GREEN POLITICS: WHY NOT IN AMERICA?
By Jay Queenin

Green politics may be an unfamiliar term to most of us in the United States unless you've had the opportunity to study Western European politics. In its simplest definition, Green politics advocates humans living in greater harmony with nature. To accomplish this, Greens call for decentralization, slower economic development and greater civil liberties. In most Western European countries, this Green movement receives a consistent 5-10% of the vote which enables them to have a direct role in government policy.

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INTERNATIONAL WASTE TRADE
By Alyson Molloy

Out of sight, out of mind, people seem to accept this philosophy when dealing with the toxic waste. They figure that as long as the garbage is off of American soil it can no longer do harm to Americans. How wrong they are. In the July/August edition of Greenpeace Magazine an article titled "Help Stop the International Waste Trade" reported how United States companies sell their toxic wastes to countries like Haiti, Brazil, Canada, Jamaica, Guatemala, South Africa, Mexico, and Tonga. These countries, many of which are underdeveloped, welcome the monetary exchange.

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BUSH'S ENERGY POLICIES
By David J. Lang

Last February, President Bush released his National Energy Strategy. He declared that its purpose would be to lay "the foundation for a more efficient, less vulnerable, and environmentally sustainable energy future." However, when we look at this strategy, it does not seem to do this at all. The main focus of the plan is upon increased production of fossil fuels, nuclear energy, and deregulation of industry. All of these things so far, have proved to be environmentally unstable. The stress on conservation, which is desperately needed, has been noticeably lacking. Taking cues from the so called "environmental President" could prove to be devastating to the U.S. in the long run.

One problem that has arisen involves the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which has been targeted by the oil industry, who claims it has a large oil deposit. So far, the National Energy Security Act, which would open up the refuge to coastal oildrilling, has been approved by the Senate Energy Committee, and is now being run through Congress. The sad thing about this all, is the fact that we would be ruining the last protected Arctic ecosystem in the U.S., for what has been described as at best, a 205-day supply of oil.

The National Energy Security Act, would also speed up the licensing process for nuclear and hydropower energy. Hydroelectric dams are killing rivers, and wiping out species of fish, like the Snake River Sockeye and the Colorado Squawfish.

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"What on Earth" was begun by the Environmental and Wildlife Club for the sole purpose of promoting awareness. This is where it all begins, for how can we go about improving our world unless we know what needs to be improved?

The Wall Street Journal reported on Nov. 8, 1991, the results of the Roper survey. This survey, commissioned by S.C. Johnson & Son Inc., measures the nation's knowledge of environmental issues. We flunked. The average score was 33 out of 100 points. Even the "True-Blue Greens", who are regularly environmentally active, scored only 40 points.

What does this mean? Richard Carpenter, the president of Johnson, said that "While we want to do what is environmentally right, it appears we Americans don't always know what that is."

Again, that's where we come in. We hope that these editions of "What on Earth" educate you on such issues as water and air pollution, global warming, ozone-layer depletion, deforestation, etc. The list goes on and on.

Now is where you come in. Take our suggestions, our helpful hints, write to your state and federal representatives. We can make a difference if we learn from the mistakes and each do our little part in remedying them. Good luck and thank you.

Dorian Reiser and Jen Frese

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As always, the question remains. What can we do about it? It seems that the best way to get anything through the thick heads of Congress people is to send them massive amounts of letters. If you care in the slightest, take five minutes out of your day and write your representatives:

US Senate & House of Reps
Washington DC 20510

Also, you can call the Alaska Coalition at (202) 675-2371. And don't forget to tell your senators to recycle the letters.

Compiled from National Parks

International Waste Trade from p.1

These countries are getting much more than they bargained for. "Mercury waste from American Cyanamid, for example, has contributed to contamination of the Umgeni River in Natal, South Africa to a level 8600 times higher than EPA standards."

Perhaps you are thinking, well, there are not many people over there, or at least my friends and I do not have to worry about being contaminated by these wastes. This, however, is far from the truth. These wastes enter the air we breathe and are spread all over the world, contributing to all types of health problems including lung and bone damage and birth defects.

So what can you, a Providence College student, do to stop these billion dollar companies from selling toxic waste? The first step for this (or any other environmental concern) is to write to your federal representatives. These people are being paid a lot of money every year to represent you in Washington D.C., so why not make them earn your dollars. The environment is a hot issue in Congress these days and believe it or not your letter really can make a difference. Encourage your friends and relatives to write to their representatives as well. Inform people about the issues that concern you, like toxic waste, so that you can help to stop these hazardous elements from polluting our world any more than it already has.
Green Politics from p.1

If successful in other Western democracies, why is it that the Greens are unable to capture any direct political power here in the US? One answer can be found in the differing electoral systems. In Western Europe, seats in parliament are determined proportionally. This means that if a party receives 10% of the total vote, they are allocated 10% of the seats in parliament. In the US, seats in Congress are determined by district plurality. This system is designed for two party competition thus limiting the ability of smaller third parties to gain political representation. Another reason for the Greens lack of success is due to the fact that they have a weak internal organization. Traditionally, the Greens have shunned any type of authority which has led to the formation of a very loose coalition of varying environmental interests. Finally the Greens have failed to move from the slogans of the 70’s to the scientific discourse of the 90’s. In this day and age, slogans alone will not garner the broad political support needed to become a dominant political force.

How then can the Greens become a future political force in American politics? Since the electoral system is likely to remain unchanged, the answer must be found elsewhere. Their internal structure must become more powerful because ignoring power does not make it go away, it simply allows it to fall into the hands of others. Instead of mere slogans, they must scientifically educate the population on the dangers of destroying our environment. Lastly, they could create a new national political force through a coalition with other smaller movements such as the feminists and pacifists. By doing this they would gain electoral strength.

The environment is an issue that affects us all. Hopefully, in the future, there will be a political option for those of us who choose the environment as the dominant issue facing our nation.

Compiled from Greenpeace, July/Aug 1991 and European Politics Today by Frank L. Wilson

WHICH ROAD NEXT?

By Michael Leyden

In 1975, the nation passed the first fuel efficiency standards for cars. Some sixteen years later, the automakers still remain reluctant to take a definite stand for efficient cars. The recent war in Iraq illustrated our country’s reliance on foreign oil, more than half of which is used to fuel our nation’s automobiles. It seems absurd that we should place such a premium on oil when motor vehicles account for the greatest amount of air pollution of any human action. They also are largely responsible for the occurrence of the awful greenhouse effect. Because the car population is presently growing faster than the human population, the problems of air pollution and the greenhouse effect are accelerating.

The marketplace establishes itself as a barrier toward a greater acceptance of fuel-efficient cars. Automakers, in their engineering and advertising, have persuaded car buyers to purchase overpowered cars with fast acceleration, styling, and handling. These cars may be excellent for car chases through the city, but are they really necessary? Shouldn’t automakers place more emphasis on safety, efficiency, and carbon dioxide emissions?

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Senator Richard Bryan and Senator Slade Gorton have introduced a bill this year which would raise the standard for new cars to about 40 miles per gallon by the year 2005. It would also result in other energy saving strategies such as reducing the weight of automobiles by 10 percent and turning off the engine when the car is not in motion. Another route the government could take would be to put more money and effort into the research of alternatives to gasoline such as: compressed natural gas, methanol, electricity, and hydrogen. Although these excellent alternatives do present some problems, these problems are for the most part minor and quite solvable.

If the government doesn't use any tactics to fight this problem, their only choice would be to raise fuel prices. This would definitely heighten the appeal of energy-efficient automobiles. However, this would be unfair as it would make us, the consumers, pay for something we shouldn't be held responsible for, especially when there are other solutions in sight. For information about the bill and what you can do to help, write: Office of Legislative Affairs National Wildlife Federation 1400 16th Street N.W. Washington D.C. 20036

Compiled by National Wildlife, Aug/Sept 1991

As I look out my window, I notice a few sparse trees standing tall in the firr earth below and wonder, "What good are trees anyway?" As an ignorant onlooker I have failed, along with others, to delve into the anatomy of a tree. Granted I know that trees are used for industrial (houses, desks, etc) and leisure (tree swings, firewood, etc) purposes, but what I have overlooked is the environmental impact of trees.

After a brief study my brain has become enriched with tree facts and what I have discovered is that these lumbering pillars actually hold the long-term key to survival on this great and wondrous planet.

Trees, in general, are responsible for absorbing carbon dioxide, the gas that is most responsible for global warming, from the atmosphere and converting it into oxygen, which is essential to human survival. In the tropical rainforests there are mass numbers of trees that contribute to this process. So far everything looks good, but as with everything, there is a catch. In order to meet the demanding needs of countries many trees are being cut down, in fact, more than 130 square miles every 24 hours. Many bleak outcomes result from this rapid deforestation, such as the extinction of wildlife and plant species, not to mention the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. This carbon dioxide is released when the trees storing it are burned down. This results in the increase of the global warming process.

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ON INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY
By Dr. Dorsett

This year's ozone "hole" in the Antarctic is the deepest on record, and the global average stratospheric ozone also has reached a new low. The decade of the 80's was the warmest on record, and climatologists warn of a runaway "greenhouse," as atmospheric carbon dioxide levels continue to rise. Rainforests disappear at increasing rates, as farmers and ranchers and loggers, especially in the Amazon Basin, chop down trees. Along with the forests, the thousands of species-whole species, the products of 3.8 billion years of evolution-also disappear each year.

The news isn't getting any better for planet Earth. Hello, is anybody there?

We tend to assign such problems to governments and international agencies for solution. Let Congress set new auto emission standards, let the United Nation's Environment Programme manage the Amazon Basin. What can I do as one person among 5.5 billion?

After all, I certainly don't control the electric industry and I didn't captain the Exxon Valdez. They're the ones responsible for this mess, after all. They're the ones who brought us acid rain and oil-soaked birds. Aren't they?

Well, yes. Big industries and big oil tankers can be big polluters. But consider the cumulative effect of individual actions:

500 million motor vehicles ply the world's roads and consume about half the world's oil. They're responsible for 14% of the carbon dioxide output worldwide (24% of it in the United States), half the nitrogen oxides (which contribute to acid rain and photochemical smog) and two-thirds of the carbon monoxide.

That's you and me. We're doing that. 500 million of us are out there driving. And proportionally more of us in the good old US are contributing more to the problem, since we, who are 5% of the world's population consume 25% of the oil. Maybe more.

And our refrigerators leak freon, which drifts into the stratosphere and eats ozone. Especially when we discard old refrigerators or old air conditioners in old cars, they leak freon.

That's you and me. We do that. We individually dump tons of other waste, too. And there are lots of us. So it accumulates. The cumulative effects of lots of people doing little things add up to global problems. Says Pogo, "I have met the enemy, and he is us."

The good news is, if we all changed our ways, in little ways, it would make a big difference:

If everyone obeyed the speed limit, this nation would save 18 million barrels of oil each year.

If all the nation's automobile tires were properly inflated, all the time, we would save another 17.5 million barrels yearly.

If we all replaced just four 60 watt incandescent lights with new compact fluorescents, we'd save about 50 million barrels.

Not to mention the savings that would accrue if we parked the cars and rode bikes from time to time. Or walked. Or if we turned down the thermostat and bundled up in sweaters.

Little changes in behavior, little changes in lifestyle, little changes in attitude just might save this planet.
Naturally, there are many efforts underway to decrease this rapid deforestation. A good idea is the massive replanting of trees on acres of agriculturally unfertile land. There is even a deal in which companies agree to plant trees in a ratio comparable to the amount of carbon dioxide their factories emit into the air. These solutions are a start but the real keys to solving this problem are action and awareness. Consumers should become more aware of the problem and consider whether or not they should continue to buy products from companies responsible for the deforestation. As with everything, money comes into play. The reforestation process costs billions of dollars and the government, businesses and citizens need to consider funding this project. Lastly, "What can I do?" you ask. All I can suggest is not to look at a tree like it's a worthless object because it holds the key to whether or not your future relatives spend their vacations in 300+ degree climates. P.S. Plant a tree, who cares if it's not Arbor Day.

Compiled from International Wildlife, Sept/Oct 1991

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SACRIFICING THE ARCTIC FOR A DROP OF OIL

By Erika Gasper

Each student reading this paper could very conceivably see the last drop of the Earth's oil supply be consumed. The unofficial U.S. Department of Energy estimate is 75 years until the depletion of the reserves. Perhaps this is not a fact that every student has contemplated, or even realized, but in this light, some important concerns about our country's energy policy are provoked. Our country spent billions of dollars fighting for an unrenewable source of fuel that will deplete within our lifetimes. Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Energy dedicated a mere one percent of its budget for renewable systems and energy efficiency programs over the past years. However outrageous these acts may seem, they are past crimes, there is little the general public can do now.

The present picture does not brighten. 46 million acres of pristine Alaskan Artic waters whose intricate mazes of ice support a diversity of wildlife may soon look like the black, dead shores that are victims of the Valdez spill. Big Oil already has access to 90% of the Artic coastline and now wants the last 10%, the 125 mile coastal plan of the Artic National Wildlife Refuge. Under the Interior Department's new 5-year plan, an additional 91.5 Artic acres, 337 million acres of Alaska's Bering Sea and North Pacific coasts, 337 million acres of the Atlantic Coast, the Gulf of Mexico and Southern California may follow.

The Artic-marine ecosystem is delicate and complex. As even the Department of the Interior admits, chronic and reoccurring...
spills are likely. Industry admits it does not have the technology to clean up oil in these harsh conditions where broken and solid ice remain in the Arctic most of the year. These inevitable spills will destroy rich forests of kelp, delicate algae and crustaceans which the endangered bowhead whale and several species of seabirds depend on for survival. Oil will block pathways in the ice which serve as migratory routes, resting, breathing, and feeding areas for whales, walrus, seals, polar bears, and millions of species of seabirds.

The delicate and beautiful Arctic ecosystem will be forever damaged from our country’s oil seeking endeavors. This pricetag of permanent destruction does not even bring a great benefit to the American people. For the 46 million acres already under lease to oil companies, we will only obtain between 42 and 288 days of oil. The entirety of the Interior’s 5-year plan will supply less than 2 years of oil.

This gross imbalance of cost and benefit would seem illogical to even a grammar school child. Yet the leaders of our country proceed with tunnel vision towards the Earth’s last drops of oil. They have no foresight to the dead Arctic we will be left with after 2 years, to the black world we will create in the next 75 years. Our government is blind to renewable energy systems using solar, wind, hydrogen fuel cells, and other promising technologies which can eliminate the need for fossil fuels and nuclear energy. Every student on this campus and every citizen of this country who hears of this outrage has a responsibility to make our leaders change these policies. Write or call Senators and Representatives from your home state, or Senators Pell and Chafee, Representatives Machtley and Reed from Rhode Island. Urge them to reject the Bush Administration’s National Energy Strategy, to work for energy efficiency, conservation, and renewable energy as the basis for our country’s energy policy. Write to the Secretary of the Interior demanding that he cancel the new lease sales for the Beaufort Sea and Chukchi Sea, as well as all proposed leases under the 5-year plan to exploit oil from the Arctic Ocean and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Let us all do our part to prevent the pristine wilderness of our ancient planet from being sacrificed to the black lifeless sludge that is worth less years than our own short lives. The addresses are listed below:

The Honorable Manuel Lujan
US Dept. of the Interior
18th and C Streets, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Representative______
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Senator______
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Compiled from Greenpeace,
Omni, May 1991