



Sierra Club

SIERRA CLUB ACTIVIST NEWS

Vol. 1, No. 1, Fall 1998

Nova Nada and J. D. Irving, Ltd.

Rita Morbia



ELIZABETH MEETS WITH FATHER WILLIAM AND BROTHER CHRIS.

In Yarmouth County, in the southwestern portion of Nova Scotia, there lies 58 acres of forest wilderness. The Roman Catholic monks of the Spiritual Life Institute bought the property and called it Nova Nada over 25 years ago. The previous owner, also a large forest company, Bowater-Mersey, had instructed its contractors to stay well away from the monastery, so for 24 years their peace was largely undisturbed. Since this time, they have struggled to live a simple but rich monastic life all year round, without electricity, or, for the most part, running water. Who would have guessed that Nova Nada could become embroiled in a long and arduous struggle against the Maritime forestry giant, J. D. Irving, Ltd. (JDI).

Three years ago JDI bought a large parcel of land adjacent to Nova Nada and commenced forestry operations in the near vicinity. JDI's pattern of logging is characteristic of other large forestry companies. Intensive road-building allows large, capital-intensive machinery entrance into previously inaccessible areas and the wholesale clearcutting of tracts of land. Hardwoods and softwoods are both indiscriminately logged and what doesn't go to the mill is chipped. The next year might bring tree-planters who plant only one species and subsequently require herbicide spraying to defend it from the competing natural regeneration. In a few decades, a monoculture of even-aged, straight-rowed trees will have replaced the existing natural forest. This is the goal.

For Nova Nada, it was the incessant noise from feller-bunchers and large harvesting equipment that first alerted the monks to the destruction around their monastery. (A feller-buncher is a

large piece of mechanized equipment, mounted on tank shoes. It can cut, delimb, chop and stack what was a forest, with one operator working the controls inside the cab of the machine. Each feller-buncher replaces between 10-12 loggers.) At times, the noise has

"Lots of people and groups came to support us and tell us what we should do. Sierra Club was the only group that came and said 'here is what we will do with you! We could never have gotten so far if it were not for Sierra Club's help.'"

MOTHER TESSA

been unceasing – machines have operated 24 hours per day, 7 days per week in the monastery's near vicinity. In these periods, neither monks nor visiting retreatants have been able to sleep. To a monastery whose existence relies on the stillness of its local environment and the integrity of the natural forest, this situation has proved to be a nightmare.

When Mother Tessa asked Sierra Club for help, we felt it was important for a number of reasons. Both Nova Nada and SCC are fighting against unsustainable industrial logging practices. They necessitate the use of heavy equipment that destroys both the soil structure and the forest's stillness. Both Nova Nada and SCC are striving towards

the long-term goal of ecoforestry as an alternative. If JDI practiced ecoforestry on their holdings, not only would it prove compatible with other forest uses, but over the longterm the wood supply would remain stable, more workers would be employed and the existing natural forest would not be replaced by plantations. Furthermore, the monks would not have had to leave.

By helping Nova Nada, the Sierra Club of Canada has not only been able to promote the vision of ecoforestry, but also engage the environmental community in the monks' struggle. Due to their uncompromising dedication to maintaining the integrity of wilderness areas and their opposition to destructive industrial forestry activities, the monks have been able to raise awareness about forestry issues among many different constituencies. Regionally, nationally and even internationally, those who have heard about the monastery's situation have also heard about JDI's environmentally-destructive logging practices. The issue of Nova Nada has crystallized everything that is wrong with forestry in both the Maritimes and Canada.

In the process of raising awareness about logging issues in the Maritimes, and specifically the Nova Nada monastery's plight, I spent 2 months in Nova Scotia. In fact, I lived at the monastery. It was during this time that I gained an appreciation for just what was at stake. Although living in a log cabin in the middle of the woods anywhere would have been a spiritual experience, this wasn't just any log cabin, in just any woods. The monks' emphasis on stillness, solitude and contemplation even in the midst of their struggle lent an air of sacredness to the natural surroundings. As a group of people who have committed their lives to an existence in harmony with the natural world, I found their particular theological focus

admirable, compelling. My summer with the monks, the lake, the loons, the coyotes who howled at night and the simple splendour of this particular piece of Nova Scotian wilderness left an indelible impression.

Monks' Sabbatical

At a press conference on Monday, Sept. 21, 1998, the monks of Nova Nada announced that they were leaving their monastery for a year-long sabbatical. Whether they will return is dependent upon whether JDI will agree to a silent 3.2 km buffer zone. This buffer would amount to less than 1% of just their southwest Nova Scotia holdings. They could create a nature reserve in the buffer zone. Alternatively, the company could also choose to log in a way that is compatible with the presence of a monastery in the area, i.e. practice ecoforestry. To promote ecoforestry in the Atlantic region, SCC is becoming involved with the Maritime Ecoforestry Association.

If the monks leave Nova Scotia permanently, Nova Scotians will lose an important cultural and spiritual resource and the local economy will lose an estimated \$500,000 to 1 million dollars in direct and indirect expenditures by the monastery. The Nova Scotian government has been shamelessly absent from involvement by calling it a dispute between two private landowners. Despite receiving petitions with over 17,000 signatures, they have done nothing to help resolve the situation.

It is a profound tragedy that the monks and the Nova Scotian forests have both been subjected to such abuse. Father William, Nova Nada's Abbot, stated at the Sept. 21 press conference that, "No one will grasp the full catastrophe of our forced departure from Nova Scotia unless the centrality of the sacred

continued on p. 2



- 1
- 2
- 2
- 3
- 3
- 4-5
- 6
- 6
- 7
- 7
- 8

- NOVA NADA AND J.D. IRVING, LTD.
- A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT
- NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
- SIERRA CLUB URGES ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE
- DEBT, POVERTY AND THE ENVIRONMENT
- ACTION ALERT! SYDNEY TAR PONDS
- GOING, GOING, GONE... ENDANGERED SPECIES IN CANADA
- PLANET BY THE NUMBERS...
- WHAT THE CHRÉTIEN GOVERNMENT DID ON YOUR SUMMER VACATION...
- SAVE THE GREAT BEAR RAINFOREST
- GIFTS THAT WON'T COST THE EARTH

Nova Nada and J. D. Irving, Ltd. (cont'd)

is understood. Sacredness pervades the universe, in every tree, every bit of soil, every person. But our Nova Nada monastery is uniquely sacred, as is any particular place, time and action that is separated from the ordinary and ordered directly and immediately toward the realm of the divine . . . Society without a sacred centre is a cataclysm . . . since this last year we spent our time, energy and dwindling finances trying to save the woods, the silence and monastery's peace. We failed. Mammon has prevailed. The natural beauty is spoiled; the silence is spoiled; ugliness surrounds us. The monks are exhausted. As Founder and Abbot, I must remove them from the battlefield. Their wounds are almost unbearable. You may ask, doesn't our opposition bear wounds? Oh yes, worse than ours. Chasing money and power and raping the earth, controlling people is itself a terminal illness."

"Green" Certification

In a separate but related issue, a forest region in New Brunswick owned by JDI, the Black Brook district, has received certification from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). This certification implies that the area is being managed to very high environmental standards.

However, the Sierra Club of Canada is appealing this certification. JDI still clearcuts using heavy equipment in Black Brook, they still plant monocultures and convert the existing natural forest ecosystems into plantations and they still use pesticides. We have a very strong case against this certification as it violates FSC principles and criteria on forest management.

Boycotting Irving

Sierra Club of Canada has also announced reactivation of a boycott against the Irving Group of Companies. Besides their treatment of Nova Nada, we cite the Irving Whale as yet another reason to participate in this boycott. The Irving Whale was a barge that sank in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in 1970 along with thousands of tons of oil and over 7500 kgs of PCBs. An estimated 900 tons of oil have since leaked from the barge, and over 75% of the PCBs were released into the environment. The Whale was raised in 1996, costing the Coast Guard and ultimately taxpayers \$42, 447, 638.75. The Coast Guard has taken Irving to court and the case is still pending.

Consumers are encouraged to write to local stores that carry Irving products to let them know they are participating in this boycott. Brand names to look out for include: Majesta Brand Paper Products, Selecta Brand Paper Products, Irving Oil, Cavendish Farms, Atlantic Speedy Propane, Midland Courier, Kent Hardware Stores, and Midland Transport Ltd. For an expanded list of products, contact Sierra Club of Canada National Office.

Rita Morbia coordinates our work on forests, biodiversity and endangered species. "Long Highway Home", the Monks' latest CD which includes the haunting "Woods of Nova Scotia" is available at the National Sierra Club office. Tapes are \$12 and CDs \$20.

A Word from the President

Peter Lloyd



I'd like to welcome you to our inaugural edition of SCAN, the Sierra Club Activist News. I am ecstatic to finally launch this newsletter since this opens our lines of communication to you and helps us tell you what we're up to and keep you informed of happenings within the environment. We hope you find this newsletter a key source of information for you.

As you know, the Sierra Club is a grass-roots environmental organization that is dedicated to protecting the natural environment for our families, our future and ourselves. I joined the Sierra Club 6 years ago because I was concerned about the environment. I had always enjoyed the

outdoors and was concerned about things happening around me, such as climate change, deforestation, elimination of species at an alarming rate, pollution of our lakes and oceans and the list goes on and on. So I attended a "Sierra Club Activist Training" workshop which began my career as an environmentalist. From that event, I was changed and there was no turning back. The Sierra Club empowered me.

Today there is a need for the Sierra Club more than ever. We need people like you to participate in the environmental movement and to be heard. It's not enough for us to watch as our environment erodes. We need to stand up and be counted. Unfortunately our politicians do not watch the environmental barometer. They watch the polls. If the polls tell them that you're not happy about things, they change them. If people do not show concern and get involved then the politicians move on to other challenges.

The Sierra Club is different from other environmental organizations. It's an organization that not only acts on your behalf for the environment, but also encourages you to participate. This tradition dates back to John Muir himself. Back in the late 1800s, he started the Sierra Club as a way to take people on outings away from the city to the mountains

of the Sierra Nevadas to show them the problems of urban sprawl. John Muir had a lot of foresight. From that small beginning the Sierra Club has grown to a membership of over 600,000 people and covers the entire North American continent.

We work on a wide variety of issues ranging from forests, to oceans, to endangered species, and climate change. We are also listened to. The Sierra Club ranked first of all the environmental organizations in number of times quoted in the Globe and Mail. Watch for Elizabeth May, Bill Wareham, Angela Rickman, Brad Duplisea, Paul Gregory, John Bennett, Christine Elwell, Rita Morbia, Sonja Mihelcic and our other campaigners in the news and on television. They give a lot of themselves in their campaign efforts.

Please take the time to read this newsletter and see the kinds of campaigns that we're running. We have extremely dedicated and passionate campaigners working on your behalf. We can use all the help that we can get in their campaigns. We also have local groups and chapters that are actively involved in environmental campaigns across the country. We'd love to hear from you. As well, watch for our activist kits contained in this newsletter. These are designed to help you build your own campaigns. They're a great way for you to easily get involved in issues that are dear to your heart!

Get impassioned and get involved! In the words of the great Mahatma Gandhi, "We must be the change we wish to see in the world."

Peter

Notes from the Executive Director

Elizabeth May



PAUL MARTIN RECEIVES MY BOOK AT THE CUTTING EDGE.

The first words to you who receive this newsletter must be "thank you." Your support is what makes our work possible.

The Sierra Club of Canada works to meet almost unimaginable challenges. We conduct research, produce publications, hold workshops and speaking tours, and campaign to change the way human-kind, or, at least Canadian human-kind, treats our natural world.

I often compare our national office to the old t.v. show, "M.A.S.H." I start every

day thinking I know what I will do, with a list of high priority items circling my brain like aeroplanes stacked up over O'Hare. Nine times out of ten, whatever I thought I would do is shelved when — a la MASH — we hear the call "incoming wounded!" The government has caved in to industry. Legislation has been rushed, or stalled. A local community needs our help, "NOW!"

I cannot tell you how proud I am of the national office team, the Sierra Club team across Canada, and the work we all do. We are flexible, strategic and hard-working. We do not compromise, but we do not alienate. Our ability to sit down with industry CEOs, even when we are boycotting their products, is a mark of our unique approach.

The picture of me with Finance Minister Paul Martin is a souvenir of a four-hour meeting we had with him on July 2, 1998. The subject was the environmental and human impacts of Third World Debt and unregulated currency speculation. (see article in this edition on the impact of debt.) We talked about global warming, my new book on forests, and the future of the IMF. Will it make a difference?

I honestly don't know. Recently Martin moved much closer to our views on debt and the need for a tax on speculative currency transactions, but the reality is that we are at the moment of the greatest peril we have ever been on this planet. The situation is urgent, but governments have focused attention elsewhere.

Most environmental group newsletters will try to convince supporters that they are making great strides, and all on their own. I commit that this newsletter will stay honest. We do win on issues, but never without working with others. This is a long struggle and results-based reporting on a quarterly basis is distorting. Overall, we are losing, not winning. Greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise. Toxic waste sites continue to seep into back yards. Species are going extinct at a rate unknown since the time of the dinosaurs. To be able to function, I am an optimist. As Executive Director of an extremely effective environmental organization, I must be. As a mother, I must be.

I believe that the natural world's ability to heal itself, to recover from abuse, is our best hope. When we make the necessary changes, we will be saved by a large blue-green ecosystem floating in space that knows how to adapt to and to overcome just about any assault, but we must make the change. With your help, we will.

Elizabeth

Sierra Club Urges Action on Climate Change

The Kyoto agreement has thrown the debate on what to do about climate change into a new 18 month chat-fest. The federal and provincial governments have established a new delaying tactic to keep from acting to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"They call it a national process and have set 16 issue tables to discuss everything from public education and outreach to emissions trading, but really,

"...We won't get action until Jean Chrétien realizes climate change is an issue of national security."

nothing is happening because the federal government is not taking leadership. Instead of the things it can do without provincial involvement, it is allowing fossil fuel provinces like Alberta to use jurisdictional questions to prevent action", says John Bennett, who joined the Sierra Club staff in June.

He takes over from Louise Comeau who is continuing her work on climate change with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

"The public supports taking action, all the polls show that, but the federal

government needs to get the ball rolling. Do things like creating tax incentives for companies and homeowners to invest in conservation, efficiency and renewables. Think of the impact of Paul Martin (Finance

Minister) standing up next spring and saying, "To meet the challenge of global climate change the government of Canada will allow Canadians to deduct the cost of reducing their emissions from their income tax," continues John.

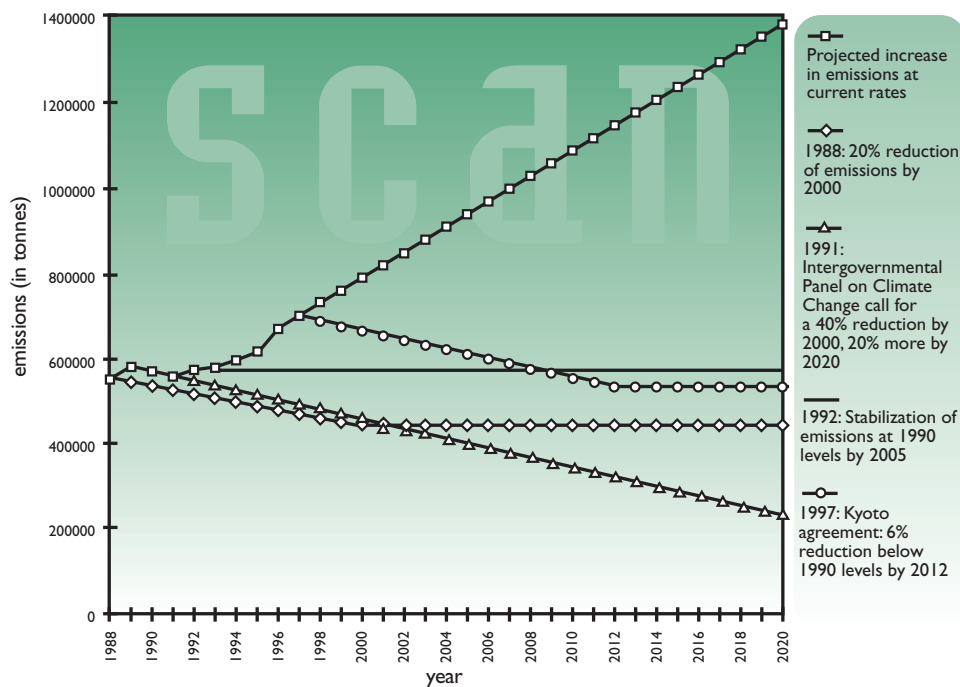
Sierra Club presented specific recommendations to the Standing Committee on Finance in September, calling upon the government to sell its interest in the Hibernia oil project and use the fund to set up a national atmospheric fund, and to offer new tax deductions for home owners. The entire submission is available on the Sierra Club Web site.

"These are nice practical ideas," he says, "but we won't get action until Jean Chrétien realizes climate change is an issue of national security. It is the responsibility of the prime minister to put the long term survival of Canada above petty provincial squabbling and make climate change a priority for all Canadians."

John would like to see solar panels on 24 Sussex and a windmill on Parliament Hill to show Canadians the way of the future. He urges all Sierra Club members to take ten minutes and write to the Prime Minister and urge him to take real action on climate change.

John Bennett has campaigned against nuclear power in Ontario, set up Greenpeace Canada's climate campaign in the early 1990s and managed Belleville Green Check, an Ontario Green Community Initiative that performed over 1500 Green Home Visits. He directs SCC's campaign on climate change.

Greenhouse Gas Promises



Debt, Poverty and the Environment

A number of years ago, Sierra Club of Canada organized a coalition to deal with the environmental abuses of the Bretton Woods institutions. Created in the wake of the Second World War, the international financial institutions (IFIs) established at a conference in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, promised to help rebuild a war-ravaged world. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), somewhere along the line, ceased to be part of the solution and became a giant problem.

Our coalition, called the "Halifax Initiative" in reference to the last G-7 Summit in Canada, is made up of leading development and church organizations, as well as environmental groups concerned with IFI policies.

The connections between debt and the environment are clear enough. As long as countries in the south are heavily indebted, they must respond to creditor economic strategies. The Structural Adjustment Programmes, imposed by the IMF, typically insist on increasing export earnings as a term imposed before assistance. Export-led development means that cash crops take priority over domestic food production, that razing forests for quick cash trumps long-term sustainability, and that mangrove forests are clear-cut to make room for boom and bust shrimp aquaculture. Poor farmers are pushed off their land and must cultivate marginal lands, with predictable and disastrous environmental consequences.

The burden of developing country debt is incredible. The poorest countries on Earth still pay more to the rich in interest payments than they receive in aid. These conditions are brutal on the citizens of these countries, as well as on their environment. In 1995, for example, Mozambique spent 3.3% of its budget on health care, 7.9% on education, and 33% on debt servicing. As population growth is a major cause of environmental devastation, the debt is perversely increasing the problem by directing funds away from primary health care for women, away from education – in short, away from the very things that stabilize population growth. This is not debt servicing. It is debt slavery.

This year, we are getting behind a major international campaign to remove developing country debt. It is called "Jubilee 2000" and, while started by British church groups, is gaining broader support. The term "Jubilee" comes from an old Biblical tradition. According to Leviticus, every fifty years the slate must be washed clean, slaves released from bondage, wealth redistributed, debts forgiven, and the Earth restored and renewed. The Jubilee 2000 campaign notes that not 50 years, but 2000 years have passed. We need to wipe the slate clean and restore the Earth.

If you are interested in spreading the word, contact Halifax Initiative Coordinator, Pam Foster, in the Ottawa Office. In the meantime, here is a small version of the petition we hope you will sign and send to us:

Petition

"WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, BELIEVE THAT THE START OF A NEW MILLENNIUM SHOULD BE A TIME TO GIVE NEW HOPE TO THE IMPOVERISHED PEOPLE OF THE WORLD.

TO MAKE A NEW BEGINNING WE BELIEVE IT IS TIME TO CANCEL THE BACKLOG OF UNPAYABLE DEBTS OF THE MOST IMPOVERISHED NATIONS.

WE CALL UPON LEADERS OF THE LENDING NATIONS TO WRITE OFF THESE DEBTS BY THE YEAR 2000.

WE URGE THESE LEADERS TO TAKE EFFECTIVE STEPS TO PREVENT HIGH LEVELS OF DEBT FROM BUILDING UP AGAIN. THEY SHOULD PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT INSTEAD OF SUPPORTING MEASURES DEMANDED BY INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS THAT ERODE HEALTH CARE, EDUCATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT, FURTHER IMPOVERISHING THE POOREST POPULATIONS OF THE WORLD."

NAME

ADDRESS

SIGNATURE

Action

Background:

The largest toxic waste site in North America sits on Cape Breton Island. Decades of steel making have left a legacy of cancer and disease for the people of Sydney, Nova Scotia. The environment around them and the open ocean continue to be contaminated by the industrial garbage created to make steel.

The scale of the contamination is breath-taking. 700,000 tons of toxic sludge lurk under the surface of Muggah Creek estuary. (Bear in mind that Love Canal contained “only” 40,000 tons of toxic waste.) That sludge is heavily contaminated with carcinogenic PAHs (poly aromatic hydrocarbons) which were by-products of the baking of coal to make coke to make steel. Benzene, pyrenes, naphthalene, toluene — were all made at the upstream coke ovens site with black coal tar sludge moving down the brook to the estuary to the sea. In addition to the witch’s brew of PAHs are a minimum of 45,000 tons of PCBs (poly chlorinated biphenyls) presumably dumped into the estuary by the steel mill and/or the adjacent rail yards. All of this is surrounded by Cape Breton’s largest urban community, the 35,000 people of Sydney.

In addition to the sludge in the estuary is the 125 acre site where the coke was baked, the “coke oven site.” It is contaminated to depths of 80 feet. Criss-crossed by an estimated 80 miles of underground piping, no one knows exactly where the pipes are, only that they may still contain volatile gases. The possibility of underground explosions discourages drilling for more and better information. Through the coke ovens site, a stream runs orange.

Currently, the only “clean-up” plan is to collect the sewage from 13 different sewage outfalls into the estuary, run it through a common pipe, to dump it, untreated, further out in Sydney Harbour. Despite the fact that this violates the federal Fisheries Act, the City is proceeding, with federal funding.

In the midst of all this, one street in the neighbourhood known as Whitney Pier became a focal point for attention.

Frederick Street:

In the spring of 1998, the multi-government/citizen’s committee established two years before, the Joint Action Group, approved excavation of the top 15 feet of material from portions of the coke ovens site. This was not clean-up. It was a revenue-generating activity. The top 15 feet of material was sold as commercial coal for energy production. The closest residential street to the operation was Frederick Street. The backyards of Frederick Street end at an embankment on which sit railway tracks, neatly bounded by chain link fenced marked “Human Health Hazard.” When the coal removal began, no notice was given to Frederick Street. Juanita MacKenzie, arriving home from work, noted a man in full white environmental hazard suit, complete with breathing apparatus, less than a hundred feet from her. She remembers thinking, “Am I underdressed?”

Neighbours began to get splitting headaches, smarting eyes and raw throats. Before long, local mother Debbie Ouellete noticed an orangy-yellow ooze seeping out of the

embankment in her backyard. At her invitation, I came to investigate — local reporters in tow. Sierra Club helped to get media and government attention. Tests on the ooze and backyard soil were performed. The results were sobering. Frederick Street had 18.5 times the acceptable levels of arsenic (as set by the Canadian Council of Environment Ministers – CCME), over 6 times the guideline levels of benzo-pyrenes and other hazardous PAHs. Sierra Club joined local residents in calling for their relocation. The Medical Officer for the Province of Nova Scotia said they would be fine, but that children should avoid their backyards and the brook. The orangy goo was excavated with a back-hoe, gravel dumped on top and an orange plastic fence erected inside the chain link one.

A new local environmental group was founded in Sydney in early July. HELP Cape Breton established relocation of Frederick Street residents as its first priority, and deadlines and commitments to cleaning up the entire Muggah Creek Watershed as urgent as well.

Draft Letter to the Prime Minister (Letters to the House of Commons do not require postage)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien
Prime Minister, House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

The on-going toxic nightmare in Sydney, Nova Scotia is a national disgrace. In recent years it has actually worsened as residents of Frederick Street have been exposed to increased pollution, the government has agreed to pump raw sewage into the harbour and nothing is done about the unacceptable levels of toxic substances in the middle of an urban area.

I have written to Premier MacLellan urging him to relocate Frederick Street residents. Please offer the help of the federal government to ensure that the residents are moved immediately. Please ensure that adequate funds are provided to establish a sewage treatment plant at the end of the \$9.5 million pipe intended to take the raw sewage to the middle of Sydney Harbour. And please ensure that your government will establish a programme, similar to the U.S. Superfund programme, to provide adequate funding for the clean-up of toxic waste sites.

Thank you.
(Your name here)

Alert!

Sydney Tar Ponds:

Elizabeth May

Headaches and nausea continued. One local two year old had severe breathing problems. One August evening, the now mobilized, activist neighbours smelled a stronger odour and following their noses found a bubbling seepage of coal tar. Numbers on this creeping ooze were unbelievable. (The term “creeping ooze” is not hyperbole. It literally did creep. I saw it in early September and the stick marking the edge of it when first discovered was six feet inside the periphery.) According to Environment Canada, the ooze had 9,940 mg/kg of naphthalene. The CCME acceptable level is 0.6 mg/kg. Levels of benzo-pyrene were nearly 5,000 mg/kg. The acceptable level is 0.7. Still, the Nova Scotia government offered nothing to residents but reassurances. They were told to stay well away from the oozing coal tar. And they were told living in their homes would not pose an unacceptable risk. Sierra Club called for the removal of the provincial medical officer.

The position that there is no unacceptable risk in living on Frederick

Street is supported by a risk assessment performed by a firm called Cantox at the request of the Nova Scotia government. Cantox essentially performed a computer-modelled guesstimate to establish exposure levels. Their first assumption was that the primary route of exposure was through the soil. Since I have visited Frederick Street on numerous occasions, I am now familiar with the splitting headache and smarting eyes that come from spending any time there. But, I swear, I have never eaten the soil. I think it is fairly obvious that, while soil is one route of exposure, the primary route is the air. This was not investigated.

The situation for residents is desperate. Every day that goes by with government dismissals, is a day of anxiety and panic for residents. Only 14 families live on the street. As an historical footnote of interest, in the 1970s it was decided the street was too polluted to be residential. It was zoned non-residential and a number of homes were purchased by the municipal government and torn down. This zoning was reversed in the late 1980s.

Sierra Club has committed to cover costs for a lawyer for residents. Halifax lawyer Rocky Jones is only charging his expenses, unless we can find adequate funds to pay fees. We have contracted the International Institute of Concern for Public Health to conduct a peer review of the Cantox risk assessment. And we have committed to helping conduct independent medical assessments.

But we need help. Residents of Frederick Street must be moved. The federal government is deferring to the province. The provincial politicians are deferring to their chief medical officer. No one is helping Frederick Street. And in the bigger picture, no one has committed to the ultimate clean-up of the whole unhealthy mess — estuary, sludge and coke ovens.

We need your help!! Please write your own version of the following letters, and send a donation to the Sierra Club, earmarked for Frederick Street.

Draft Letter to the Editor of your local paper

To the Editor

I recently became aware of the unacceptable, indeed scandalous, levels of toxic contamination found in Sydney, Nova Scotia. While Canadians are generally complacent, even self-congratulatory about our environmental record, we have one of North America's most heavily contaminated communities in our midst. It is no wonder that Sydney, Nova Scotia holds the title "Cancer Capital" when one considers the appalling legacy of the steel industry. The jobs are now gone, but the pollution is not.

Arsenic, PCBs, and PAHs, are found at levels to boggle the mind in the estuary, flushing daily to the sea, the soil and the neighbourhoods of Sydney. If this were Mexico or the former USSR, it would be dreadful, but not as shocking as discovering this state of neglect in our own country.

I know that Health Minister Allan Rock and Environment Minister Christine Stewart recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Joint Action Group in Sydney, but the MOU does not commit anyone to do anything. In fact, it explicitly states that nothing in the agreement obliges anyone to do anything. It is, at best, a written, unenforceable statement of moral commitment. We urgently need commitment to the immediate relocation of residents of Frederick Street and a comprehensive remediation of the estuary (Tar Ponds) and coke ovens site as soon as possible.

Sincerely,
(Your name here)

Draft Letter to Premier Russell MacLellan

Honourable Russell MacLellan
Premier of Nova Scotia
P.O. Box 726
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2T3

Dear Mr. Premier,

I have recently become aware of the unbelievably hazardous conditions in which residents of Frederick Street in Sydney are living. The levels of arsenic, naphthalene, benzo-pyrenes and numerous other toxic substances far exceed the safety standards that have been established by Environment Canada. The residents are complaining of health problems, completely in keeping with exposure to such dangerous substances.

How can you as Premier justify allowing your citizens to live in a toxic waste site? Why haven't the Frederick Street residents been moved? What will it take to convince your government, further mortality figures?

Please move residents of Frederick Street now. I am also writing to the Prime Minister suggesting that any costs of this decision can be shared. But please, act now. It is a matter of life and death.

Sincerely,
(Your name here)

Going, Going, Gone... Endangered Species in Canada

Canada still has no legislation to protect species at risk. Canada has a voluntary process, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), which lists species as threatened, vulnerable or endangered. We keep a list of endangered species, but nothing is triggered by that designation. We know they are at risk, but no federal law exists to protect them. A grizzly bear, protected as a species at risk in Montana, can be legally shot in Alberta.

Sierra Club of Canada was the first group to press for the passage of endangered species legislation. We found allies in other major environmental groups. Together we have been successful in gaining a government commitment to act. But the last session of Parliament saw an atrocious bill die on the Order Paper. The federal government proposed a bill which would have allowed the commercial fishery to be virtually exempt from the law, the listing

process to be run by Cabinet and not scientists, and which would have only applied to a minority of species at risk in Canada. Furthermore, it would not have provided habitat protection at listing. As the primary cause of extinction is habitat loss, failure to protect the places species require for food, shelter and life, is a fatal flaw. We condemned Bill C-65 as a "permitting system for legal extinctions."

We have been working with other environmental groups, and with industry, in finding ways to protect species, developing an approach that the federal government would have to accept.

The federal Minister of Environment, Christine Stewart, has said that new legislation will be put forward early in 1999. We need all our members and supporters to write Stewart and Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, urging them to bring in endangered species legislation with teeth. At a minimum, such legislation must include:

- Comprehensive and mandatory habitat protection for all species at risk in all jurisdictions;
- Listing decisions made by scientists, not politicians;
- Mandatory formulation and implementation of species recovery plans;
- Advance review of projects that may harm species and habitats at risk;
- Effective dispute resolution mechanisms;
- Incentives for citizen conservation initiatives;
- No "blanket" exemptions for species-threatening activities;
- Consistency of all elements of protection among federal, provincial, and territorial jurisdictions;
- National standards that ensure full protection of species and ranges that cross international and provincial borders; and
- Adequate funding to support all of the above efforts and to ensure enforcement and accountability.

Endangered Species

Planet by the numbers...

(Sources: United Nations Human Development Index, Canadian Coalition on Biodiversity, Sierra Club of Canada national office)

\$60 Billion (US)
Total indebtedness of African nations

\$8 Billion (US)
Annual spending in the U.S. on cosmetics

86%
Percentage of goods and services consumed by the richest 20% of the Earth's population

20%
The decline in spending by the average African household in last 25 years

20
The number of minutes in which another species goes extinct

3
The richest 3 people in the world have assets which exceed the GDP of the 48 least developed countries

240
The number of acres of Canadian wilderness lost every hour

98%
The percentage of cows in Canada which are Holsteins

\$1.5 Trillion (US)
The amount of unregulated currency transactions occurring daily around the world

75%
The percentage of Canadian Holsteins bred from the same 12 bulls by artificial insemination

0
Number of environmental regulations challenged through the World Trade Organization, ruled to be legitimate

51
Number of corporations among the 100 largest economies in the world

191
Number of countries in the world

161
Number of countries in the world with economies smaller than Wal-Mart

What the Chrétien Government Did on your Summer Vacation... or How Did a Banned Toxic Product Get Re-approved, and its Manufacturer Get Paid Off.

This is indeed the brave new world. While most Sierra Club members are by now well aware of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, fewer will know that virtually the same protections for foreign corporations exist under Chapter II of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

In the last few months, the federal government has been embroiled in two challenges by companies manufacturing or processing toxic products, each of which is complaining of lost profits due to government regulation.

The first of these was the challenge by Ethyl Corp., the manufacturer of toxic gasoline additives. For decades, Ethyl Corp. defended its leaded gasoline as safe. Once banned, it shifted to a manganese-based octane enhancer known as MMT. Canada registered it for use nearly 20 years ago, although the US did not. There was reason for the caution exhibited by US regulators. Manganese is a well-known neuro-toxin, or brain poison. In occupational expo-

sure it has caused tremors similar to those caused by Parkinson's disease.

Ultimately, the Canadian government decided to ban MMT. The car manufacturers were complaining that MMT impaired the on-board diagnostic capabilities of pollution-control devices. Increased air pollution worried Environment Canada. Warranty coverage for gummed up devices worried the car manufacturers. The Learning Disabilities Association and Sierra Club worried about poisoning the brains of Canadians. It took two years and two sessions of Parliament, but ultimately Sergio Marchi brought Sheila Copps' bill through the House and Senate. That was 1997.

Before the bill was even through Parliament, Ethyl Corp. threatened to sue the Canadian government under Chapter II. As under the MAI, this allows a foreign corporation to sue the government directly for alleged lost profits. When Ethyl Corp. sued for \$350 million, they also claimed damages for loss of reputation. Apparently, transnational corporations

can now sue for libel over issues raised during debates in the House of Commons, although no one else can.

The hearings between Ethyl and our government were secret, as were all pleadings and arguments in the case. This is standard practice in trade disputes, but when a corporation can sue a government, it is anti-democratic to keep the whole process behind closed doors. (Editorials in the Globe and Mail and Financial Post have agreed with us in the call to get these hearings out of the dark.)

On July 20, 1998, Environment Minister Christine Stewart and Industry Minister John Manley held a press conference at which they announced that MMT was no longer banned in Canada. In fact, they read out a statement of apology, claiming that they never had enough evidence to have banned MMT in the first place. In the context of Ethyl Corp. dropping its \$350 million suit, this statement must have been pre-approved, word for word, by Ethyl

Corp. lawyers. Canada also gave Ethyl \$19 million for damages during the ban!

Within weeks, we learned of another Chapter II based challenge. This time it was a company based in Ohio, called S.D. Myers, which processes PCBs. They claimed damages for the existence of a 15 month ban on the export of Canadian PCBs to the US.

In fact, although we did not learn of the S.D. Myers challenge until September, it was actually filed two days after the Manley/Stewart cave-in to Ethyl Corp. There is no provision for such challenges to be filed on a public registry. In fact, we only learned of it through a casual remark which led reporter Heather Scofield of the Globe and Mail to dig. Initial denials gave way to a confirmation of another Chapter II environmental suit.

The PCB export ban was in keeping with Canada's commitments under the Basel Convention on Hazardous Wastes which encourages member states not to allow the trade in toxic waste. When Canada allowed the trade to recommence, Sierra Club in the US successfully blocked the trade through legal action. For S.D. Myers to seek compensation for a 15 month ban on a trade that was disallowed in any event, is opportunistic. But, like the MMT case, it will likely have a pronounced chilling effect on regulators.

What regulator is likely to ban a toxic product knowing that a foreign-based manufacturer can sue for damages? This is the most glaring example of transnational corporate power undermining democratic decision-making.

In an attempt to use what levers were created by the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (C.E.C.), the so-called "side deal" to NAFTA, Sierra Club spear-headed a joint letter to the Commission. We requested that the environmental agency, governed by the environment ministers from Canada, U.S. and Mexico should intervene pursuant to a section of the agreement establishing the C.E.C., which sets out their role as a point of public contact for Chapter II investor-state disputes involving the environment. We have asked for the S.D. Myers case to be suspended until adequate provision for public involvement and environmental expertise can be developed. Our letter was co-signed by the Council of Canadians, Greenpeace and the Canadian Labour Congress. We await a response.

Meanwhile, both cases provide concrete examples of the dangers of further expanding investor rights through the Multilateral Agreement on Investment. Sierra Club of Canada is assisting the Council of Canadians in their cross-country Public Inquiry into the MAI. The object is to develop alternatives to the MAI and the current global corporatization.

Upcoming hearings include November 12, Winnipeg; November 13, Saskatoon; November 14, Edmonton; November 28, Halifax. Contact Sierra Club for details. And please join us!

Save the Great Bear Rainforest

The magnificent forests of coastal British Columbia – the ancient temperate rainforest – are the product of a spectacular synthesis of climate, geography and biology. From its towering trees to its diverse wildlife and marine life, and even to its insects, the old-growth forest in this wet maritime region has evolved over thousands of years into an ecological web of life unique in the world.

Historically the Pacific coast rainforest reached its most luxuriant expression in northern Washington and southern British Columbia. Today only a handful of valleys containing these magnificent forests remains unlogged, primarily in Clayoquot Sound on Vancouver Island.

That leaves the remaining wild regions on B.C.'s central and north coast as the last large repository of intact, unprotected ancient temperate rainforest in the world. This area is now known as the Great Bear Rainforest because it is one of the great grizzly bear strongholds of the world. This is a daunting coastal landscape of some 3.2 million hectares extending northward along B.C.'s central and north coast from Knight Inlet to Alaska. Its geography ranges from low-lying muskeg bogs to mountain-high glaciers. Its ragged coastline contains a maze of islands and channels.

The Great Bear Rainforest contains more than 60 undeveloped watersheds greater than 5,000 hectares, plus many smaller ones as well. Wildlife abounds here, including the rare and remarkable white Kermode bear – the spirit bear.

The very lifeblood of this rainforest environment is the annual migration of Pacific salmon that swarm up the thousands of rivers and streams, providing food for wildlife and nutrients for the riverside forests.

Almost every intact valley is threatened by clearcut logging. Western Forest Products, Interfor, West Fraser and MacMillan Bloedel have plans to punch roads and logging into most valleys over the next two decades. The current rate of logging in the area is twice what the government considers a sustainable level, and far higher than what the Sierra Club believes is sustainable.

The Sierra Club of BC is working to protect this rich coastal ecosystem. And we've achieved short term success! We've led the way in negotiating a short term moratorium on logging in all the intact valleys and are now working for permanent protection of these areas. Local communities are some of the major players who will decide the future of this area and therefore we're sharing information about conservation planning and alternative forestry with these communities. Our goal is a land use plan that protects the ecological wealth of the area as well as providing support for communities to develop conservation based economies.

The Sierra Club encourages you



to write to British Columbia's Premier Glen Clark and tell him you want him to protect BC's ancient temperate rainforests. Write to Federal Fisheries Minister David Anderson and tell him to ensure that Pacific salmon populations are protected, as they are the lifeblood of the coastal ancient forest ecosystem.

Honorable David Anderson
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Ph.: 613-996-2358
Fax: 613-952-1458

Premier Glen Clark
200 Kent St., Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
Ph.: 250-387-1715
Fax: 250-387-0087

We invite you to look at Sierra Club of BC's web site (<http://www.sierraclub.ca/bc/>) for more visuals and campaign information.

