regional Meetings held up in Devonport. The meeting provided an excellent opportunity for the Party to focus on issues pertinent to the northwest of the state. There is a lot of enthusiasm and commitment up around the Braddon electorate, and hopefully we will be able to translate this into a seat at the next state election. To help us to reach this goal, Paul O'Halloran has been appointed spokesperson for Braddon. Paul has contested the seat in the past, and is well known in the electorate.

Preselection is underway for the three Tasmanian Legislative Council seats which are up for election in May. There is some resistance in the Tasmanian electorate to the idea of endorsed Green candidates at local government and in the Legislative Council, as there has been a tradition of 'independent' candidates in these areas. As many of these 'independent' candidates are actually members of political parties who choose not to go public with their allegiances, this is an issue of openness and transparency – when you vote for an endorsed Green candidate you know exactly what you are getting (and that you're not getting a Liberal candidate in disguise!).

Our state policies are now under review, with the aim of having our key policies condensed into the new two-page

format in time for the next state election. With the media and other parties very quick to pick up on loose or imprecise wording, it's vital for us to get them tidied up as soon as possible, and to have the previous policies removed from circulation well before the state election

Karen Cassidy: Convenor, Tasmanian Greens

VIC *Success in council elections*

Twenty-five of Victoria's 79 local councils went to the polls during November. 22 were postal ballots and three were attendance elections held on November 27th. Forty Greens candidates contested positions in eleven local government areas.

Two councillors - Jenny Farrar and Gurm Sekhon were re-elected in the City of Yarra (Greg Barber and Deborah Di Natale did not re-contest in Yarra). Jo Connellan and Andrea Sharam were elected in neighbouring Moreland Council, while retiring Moreland Councillor Fraser Brindley was elected to Melbourne City Council, where David Risstrom had retired after five years. Greens members Julie Rivendell and David Jones were elected to the Bendigo Shire Council, but unfortunately our only other non-metropolitan councillor, Stephen Hart missed out on re-election to the Colac-Otway Shire by the slimmest of margins. Several of our other candidates also missed being elected by very slim margins.

We are looking forward to electing more Greens councillors when the 54 remaining local councils go to election this November. This will complete the cycle of re-aligning local government elections, so that in the future they will all be held on the same day – the last Saturday in November, 2008, 2012, etc.

We are also reviewing the implementation of our Strategic Plan, which was adopted in 2002 and we will be spending a lot of time on the party's number one priority: election planning.

Sue Pennicuik and Gurm Sekhon: Co-Convenors, Greens Victoria

SA *Planning amid change*

The party has been very busy in the past few months. With the State Election due in March next year, we have been preparing the election processes and have called for nominations for the Legislative Council candidates. We believe that we have a respectable chance of winning a position in there, but it will require a big effort and a united party. At the same time we have been analysing the work that we did for last year's federal election where we polled well, but not well enough in the face of the Democrats preference deal with Family First.

There has been a huge change over in elected office holders in the past two months and a lot of work will be needed to re-energise and enthuse the membership as the State Election approaches. We also plan to develop our state policies and an election platform which are only in their early stages at present.

Paul Petit: State Secretary, Australian Greens SA

Bon voyage Scott!



Scott Oates

After four years managing the Australian Greens' national office, this is Scott's final report. As Scott explains: 'My partner and I are taking a sabbatical to spend a year cycling around Eastern Europe, visiting some friends and family, including some international Greens' parties and getting our hands dirty with some WOOFing (Willing Workers On Organic Farms) along the way. We're very sad to be leaving the wonderful world of the Australian Greens for a while, very excited about our trip and we're sure that the Greens will still be here when we get back.' Scott richly deserves the heartfelt thanks and warmest best wishes of the Greens. He has played such a valuable role during these years of the extraordinary growth of the Australian Greens.

The last four years have been the most challenging, rewarding and best of my life. The volume of learning has been without measure. The Greens are now the third major party in Australia, the largest of the new parties, and we are causing the old parties no end of embarrassment by delivering genuine opposition against the vested interests that are inherent in the two party system and the continued integration - rather than separation - of powers, including the mainstream media which control a large part of the communication flow to the public.

The issues ... The stark plight of refugees in detention, waste and destructiveness of human activities, especially relating to climate change, the destruction of forests and desecration of our environment at staggering rates and mainly for a short term bottom \$ line. Discrimination in many forms, the erosion of civil liberties, and the devastating influence of the petrochemical, pharmaceutical and war machines that continue to exploit and degrade public assets including health, education and people themselves globally. We desperately need to nurture our faith in one another, and turn 'us' and 'them' into 'we'.

There have been enormous amounts of work and dedication which have led to a successful growth period in the Greens. The Australian Greens Office has also expanded commensurately and I would like to thank the hundreds of members, volunteers, staff, parliamentarians, office bearers and supporters whose hundreds of thousands of hours have allowed us to get where we are. I have witnessed the Greens' abundance of positivity, intelligence, passion and inspiration. We are genuine, good humoured and seek to improve the world. And I have seen that there are millions of us all over the world.

The future is looking bright and busy with the advent of an Australian Greens Website manager, a National Officer, and a new Australian Greens Office Manager, Sean Downes. I can confidently say that Sean's passion, proficiency and big heart will be invaluable. I would especially like to thank my fellow workers who have been such a pleasure to work with. I literally do not have enough space to thank you all personally but you know who you are.

No one is perfect, including the Greens, but we are much further down the path than any other political party. I believe the Greens offer a better and brighter picture of the future and I am very proud to have worked with you and for you.

JOIN THE GREENS

To become a Greens member either:

- Fill out and return the coupon to receive a membership form in the post OR
- Go 'on-line' to the Greens website: www.greens.org.au and select your state or territory

For further membership information call **1800 017 011**

Yes, please send me a membership form

name _____

address _____

city _____ state _____ postcode _____

email _____

Post or fax to your local state or territory party office
(see page 17 for listing)



Brazil

In recent elections, the Greens in Brazil won 6 seats in the national parliament, 13 seats in regional parliaments and 300 positions as local councillors. At the national level, the Greens supported a plural government led by Partido de los Trabajadores. Gilberto Gil – a well-known cultural figure affiliated with the Greens, was appointed national Minister for Culture. However, the Greens have voiced strong criticism of some policies of the new government, in particular its nuclear program and its approval of GM crops.

Aotearoa/New Zealand

Greens MP Mike Ward spent three weeks over Christmas touring the North Island on his trike – a 'close up, slowed down and intimate' way of meeting the people and highlighting 'Buy Local' and waste-free initiatives. <http://www.greens.org.nz/people/mike/mikes-trike-tour.htm>

NZ Greens are highlighting the effects of foreign investment. New Zealanders are 'rightly upset that the world's wealthy are buying up so-called trophy properties, including our high country, beach and lake fronts, so they can escape from an increasingly overcrowded, polluted and violent world'. But, the Greens warn, a much greater danger lies in the levels of foreign investment, foreign ownership and the resulting increases in overseas interest payments and the current account deficit. www.greens.org.nz

Mike Ward MP on his national tour – a reminder that The Greens offer a different approach to politics.



Europe

Grazia Francescato begins the editorial in the latest European Greens newsletter with a fascinating but disturbing description of an unusually warm Moscow winter. One strange effect ... the annual ice sculpture competition being conducted under thick plastic sheeting to prevent the exhibits melting! Grazia makes an impassioned call for a 'momentous change in energy policy' and for the Greens to develop an 'international and European common campaign on climate change'. The Kyoto Protocol, she concludes, is in danger of becoming 'just a mantra', with major nations like the USA, China and India outside the agreements and some major EU nations failing to meet targets.

<http://www.europeangreens.org/news/update/february2005.pdf>

The European Federation of Green Parties committee met in Moscow from 14-16th January 2005. Coincidentally, those three days were the warmest January days ever recorded in Moscow. Records have been kept for 130 years!

Georgia

Zurab Zhvania, the Prime Minister of Georgia who died suddenly in early February, had played an influential role in Green politics in Europe. He was in Finland in 1993 to help found the European Federation of Green Parties. Arnold Cassola, Secretary-General of the European Greens, recalled convivial times spent with Zurab and other Greens, 'so many late nights singing songs to the tune of a guitar and sipping Georgian brandy, which we all grew to love'. Even after assuming the demanding role of Prime Minister following the bloodless Rose Revolution, Zurab found time to visit Rome in 2004 for the founding of the European Green Party.

Colombia

Belgian women parliamentarians organised a visit to Bogota to coincide with the third anniversary of the kidnapping of Ingrid Betancourt by FARC rebels on 23rd February. Wangari Maathai, Kenyan-based recipient of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize, promised to also visit Colombia in March in support of Ingrid's release.

Contact Miriam Solomon, Australian Greens International Secretary, at global@greens.org.au if you'd like to be on the email list for global green news, a bi-monthly compilation of articles about Green politics and issues around the world.



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Campaigning in a high growth region

GREG GEORGE

Campaigning against unsustainable development in a high growth region presents lessons for activists in other fast-growing regions.

South East Queensland (SEQ) is the region of fastest population growth in Australia - over the last year increasing by 1200 each week. Migration provided 39,200 but the region also has the highest birth rate in Australia. This speed of growth has applied now for 20 years and the region's population has increased by nearly one million over that time. Over the next 20 years the population is estimated to increase by more than another one million, to reach 3,709,000.

In 1991 the ecological footprint was 4.9 ha per capita, multiplying out to four times the size of the region. Research from Griffith University indicates that over the last 10 years the ecological footprint has increased by 30 per cent. Ecological footprint is not the only or the most reliable way of estimating impact but on a host of other measures the figures are equally grim.

In this context the current Australia-wide talk about infrastructure needs and infrastructure choices has added intensity. It is a test bed of the seriousness of the Green response. Other regions will become growth rate leaders as conditions change (Melbourne had the biggest number of interstate migrants last year) so the lessons are salutary.

In SEQ the bleeding edge of conflict over these issues has been transport. While LA-like road proposals were put on the drawing board by the State in the 1970s it was not until this growth spurt that implementation really took off.



Brisbane is bulging! The new pressure on the CBD

A forlorn stand of trees remains amid this coastal residential project. Developers take the 'easy way out' to create new urban landscapes.



'Other regions will become growth rate leaders as conditions change (Melbourne had the biggest number of interstate migrants last year) so the lessons are salutary.'

Community groups sprang up and there were countless meetings, rallies, petitions, 'consultations' and big protests. Most of these groups achieved a regional perspective and got beyond the simple, sometimes effective, but ultimately vulnerable, 'not-in-my-backyard' approach. The community put forward ideas that accorded with international experience and were vastly in advance of those of the planners, bureaucrats and politicians. Through all of this the only political party to support them was the Queensland Greens (who formed in 1985, a couple of years in advance of these struggles).

The fight went forward over ten years and there were losses and victories. All the victories were won in an electoral context in which the Green presence was vital. The most crucial of these events was the 1995 State election when the Greens gave preferences against the Goss Labor government in three seats affected by a freeway proposal. Goss almost lost government and had to abandon the freeway. A rail route was built instead, and that is about to be extended and duplicated because of its high use.

Goss later lost government in a by-election. The episode, along with the Tasmanian Greens and their toughness during the Accord with Labor, had the added value of killing the myth that the Greens could only ever be a preference machine for Labor.

The current moment in this saga is captured by debate over Queensland's first ever statutory regional plan. You can read the Queensland Greens' highly critical response to this plan at <http://www.qld.greens.org.au/> (go to Issues/Campaigns – Planning and Development/Draft South-East Queensland Regional Plan). Suffice it to say the Plan repeats most of the errors of the past and does not promise a solution despite the new element of regulatory teeth.

Regional planning is notoriously difficult to mobilize people on. If it cannot be seen as a backyard problem then it cannot be seen at all. But again the issue is coming to a head over transport plans. The un-built roads from those drawing boards are in various stages of planning or implementation, some now appearing as tunnels.

When the earlier array of groups closed down the Greens kept at it, voicing a sane transport and regional planning alternative in policies, media work, electoral and non-electoral campaigns. Now new community movements are shaping up. The Queensland Greens are devising a community action planning based campaign. The superiority of the alternative and the heat of communities wanting to protect their quality of life should generate momentum to carry the fight into the next electoral round, when some of the plans should again be able to be defeated, with the cutting edge provided by the presence of the Green electoral alternative.

Greg George is a spokesperson for the Queensland Greens



A promising sign ... but authorities must do more to support safe and effective bicycle use in cities.



The old and the new – a bus station promises a new boom in public transport. In the background, Brisbane's Riverside Expressway is a stark reminder of a failed approach to urban transport.

Can we support Iraqi insurgents?

DREW HUTTON

What attitude should the peace movement take to the insurgents in Iraq and the recent elections?

The Queensland Peace Network is currently debating the question: 'Can the peace movement support the Iraqi (armed) resistance?', a question on which Greens members themselves might possibly not agree. Most Greens condemn Australian and US involvement in the war but where do we stand on the issue of support or otherwise for the recent elections and for an incoming Iraqi government?

Militant groupings in the global peace movement have argued consistently that the February elections were a farce, that they merely disguise the Bush administration's intentions to dominate a post-election Iraq and that we should support the insurgents and call for immediate withdrawal of all coalition troops. These assertions are inadequate and, if a program based on them were adopted, would leave the international peace movement marginalized from popular opinion and from the democratic resistance in Iraq.

Firstly, we should have no illusions about US intentions in Iraq and the Middle East generally. That country's military involvement in Iraq was not about WMDs or terrorists and it is certainly not about delivering freedom to oppressed peoples around the world. It was about US power, seeking control of Iraq's substantial oil reserves. The Bush administration will obviously hope for a compliant Iraqi government that will give them that access. However, the reason serious elections were held at all is that Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the grand marja of the Shi'as of Iraq, called 100,000 people onto the streets of Baghdad last July to demand them – not because of US beneficence. We should also be aware of the dangers represented by those in the Shi'ite coalition who would impose a theocracy on Iraq. There are obviously many who wish to



keep considerable distance between the government and the mullahs and that other large section of the Assembly – the Kurds – clearly wants a secular state.

The US will hope to gain as much leverage as possible from the election result but their continuing control is not a given. The peace movement and the Greens should be giving support to a legitimate democratic government in Iraq, putting as much pressure on the US and other coalition forces to withdraw from Iraq as quickly and as completely as possible (except for reconstruction aid). It was obvious that this election was overwhelmingly supported by the Shi'ite majority of Iraq and the Kurds and, while it is difficult to say whether Sunnis stayed away from the polls because of fear of the gunmen or because they agreed with the boycott, a voting figure of as much as 70 per cent of constituents is a mighty big statement in favour of democratic elections. It's just a pity the peace movement wasn't supporting this position more clearly over the past few weeks and months, instead leaving it to the hypocritical Bushes and Howards to appear as the defenders of democracy.

The Greens' "non-violent resolution of conflict" pillar is not a call for pacifism and it is quite consistent for the party to uphold the right of oppressed groups or invaded countries to use violence in their own defence, depending on the circumstances. However, when there is a large, mobilised non-violent resistance in Iraq, then the peace movement and the Greens should be supporting its efforts, not the insurgents.

'...when there is a large, mobilised non-violent resistance in Iraq, then the peace movement and the Greens should be supporting their efforts, not the insurgents'

The ultra-militant groups supporting the armed insurgency are only a small section of the peace movement. They are not really significant in the scheme of things. What is more important is that organisations like the US Greens and other peace groups (and I suspect many in the Australian Greens) are afflicted by the same sort of uncritical, anti-imperialist sentiment and a desire to act in a manner consistent with their opposition to the original US military invasion. They therefore downplay the validity of the elections and turn their backs on the democratic movement in Iraq. Consequently, they help make the peace movement irrelevant in the eyes of many who might otherwise support it. It is not inconsistent to support the democratic, non-violent resistance in its determination to have elections AND to call for the rapid removal of coalition troops and true self-determination for the Iraqi people (including Iraqi control over their own economy and their own resources, especially oil).

Drew Hutton is a member of the Queensland Greens

So much for a great escape

IAN COHEN

One of our best known Green politicians reports back from Sri Lanka where he was caught up in the Boxing Day tsunami

Ah, to escape after a harrowing year in parliament and the arrogance and aggression of a government out of hand. The plan was to retrace a journey I made 30 years ago when I travelled overland through Burma and India to reach fabled Sri Lanka, to surf the tropical ocean and, at least in my opinion, to savour the best food in the world. The plan (the escape) ... it all seemed too easy - just two plane trips, then picked up at midnight and delivered, surfboards and all, to the beachside hostel!

Far too easy. Bleary after a 4am arrival but keen, I headed out early for my first surf. It was Boxing Day. The surf had come to meet me, pounding the verandah of the hostel which had previously been three metres above sea level.


A chunk of what had been the sea wall washed past me in the surge that had already killed tens of thousands in Indonesia and was now inundating the coast of Sri Lanka. I could see some surfers in the distance paddling for shore – what shore? There is a rumour that other surfers were lost at sea further south.

The whole sea had risen up and the relaxed, former one-metre swell lashed at the retaining walls and the walls of the buildings all along the visible coastline. I retreated to the front room of the hostel, still holding my surfboard like some sort of security blanket. I tried to close the door but it broke apart against the surge of water. I retreated further to a pole house nearby to try to avoid the crash and retreat of debris.

As the water rose it poured down the corridor of the house and I moved again to another room to escape the surge. I couldn't stay there long though, as the water was rising quickly. Within seconds it was 1.5 metres deep and I was struggling to keep my gear intact.

Then, in an instant, the sea retreated hundreds of metres, exposing the reef. I went to the beach to check for injured people. Everyone was in a state of shock. Picking up kitchen utensils seems pointless but simple actions like this were already happening all along the shattered coast, salvaging some of the loss.

continued next page



*After the tsunami, devastation like this in Sri Lanka was all too familiar a sight.
Photo credit: Jerry Galea/OxfamCAA*

continued from previous page

Sri Lankans often say 'What to do?' This everyday statement took on new levels of meaning as the devastation was revealed.

Twenty minutes after it retreated the sea came rushing back in again. I moved back to a road and tried to calm myself and panicking locals, some of whom couldn't find their children. I helped check two of the houses nearby before coming back and directing people up to the second floor of buildings across the road.

The sea continued to surge and we could only watch and wait, not knowing who had been lost, not knowing that hundreds had been swept away from a marketplace two kilometres up the road. At that stage none of us had any idea of the real catastrophe unfolding.

For two days people were in shock. Tourist deaths were relatively low but ten deaths were reported in Hikkaduwa. Some had died in their sleep, walls collapsing on them.

The group of people I was with retreated to a tourist hotel 200 metres inland. There we heard rumours of another wave and of the threat of looting.

Some wanted to travel to a hospital or see a doctor. Problem was, there were none. The Galle hospital had been destroyed, the road to Colombo was closed and the rail line was mangled. A train, with hundreds on board, had been swept off the rails. There was the sobering sight of a bus being towed through town, the entire roof crushed like an aluminium can. Buses here are always packed.

Evidence of the damage done was everywhere. As I made my way by bicycle through surrounding villages I could see that even a kilometre inland, people's lives had been devastated, their livelihoods destroyed. Fishing boats had been tossed aside and lay high and dry with gaping holes in them. Others had been ripped apart with only their bows visible above the waterline.

'Evidence of the damage done was everywhere and I as made my way by bicycle through surrounding villages I could see that even a kilometre inland, peoples' lives had been devastated, their livelihood destroyed.'

The environmental implications are also stacking up. The constant seepage of diesel and oil into the surrounding environment is just one example of the ongoing problems Sri Lankans will have to deal with.

I have been working with Suranajan Kodithuwakku of Green SL. It's a grassroots aid organisation with green principles and a stated commitment to get aid to the source directly, avoiding the much-talked-about diversion of aid to sectional interests. Green SL has a comprehensive team of volunteers, including a research associate in trauma and refugee care working under the auspices of Northumbria University. Green SL is making a significant contribution to the people of Sri Lanka.

It was a great escape ... but not quite what I had in mind.

Ian Cohen is a Greens MLC in the New South Wales Parliament.

Michael, lead singer of Spearhead and advocate for global justice, performs at a Greens benefit concert for tsunami victims.



Tsunami, Environment and People

MIKE DENDLE

The Boxing Day tsunami has presented the region with some unexpected environmental and developmental issues.

Although the immediate effects of the December 2004 Tsunami disaster have, by and large, been dealt with by local and international relief efforts, the challenge of restoring livelihoods and a semblance of normality to those affected, has thrown up some ethical and social dilemmas.

Many of us, simply by following the media reports, would be aware of the most obvious effects on those surviving the tidal wave - coping with the loss of family and friends; loss of housing and the subsequent dislocation of whole communities; loss of livelihoods including businesses, jobs, tools, capital and land and with it the ability to feed and provide for family; destruction of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, water and power supplies and sanitation; loss of personal documents like deeds and titles, ration cards, ID papers and the like. A list like this reflects the enormity of the tragedy. However some of the not so obvious or 'knock-on' issues are presenting serious challenges to aid agencies and governments.

In some areas, as the tsunami rolled across the sea bed, coral reefs were damaged and sandbanks shifted position or disappeared altogether. There are reports that some fisherfolk have lost confidence in their knowledge of the sea and in fish patterns, much of which has been acquired over generations. Even though fishing has again commenced, in some cases it is tentative and catches are lower. Rebuilding this knowledge and confidence is not something which can be done quickly or from the outside and it is difficult to know what the remedies could be.

'...for people who have spent a lifetime building their skills and knowledge for survival around one occupation, this added burden of starting anew can be traumatic, disruptive and frightening.'

For these and other reasons the tsunami has forced agencies and governments to think seriously about 'renegotiation of livelihoods' by reskilling and other assistance. However for people who have spent a lifetime building their skills and knowledge for survival around one occupation, this added burden of starting anew can be traumatic, disruptive and frightening.

As aid and support rolls in for those directly affected by the tsunami, there is a danger that others in the society who are poor and excluded but not directly affected, will miss out and be relatively further marginalised. This situation can breed community tensions and indeed entrench poverty if



In the Chinnoor village of Cuddalore, India, survivors of the tsunami sit amid some saved possessions. The devastation was swift, but the rebuilding of people's livelihoods, confidence and well-being will be a long-term process. Photo credit: Max Martin/Oxfam

not recognised and managed by an appropriately inclusive approach. Similarly social inequities which were present in communities before the tsunami can be duplicated in relief efforts if not recognised and exposed. There have been some reports in India for instance, of tribal people and Dalits (formally called untouchables) not being allowed into some relief camps or discriminated against in other ways such as receiving only a part of their relief entitlements. Women, particularly those in relief camps, also tend to be excluded from adequate representation and a say in their own welfare needs, especially in societies where traditionally village leaders are men.

Conscious efforts will need to be made by all bodies to ensure that the specific concerns of the poor and of women and children are identified and taken into consideration so that relief efforts do not further entrench discrimination.

Many aid and relief agencies are saying that out of this disaster will come opportunities for a better quality of life and a chance for positive change on a number of fronts. However most realise that such change must include and embrace all sections of society and especially those most at risk of marginalisation. If people are genuinely involved in deciding change at every step of the way many of the dilemmas can be embraced and overcome and positive environmental and social change enfolded into societies.

Mike Dendle is a member of the Sandgate Greens in Queensland.

Teak Furniture & Tribal Genocide

MICHAEL MCGRATH

Teak has long been prized for its beauty, its quality as a clean, easily worked timber and its resistance to weathering. In the days of wooden ships the seafaring nations prized teak for shipbuilding. Today there is a glut of teak furniture on sale in Australia.

Unfortunately the international trade in teak is anything but beautiful.

Teak is a large rainforest tree that takes at least 120 years to mature. In a healthy forest they will live for many hundreds of years. Removal of the trees leads to substantial deforestation, soil erosion, flooding, siltation and pollution of rivers.

It's estimated that four trees are destroyed for every tree that arrives at a sawmill. The thin topsoil disappears and the whole ecosystem is so damaged that it will take many hundreds or thousands of years to regenerate and become stable once more.

The history

The history of global deforestation is long and tragic, but the past twenty years have been devastating in the teak forests of South East Asia. In 1989 the Thai government banned the harvesting of its remaining teak trees after major flooding, due to deforestation. Burma, on the other hand, was just emerging from forty years as a closed economy with large, virtually unspoiled teak forests and a ruthless ruling dictatorship with the deliciously evil acronym of SLORC.

In less than a decade teak has become Burma's second most important source of legal foreign exchange, earning almost \$200 million from the export of more than 300,000 cubic metres every year. Observers estimate that the illegal trade in Burmese teak is possibly double that again.

The generals profit quite handsomely from the teak trade and ruthlessly suppress any dissent in the areas affected by logging.

The people

Not only is the forest itself disappearing, so also are the peoples who live in and around those forests. They suffer through human rights abuses and the loss of a once vital and abundant ecosystem that supported a large number of ethnically distinct groups. Many of these tribal people have lived harmoniously in the dense forests for thousands or tens of thousands of years.

These people are not primitive. Perhaps they don't have mobile phones or live in brick veneer houses, but they do have well-developed oral histories, intricate kinship ties and extensive trading networks within the forests and with the world outside. They also clearly understand their relationship to the forest ecosystem. Many of them regard it as

their solemn duty to preserve and protect the forest for future generations of forest dwelling creatures apart from themselves.

When the forest is logged these peoples are not consulted. They are not paid for the land that has nurtured them for generations nor do they share the profit from the sale of their trees. If they survive the destruction of their forests the tribes are rounded up and sent to squalid camps where malnutrition and disease take their toll.

The rivers are not only filled with silt but also contaminated with the poisons used to preserve the logs in transit to timber mills, causing illness among the surviving people who have no other water supply. Malaria mosquitoes breed in the dirty puddles left by the trucks and bulldozers, infecting people who had no history of the disease in their pristine wilderness.

If they protest the destruction of their habitat they face the wrath of the military, sanctioned murder by mercenaries and forced migration. According to Amnesty International SLORC is one of the most notorious human rights violators on Earth.

The lucky ones find poorly paid work for logging companies, destroying the very forests that once nurtured them.

How we are implicated

Most of the teak furniture found in Australian shops is labelled as Indonesian plantation teak. The colonial Portuguese and Dutch established teak plantations in Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. The last mature trees from these were felled during the Second World War.

Without an independent timber-certification scheme, there is a great incentive for new plantation owners in countries like Indonesia to provide misleading information to create some cash flow while their young trees grow. Consequently a large proportion of the teak currently sold as 'plantation' timber is in fact Burmese teak being laundered through the plantations to gain access to international markets. Additionally these plantations are often located on ancient tribal land, where diverse rainforest recently supported populations of indigenous hunter-gatherers.

Of course teak is only one of many rainforest timbers. Others are used for plywood or pulped to make rayon. Huge swathes of rainforest are cleared for palm oil plantations.



'...a large proportion of the Teak currently sold as 'plantation' timber is in fact Burmese Teak being laundered through the plantations to gain access to international markets. Additionally these plantations are often located on ancient tribal land, where diverse rainforest recently supported populations of indigenous hunter-gatherers.'

Massive quantities of 'plantation mahogany' end up in the brand new 'antiques' from Indonesia and Malaysia that are currently filling our shops.

As you read this, indigenous forest people - along with the birds, monkeys and apes, deer and other endangered animals - are being evicted from their disappearing forests, not only in Burma and Southeast Asia, but in the rainforests of Central Africa and South and Central America.

Add this to the death and destruction caused by Australian mining companies in Indonesia and PNG, and the wars fought over diamonds and the mineral Coltan used in mobile telephones. The list of global plunder to satisfy our consumer need is nearly endless.

Like the American Indians and the Australian Aborigines, these proud and independent people are reduced to very bottom rung on the ladder of opportunity. Sick in body and soul they do not enjoy the profits from their plundered forests and oceans. They do not receive dividends from the mining companies who rip the minerals from their land. They are exiled forever from the lands of their ancestors, lands that are still being cleared of indigenous tribes in a global wave of genocide.

So ... what can we do?

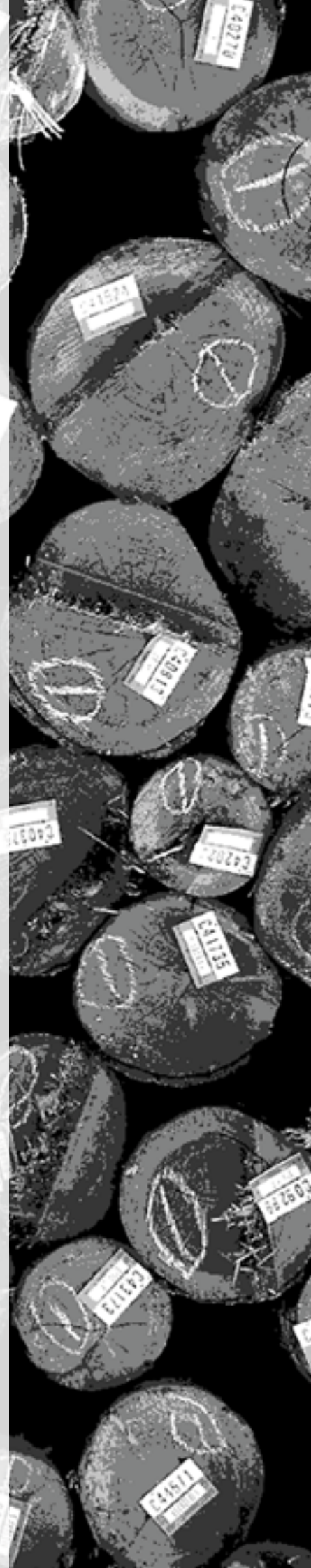
As consumers in a first world economy it's our dollar that drives this trade in misery and destruction. We may only get to vote for our government once every few years, but we also vote every time we open our wallets.

I urge all of you to make an ethical decision every time you shop. It's what we buy that decides who lives and who dies.

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Nothing good ever came out of Scotch College, until now ...

SHANE MOLONEY

This speech was given by Melbourne-based popular novelist Shane Moloney to an assembly of boys at Melbourne's exclusive Scotch College in August 2001. Needless to say his speech caused quite a stir, with some of the teachers and boys being very indignant.

When I first received an enquiry about my availability to come and talk at this school, I was naturally reluctant. After all, this school has little to recommend it in the eyes of the wider community. Historically it has been simply a machine for the transmission of inherited privilege. (At the height of the Great Depression, for example, when many Australian families hardly knew where their next meal was coming from, Scotch College was the largest private school in the British Empire).

It is a place where boys from middle class backgrounds are sent to improve their material prospects and to reproduce the values of their class, or where the boys of insecure parents are sent to fulfil the distorted ambitions of their fathers.

When I think of Scotch College, what comes immediately to mind are the values and actions of its most prominent Old Boys. I think of the scene I saw on television after Scotch Old Boy Jeff Kennett used his power and his philosophy to close down the only high school in the state specifically dedicated to the education of young Aboriginal people. How students from that school came here and stood at the gates and how your principal went out and told them to go away.

I think of your old boy, David Kemp, the federal education minister, giving millions of dollars of public money to enhance the marketability of schools like this one justifying his actions with statistics and arguments that he refuses to apply to the needs of the 70 per cent of Australian families who CHOOSE to educate their children in the democratic and equitable environment of government schools.



'I expect you all to be independent, innovative, critical thinkers who will do exactly as I say.'

I think, too, of the newspaper reports of the violent behaviour of some of your students and the quick readiness with which these boys were defended and excused in the courts by their adult class allies. For these reasons, I was initially reluctant to come here. On the other hand, I thought 'Well, all this is hardly the fault of the current crop of students'. It is not your fault, after all, that your families decided to institutionalise you. It is not your fault that your mothers and fathers elected to place you in the emotionally distorting and educationally deficient environment of an all-boys school.

It is not your fault that your parents lacked sufficient confidence in your personal maturity and ability to respond to the opportunities offered by government school education, and Australia has one of the best systems in the world, by the way, despite the relentless propaganda to the contrary

by the vested interest of the private school lobby.

Right now, you are the victims. Later, of course, society will be your victim, and will suffer from the attitudes with which you are indoctrinated here. But who knows? Just as prison does not always break the spirit of all who are incarcerated there, perhaps you will not turn out to be a burden to society. Perhaps when you leave here, some of you will even manage to contribute to the wellbeing of this country. I certainly hope so.

But just to hedge my bets, I will be donating part of my fee today to the campaign for public education.

Good luck with your studies and thanks for having me.

SATOKO WATANABE

Satoko is Co-convenor, Asia-Pacific Greens Network and an MP for Kagawa Prefecture. Satoko spoke to Kumi Kato, a Tasmanian Green who participated in the Asia-Pacific Greens Network meeting in Kyoto ...



Satoko Watanabe receiving a gift of thanks for organising the Inaugural Asia-Pacific Greens Network meeting in Kyoto

Softly spoken and graceful, any attempt to impose an iron-lady image would not work for Satoko. She displays calm professionalism, an articulate focus but never harsh tension. Her deep bow not only to national and international guests but also to colleagues, young volunteers and everyone around her creates a sense of equality and harmony.

Satoko, an Arts graduate from the Kyoto University, taught Japanese literature at high school and worked as an interpreter and translator before starting her political career. During her university days, she was 'aware but not particularly political'. Her daughter's education alerted her to the stubbornly monolithic nature of Japanese education and led her to join a civil group dealing with educational issues. With involvement also in peace and gender equality movements, Satoko was convinced that women's participation was essential for true political progress.

In 1995, Satoko was elected as a Kagawa prefectural MP – a significant win. In Japan it's still thought almost impossible to win a seat without support from a major political party or other organizations, being heir to a traditional political dynasty, or having large campaign funding. Satoko had none of these. Her victory was publicized widely in the region. Only ten percent of MPs in Japan are women - 98th in the world and the lowest among G8 nations (World average 15%). Satoko has worked hard to increase female representation. She has taken initiatives to 'open very conservative political doors' and promote participatory democracy through newsletters, homepages and other awareness-raising activities.

Satoko's involvement with the Greens started in 2000 at the Asia Pacific Greens Workshop in Brisbane. The Green's

policies and the members' philosophy and approaches resonated with her. Satoko believes that alternatives to economic-driven politics, with a clear sense of responsibility for the future, are the most important aspects of green politics.

Currently Satoko is focusing on the environment, education and gender equality. She is concerned about the rise of neo-nationalist movements and attacks on the constitution. Satoko believes that Japan's peace constitution is not an 'old fashioned political ideology, but is what is needed globally'.

With Margater Blakers, Satoko co-convened the inaugural Asia-Pacific Greens Network in Kyoto in February 2005. The three-day meeting was attended by more than 800 participants, including 100 overseas delegates from 23 Asia-Pacific and four other nations, and 300 from Japan. A highlight was the participation of many young people.

Greens Japan was launched officially on the 13th February after the Kyoto meeting. Satoko is positive that, with two young convenors both in their early 30s, the Greens in Japan will form a fresh political force quite different from existing parties. They are currently holding public forums throughout Japan reporting Kyoto outcomes, working to initiate grassroots activities and establish a national network by the next national election.

'I would like to thank the members of the Australian Greens for helping us achieve the major task of convening an international conference. I am truly grateful for their support.' I sensed Satoko's sincere deep bow at the other end of the phone line as I put the phone down.



Bob and Ben at the Franklin River's Rock Island Bend

Black thumbs for George and Laura

Here I am in beautiful Vancouver, British Columbia. En route, at Los Angeles, along with other non-US citizens, I was fingerprinted and photographed by the Bush officials. Yet none of us has bombed anyone. We should fingerprint George and Laura next time they visit Australia. Vancouver is delightful. Like Hobart in spring. The BC Greens are campaigning to have party leader Adriane Carr, amongst others, win a seat in next month's election.

Voting BC

Along with the election, BC will have a referendum to introduce Single Transferable Voting, similar to our Senate, ACT and Tasmanian style of proportional voting. Three other provinces are also having referendums for proportional voting. I have a busy week helping advocate a 'yes' vote in BC and campaigning with Adriane. I will also catch up with Canada Greens Leader Jim Harris who once lived on our Gold Coast.

Rupert's Evasions:

Read about the Australian Press Council's condemnation of the *Herald-Sun's* anti-Greens election mischief in earlier pages of this Green magazine. Amongst other things, Gerard McManus' misrepresented our corporate tax policy as 49 cents in the dollar instead of 33 cents. Meanwhile Rupert Murdoch has moved his family company from Adelaide to Bermuda to avoid a potential tax payment in Australia of \$1.2 billion per annum.

Thunderclouds of Destruction

The Howard and Lennon Governments have agreed that firebombing the post-logging remnants of Tasmania's ancient forest is 'environmentally sustainable'. The fires are ignited by helicopters carpet-bombing each area with incendiaries, incinerating everything including the roots and seeds of rainforest species grow under the great wild eucalypts. Besides the extinction of life, these fires of eco-insanity promote soil erosion, lift untold tonnes of nutrients into the atmosphere and emit tonnes of greenhouse gases from the remnants of the forests which were previously the greatest terrestrial absorbers of carbon dioxide. So the pockets of Gunns board members are enriched and so the Earth is forever impoverished.

Drew & Libby

I missed the celebration of Drew Hutton's decades of Green achievement in Brisbane on 31st March. In 1984 he helped found the Queensland Greens. In 1990 Drew flew to Hobart to urge me to help organize the formation of an Australian Greens. Many more came to the party. It was announced in Sydney in August 1992 with, at first, Tasmania, Queensland and New South Wales joining in. Drew, and his partner Libby Connors, have put huge energy and grounded, experienced wisdom into making us what we are: Australia's third but fastest-growing party with more than 9000 members in 2005.

Sydney's Double Decade

But I did get to a double-celebration further south the next day. It is 10 years since Ian Cohen won the first Greens seat in the NSW Upper House. He has since been joined by Lee Rhiannon and Sylvia Hale. And it is 22 years since the Sydney Greens first requested the Greens as a federal voting option in 1983. Tony Harris, that registering officer, recalled the Greens' formative days. Green Bans organizer of the 70s, Jack Mundy, was also there along with our first MHR Michael Organ, current Senator Kerry Nettle, who MC'd, and 300 more celebrants of our new rich and progressive history.

Pandemic's Ostriches

Kerry Nettle and I failed to get Senate backing for two crucial enquiries in March – into the Cornelia Rau affair and into Australia's preparedness for a bird flu pandemic. Mr Howard is not asking us to be alert or alarmed about bird flu, yet it has the potential to kill millions of people around the world. Ask your doctor about a script for a prophylactic anti-viral tablet such as 'Tamiflu'.

Flowing Free

At the end of January, World Expeditions guides Heather Kirkpatrick and Anna Creely took our party of seven – including Paul and my Canberra advisor Ben Oquist – on a nine days rafting trip through to the Franklin River's forest-flanked and waterfall-streaked gorges. It is every bit as stunning as when I last rafted down those rapids 23 years ago.

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