

WOMAN SPEAK!

CARIBBEAN JOURNAL - No. 28, 1992

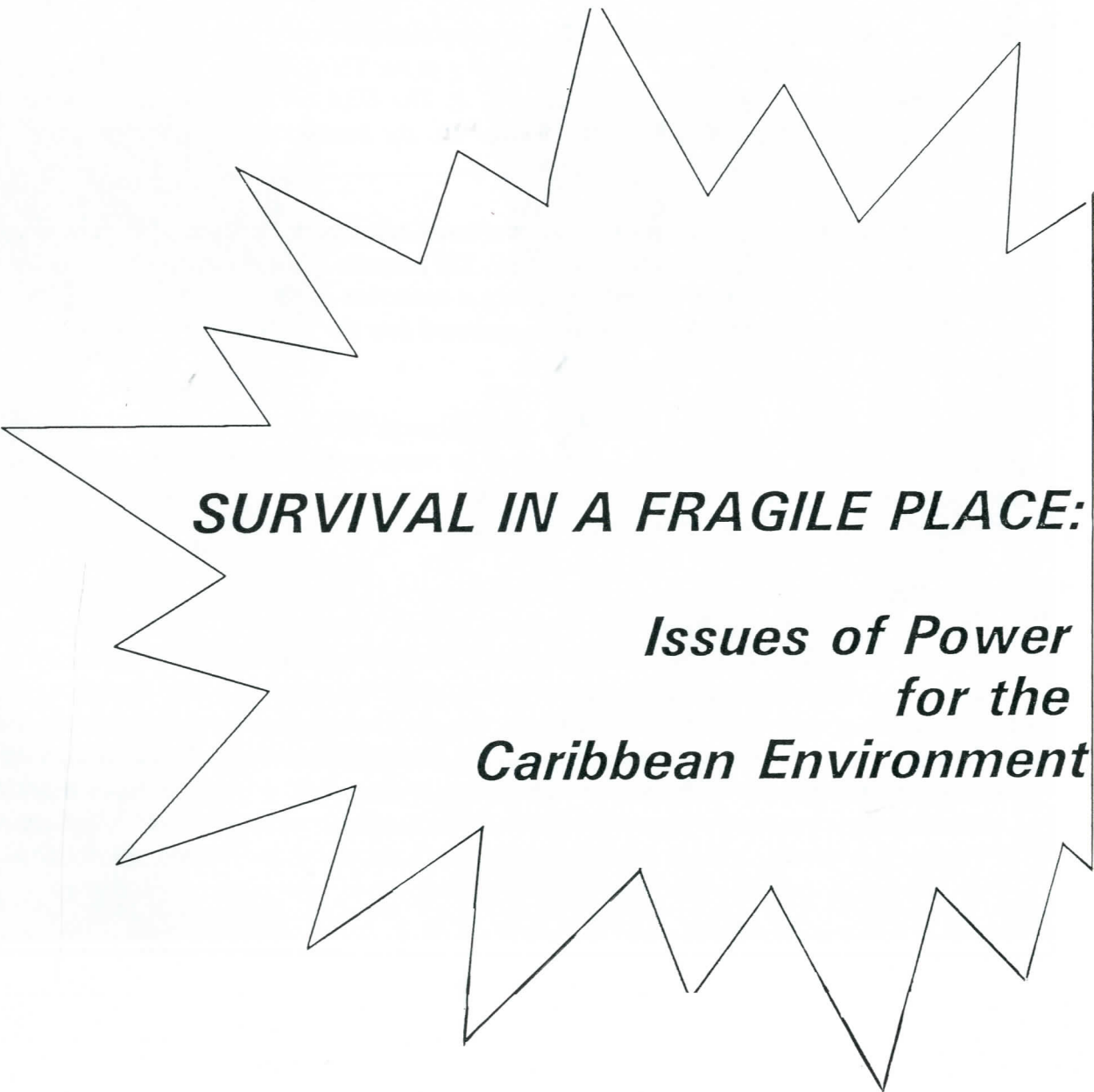


SURVIVAL IN A FRAGILE PLACE:

***Issues of Power
for the
Caribbean Environment***

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Setting The Scene

It's been an open secret for ten years, though starting with Ronald Reagan, folks don't like to talk about it, the United States economy is in crisis. Trouble started when the manufacturing sector lost its competitive edge to Japan. A restructuring of the economy away from manufacturing toward a huge service sector was set in motion. But what's good for MacDonalds, Mickey Mouse or even Midland Bank is not as good for America as General Motors sure was. These days only the US defense industry is out in front of the rest of the world in know-how and production. While that's a boon for the likes of the stealth bomber manufacturers, it's environmentally unfriendly, not to mention kinda unseemly for the Land of the Free, having just vanquished the enemy with bare economics.

What can our Friendly Impecunious Giant Neighbour to the North do to redress the problem? First, the USA needs cheap places to manufacture things, and markets to sell them in. The cost of production is determined by the cost of resources - capital, technologies, raw material, labour - but since these costs are high in the US, and since manufacturers cannot do anything about these costs in the US, they seek cheap sources of labour in the Third World - especially among women. Second, the USA has something big going for it. The USA controls the major global financial institutions set up by the West after World War II: the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.

So, it is not a coincidence that brings us to Structural Adjustment Policies. These are being applied globally out of "the medicine chest" of the IMF. The purpose of these measures is to depress wages which is meant to encourage investment. Since a reduction in the cost of technologies would not be in the interests of profit, labour must be squeezed into the global potion to make America well again.

But let's not make the mistake of confusing the strategic power held by the US government with the global economic system and the agendas of its transnational corporations. Recently, during a television interview in Barbados, a visiting businessman extolling the international marketplace commented, "The world won't wait for the laggards; not even Uncle Sam".

The productive systems we know are being transformed by the technological revolution. In the new game the masters must be faster. To dominate, a country must score in the rapid transformation of substance and energy. The colonising process that converted "the wild" into "free gifts of nature" into "natural resources" moves on: "Only by accepting that water is a tradable commodity, like coal, oil and timber, will sensible decisions be possible", predicts the Economist 28.03.92. Meanwhile, US industry is desperate to secure markets through free trade, initially with Canada and Mexico, but with plans to take down the fences all the way to South America. Huge political changes are about. How will all this affect the finite earth we live in? Perhaps some day America will be one big trading block from the hole in the ozone layer above the Arctic all the way to the hole in the ozone layer above Tierra del Fuego.



'Sea Wall', Karen De Souza

Writing about Haiti, Caribbean novelist, Wilson Harris observes: "The necessity to break such a cement of tragedy and to release a different vision of possibilities runs much deeper than the vocabulary of politics, the vocabulary of cliché-ridden realism, cliché-ridden violence, that exercises its dreadful enchantment upon masses of people around the globe." The bodily health of the Caribbean is being overtaken by this illness: the "charisma of violence". We will have to find the means of our transformation if we are to survive.

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- The Carib motif used throughout this issue is from a brooch designed by Josette Norris of St. Vincent.



The Red Set Girls and Jack-in-the-Green.
Drawing: Xmas, 1836, Jamaica. Isaac Mendes Belisario

Festivals throughout the Caribbean grow from the aesthetics of their Asian, African, European and Amerindian origins. Their transformation by the Caribbean environment is evidence of the reshaping power of human perceptions of all nature including our perceptions of where we are and who we are with.

WOMAN SPEAK! Journal - No. 28 1992

Editor: Nan Peacocke

WOMAN SPEAK! Journal is published by the Women and Development Unit (WAND), a division of the School of Continuing Studies of the University of the West Indies. Please address all enquiries to:

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Detail from 'Christmas is Coming', Ronnie Carrington

Export agriculture reshaped the Caribbean landscape in all forms of relationship.

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HOW THIS ISSUE WAS PUT TOGETHER

The material available for this issue was overwhelming. Special thanks to Cheryl King and Peggy Antrobus for the copious sources you made available to the Media Production Unit room (many days we hid from you). Thanks to Debbie Moseley, Veronica Gaston and Michelle Barrow for the initial discussions on the approach we could use, essential to the process of selecting material. Thanks Brenda Thomas for checking on our progress and for your world atlas!

The previous issue "Working Hands", which looked at the topic of women's organisations in relation to work, was inspired by a regional meeting of women (WAND's 10th anniversary consultation). That broad consultation of women from their areas of experience was examined in the light of Caribbean historical research by Rhoda Reddock, Joan French, Honor Ford-Smith, and the theoretical work of Selma James. "Working Hands" marked the evolution of Woman Speak! into a resource document. Concentrating on the relationship between paid and unpaid work, the issue addressed from a Caribbean perspective, the major conceptual breakthrough of the women's movement worldwide in the period since 1975: counting women's work. As a result of the feedback on that issue, we decided to shape Woman Speak! consciously as WAND's representation of issues and theory as part of efforts by Caribbean women to speak out against the calamities besetting this region and our peoples, and conjure the good spirits of our future.



EDITORIAL

"Environment" is on the global agenda. But consider our home in the Caribbean for a moment. Washed by the occasional hurricane, tossed every century or so by a volcanic eruption, housed on the summit of a submerged mountain or behind a seawall, we are already unconsciously oriented to the topic. There is the physical variety of the Caribbean landscape: an archipelago secured to the continental frame by Belize and Guyana. This part of the planet known for its beauty contrasts with genocide, slavery and indentureship, violent economic forces shaping a complex social landscape which in turn altered the land of the Amerindians.

The impact of this history on the landscape also varies. The geography and ecology of some places have been changed utterly. It took white indentured labour decades to cut down the forest and ready Barbados for a plantation. In some other places, such as the interior of Guyana, people have, until now, been spared from our dreamed-of-development. But modern mining technology in the hands of Korean business could change all that now that the government of Guyana is making vast tracts of land available to multinationals.

Given the fragility of Caribbean ecosystems (forests, coral reefs, mangroves), the high degree of human dependence on the natural environment (agriculture, fishery, even tourism) and the dangerous contortions we put ourselves through to earn foreign exchange, we better become highly aware of what's going on around us. The way to practice this is to start our NGOs monitoring development in each territory, to use the media to let each other know about it, to take action in the interests of our community and to defend the body of the earth we are made of. In this regard, the people of St. Margaret's Belize have a message for us. January, 1991: a Mexican owned road tanker delivering heavy bunker oil on behalf of the monopoly wholesaler, Texaco, overturned spilling 200 US gallons of oil into Dry Creek. **Caribbean Insight** (Mar.'91) reported that not only was the local water supply polluted, but the oil drifted on downstream to affect the nesting grounds of iguana, Hickatee turtle, gibbon and water dogs. When villagers of St. Margaret's saw nothing being done about the spill, they issued a press release, after which Texaco agreed to pay for a clean up.

The workings of global economics have put more pressure on the environment: that is, both on its ecological systems and on its also fragile systems for social equity. In one worldview, the "environment" is an opportunity for a recolonisation of earth so complete as to rob even the seed of regenerative power. The colonisation of plant regeneration is not some bizarre futuristic nightmare. Already, in the Caribbean, farmers are being sold seed that cannot be propagated. With the disappearance of the Soviet Union and the consolidation of capital, the "environment" for the rest of us, becomes the last place left on earth for people's movements to prevail against the violence colonisation generates within human relationships.

These are old troubles in new form. They raise new tasks for the Caribbean women's movement: first, to strengthen social movements by urging, once again, a fuller understanding of the complexity of power in social relations through gender; second, to shape the definition of environment that human well-being is inseparable from the health of natural systems; third, to secure political space for strategies and campaigns being proposed out of woman's experience to be translated into policy. We at WAND hope this issue can help things along.



Coiffure, ou le Triomphe de la Liberté, European courtly masquerader in the 18th century.

Caribbean Festival Arts,



"Just between you and me, shouldn't the World Bank be encouraging more migration of the dirty industries to the LDCs (Lesser Developed Countries)."

*Lawrence Summers, World Bank Vice President,
chief economist. From office memo dated 12.12.91.*

SHIPWRECK DEVELOPMENT

"The starved eye devours the seascape for the morsel of a snail." The Castaway, Derek Walcott

There are always contradictions at work in history, and the Caribbean has a way of attracting some serious ones. In such a climate, public accountability is vital, and the region has generated ways, from calypso to NGOs, of keeping the public aware and politicians in line. The value of the press in this process is crucial as decisions affecting the world's peoples are made through a lofty, inscrutable corporate process uncomplicated by public questioning. NGOs would do well to shape a more professional relationship with the mass media that democratic forms in the region can avail themselves of information based on solid documentation.

Under the MARPOL Convention (Annex 5) the Caribbean Sea has been designated a "special area" and provided with a higher level of protection than other areas of the sea. This is supposed to mean that "ships can no longer dump their waste at sea" and "adequate port facilities must be provided to receive garbage from cruise ships and other vessels."

The Caribbean, like the Mediterranean, qualifies for this status because of its oceanographic and ecological conditions as well as the volume of its vessel traffic. But while the European Community contemplates methods to prevent ships from dumping into the Mediterranean, such as holding the country of origin responsible for its waste, in the Caribbean it's another story.

The Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA) has had to plead with Caribbean governments to be more attentive to a World Bank proposal to build "waste reception facilities" in the islands of the Organisation of East Caribbean States. The project also seeks to change regional laws where necessary so that islands can be better able to take foreign waste.

The CCA has alerted the public to the distinction between ship generated and ship borne waste, explaining that no clear positions as to the origin and

composition of such waste have been established by the project. To make matters worse, there's money talking. The proposed project calls for a US\$72 million investment. Prospective donors include the World Bank's Global Environment Fund (to contribute US\$25 million); the International Development Agency and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (US\$20.5 million); other donors (US\$15.5 million). OECS governments are being asked to contribute US\$11.5 million.

The CCA reported that donor agencies at a meeting in Castries last December were cautious, while one Caribbean donor agency declined to be associated with the project. This is encouraging, considering how tempting it must be for the loan-loving governments of our region to get their hands on more debt.

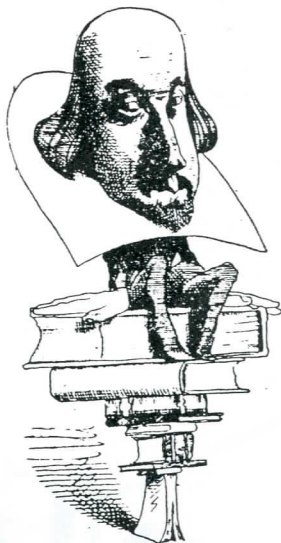
The World Bank project can endanger delicate water systems, coastal zones, marine life and human health. Our situation calls for collectively worked out responses by governments acting in unison, not the fearful, "lost sailor" approach of powerless, scattered, castaway nations.



Caribbean Festival Arts.



Ships have been a major instrument of Caribbean history. Joseph Johnson sailed his headdress Nelson during the Christmas season in London in the 19th century.



"MAN MUST RULE" MENTALITY

"The negation of nature is the way to happiness" said the English philosopher, John Locke. The history of the Caribbean, as with most of the world in the modern era, generally reflects an adversarial relationship with the environment. Even the Bible has been used to justify the mindset of domination. Referring to the Old Testament Book of Genesis, where God gave man dominion over all things, scholars point out that this has usually been interpreted as domination and sanctioned exploitation, rather than custodianship. "They argue that as nature comes to be viewed as nothing more than the material for human domination, we develop an anthropocentric view of the world in which we see ourselves as 'the

measure of all things'. In this way we lose an awareness of the dialectical relation between nature and history, as we lose an awareness of ourselves as part of nature".*

The consequences of human domination of nature are lamented in artistic forms, as well as scholarship. Bunny Wailer took it on in **Blackheart Man**, William Wordsworth took it on in **Upon Westminster Bridge**. But it's hard work uprooting a philosophy we have taken to heart. A useful exercise to test your awareness is to listen to yourself and others unconsciously express the worldview we carry around in our heads.

■

"Land that is left wholly to nature is called, as indeed it is, waste".

John Locke

"You rocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things"

William Shakespeare

"Why you have that bush in your nice garden?"

Friend of Sheila Stuart, WAND

"Rabland"

Common noun (Land that is not useful for agricultural products)

"I'm going to pick that rose and watch her as she grows in my garden"

'Spanish Harlem' by Jerry Lieber and Phil Spector

"We plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land".

Hymn

* Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, *Hypatia*, vol. 6 #1, Spring 1991

DEFINING

"WINNER TAKES ALL" DEVELOPMENT

Much of the information for this article is adapted from "Traditional Economic Thought and the Need for Change" by Norman Girvan in *Environment - The Message and the Media - A Caribbean Perspective*. CARIMAC, University of the West Indies and the Caribbean Conservation Association, July, 1991.

Part of what endangers our earth is what we believe about development, and that, in turn, is shaped by what we believe about economics. A "natural resource", for example, what does that name suggest? Something lying around in the ground, the sea, waiting to be exploited for profit, which means the same thing as "given value". So fundamental is this way of seeing, that working people have had to view our human labour/creativity that way in order to 'bargin' with the owners of production. Remember, women's work falls outside this worldview, and that explains a lot about why women don't get money for their household labour.

One basic model used in economic science and which underlies economics, is that the economy

consists of a circular flow of activities. On the one hand, you have households. On the other, you have firms, which simply represent the places where productivity takes place. Households provide labour services to firms and firms provide goods and services to households. Firms pay households via wage earners, that is those sent forth from the household to get money, since the household is not paid directly for the labour services, resulting in a money flow in that direction.

As a result of households purchasing goods and services from firms, there is a reverse money flow. It is a closed circle, and it grows and expands like a mushroom, but within itself.

Interactions between that system and other systems on the planet are completely excluded from consideration, implying either that those interactions are unimportant, or, that the closed economic system can simply take things from the environment and emit things into the environment without considering the effects.

'ENVIRONMENT'

This kind of mindset, the notion that the system is a total system, or that others don't matter even if they exist, is an intrinsic part of the social and cultural baggage of contemporary civilization. It exists equally within capitalist and socialist economics. And this is where we have some inherent problems.

• *Norman Girvan*

Environmental degradation is a consequence of a system of production whose waste cannot be reused by that system. Compare the mushroom-like, self-poisoning system Girvan describes (that is the current global, manmade productive system) with the system plants make to maintain and reproduce themselves: the spiral of endless possibility we call creation.

AN EXAMPLE FROM JAMAICA

People in Jamaica did not really think about the fact that mining activity produced tremendous quantities of red dust and that shipping the ore generated a red dye along the coastline, spreading out from the pier where the bauxite was shipped. No one was seriously concerned with this 'uglification' of the natural environment, even in

terms of its possible long term negative effect on tourist traffic.

Nor was serious consideration given to the implications of a proliferation of alumina plants, to get economic development, despite evidence of red mud waste which accumulates in the environment, with its potential for pollution of underground and surface water. Now, after twenty years, Jamaica has huge manmade lakes of red mud which are there as a more-or-less permanent eyesore and a source of health problems for generations to come. Only now are they trying to find some other way to dispose of the waste.

• *N. G.*

Though we know the 'technical' causes of the environmental crisis, we cannot 'solve the problem with science', as we would like to believe. It is unlikely that science has even the technical capacity to arrest the problem. The root causes of the environmental crisis lie with the economic/technological model. The difficulty in finding a solution lies with powerful financial interests who maintain the global productive system over the project of human liberation.



"What are the processes that drove so many of the world's women to struggle for existence on marginal, ecologically vulnerable land in the first place? What are the processes which lead to the poisoning of the earth, water and air with toxic wastes, pesticides and other harmful industrial products? What led to the exploitation of humankind and nature in the interest of profits? Without answers to these questions, our 'solutions' to environmental problems will be of no avail. We must link the experiences of women, their daily struggles to survive, with the macro economic policies which impact on every aspect of our lives."

Peggy Antrobus

WHY THE EARTH SUMMIT WILL BE MEANINGLESS FOR MOTHER EARTH - AND FOR THE MOTHERS OF THE EARTH

By Peggy Antrobus, General Co-ordinator, DAWN

It has become increasingly clear to me that there is really no one - in the official discussion on the environment - who speaks for the planet, and that on this issue "North-South" (and for that matter East-West) divisions are largely meaningless. The emerging women's perspectives on Environment and Development at the two international conferences on Women and Environment held in Miami last November confirm this.* At the Global Assembly, over 2,000 women from around the world spoke of their own efforts at environmental protection and sustainable development. At the congress, a similar group of 1,500 came up with an analysis, based on testimonies of 15 witnesses, which showed the link between a fundamentally inequitable and destructive global economic order, under-pinned by a value-system, characterised by the subordination of women and the subjugation of nature, and the degradation of both the human and natural environments.

The Women's Action Agenda '21 highlights the role of the military and consumerism and the control and manipulation of information within this system, and demonstrates the need for a more holistic analysis than that which appeared to inform the official discussions leading to the Earth Summit.

Indeed, it is hard to detect any serious analysis when one reads of the official documents. The glaring inattention to the damage to ecological systems by nuclear testing and production of nuclear energy, and the role of the military-industrial complex in this, must be one of the scandals of the process - rivalled only by attempts to exclude discussions on the implications of the Uruguay Round of GATT, and free market liberalisation policies for the environment. In fact, it often seems that the only "cause" of environmental degradation being discussed is "population pressure" - with all its racist and sexist connotations.

The attempts to associate environmental degradation with population have been disputed most recently by a group of scholars convened by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), the International Council for Social Science Research (ISSC) and DAWN (see page 32). However, the notion persists, despite the fact that there is no evidence to support a causal relationship between population and environment. Indeed, it can be argued that some of the worst examples of environmental degradation take place in areas of low population density! This is both unfortunate and dangerous since it not only "blames women", and places the onus for corrective action on Third World countries, but deflects attention for the real causes of environmental degradation.

A series of recent meetings in Dublin hosted by Women in Development Europe (WIDE) and Irish Women's Environmental Network (IWEN) put all of this into sharp focus. There, European women and Native American women spoke with the passion of the women of the Pacific, of the effect of nuclear testing on health, including the health of future generations. They spoke of the dumping of toxic wastes underground and in the ocean. Secretly, the basis for the poisoning of future generations is being laid. The years of effort by these women to raise the issue with the public and officials have largely failed to achieve results. The item is not even on the official agenda for the Earth Summit. They spoke of the industrial pollution of rivers which supply drinking water in the former East Germany and on the Mexico-US border: both communist and capitalist governments condone such acts. Clearly, neither governments nor industrialists can be trusted when it comes to the well-being of people, and ecological systems.

All of this must now be set within the context of the recent leak of a memo from Lawrence Summers, a Vice President of the World Bank who argues for the

* The Global Assembly organised by the Senior Women's Advisory Group (SWAG) of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), and the World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet organised by an International Policy Advisory Group (IPAG).

export of toxic wastes to poor countries, where low wages, low life expectancy and an assumed lack of appreciation for the aesthetic value of 'pretty air' provide the "impeccable economic logic" justifying the inflicting of the life destroying wastes generated by the over-consumption of the North.

In Britain's preparations for a general election, none of the platform documents on environment by the three major political parties included references to the threat of nuclear testing to the health of the planet and to people. In fact, the otherwise progressive statement of the Labour Party's Shadow Minister on Environment, a woman, is divided by a two-page spread on the virtues of Nuclear energy; the publication (the New Statesman of March 9, 1992) carries an advertisement from the Scottish Nuclear industry on its back page. (In fact, nuclear energy is widely promoted as a "clean" source of energy, with no hint of the problems of the radioactive waste it produces). As if to drive home the point in the

week of the IWEN meeting, Britain launched its latest nuclear submarine, "Vulcan". The front-page article boasted that it has "960 times the power of the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima".

No one speaks of these contradictions in the UNCED process, except the women. It is this common concern of women of North and South, East and West, with health issues and their focus on nuclear pollution - going outside the official agenda - which marks a major difference in their discussions from those of other groups. For me, the key to an understanding of the significance of the relationship between women, the environment and development is not so much that "women are closer to nature", or their key role in the management of natural resources, but rather in the perspective they bring to issues. This perspective, informed by their daily involvement in so many dimensions of living is one which offers a much clearer understanding of issues of survival - which is what the environmental crisis is all about.



THE CARIBBEAN BUSINESS CLASS: WAKING UP IN THE HUMAN LANDSCAPE

3RD ANNUAL PRIVATE SECTOR CONFERENCE OF THE CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE: JUNE 1991. Text of Presentation: The Role of the Private Sector in Maintaining the Caribbean Environment

By Jocelyn Dow, Businesswoman, Guyana

I think we should begin the discussion of our role by defining who we are and where and why we are so located: if we are really looking at the environment, those of us present this morning, who represent the indigenous private sector, must reflect on how we came to be here.

Most of us are here first, because a sailor got lost and second, because a new plant, sugar cane, was introduced into the environment. Our very being, so to speak, represented a major shift in the global environment: we came or were brought to these lands as the producers of the sweet of Europe and with us came a change so vast that we radically transformed the humanscape of the Caribbean. The cultivation of this new plant caused to happen new diseases, wars, and a conflict of culture that in many territories

eliminated those who were the true environment. And has much really changed since that miscalculated voyage of Christopher Columbus 500 years ago? We are on the eve of the 'celebration' of that journey that led to the devastation of the continent of Africa and the near-obliteration of the people of the New World for the enrichment of Europe. We who sit here today are inheritors of that global shift in the environment.

What, therefore, must be our role as indigenous capital and what must be our expectation of foreign capital as 500 years later, we enter once more into a new or not so new global market economy? We who have been the tools of the greatest expansion of capital in modern times are summoned by our ancestors and the generations to come to contemplate with great care our role in this process. What are we

proposing? What do we adhere to, what are we redefining, and what are we to defy as we enter the 21st century?

As a woman - I like to think a progressive, modern and conscious one - and of course, as an owner of capital and an employer of labour, I am fully committed to a rigorous scrutiny of my role in the process of the development of our Caribbean community. As a user of technology, of our natural resources, particularly the forest and mineral resources, I have to admit to a further responsibility and recognition of the role I must play in a sustainable development. But how do all these noble concerns match with the pressures of the overdraft, the desire and necessity for profit, the contradictions of a political culture slowly emerging from the traumas of dictatorship, the distortions of a battered economy and above all, the all oppressive demands of a structural adjustment programme that negates the local agenda in favour of the almighty export dollar?

The situation of Guyana is the extreme case of the English speaking Caribbean, and I believe that to shunt it aside as a mere distortion of Caribbean reality, a peculiarity born of Guyana's peculiar history, is an error. What we face as a business class, as producers of value, is the failure of our economies to respond to the needs of our every citizen. We are also confronted by the appeal and pressure of a new world order. Those who have plundered their own and our environment for their enrichment and our impoverishment, ask now that we be responsible to the world's dilemma of ecological damage, and that we conserve the remaining resources for their safety (though no doubt for our own as well). What should we conserve and for whom? What is our particular responsibility?

I want to suggest that our first obligation is to the poverty that now envelops the nations of the South, which happen not to be white. We must have as item number one the lifting of the standards of our people, the goal of providing the most ordinary requirements of health, housing, food, dignity and a sustainable future. And by the same token, we must force the North to acknowledge its role in the present dilemma and to set an agenda for itself, that recognises the human being of the South as of no less value than the

tree, the ozone layer, the panda or any other endangered species.

Given this insistence, we Caribbean producers of value and users of the environment - forest, shoreline, oil, pitch, bauxite - must work to extract the maximum value out of every single resource. We must work to ensure that our human resource is placed as the highest value. We must begin to guarantee that every dollar that can be added to any of our resources be added right here in order that we humanise this environment in the fullest sense. We must stop being primary producers and begin to carry every process as near as possible to completion in the region. We must use our oil and cheap energy to add value to our primary products.

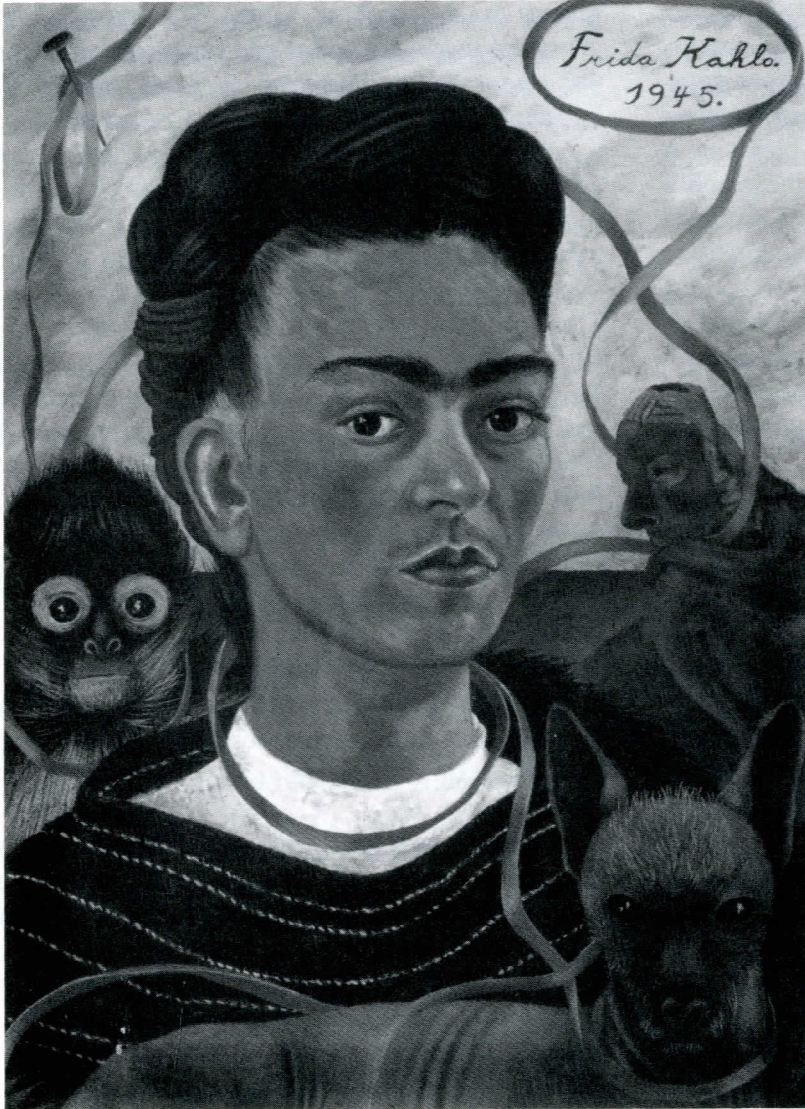
The Caribbean private sector therefore must, in the management of our environment, start with a determined consciousness on a pattern of production that will set us as a generation apart - one that encourages a skilled indigenous labour force and a finished product with full added-dollar value. We must collaborate with governments to regionalise our human and material resources. We must insist on and help to ensure that our politicians pay more than lip service to the notion of a community free of restriction and prejudice. We must help in the promotion of a sense of regional identity and culture. We must help in the inculcation of a sense of a shared past and a common future.

Given the unevenness of our present development we, as regional producers and users of the environment, must begin to consider the existence of the non-English speaking members of this basin and how we will integrate these geographical neighbours into the joint and beneficial use of our common land. We, the present owners of capital, must see ourselves as holding in balance the future of our territories economically and environmentally. The shortcuts we may feel induced to take in order to survive the effects of a global recession must be understood to be capable of eliminating, for the second time in 500 years, a significant section of our community from any possibility of a full and just place in the Caribbean future.

We are each other's environment.



DIMENSIONS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS:



Postcard, Frida Kahlo, 1945

- destruction of the finite Earthbody by catastrophe-creating technologies of acquisition. (We include here escalated sickness - e.g. widespread cancers, AIDS. The human body along with the threatened global systems that control climate and sustain the conditions for life, is a dimension of natural systems).
- economic processes and social relations working through history (colonisation) have eroded the basis for equitable human relationships. Today the relationship between the human community and nature is unbalanced to unsustainable levels.



"Today, it is the international corporation that is the stupendous body that now rises above what ordinary people and leaders imagine to be the domestic authority of the land...(The international corporation is) that gigantic arrangement of modern life that has the capacity to control or redirect decisions democratically decided by people and their leaders."

George Lamming

INTERNATIONAL SYSTEMS

All governments of the world today are writing themselves into a doomsday contradiction: How to pursue the path of profit-based economic growth and maintain the health of natural systems. Evidence of the futility of the task is everywhere as the social order of the past, disintegrates. The human project for our new age is to join an understanding of economic activity with a politics of social transformation. The consensus among women at the World Women's Congress contained in the final document Agenda 21 is that international economic institutions must be made publicly accountable.

MIAMI - November 8 to 12, 1991. Among the 1,500 women from all parts of the world who attended the first World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet, eight of us from the Caribbean kept in touch over the five day marathon and tried to divide ourselves up between 15 testimonies, 48 workshops and countless corridor confabs in the monstrous Miami Hyatt Regency Hotel. The purpose of the Congress was to draw up a women's environmental agenda and to present it to Maurice Strong, the Secretary-General to the United Nations summit (UNCED) planned for Rio de Janeiro in June this year.

The World Women's Congress and the production of *Agenda 21* was an event that mattered. Women who have knowledge about the "orientation of social and ecological systems which surround economic production systems that do not protect the environment"* had a chance to meet and assess the extent of global problems. Many bore witness to people's growing poverty, in all senses of the word. Many anguished over the implications of decisions being made behind closed hardwood doors. The freemarket new world economic order is taking the whole world on a swift ride toward Kaieteur. Regrettably, CNN and the rest of the mainstream

* Asian and Pacific: Women's Resource and Action Series -Health. APDC, Kuala Lumpur, 1990

GLOBAL CONSCIOUSNESS

press paid little attention to the event, so most of the world did not have the opportunity, as did Michelle Landsberg of the Toronto Star to be "startled by this firsthand evidence of world network of female leadership...In all my years of covering conferences and public events, I've rarely witnessed a gathering so rich in substance and with so many dynamic speakers".

Following is a summary of the report of a panel of five "judges" who presided over the "hearings" of the Congress. These were indeed five women judges from all over the globe. The summary is reprinted from **Caribbean Conservation News** Vol. V, No.16, December 1991 - February 1992.

"The witnesses showed from their evidence that they and many other women have a wealth of knowledge and experiences in environmental issues. Their expertise should clearly be utilised in planning and implementing the policies necessary to overcome the problems indentified ."

"The dimensions of the problem:
Our consideration of the material presented by the 15 witnesses leads us to conclude that there are many serious and interrelated problems to be overcome.

Briefly, they can be summarised as followed:

- Wasteful over-consumption of energy and other resources, especially in the developed world.
- Rapid population growth.
- Ecological refugees, fleeing desertified land.

UNCED CONTRADICTIONS

Why is the 'debate' on the environment at the UN framed in the positions of North and South? i.e colonial relations, and reinforcing the Atlantic centered, Northern hemispheric bias of recent history? The term 'North' connotes a focus on the technical and ecological dimensions of environmental destruction, tending to isolate humanity from nature as the cause of a crisis (overpopulation, ozone depletion, greenhouse effect). The term 'South', describing a weaker position, maintains there are unresolved issues of justice and power around land distribution, multinationals and now structural adjustment which attend an old environmental crisis created by colonisation.

- The burden of debt, leading to over-exploitation of resources and further poverty; women and children suffer most.
- An ever increasing rate of environmental damage including destruction of forests, pollution of land and water, and accumulation of dangerous wastes and emissions.
- War, military spending and associated environmental damage.
- Exclusion of many who are vitally affected, especially women, from participating in decisions which affect their standard of living and, in many cases, their survival.
- The failure of states, individually and collectively, to give real meaning to human rights and to the principles of justice and equity.
- Over-emphasis on the market as the sole measure of human progress; failure to have respect for other human values.
- Survival of many is threatened by the inequity and lack of ethical considerations in the use and exploitation of natural resources."

The judges concluded that more should be done to ensure that women are involved in the developing and implementing policies for environmental protection and development. To this end, the programmes for UNCED should include areas which are specifically devoted to enhancing women's initiatives and activities for sustainable development.

There are so many people talking about the planet and how to save it . And so few taking action to make sure that happens. Talking or acting? That is the challenge.

Wangari Maathai, Kenya.

The primary task of women must be to formulate an analysis of the causes of the problem and to develop a mechanism for this analysis.

Peggy Antrobus, Caribbean.

A nation's health and progress should be measured in terms of its people's wellbeing rather than its GNP. Women's groups should issue report cards on their states, dealing with natural resources, value systems and resource distribution.

Rosalie Bertell, Canada.

A healthy ecosystem or beautiful natural surroundings do not have any monetary value *per se* and are not counted for the purpose of calculating the national income or national wealth. Destruction of this environment is also not reflected in the system of national accounts. It is not possible to translate these into cash generating activities, as is sometimes attempted. The environment and the ecosystem are not commodities with a market value.

Marilyn Waring, New Zealand.

Women are constantly being told that their analysis is political hysteria.

Vandana Shiva, India

What's Going On?

- In a Malaysian village, where a Japanese consortium sold radioactive waste as fertilizer for home gardens and window boxes, children are now dying of leukemia.

Toronto Star, November 15, 1991.

- In the Marshall Islands, women whose bodies are poisoned by radioactive fallout from nuclear testing in the Pacific, are giving birth to jellyfish-like babies, living blobs of flesh with no limbs, eyes or brains.

T.S. 15.11.91

- On a coral atoll in the Pacific, women hang fresh fish, like laundry, on a line. They eat only those that flies land on; the others are discarded as too contaminated, even for flies.

T.S. 15.11.91

- Ethiopia's 60% forest cover has been reduced to 3%.

T.S. 15.11.91

- In the Argentine Andes the native people's mountain home is relentlessly blasted for oil exploration.

T.S. 15.11.91

- Three hundred homeless street children reported murdered in Rio de Janeiro.

T.S. 15.11.91

- Children in Eastern Europe have had to wear gas masks to school.

T.S. 15.11.91

- For every 1000 children born, 253 will die before they reach the age of three.

Hell to Pay, film on Bolivia's fiscal austerity policies

- 1 million cases of pesticide poisoning occur annually.

World Health Organisation (WHO), 1985

- 500 million people in the world are seriously malnourished while food production has reached the highest levels in history.

Women, Environment and Natural Resources

- The number of landless people in the world is growing.

United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), 1980

- In Amazonia 1000 peasants, rubber trappers and other forest dwellers have been killed in the last decade in violent conflicts over forest resources.

World Resources Institute, 1991

- Half the world's tropical forests have already been cleared or degraded. Every hour at least 4,500 acres fall to chain saws, machetes and bulldozers.

W.R.I., 1991

- Every hour another four plant or animal species die out, most of them in the tropics.

W.R.I., 1991

"Cry out! Don't be polite"

Magda Renner, Brazil.

What's Going on in the Caribbean

The image of exotic Caribbean cargoes has taken on a macabre new reality. In the late 1980's there were rumours of ships carrying tons of toxic garbage sailing the region in search of dumping ground. When in February 1987

CARICOM Countries

Antigua
and

Barbuda - Rejected - Proposal to incinerate 3000 tons of waste per day (June 1988).

Bahamas - Rejected - Plans to use garbage wastes as landfill material (1987).

- Rejected - Dumping of 14,000 tons of incinerator ash aboard the *Khian Sea* (1986).

- Status - Unclear - Proposal by Ashvins S.A. to ship wastes from paint and pesticide manufacturers and metal-plating firms. (Proposal probably rejected)

Belize - Rejected - Plan to use garbage wastes as landfill material (1987)

- Rejected - Proposal by Potts and Teixeira to build incinerator to burn US wastes (1987).

- Rejected - Proposal by Applied Recovery Technology to import US sewage sludge (1986).

Guyana - Rejected - Proposal by Potts and Teixeira to build incinerator to burn US wastes (1988).

Source: Greenpeace

WHY THE

The Caribbean countries are targeted as waste dumps for basically the same reasons as are other developing countries. In the first place, it is undoubtedly economic. Safety laws in Europe and the United States have pushed toxic disposal costs up between \$2,500 and \$3,000 a ton, whereas in some African and Caribbean countries it can cost as little as \$2.50 per ton. Treating the waste represents the major part of the disposal cost. In the developing countries it is usually disposed of untreated.

More, there is the added convenience of Caribbean countries' proximity to a major source. Companies in the United States cover the cost of shipment to the Caribbean, pay the disposal fees, meet the financial agreements of contracts, and still come out on top.

In the second place, European and American waste companies complain of a saturation of dump sites in the generator country. Disposing of garbage in American coastal waters has been banned since 1934 and in 1964, Congress effectively barred the disposal of most toxic material in landfills.

Haitian authorities reported that a freighter, Khian Sea, chartered by a company in Philadelphia dumped tons of ash from the city's dump on a beach in Haiti, the stories started coming out.

CARIBBEAN?

Thirdly, in most countries of the Caribbean, legislative and administrative mechanisms for controlling the management and disposal of waters are absent or inadequate.* The resulting dangers are apparent. Waste classified as hazardous in an industrialised country could pose considerable threat to the environment and the population of a recipient developing country if it is mismanaged or disposed of improperly. In cases where the toxic waste is mislabelled, Caribbean countries, which lack the technological and economic capabilities to identify and assess accurately its contents, risk accepting unknowingly hazardous waste.

Source: Fifth Informal Consultation of CARICOM Foreign Ministers. New York 10.10.88 "Environment: The Dumping of Waste in the Caribbean" prepared by St. Kitts and Nevis

* This remains true in 1992 for many areas of the environmental legislation with our two major problems still unresolved. First, existing legislation at national level (eg. against unrestricted beach mining) is not being reinforced. Secondly, while individual territories may be signatory to grand-sounding international conventions (eg. Cartagena, MARPOL) the Caribbean still has no teeth to defend its ecosystem from "prowlers and renegades."

Non-CARICOM

Bermuda	- Rejected	- Dumping of incinerator ash by <i>Khian Sea</i> (1986).
Dominican Republic	- Status Unclear	- Proposal by World Technology Co. to ship toxic liquid waste (1988)
	- Rejected	- Dumping of incinerator ash by <i>Khian Sea</i> (1987).
	- Rejected	- Proposal by Atlantic Forest Products to input chemical and other wastes for top soil (1987).
	- Actual	- Shipment of PCB wastes (Jan-June 1980).
Haiti	- Actual	- Dumping of 4,500 tons of incinerator ash on a <i>Khian Sea</i> (1988).
	- Rejected	- Proposal by Applied Recovery Technology to import sewage sludge (1987).
	- Rejected	- Proposal to Steward Environmental Systems to import 40,000 tons/year (1982).
Netherlands Antilles	- Rejected	- Proposal by Waste Central Inc. to import garbage into Saba (1988).
	- Rejected	- Proposal by Power, Water and Waste to import waste into Curaçao (1987).
Suriname	- Rejected	- Proposal by Mine Technology International to import 200,000 tons of PCB wastes (1987).
Turks and Caicos	- Status	- Proposal by Applied Recovery Technology to import sewage sludge (1986).

Source: Greenpeace

THE ENVIRONMENT - A GROWING CONCERN

By Veronica Gaston

WAND is in the process of compiling a register of environmental groups, with emphasis on grassroots organisations struggling with environmental problems at community level.

*Treat the Earth well, it is not given
to you by your parents, it is
loaned to you by your children.*

Kenyan Proverb

Incoming questionnaires list a wide range of problems but what comes across from many respondents is an opinion that governments are being lackadaisical about enforcing legislation.

Of the wide range of concerns that were highlighted, the primary issues were: deforestation, sea, water, and air pollution, soil erosion, sand mining, coastal erosion, garbage pollution.

Where do we go from here? Should we just sit back and let our beautiful territories just disappear, under the guise that the situation is not serious? The responses of this survey, so far, clearly show that this is not the case. People want to act.

Environmental Agenda for the 1990s: A Synthesis of the Eastern Caribbean Country Environmental Profile Series, published by the Caribbean Conservation Association and the Island Resources Foundation (1991) lists key environmental issues for all sectors of environmental management. These summaries reveal underlying major problems stemming from poor developing planning. Caribbean environmental groups have a big job on their hands in terms of informing and influencing our political process for the future.

KEY ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- The need to improve the understanding of political decision-makers about the value of forests, particularly with regard to soil and water conservation.
- Lack of involvement of local non-governmental organisations in monitoring and data collection tasks related to wildlife resources and biodiversity.
- The inadequacy of quantitative data on agrochemicals (importation, use, impacts) upon which to base informed decisions.
- The failure of legislative restraints and existing land use control measures to fully protect upper water catchments and forest reserves against deforestation and encroachment.
- Lack of comprehensive development control guidelines and policies committed to maintaining the quality of coastal resources.
- Unquantified and unresolved linkages between growth in the tourism sector and associated environmental and social issues.
- Out-dated public health and water legislation, lacking regulations, national standards and modern criteria for water quality, pollution control, and waste management.
- Relative lack of understanding and appreciation for the economic and social benefits to be derived from the protection of indigenous natural and cultural resources, often resulting in government policies of benign neglect.
- Failure of CEP governments to take full advantage of the creative energies, resources and expertise of NGOs with environmental interests and agendas.

*From: Environmental Agencies for the 1990s,
CCA and The Island Resources Foundation, 1991*



"Ecology raises the issue that the very notion of man's domination of nature stems from man's domination of man. Feminism reaches even further and reveals that the domination of man by man actually originates in the domination of woman by man. Community movements implicitly assert that in order to replace social domination by self-management, a new type of civic self - the free, self governing citizen must be restored and gathered into new institutional forms such as popular assemblies to challenge the all pervasive state apparatus. Followed through to their logical conclusion, all of these movements challenge not only class formations but hierarchies, not only material exploitation but domination in every form.

*Murray Bookchin, Toward an Ecological Society,
Black Rose Press, Montreal*

REALIGNING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

ANTI-COLONIAL • LABOUR • WOMEN • ENVIRONMENT • ANTI-COLONI

It would be valuable at the outset for participants in a dialogue on the environment to be informed of the historical context for the appearance of NGOs in the Caribbean. Briefly: the popular uprisings of the 1930s, significantly influenced by the evocative participation of women, successfully challenged the status quo. Social movements of that period, particularly labour, were forces for democratisation on the anglophone Caribbean. However, the civil institutions laid down by the colonial state, regulated by the interests of a newly emerging black middle strata, moved to co-opt and control this movement.*

One of the means by which this was effected was through the domestication of women. What the colonial government did was to institutionalise the domination of women as a gender and in so doing contain women's provocative role in the ground-swell for social justice. The organisational response to this highly successful British strategy engendered the conflicting traditions within the anti-colonial movement which are visible today along the spectrum of NGOs. At the strong end are those organisations who built the political orthodoxy of the existing dominant social organisations. Meanwhile, rival perspectives have maintained a presence in the wings. These are variously dismissed by conventional wisdom (and each other) as extremist, lumpen, intellectual, communist, feminist and so on.

Whatever the sociology of the antagonisms they reflect, however, NGOs are our contemporary evidence of social movement. What social movements signal at given periods of history is the demand for new social organisation that will accommodate survival.

Emerging movements dramatised the violence which has characterised relations between groups in the course of "making the world"

(production/reproduction).

The function of such movements: emancipation, civil rights, black power, feminist, peace, environment etc. is to contend with that violence. They amount to provocation of the status quo by those who labour at the reproductive base: the field, the household, the factory etc. However, as production changes so does social organisation.

NGOs must address the declining ability of the state to address the social justice

claims of its citizens. The legitimacy of NGOs hinges on precisely what is being lost in formal politics: the process of consultation with informed constituencies and the courage to advocate the development alternatives generated there. Because of their historical relationship to social movement, NGOs may be empowered to generate new alliances from among those disregarded by former dominant structures.

Action Canada Network, US Fair Trade, and Maquiladora are new coalitions emerging among workers in The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Much of the trade union coalition action among these networks at the international level involves the male leadership. However, women have been the primary workforce in the 'transnationalisation' of industry over the last fifteen years, and over time, women have developed innovative forms of organising which go beyond the strict, traditional union focus on salaries and benefits to address the relationship between workplace, community and family which 'working' encompasses for women. Women within Latino, Asian and black communities in the US and Canada and in the maquiladora industries in Mexico are creating new models of women's and community self development in a transnational context.

* This summary is from analysis by SISTREN Research, part of the work of a women's organisation which exists through negotiations between grassroots and middle class women in Jamaica. "Women, Work and Organisation in Jamaica, 1900-1944". Research paper by Joan French and Honor Ford-Smith, Institute of Social Studies, the Hague, and WAND/UWI, 1986.

Things to Know ...

In the Caribbean, the I.M.F. (International Monetary Fund) has become a household word, so to speak, since some families have lost their homes as a result of its policies. Social activists in this region, as elsewhere need to be more informed about the international systems being developed by capital.

ABOUT THE GATT

(General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs)

GATT like the IMF is promoting structural adjustment policies for the benefit of transnational corporations.

- The GATT objective is the expansion of markets for the US based corporations. Its aim is to break down barriers, especially in the Third World, that hinder such expansion.
- Third World Countries are fighting the proposals. A group of 14 submitted their own proposals, opposing the use of the Uruguay Round to create rights for investors or to prohibit investment measures. The confining of negotiations to tackling adverse trade effects is proposed.
- Forcing open of Third World Markets involves the presence of service companies since free trade in goods demands service facilities. To provide for these requirements national status is being stipulated for foreign service companies in the Uruguay Round
- Acceptance of the international GATT agreements could nullify many important national laws passed by Third World legislatures without those legislatures even being aware of the situation.

Info. from: *The Uruguay Round and the Third World*
by Martin Khor and Kok Peng

ABOUT THE WORLD BANK

The most important instruments of policies and aid responsible for domination of peoples and environmental destruction are the multilateral development banks (MDB). Chief among these is the

"A freemarket economy is the myth of freedom. It is riddled with contradiction. It is the ultimate ideology of the GATT and the IMF who are promoting structural adjustment policies so as to create a superstate on behalf of the transnational corporations".

Vandana Shiva, India.

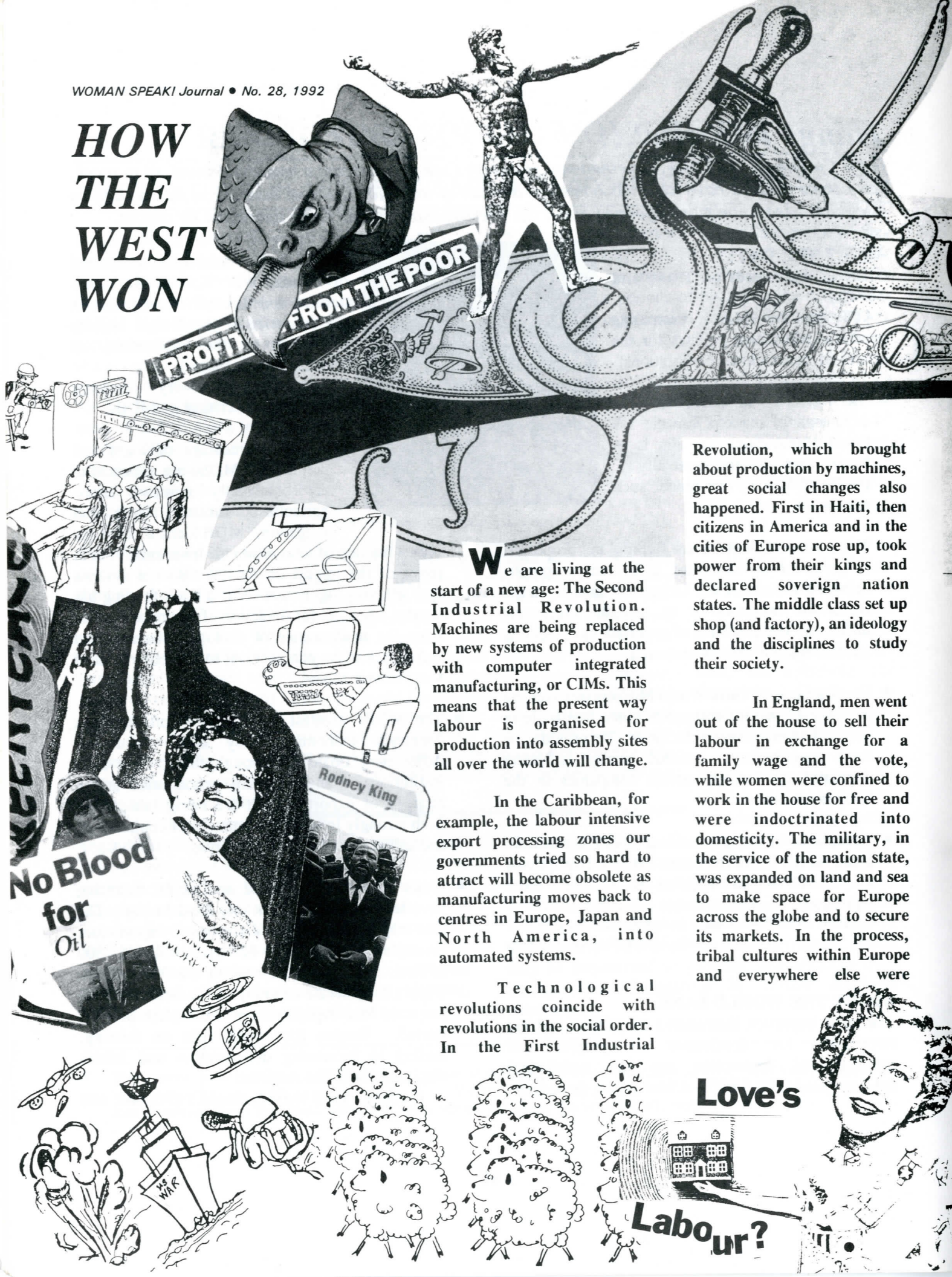
World Bank. Established at the end of World War II, the Bank has defined and directed development in the countries of the United Nations according to the inclinations of international finance.

Three reasons why ecology movements are critical of MDBs:

- A high percentage of loans and credit from MDBs are allocated to environmentally sensitive areas—agriculture; forestry; dams and irrigation. MDB loans account for only a fraction of total economic investment, but in terms of the impact on natural resource systems they are very significant. World Bank funding has created a context for diversion of natural resources from the maintenance of ecological balance and sustenance of human survival to the generation of short term profits.
- The MDBs greatest leverage for influencing a country's economic policy is in Structural Adjustment Loans. Through these, long term institutional changes toward privatisation and a strategy of export growth are being laid down. Both strongly influence the pattern of control over and utilisation of natural resources.
- Links between foreign aid and export financing have led countries straight into the debt trap. The next step is borrowing and ecological degradation. Example: Brazil- 1980-82 borrowed US\$ 300 million. 1983-84 figure rose to US\$ 950 million. Unable to generate counterpart funds to complete projects, loan repayment on incomplete projects started. Burden for export falls on farming, leading to increasing deforestation and human displacement in the Amazon.

Info. from: *Third World Economics* 1-15 October, 1991

HOW THE WEST WON



Revolution, which brought about production by machines, great social changes also happened. First in Haiti, then citizens in America and in the cities of Europe rose up, took power from their kings and declared sovereign nation states. The middle class set up shop (and factory), an ideology and the disciplines to study their society.

We are living at the start of a new age: The Second Industrial Revolution. Machines are being replaced by new systems of production with computer integrated manufacturing, or CIMS. This means that the present way labour is organised for production into assembly sites all over the world will change.

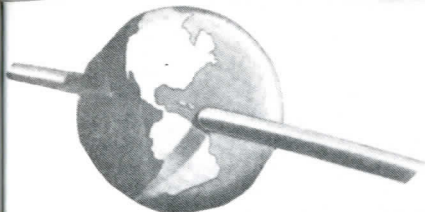
In the Caribbean, for example, the labour intensive export processing zones our governments tried so hard to attract will become obsolete as manufacturing moves back to centres in Europe, Japan and North America, into automated systems.

Technological revolutions coincide with revolutions in the social order. In the First Industrial

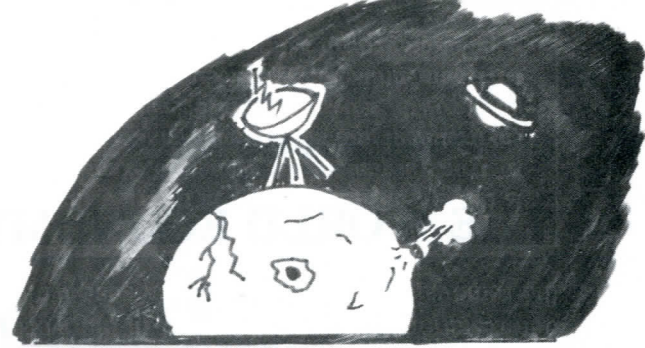
In England, men went out of the house to sell their labour in exchange for a family wage and the vote, while women were confined to work in the house for free and were indoctrinated into domesticity. The military, in the service of the nation state, was expanded on land and sea to make space for Europe across the globe and to secure its markets. In the process, tribal cultures within Europe and everywhere else were

Love's

Labour?



Justice?



Continued

It Was Never the Same After Them

surpressed. So brutal was the progress of the First Industrial Revolution, under capitalism, that struggles emerged in the form of social movements to contend with the injustice and inequity it generated through the social organization of race, class and gender.

Movements for social justice over time have included: emancipation, nationalism, socialism, civil rights, feminism. The most famous attempt to establish an alternative system of social organisation was the creation of the USSR in 1922.

The experiment ended officially last December 21. What we can call a global system of production has been in the making since World War Two. With the technological revolution underway, this transnational organisation of production is gaining acendency, and the structures of society which developed during the previous peroid of the nation state are in upheval. We can expect a time of great suffering, as the gains made at the insistance of

social movements are swept away by the "logic of the freemarket" and the soverign right of nations subordinated to the interests of international finance. But this may also be a time of possibility. It depends...



THE WORLD ECONOMY - WHERE IS IT GOING?

"To market, to market..."

Since the Soviet collapse, the affirmation of market-oriented economies is now truly global.

WHAT IS A MARKET ECONOMY?

A market economy is one in which "market forces" i.e. the laws of demand and supply, determine the allocation of resources between competing products, sectors and social groups.

WHAT ARE ITS ASSUMPTIONS AND CLAIMS?

Its assumption are that

- each person has the means to engage in the exchange of goods and services.
- when each person is free to pursue his/her own self interest the welfare of everyone will be maximised.
- people's "effective" demands (wants plus the money) determine what gets produced, and this is deemed to lead to the most efficient allocation of resources (such as land, labour, capital and technology).

WHAT DOES THIS DO IN THE REAL WORLD?

In the real world there is no such thing as a "free" market: market forces are actually determined by power - economic, political, social, cultural and military. This challenges each assumption:

- poor people (classes, races, gender, and nations do **not** have the means to engage in "free" exchange.
- those with money (classes, races, gender, and nations) pursue their own self-interest at the expense of those without: the general welfare is **not** maximised.
- the allocation of resources generated by the demand of the wealthy leads to an inefficient use of resources - for guns rather than for margarine.

WHY DO FREEMARKETEERS SOMETIMES INTERVENE IN THE FREE FUNCTIONING OF THE MARKET?

- to protect their own economic self interest - e.g. US reactions to Japanese trade surplus
- to serve non-economic ends - e.g. food security
- in response to political pressure e.g. European farmers.





*I do not say we are doomed
But now, now must
Wrestle the world
Still green and ardent
Out of cock-crazed
Agonized hands
Out of the blast of gun-cocks
Aimed at the prone receiving earth,
Must wrestle it away from those
Who once
In the place of origins
Were our lovers and sentries
Must alter energy-fields
Create new time*

*Ramabai Espinet
From: Nuclear Seasons*

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT - WHERE IS IT COMING FROM?

Women's economic activities and reproductive tasks must be understood if we are to achieve ecological sustainability.

THE OLD WORLD ORDER

AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER ARE THE SAME WORLD ORDER

In the old world order, the economies of the Windward Islands, for example, were organised to produce one primary product: by the end of the colonial period, this was bananas. Today, these bananas are increasingly grown on slopes, leading to soil erosion and deforestation, with a consequent effect on the water supply. In addition, this single crop cultivation, like all monocrop agriculture, exhausts natural nutrients and biodiversity. The erosion of the natural resource base in the Windwards is rooted in the organisation of "National" economies inherited from the colonial period and kept in place by the continued unequal relations between north and south.

In the new world order, a Japanese multinational in Jamaica is slashing and burning virgin forest for coffee cultivation: the more these practices are banned in the North, the more they are exported to the South. The disappearing forest represents the watershed area for the most heavily populated parts of the island and is leading to lower water availability and water pollution. Another contributing factor to Jamaica's 5% yearly rate of deforestation - one of the highest in the world - is women's renewed reliance on fuelwood as a result of the removal of subsidies from kerosene which is part of the IMF structural adjustment policy.

Is there really any validity in the view that women have some sort of special relationship to the environment?

A strong argument for women to examine our location as a sex in 'the environment' is that dominant thinking on environment and development makes a "straightforward correlation between three factors: population distribution and growth, environmental degradation, and poverty."* That means the strategy being developed to manage the environmental crisis is to reduce population growth in the so-called South. In fact, research findings do not support population growth as the central variable in environmental degradation.

Extremes of wealth and poverty, leading to over-consumption by some and the erosion of livelihoods for others, skewed distribution and use of resources, and patterns of human settlement (including urbanisation) have a stronger demonstrable relation to environmental degradation than population size per se. In addition, macro/global economic strategies and policy decisions are increasingly affecting both people and the environment. These findings are supported in study after study, across a wide range of social and environmental conditions.

There has been a long tradition of people adapting to and shaping the natural environment through the accumulation of local knowledge and experience.

This relationship has been increasingly disrupted as a result of external global forces, notably, the globalisation of capital, large scale technology and communications, subordination within world markets, and rising levels of consumption by the rich, particularly concentrated in industrial countries...The focus on population growth as the key factor in degrading the environment is thus misplaced.

...It has been repeatedly demonstrated that fertility is determined by cultural and socio-economic factors such as women's economic autonomy, legal and political rights, education and access to reproductive health service and health. Fertility decline is also related to the improved survival chances of offspring. However general erosion of livelihoods as a result of global economic and political forces, and resulting national policies, are increasingly undermining women's access to health and education.**

* Women's Movement and the 'Population' Issue, Report presented at 6th Preparatory 'UNCED-92 NGOs' Forum, September, 1991, Sao Paulo. Published by CIM.

** Concerned Scholars Participating in a SSRC/ISSC/DAWN Workshop on Population and the Environment, Mexico, Jan/Feb 1992)

THE FORGOTTEN FUTURE

There is always a woman's movement, the question is, how transformative has its politics been? How transformative can its politics be?



*"Paulette and Sorrell", Samere Tansley
Acrylic on linen 22 x 30"*

The long discussion about women's participation in development (Does she or doesn't she?) has brought many insights into the nature of power. A report on a UNESCO sponsored research project in Jamaica in the 1980s for example, observed that women's participation doesn't guarantee control over the processes involved in production. Instead, women's participation helps perpetuate their subordination.

During slavery, women's labour was seen primarily as agricultural. Both as workers on estate production and as subsistence farmers, i.e., food producer for their own survival, women were a visible force. At Emancipation most women worked outside the home

on estates yet today agricultural labour is seen as men's work. "What is women's role today may be men's role tomorrow, as history shows", comments the report.

By the same token most women today are unaware of women's participation in the nationalist struggles of the early 19th century, or of the Caribbean feminist movement which won political rights for women. If collective amnesia shapes the record it must also shape "the future".

The English feminist and psychoanalyst, Juliet Mitchell, looking at changes in Western capitalism over the last twenty years (the period of the 'second

wave' of feminism) makes some observations we should note. The most dramatic change affecting women in Europe is the rise in unemployment. Yet in the midst of this, women form the only sector of the community with increased employment prospects. These are not jobs, as was the case in wartime, temporarily taken over by women to be returned to men when the situation returns to 'normal'. These are service jobs, available to women in middle age, not usually done by men or young adults. Writing in 1986, Mitchell noted that women had increased as a percentage of the British labour force from 33% to 40% over two decades. Recalling other periods "when a comparable switch in the economic distribution of the sexes has occurred", she wonders aloud whether "these repeated occurrences suggest that women serve a particular function at certain historical junctures?"

If Europe is in a period of transition, is living the protracted "decline and fall of the late stages of a way of life, a major mode of production", the present situation of women may be less "an indication of the general level of social advance" as "a sensitive (and problematic) indication of the stage of the process of social change".

"My tentative hypothesis is that women are used within the economy as a temporary advance guard, or perhaps as a toe in the water of an unknown sea. I suggest that women are the first, temporary inhabitants of the future. That, contrary to myth, within history, it may well be that women are there first and that men are then made in the image of women. If this is so, it may well be true only of capitalist or only of industrial countries. It may be true more generally; I do not know."*

Nevertheless, this kind of historical recall is essential to any sound analysis of environmental issues as they are being addressed by women's organisations. We should bear this in mind when making sentimental claims about women's "special relationship to nature".

The worldwide documentation of the Global Assembly 'Success Stories' indicates the innovative work done by women and youth on environmental projects and environmental awareness in their communities. These efforts result in better conditions and community life. Women mobilised, it seems, are instrumental to linked action on health, food security, and ecological conservation. But are these activities connected to changes in fundamental social organisation? When women mobilise to acquire fuel efficient stoves and no longer have to spend four hours a day walking miles to gather wood, what happens to their time? What do they do instead? Are they released from domestic drudgery? Having saved the community, once again, do they make any gains against the disproportionate domestic load they carry or alter in any way their lack of power to influence the order of things?

WHEN SAPs WALKS IN

Structural adjustment policies (aptly nicknamed SAPs) require increased unwaged labour to compensate for cuts in social services. These policies rest on the assumption that increasing unwaged work has no cost. But, as we can see around us, SAPs have huge "social costs" (unemployment, domestic violence, criminal activity, drug abuse).

Since most unwaged work is done by women, when SAPs move in things tend to fall apart in the home, the community and at national level because functioning at all these levels depends on the availability of unwaged labour. First, structural adjustment forces women to look at various ways of making money in return for their labour, reducing the time they have for unwaged and voluntary work. (Women then get blamed for neglecting their families!) But, second, it is worth contemplating that women may be expressing a refusal to do the work that almost entirely defines our gender: caring this home and this society for no pay. Now, are we being asked to add to all this, caring for the Earth, or worse: are we recommending ourselves for the job?

* Juliet Mitchell, 'Reflections on Twenty Years of Feminism' in *What is Feminism? A Re-examination*. Edited by Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley Pantheon Books, 1986)



15,000 boys in their teens are trekking across East Africa, having lost their parents to war and famine. This is the fourth year of their journey; their destination is unclear but their purpose is survival.

Homeless children in Rio de Janeiro are allegedly being exterminated by death squads, a practice being stepped up to prepare the city for the Earth Summit.

The claim of the international women's movement is that history has located *all* women in *some* way within structures which subjugate us while also maintaining the status quo. That is: our subjugation clarifies and creates solidarity with other subjugations. By now the point is made. It is time to assess how we can challenge internationally where designated organisations, such as UNICEF, cannot. With what intentions and by what means will we proceed into the next century?

"We can say, 'Peace on Earth', we can sing about it, preach about it, or pray about it, but if we have not internalised the mythology to make it happen inside of us, then it will not be."

Betty Shabazz.

She is director of communications and public relations for Medgar Evers College of the City University of New York. Her husband, Malcolm X was assassinated in 1965.



Listen more often to things
than to beings.
It's the ancestors' word
When the fire's voice is heard
It's the ancestors' word
in the voice of the waters.

Sweet Honey in the Rock