

Green

ISSUE 23

the magazine of the Australian Greens

WINTER 2007



Cover Story

THE GREEN ELECTION?



Discover the Tarkine

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The Greens and Tarkine Trails have teamed up to promote two unique walking holidays that explore the heart of the Tarkine, Australia's largest temperate rainforest. Choose from the vehicle supported Explorer tour that circumnavigates the Tarkine or the six day forest walk that ventures deep within the Tarkine's grand Myrtle rainforest. By joining one of the scheduled walks, 20% of the revenue raised from that walk goes directly to the Tasmanian Greens party.

Tarkine Rainforest Track

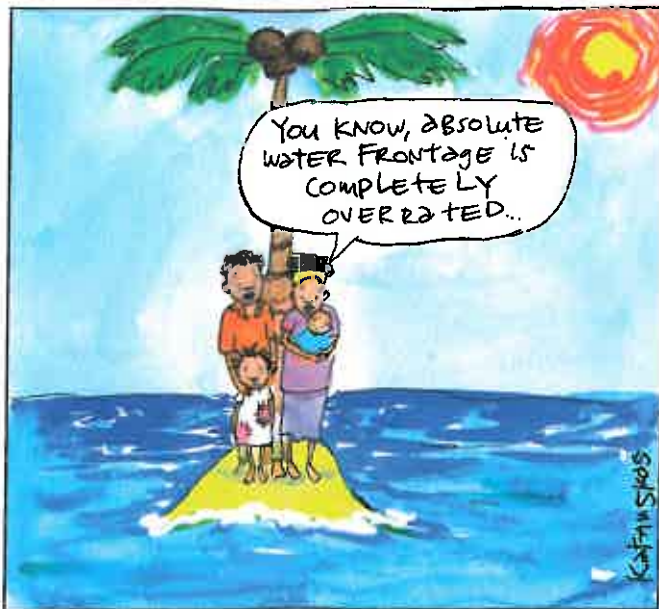
Dep: 23rd Jan 08 Remote tagged trail, giant cathedral like Myrtle rainforest, pristine waterfalls and swimming holes, panoramic forest views. Duration: 6 days price \$1399

Tarkine Explorer

Dep: 8th Jan 08 Remote forest camping, light packs, great day walks, warm showers, gourmet camp food, Pieman River cruise, panoramic views and dinner with wild Tasmanian Devils. Duration: 6 days Price \$1849

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letters to the editor



There are some promising signs that the coming federal election could be a 'green election'. On the global stage, Nicholas Stern and Al Gore have captured the popular imagination. At home, the drought has provoked questions about climate change and sustainability, and the Australian Greens' climate change campaign has stirred public debate. The popular media have had a field day with 'green' features. Meanwhile, both Howard and Rudd are spruiking their green credentials.

Many voters may enter the polling booth with a real desire to vote 'for the environment' but sadly, neither the Coalition nor Labor is offering policies and programs to address the staggering challenges signalled by Stern and others. Both major parties remain committed to high levels of growth fuelled by resource exports and coal-fired energy. At the state level, the major parties are similarly myopic, unable to see past car-based responses to transportation needs or dam-based solutions to water crises. Put simply, no matter which party wins the federal election, there is no chance it will embark on serious programs aimed at sustainable systems of production, use and disposal.

Only the Greens espouse the forward-thinking and creative solutions needed to meet the widely-acknowledged current crisis. So, by all logical measures, the Greens should do very well indeed in the federal election. The Greens' primary vote nationally should increase, continuing the growth seen since the Greens first burst onto the national political stage. And, perhaps more importantly, voters should ensure that the Greens do indeed 'Rescue the Senate' – producing an upper house in which the Greens hold the balance of power so that WorkChoices as well as dangerous climate change policies can be defeated in the Senate.

But the opposite is possible. Voters may be seduced by the 'greenwash' policies of Howard and Rudd, believing that the major parties are ready to act intelligently, creatively and

courageously on climate change. If so, the contest will resolve into a question of whether Labor or the Coalition has donned the more convincing green cloak.

Yet another scenario is possible. As in previous elections, most voters may be motivated overwhelmingly by 'hip pocket' concerns and cynically-stirred fears of security threats. If so, the contest will focus on who is best equipped to protect bank balances and borders, shares and streets. The environment could fade into the electoral background.

And so this election could be a watershed for the Greens, depending on which of the above scenarios prevails.

In this edition, writers probe key electoral questions. Sarah Hanson-Young cuts through the 'greenwash' of Labor while Julian Burnside exposes the illiberalism of the Liberals. Kerry Nettle describes why the Senate result is crucial for both the Greens and the nation. Rachel Siewert recounts the dangers of Workchoices and Louise Crossley introduces the Greens' visionary 'Re-energising Australia' policy.

Other articles depart from the election cover story. Sue Pennicuik describes the continuing plight of Ingrid Betancourt, still captive in the Colombian jungle five years after her kidnapping. Greg Hardwick recounts the travesty of Traveston Dam – an environmental and social disaster in Queensland. In his 'Counterpoint' article Ted D'Urso castigates the Greens for seeking 'salvation within the system' – an article sure to provoke responses.

We hope you enjoy this edition of 'Green'.

Brian Hoeppe and Drew Hutton

Wind farms 1

As a Green whose livelihood is in wind energy I want to comment on Ralph Cooper's long letter in the Autumn 2007 issue of Green Magazine. The letter expresses two main concerns about wind energy: the first is the control exerted by large corporations on people who object to wind farm developments. Secondly, at greater length, he claims that the new Woolnorth wind farm in North West Tasmania is killing significant numbers of birds and bats. Unfortunately most of the evidence he presents is either hearsay or simply incorrect. An example of the latter is the claim that the 'pressure gradient' in the vicinity of the rapidly rotating blades – which can approach 300 kilometres per hour – can burst the blood vessels of small animals. If that were the case, it is highly unlikely that high speed trains, which travel at the similar speeds but are much larger and much less aerodynamically shaped than turbine blades, would ever be allowed across Europe, Japan, and China.

I invite readers to compare the factual evidence of the impact of turbines on birds contained in the two fact sheets produced by the Australian Wind Energy Association:

<http://www.thewind.info/downloads/birds.pdf>
<http://www.auswea.com.au/WIDP/assets/8Bird&BatImpact.pdf>

with the hearsay in Ralph's letter. The first of those sheets also contains a quoted endorsement of wind energy from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Both conclude that bird and bat deaths are, indeed, rare. However, this general conclusion does not mean that every wind farm is safe. The continued monitoring and factual assessment of animal and bird fatalities is essential.

All forms of energy generation have environmental consequences. Wind farms can cause visual and noise pollution as well as bird and bat deaths; photovoltaics are very expensive both in dollars and in the amount of energy needed to make the silicon cells. Even nuclear energy has some well-known problems. It is also a sad fact that most of these industries are dominated by large corporations: BP in photovoltaics, and General Electric in wind being two examples. As Greens we must separate

the relative, huge advantages of expanding renewable energy production from the common problems of living in a world containing big corporations.

Finally, it may surprise readers to learn that wind turbines can be the victims of birds. I have a photo of two sulphur-crested cockatoos about to attack the wooden blades and tail fin of a small research turbine at the University of Newcastle, having previously dined on a nearby wind vane. Nevertheless, both the birds and the turbine survived the encounter.

David Wood
Newcastle

David is a member of the Newcastle Greens, conjoint academic in the School of Engineering, University of Newcastle and co-owner of Aerogenesis Australia which designs and builds small wind turbines. www.aerogenesis.com.au

Wind farms 2

I found Ralph Cooper's letter 'Should the Greens support wind farms?' (Green 22) momentarily infuriating because he questions one of my sacred attitudes. On reflection, I must thank him for so doing.

He is not condemning wind farming so much as pointing out that, because we live in a highly interconnected world (ecosystem), there are costs as well as benefits to everything that we do. He points out three major qualifications on recourse to wind farms to satisfy demand for electricity.

1. Wind farms are ugly intrusions on landscapes.
2. Wind farms are far less effective at harvesting energy than their stated capacities.
3. Wind farms can be, and generally are, destructive of local wildlife. (Noting that he has not invited me to do this.) I respond to each of his points below.
 1. The ugliness of wind farms is in the eye of the beholder; personally, I find the sight of an array of giant white turbines quietly harvesting nature's bounty rather attractive, vastly preferable to the dark satanic mills that are thermal power stations, with

their clouds of steam over the parched land, their thin plumes of ash, the open wounds that are the coal mines and the desiccated gulches, in the shadow of dams, that once were living streams. Of course, the power lines by which power is transferred to consumers from either power station or wind turbine are disfigurements.

2. In any given location, the wind does not always blow. Ralph states that this necessitates maintaining fossil-fuelled generators on standby. This is not strictly correct; if your wind farm is used to charge a giant rechargeable battery, and power drawn from the battery as and when needed, then the need for stand by generation is substantially reduced.

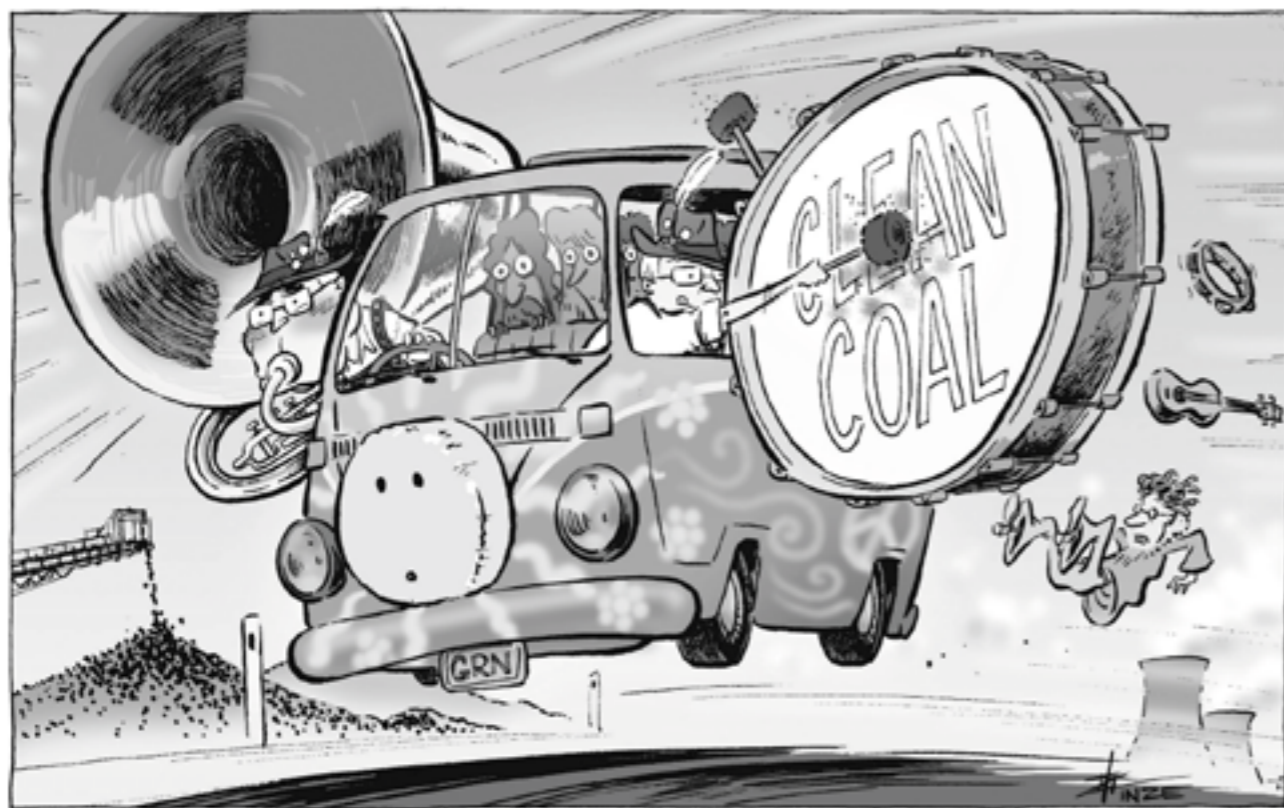
This was illustrated by Tim Thwaites in an article in 'New Scientist' magazine, issue 2586, 12 January 2007. He described King Island's electricity supply system, in which wind turbines are used to charge an indefinitely rechargeable Vanadium 'flow battery'. See <http://environment.newscientist.com/channel/earth/mg19325861.400-a-bank-for-wind-power.html>.

3. Killing of wildlife is the major objection to wind farms that I cannot readily answer. Do flying animals learn to avoid the blades? Darwinian selection may occur, much as kangaroos seem to be learning road sense/avoidance behaviour in more settled parts of Queensland. Perhaps some sort of cowling could be put around the blades. Perhaps traditional water 'Southern Cross'-type windmills, in conjunction with the same battery system that is charged by one's photovoltaic could be used to augment remote homestead supply.

To summarise, Ralph Cooper raises valid concerns, which has certainly reminded us that any 'knee-jerk' approval of wind farms is no more than that. Any 'roll-out' of wind farms must be preceded by a proper consideration of these concerns, so that wind farms are installed only where these concerns are satisfactorily addressed.

David Arthur
Maryborough
David is a member of the Fraser Coast Greens

*Letters to the Editors may be edited for length. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Greens.



snippets



REVA electric car

In previous editions we've described the unfolding saga of the REVA – the Indian-made electric car which seemed to offer a promising solution to the challenge of private urban transport. Following enthusiastic moves by Greens Senator Christine Milne, the WA government planned to trial and test a fleet of REVAs. The trial would have allowed until next February for evaluation and, if necessary, modifications by the manufacturer. But it quickly became a murky tale. In a surprising move - and in an unexplained arrangement with its UK counterpart - the Australian Department of Transport and Regional Services hurriedly arranged a crash test of the REVA in the UK. Based on the tests results, the May meeting of the Australian Transport Council in Broome effectively banned the REVA from Australian streets. Questions remain about why the federal department undercut the longer process planned by WA – a process that could have seen suitably-tested and possibly-modified REVAs available to Australians. For now, it's understood that the manufacturers and local distributor are considering their options. This story isn't over.

Something fishy?

A surprising statistic has emerged from Tasmanian waters. Ten years ago, Tasmanian salmon farmers used a total of just 12kg of antibiotics in a year. But in just the first three months of this year they have used a staggering eight tonnes! The antibiotics are supposed to pass through the fish before harvesting. But even if this is guaranteed, there are problems if wild fish eat treated feed that drifts from the pens or if farmed fish escape from the pens. Recently nine thousand fish escaped near Strahan, most of them caught later by amateur anglers scarcely believing their luck. Authorities report that salmon sold in

Australian shops do not contain residues at or above the legal limit.

Just (?) jeans

A Greens member just back from the UK was delighted to find 'Fair Trade' jeans on sale in Marks & Spencer. He eagerly walked away with two pairs, but was soon questioning his purchase. While the label explained that the cotton was 'fair trade' in the sense that the cotton growers received a fair price for their product, there was no mention of the environmental conditions on the cotton farms or of the labour conditions in the jeans factory. Having noted that the jeans were made in Bangladesh, and that the retail price was a modest 19.95stg (c. \$50AUS), he's now keen to probe the 'Fair Trade' label further.



The History Wars continue

It seems PM Howard is determined to shape the teaching of Australian History in schools to his liking. After a much-heralded Summit in August 2006, a 'model curriculum' was written by A/Prof Tony Taylor. For months, the federal government refused to make the document public. In late June, in a worrying move, Howard appointed



a four-person committee to review the (secret) document. The members include the conservative commentator Dr Gerard Henderson. As one (anonymous) historian commented, it seems the committee has been 'put into position to force the draft into a shape that is more acceptable to the Prime Minister's office'. While Prof Taylor is a history teacher, the four-member committee reviewing his work comprises Henderson, two academic historians (including the controversial Geoffrey Blainey) and only one history teacher – a NSW schools inspector who has been forbidden by her minister to participate!



Findhorn

For decades the ecological community at Findhorn in Scotland has been an inspiration for many. What might surprise readers are the results of a recent audit of Findhorn's ecological footprint. It found that the community's footprint was 1.5 – quite admirable compared with most Western communities but perhaps a disappointing statistic for both Findhorn residents and their supporters. There's an easy answer, as the residents are keen to explain. Each year Findhorn attracts about 5,000 overseas visitors who undertake courses in the community. And it attracts about 10,000 day visitors, many of who take the excellent guided tour. The ecological audit took into account the impact of all the air travel and land-based travel undertaken by those 15,000 or so visitors. If their impacts were discounted, Findhorn's footprint would be substantially smaller. As noted in our last edition, air travel seems to be the 'elephant in the living room' when it comes to addressing climate change in developed societies.

snippets



Coffee break

Fair trade coffee seems to be finding an even surer foothold in Britain than here in Australia. After two years, Oxfam's two fair trade cafes in London are prospering. Located in Covent Garden and Portobello Road, the Progreso cafes are 25% owned by the growers who produce the coffee in African and South American countries. Fair trade posters adorn the walls, and fair trade coffee and tea are delivered to the packed tables along with fresh organic food. There's a 'loyalty card' with a twist. A completed loyalty card entitles the customer to select a magnetised piece to add to a displayed outline of a goat. You guessed it ... once the goat is completed, a real goat is donated to a developing world community. A final dramatic touch – the director of the board is the smouldering Mr Darcy (aka British actor Colin Firth, who features in one of the famous 'dumped on' Oxfam ads). Firth also contributed the funds that gave the growers their share in the enterprise. www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/fairtrade/progreso.htm

www.firth.com/articles/05indep_716.html

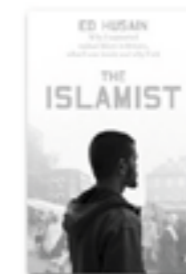
Unlikely ally

The Greens have called for a target cut to Australia's greenhouse emissions of 80%, whereas the ALP has called for a 60% target. As reported in an article in the 'Independent' (UK), Labour MP Colin Challen - the chairman of the UK All Party Parliamentary Climate Change Group - agrees with the Australian Greens. He is quoted as describing UK Labour's target cut of 60% as lacking 'integrity and intellectual rigour'. <http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/politics/article2494119.ece>



Carbon Cops

The first episode of the ABC TV series 'Carbon Cops' produced some interesting insights into urban living. Helping to audit the family home, the younger daughter started counting the number of lights in the house, but gave up somewhere over a hundred! Footage of rooms lit with multiple downlights and a stairway lit with an array of recessed globes was a reminder of how style has triumphed over the environment in many Australian homes. The beer fridge – stored in a closed cupboard where the rear temperature was in the thirties – was another revelation. On the positive side, the family managed to rise to the challenge and reduce their carbon footprint by about 40%. Walking to school, shopping locally and using a compost bin instead of the 'insinkerator' were part of the success story. The family also became purportedly 'carbon neutral' by, among other steps, paying for trees to be planted. But that's another story!



Inside Islam

Due for July release is *The Islamist* by Ed Husain (Penguin). If it lives up to expectations, the book could provide readers with insight into the motivations of the small group of radical Islamists who - born and raised in Britain - turned their backs on their country with catastrophic consequences. For some years, Ed (Mohamed) Husain was himself an active player in the groups that apparently nurtured the July 7 London bombers. By that date he had rejected extremism and was teaching in Saudi Arabia where he found 'the local brand of Islam harsh and unappealing'. But he admired India, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt where

'the form of Islam people manifested was very humble, internal, spiritual, harmonious'. Returning to England, he was unsettled by the emphasis in some Islamic groups on 'identity, confrontation and politics'. He decided he had to speak out from within. Hence this book.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,21893068-5001986,00.html>

Climate change threatens World Heritage sites

World Heritage sites are endangered by global warming according to a new UNESCO report. Sites under threat include the Great Barrier Reef, Mount Kilimanjaro's ice fields and the Chan Chan Archaeological Zone in Peru. Studies are currently being conducted at several World Heritage sites to monitor climate change impacts and plan appropriate adaptation measures. The report, *Case Studies on "Climate Change and World Heritage"* presents several case studies in order to illustrate the impacts of climate change that have already been observed and those which can be anticipated in the future.

http://whc.unesco.org/documents/publi_climatechange.pdf



According to the Worldwatch Institute, 2008 is the year in which, for the first time in the history of humanity, there will be more people living in cities than in rural areas. *State of the World 2007: Our Urban Future* has identified accelerating urbanization in Africa, Latin America and Asia as the main drivers of the trend. The report examines the ways urbanization is affecting our lives and the global environment, with a special focus on the ideas that can make our cities environmentally sustainable and healthier places to live. <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/4752>

Labour's Green Veneer

Sarah Hanson-Young

Despite being only in high school in the 90s, I still remember what it was like to have a Labor Prime Minister, and I still remember being told by my parents that they would never vote for Hawke again after his flirtation with the uranium industry. When I complained about not being given pocket money, my dad told me to whinge to Keating because we were in 'the recession we had to have'. I remember hearing Labor ministers arguing for the continued logging of old-growth forests at Errinundra Plateau in Far East Gippsland, just up the road from where I was growing up.

After 11 years in Opposition, during which Labor has done very little to challenge the Howard Government on key environmental and even social issues, why the sudden adoption of green faith? Do they really pass the green test, or could it be that Labor is recognising the influence of the new yuppie?

“... even channel Ten's Big Brother house, a monument to consumerism, has gone eco-friendly and energy efficient in order to impress a more 'stylish' audience.”

Today's yuppie is quite different from those of the 80s. It is no longer about flashing your dollars around for everyone to see, driving a Porsche or wearing shoulder pads. Today's yuppies are self-conscious about rubbing their wealth in faces of others; they prefer organic vegies over pre-packed meals, and they order their coffee fair-trade with organic soy. The new yuppies work hard to protect their social conscience, and they don't think issues of climate change are simply

stories bantered around by tree-hugging hippies as they did back in the late 80s.

Celebrities like Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt, George Clooney and even Bill Gates have become champions of this new social order, splashing their dollars across various causes, helping to spread the word on green and social justice issues. And what's more, if NGOs and charities manage to secure one of these good-cause-wrist-banded-yuppie celebs, they see their public awareness grow - and the donations from star-struck fans explode.

With issues of climate change now taking centre stage in the political arena, it is sometimes hard for the true voices of action to be heard above the loud buzz of the green PR machines of both Liberal and Labor. The environment has become trendy, the movement has a broad following, and with that comes politics and spin - even channel Ten's Big Brother house, a monument to consumerism, has gone eco-friendly and energy efficient in order to impress a more 'stylish' audience.

Labor understands the power of both the eco-yuppie and the celebrity. Peter Garrett as an MP is testimony to that. Labor seeks to secure the support of those who follow the eco-friendly trend by greening themselves up - much like Big Brother or Channel 7's Sunrise program with their 'Cool the Globe' campaign.

Labor wants to be seen as caring about climate change but they refuse to look at the need to move from an energy industry dominated by the burning of coal - which produces half of Australia's carbon emissions (and adds more world-



wide through our exports) - to an industry based on clean renewable energy sources. The language used by Labor in its eco-friendly spin talks more about the individual's responsibility to combat global warming than the desperate action needed on climate change by the biggest polluters. Garrett spends more time telling voters what four-minute water-saving-songs to listen to in a shower, than getting his own party to commit to mandatory renewable energy targets or reducing global temperature rise.

Despite knowing the truth on the economics of climate change - that acting sooner rather than later is the only way to secure an economic future - Labor refuses to take the government to task when John Howard says emission reduction targets will destroy the economy. Garrett has been a long-time opponent of the nuclear fuel cycle, but he must now promote his party's incoherent approach to the uranium industry. Confirmed at the party's national conference, the ALP's position on the nuclear industry is as irresponsible as ever - they do not support nuclear power because it is unsafe; they do not support a nuclear waste dump because it is unsafe; but they do support the expansion of uranium mining and exports overseas, where as long as there's a buck to be made, it doesn't matter if nuclear power and weapons development is dangerous.

Within this new movement of eco-friendly and socially responsible citizens, there is both an emphasis on quality and a new economic order of put-your-money-where-your-mouth-is. Labor risks the perception that its green veneer is cheap and nasty, and like all bad quality lacquer, it starts to peel off. Inconsistent policies on the environment and social welfare will start to make voters wary of the party's true colours that promote big business and mining industry interests.

The other problem for the star-studded Labor outfit with front man Peter Garrett, is that even though eco-yuppies still care about brands and style, they don't like the idea of being perceived as followers. The trends they follow are subtle and whispered between like-minded individuals. Logos are a no-go. The organic cotton clothing worn by these new sophisticates will not bear a large printed brand name. Members of this eco-friendly order are more likely to promote their support for a small non-profit or a good cause than a big company name or a major political party.

Unlike Labor, the Greens have always been green, long before it was trendy. Greens politicians have a history of being looked down on with disdain, only to be proven accurate environmental prophets. Greens policies that were laughed at ten years ago have now been adopted by almost all other political parties. Greens politicians have become celebrities in their own right - they never released any albums, but they are well known for doing what they do - standing up for issues that are important. A song I recently heard puts it this way: 'Bob Brown/he says, the things I'd like to say/but in a better way/hands down.'

Eco-friendly voters are not looking for a party that tells them what they should care about, or simply what they think they want to hear. They want to support a party that stands up for the causes they themselves support. If Labor isn't careful, it may just turn out looking less appealing than a Nike branded golf umbrella, or a copycat version of another political party, like those cheap rip-off Gucci handbags you can score on holiday in Phuket.

Sarah Hanson-Young is the lead Senate candidate for the Greens in South Australia.

Green with envy Green with envy

JULIAN BURNSIDE

It is alarming just how far the dominant conversation has moved to the right during the past 11 years. The so-called Liberal Party has made it clear that former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser is no longer a welcome member of the party he once led, and I suspect that the Australian Labor Party would see him as a bit too far left to be electorally useful.

The problem is one of honesty: the Liberal Party has abandoned any pretence of honesty in policy and government. No principle is so fundamental that it cannot be subverted or debased by John Howard. To add insult to injury, the betrayal of principle is dressed up in dishonest rhetoric so as to maintain the misleading appearance of the values the Liberal Party once stood for. In place of policy founded on principle, we get platitudes larded with rhetoric. Remember John Howard's speech on the 50th anniversary of his fan magazine *Quadrant*. He again disparaged the 'black armband view of history'. Ignoring the plain facts uncovered by the HREOC report *Bringing Them Home*, he hides behind the notion that what has happened in the past is no part of this generation's heritage or responsibility. This from the man who increasingly exploits the tragedies of an earlier generation who died at Gallipoli.

In the same speech he rejoiced in the 'ideals of democratic freedom and liberty under law'. This must have had a hollow sound to David Hicks as he languished in Guantanamo Bay after being sold to our ally America by the Northern Alliance. Hicks was denied the rights accorded to criminal suspects, denied the rights of a prisoner of war, held for five years without charge, held in solitary confinement in a concrete box for most of his time and denied access to lawyers for the first few years of his incarceration. During all this time, the Australian government did nothing to secure his freedom, on the curious pretext that he had not broken the law.

The 'ideals of democratic freedom and liberty under law' must seem a remote prospect to those who are sentenced to two weeks' preventative detention after a secret hearing which they are not allowed to attend. When arrested and taken into custody, the person concerned is not allowed to know the evidence which was used against them.

"the indefinite detention of children is squared with family values by dressing it up as border protection"

The ideal of democratic freedom and liberty under law' must have slipped Mr Ruddock's mind when he ran the case of Mr al Kateb who had come to Australia seeking asylum. He was held in detention while his application for a protection visa was considered. The Migration Act says that a non-citizen without a visa must remain in detention until they get a visa or are removed from Australia. Mr al Kateb was refused a visa and found conditions in detention so awful that, rather than appeal the decision, he asked to be removed from Australia. But he could not be removed because he is stateless. Rather than amend the Act to deal with an anomaly, Ruddock argued that Mr al Kateb – innocent of any offence, not suspected of being a risk to society – could be held in detention for life. That the senior law officer of the Crown could consider making such an argument is a disgrace to the office he holds and a stain on the government he serves. Not much 'democratic freedom and liberty under law' for al Kateb.

The children who, broken and desperate in detention, tried to harm or kill themselves would not readily distinguish between the cruelty of the Taliban and the Liberal Party's family values. So, the indefinite detention of children is squared with family values by dressing it up as border protection being jail without trial for reasons based on secret evidence is passed off as necessary to



Drawing by a child in detention, Woomera www.v-i-s-a-s.net

preserve democracy; the abandonment of an Australian citizen in Guantanamo Bay is fudged as a prelude to a fair trial on a retrospective charge and hearsay evidence obtained by coercion. Ministerial responsibility, one of the pillars of the Westminster system that Howard promised to honour, has disappeared without a trace, until its brief reappearance when practical politics required Ian Campbell to be sacrificed in an attempt to skewer Rudd for meeting Brian Bourke.

Global warming was ignored, doubted or scorned until suddenly, six months ago, it snapped into policy focus as Howard deftly recognised the plain facts science had been proclaiming for a decade at least. None of these things conforms to any of the ethical principles on which the Liberal Party was founded. None of these things provoked even a murmur of concern from the Labor Party. The putrid hypocrites of the Right have been well served by their fawning acolytes in the press, and by an Opposition which only recently remembered how to oppose. If any part of their ethical foundations survive, the members of the coalition parties must be stung by regrets when they see two minor parties, the Greens and the Democrats, adopt and maintain positions which are principled and steadfast. It is possible that a few members of the coalition can still remember the principles for which they once stood: principles which now stare at them reproachfully from the cross-benches.

For the Greens and Democrats, principle must seem costly: government is a distant prospect. But now, more than ever, it is important to hear the echoes of conscience from the cross-benches. If it does not end the excesses of dishonesty on the government side, it might at least make them a little more cautious. The Greens and the Democrats have been the de facto Opposition until recently. It is a badge of honour. This position is likely to continue indefinitely, whichever major party wins the next election. The two major parties look more and more alike as focus groups replace principles as the instrument by which policies are shaped.

Conscience is generally an honoured but unwelcome guest. The Greens and the Democrats can serve as Society's conscience: it is a role which will never be popular but it is honourable ... and right now it is vital.

Julian Burnside is a barrister based in Melbourne. He acted against BHP in the Ok Tedi case and for the Maritime Union of Australia in the 1998 waterfront dispute against Patrick Stevedores. He was Senior Counsel assisting the Australian Broadcasting Authority in the 'Cash for Comment' inquiry and for Liberty Victoria in the Tampa litigation. He is President of Liberty Victoria, and has acted pro bono in many human rights cases, in particular concerning the treatment of refugees. In 2004 he was elected as a Living National Treasure.

Greens vital to ripping up WorkChoices

RACHEL SIEWERT

WorkChoices radically changed Australia's workplace laws, shifting the balance of power firmly into the hands of employers. The extent of the changes made by the government and the detrimental effects they are having on many working people and their families have guaranteed industrial relations will be a vital issue in this year's election campaign.

The Greens now stand as the only party committed to repealing the entire WorkChoices regime and establishing truly fair and just workplace laws. The ALP's policy retains key planks of the Howard government's changes and the Democrats continue to support Australian Workplace Agreements. Family First also supports AWAs as well as limitations on access to unfair dismissal laws which, when you look at the consequences of these policies, are hardly family-friendly.

While the *Your Rights at Work* campaign has necessarily focused on WorkChoices, it is not the only law passed by the Howard government that has reduced the rights of workers to fair and safe workplaces. The government has also specifically attacked workers and unions in the building and construction industry and undermined occupational health and safety laws. For more information on these laws and our reasons for opposing them, please see our website at www.rachelsiewert.org.au.

WorkChoices

After more than a year of WorkChoices the fears we voiced about its likely consequences have been realised. We have seen employers take the opportunity it presented to sack employees and then seek to rehire them on AWAs with less take-home pay and conditions. Many employees have been sacked unfairly with no recourse. The government's so-called 'protections' have proved to be a chimera.

The few statistics on AWAs the government has released (or that have been leaked) have shown AWAs reducing take-home pay by removing overtime rates, penalty rates, public holiday pay and more. The government has been forced to amend its legislation and introduce an ineffective 'fairness test'. These amendments are merely a smokescreen and do not change the fundamental nature of WorkChoices.

We have also seen an increasing gender wage gap, with women's wages decreasing at a time of unprecedented prosperity. Combined with the punitive Welfare to Work regime (which

targets single mothers and people with disabilities currently receiving income support) we are witnessing a deliberate attempt to create an underclass of low-paid, low-skilled, women workers.

Greens Policy

Greens believe that workplace laws should be fair, protect all workers from unjust treatment, promote industrial harmony and enable us to organise collectively to negotiate fair pay and conditions. The laws must include:

- the complete abolition of Australian Workplace Agreements,
- a strong expanded safety net of minimum conditions including overtime pay, penalty rates, public holiday pay, rest breaks and redundancy entitlements,
- the enforceable right for employees to collectively bargain through their union,
- universally accessible unfair dismissal laws,
- the right for workers to take industrial action, and
- the return of conciliation and arbitration powers, including setting minimum wages, to the independent Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

AWAs must be abolished and collective bargaining placed at the centre of a new industrial relations system. The Greens believe strongly in the right of workers to bargain collectively and support a framework requiring employers to enter into collective agreements. The Greens are also committed to a legislatively protected right to strike as a fundamental right of workers to promote and defend their economic and social interests.

Unfair dismissal laws should apply to all workers regardless of the size of their employer's business. Protection from unfair dismissal provides a level of job security which should be available to all employees. The widely abused 'operational reasons' provisions in WorkChoices, which have had the effect of essentially removing unfair dismissal laws for everyone, must also be repealed.

Work/Life balance

Australian working families are in desperate need of provisions to assist in balancing work, family and community life. We are seeing increasing hours of work and unpaid overtime, together with more unpredictable and anti-social hours of work and decreased job security. These factors combine to



“After more than a year of WorkChoices the fears we voiced about its likely consequences have been realised.”

increase pressure in the home and leave less time for family, friends and community.

The Greens are committed to ensuring an industrial relations system that enhances people's ability to balance their work, family and community commitments. Such a system would include an independent Industrial Relations Commission able to set community standards for workplace conditions, a national paid parental leave scheme, more effective regulation of working hours and the addressing of gender pay equity.

Comparison with the ALP

The ALP seems to have accepted much of the underlying rationale of WorkChoices. It has accepted a small business exception to unfair dismissal laws and redundancy pay. It has betrayed its own legacy as a party formed out of the industrial struggles of the late 19th century by supporting severe restrictions on industrial action.

The ALP's stated policy is to abolish AWAs although there is an enormous amount of pressure being applied to the ALP to provide for some form of individual statutory agreement. While the ALP probably won't change its policy position before the election, they may not be too keen to actually change the laws once they get in. This is why it will be crucial to have Green Senators holding the balance of power, pushing the ALP to live up to its commitments to Australian workers.

The decision by the ALP to continue to support the Australian Building and Construction Commission demonstrates its willingness to change policy under pressure. The ABCC and its supporting legislation are an expensive and undemocratic attack on unions and their members in the construction industry. Workers have lost their right to silence, have had restrictions placed on their legal representation and face personal fines for taking industrial action under these laws. Quite simply, it is a "Star Chamber" that provides workers with fewer rights than criminals on trial for murder or war crimes. The Greens' principled position is to call for the abolition of the ABCC and the repealing of its supporting legislation.

Conclusion

Australians cannot afford Work Choices staying as our industrial relations system. Too much harm is occurring to too many people. WorkChoices can only be repealed if there is a progressive Senate – something only the Greens can guarantee. The upcoming election presents the opportunity to dismantle WorkChoices and the chance to restore a fair and just industrial relations system.

Rachel Siewert is the Australian Greens Senator for Western Australia

The battle for the Senate

Kerry Nettle

There will be two election battles later this year, one between Kevin Rudd and John Howard to see who will be prime minister and form government, the other for control of the Senate. This contest is delicately poised. At the 2004 election, the Coalition claimed 39 of the 76 Senate seats, giving the Coalition a one seat majority in the Senate and total control of the Parliament. In Victoria, a Family First (religious conservative) senator was elected despite claiming only 1.9% of the vote - thanks to Labor Party preferences. The Greens candidate David Risstrom missed out despite receiving 8.8% of the vote.

These results mean conservative forces currently have a two seat majority in the Senate. This has allowed John Howard to push through laws that are unpopular with the public. Maverick Senators such as the Nationals' Barnaby Joyce and the occasional backbencher brave enough to take on the Prime Minister have threatened revolt, but have almost always voted to implement John Howard's agenda.

The full privatisation of Telstra, the unfair workplace laws and the de-funding of student unions have all occurred because of Coalition control of the Senate. After it was clear the Coalition had won a majority in the Senate in 2004, John Howard promised not to misuse this power, saying his government would be 'modest and humble'. But John Howard's control of the Senate has resulted in important democratic processes that the Senate fulfils being lost. The review of legislation by Senate committees and the conducting of detailed inquiries into important issues have been lost or truncated. The number of Senate committees has been reduced from 16 to 10 and only Government senators are allowed to chair them. Debate in the chamber on important legislation has been cut short through the government's numbers and the use of the 'guillotine'

Two days after the October 2004 election the Clerk of the Senate Harry Evans told ABC radio:

It appears that with Government majorities in the House of Representatives, parliamentary accountability is virtually zero. And that the only way the Government is compelled to give account to parliament is through the non-government majority in the Senate.

In June 2005, Harry Evans opined in The Sydney Morning Herald that the parliament had been reduced to a mere rubber stamp of the executive.

We would have to concede our government has become more like an early modern autocracy: the monarch rules from his royal court (the prime minister's office) and while he might consult his courtiers, his will is the law... Giving a monopoly of power to one party is not the essence of good government but, under the way our parties operate, a sure route to corruption and misrule.

The obscene amount of taxpayers' money being spent on blatantly party political advertising such as the advertisements promoting WorkChoices is a clear example of how corrupt our system has become under John Howard. The federal government is now the second biggest advertiser in Australia after Coles Myer.

This election we have an opportunity to save our Senate from government control, but it will not be an easy task. Senators sit for six years so only half the current Senate will face election this year. The large number of senators elected for the Coalition in 2004 gives them a head start, leaving them well placed to continue to control the Senate, even if they lose government. Australians may wake up on Sunday after election day with a Labor government that has its hands tied by a Coalition controlled Senate.

Labor's deputy leader, Julia Gillard, recently told the journal Workforce Express, 'it's mathematically inconceivable that Labor would win enough seats to control the Senate'. Even if Labor wins three senators in every state they will still be five Senate seats short of a majority in a 76 seat Senate. Looking back through electoral history tells us that Labor has never won more than three Senate spots in any state at any election.

With the Democrats languishing in the polls and facing electoral annihilation, the Greens are the only hope to rescue the senate from continued conservative control. For argument's sake, let's say Kevin Rudd maintains his lead in the polls and Labor gets three Senators in each state and

“Holding the balance of power in the Senate after the next election would make our party central to the national debate.”



one in both the ACT and NT. They are still five short of a majority. Two Green Senators, Rachel Siewert (WA) and Christine Milne (TAS), are not up for re-election. This brings the Labor-Greens numbers to 36, still three short of a majority. We are all hopeful that Bob Brown will be re-elected in Tasmania, taking us one seat closer to rescuing the Senate. In New South Wales I face an uphill battle to get re-elected with a large population and multitude of candidates. If we run a strong grassroots campaign and preferences fall the right way, my re-election will bring the combined Senate seats for the Greens and Labor to 38. This is exactly half the Senate of 76. That is enough to block legislation but not pass legislation. The Coalition, together with Family First, would still be able to block legislation with their 38 Senators. So not only do Bob Brown and I need to get re-elected, but the Greens need to gain an additional Senator in another state or territory.

Holding the balance of power in the Senate after the next election would make our party central to the national debate. It would also put us in a position to push for progressive policies in many areas and particularly for real action to combat climate change. It is important to remember that balance of power is contingent on Labor and Liberal not voting together. Rescuing the Senate by electing more Greens will bring great benefits for our country's future. It will require a lot of effort from Greens members around the country between now and the election.

I know all four current Greens Senators look forward to working with you on the campaign trail.

Kerry Nettle is the Australian Greens Senator for New South Wales.

snippets



Solar power becoming mainstream?

Solar power could become a mainstream energy choice in three or four years according to a new Worldwatch report. The development of advanced technologies and the emergence of China as a low-cost producer are the trends behind this prediction.

Last year, China passed the United States to become the world's third largest producer of solar panels, trailing only Germany and Japan. Many companies are now producing thin-film solar technologies that cut the amount of silicon used in panels.

Solar is the fastest growing energy source, but still provides less than 1 percent of the world's electricity, partly because its power can cost homeowners twice as much as power from the grid. But costs could fall 40 percent in the next few years as polysilicon, which helps panels convert sunlight into electricity, becomes more available.

<http://www.worldwatch.org/node/5086>



Vulnerable victims

In late May 20 trolley boys at three shopping centres in Albury were dismissed by a Melbourne labour-hire company, Xidis Pty Ltd. The dismissals followed investigations of underpayments by the Office of Workplace Services. The Director of the Office, Nicholas Wilson, described the trolley boys as 'the most

vulnerable of the vulnerable'. They had been paid as little as \$9 an hour, below the minimum wage. Xidis has replaced the trolley boys, employing at least six workers originally from Sudan and Iraq. Redress may be difficult. Six of those dismissed are seeking conciliation through the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. If that doesn't produce results, the only recourse is apparently through the Federal Court, at the plaintiff's expense at least initially.

Innovative waste-to-energy project

In Argentina, rubbish will soon be processed to create marketable goods. In a new partnership, 13 municipalities in Argentina have agreed to send their refuse to a waste treatment facility that will turn it into electricity, biodiesel, water, and animal feed. The communities, in turn, will receive half of the profits from sales of these goods.

The project aims to address the excess rubbish problem in the region, relieve Argentina's rising electricity demand, provide clean water, and create much-needed jobs and income for rural people. WaterSmart Environmental Inc, a provider of waste-to-renewable energy technologies, and FUVAAL, an organization that promotes affordable housing in Latin America, are working with communities on the project.

<http://www.watersmart.com/documents/DalmacioVelezPressRelease3.pdf>



Fair play

Yes ... you can play ball and play fair! It's well known that more than 70% of soccer balls destined for western markets are produced in Pakistan, many of them (perhaps 25%) stitched by children aged 7-14. 'Fair trade' practices have been adopted by some producers to secure the rights of marginalized workers and their families. Internationally, a small number of companies now produces 'fair trade' certified soccer balls. The only Australian company in this group is Etiko. At their Pakistan factory, they've been making ethically produced soccer balls that are guaranteed to be child labour free. Now Etiko has added netballs, rugby and Australian Rules balls to its range. Available at Oxfam shops around Australia and online at www.etikosports.com.au.

Counterpoint

Ted D'Urso

I am writing in critical reaction to the article 'The Aspirational Life: the challenge to make meaning' co-authored by John Hillcoat and Brian Hoeffler in the Autumn 2007 edition of *Green*.

While I have long held the basic philosophical beliefs expressed in the article (since 1960 indeed) and am familiar with Fromm's other works of a sociological nature influenced by Marxist ideas, I am disappointed that the article didn't contain an explicit (even in passing) historical-structural condemnation of corporatised transnational capitalism. As long ago as 1918 Rosa Luxemburg predicted that the alternatives to capitalism were socialism or barbarism, the latter now well under way. With the defeat of the hopes for humanistic socialism, the plans now in progress by the Pentagon for military supremacy in an increasingly resource-scarce future (the pre-emptive invasion of Iraq is a foretaste of future conflicts), the hysteria raised by capitalist media and politicians following the global warming reports and so on – against this evolving global scenario, the analysis and recommendations of the article are very shallow indeed.

If, as the article rightly states, cultivating one's acreage is certainly 'not a feasible model for all seven billion people on earth' in the face of looming ecological disasters, I ask, realistically speaking, what then should be 'a different kind of aspirational thinking?' The beginning of an answer, I believe, is a forthright public condemnation by Green 'theoreticians' of the daily crimes of corporate capitalism and their ideological cover-ups. Obviously this would demand a radical 'paradigm shift' from thinking-inside-the-box of the cultural episteme of capitalism – in short, the abandonment of reformist possibilities about the system. How can there be any salvation within the system when it is itself in its institutional logics the very source of its manifold pathologies, environmental and sociological? A non-growth capitalist economy is an oxymoron – unless it refers to economic stagnation or recession/depression, either of which would exacerbate present pressures towards fascism. Exponentially amoral growth is the 'physics' of all capitalist economies of which the Chinese and the Indians are the latest striking examples. For a lucid analysis of the dynamics of capitalism see Heilbroner's *The Nature and Logic of Capitalism* and for his calmly rational conclusion about its ecological consequences for humankind, see the Afterword of the second edition of *An Inquiry into the Human Prospect* 1980 (sic!).

It is the moral responsibility of all intellectuals (ugh!) to, as the old Quaker adage goes, 'speak truth to power'. Not to do so is, as Marx declared, to be guilty of 'intellectual immorality' ⁱ. I do believe that the course of the coming century's events will show the futility of the Greens' expenditure of resources in attempting to diminish the corporate ownership of government and participating in its entertainment branch of parliamentary 'debates' ⁱⁱ. The most precious asset of a cutting-edge political movement is its moral credibility in the face of emerging disasters.

Ted D'Urso is a retired university teacher of critical social theory. His interest in radical politics stretches over sixty years.

ⁱ Chomsky added a historical dimension to these exhortations when he wrote 'If it is the responsibility of the intellectual to insist upon the truth, it is also his duty to see events in their historical perspective' (Noam Chomsky 1969, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, Chatto and Windus, p.279).

ⁱⁱ Again, Chomsky elaborates this idea with the following wry claim: 'Debate in a democratic political order cannot be stilled, and indeed, in a properly functioning system of propaganda, it should not be, because it has a system-reinforcing character if constricted within proper bounds. What is essential is to set the bounds firmly. Controversy may rage as long as it adheres to the presuppositions that define the consensus of elites, and furthermore it should be encouraged within these bounds ... as the very condition of thinkable thought while reinforcing the belief that freedom reigns. In short, what is essential is the power to set the agenda'. (Noam Chomsky 1989, *Necessary Delusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies*, Pluto Press, London, p.48)



The Kidnapping Of Ingrid Betancourt

Sue Pennicuik

Colombia is in the grip of a long-running civil war, exacerbated by drug-related criminal violence. It involves government troops, leftist guerrillas and right-wing paramilitary groups. Caught in the middle are the Colombian people.

While Colombia's situation is little reported in the English-speaking world, the displacement of an estimated three million people in the last three years makes it second in scale only to the crisis in Sudan. In addition, the US-sponsored 'Plan Colombia' or 'Andean Initiative' (extensive aerial herbicide spraying of coca plants) is devastating the health of the people, and the environment.

In April 2001, I was privileged to join 800 people from 70 countries at the inaugural Global Greens Conference in Canberra. There I met and heard from Ingrid Betancourt, former Senator and Presidential candidate for Colombia's Green Oxygen Party (PVO).

Ingrid had an enormous impact on me, both as a Green and as a Parliamentarian. She spoke about putting your life on the line for what you believe. This isn't something we often confront in Australia, so imagine standing up to the powers that be in Colombia! Ingrid said:

The salvation of the planet, the right to life, is nothing else than a fight for values. These values are shared by all of us human beings, regardless of the colour of our skin or the name that we give our god. And because they are essential values, they are not negotiable. To outline a new economic order, a new social pact, is not utopia. It is simply the basic thing, the minimum for society to continue in a globalised world.

I say this with force and with anguish because we cannot waste any more time. We still have time to stop the self-destruction being foisted on us. But this will depend on our will, on our character, on our commitment and not on what power they choose to grant us.

The first thing we must defeat is our scepticism. Do not let us think of what we have not achieved, but of what we can do and what we must achieve. Let us not deceive ourselves: we have to take on the uniform of the new samurai, to defend our values, our principles, our ideals above everything – even above our own life.

Ingrid also spoke of the threats of violence and death made against her, and how she'd been forced to send her children overseas for safety.

Less than a year later, on 23 February, 2002, Ingrid and her friend and presidential running mate, Clara Rojas, were kidnapped by Armed Revolutionary Force of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas on their way to San Vicente del Caguan. Noted for its majority Green council and mayor, this city had been bombed by the Colombian armed forces trying to evict the FARC. Ingrid and Clara were travelling there in response to anguished phone calls from their constituents and their kidnapping coincided with the breakdown of peace talks.

“The salvation of the planet, the right to life, is nothing else than a fight for values.”

Despite her kidnapping, Ingrid scored 53,000 votes at the June 2002 Colombian election, just enough to keep the PVO registered. Her husband, family and supporters had continued her campaign using life-sized posters of her. The new President, Alvaro Uribe, promised to work for Ingrid and Clara's release.

The 23rd February 2007 was the fifth anniversary of Ingrid and Clara's capture. The FARC is holding thousands of hostages – some for over eight years – for political leverage or ransom.

Many Greens (including Senator Bob Brown) have since visited Colombia to support the release campaign. A video recording of Ingrid was released in August 2003 and French newspaper *L'Humanité* reported in June 2006 that a FARC leader had said, 'Betancourt is doing well, within the environment she finds herself. It's not easy when one is deprived of freedom'. Recently, a policeman who escaped from the same camp as Ingrid reported that she was alive on 28 April this year.

As a first step towards peace, there's an urgent need for a negotiated humanitarian agreement, including a hostage exchange, between the Colombian Government and the FARC. The Mayor of Bogota, Luis Eduardo Garzon, has held a seminar with mayors from around the world to demand such an agreement.

Sue Pennicuik is a Greens member of the Victorian Legislative Council for the Southern Metropolitan Region.

www.betancourt.info

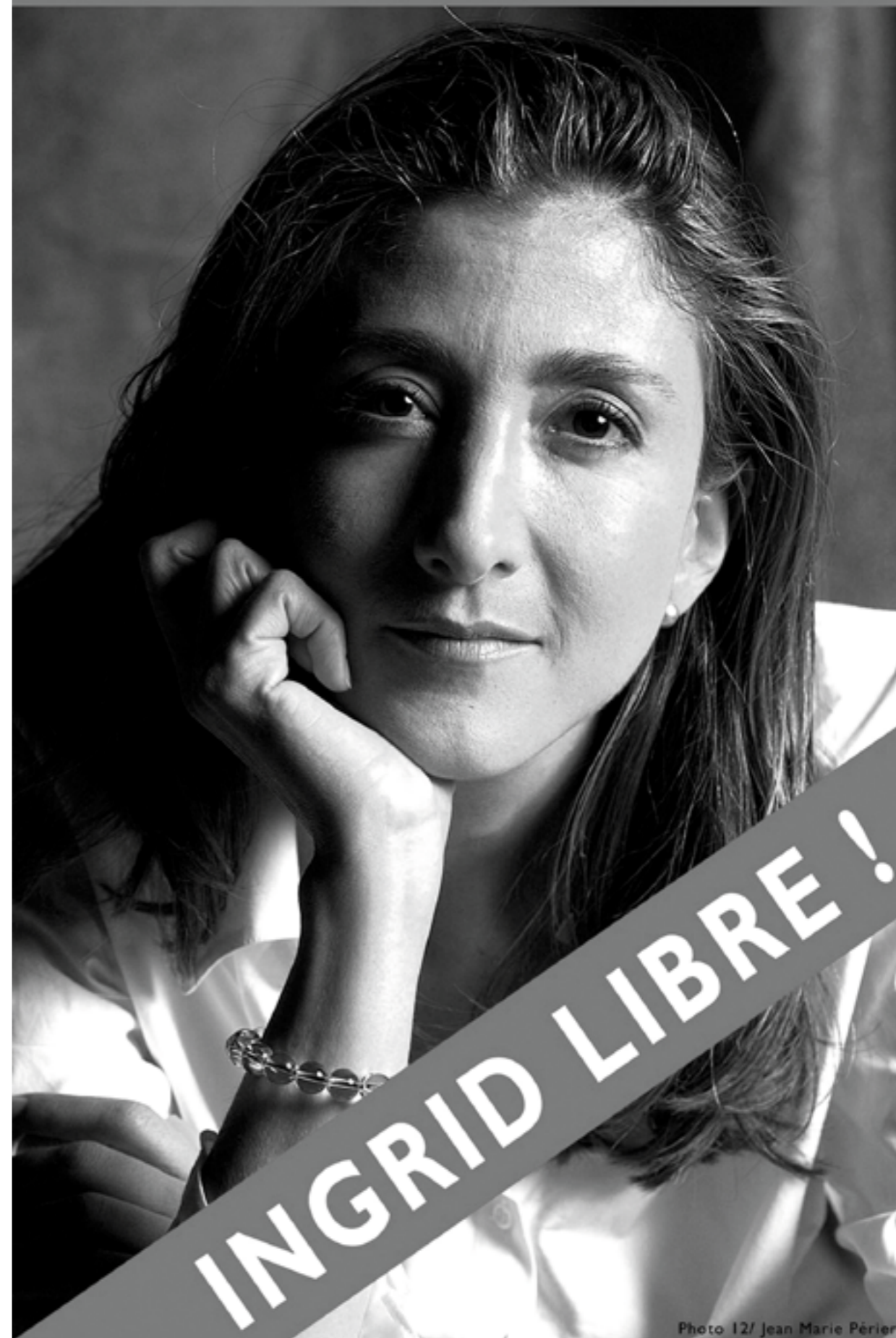


Photo 12/ Jean Marie Pèrier

RE-ENERGISING AUSTRALIA

Louise Crossley

We need transformation, a wave of social, technical, and economic innovation that will touch every person, community, institution and nation on Earth. The irony is that this transformation is still viewed as an economic 'cost' when it is in fact an enormous economic opportunity – an opportunity that we are now being increasingly forced to recognise.
Alan Atkinson¹

- Introduce a goal of reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions to 20% below 1990 levels by 2020 and to 80% below by 2050.

Although Australia contributes only 1.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions, we have the highest per capita emissions of any nation. We have a moral obligation, to the planet and all our fellow inhabitants, to curb this excess and we can gain important leverage in the world's economic forums such as APEC by committing to serious reduction targets. Ratifying the Kyoto Protocol is an essential first step in developing international credibility.

- Introduce a cap-and-trade emissions trading scheme for stationary energy emissions and some industrial processes, and replace fuel excise with a carbon tax on transport emissions in order to make the market pay a price for the environmental cost of carbon.

The second step is to become part of the future global emissions trading by developing an effective national cap and trade scheme. Senator Milne has outlined the essential characteristics of such a scheme⁵, most of which are violated by the proposals of the Prime Minister's Task Group⁶.

- Increase Australia's Mandatory Renewable Energy Target (MRET) to ensure that at least 15% of national electricity demand is met from renewable sources by 2012 and at least 25% is met from renewable sources by 2020. Introduce annual auditing of national progress towards the target.

- Introduce a national energy efficiency target to halt the growth in energy consumption by 2009.

The third step is to focus on initiatives and technologies that are available immediately, including energy efficiency and renewable energy (instead of at least 20-30 years down the track, like the Prime Minister's preferred options of nuclear power and 'clean' coal). Energy efficiency, by definition, will save money, and most renewable energy would be price competitive now if it were not for the \$10 billion annual subsidies to the fossil fuel industry⁷. If these strategies were comprehensively implemented over the next 30 years, there would be no requirement for the 30% of electricity that the proposed 30 nuclear power stations could supply by then – which would in turn save hundreds of billions of dollars.

The report gives many examples of successful implementation of low carbon technologies that will help

save the environment and the economy. This approach must be at the forefront of the Greens election campaign.

report by contacting her office on 03 6224 8899 or senator.milne@aph.gov.au

You can read the full report *Re-energising Australia* on Senator Milne's website at <http://christinemilne.org.au/files/campaigns/extras/Re-Energising%20Australia%20long%20FINAL%2011%20May%202007.pdf> All HoR and Senate candidates can obtain a hard copy of the

Louise Crossley is a former Australian Greens Convenor, Senate candidate and economic spokesperson. Louise assisted Senator Milne in the editing and production of *Re-energising Australia*.

¹ Alan Atkinson, Foreword to Karlson Hargroves and Michael H. Smith, eds, *The Natural Advantage of Nations: Business opportunities, Innovation and Government in the 21st Century*, Earthscan, London, 2005.

² ABC AM interview - Monday, 4 June, 2007

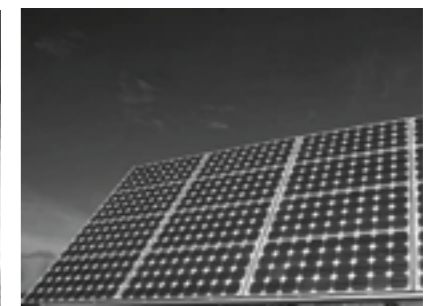
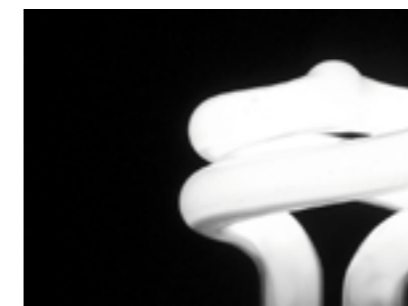
³ Nicholas Stern, *The Economics of Climate Change (The Stern Review)*, report to HM Treasury, London, 2006, p.362

⁴ For example: Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins, Hunter B. Lovins, *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution*, Little Brown, 1999, chapter 1: Stern et al, op.cit 3, Executive summary p.1: UN Scientific Expert Group Report on Climate Change and Sustainable Development, *Confronting Climate Change; avoiding the unmanageable and managing the unavoidable*, UN February 2007, p.3; The Allen Consulting Group, *Deep Cuts in Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, 2006, a report prepared for the Australian Business Roundtable on Climate Change: ABARE, *Economic Impact of Climate Change Policy*, 2006.

⁵ Press release, 28 May 2007

⁶ *Final Report of the Prime Ministerial Task Group on Emissions Trading*, May 2007 Executive Summary p.10-13, <http://www.pmc.gov.au/publications/emissions/index.cfm>

⁷ Chris Reidy, *Energy and transport subsidies in Australia*, Final Report, Greenpeace Australia 2007, p.iii, <http://www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/australia/resources/reports/climate-change/energy-and-transport-subsidies.pdf>



Drowning Democracy

GREG HARDWICK



The nightly news often brings tales of grief and despair and when your wife asks you to come and look at the television, the expression on her face hides nothing. There on the evening news, the State's leader has just announced the Government's plans to build a dam. A dam, that when built, will mean your house, your land; in fact your entire community within the next five years will be a drowned memory. You and your family are being forced to sacrifice the very thing that provides security and a sense of belonging for the good of a distant, ever-expanding and thirsty urban population.

Unfortunately this is not the stuff of a bad night's sleep – a paranoid nightmare. Nor is it something happening in a far-away Chinese province. It is a very real scenario unfolding in the fertile farming districts in the Mary River Valley, two hours north of Brisbane.

The historic townships of Imbil, Kenilworth, Kandanga and surrounding districts learnt of their fate on a Thursday evening in April 2006. A \$1.7 billion dam at Traveston Crossing to yield only 70 gigalitres per year and almost 1.5 times the area of Sydney Harbour is being forced upon local residents.

Two days after the Premier of Queensland, Peter Beattie, announced to residents his government's intentions to build

a dam, shocked locals sprang into action. With reported statements by the Premier such as 'people power will not stop this dam' and 'this dam will go ahead whether it is feasible or not', there is little wonder that an almost furious local opposition has quickly gathered momentum.

Glenda Pickersgill is a second-generation grazier; her family has owned their land in the Mary River Valley for 30 years. Unfortunately it is only one kilometre upstream from the proposed dam wall, so the announcement was particularly personal. Qualified in Agricultural Science, with 18-years experience in environmental management, she and other locals hurriedly formed the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group.

Her role of coordinating research for the group, coupled with facing the loss of her family's land, has taken its toll. Although the dam is not yet approved, and won't be until after the Federal Government has assessed issues under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, volunteer land acquisitions have curiously already commenced. For the residents, facing such uncertainty has resulted in cases of depression and anxiety amongst a community that has ironically won national awards for riverbank and catchment restoration.

'The Mary River communities have worked hard to restore the Mary River catchment and protect the region's unique

ecosystems,' she points out. But, as a result of the dam proposal 'people are choosing to sell to the Government, given there are no other purchasers in the market'.

'There are also lots of people who don't wish to sell. We love where we live and love the community. And we know there are alternatives to the dam that are cheaper, less risky and less damaging, socially and environmentally.'

With such an upheaval, the makeup of local communities is changing as well.

'Friends and families are moving away, properties are now being rented as opposed to owner occupied and there are increased instances of crime and violence – it has changed our key community values and demography,' Ms Pickersgill adds.

Greens lead Senate candidate for Queensland and Environmental Lawyer Larissa Waters explains the absolute power of the State Government in cases such as the Traveston Crossing Dam.

'The Queensland Acquisition of Land Act allows the State Government to acquire land for particular purposes and requires that the parties agree on the amount, or if they cannot, the Land Court decides at what price the land should be bought. There are no grounds for appeal.'

The dam will create issues other than its direct impacts upon communities. According to various reports, the Traveston Crossing Dam will drown cultural heritage sites, severely impact already threatened species - the Mary River Cod, Mary River Turtle and Queensland Lungfish (internationally significant and an Aboriginal totem) – and affect the Great Sandy Straits and RAMSAR declared wetlands. In Stage 1 the depth of the dam will average five metres, providing an ideal habitat for aquatic weed species. Despite all the impacts, it will also do nothing to solve falling water supplies.

The Mary River Council of Mayors (a group of nine mayors representing councils in the Mary River Valley) commissioned a study that found the Traveston Dam would supply water at three times the cost of other options (such as efficient use of existing water supplies) and importantly, that the dam, - in fact any extra dams - are simply not necessary.

The track record of the Queensland Government with its dam building exercises would come as no comfort to residents in the Mary River Valley. The Paradise Dam, 80 kilometres southwest of Bundaberg, according to the World Wildlife Fund, ranks as 'one of the six failed dams worldwide'. Similar stories to those in the Mary River Valley have emerged of 'heavy-handed tactics' being used by the Government to 'force' residents to sell land.

"building dams in a time of reduced rainfall is like buying an extra wallet to solve a cash flow problem."

The incidence of dams displacing people and threatening local ecosystems is not isolated to Queensland. The Tillegra Dam in the Hunter Valley north of Newcastle is another similar story. Rich agricultural land, world heritage listed areas such as

Barrington Tops National Park and once again people facing removal from their land ... all in the name of the water requirements of a thirsty and growing urban population.

This story is so common that as part of next year's World Exhibition in Zaragoza, Spain, the civil society pavilion will 'pay homage to the persons and communities affected by large water projects' and 'publicise social and territorial trauma, which tens of millions of people have suffered worldwide' as a result of water policies.

Wayne Cameron, from the Bulimba Creek Catchment Coordinating Committee is assisting the nomination of the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group – Australia's only entry.

'It is amazing, on the driest continent on the earth, that this country could not find time to enter such an important and relevant world event,' said Mr Cameron.

'It just shows that sometimes the grass roots people can achieve some of the most important things,' he added.

But are the politicians reacting to the demands of the voting public? President of the Australian Conservation Foundation, Professor Ian Lowe, speaking at the recent Towards 2020 Conference and Expo on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, said that governments tend to react to issues such as the so-called 'water crisis' by simply 'building things'.

Is it a desire to leave a tangible legacy? Solutions such as reducing water demand through increased efficiency or rainwater tanks in urban homes are difficult to place plaques upon. And building dams in a time of reduced rainfall is perhaps like Professor Lowe points out: buying an extra wallet to solve a cash flow problem. However, as existing dam levels fall, residents of cities such as Brisbane expect action from the Government.

'We are tired of all the talk. We have been doing our bit and saving water, but the government just appears to want to continue talking about the options,' said Venita Manning, a resident of inner city Brisbane.

'We want action that is fair for others as well,' she added.

The fight against the dam in the Mary River Valley is not a case of a 'not in my backyard' mentality. Nor is it an isolated incident. As precious water supplies dwindle throughout the country, the Traveston Crossing Dam is perhaps an example of democracy being drowned by a Government less willing to listen to the people they serve.

Greg Hardwick is a Freelance Writer, living just north of Noosa, Queensland. He is the current Editor of the Sunshine Coast Eco News.

For more information

<http://www.savethemaryriver.com/>, <http://www.ourgreatsandy.com/>, <http://swampnews.squarespace.com/home/>, <http://www.qldwi.com.au/about/index.shtml>

Guest Green

JACK MUNDEY



Jack Munday is a hero to a dear friend of mine who is part of a very old, distinguished, Brisbane family and who has probably never voted anything but Liberal in her life. She loves Jack – a former Communist and secretary of the New South Wales Builders Labourers Federation - because, as she says, no one has done more to preserve Australian heritage and to teach Australians to do the same. As a noted heritage activist herself, she knows how difficult it can be to go up against the barbarians who value only money and so she regularly brings Jack to Brisbane so that the legend of Jack Munday can give extra emphasis to the heritage protection work she is doing.

And it is some legend. Jack headed the New South Wales BLF at a pivotal time in Australian history – the early seventies. It was Jack who coined the term 'green' as it applied to political action in the famous Green Bans campaigns in Sydney and elsewhere. The word was then taken up by the German environmental activist Petra Kelly and used when she founded that country's 'Green' Party. Because of these bans, applied in cooperation with local communities and community groups, many of Australia's most famous heritage places have been protected from developers – the Rocks, Centennial Park, Woolloomooloo, Theatre Royal and many others. Jack even wanted to extend the green bans to nature conservation issues like the struggle to stop the damming of Lake Pedder and sand mining on Fraser Island. These activities by the union and associated community groups led to major reforms in Australian planning laws, including heritage protection and a much greater emphasis on community consultation.

The BLF was also very involved in other radical issues of the day – opposition to the Vietnam War and to racism, promoting women in the workforce (including as builders labourers) and democratic decision making in the union itself. Union democracy included limited tenure in positions and so, when Jack's time as secretary was up, he stepped down. Unfortunately, this came at a time when a coalition of employers and the corrupt federal organisation of the BLF managed to get the New South Wales-based union

de-registered and Munday, along with two other leading members of the union Joe Owens and Bob Pringle, were all blackballed. Jack never worked in the industry again and, apart from a stint as a councillor on the Sydney City Council (which was sacked by a Labor state government because it had an environmental consciousness), he has never had full-time work since.

Nevertheless, he has made an outstanding contribution as an environmentalist. He was, for many years, a councillor on the Australian Conservation Foundation, was chairman of the Heritage Houses Trust of NSW 1995-2001 (and is currently their patron), is a life member of the NSW Labour Council and in 2004 was elected a Living National Treasure on the National trust list.

Jack joined the Greens in 2003 and believes there is a great need for the Greens in Australian politics and strongly supports Greens policies. He is a little surprised that the party has not had more of a bounce from the widespread recognition of climate change as a major factor in the next federal election but feels that this may be due to a delay in people catching up with what is really needed to deal effectively with reducing greenhouse gases. He does have some concerns about such Green assertions as 'green politics is neither left nor right' because he thinks the Greens are naturally part of the Left – the 'thinking' Left. He would also like to see the Greens forge stronger links with progressive trade unions.

You get some idea of what Jack Munday means to many people when you stand in a bar with him and see the number of ordinary workers who want to come up to him and say hello. For them, he symbolizes pride in being a worker. As Jack says, after the big, militant BLF wage struggle of 1970, workers went from saying 'I'm just a builders labourer' to asserting 'I'm a bloody BL.'

Drew Hutton



Environmental Principles and Policies: an interdisciplinary approach

SHARON BEDER 2006
UNSW Press
Paperback 336pp AUD\$54.95
ISBN 0 86840 857 3.

Sharon Beder burst onto the scene in 1989 with a book called Toxic Fish and Sewer Surfing which uncovered the true state of affairs behind the phony public relations campaign designed to reassure a Sydney public which had become increasingly skeptical about ocean outfall. Since then she has developed an international reputation for her devastating critiques of corporate attempts to manipulate public opinion about their environmental records.

Sharon also writes textbooks (good ones too – I have used them with my students at university). Her latest – Environmental Principles and Policies: an interdisciplinary approach combines her strong background in pedagogy with her preparedness to challenge the powerful. This book examines the assumption that economic instruments and market-based policies can adequately address environmental problems like global warming. She gives a resounding 'no' to this question after systematically examining the various options such as trading rights and offsets.

For Beder, no amount of tinkering with these instruments can fix the problem. Economics-based environmental policies leave out the vital element in environmental protection - public discussion and decisions about values, ethics, social goals, principles and priorities. Ultimately, she says, it is an educated, empowered, participating community that ensures the development of environmental policy that guarantees equity, human rights, livable communities and, ultimately, environmental protection.

Drew Hutton

book reviews



The Hollow Men: a study in the politics of deception

NICKY HAGER 2006
Craig Potton Publishing
Paperback 352pp AUD\$34.95

A book about the 2005 New Zealand election would seem to have little immediate relevance to the readers of this magazine. But the parallels with the 2004 Australian federal election are remarkable and the likelihood of similar events at this country's 2007 federal election is high.

Firstly, Hager unravels the bizarre but effective alliance between the shadowy Exclusive Brethren and the leader of New Zealand's biggest conservative party, National. Don Brash, a former Governor of the Reserve Bank of New Zealand, was elected leader of National in 2005. Touted as a man of principle and even 'above politics', Brash organized with the Exclusive Brethren for this secretive, extremist religious group to launch vicious attacks on both Labour and Greens parties in the lead up to the election, all the time denying that any connection existed. Brash also unashamedly played the race card, developed strong links with US neo-conservatives and employed the unscrupulous, push-polling, wedge politics experts – the Australians Lynton Crosby and Mark Textor. All these recall the approach of Australia's John Howard.

Ultimately it was Brash's substitution of big business influence on National policy for proper party processes that led to the alienation of party members who leaked damaging material to Hager. Hager was then able to tell in astonishing and damaging detail the story of how Brash and National almost won the 2005 election using dishonest, illegal, cynical methods. Brash desperately tried to injunct The Hollow Men but, when it was published in 2006, Brash resigned soon after.

Mandatory reading for anyone wanting to know the sorts of things John Howard is likely to get up to in the next few months.

Drew Hutton



The Forest Wars

JUDITH A. AJANI 2007
Melbourne University Press
Paperback 368pp AUD\$34.95
ISBN 0 522 85419 2

On being presented a book written by a forest economist, it would be understandable if the potential reader turned to something more likely to be read and understood. That would be a mistake in this case. Judith Ajani (probably better known to most environmental campaigners as Judy Clark) has told a fascinating story about one of the most controversial political issues of our times – the decades-long fight over the forests.

Forests have been at the forefront of the last four federal elections and many other state elections, right up to the 2004 federal election when John Howard, with the help of the Forestry Division of the CFMEU, used the issue of Tasmanian forests to whip up a last-minute scare about jobs to his advantage. As an adviser to the conservation movement Judy saw much of this conflict at close hand. She brought her expertise to bear on the alternatives available to native forest logging, and especially to native forest woodchipping.

This book documents the many, bitter fights between the timber industry and environmentalists, beginning in the 1970s with the introduction of woodchipping. It also shows, clearly and definitively, the irrationality and irresponsibility of those in the timber industry and governments who refused to accept it was possible to have a prosperous forest industry without logging native forests – through exploiting the country's existing plantations.

Apart from the many heroes of the environment movement this book pays tribute to those in the timber industry like Rod McInnes of the Queensland Timber Board who had the vision (and the good fortune not to have an export woodchip industry in the state) to work with Aila Keto and Premier Peter Beattie to develop the only worthwhile regional forest agreement in Australia. However, the lack of vision by others will ensure the forest wars continue.

Drew Hutton

Bob's back page



Thorpie's Blue Tier

Ian Thorpe is an environmentalist. Besides which, he has a keen intellect, including what seemed to be a photographic memory. His two-hour show, on Fox8 in July, covered visits to six of Australia's wild places. Here we are in northern Tasmania's Blue Tier where forests will be under 20 years of attack if Gunns' polluting pulp mill gets Malcolm Turnbull's go ahead in September. In June 11,000 Tasmanians clogged downtown Launceston in protest against the pulp mill proposal. An earlier pro-mill meeting featuring Premier Paul Lennon attracted a crowd of 47.

Suffer the children

After 11 years of turning his back, refusing to express sorrow and casting the 'black armband' history into the gutter, John Howard has arrived at the rescue of Aboriginal children. Way back in 1999, Professor Boni Robertson of Queensland's Griffith University wrote a report warning Australia:

While the violence being regularly committed in Indigenous Communities has become front-page news, it is not new. It has been acknowledged by Indigenous and non-Indigenous forums for many years. The people who could have made a difference have failed to intervene to stop innocent women and children from being bashed, raped, mutilated and murdered and exposed to forms of violence that have been allowed to escalate to a level that is now a national disgrace.

Our Prime Minister ignored her. Eight years later, looking for an issue to save himself, Mr Howard is at last taking action. We Greens will do all we can to make that action more helpful than hurtful. If only our spokesperson on Indigenous affairs, Rachel Siewert, were Prime Minister!

Status party

I am delighted by the candidates selected in the Greens winnable seats for the Senate and the House. If only a few cross the hurdles and make it into the parliament, the Greens

team will be invigorated and enriched. Just one more senator and we will have party status (with extra staff). We will have the best party ever.

Queensland rain

A few months back I went to Central Queensland's Blackwater to face angry coalminers about the Greens' global warming policies. The mood was greatly mellowed by a thunderstorm which drenched the town with three inches of drought breaking rain as we arrived. So I was doubly happy when more than an inch dropped on Brisbane in June when I returned to launch young barrister Larissa Waters' bid to be the Sunshine state's first Greens senator.

Howard reigns

After 10 years of drought, our Prime Minister asked us all to pray for rain, and rain it did. But all's not as it seems. At Senate Estimates in May I asked the Bureau of Meteorology expert who confirmed that they had predicted an above average likelihood of rain due to the La Nina phenomenon of altered sea temperatures emerging in the Pacific. It turns out Mr Howard's call to prayer came within a week or two of those predictions being announced. However he has claimed none of responsibility for the \$1 billion flood damage which followed.

Gallery pleasure

Paul ignored my 'I simply can't do this AND go to Brisbane AND get ready for Parliament etc etc' laments and pushed on to set up an exhibition of 100 of my photos taken since 1960 at Hobart's Long Gallery in May. In six days, 2,500 people came along and 160 photos were sold to aid the election campaign. Now the show is off to Launceston and, in September, Melbourne. See www.greenart.com.au The wallaby in the snow near Cradle Mountain (below) was a favourite, as were the Franklin River and Liffey photos. In my parallel universe I am strapped to a camera, wandering on a wild ocean's shore just as the morning sun lights up the ripples on the storm-strewn sand and the oyster catchers pursue the receding tide.

Being green

Christine knows more about fixing climate change than anyone else on Capital Hill. Kerry is Parliament's action senator for Australia's motto of 'a fair go'. Rachel is the champion of First Australians and knows better than any other MP how to save the soil we sing about in the national anthem. It is a huge privilege to be a Greens senator in their company. And a great pleasure to know that you and 9,000 more are part of this party bringing hope to Australia's future. May the federal election rejuvenate our parliament with a show of new Greens!

Best wishes
Bob Brown





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Wildness can be a way of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures.

a part of the geography of hope." - Wallace Stenger

