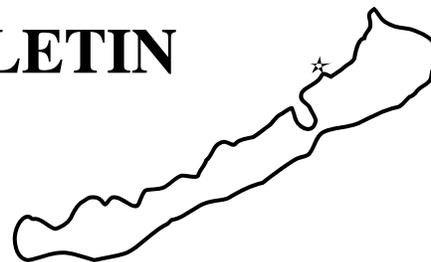


THE BALATON BULLETIN



Newsletter of The Balaton Group

FEBRUARY 2000

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**The next Annual Meeting
of the Balaton Group
will be September 6–10, 2000,
in Csopak, Hungary.
(Arrival on September 5.)**

Foreword from the Editors

This is the first edition of the Balaton Bulletin in the new Millennium! And for the first time in the life of the Balaton Bulletin, this edition is created with the help of an editorial committee.

In all previous years it was Dana Meadows who took care of the content and editing of the Bulletin, she was the chief editor. She motivated people to write, thought of themes, she edited articles, and she wrote a lot of contributions (like book reviews) and articles herself. As her partner, Dana had Diana Wright, who took care of the layout of the Bulletin, and the administration and distribution via mail and email. They provided the Balaton Group with four inspiring Bulletins each year.

Recently, Dana decided to pass on the editorial torch to the Balaton Steering Committee in order to concentrate on her new project with the Sustainability Institute and the community farm (see: News from the Members). We all appreciate the untiring effort that Dana has given to creating and continuing this important communication medium for the Balaton Group. Thank you so much Dana, for doing it all these years!

Other changes have been considered by the Balaton Group, including having our yearly meeting in a new place. Last year's meeting about visioning was also about visioning the future of the Balaton Group. The plan of having our millennium meeting in India was far along, but it has now been postponed due to practical problems. So our meeting in September will again take place at Csopak, as you can read more about in the next issue of the Bulletin.

Coordinating editors are now Nanda Gilden and Niels Meyer, supported by an editorial committee that consists of Joan du Toit, Hermann Knoflacher, Gillian Martin Mehers and Carlos Quesada. And above all, Diana Wright is continuing her work for the Bulletin! So we are confident that we can continue the Balaton Bulletin in the spirit of Dana and of the Balaton Group.

At the Steering Committee meeting we discussed some possible changes in our channels of communication, including the use of the web. However, for the year 2000 we want to continue the Balaton Bulletin in its original format with due respect to editorial freedom and perhaps some minor changes in style. So, for the year 2000, this means that there will be 3 or 4 traditional Bulletins.

For the coming issues of the Bulletin we hope to receive a large number of different contributions of interest to the Balaton Group. You may submit articles, brief notes, jokes, personal news, information on interesting conferences etc. in the usual BB style. We hope that many members of the Balaton Group will feel responsible for the successful continuation of the Balaton Bulletin.

Warm greetings from Nanda and Niels

Contributions should be e-mailed (preferably in Word) both to Nanda Gilden (w.biesiot@fwn.rug.nl) and to Niels Meyer (nim@ibe.dtu.dk). The deadline for the next Bulletin is April 20th.

An Alternative to the WTO

By Niels I. Meyer

The World Trade Organization (WTO) top meeting in Seattle in December 1999 was a clear fiasco for the driving forces that were seeking more advantages for international capital and for the commercial interests of multinationals. Finally, the developing countries and NGOs managed to stand together in a strong protest against the dominating role of the triad consisting of the US, the EU and Japan. As a result, the meeting ended without any concrete decisions, and the WTO is in deep crisis. More details may be found in a recent review article in *State of the World 2000* by **Hilary French**, who attended the Balaton meeting last September.

One may ask why this has not happened before. Several UN reports have documented that the WTO version of free trade primarily benefits the rich industrial countries, while it is making life even more difficult for the poorest developing countries. The develop-

ing countries do not get an opportunity to protect their own agriculture and industry in the learning phase and the build-up phase when these sectors can not yet compete with the industrial world.

One reason why their protests have not been stronger may be found in the economic aid from the rich world and its institutions. Although this aid is much too small, has the wrong criteria, and is filled with reservations to the advantage of the donors, it has made the political situation of the developing countries weaker

A typical Western argument in favor of having an international trade institution like the WTO is that without common rules, trade would be even more dominated by the powerful industrial countries, following the "law of the jungle". This is a questionable argument, when the rules of the game are cementing the advantages of

the powerful nations and their multinationals. As the trade minister of Tanzania once expressed during some heated negotiations in WTO: "If I am to fight Mike Tyson in a boxing ring then it is a poor consolation that we are boxing according to the same rules."

The ambition of the WTO is clearly to establish itself as some kind of world government. If the organization succeeds in this plan it would be disastrous for democracy, for the natural environment and for social and economic equity in the world. However, the oppositional groups are split in their choice of counteracting strategies. Some NGOs argue that changes can only be made by working inside the framework of the WTO, but this strategy seems to be in conflict with reality.

Let us consider environmental concerns as an example. Already at the meeting in Marrakech, in April 1994, where the WTO was formally confirmed as a successor to the GATT, it was decided to set up a Committee for Trade and Environment to analyze possible conflicts in this connection. This committee has now been working for more than five years with many meetings. The best one can say about this work is that it is transparent, because the committee minutes are open for the general public. Therefore, it is also possible to see that nothing concrete has resulted from all these meetings. This is not due to lack of important questions taken up by the committee, but in accordance with general UN principles a decision requires consensus, which is almost impossible to obtain. Even small changes, in order to enforce environmental concerns in the WTO rules, have not found the necessary support. How then can one imagine that radical changes of the priorities of free trade could be agreed upon from within the WTO?

An Alternative Basis for Global Trade

The WTO, and global trade in general, are developing in a completely wrong direction with little consideration of social and environmental problems. Non-committing and nice-sounding words in the WTO preamble do not make any noticeable changes in the real world. What is needed is a reversal of priorities so that social and environmental concerns come first in determining the rules of global trade, while commercial interests can only be promoted if they support the primary concerns.

Such an alternative basis for global trade implies that developing countries would have full rights to protect their agricultural and industrial sectors in a long transition phase determined by themselves. At the same time, the industrial world should be open without import barriers for export goods from developing countries. It also implies that if the rich industrial countries want to improve local working and environmental con-

ditions in connection with trade, then they should fully fund the costs involved for the developing countries.

These principles could contribute to a much-needed improvement in the quality of life in the developing world. If, as a consequence, the material growth in the rich world were slowed down, this would not be the worse thing to happen.

It is my conclusion that such a radical shift in the basis of world trade would have no chance of finding the necessary consensus within the WTO. However, as the WTO is very fond of competition it could hardly oppose the creation of a competitive trade organization.

My proposal is to set up such an alternative trade organization under the UN. It could be called the United Nations Programme for Sustainable Trade (UNPST). The important point is that the priorities of the alternative trade organization should be in accordance with the principles mentioned above. UNPST could cooperate closely with UNEP, UNDP and UNCTAD.

The first question is how to get started. I think that the present crisis in the WTO gives a good political background for new alliances between NGOs and politicians in some of the more progressive industrial nations, together with governments in critical developing countries.

The most difficult part may be to find sufficient support in industrial countries. Potential industrial partners may be found in Scandinavia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Canada and maybe even Germany with its present government. However, one should not expect many of the large industrial nations to join in the first round. But, even a smaller group could make a difference on the world scene, both directly through the support of the special trade interests of the developing world, and indirectly by demonstrating that it is possible to base trade on different criteria.

In order to ease the decision of joining the alternative trade organization it should be possible to continue some kind of affiliation with the WTO (joint membership) for a period where the livelihood of UNSPT is tested in real life. All parties should be interested in avoiding strong conflicts in this connection.

In this issue of the Balaton Bulletin you will find more articles and viewpoints on the situation after Seattle. I hope that these will inspire readers to continue the debate in the Balaton listserv and in coming issues of the Bulletin. In particular, I would welcome proposals for concrete actions that could support the creation of an alternative basis for world trade.

WTO Reflections by Vicki Robin

WTO as Mirror

This was no picnic, and not because I got tear-gassed or faced down by the police (which I did). The battle in Seattle happened inside me as well as around and through me. The week was a constant encounter with my conscience. Courage and bravery are important to me. My “fear style” is to step as far as I can into the center of every terrifying unknown and let my gut lead me to the next truth that sets one free. It’s really a coping mechanism. Being anywhere less than on “the front lines” leaves me uncomfortably messing around in moral ambiguity.

I am also slow to anger and quick to inquire into the human being behind the point of view. Every time I was attracted to joining the direct action, I looked down and saw that for me no line in the sand had yet been drawn. I wasn’t convinced that I personally was at war with the WTO. Not until I’d seen the whites of its eyes and smelled its breath and found what made it tick. But the passions of the week kept challenging me to ask, “What is MY demonstration? Where DO I take a stand?”

So I spent the week in the center of marches and rallies and workshops, but on the sidelines of the major conflagration. I didn’t plan to do civil disobedience. I took non-violence training in case the marches stumbled into violence but I didn’t plan to get arrested. I have not been a political activist. Ever. I’ve been a cultural activist. I’ve been a consciousness activist. I’ve stepped over the line of many friends’ comfort zones to speak the truth as I saw it. But this was the first time I was taking to the streets for anything.

My most incendiary act was to carry a huge sign on a march through a boarded-up downtown that said: LOCALIZE CHRISTMAS—GIVE LOVE NOT STUFF. (Well, the day after the WTO left Seattle I did go downtown dressed as Mrs. Claus with a sign on my red coat saying “MRS. CLAUS SAYS: MAKE COOKIES NOT DEBT FOR CHRISTMAS.” Luckily, none of the merchants trying to get back to the buying bacchanalia stoned me. So, you get the picture, I wasn’t directly part of the story most of you read.)

WTO as WTO

For an excellent summary of the WTO, please go to <http://www.rachel.org> “Making Sense of the WTO” #679. An interesting factual account of the command chain that led to the police action can be found at <http://archives.seattletimes.com/cgi-bin/texis.mummy/web/vortex/display?storyID=385a0a046&query=WTO>. Beyond this, you’re on your own. I’m sure you have your

own sources and are forming your own opinions. Rather than offer another personal account of events I want to make three simple observations.

1. THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF ALTERNATIVES: The WTO thrives on selling the idea that there are no alternatives to globalization. It’s an ideology nicknamed TINA—There Is No Alternative. It’s ironic that the acronym turns out to be a woman’s name. Most women I know are much more inclusive of a range of opinions than TINA is. The world I live in, however, could be called TATA (There Are Thousands of Alternatives—a term used at the IFG teach-in). I like that. It sounds like a kindly grandmother.

I admire and participate in a myriad of successful, common sense design strategies for a world that works for all of life. I’ll name a few to indicate my meaning, but the list only points a finger to a rich, diverse and densely populated territory. The Natural Step. Ecological Footprint. Non-violent Communication. Barter Networks. Indigenous wisdom. Meditation. Engaged Buddhism. Appropriate Technology. Results. Mindful Markets. The Universe Story. Beyond War. Holistic everything. Natural foods. Community Supported Agriculture. Biointensive Gardening. Permaculture. Citizen Juries. Consensus. Home Schooling. Ecological Economics. Town Meetings. The Genuine Progress Indicator. Ballot Initiatives. Boycotts. The Ceres Principles. The Earth Charter. And yes, Your Money or Your Life. You get the drift.

Globalized free trade could be seen as putting the economy on steroids and amphetamines. TINA is having delusions of grandeur and is in the midst of a serious psychotic break. If “she” were a person, we’d institutionalize “her”. The lockout of the WTO in Seattle was the beginning of her lock up by the citizens of the world. TATA is respectful, humble, curious, sincere, ethical, devoted to the common good—in other words, sane.

The teach-ins, marches, rallies, workshops and NGO meetings in Seattle marked the beginning of the many alternatives finding one another and making common cause and commonsense. Hallelujah! Every place I went I met wonderful people, heartened to know one another. We listened to each other’s views, learned, shared stories, exchanged email and web site addresses and generally shifted from the loneliness of the long time-frame critic to the knowledge that we are legion and we aren’t gonna let TINA run the world by default. There is every indication and reason to hope that a new global grassroots citizen’s movement was born at the end of the second millennium.

2. GLOBALIZATION “R” US: So shoot me. I’m in favor of globalization. First of all, communications and travel have woven our world together to such a degree that I don’t have to believe in quantum physics or metaphysics to know that when a butterfly flaps its wings in China my world changes. I’d personally like to globalize quite a lot of things: Non-violent conflict resolution. Tolerance. The world’s religions in dialogue and functioning as wise elders. Ethics. Awareness of our common heritage in the heart of the Universe. Preservation of indigenous wisdom. Ecosystem protection. Equity—the fair distribution of wealth. Freedom from want, from tyranny, from hate crimes, from abuse. Freedom to protect from harm one’s own body, one’s own community or tribe, one’s own bioregion, one’s own nation. Reconciliation between the sexes, the races, the nations, and people and nature. Celebration of non-material forms of wealth. For starters. What’s your list?

The WTO’s version of globalization is a fantasy of material progress. It has its good points. Free trade certainly is effective at stimulating the production and distribution of more, better and different stuff—just like the free-traders claim. I am grateful for many goods and services the global economy has made available to me and I do want others to have access to them. But it’s pitifully insufficient as a Utopian ideal for humanity. We need to fold in our perennial aspirations to have it make any sense at all. The people in the streets, by and large, were not against trade, but want the “goods” of globalization to make room for “goods” like clean water, fresh air, intact ecosystems, respect for non-human life, wholesome foods and sharing the benefits of prosperity more universally.

3. WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE UNITED NATIONS?: Given this perspective, I came to wonder why the WTO isn’t just another UN agency. I know the UN has been rendered impotent and irrelevant in many ways. But it’s what we have, along with the World Court, to embody global ethics, global decency and global decision making. Underfunded and with few binding powers, the UN cannot put any teeth to the hard-won agreements that emerged from the series of conferences in the 1990’s. Rio. Cairo. Copenhagen. Beijing. Istanbul. These events could be guiding our future—and regulating the activities of the WTO. That would be putting money in service of our values, rather than having our values be distant side rails in a vicious bumper car carnival game where everyone is trying to get the best of everyone else.

A German microbiologist who has been involved for decades in international negotiations explained to me that the WTO is an attempt to actually create a supra-agency beyond the reach of and with control over the UN. I intend to investigate why the necessary glo-

bal trade agreements can’t happen within the United Nations. Are we so far gone in assuming the dominance of corporations in our lives that we can’t imagine a world in which “we, the people” call the shots? Remember, both the UN Charter and the US Constitution start with “We, the people.”

WTO as Manifestation of a Worldview

One of my favorite teaching tales: Two monks sat in contemplation by a river. Suddenly they heard the cries of a baby and saw the infant struggling for breath as it floated by. They waded in, brought the child to shore and revived it. Satisfied, they returned to their peaceful state. Again they heard cries, saw a struggling infant, fished it out, revived it and settled down for meditation. But the tempo of drowning babies increased. Both men shuttled from river to shore, saving babies as fast as they could. Soon they were soaked and exhausted and totally out of peace.

Suddenly one monk ran away. Now the other was REALLY out of peace, angry at being abandoned. Hours later the stream of babies stopped as mysteriously as it had started. Then the second monk returned. “Where were you,” cried the first monk, “when I really needed you!” “I went upstream to see who was throwing babies into the river,” the absent monk replied.

Fishing out babies is a front lines holding action, necessary for immediate survival. Such actions take courage, commitment and a willingness to get waist deep in the torrent of the times. A great deal of activism is just this sort of heroics. Shutting down the ministerial meeting was, among other things, a holding action. It was like lying down in front of a tank or climbing a tree in a threatened forest. As I said, many times during the week I felt the tug to this moral high ground, but I was there on another mission.

For years I’ve “battled” the blindness and manipulation at the heart of overconsumption. It’s as far upstream as I could go. I have been deeply distressed by the whole tempo of trashing the planet to fill the pockets and presumed needs of those who already have more than enough. Yet “overconsumption” seems to be a many headed beast—lop off one and 10 other brains seem to kick in to keep it going. So I’ve been searching for its lair and its source of nourishment. I’ve been searching for its heart. (More on this later.) The WTO, for me, is extremely dangerous, but it isn’t the problem. The mindset it stands for is. I spent my week deepening my understanding of the WTO worldview and learning as much as I could from the full range of activists present how to reveal its assumptions so stunningly that it might melt like the Wicked Witch of the West.

The WTO is merely the handmaiden of a worldview that is:

1. materialistic (profit is our most important product, economic growth = well being)
2. undemocratic (of, by and for the people with wealth)
3. cut-throat (do what you have to do to compete successfully today—even at the cost of compromising the future—or you're history)
4. cynical (purporting to be for the poor—a rising tide lifts all ships, y'know—but actually fueling the increasing rich/poor gap) and
5. sociopathic (greed is good; altruism is suspect; cynicism is de rigueur).

It is a self-organizing system that would, from its own point of view, work better without the constraints being placed on it by worry warts. It has removed as many natural and artificial controls to its ascendancy as possible, against all good sense. Money isn't tied to any form of natural wealth. The natural world is a subset of the economy and, if any natural limits are transgressed, technology is called in to fix it. The ability to overturn national laws that limit free trade is a completely coherent demand of such a worldview. Never mind that global warming, water shortages, loss of topsoil, overpopulation, rising inequity, collapse of fisheries are flashing "red alert". The worldview cannot let this in without cracking its internal logic.

My favorite recent example is that Clorox, the leading global manufacturer of dioxins, has purportedly bought out Britta, the counter-top water filtration system to make our drinking water pure again. Do I hear double speak? Hate is love. War is peace. Instead of "polluters paying" (a sensible principle of ecological economics), polluters can profit from both ecological destruction and remediation. We need this worldview like we need a hole in the head.

But, as Seattle demonstrated, worldviews die hard. Think of it this way. If you are a farmer and your farmland is taken away, you don't only lose your land and your livelihood—you lose your identity. Even if you are given a job in the new prison facility built nearby or given a pension for the rest of your life, a hole in the center of your being has opened up. And if you are a rich person profiting from the Industrial paradigm you will be hard pressed to change. Even if you have no time for your family. Even if you have had to do things that violate your original sense of fairness. Even if your doctor says you have to slow down. Even if you learn that your company's product is doing harm.

In fact, I suspect that the faithful followers of the dominant economic paradigm are as much its victims as are the voiceless. The managerial class is being milked for its productivity like forests for their logs and chickens for their eggs and sweatshop workers for their labor—and they know it. Perhaps this is why YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE appeals to people in every income bracket—it's a defector's manual.

Yet, if you are a winner in the casino where the future of the biosphere is being gambled away, it's still hard to push away from the table. Aside from people influenced by compelling moral figures like Mohandas Gandhi or Jesus, few privileged individuals in history have voluntarily given up their advantage.

So, in my view, the materialistic mindset is what's throwing the babies (living systems) in the drink. The WTO is just a visible representation of a mindset that puts profits over people and the planet.

The emergent worldview, in my opinion, has it all over that old one. It starts in the vastness of the unfolding story of the Universe, cracks open the future by showing that evolution is still going on. It affirms that spiritual values are as determinative of outcome as material ones. It lifts up the non-economic side of life (laughter, generosity, dance, intimacy, caring, art, music, philosophy, inquiry) and embraces the economic side of life like a cherished younger brother. It wants the economy to do what economies do well—meet real material needs. And it wants the rest of life to flourish. It honors democracy, decency, civility and law as part of what it takes for humans to live together. It honors the earth as the home of all life, the only home we have. It is practical, sane, common sensible.

WTO as a Front for the Ten-Ton Gorilla: CONSUMPTION

One anarchist and a couple of wise women associated with the International Forum on Globalization (Anita Roddick and Helen Norberg Hodge) were the lone voices of the obvious. If we want to really get globalization where it lives, we need to look at our consumption. We don't buy... they can't sell.

Of course, there's more to it than that. There always is. But being simplistic helps sort things out. We are in a condition globally of overshoot—we are living beyond the means (the productive capacity) of the earth. Like any family digging themselves deeper and deeper into debt, we've got to stop, yet we've built a lifestyle based on excess. So many habits, preferences and conflicts would need reconsideration that denial sounds like a better alternative. Rather than share (TV's, bathrooms, phones, cars, parks, public transportation), we consume. And externalize the costs onto the future (credit) or oth-

ers (our creditors, the poor, ecosystems, the privilege of polluting the biosphere).

One of my favorite TOLES cartoons has a guy watching TV. The announcer is saying, “The Worldwatch Institute says we have to stop consuming or die”. Several panels go by as the guy absorbs the message. Then he says, “Decisions, decisions.” The subtitle says, “How long am I going to personally need the planet, anyway?”

So within decades we will enter a time of paying the piper for over-production and over-consumption. Livelihoods will disappear. Families will be hurt. Land will become unproductive. Water will be used more efficiently and then, I fear, run out—especially for those who are stranded in rural areas with no political clout. Floods and droughts and other by-products of global warming will come. Who needs an angry God when we’ve got human blindness to visit such pestilence?

As we face this as a culture, I imagine we’ll indulge in blame ball for a while. Blame ball? That’s when everyone will want to shed the full weight of responsibility and toss blame to another party. The rich. The poor. The government. Advertising. The corporations. Inflation. Truly, since over-consumption comes out of a paradigm that’s dying (there’s always more where that came from) we’re all innocent and we’re all to blame. The question is: Who will have the strength and sanity to say, “the buck, literally, stops here.”

Will it take breaking the eco-bank before we face our predicament?

If I fault myself seriously for anything, it was not seeing how necessary this point of view was to the whole challenge to the WTO and at least passing out some printed jeremiad on street corners. Because at one level, it doesn’t take a rocket scientist to see that as people and as a planet, we need to live within the means of our productive capacity. And it’s obvious (to me, at least—what about you?) that the less dependent we are on the economy, the more we can challenge its core premises.

Remember, no matter how much we criticize the global economy, we are tied to it. Fans of Monty Python may remember the scene in *THE LIFE OF BRIAN*, set in the time of Jesus, when the small political cabal is stoking their revolutionary ire. “What have the Romans done for US anyway???” one cries defiantly. “The aqueducts?” another tenders, sheepishly “Yes, but besides the aqueducts?” “Sanitation” “Yes, but...” “Education” “The roads” “Yes, but besides, aqueducts, sanitation, education, the road, what HAVE the Romans done for us.”

What HAS the global economy done for us, anyway? It turns out it’s done a lot, and not just for us but

for many people in the two-thirds world as well. We need and appreciate some commerce to support ourselves and meet our needs. But what needs is the economy—global or local—good at filling and for what needs is it just gross and clumsy?

For some things I need money. I won’t bore you with an accounting of how I spend my \$850 a month income. I know that even if I were more of a gleaner or gatherer than I am, I would need aspects of the money economy to survive in today’s world. Many other needs, however, are met by my own self-responsibility, creativity, struggle to learn, willingness to feel, and, of course, by my relationships. Once basic needs are met, most real human emotion is centered on the joys and sorrows of living itself. Birth. Marriage. Death. Overcoming challenges. Missing out. Achieving. It’s more about love than a Lexus, no matter how much advertising tries to sell the latter with the former.

In *YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE*, a daily practice is established of distinguishing between purchasing to meet real, tangible needs and buying to try to fill non-material needs. Quantity is differentiated from quality. Calculating real hourly wage and the fulfillment curve (simple analytic tools used in *YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE*) illuminate the true cost of the product-intensive American way of living. That’s why people’s expenses drop like a rock. What if we could energize such a process globally? What if we put serious restraints on advertising (c’mon folks, that ain’t free speech!)? And what if we taught media literacy so that even toddlers could differentiate between commercially stoked needs and a wet diaper? What if we reclaimed some of the airwaves from commercial interests, used them to inspire, inform and empower, and made citizenship a better game than “more” (consumerism)? What if we established a really progressive income tax again, just like in the good old post-war days when the poor were getting richer faster than the rich were? And what if we actually started a national and international dialogue about the big “R” word—redistribution of wealth? What if we overturned the Supreme Court ruling that gave corporations the rights of personhood to corporations?

Initiatives in all these areas are already underway. So this isn’t idle chatter. Now, what about the two-thirds world where basic needs are still not met for billions and those that are entering the middle class are clearly better off? Am I advocating voluntary simplicity for the poor of the world who’ve had their appetite for consumption whetted by our media? Am I saying that the billions of poor shouldn’t have their crack at the good life? Fortunately, a great deal of research has been done about how to provide room for the poor to expand their consumption while the rich moderate theirs. Studies by Friends of the Earth Netherlands, among many others,

reveal that consumption fairness can be achieved while still giving the wealthy (us) as high a standard of living as we had, say, in the 1950's. Implementing such a system, of course, will take much political will and courage, but in times of real need people have shown a remarkable willingness to pull together for the common good. Do you think polluting our scant water supply, for example, might be a crisis worthy of making some adjustments?

WTO as the Empire Strikes Back

My favorite chant in the marches was, "This is what democracy looks like!" Free speech. Right of free assembly. Freedom from cruel and unusual punishment. Of course democracy is more than marching in solidarity against the WTO alongside people who might disagree with you on a host of other things. But there was a whiff of citizenship in the air—especially heartening during the Christmas shopping season in a country where consumerism has all but supplanted the quaint virtue of civic participation.

Then the Empire struck back. Conservatives, shoppers, shop-keepers, business people, downtown workers and the Federal government that insisted on a show of force might all think that all police actions were justified—necessitated and provoked by the actions in the streets. But there were hundreds if not thousands who were brutally treated by the police, assaulted, injured, and some in jail tortured and denied basic rights to food, water, legal representation, etc. The police wore riot gear. The protesters wore sweatshirts, rain gear and sported a few signs. Sure, if this had been elsewhere in the world, there would have been real bullets, so in a sense we got off easy. But real damage, psychic and physical, was done to some pretty harmless people.

To me, the show of force was a show of something much more troubling. Those of us who are white, polite and off the streets don't know what many others in America do know—that the police are the friends of the dominant paradigm. Our government gains power and legitimacy not by the consent of the governed (democracy) but by the consent of the governed who have money and other forms of clout. Most of us don't see the chain link fence that surrounds us because we rarely get anywhere near it. Whether or not we were hurt on the streets or in the jails, even if we just watched it all on TV along with the rest of the horrified world, our noses hit the fence and our sense of freedom and justice was bruised. We have the illusion of choice—but within the chain link compound. It's chilling.

I was also troubled by how easily I and many others adapted to the tear gas, curfews and police blockades. "Oh, tear gas on 7th Avenue, let's head over the freeway and down Marion." It only took minutes for my

reptilian brain to develop survival strategies for current conditions. All but the most devoted protesters exercised their incongruous option of dropping in and out of the action at will—to grab a quick bite to eat, take a walk, go to a workshop or catch a nap. Human adaptability can absorb horror and get on with daily life. It's like stepping over or routing yourself around street people. How much have I already adapted to? How much will I adapt to before I draw my own line in the sand?

The police and National Guard, in their frightening array of force, was the old paradigm baring her teeth. The temporary loss of democratic rights in Seattle demonstrated vividly the undemocratic nature of the world order the WTO is designed to enforce. It was the WTO's version of "This is what democracy looks like." Of, by and for the people who have the wealth (and want more of it). I've designed a test for WTO supporters (up to and including Michael Moore) who tell me they're doing it all for the poor, who still believe in the trickle down theory. Let's have a lottery, monitored by the likes of Vaclav Havel, Desmond Tutu, Thich Nhat Hanh or other respected moral voices. Every child between the ages of 10 and 13, say, will draw the name of a family somewhere in the world and go live with them for a year. Suburban jocks could end up in a barrio in Mexico City. Indian farm kids might join city sophisticates in Paris. And maybe some of the millions of kids who die daily of malnutrition diseases could end up dining for a year at tables heaped with luscious, plentiful food. The kids might all love it. But what adjustments might the well-heeled parents in the North make if their own children were the recipients of their corporate policies?

The problems weren't specific bad cops or "anarchists". The problem is that we thought we had a democracy and we may not. Worse, I think many of us have forgotten how. I've not thought much about democracy, just like I hadn't thought much about the economy until 10 years ago. I learned in 7th grade that we have one and left it at that. Now, I'm reassigning myself to Poli Sci 101 (I actually never took that class in the first place). The beauty and hope from all this is that there are, I believe, millions like me who have been rudely awakened from a civic laziness. My guess is that once I catch hold of what democracy really is, I will be in awe of its beauty and proud to be part of the species that invented it.

WTO and Anarchy

Luckily I had a couple of anarchist friends staying with me or I might have dismissed their cause as incoherent at best and counter productive at worst. We stayed up late into the night talking. Amber saw in anarchy a utopian ideal—self responsible, aware people making considered choices that benefit the whole. She was quite aware that pulling off a functioning anarchist society

would take a level of maturity that humanity might never achieve, or only after some profound growth at a species level. Mike saw anarchy as an appropriate response to an insane world. “I don’t have to understand the phonebook-fat trade regulations to know they don’t work. Just look around. Injustice. Unhappiness. Uncaring corporate power.” For him, crimes against property aren’t like crimes against people. Only those corporate outlets that exploit people and nature had been targeted. Their property, in his view, was ill-gotten. Those plate glass facades literally come out of the hide of underpaid workers and abused ecosystems.

I thought of my own sentimental affinity for Luddites and Monkey Wrenchers. If I believed that smashing things would actually work, I might do it. But I’m just far enough along in life to know that in some perverse way such acts are good for the GDP (the clean up and repair WILL happen) and ultimately bad for the natural world (more resource consumption to tidy up the mess). But what struck me about Mike’s argument was the fact that the world he’s expected to inherit and uphold makes no sense to him. He doesn’t want it. And he’s no “trust fund hippie.” He rides the rails, dumpster dives and plants trees for money—embracing a marginal existence as the only thing that’s consistent with his stark view of reality. While the ones who did the tagging and window smashing were few, I suspect there are many Mike’s out there, and this is as much a by-product of the consumer society as deforestation.

Before leaving the anarchists, I want to tell one more story. At the end of the final big march on Friday, the labor contingent had chalked DEMOCRACY in large letters down a whole city block. They had us arrange ourselves along the lines so a media chopper could take our photo for the evening news. Perhaps to say, THIS is what democracy looks like. I was on the spine of the E. Behind me, a young man, standing precisely on the curve of the D, shouted until he was hoarse: “Don’t cooperate. If we are peaceful, they win. Go back to the jail. Protest. Don’t just do what you are told.” All the while his feet never budged from the line. He could have broken rank. He could have run around every letter, fomenting revolution among the obedient. Instead he protested as he complied. I thought about those two forces in me—the one who thinks “outside the box” and the one who counts on the box to maintain an orderly world. I don’t think that anyone really wanted it all to collapse—however much we might fantasize about the demise of western civilization in moments of disgust with crass materialism and gross injustice.

WTO as War?

A dear friend of mine—a man enamored of truth and beauty who happens to be a Republican—wrote me last week saying: “The worst thing about highly con-

tentious situations is that they can come between friends.” People I cherish are strung out along much of the spectrum of opinion about the WTO. I wonder who might feel required to distance themselves from me because I haven’t taken quite the right stance.

During the year I lived in Spain, I remember long, eye-opening conversations with an older friend over Galoise-like cigarettes. She told me about her recollections of the Spanish Civil War. There was no electricity and fewer telephones, in rural Spain at that time. News of the war filtered into the hinterlands via word of mouth. And people, who’d harbored ancient enmities, having nothing to do with the issues of the war, grabbed the occasion and started killing each other. That image of war releasing the beast of hatred has always stayed with me.

Listen to the rhetoric. The Battle of Seattle. The war being waged by the global corporate and financial institutions. These are fighting words.

So skirmishes began on the streets of Seattle. The beginning of a global citizen revolution? Time will tell. But if war it is, then war means sides, fathers against sons, brother against brother. Lines get drawn. The metaphor of war justifies behavior that in peace would just not happen. And war means people get hurt. Some, like those who choose to join the army (even the civil disobedience army), are choosing personal pain over turning a blind eye to evil. Civil disobedience IS disobedience and WILL be punished. It is breaking the law. That’s the point. So it’s no surprise that people were met with force.

Much as we might like the Empire’s army to have been trained in nonviolence rather than violence, their behavior was predictable. In war, too, bystanders are hurt, as were the shoppers and coffee drinkers, the street people and the folks doing their laundry at the wrong time. So declaring war, even righteous war, has profound costs and need be done with full awareness of the narrowing options war brings.

Perhaps, for me, the luxury of empathy with all the humans I met that week will be sorely challenged. I recall now the young policewoman with braces who was part of a three deep blockade of a small group of middle-aged women carrying a non-threatening banner and chanting peace songs. She stood at attention but whispered to us conspiratorially “Hey, if you’d just roll up the banner there would be no problem.” She was much less inclined to fight than some of the feisty old activists in our group.

I recall the girls in anarchist garb joining me in trying to give a small dog a drink of water from the bottle they were carrying to wash tear gas from their eyes. The dog, one said behind her bandana, was “the only person who’d been nice to me all week.”

I recall distributing fruit to the people in vigil at the King County Jail. One girl declined, saying she'd not been so well fed in her whole life. People were coming by non-stop with food. "There was a pizza a protester," she said.

I recall the calm of the peace keepers, their tense good cheer as they shepherded thousands through incendiary intersections. I recall the tireless work and patient repetition of explanations on the part of intellectuals in the Third World Network and the International Forum on Globalization. I recall the exasperated woman who came out of her shop on Friday, took one look at yet another rag-tag throng of protesters marching up 4th Avenue and angrily said to no one in particular, "They should put them all on a bus and send them home." ("They ARE home", I thought, but would it serve this woman to say it?) She wanted normal life back. I recall the woman in a "WTO for Beginners" workshop with me who on Monday hadn't even heard of the WTO. She'd been at a bus stop and struck up a conversation with someone who gave her an earful. By Tuesday she was at every teach-in she could find. By Friday she was in the March. By the next Wednesday she was front row center with her tape recorder at the first City Council hearing. She'd gotten radicalized—along with many other people on the streets and in front of their TV's that week.

And I recall an old folk song about the civil war: "Which side are you on? Which side are you on?" If lines get drawn and sides picked, which way will all the people I know and those I met on the streets go?

Something in me wants to stand up for the perfection of the whole pageant and all of the passion and outrage and courage that flushed the old paradigm out of hiding. I want to stand up for the camaraderie and bridge building I saw happening outside the "war zone." I want to have those who were locked down give respect to the people for whom the greatest act of courage was just to show up at a rally. I want us to celebrate those who were disobedient and got arrested, to remember what we learned dutifully in American History books—it was the SHOT heard round the world, not the teach-in or march.

At the same time, I want all of us who protested to remember the humanity of the delegates and ministers. I want us to heed people like Holocaust survivor Elie Weisel and playwright Anna Devere Smith who have had the patience and vision to tell the whole stories of horrors like the Holocaust and the LA riots. I want the precious possibility of new alliances to flourish and not get beaten down by ideological hair splitting. If "Turtles and Teamsters" are going to have more than a fling, they will need all the courtesy and respect they can muster to deal with their real differences.

I'm not just being nice in this call for respect. I'm being practical and fierce. And true to my own conviction that all elements have information that will lead to unheard of solutions—if we will listen deeply. Demonizing is running rampant now, filling column inches and email boxes globally. It won't help. Having trained in many forms of Aikido, on and off the mat, I am deeply concerned by my colleagues demonizing the WTO and what it stands for. I was especially troubled when this attitude spilled over into subtle and not-so-subtle put downs among the broad range of citizens and NGOs who formed common cause for a few glorious days. A few folks engaged in direct action seemed to be wearing a bit of "You Wimp" cologne that the rest of us could smell. Any choice short of battle mode was capitulation. But there was other polite sniping going on. I literally fear that after years of careful work we will arrive at the crest of the hill, see the "whites of the eyes" of the old paradigm, stand up and turn our guns on one another for some obscure differences of analysis and strategy. (Monty Python could do this skit up good.)

The battle lines need to be drawn between paradigms, not between people or preferred tactics for change. We are choosing the rules for the future. Let's do it eyes wide open. In a way, the ideology of greed and growth thrives because it is simple-minded and single-minded. How can we, diverse as we are, be of one mind too?

Some of the people who impressed me most for their inter-NGO bridge building were representatives of Alliance for Democracy, United for a Fair Economy and Sustainable America. They said "We need to watch out for the turf and leadership and funding wars that break us apart in petty ways. We need to take reflective time to scout upstream for the source of drowning babies so we don't repeatedly solve the same problem. And we need to keep our eye on the prize—healthy people on a healthy planet—and not just the next phone call or campaign." Can we do these few simple things?

WTO as Infotainment

I have annoyed my enviro friends by asserting that the future belongs to the press agents. Surely science, public policy analysis or ethical debates should guide our cultural conversations. But they don't. Publicizing YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE taught me that the media mediates reality and bestows validity much as the church or royalty did in bygone eras. If it's on TV, in the papers, in a book, well, it must be true—or at least worthy of forking over some my limited attention span to consider.

Sound bites. Photo ops. Conflict. Sex, violence, scandal and celebrity. Face it, we eat that stuff for breakfast, lunch and dinner. So isn't it pitifully predictable that the stunning show of outrage and concern about

what the WTO represents made headlines thanks to our much maligned anarchist compadres? They knew how to make news, and, in making news, they made all of our concerns a bit more newsworthy. It's not their "fault" that they upstaged everyone else except, ultimately, the police. Those two factions, with the direct action folks playing the Greek Chorus role of highlighting the morality of the moment, captured the media's attention and thus the attention of the world. That's how the media environment makes us make news. In a way, the media fosters the very misbehavior society is bound to condemn. Could it be that our capitalist epidemic of busyness and distraction are making us all into the cartoon yuppie parents? Civil society has to throw a tantrum of major proportions to get any attention.

Ironically, the media makes money reporting on the very insanity it fosters. Oh well, who said the world isn't weird and getting weirder.

The media isn't recognized as a player in these pageants, but it's got the central role. In this century's revolutions, guerrillas have learned that they must capture the media if they want to capture the state. Campaign finance reform is really media manipulation reform—politicians use soft money to capture the minds the media is adept at delivering.

How can activists for the "new paradigm" capture at least their fair share of the media? How can we cut through the palaver and trivia that the media churns out? "Alternative" media is marginalized and serves only the already converted. Mainstream media seems to be such a huge fortress with commercial interests in every gun turret (as well holding a pistol to the heads of Station and Program Managers). So part of a measured, coordinated strategy post WTO Ministerial meeting has to be, dare I say it, a good media strategy.

YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE was, in a way, a media strategy. A life free of financial constraints yet strangely dismissive of traditional wealth and status symbols had enough curiosity to capture media attention. It irked and attracted people all at once. And I got hundreds of hours of air time—very frugally I might add. Then I used my thousand hours of fame to educate people in a new way of thinking about money, success, savings, status, freedom, purpose and stuff. Ironically, I would gently use the sponsor's ads on interview programs to enhance the points I was making. Somehow, no one recognized this work as subversive. And somehow I have a feeling that this experience has educated me in as yet untapped ways for the kind of transformation I believe we all yearn for.

Many friends call me when they want media contacts (especially Oprah!). But that's not what I am talking about. Rather than getting our messages out singly, we need a two-prong media strategy. We need the grit and moxie to reclaim some rightful space on the media for the leading cultural edge. AND we need to Aikido

the current sick set-up to give us power (air time) using the very tools (shock, celebrity, style, sound and video bites) they use to make news. We can change the rules by playing their game better than they can. I know we can. I already know people who are doing it.

WTO and Spirituality

Say what? Where's the link? I only bring it up because I am determined to integrate my devotional side and my activist side. And, as I do that, to seek this reconciliation in outer events. We all look with dismay on how religion and war have made common cause, with every side claiming God is with them. Result: a lot of suffering. So what is the role of spirit? I am not a contemplative; I don't believe that prayer alone is sufficient to change the course of events. I am also not a materialist; I distrust any process conducted in the absence of the sacred. Perhaps it is with the natural love of a mother for a newborn that we need to hold the affairs of the world.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, when asked about evil in the world, spoke about the centrality of teaching happiness. Everyone wants it, yet to achieve it ultimately requires that everyone's happiness be assured. Peace Pilgrim, our American "saint", said, "Overcome evil with good." Saint Paul said love was the greatest force. So perhaps along with all our strategizing, we need to just love the shit out of the WTO.

Here's a wonderful story I recently got over email: In the Babemba tribe of South Africa, when a person acts irresponsibly or unjustly, he is placed in the center of the village, alone and unfettered. All work ceases, and every man, woman and child in the village gathers in a large circle around the accused individual. Then each person in the tribe speaks to the accused, one at a time, about all the good things the person in the center of the circle has done in his lifetime. Every incident, every experience that can be recalled with any detail and accuracy is recounted. All his positive attributes, good deeds, strengths and kindnesses are recited carefully and at length. The tribal ceremony often lasts several days. At the end, the tribal circle is broken, a joyous celebration takes place, and the person is symbolically and literally welcomed back into the tribe.

I can see the faint outlines of Direct Spiritual Action. Blockade the entrance. Form a human chain. Then praise the WTO functionaries for all the good the global economy has given us and for all their hard work in making it happen. Thank them for the cell phones and computers that make our civil society hum. For the planes that brought us to the demonstrations. For donations to Universities where we got the training in law and medicine that allowed people to be protected and defended and healed on the streets. For the factories that make the bricks and mortar that make our homes. For our cars and trains and televisions, because we use

them to bring us together and bring our message to the world. For providing some of the food we cannot grow ourselves anymore. For their good intentions. For being parents who want the best for their children. For standing up for their belief that they are doing the arduous work of stitching together the world economically so it doesn't fall apart politically. For every unknown act of kindness and courage they have ever done. For...

Too improbable. Too idealistic. Every religion teaches such love. I suspect it will take incredible courage for me and everyone else to be boldly wise and fiercely loving in the face of all that needs repair in this world.

...and so in Conclusion

I am famous for poor wind-ups to my public talks. Sorry, there's no summation for this story. It's unfolding in front of all our eyes. I am grateful to be part of it. I am grateful for every disturbing aspect of that week. I am grateful to the WTO for having given us a visible target for our distress; so many friends now are saying,

“When I thought about the WTO I realized I needed to change a habit or a plan or a point of view.” I am grateful to know more about the world I live in and know it's going to require more of me than I've ever given. Never before has the simple intention to be a responsible and compassionate human being meant stretching one's awareness to encompass all natural and human systems.

Ouch. As hard as it is, the alternative of living in a plastic world or a comfortable bubble no longer cuts it. I'm going to need my sense of humor big time. And kindness, because I'm going to fall down a lot of times on the road to real global citizenship. And discipline. Discipline to use my time really well, which means knowing when to stare out the window and think, as well as which meeting to attend, which project to start, which essay to write, which friend to join for an intense discussion over tea, which book to read.

Discipline to strengthen my spirit, deepen my reflection. To learn those tools and skills that will provide comfort and encouragement for everyone on the journey with me—including me. And I'll need all the help I can get.

How We Really Shut Down the WTO

by Starhawk

Dana Meadows read this piece and forwarded it to the Balaton listserv. It can be found on Starhawk's home page: <http://www.reclaiming.org/starhawk>.

It's been two weeks now since the morning when I awoke before dawn to join the blockade that shut down the opening meeting of the WTO. Since getting out of jail, I've been reading the media coverage and trying to make sense out of the divergence between what I know happened and what has been reported.

For once in a political protest, when we chanted "The whole world is watching!" we were telling the truth. I've never seen so much media attention on a political action. However, most of what has been written is so inaccurate that I can't decide if the reporters in question should be charged with conspiracy or simply incompetence. The reports have pontificated endlessly about a few broken windows, and mostly ignored the Direct Action Network (DAN), the group that successfully organized the nonviolent direct action that ultimately involved thousands of people. The true story of what made the action a success is not being told.

The police, in defending their brutal and stupid mishandling of the situation, have said they were "not prepared for the violence". In reality, they were unprepared for the nonviolence and the numbers and commitment of the nonviolent activists—even though the blockade was organized in open, public meetings and there was nothing secret about our strategy. My suspicion is that our model of organization and decision making was so foreign to their picture of what constitutes leadership that they literally could not see what was going on in front of them. When authoritarians think about leadership, the picture in their minds is of one person, usually a guy, or a small group standing up and telling other people what to do. Power is centralized and requires obedience.

In contrast, our model of power was decentralized, and leadership was invested in the group as a whole. People were empowered to make their own decisions, and the centralized structures were for co-ordination, not control. As a result, we had great flexibility and resilience, and many people were inspired to acts of courage they could never have been ordered to do.

Here are some of the key aspects of our model of organizing:

Training and Preparation:

In the weeks and days before the blockade, thousands of people were given nonviolence training—a three-hour course that combined the history and philosophy of nonviolence with real life practice through

role plays in staying calm in tense situations, using non-violent tactics, responding to brutality, and making decisions together. Thousands also went through a second-level training in jail preparation, solidarity strategies and tactics and legal aspects. As well, there was first aid training, training in blockade tactics, street theater, meeting facilitation, and other skills. While many more thousands of people took part in the blockade who had not attended any of these training activities, a nucleus of groups existed who were prepared to face police brutality and who could provide a core of resistance and strength. And in jail, I saw many situations that played out just like the role plays. Activists were able to protect members of their group from being singled out or removed by using tactics introduced in the training. The solidarity tactics we had prepared became a real block to the functioning of the system.

Common Agreements:

Each participant in the action was asked to agree to the nonviolence guidelines: To refrain from violence, physical or verbal; not to carry weapons, not to bring or use illegal drugs or alcohol, and not to destroy property. We were asked to agree only for the purpose of the 11/30 action—not to sign on to any of these as a life philosophy, and the group acknowledged that there is much diversity of opinion around some of these guidelines.

Affinity Groups, Clusters and Spokescouncils:

The participants in the action were organized into small groups called Affinity Groups. Each group was empowered to make its own decisions around how it would participate in the blockade. There were groups doing street theater, others preparing to lock themselves to structures, groups with banners and giant puppets, others simply prepared to link arms and nonviolently block delegates. Within each group, there were generally some people prepared to risk arrest and others who would be their support people in jail, as well as a first aid person.

Affinity groups were organized into clusters. The area around the Convention Center was broken down into thirteen sections, and affinity groups and clusters committed to hold particular sections. As well, some groups were 'flying groups'—free to move to wherever they were most needed. All of this was co-ordinated at Spokescouncil meetings, where Affinity Groups each sent a representative who was empowered to speak for the group.

In practice, this form of organization meant that groups could move and react with great flexibility during the blockade. If a call went out for more people at a certain location, an affinity group could assess the numbers holding the line where they were and choose whether or not to move. When faced with tear gas, pepper spray, rubber bullets and horses, groups and individuals could assess their own ability to withstand the brutality. As a result, blockade lines held in the face of incredible police violence. When one group of people was finally swept away by gas and clubs, another would move in to take their place. Yet there was also room for those of us in the middle-aged, bad lungs/bad backs affinity group to hold lines in areas that were relatively peaceful, to interact and dialogue with the delegates we turned back, and to support the labor march that brought tens of thousands through the area at midday. No centralized leader could have co-ordinated the scene in the midst of the chaos, and none was needed—the organic, autonomous organization we had proved far more powerful and effective. No authoritarian figure could have compelled people to hold a blockade line while being tear gassed—but empowered people free to make their own decisions did choose to do that.

Consensus decision making:

The Affinity Groups, clusters, Spokescouncils and working groups involved with DAN made decisions by consensus—a process that allows every voice to be heard and that stresses respect for minority opinions. Consensus was part of the nonviolence and jail training and we made a small attempt to also offer some special training in meeting facilitation. We did not interpret consensus to mean unanimity. The only mandatory agreement was to act within the nonviolent guidelines. Beyond that, the DAN organizers set a tone that valued autonomy and freedom over conformity, and stressed co-ordination rather than pressure to conform. So, for example, our jail solidarity strategy involved staying in jail where we could use the pressure of our numbers to protect individuals from being singled out for heavier charges or more brutal treatment. But no one was pressured to stay in jail, or made to feel guilty for bailing out before the others. We recognized that each person has their own needs and life situation, and that what was important was to have taken action at whatever level we each

could. Had we pressured people to stay in jail, many would have resisted and felt resentful and misused. Because we didn't, because people felt empowered, not manipulated, the vast majority decided for themselves to remain in, and many people pushed themselves far beyond the boundaries of what they had expected to do.

Vision and Spirit:

The action included art, dance, celebration, song, ritual and magic. It was more than a protest; it was an uprising of a vision of true abundance, a celebration of life and creativity and connection, that remained joyful in the face of brutality and brought alive the creative forces that can truly counter those of injustice and control. Many people brought the strength of their personal spiritual practice to the action. I saw Buddhists turn away angry delegates with loving kindness. We Witches led rituals before the action and in jail, and called on the elements of nature to sustain us. I was given Reiki when sick and we celebrated Hanukah with no candles, but only the blessings and the story of the struggle for religious freedom. We found the spirit to sing in our cells, to dance a spiral dance in the holding cell, to laugh at the hundred petty humiliations the jail inflicts, to comfort each other and listen to each other in tense moments, to use our time together to continue teaching and organizing and envisioning the flourishing of this movement. For me, it was one of the most profound spiritual experiences of my life.

I'm writing this for two reasons. First, I want to give credit to the DAN organizers who did a brilliant and difficult job, who learned and applied the lessons of the last twenty years of nonviolent direct action, and who created a powerful, successful and life-changing action in the face of enormous odds, an action that has changed the global political landscape and radicalized a new generation. And secondly, because the true story of how this action was organized provides a powerful model that activists can learn from. Seattle was only a beginning. We have before us the task of building a global movement to overthrow corporate control and create a new economy based on fairness and justice, on a sound ecology and a healthy environment, one that protects human rights and serves freedom. We have many campaigns ahead of us, and we deserve to learn the true lessons of our successes.

On the Seattle Conference Strategy

by John de Graaf

John sent this to the Balaton listserv, in response to the posting of Starhawk's letter.

Dear Balaton Friends:

Maybe I'm getting a little old or spent too much time in demonstrations during the 60s, but I believe the strategic lessons to be culled from "the battle in Seattle" are a little different from those outlined by Starhawk in the message forwarded by Dana. As a Seattle resident and participant in at least part of the anti-WTO activities, it seemed to me that at least one key strategic error prevented this protest from being as successful as it otherwise might have been. In my view, it comes down to a question of timing. I have no philosophical quarrel with civil disobedience or "direct action," but civil disobedience is not a principle, it's a tactic. As such, it works most effectively as an escalation AFTER lawful activities prove unsuccessful. One does not strike before making demands, for example.

What I'm getting at is this: it was a serious strategic error to begin the use of civil disobedience BEFORE the incredible rally of labor and environmental groups which took place from 10 am to 12:30 pm on Tuesday, November 30. Anyone who was at that rally, as I was, was no doubt astounded by the show of broad-based anti-WTO solidarity that was displayed. The biggest ovation (from a crowd made up of at least half union laborers) was for Indian activist Vandana Shiva. Seeing her on the same stage with Jimmy Hoffa Jr. was something I didn't expect in my lifetime. Additionally, there was widespread representation from developing nation labor leaders, giving the lie to the idea that the anti-WTO criticisms of US labor were not shared in the rest of the world. The banners and enthusiasm among the crowd of 25,000 plus were wonderful; I especially liked one banner: TURTLES AND TEAMSTERS UNITE! It seemed to sum up this new found solidarity between environment and labor.

But this massive rally, and the march that followed, which might have spoken to millions of ordinary Americans who had no knowledge of WTO received almost no media coverage at all. Why? It's easy to blame the media. After all, TV crews focused entirely on the "action"—pitched battles between demonstrators and police using teargas—going on downtown. But let's be honest: our strategy allowed that to happen.

We know that media goes where the visuals are and conflict visuals attract TV cameras more than do even massive lawful rallies and marches. Yet had the labor/environmental rally PRECEDED the disruptions, the media was prepared to cover it. Let me suggest an alternative strategy that I believe would have produced a

broader understanding of the WTO and taken full advantage of the enormous numbers of people who came to Seattle to protest.

On the first day, the Direct Action Network folks should have added their bodies—some 5-10,000 of them—to the labor rally/march, making it the only event for the media to cover: 40,000 people marching to downtown and sitting down temporarily in the streets (as the labor leaders had planned to do.)

Then, a series of demands should have been made to WTO. (There was, here, some confusion as to goals: the labor/environmental slogan heard at the rally was "Fix It or Nix It": that of the DAN was simply "Shut It Down.") A more effective demand would have been "Open It Up or Shut It Down." We cannot completely stop globalization and we will need organizational rules to make trade "fair." What if we had demanded three initial things of WTO at the labor rally/march:

- 1) Stop the secrecy. Make ALL meetings of the WTO fully open to the press so that the people know what's going on.
- 2) No access for corporations without access for representatives of peoples' organizations—labor, environmental, farm, etc. As it was, Microsoft et al were paying \$250,000 for the privilege of meals with the WTO delegates. We could have demanded that be stopped.
- 3) Rescind all rulings overturning national laws which protect labor, farmers, the environment, etc.—e.g. the Venezuelan oil ruling that effectively overruled the US Clean Air Act, etc.—and agree that no future rulings which undercut national sovereignty and the right of each nation to protect its people and environment shall be instituted.

The media, and ordinary citizens would have understood these demands and they would have seemed eminently reasonable. Yet the WTO could not possibly accept them and still be the corporate servant it is.

So the first day could have ended with the ball in WTO's court: accept these demands, Open It Up, or tomorrow, if you have not, we will begin civil disobedience to Shut It Down.

This would have meant a day in which the message about what's wrong with WTO got out through the

media (as a media professional myself, I know many news people who would have given excellent coverage to such demands). It would have been a day of educating the general public and building popular understanding for the civil disobedience, which would almost certainly have followed.

Instead, what happened? The Direct Action Network began harassing WTO delegates by 9 am Tuesday, at least an hour before the big rally even began. Harassment of delegates was not something expected by Seattle city officials, even though they had had meetings with the DAN. At one point, a bodyguard for one delegate (and the delegates being harassed were virtually all from poor countries) pulled a gun and threatened to shoot. Police stopped him, but it was clear to city authorities that they now had an untenable situation on their hands. The one thing they could not allow was an injury to a foreign national—they had to protect the delegates from what, rightly or wrongly, was perceived by them as physically threatening. This forced the city to have the police give up the idea of individual arrests of protestors and use gas to clear the area around the delegates as quickly as possible. Once the gas began flying, the ensuing chaos provided the perfect cover for the so-called “Anarchists” on their cell phones who got the message to each other: “it’s chaotic out there, so we can begin smashing windows, etc.”

And once that happened, the entire issue in the mind of the public, at least in Seattle, became one of whose behavior was worse, the demonstrators or the cops. The issues of the WTO and free vs. fair trade faded into the background.

I agree that 99% plus of the demonstrators were completely peaceful and should not be blamed for the actions of a few window-smashers. I also agree that the

police in many cases went much too far (especially on Capitol Hill), though anyone who experienced the police riots of Chicago in 1968 or Oakland/Berkeley 1969 would agree that Seattle’s police were quite restrained by comparison.

I also agree that the Seattle WTO protests were successful in that without them, there would likely have been no coverage of WTO at all. Now, at least, millions of people have heard of the WTO and know, at least, that a lot of people don’t like it. But what we might have done was helped them understand why. We might have made far more effective use of the immense crowd and great energies of the people who came here to not only harass the WTO but help people understand why unrestricted “free” trade is not fair, and how, while it makes goods cheaper for global consumers, it threatens our communities, our families, working people and the earth itself.

I offer these suggestions not to condemn anyone (except the vandals, whose acts were reprehensible) but simply to suggest that amidst the euphoria of WTO post mortems we pause to consider how next time, whatever the protest, we might make our strategies more effective. Let’s give timing a little thought (escalate tactics—don’t start with “direct action”) and consider more thoroughly what kind of message we want to leave the public with. Unfortunately, it seems that in this case it has come down to (depending on your point of view) SEATTLE POLICE ARE MEANIES or THE PROTESTORS BEHAVED BADLY. The real goal should have been education about the WTO.

In closing, let me give a word of thanks to all the people who gave of their time and energy to come to Seattle and join the protests.

Poverty in Vietnam – A New Insight

by Bishan Singh

The UNDP's Fact Sheet on Poverty in Vietnam prepared in August 1999 points out that:

Based on an international poverty line, approximately 37 million people in Vietnam—more than half of the population—live in poverty.

In Vietnam, 52 percent of all children are malnourished.

15 percent of communes in Vietnam still lack basic infrastructure, including accessible roads, safe water supply, electric power, classrooms, health clinics and markets.

Ninety percent of Vietnam's poor live in rural areas.

If this is the scenario of Vietnam's poverty, what was the wealth of Vietnam that stopped two Western powers (France and the United States) from subjugating it, in spite of such a long drawn-out battle? What was the strength of Vietnamese people that it did not allow them to divide their country but kept it united as one in face of such adversity? And what was the strength of the Vietnamese as a people that thwarted the expansionist ambitions of another world power, China?

The case of Vietnam's poverty described in the UNDP Fact Sheet has helped me gain a new insight regarding the issue and question of the alleviation of poverty both in Vietnam and elsewhere. When we are talking of poverty in Vietnam, as in other former socialist and developing countries, we are talking of poverty in the context of the dominant Western Economic Worldview. This Western Economic Worldview to many, in particular the research finding of the Management Institute for Social Change (MINSOC), is capital-centered.

In this capital-centered model of development the function of money has additional functions. Money is no longer a medium of exchange only. It has become the ultimate source of all power. Financial resource is becoming the ultimate resource of the world. It has power even over people. The capital-centered model sees people as resources, to be exploited for profit. Generations yet to be born are also subjected to claims of the power of financial capital transacted today. Today's foreign debt of a country shall be paid by a future generation. The entire management of resources and life on this planet, for the present and future, is determined by financial capital. Financial capital has the power to make claims over other resources world wide, especially with the current growing globalization trend.

Under this dominant capital-centered development model, the aspiration of globalization, in essence, is not to create a global village to unite all people, share resources equitably, eradicate poverty, enhance collaboration and improve the quality of life. It is to create a global market, free of all control and easily accessible to financial capital for making maximum profits.

The vision of a global village is only an advertisement created by the benefactors of the capital-centered model of development. It is like the soap advertisement. Most advertisers of soap avoid telling us that soap is for cleaning ourselves during washing and bathing. The message they give us is that soap makes our skin smooth and beautiful. They are selling us "hope" more than soap. Likewise the sales pitch of globalization is the creation of "hope" in a global village. In truth, globalization is for a global market and an opportunity for profit maximization.

Therefore, a country like Vietnam (resource rich but without financial capital) needs foreign investment, foreign borrowing and a lot of capital aid from donors to help it move into the main capital-centered development tract. A rich country is now poor by the standards of the capital-centered development model. Vietnam is now managing its policies, resources, people, and lifestyle according to a capital-centered model of development. It has begun opening up and accelerating the process of globalization. The rapid development that Vietnam is undergoing seems to indicate one thing—Vietnam is trying to make up for the lost time spent strengthening the nation to liberate itself from territorial colonialism.

There is a larger question looming in my mind and the minds of the older generation in Vietnam, whom I met on my recent mission to Vietnam. The question is, "can Vietnam avoid being trapped in the economics of colonialism, and instead help unleash the people's energy and creativity on a path of development that is people-centered and sustainable?"

Everyone recognizes that Vietnam needs to eradicate poverty, ensure food security, regenerate its environment, improve the quality of life with modern amenities and, at the same time, ensure that the needs of future generations are not compromised. There is a concern among the older generation that Vietnam is not pursuing development from a position of strength and advantage. It is actually starting from a position of weakness. In other words, instead of beginning with what they are capable of doing themselves, they are borrowing from outside and getting outside experts to shape their development agenda.

Is this true? What is the strength of Vietnam and the Vietnamese people? What is needed by Vietnam to remain economically independent and, at the same time, what can be done to develop in a way that is people-

centered and sustainable? These are the questions I am researching. I invite Balaton colleagues and friends to reflect on these questions and to provide me your views and inputs.

Kinds of Experience by David Berry

At the 1999 Balaton Group meeting we explored together the capacity of ceremony to deliver an experience. Gathering at the Balaton Tree, which represents the roots of this community, we moved in procession past female gatekeepers and male fire keepers that smudged us with frankincense and myrrh to a sacred place in a circle around a very ancient tree. We touched and looked at fossils (tabulate coral—450 million years old and bones of a giant dolphin—15 million years old), and visualized the life experience, perceptions and concerns of our direct ancestors at various steps in our evolution. (Remember little *Ostracoderm*—the first vertebrate? And the little early primate that stood on its hind legs to simulate the longer vista afforded by being in the trees?) As we brought our attention to our present experience of our species and beyond, many of us reported insightful and emotional experiences.

Experiences such as these are hard to describe. For example, a friend recently related an experience to me that, when I described it as “transcendent”, she replied that it had been only at an intellectual or intuitive level. This prompted me to think about “kinds of experience”. This may be relevant to those seeking to contribute to the quality of human experience whether in economic, environmental, cultural or personal spheres. Transcendent experiences allow us to perceive connections at a deeper level. What once appeared to be chaos, may emerge as more complex patterns (the noting of which may be useful as well as entertaining). Webster’s *New Collegiate Dictionary* defines “transcendent” as: 1a. exceeding usual limits; 1b. extending or lying beyond the limits of ordinary experience; 2. being beyond comprehension; 3. transcending the universe or material existence.

There is something subtle here. Some people hear better than others, have better night vision or are more sensitive to scents—but improved senses don’t seem to correlate closely with what some call a deeper knowing or insight. If transcendence meant seeing farther or “getting” something tangible or logical, beings like Buddha, Jesus, Moses or Mohammed would have said “look over here” or “feel this” and we would try it. Then we would have said “Aha! Why didn’t I look there before?” And human behavior today might not look like it does. If we could just “smell this” or “look under there” to experience the reality underlying and inspiring the brilliant metaphors of those of us with the most profound insights, our experience of being alive might not feel like it often

does. We might find ourselves in the middle of a flow of ever changing sensory inputs and internal reactions to those inputs, of constantly shifting patterns of relationships to others and to circumstances, and of co-creating our experience in the midst of an ever evolving context and ever changing viewpoint. With this perspective, I suspect we would say “Ah shit!” much less often.

So the experience of “going beyond” may be another kind of experience—not just more of the kinds our reason or senses give us. And not just the kind that would occur if we got to another material place—like the top of a sacred mountain or the Garden of Eden. Or when we stand finally on another planet. Therefore we can ask “What are the wise ones’ parables or metaphors a metaphor for?”

I think using an operating question to guide an inquiry is sometimes more useful than a hypothesis. The latter tempts us to cling to and make permanent a temporary tool. If we succumb, we fossilize and fight religious wars or academic debates with those clinging to other answers; we miss an opportunity for evolution and die about as ignorant as we were when we came in. Let’s ask the operating question: “What kind of experiences are intellectual and intuitive experiences?” and observe what data show up and what insights arise.

Intellectual experiences seem to me to begin with observing data, sensory inputs, thought forms from many sources, and then projecting them onto a mental “screen”, creating images and playing with them by rearranging forms or modeling. One indication of growth of awareness is the gradual dawning upon us that we ourselves build these forms, e.g. explanations of what is happening, opinions and preferences. “This tastes like chocolate.” “I vote Republican.” “She’s cool.” “I firmly believe xyz.” Those forms organize the rush of inputs that otherwise would be beautiful chaos, like the flow of colors and sounds an infant sees without making distinctions. My view is that infants see but do not focus on individual objects that we have learned to separate according to conceptual pattern. There are variations in these patterns among cultures, families and individuals. To the extent that the forms serve as filters to select what phenomena are relevant and to arrange those inputs according to a previously learned set of concepts, two individuals can have very different intellectual or conceptual experiences from the same sensory inputs.

One says “Oh Yum.” The other says “Oh Yuck!” One says “Yahoo!” The other says “get me down from here!”

It seems that intellectual experiences are subject to the limits of current range of concepts just as sensory experiences are limited to the range of the senses. Spiritual leaders spoke of higher truths in parables perhaps because the transcendent truths are beyond speech, beyond intellect, as well as beyond the material. So what about “intuitive” experiences?

Webster’s *New Collegiate Dictionary*: INTUITION: 1a. immediate apprehension or cognition; 1b. knowledge or conviction gained by intuition; 1c. the power or faculty of attaining to direct knowledge or cognition without evident rational thought and inference; 2. quick and ready insight.

“Immediate apprehension” suggests neither through the five senses nor through a concept. “Direct knowledge without rational thought” does not mean irrational—it suggests an experience of something through a direct link to it or perhaps even identity with it.

Development of “direct knowledge” or “direct perception” was the goal of the dialectic debating technique I witnessed in 1999 at the Namgyal Monastery in Dharamsala. Young monks laughed and clapped when they made a point as they challenged each other’s A) memory and mastery of the texts, B) consistency of internal logic of intellectual constructs and ultimately C) level of direct perception of the nature of the phenomena under consideration. The day I was there, boys by the temple door were debating the true nature of a sprout and moving toward realization by direct perception that a sprout has no independent existence. A seed becomes a sprout not on its own but through interaction of seed, moisture, temperature, soil, and light; the seed came from a flower which came from a seed. The moisture came from rain, which came from evaporation of the sea, which came from rivers, which came from rain. The increased temperature came from a change of seasons and more warmth from the sun. The soil came from erosion of rocks by rain and rivers and decomposition of formerly living things. The light came from the sun. The farmer planted the seed this spring, after herself being saved from drowning by a man, who came to the valley to buy a yak, which came from a seed. Not only do sprouts have no independent existence, but also in fact, all arisings or phenomena are interdependent including the monks and thee and me. Recognition of that is an intuitive experience.

There are steps to the meditative process and opening of the intuitive faculty we are told by some Elders:

“Sit down, shut up, don’t dare cry, things’ll get better if you really try. Doncha panic doncha panic give it one more try.” The Rolling Stones, 1960’s. (Well, they’re Elders now.)

Sit quietly (or walk quietly).

Start observing what is there, the breath, the heart beat, the stream of thoughts, sounds around us.

Don’t grab hold of any of it mentally just notice it and just watch it flow by.

Pay attention, pay attention, pay attention. (The three rules of Zen.)

And watch what happens (in the parts and in the connections or patterns).

The path beyond starts where we are with paying attention and taking ownership of our own thoughts, the thoughts that we mistook for ultimate reality. “Going beyond” involves noticing the process and the flow without getting stuck in a new place just because it is better than the old place we were stuck in. By paying attention, we continue to notice more and more. Gradually some of what we notice is beyond what we used to notice and some of this noticing has unforeseen symptoms and we notice these symptoms of deeper noticing and so it goes on and on. There are practices, rituals, prayers and mantras in many traditions that relate to this journey. I am familiar with only a few of them.

This conversation is about the opening or evolution of awareness or intelligence in ourselves and in our species. This would not be an issue for us, and we would not be having this chat, if it did not fit the context, i.e. if it were not the time. Since we don’t know how to grow our own fingernails (as Bucky Fuller reminded us) we should not expect to know how to evolve ourselves into higher awareness.

If ALL THINGS are created by and permeated with Wisdom and if the unfolding of everything is an integrated pattern, (the unified field or implicit and explicit order), if it is all a whole cloth, then our own little personal thread of being and awakening and knowing is part of the design of the fabric. The “work” is more an opportunity to drop the illusions and concepts we made up, to let the limits of our perception fall away, than a need or obligation to create a view of the truths that our concepts obscure. I conclude with a wonderful piece of news that isn’t really news but was news to me when I noticed it: the next deeper level of truth is already there and turns out to be who we are. We are part of the cloth and part of the weaver.

As we continue to open and be opened, intuitive experiences and their accompanying insights and energy will appear in the imaging place of our temple on schedule.

IPCC B1-Scenario by Bert de Vries

First, I wish to thank the participants in the 1998 Annual Balaton Meeting for their contributions to my IPCC-related work. Our work at RIVM with the IMAGE-model has benefited from the discussions and ideas generated during the meeting. A paper about the B1-scenario will soon be published, we hope, in the journal *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*. The B1-scenario is, as you may remember, a global world with emphasis on social and environmental values. Not exactly where the world is heading—or is it? I recall the fierce discussions in the Balaton Group network on energy issues. This scenario is an attempt to merge the high-tech orientation of Amory Lovins' and others' view with a trend towards less-materialistic and more social-environmental values. I appreciate further discussion on this—and I include the abstract of the paper:

Abstract

This paper describes a greenhouse-gas emissions scenario for a world, which chooses collectively and effectively for service-oriented economic prosperity

while taking into account equity and environmental concerns, although without any explicit climate policy. Stabilizing (and after 2050 declining) population, convergence in economic productivity, dematerialization and technology transfer, and high-tech innovations in energy use and supply lead to only 40% higher primary energy use by the end of next century. (Primary energy use peaks around 2050 at 2.2 times the 1990-level.) Land-use related emissions show a similar trend. Total CO₂-emissions peak at 12.8 GtC/yr around 2040, after which they start falling off. Other greenhouse-gas emissions show a similar trend. The resulting CO₂-equivalent concentration continues to rise to about 600 ppmv in 2100. Present understanding of climate change impacts suggest that even in this world of high-tech innovations in resource use in combination with effective global governance and concern about equity and environment issues, climate policy is needed if mankind is to avoid dangerous interference with the climate system. This paper presents the storyline, describes how it has been implemented in the WorldScan and IMAGE2 model and presents the main results.

In Memoriam Ferenc Rabar by Dana Meadows

Csaba Csaki, who now lives in Washington DC, brings us sad news from Budapest. Ferenc Rabar recently died at home of cancer.

Ferenc was quite literally THE founder of the Balaton Group. In his group at IIASA (near Vienna) in the 1970s, an innovative computer model of world food trade and hunger was crafted—one that had stunning policy implications. (If more grain is raised, the market sends it to the cows and chickens of the rich, not the children of the poor—that's the one I will never forget.)

Ferenc was such a kind, tolerant, inspiring leader that many of us found ourselves hanging around in his group, contributing where we could—including me, Genady Golubev, Janos Hrabovzsky, Csaba Csaki, Janusz Kindler, Gerhard Bruckmann, and many others. Ferenc also brought the “global modeling crowd” together at IIASA—that included Hartmut Bossel, Gilberto Gallopin, and numerous other friends and acquaintances who would contribute later to the Balaton Group.

It was the friendships born at IIASA, especially those that crossed what was then a fearsome east-west line, that started the Balaton Group. I remember the day it started. Ferenc and I were sitting in a hotel in Budapest—he had invited me for some meeting. We were excitedly sketching out a stock-flow diagram of the kind of model it would take to get a true overview of the problem of sustainable development—all the capital stocks, the population, the earthly sources and sinks, and then all the interconnections among them. We got ourselves so excited by this vision that Ferenc arranged an immediate meeting with Lazslo Kapolyi, then Hungary's minister of energy, who also got excited. Kapolyi offered to sponsor a meeting at the Hotel Petrol at Csopak on Lake Balaton—it was then under his control as a resthouse for managers in the Hungarian oil and gas industry.

That's how it all began, folks. The first meeting was in 1982.

Ferenc was at that first meeting and at many others. Intellectually he set the tone, both in helping us define

and understand our mission and in setting a systems question that has never ceased to haunt me. Mostly, he said, the little short-term wheels of the economy turn on their own, without engaging the ponderous, long-term flywheels of the environment. But what happens when the economic wheels go so far that they start the environmental wheels turning? Can the dynamics of the environmental wheels overwhelm the economic ones? If that happens, is it irreversible? Is there any way of knowing far enough in advance to avoid it?

That question pretty much sums up what Balaton was and still is about.

Ferenc had a long, bitter but loving relationship with his homeland. He was a freedom fighter in his way and paid dearly for it, long before I knew him. There was always a deep sadness about him, deriving, I think from his early hopes for Hungarian freedom. When freedom

finally did come, Ferenc almost immediately became Finance Minister of his country. I will never forget the Balaton meeting where he reported on his experience. "I am not in favor of structural adjustment," he said, "but I found myself implementing structural adjustment. I am in favor of protection measures for the poorest and weakest, but I had to take them away." It was a testament to the power of the system over the individual—and another cause for Ferenc's sadness. He didn't last a year as Finance Minister. Csaba Csaki said, "Ferenc is much too honest to be a politician."

In later years Ferenc drifted away from the Balaton Group, but his friends there never ceased to honor and love him. We would often stop in, on our way through Budapest, to visit him and his faithful, gracious wife Maria and to hear stories of their children and grandchildren. Our hearts are with Maria and those children and grandchildren now.

Balaton Business

Balaton Group Steering Committee Minutes, by Gillian Martin Mehers

The Balaton Steering Committee Meeting was held 10-12 December, 1999, at the house of **Joan Davis** in Wallisellen, Switzerland, at which the following people were present: **Dennis Meadows, Nanda Gilden, Hermann Knoflacher, Chirapol Sintunawa, Aromar Revi, Joan du Toit, Zoltan Lontay, Gillian Martin Mehers, Alan AtKisson, Melita Rogelj, Bert de Vries, and Niels Meyer.**

Substantive discussions were held on visioning, funding in general (and for the next meeting), the theme and venue of the next meeting, membership, new projects and issues, routine administration, and the Balaton Group website. Several administrative issues included the election of officers and the location of INRIC.

Funding

The meeting began with a report on funding possibilities from Alan. Several possible grants were discussed including UN Foundation, the UN University for Peace and UNITAR (UN Institute for Training and Research). US\$50,000 would be the minimum needed for the next Balaton Group meeting. Existing funds are limited and could not currently cover the costs of the next Balaton Group meeting at the current rate of subsidization. The Committee discussed various ways that funding could be sought through longer term projects, such as a three-year proposal which would build on the current thematic meeting structure, but which would

have concrete outputs which would be disseminated through the various networks represented by members at the meeting.

Consensus was reached on envisioning a three-year program as an activity for the Balaton Group, with the next meeting as the first stage of the Program. Outputs of this three-year program would include curriculum materials, a reference website, and a CD-ROM. Funding efforts would begin with a smaller grant for the meeting, with the content open to incorporate some objectives which a larger grant might bring.

Next meeting of the Balaton Group

It was decided after much consideration to hold the 2000 Balaton Group meeting in India in September. However, at the time, this decision was contingent upon an email survey of members as to whether or not they are able to attend the meeting. This survey has now been completed. [Editors Note: The venue of the 2000 Balaton Group meeting has, in fact, been changed back to Csopak, Hungary.]

It was also decided to maintain the BG meeting as context independent, with a meeting site that has capacity for all people and activities; that is, the same model that has evolved over the past years would be retained. It was hoped that people would independently benefit from the experience of being in a new venue, through organized pre- and post-workshop activities.

Content of the meeting

It was generally felt that the meeting should develop synergy with, or at least take into consideration, current international events. One suggestion was the IPCC process, based on its current relevance and funding possibilities. After much discussion, the group agreed to take *debate of the IPCC and transitions towards sustainability* as the organizing principle for structuring the next Balaton Group meeting. Discussions would take both complementary and critical approaches, and would aim to translate this debate for other audiences through the outputs of the meeting.

The group then discussed the following potential program structure:

Understanding the complexity of transition scenarios:

NB: Each day would start with a framing lecture, which is theoretical, followed by three speakers responding with regional case studies and examples. Each speaker would use the same structure/template for these presentations (e.g. using Balaton language—CLDs, reference modes, etc.)

Day 1: Multiple trajectories
(Dynamics of collapse and transitions to sustainability)

Day 2: Physical flows—Methodology and new insights on dynamics, non-linearities and surprises of ecosystem developments (Objective: to start to develop IPCC scenarios)
(Translate scenarios into interesting stories about land, water, etc. in B2)

Day 3: Human dynamics and perception/behaviors reflect to human-environment reactions
(capital stocks and institutional change)

Day 4: Co-evolution and action
(institutions and future scenarios)

The Committee decided that the meeting should have concrete outputs that can be used to contribute to international events, as well as act as deliverables for funders. In this regard, participants would be invited to contribute written remarks on the meeting topic that would then go into proceedings. To prepare these meeting products, a small group will stay after the meeting to work on output products. Extra care needs to be taken to make speaker guidelines so that written inputs fit with the desired output products.

Discussion then went into the specifics of the workshop development process. Ideas included having an event website that includes logistics information, draft papers, space for comments, and a password for access

only to Balaton Group members. An email/web discussion of draft papers would precede the actual meeting discussions.

A one-day, pre-workshop meeting was proposed by Aromar to help finance the workshop, get some additional use out of the talent in the Balaton Group, and impact more people. The Steering Committee supports this one-day event, and will contribute as speakers; Aromar's staff will take care of the organization. Due to the pre- and post-workshop activities, the group decided to have a four-day meeting, as opposed to a five-day event. The workshop would start late in the afternoon, the day after arrival. The formal workshop hours would be 08:30-13:00, with the same open afternoon and evening entertainment as has been organized in the past.

New Projects

The Viridian Meter is a new project that has received funding (US\$10,000 grant) and will be managed by Melita Rogelj. The Balaton Group is being asked to be a formal co-sponsor of the project. This project includes an international competition to design and test a Viridian Meter (an aesthetic, kinesthetic device which is used in the home as a type of sustainability meter), and several Balaton Group members will be invited to act as judges in the competition. It is hoped that the final judging could be conducted at the next Balaton Group meeting. The Steering Committee agrees that Balaton Group will co-sponsor this project with the Sustainability Institute.

There is a project to translate Wouter's book. A good translation exists now and Nanda Gilden is interested in finding a potential publisher. The group felt that she should look further for support, such as web distribution, as a CD-ROM, and check with Chelsea Green and Island Press publishers. The group accepted Wouter's book as an official Report to the Balaton Group and it will be put on the website.

An idea was put forward about a potential project on the preparation of distance learning materials with the UN University for Peace, particularly in the area of conflict management and natural resource use. More specifically, how resources generate conflict and how systems can be changed to avoid conflict. Curriculum development and a 5-day workshop on this topic are projected. Any interest in this topic should be sent to Dennis Meadows.

Balaton Bulletin

The Committee discussed the continuation of the Balaton Bulletin, now that Dana is unable to continue to produce it. An editorial committee has been established to collect input, edit, and produce the Bulletin. The issue of format was raised and it was decided that

the Bulletin will continue to be produced in hard copy and mailed to those on the list as usual in the year 2000, and that a publication strategy will be developed to look at the means of distribution after next year. No new subscriptions for the Bulletin will be accepted in 2000 until the distribution system is finalized. The group will look into whether or not it could be made available on the Internet.

Administration

The following decisions were taken by the group:

The group agreed that Betty Miller would be asked to continue to do routine administrative tasks.

The group re-elected INRIC Officers as following: Dana Meadows as Secretary Treasurer and Dennis Meadows as President.

The group decided that Cornish, New Hampshire will be the principle office of INRIC.

Indicator Workshop, Balaton Meeting, September 1999, John Peet

(Note: This report should have appeared in the last Balaton Bulletin. We apologize for the delay in publishing it.)

Attended by **Nanda Gilden, Genady Golubev, Anupam Saraph, Joan du Toit, Tamas Fleischer, Lucia Liu Severinghaus, Mathis Wackernagel, Jorgen Norgard, Hermann Knoflacher, Jochen Jesinghaus, Samantha Graham, Lazslo Pinter and John Peet.**

Most of us are already working in the area of indicators, and the others are interested in what was going on: Nanda applying Hartmut Bossel's approach to her work with oil companies; Anupam working with municipalities in Pune; Joan involved with indicators for energy and related areas; Lucia involved with a project on Taiwan's future; Mathis and Redefining Progress on indicators at local levels; Jochen on environmental pressure indicators and integrating them with green accounts in the SNA (and finding it hard!); Sam working as part of a government committee in Scotland; Lazslo using participatory processes in Winnipeg and in Manitoba province; John with Hartmut's approach at several levels—environmental, social and economic.

All in all, the group covered a wide range of interests and applications.

Points made:

We are dealing with open systems, so even indicators at the country level may not be enough.

Size and scale make public participation very important.

Wrongly chosen indicators have a lot of power (e.g. population growth is commonly promoted as the solution to the increasing number of elderly in developed countries); we need to choose indicators that really assist in control/corrective action (ref: Dana's paper on leverage points).

Indicators presented at the community level can aid education and understanding and hence assist at the policy level.

For policy influence, a "big stick" indicator is needed, that encompasses as much as possible of what needs putting right.

We often don't need to "interpret" key indicators—just put the information out and let the political process deal with it.

Lazslo expressed the concern that data collection and monitoring systems are often being eroded. The outcome is often that critical conditions are being reached without adequate time series data for advance warning etc.

Book Review

India 2020—A Vision for the New Millennium, by Abdul Kalam, A.P.J., and Y.S. Rajan (New Delhi, Viking Penguin Books India Ltd., 1998).

Review by **Bert de Vries**

This is an interesting book, in view of the Balaton Group meetings.

“Even a simple analysis of [many of these] international or global transactions indicates a much deeper fact: the continuous process of domination over others by a few nations. ... What appears to be emerging is a new kind of warfare. “ (pp. 4-5). “Worldwide, considering countries with a GDP of \$100 billion and above to be countries in the Big League, India was already in this League during the 1980s... In 1990, India’s share was 1.44 % only, a fall compared to better achievers in the world. ... We believe that [India] as a nation should aim to reach at least the fourth position by the year 2020. “ (pp. 10-13).

Their vision to make India a developed nation by 2020 is worked out in great technological but little economic and social detail. They use economists’ projections leading to 1.2 billion people by 2010 at \$762 per caput GDP (or \$3,146 Purchasing Power Parity per caput) and a population of 1.4 billion people by 2020 at \$1,540 per caput GDP (\$6,355 PPP per caput), in 1996 \$. Features of the economy include expanding domestic markets and an expanding wage economy, as well as an expanding informal economy and growing tendency towards self-employment. Both manufacturing and service sectors will grow, agriculture will be modernized and India will lead in certain sectors (mineral-based industries, software). *“It would appear that mastering of technologies is the key task to which the country and its people have to give importance. This can be considered to be the very essence of development. ”(pp. 9). But they also state that “India can launch itself into a developed status only when the economic machinery starts ‘real movement’ through the infrastructure. “(pp. 248).*

What is a vision? *“It is not possible to envision all the details of implementation [of the vision]. A vision,*

in fact, should not be a feasibility report, just as it cannot be a mere slogan or play of words. “(pp. 10). Interestingly, Kalam and Rajan’s vision is naïve in several respects. It has a high-tech mission orientation—yet, they have to admit in the last chapter how deficient India’s infrastructure and institutional systems are. The vision also contains seeds of an orientation towards sustainability and equity, in that it emphasizes the need to eliminate poverty and to focus on environmental issues—at least on some (half a page on water pollution, then 3 pages on inland and coastal waterway networks). “Soon we will have one billion Indians. A few tens of millions of them have lifestyles equivalent to or even more luxurious than the upper strata of the developed world. They enjoy the material wealth and facilities offered by modern technologies, and simultaneously enjoy the benefits of cheap labour. Another 200 to 300 million Indians, the so-called middle class, have a varied lifestyle, often aspiring to copy the developed world but having only limited resources. They face the stress of modern life but often do not have the facilities for good living. The rest of the population is engaged in jobs, which leave it confronted with constant insecurity about making ends meet. This majority does not have economic surplus and has just enough for covering its bare necessities. Investments in health care is an impossible luxury.”(pp. 221-222).

There are clearly equity concerns but they seem more like an emotional addendum than a part of the analysis: *“...it does not make sense to achieve a ‘developed’ status without a major and continuing upliftment of all Indians who exist today and of the many more millions who would be added in the years to come. “(pp. 3). Employment is a crucial issue here, and the services as well as the manufacturing sector have their role to play. A whole chapter deals with Health Care for All. “In the ultimate analysis, any society will be judged by its ability to provide universal health care for its people. “ (pp. 217).*

Announcements

Viridian Meter Competition

Alan AtKisson has launched the first Balaton design competition! A poster version of the Viridian Meter Competition announcement appears at the end of this Bulletin. Alan sends this request:

Please give the announcement maximum possible circulation! Please tell your colleagues, your students, and anyone you think might be interested. If you'd like a formatted version by email to print out and distribute, please send me an email (atkisson@aol.com) and let me know.

The support for this competition came from a grant, which was prompted by our listserv discussion about this idea last year. Bruce Sterling, the originator of the Viridian Movement, is very enthused about helping us to promote this as well. This is the Balaton Group in action! If all goes well, we'll have a number of actual meters to review and judge at our next Balaton meeting...

Warm regards,
Alan AtKisson

Natural Capitalism

Natural Capitalism: creating the next industrial revolution, by Paul Hawken and **Amory Lovins** and Hunter Lovins, was published 30 September, 1999 by Little Brown in New York and Earthscan in London. The German edition is due from Bertelsmann on 3 March, 2000. Translations are underway into Portuguese and simple-characters Chinese. Negotiations are underway with potential publishers in Japan, Korea, and Russia, and for complex-characters Chinese. If you know of opportunities to translate it well and publish it effectively (especially for the business audience) in other

languages, please let Amory know (ablovins@rmi.org). You can view and download the book, and much supplementary material, at www.naturalcapitalism.org (or for short, www.natcap.org).

Amory will also be teaching a Natural Capitalism course at Schumacher College in England during 17-22 September 2000, and at Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, on 3-5 November 2000; some scholarships may be available for both.

Sustainability Institute Website

Dana Meadows announces that The Sustainability Institute has a new virtual home, at www.sustainer.org. The website is a work in progress, but it already includes descriptions of the Institute's activities, as well as a link to the Cobb Hill Cohousing project.

News from the Members

Bert de Vries writes:

As some of you may remember, during the last Balaton Group Meeting I organised a working group on the Mappa Mundi project. The aim of the Mappa Mundi project—which is renamed the Mappemonde project—is to put the manifold interactions between humans and their environment into a longer-term perspective and derive lessons from it for the future. The idea originated during previous Balaton Group meetings. I am convinced that this project could provide one of the threads for future Balaton activities, as we have so much experience about these issues and are able to communicate them in less and more formal (model) ways.

I finished the research proposal last week. It has grown into an 85-page report that explores the feasibility of the idea and suggests a research plan. One of the conclusions is that the large and fascinating research programs going on in the earth sciences make it possible to construct increasingly reliable paleomaps of climate and vegetation—but that quantitatively oriented, model-based exploration of the longer-term human dynamics is woefully scarce.

As part of the project and my three-month sabbatical leave from RIVM, Annelies Lootsma and I visited Russia, India and China—and enjoyed the hospitality of quite a few Balaton Group friends: **Ruben Mnatsakanian**, **Genady Golubev**, **Aromar Revi**, **Anupam Saraph** and a colleague of **Qi Wenhu**. The trip was financed by the Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen in Haarlem, which recently decided that the prospects for the project are good enough to continue funding at a limited scale. The first results should then be presented at their 250th anniversary in 2002. Those of you who are interested in receiving a copy of the proposal: please ask and I will send you one.

I hesitate to write about our two-months travelling in Russia, India, and China. It was such a great experience, I am so grateful for it. First, Russia. It was special from the very first day—staying in the huge building of the Lomonosov Moscow State University is an experience in itself, certainly for someone with a fairly acute historical awareness and imagination (like me). The hospitality of our hosts, Genady Golubev and his colleague Nikolai Dronin, made our stay very pleasant. Our visit to their Department of the Physical Geography of the World turned out to be very surprising and useful: there is a large amount of data and ideas on resource and population issues in Russia and it is apparently concentrated in this Department. What I remember best is when I was shown the maps of all kinds of environment-, resource- and sustainability-related indicators: Russia looked different—I realized suddenly that I did not see

the former Soviet-Union... and that there are now millions of Russians who live outside of their home country... All these changes in such a short time span. Yet, life in Moscow seemed quite normal, there was a smell of newly gained affluence, which has replaced the sense of chaos and confusion I remember from 1992. How much do we not see? But are our present personal experiences giving a more distorted view than what one gets from CNN and European journals?

Our second destination was India. Michael Wood writes in his book *Legacy* about India: the empire of the spirit, and China: the empire of heaven... Somehow, this is a deep truth. I hope to write some reflections on our trip in these countries for the next Balaton Bulletin.

* * *

Some news from **Nanda Gilden**:

Since the last Balaton Group meeting in Csopak, I put all my efforts into (re)building a consultancy team on environmental management, trying to focus the work more on sustainability and environmental issues. I find it quite challenging to get useful work done on sustainability, in the setting of a *commercial* consultancy firm. It is the practical level, with policy makers, local authorities and small and bigger industrial corporations, where SD has to be operationalised. On those levels, they almost never have their own experts on this theme, so they need consultants for this. My biggest problem over the last months was (IS) to getting experienced consultants who have the knowledge and the motivation to work in the area of sustainability. I guess this is a general problem. At least here in the Netherlands there is a lack of experienced people in many branches. But, for sure, there is lack of experienced environmentalists. I arranged a partnership with a small, new consultancy firm that is related to the IVEM of the University of Groningen. Together we are going to work on the sustainability issues.

And thanks Balaton Group, for electing me as a member of the Steering Committee. My involvement and activities for the BG SC inspired me enormously and that was compensation enough for having a hard time 'with my job'.

And for the balance part with being a single mother: my daughter Marijn is doing wonderfully. Marijn has a real Balaton spirit, especially when it concerns equity: "Why do they especially name the two unharmed Dutch people in an aeroplane/train-crash, bomb attack or earthquake (somewhere in the world)..... while there are so many other nationalities involved and harmed AND NOT SPECIALLY MENTIONED.....".

* * *

Sam (Samantha) Graham writes:

Hello to all the folk I met at Balaton this last year! I hope the New Year is full of miracles and de-materialized abundance for you! News...

Our Master of Science programme is up and running, not too many hiccoughs and 21 bright and budding Human Ecologists raring to change the world! They are of course wild about **Ulrich**, his wonderful house where we've done some of the teaching and his special (Balaton-inspired?) 'take' on the state of the planet. We used some of the games **Dennis**, **Gillian** and **Pavla** showed us—our squaring the circle blindfolded was abominable! But I guess it's the beginning of term!

My PhD (on transformative learning/consciousness shifts as experienced by those who have chosen to reduce their ecological footprint) is getting a lot of my attention as I simply want to FINISH IT!!! I just hope that the creative tension (source: procrastination?) has enough energy in it to propel me to the very end of the process! And rapidly!

Findhorn is on the eve of running its 2nd Eco-village training, a one month course for people from all over the world who want to learn to live more lightly on the planet. It's been a hugely successful programme, we've had to turn people away, which makes a change from some of the other courses on offer. (www.findhorn.org should have some details).

My partner John Talbott and I got married in November in Jervis Bay, south of Sydney! We were blessed by four kookaburras overseeing the ceremony from the gum trees around us (they didn't laugh once!) and everyone stayed in semi-permanent tents for the weekend, feasting on emu and kangaroo! Lots of fun! Scottish dancing and surf lessons all round!

Finally, I wanted to mention that in the latest New Internationalist there's a section on the Tobin Tax that Hilary French mentioned in her talk last year. It describes what it's all about and gives some web sites. Hope that's helpful to anyone interested.

That's me! May the life force inspire you to great things this year!

Love and best wishes to you all.

Sam

* * *

Gillian Martin Mehers writes that LEAD International has been able to benefit from the input of Balaton Members in the past months and will continue to do so in the future through several upcoming activities. **Dennis Meadows**, a member of the LEAD Curriculum Advisory Committee, participated in this body's second meeting at the LEAD Offices in New York City in December 1999. In the next months, LEAD will be happy to feature Dennis during a live interactive internet chat on systems, which will be held in April 2000. LEAD has also been working with **Mathis Wackernagel** over the past few months to develop a web-interface for the ecological footprint which both LEAD and others can use on line. Mathis is also planned to provide input on the same topic to an upcoming LEAD International Session to be held in Vancouver on Globalization in August 2000. **Anupam Saraph** and a colleague from Change Reengineering will also be participating in LEAD training by delivering a one-day Skills Module on "Systems Thinking for Sustainable Development" for the 185 LEAD Associates from Cohort 8 at an upcoming International Session in Brazil in March 2000 focused on Diversity and Societies in Transition.

* * *

Dana Meadows has news about her transitional life situation:

I have sold the beautiful farm where I lived for the past 27 years and have moved to one less beautiful, but much better for farming and for community building. My new home coordinates are:

Dana Meadows
PO Box 174
(13 Mace Hill Road for deliveries)
Hartland Four Corners VT 05049
home tel: 802-436-1355

The new farm is called Cobb Hill. At the moment I'm living in the old farmhouse, with six friends. We have three workhorses and eight milk cows and 60 chickens (moved over from my old farm). A seven-acre (three-hectare) organic vegetable farm will begin there in the spring. I will be busy planting fruit trees, berries, and other beginnings of a home garden to feed the 22 families who will live in the cohousing community. Over the coming year we must also fix up the barns and retrofit them for milking and cheese-making.

There are now 17 wonderful families signed up for the cohousing. We are finalizing the detailed architectural plans, waiting for our building permits, and trying to convince someone to loan us \$3 million for housing construction. (We already have raised loans of \$1 million from friends.) We hope to start building this com-

ing spring and to move in the following spring. We are getting better and better at making hard decisions together—because we are constantly presented with hard decisions to make! This community-building is the most interesting and humbling thing I have ever done.

The Sustainability Institute is also confronted with insurmountable opportunities. The three commodity models (shrimp, forest products, and corn) are getting so intriguing that there is now significant call for them from the actual commodity system players (except for shrimp) and, though there is still a lot of modeling to do, we spend time increasingly on presentations and political discussions. It's getting exciting! We are also beginning to design a systems/sustainability education program (which **Drew Jones** called "systemability"). It's all more than I can keep up with, but fortunately I have some colleagues who are way more capable than I am.

* * *

Betty Miller shares the following news about her daughter:

Emily, achieved the top score of fellow sixth graders in her school in a surprise geography competition. The top four students in each of the grades 5-8 then went on to compete in a "geography bee." It came down to Emily and one other student; the eighth grader won. Sponsored by National Geographic, this competition goes on to the regional and eventually national level. Emily thinks her mom's association with the Balaton Group contributed to this achievement. A number of Balaton folks have visited the Millers, and Emily and some of her classmates became pen pals with Balaton friends. Emily and her dad, Doug, came to the end of the 1997 Balaton Group meeting.

Thanks, Balaton Group, for your help in widening Emily's horizons!

* * *

Bisan Singh just returned from Vietnam where he participated in a UNDP mission to train and enable officials of three Provinces in Northern Vietnam to undertake a participatory assessment and planning exercises. This project focused on 18 pilot communes and had the goal to integrate aquaculture practice as part of the capacity building initiative for increasing farmers income, alleviate poverty and as a strategy for national food security.

* * *

Chirapol Sintunawa sends exciting news of changes at ADEQ:

Development activities at our centre in Karnchanaburi Province are being seen, staff houses and the first dormitory building are being constructed and are expected to be ready by the end of March. News of the development has been spreading in Karnchanaburi and Bangkok, groups and organizations in these provinces have shown their interests to have access to the use of this Centre as soon as the basic infrastructures are ready. I will spend significant time at this new centre at least for the first two years. The mobile exhibition is now up and running to disseminate energy efficient information to target groups in various parts of the country, our exhibition centres in Bangkok (about 600 square meters), Ayuthaya, Phitsanulok, and Chiangmai are now getting ready for the opening in May expecting to educate more than 1.5 million visitors each year.

And then: Chirapol was nominated to be considered for the Global 500 Roll of Honour for the Environmental Achievement! If anyone deserves this it is he!

* * *

Jorje Zalles sends High-altitude, tropical greetings to all.

He has recently completed a bird distribution analysis of the mountains and volcanoes near his home city Quito (2800 meters above sea level). Tropical montane environments are so biodiverse that an amazing 579 species of birds can (or could until mid-last century) be found in 160,000 hectares of Ecuadorian North Andean landscapes. To put this in perspective, consider the number of bird species recorded in the entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania during a recent breeding season: 210 (of which only 187 were considered to actually breed there).

The report also identified priority groups in terms of global bird conservation. Of particular note are the hummingbirds, a single-descent group (in evolutionary terms) of 322 species of highly specialized, hovering, nectar-feeding birds that occur only in the Americas, from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego. Almost a fifth of the world's total hummingbird diversity can (or could) be found in the report's study area: 57 species. Of these, one is of particular interest to Jorje since he intends to use it as a flagship for his still-in-conceptual-development educational program on evolution and ecological scale as they pertain to sustainability. The bird in question is called *Oreotrochilus chimborazo*, literally the little mountain bird on Chimborazo (which at 6300 m is the highest point in Ecuador and the furthest point away from the center of the Earth). This little "hummingbird volcano" lives exclusively between 3500-5000 meters altitude in the mountains of Ecuador. Which

means it only got there (or evolved to be there) in the last 12,000 years, since before that its present habitats were glacial snow fields. An interesting story, the unraveling of which continues...

Balaton Group members wishing to explore or discover potential bird species to use as educational flagships for their programs (or just for fun) are encouraged to contact Jorje.

Stories, Quotes, Jokes

Carlos Quesada sent us the next two reflections, and hopes they are as powerful and helpful to other Balaton friends in order to keep our hopes and advocacy for a better world as they are for himself.

On personal evolution.

When some one evolves, its surroundings also evolve. When we try to be better than what we actually are, all around us also improves.

- Paulo Coelho, *The alquimist*.

On commitment.

Unless there is commitment there will be doubts, the opportunity to retract, and always inefficacy. Regarding all acts of initiatives (and of creation), there is an elemental truth, whose lack of knowledge kills innumerable ideas and splendid plans: at the moment of our definite commitment Providence also moves.

All sort of things start to happen, to make possible what otherwise would have never happened. From that decision a whole series of events occur, promoting in our favor all kinds of unpredictable incidents, of meetings and of material assistance, that no person could dream of to find on its path.

I have learned to profoundly respect a verse of Goethe:

Anything that you can do or dream of doing, start it.

Audacity encloses genius, power and magic.

-W.H. Murray

On Systems

John Peet sent us this humorous story about the bathtub, as a nice metaphor for climate policy discussions. It all started with an article in the Chemical Engineer on the Fifth Climate Change Conference (25 November, 1999, p 25) and a letter from A. Lodge, in response to that article.

The article.... gives a fascinating insight into the way international politics struggles with complex technical issues.

I was inspired to set up an experiment to test some of the ideas, and hit upon the analogy of using my bath instead of the Earth and taking the water as carbon dioxide. I jammed the plug firmly, and turned one tap to full. I observed that the bath was filling with water. I turned the flow down to 80%—a massive 20% reduction—only to discover that it was still filling but slightly more slowly.

At this point my neighbour, an American, joined me. He pointed out that reducing the flow by 20% was out of the question; we haggled for a bit before agreeing on a reduction to 94.8%. We thought the 5.2% reduction had a nice ring to it.

Oddly, the bath was still filling up with water at almost the same rate that it had been initially.

My friend then gave me a five-pound note to turn the tap down by another 20%. I did so. He then turned on the other tap to exactly counter the 20% saving. I complained, only to be told that he had “bought my credits”, whatever that means.

He then rushed out, returning with a bucket, which he put under the second tap. I was so impressed that I did not notice for a moment that the bath was still filling up and that the bucket would soon overflow.

We decided we had experimented enough for one day and went off to the pub.

We were on our third pint when we remembered that the experiment was still running.

The Paradox of our Time

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints.

We spend more but have less; we buy more but enjoy it less. We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences but less time; we have more degrees but less sense; more knowledge but less judgment; more experts but more problems; more medicine but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get angry too quickly, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too seldom, watch TV too much and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions but reduced our values.

We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often. We've learned how to make a living, but not a life; we've added years to life, not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor. We've conquered outer space but not inner space.

We've done larger things but not better things. We've cleaned up the air but polluted the soul. We've split the atom but not our own prejudices.

We write more but learn less. We plan more but accomplish less. We've learned to rush but not to wait. We build more computers to hold more information to produce more copies than ever but have less communication.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion; tall men and short character; steep profits and shallow relationships. These are the times of world peace but domestic warfare; more leisure, but less fun; more kinds of food but less nutrition. These are days of two incomes but more divorce; of fancier houses but broken homes.

These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throw away morality, one-night stands, overweight bodies and pills that do everything from cheer to quiet, to kill.

It is a time when there is much in the show window and nothing in the stockroom; a time when technology can bring this letter to you and a time when you can choose either to share this insight or to just hit delete.

-George Carlin

———— DESIGN COMPETITION ANNOUNCEMENT ————

The Sustainability Institute

in cooperation with

The International Network of Resource Information Centers (The Balaton Group)

announces

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL VIRIDIAN DESIGN COMPETITION

A Total of \$8,000 USD in Prizes

*will be awarded for excellence
in the design of a functional and aesthetically dazzling*

VIRIDIAN ELECTRICITY METER

The Viridian Electricity Meter is a household energy consumption meter that resides in a prominent place inside the home. Its purpose is to provide accurate, compelling, and artistically fascinating feedback to homeowners about their current energy use. Users are rewarded aesthetically for reducing energy consumption (and for switching their energy source to a renewable one). In other words, the more sustainable their energy consumption, the more beautiful and fascinating the meter's display.

Viridian Meters should be technically accurate, artistically creative, adaptable to many different cultural contexts, marketable, and above all, very, very cool. Commercially produced Viridian Meters should be capable of generating consumer desire. The ideal Viridian Electricity Meter would be so attractive, people would simply want one, regardless of whether they personally cared very much about saving energy.

Design specifications and submission instructions should be followed carefully. Background on the Viridian design movement follows.

Background on The Viridian Movement and the Viridian Meter

The term viridian — a word referring to a bluish shade of green — was adopted by U.S. science fiction author Bruce Sterling as the name for the design movement he initiated in 1999, and launched formally with a Manifesto on January 3, 2000. The intent of the Viridian Movement is to stimulate the reinvention of everyday products and technologies in the industrial world, so that they are both environmentally benign and aesthetically superior to products now in use. (To read more about the Viridian Movement, visit its website: www.bespoke.org/viridian)

The concept of the Viridian Electricity Meter originated with Stefan Jones, a member of the Viridian Curia (an international core group of designers and writers, linked by internet). The Meter began, like most Viridian ideas, as an imaginary product, for which Bruce Sterling wrote the following imaginary advertisement:

“One of the most offensive artifacts of the twentieth century is the standard household energy meter. This ugly gizmo clings like a barnacle to the outside of your home, readable only by functionaries. Clumsily painted in battleship gray, this network spy device features creepy, illegible little clock-dials, under an ungainly glass dome. Look a bit closer, and this user-hostile interface deliberately insults you, with a hateful anti-theft warning, and a foul little lockbox.

“This crass device is designed to leave you in stellar ignorance of your own energy usage. It publicly brands you as a helpless peon, a technically-illiterate source of cash for remote, uncaring utility lords.

“But today, thanks to the Viridian Electrical Meter, the tables are turned. The Viridian Meter is not some utility spy device, but a user-owned art object!”

The purpose of the competition is to bring forward as many different design ideas for the Viridian Meter as possible, to increase the likelihood of discovering one or more ideas with the potential for being manufactured and distributed in the mass market.

The competition sponsors therefore encourage maximum design creativity and diversity in reinterpreting the Viridian Meter concept, together with technical accuracy, functional utility, and consumer ease-of-use.

Procedure for Submissions

The Competition will proceed in two rounds. In the first round, entering teams or individuals will submit a one-page written description of their proposed Meter, a one-page description of the individual or team submitting the design, and (optional) a one-page artist's conceptual drawing or technical schematic drawing of the proposed Meter. The written

description should be clear, colorful, and compelling, while also conveying the following key facts:

- Visual appearance of the meter
- Manner in which information on energy consumption will be displayed
- Basic technical description of how energy usage will be monitored
- Intended position within a residence (e.g., wall-mounted, table-top, etc.)
- Materials and components to be used in construction

Participants should also indicate whether they are able to construct a working prototype of their design.

In the second round, up to fifteen Finalists will be invited to submit a more detailed schematic proposal and, if feasible, a working prototype.

The competition judges will then select anywhere from one to eight winners, depending on the quality of the submissions, and divide the prize money as they see fit.

Winners will have their work featured on a competition web site, and their designs may be introduced to potential manufacturers and retailers. Features articles about the competition will be written and submitted to leading art and design magazines. Entrants will retain all rights to their designs, but Finalists will sign agreements allowing the Sustainability Institute to reproduce images of their submissions.

Submissions on paper should be sent to:

Sustainability Institute / Viridian Competition
PO Box 174
Hartland Four Corners, VT 05049 USA

Email Submissions should be sent to:
viridmeter@aol.com

If your submission is also available on a web site, please include the URL.

For additional information, please write to the address above or send an email to viridmeter@aol.com.

Competition Timeline

Deadline for initial submissions:
May 31, 2000

Announcement and notification to Finalists:
June 15, 2000

Deadline for Finalist submissions:
August 15, 2000

Announcement of winners and prizes awarded:
October 1, 2000