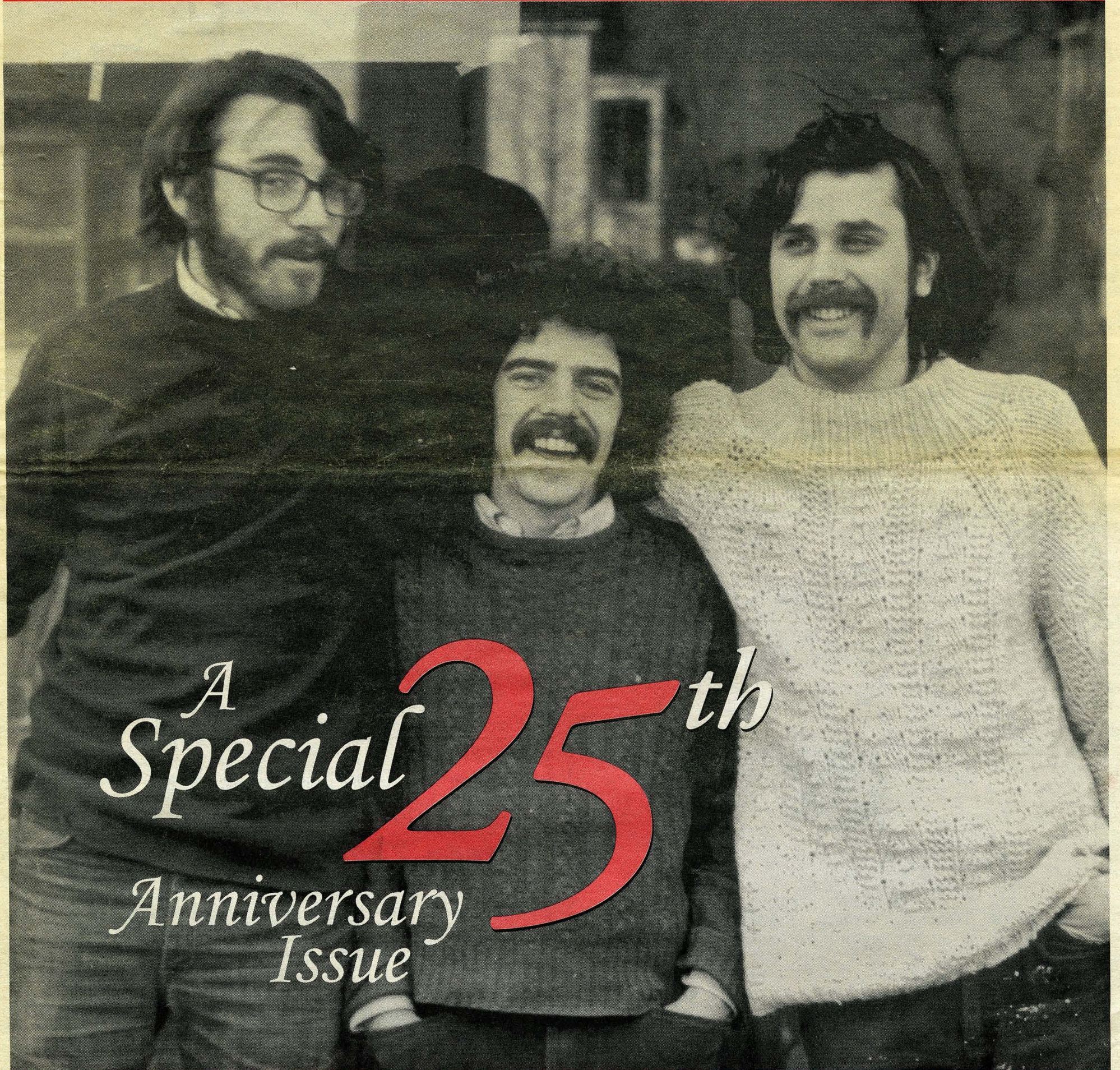


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## About Critical Thinking and Straw Houses...

A great many questions remain unanswered in all the recent publicity (most of what I've seen written by Kim Thompson) about straw building techniques.

First, how does one obtain clean, dry bales of wheat straw in Nova Scotia? We don't grow much wheat. It's difficult to bring in the straw really dry and to store it so that it stays dry and rodent free. If the builder is using fresh straw, then he/she is building at a time of year when field mice are abundant and seeking shelter.

Second, the issue of parging bears examination. Ms. Thompson is comparing an interior wall parged by amateurs with a professionally done gyp-roc wall. An amateur could do his/her own crack filling on gyp-roc and obtain the same "adobe-like" finish. So, comparing the two and concluding that the parged wall is better because it can be done by the amateur builder is spurious. Furthermore, it must be remembered that a rough wall will trap more dust and be more difficult to clean, a major consideration for allergy sufferers. On the outside, I wonder about stucco. It is not used in this climate. I assume there may be a very good reason for this. More information, please.

Third, it should be pointed out that comparing the insulating properties of a twelve (+?) inch wall with those of an eight inch wall does not tell us the R value/inch. Also, what is the insulating value of the straw after it has been in place for twenty-five years?

Fourth, I question the "user friendliness" of straw, which always gives me a rash when I work with it and which makes my husband sneeze. Sometimes the baling twine breaks. The bales are heavy and awkward to carry and lift. Trucking might be expensive and a nuisance to arrange, and then there are the above-mentioned problems of climate.

Fifth, I wonder about difficulties associated with hanging doors and windows in such thick walls without suffering those deadly, secret small leaks inside the walls, which do so much cumulative damage. Also, windows in very thick walls let in less light.

Finally, what is the actual cost comparison, for an owner built home of equal interior space by the two methods?

The whole ecology movement is based on the premise of rigorous critical thinking. This must be applied to traditional as well as new technologies.

Sincerely,  
Jane Schlosberg  
Dartmouth, NS

---

## Isn't There A Better Solution?

Dear Editor:

With my "obsession" about burning garbage I read the article about the VGH incinerator with interest. Hard to believe two "environmentalists" would write such an article. I just can't believe burning hospital waste (which includes considerable amounts of PVC) in Halifax is the best solution. I wish I knew more about alternative solutions.

Sincerely,  
Jan Slakov  
Weymouth

---

**BTI** welcomes letters and articles from its readership.  
Write to: Ecology Action Centre, Attention: BTI Editor

## BETWEEN THE ISSUES

VOLUME 14, NUMBER 3  
ECOLOGY ACTION CENTRE

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## Policy Committee

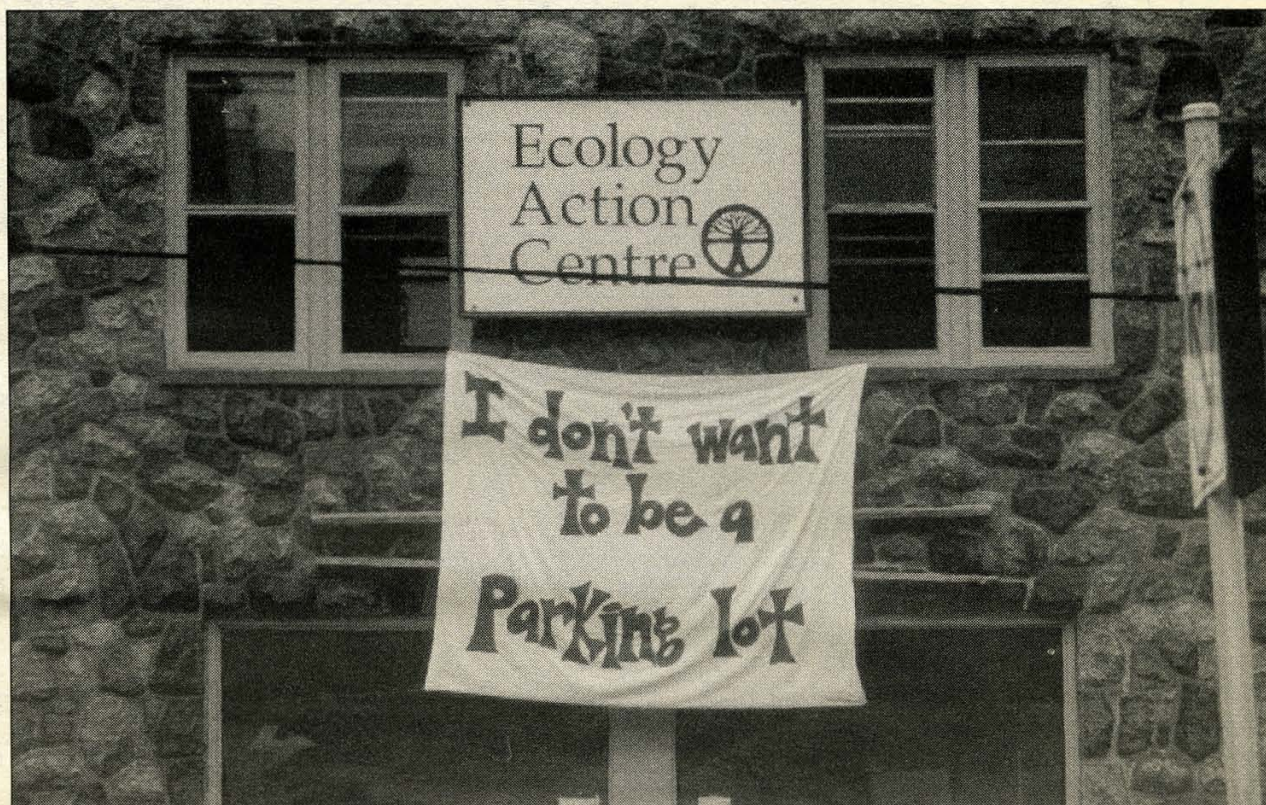
Policy committee members have been busy working on three major issues: a greening initiative for the new Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), the integrated resources management plan for Cumberland/Colchester counties, and new initiatives for sewage treatment and the cleanup of Halifax Harbour. Further details on these issues will be published in future issues of BTI.

## Volunteers at EAC

From July 2nd to August 23, the office benefitted from the presence of four Nova Scotia Youth Conservation Corps students - Jen MacDonald, Teah Gosman, Sandy Allan, and Maia Kapahi. They worked on School Grounds naturalization and marine issues (a proposed krill fishery) and brought enthusiasm and new insights to EAC. See the next issue of BTI for more of their exploits.

## New Board

We say good-bye with sadness to Veronica Sherwood, Lisa Mitchell, Ronald Wood, Daphne French, Karen Hollet, Stephanie Roberts. We enthusiastically welcome Dave Brickman, Lisa Bugden, Pieter Jacobs, Alan Knockwood, Margaret Poole, Dawn Ross and Allan Jenkins as new board members



**Maria Kapahi and Sandy Allen, Youth Conservation Corp students with EAC for the summer, spent a week in Digby Neck. They contributed to local fishery management efforts by measuring fish. Nice-sized fish – a good sign.**

## New Treasurer

We also have a new treasurer. Allan Jenkins replaces Stephanie Roberts. Thanks for all your hard work Stephanie!

## Wilderness Committee

This July the committee began work on IRM (Integrated Resource Management). Contact Kermit de Gooyer at 492-4340

## New Member

Chris Craig had a baby. We welcome this youngest member!

## New Office

In the heart of cafes, pubs and bookstores you will find the new EAC office, located at 1568 Argyle St., Suite 31. The office entrance is to the left of the Trident Cafe and Book Store. Take the stairs to the third floor. Welcome to everybody who wants to visit us!

## Seniors Fair

On Friday the 19th and Saturday the 20th of July EAC had a booth at the International Trade and Convention Centre. Many volunteers donated their time staffing our table: Mark Butler, Chris Henkelmann, Lisa Bugden, Lynn Brooks, David Brickman, Nancy Shackell, Debbie Nielsen, Jennifer Macdonald, Thea Wilson-Hammond, Maia Kapahi, and Pieter Jacobs. Thanks to all!

## Edible Commons Project

The group has changed its name to Halifax Urban Gardens Society. HUGS has been meeting every two weeks and is now in the process of becoming a legal NGO. Contact Debbie at the EAC office.

## Marine Issues Committee (MIC)

MIC is crawling with subtidal activity. Angelica Silva and Sue Watson organized a week of ocean activities primarily for school groups. Students collected plankton samples in the Northwest Arm and returned to Dalhousie University's Biology Department laboratories to look at sea creatures under the microscope. Sue and Angelica would like to expand the event for next year.

MIC also co-sponsored a fisheries workshop with the Canadian Environmental Defense Fund, Dalhousie's Marine Environmental Law Program, and the Alliance of Inshore Fishermen's Groups. The two major themes of the workshop were the proposed amendments to the Fisheries Act and the privatization of a public resource, fish, under individual transferrable quotas (ITQs). The workshop was attended by approximately 60 people, mostly people from fishing communities, and it was highly informative and reasonably action oriented. Two of the Youth Corps students, Sandy Allan and Maia Kapahi, are working with MIC. So far they have produced a draft report on past initiatives to establish a marine education centre/aquarium in Nova Scotia and

future opportunities to do so. In the last week of July they got their hands slimy measuring fish on Digby Neck thereby providing some useful information to the community managed groundfish fishery.

This fall the Marine Issues Committee will embark on a campaign to put fish and coastal communities first, focusing specifically on new fisheries.

## What would you like to know about your food?

What it takes to make it to your table. What's in it and on it. Where it comes from. A group of EAC volunteers are looking at furthering links between city farmers and their rural organic counterparts. The group would like to encourage discussions between the rural providers of food and urban consumers. The EAC group would like to work with other organizations focusing on these issues and provide information and possibly organize activities that would further our understanding of them. But before we form our objectives we would like to know what EAC members are interested in. Issues we could address include farm tours of conventional and organic farms; a question and answer column in BTI on food and agriculture; and discussions between organic farmers and their consumers. Contact Chris Henkelmann at EAC for more information.

**Larry Lamont - It was with the deepest regret that the EAC learned of the passing of Larry Lamont in a kayaking accident earlier this year. Larry was a longtime EAC supporter and community activist. Our hearts go out to his family and friends. He will be missed.**



# Introduction to the History

**T**wenty-five years: so many faces, so many projects, so many campaigns. In the following five stories, we've tried to give a reasonably balanced history of the evolution of the Ecology Action Centre. Inevitably in the short space allotted we've omitted much, and for this we apologize.

After 25 years, we are proud to celebrate EAC's successes. Hopefully we've made a difference. An early letter to the membership stated the Centre's goals at that time: to institutionalize recycling in Metro, and to provide a resource centre. By this yardstick alone, we have been successful, but that's

not all. As an activist organization, EAC, often in concert with other groups, has changed or stopped the Quinpool Road development, spruce budworm and herbicide spraying, a sewage plant on McNabs Island, a nuclear power complex on Stoddard Island, oil rigs on Georges Bank, and on and on. We have helped ensure that the public has a larger voice in the planning process in metro, served as a valuable resource centre, and been heavily involved in environmental education.

Obviously, we have also had our heartbreaks and frustrations. There remains an essential role for

groups such as EAC; many of the issues identified in the early days of the Centre are with us yet. The list would include forest management, pesticide use, energy policy and, of course Halifax Harbour. What will the next 25 years bring for EAC, Nova Scotia and Canada?

Reading over the five stories, one feels hopeful, not gloomy. Perhaps the most important message in 25 years of history (cliché though it is) is that a few involved people can make a huge difference.



# Reflections on the Early 80's

Editorial by Elizabeth Greenhavens

Can it really be 25 years? And still so much to do to keep our planet alive? What first attracted me to EAC was the Holtz/Mayo team and their style of working for change - an approach that was novel (and sometimes controversial) in those days. "The Susans" were committed to the notion that the best way to change people's minds was to find a "meeting ground" - something everyone could agree on - and work from there. That was often a challenge - and still can be! But it is an approach that has gained acceptance in many circles; now we call it "involving all the stakeholders" or "building consensus."

That was in the late 70's. When Susan Mayo left EAC, about the turn of the 80's, I was hired by EAC to work

with Susan Holtz and Ginny Point as the "office person" - to pursue memberships, pay bills, coordinate volunteers, field enquiries and guide researchers through EAC's amazing reference library.

So, it fell me to carry forward another EAC principle: When people called to identify a concern, we told them, "Great! Get a group of people together and we'll help you get started!" Under the wing of EAC they could form a committee around the issue, had access to our resources and were free to work at their own pace and in their own style with an understanding that any public statements in the name of the Centre were subject to approval by the Board.

I like that principle; it keeps an organization fresh. In this way priorities shift with changing times and with the concerns of the people willing to do the work! And, no "in" group can co-opt the organization. That's something many non-profit institutions would do well to think about.

My own first passion continues to be a love affair with the Earth. My 'arena' has shifted somewhat, as has that of many other people who have served EAC well, on staff or on the Board. People like Brian Gifford, who was there at the very beginning of EAC. I wonder what Brian would say now, 25 years later?

## "Eco-Acto" at 25

Eco - Acto (an early EAC nickname) was born in June 1971 with the help of an Opportunities for Youth grant. As early as September 1974, however, a group of EAC supporters were being asked the question: "Should EAC close down or transform itself into a volunteer-based organization?" They responded with a confident and committed "Yes!" to transformation. So began a shift to heavier reliance on volunteer committees and a new set of activists.

This story reflects some of the great strengths the organization has demonstrated over the years - flexibility, resilience, dedication, commitment, and continuity through all the changes of the people involved. The EAC has seen many changes of staff and of key activists over the years, many "changes of the guard". Some, like Howard Epstein and Allan Ruffman, have been involved on and off through much of its life. Continued existence has allowed EAC to build up a bank of information and experience over the years, and to provide information.

In essence the EAC is a venture that concerned citizens can use to enter the public debate about environmental policy and action. Its methods have been collective action, thorough research, and a heavy emphasis on action - action in the sense of engaging actively in public debates and demonstration projects - from our earliest days when our "Paper Tiger" truck collected paper for recycling. Elizabeth Greenhavens describes the key feature that has enabled the EAC to evolve as it has - issues have been defined and pursued by those willing to do the work.

Like many other organizations that arose in the early 70's, the EAC's character grew out of the twin movements of environmentalism and participatory democracy. Are these concerns passé in the cold new realities of the 90's? Hardly. They are more pressing than ever as governments are pilloried and pushed into deregulation and staff cuts, and the dominance of large corporations and the "corporate agenda" grows worldwide. EAC and organizations like it in the environmental and other movements, are vital to a well-functioning democracy and to a society based on values that go beyond financial considerations.

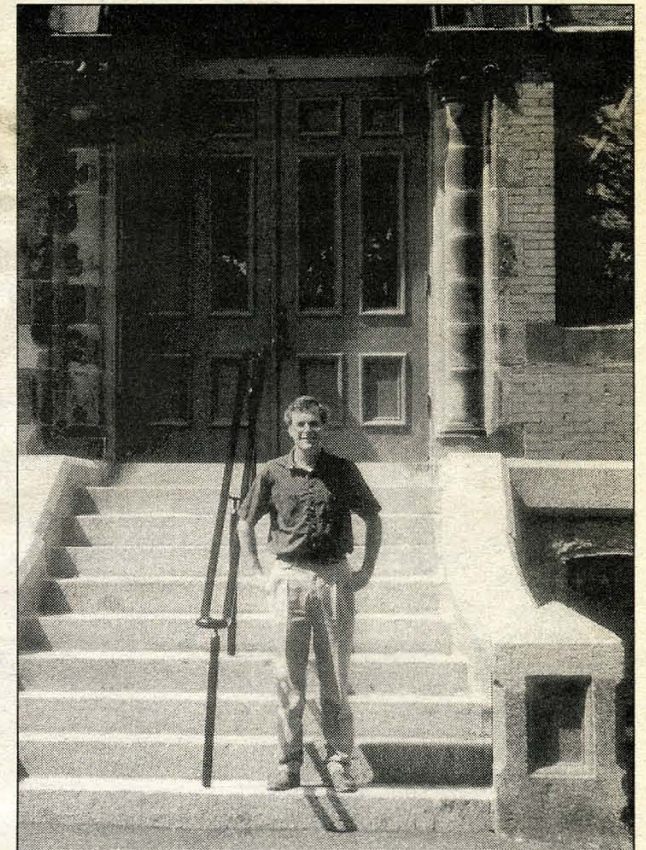
Two of the biggest challenges for the environmental movement, including EAC members, are to continue to develop and vigorously promote policies that address both environmental and employment concerns, and to develop effective strategies to achieve adoption of these policies. The Atlantic fishery is the most striking example of this challenge and opportunity, and it's right here in the waters surrounding our shores. If and when cod and other species recover, will destructive, capital-intensive, low-employment-per-tonne methods be the norm or will lower-impact, higher-employment methods be the norm? Similar issues affect the entire economy/ecology. How can we shift the powerful forces at work in today's political economy so that full employment is achieved while reducing our impact on the environment that sustains our lives as well as our "economy" - to say nothing of its intrinsic value?

EAC members, like other environmentalists, have grappled with these concerns since the early days. One hopeful development in the last 2 years is the emergence of a federal "Alternative Budget". A Nova Scotia alternative budget is being worked on now. The two key elements to this strategy are that it articulates a clear alternative at the broad political /economic level and that it involves working in coalition with social and labour advocates. In the East Coast fisheries, environmentalists, fishermen and coastal community residents have coalesced around the low-impact, high employment alternative to some degree. But the big company view seems to remain the dominant view in media and government circles. This view sees the problem as too many people chasing too few fish without fundamentally questioning the technology (or the science) used.

I confess to being an observer on the sidelines of the environmental movement and I wish to acknowledge the profound dedication of the broad spectrum of EAC activists and supporters who have been working on the front lines with these very issues and many others for 25 years. Congratulations to you all for your efforts and the results achieved.

These are challenging times for environmentalists, social justice advocates and labour activists. The current period of

Editorial by Brian Gifford



Brian Gifford, the driving force of EAC's early years, and Dal's Forrest Building, EAC's first permanent home. (OK, OK, just a few rooms in the basement). Pictured summer, 1996.

profound change could result in enormous setbacks; or it's just possible that we could eventually end up with the new definition of economic progress that environmentalists have sought, including both social justice issues and true environmental sustainability. The second is only possible with hope, vision and hard work.

Brian Gifford was a founder of EAC, its first director, and remained active with the organization for many years.



# 1971-75: The First Five Years

## Beginnings

1970: a time of hippies, folk music, bell-bottoms – and of growing concern about the environment. The Canadian Government had just passed the Canada Water Act and was preparing to launch Environment Canada. In April, millions celebrated the first Earth Day.

This was also a time of experimentation in the field of education. At Dalhousie, any eight students could design a course, provided they could find a willing faculty member. Ecology and Action was one such course, and EAC was its offspring.

The Centre first set up shop in May 1971 in a private house on Carleton Street. There were two initial goals: to prove that recycling was a viable option for Halifax, and to become a source of information for the public on environmental matters. Since paper made up almost half of Halifax's garbage stream and there was an established, though limited, market for it, it was the obvious target of their recycling efforts.

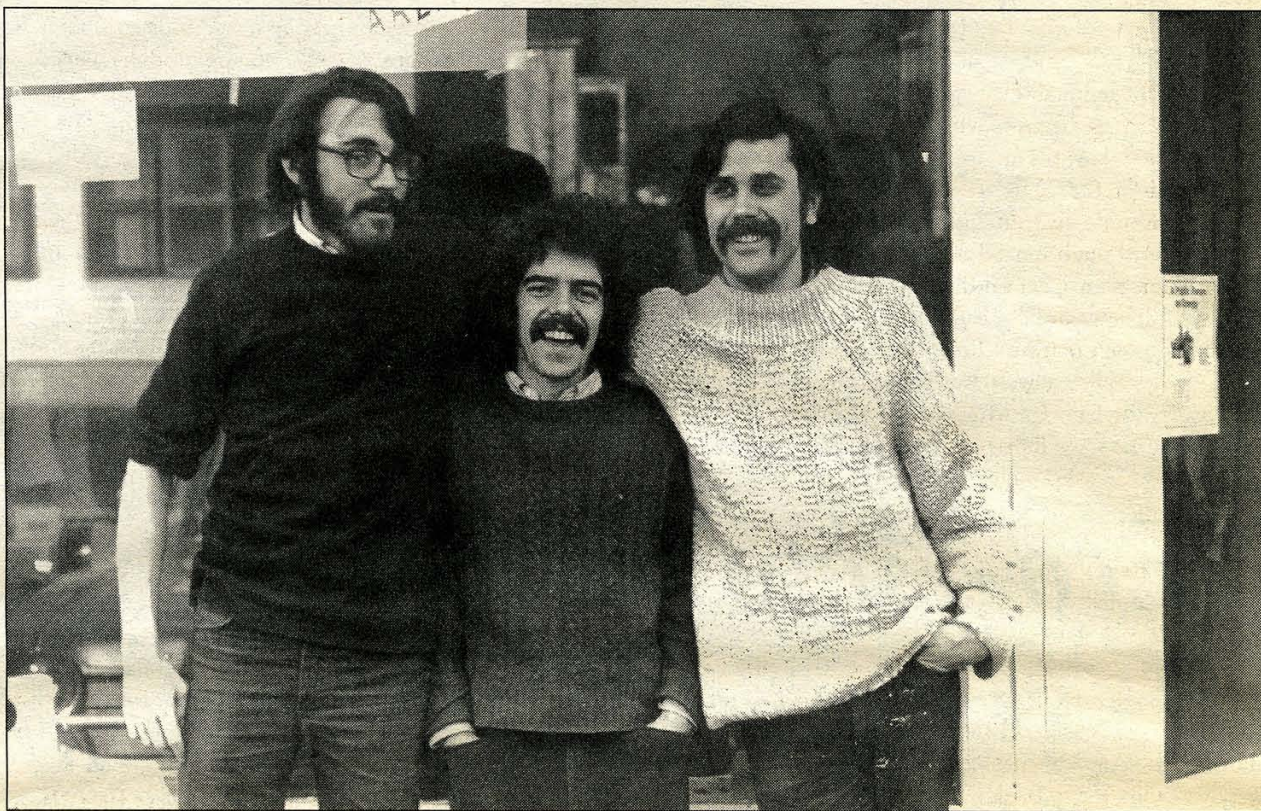
An Opportunities for Youth (OFY) grant of about \$5000 paid the bills; it allowed for five positions, shared over the summer by nine students. The students bought an old milk-delivery truck which they dubbed the "Paper Tiger," painted green, decorated with recycling arrows, and drove round town collecting paper from a number of apartment and office buildings.

The driving force of the operation was Brian Gifford, a recent graduate in economics and sociology, who served as EAC's coordinator for almost four years. Brian was joined by Tim Sullivan in September, but by this time the summer grants had run out and the two drove taxis part-time to earn a living- a learning experience in itself.

## Boom and Bust

On November 18th, EAC moved to a dingy basement office in Dal's Forrest Building. (We reprint some of Brian and Tim's opening-day greeting elsewhere in this issue.) Dalhousie was to provide free accommodation for almost 14 years - an enormous bonus for a struggling organization.

Financial salvation came in December with the next in a series of increasingly generous OFY and LIP (Local



(left to right) Dave Reynolds, Don MacLennan and Brian Gifford at EAC's first and only branch plant, Port Hawkesbury, N.S. 1973 or '74. The office lasted only six months and was staffed by Margo Lamont.

Initiatives Program) grants that would sustain EAC until March '74 — though not without long gaps when UI came in handy. (The boom and bust of EAC finances will be a recurring theme in this history.)

1973 was a banner year, the year when government grants reached an astonishing \$40,000 (total budget for the year was about \$50,000), and EAC had up to seven full-time employees. All worked extremely long hours; the pay was a modest and equitable \$100/person/week. For a brief time, EAC even operated a branch office in Port Hawkesbury; its goal was to fight the refinery/sup-erport planned for the Strait of Canso.

It was not to last. When the government grants ended in March 1974, a group of dedicated volunteers kept the Centre going while it looked for other sources of support. We registered as a society, obtained tax status

as a charitable organization, and enlarged our board. We even made plans for an ambitious expansion of our program and had set out to raise \$107,000 for 1974, enlisting advice from Pollution Probe on how to raise money from business sources. This campaign met with only limited success and EAC had to turn to membership drives and fundraising events (for years the cost of membership was only \$2.00). Government grants in future years would not include day-to-day maintenance.

A second turning point came in early 1975 when Brian Gifford resigned as Coordinator. By then the Centre had about 250 members and a large board of directors, but much of the day-to-day operation was still on Brian's shoulders. He is proud to report that there was \$5000 in the bank when he handed over to Susan Mayo. Brian's work was honoured by the Nova Scotia Environmental Control Council in 1983.

## Approach

By 1973, EAC had expanded its interests considerably and was involved in an amazing number of issues and activities.

The environmental movement was not the only influence in these early years; popular movements in neighborhood involvement and participatory democracy also played (and continue to play) a role in shaping its philosophy. So while the key words were conservation, environmental protection and resource management, EAC also became a significant voice in local municipal planning issues. Then, as now, the theme was "Think globally, act locally." Inevitably, however, our reach extended outside metro into provincial issues such as forestry.

## Quinpool Road

EAC's most significant work in its early years was its campaign against a massive \$45 million development proposed by Centennial Properties for a parcel of land on Quinpool Road. The project originally included four 20-storey apartment buildings, a nine-storey office building, a 208-unit apartment hotel, and 26,500 m<sup>2</sup> of retail and commercial space, all to be built on land zoned "park and institutional."

Ward 2 and Ward 4 Residents Associations rallied mightily to the cause, but EAC carried the burden. On June 5, 1973, we filed Notice of Appeal with the Nova Scotia Planning Appeal Board against Halifax City Council's decision to approve the project; the brief was 77 pages long. We lost the appeal but ultimately the project was reduced considerably in size, in part because of our efforts, in part because a private citizen took the city to court.



EAC has always taken a three-pronged approach to the issues: research, education and action. The first two were reflected in a rapidly growing library and a diverse series of publications - three in 1972 and 13 in 1973 - a major accomplishment of the early years. Volume 1 of *Fine Print*, EAC's first newsletter, appeared in April 1973. Indeed, once EAC had established a reputation, it became the place in town to look for the facts.

EAC's growing reputation also meant that others turned to us for help, and we supported many causes. The legal route has been a favoured weapon. Among the young lawyers who gave freely of their time were Howard Epstein, Stan Macuch, Dennis Patterson and Don McLennan; many other academics and professionals also helped. Although we did not win all our appeals, EAC had a major impact on the way the city conducts its business; since Quinpool Road (see box), there has been far more opportunity for public input into the planning process. There were four areas of special interest in this period: recycling, urban development and transportation, energy, and environmental law. Vigorous committees coordinated the activities. A few words on each:

### Recycling

EAC volunteers operated a recycling depot for waste paper every Saturday from January '72 to February '75. Hans Blaauw was the manager; Kay Lister and Alison Parsons among the many dedicated volunteers. About 300 families took advantage of the service and about a ton of paper was recycled each week. Markets, as ever, remained an intractable problem. (Another important project was the "Bring Back the Refillable Bottle" campaign in 1975.)

Halifax at that time operated an incinerator and dump at the north end of the peninsula (the old Africville site) but was seeking other solutions to its garbage problems (sound familiar?). In August '73, the Metro Area Planning Commission (MAPC) authorized a \$20,000 study of recycling, but although several companies

expressed interest in operating sorting and/or recycling facilities, the study was never undertaken and the municipalities decided instead to proceed with a sanitary landfill program, with no provision for recycling. A lost chance indeed!

### Environmental Law

In the early '70s, Canada and its provinces were establishing a base of environmental law and setting up departments of the environment. EAC fought hard to strengthen the proposed Nova Scotia Environmental Protection Act before it was proclaimed on April 3, 1973, calling for more accountability, more access to information and more public input. The arguments were dismissed by the Law Amendments Committee.

In the hopeful budget drawn up for 1974, there were ambitious plans for an environmental law centre, but it was not to be. However, EAC did publish a 150-page citizen's handbook on the subject that was updated in 1980.

### Energy

When Susan Holtz became coordinator of the newly formed Energy Options Committee in late 1975, energy (a concern from the beginning) became a major focus for EAC. Susan's long and exemplary role in EAC is discussed in other chapters. Here we note only the 1975 Energy and People Conference (which EAC co-sponsored) and the Stoddard Island campaign (see box). The 1973 oil crisis was a major factor in EAC's growing involvement in this field.

### Urban Development and Transportation

Quinpool Road was just one of many urban issues that EAC took on board. From March 1975, and into 1976, EAC was involved in the City's efforts to prepare a Municipal Development Plan. The Centre submitted a brief (at Mayor Edmund Morris' personal request) and took part in the MDP environmental sub-committee. EAC's proposal for an environmental advisory body was turned down, and the final environmental policy

## Did you know...

### Nova Scotia could have had the largest nuclear power plant complex in the world?

**Stoddard Island** - In the summer of 1972, the public learned by accident that the government of Nova Scotia was holding secret discussions with Crossley Enterprises, an American company, about a proposal to build a 12,000-megawatt facility on Stoddard Island, Shelburne County. A prominent Halifax lawyer had acquired the 260-hectare island for the company in late 1971.

The complex was to consist of ten American-style light-water reactors and would provide electricity to the New England states via underwater cable. The US Atomic Energy Commission had withheld licenses from 97 such reactors - this was an absolutely classic case of exporting an unsafe technology.

Press comment was low-key at first, but the Nuclear Power Study Group, four of whose members were Acadia University professors, set out to dig up and publicize information on the project. EAC helped to raise the alert and was one of the organizers of a high-profile forum on nuclear power held at Dalhousie.

It was Barrington citizen Hattie Perry, however, who spearheaded the brilliant campaign that led to the eventual demise of the project. In the fall of 1973, she rallied local opposition and organized a series of public meetings.



EAC's Recycling Depot at the Halifax Trade Mart, 1974.

Q: How long did it take to institutionalize recycling in Metro?

A: More than 20 years

was much weaker than EAC had hoped. (Ronald Wood expands on the committee's work in the next article.)

From early days, EAC was concerned about the sorry state of Halifax Harbour, which still receives untreated sewage from the cities. The harbour was to become a perennial for EAC.

*June Hall helps put BTI together. She also co-ordinated this retrospective. Special thanks June.*

*June is senior author of "A New Kind of Sharing: Why We Can't Ignore Global Environmental Change." IDRC, 1992.*

• • •

*Acknowledgments: Many thanks to Brian Gifford, Howard Epstein, and the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. Back issues of EAC publications and a 1979 analysis by Lesley Choyce also provided valuable information.*



# 1976-80: Where Did They Get All The Energy?

## Introduction

Between 1976 and 1980, the Centre was involved in an increasing number of high-profile public issues. Its intervention in electricity rate hearings was conducted with such professionalism that it earned the Centre a lot of respect. Similarly, the sensitive issue of uranium mining in the province was tackled so successfully that the province set in place a moratorium that remains to this day.

Infestations of the spruce budworm (a naturally recurring problem that will pass if left on its own, but which is likely prolonged by spraying) brought to a head the question of pesticide use. A successful effort to prevent its use in New Brunswick encouraged a similar effort in Nova Scotia that was rewarded when aerial spraying was banned during 1977.

EAC's most ambitious and successful efforts, however, were in the area of energy policy and planning, where there was an immense amount of high-quality work. Finally, a constant theme through this period was opposition to nuclear power and weapons through demonstrations and campaigns.

## People

EAC continued its work on recycling and urban issues after Susan Mayo took over from Brian Gifford as coordinator of the Centre in 1975. The formation of an energy committee, however, widened the scope of activities and led to funding through the Halifax chapter of the Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC), a Quaker organization, to support Susan Holtz as part-time Energy Coordinator. The Friends were also to fund a part-time librarian (Ginny Point) and books for the resource library, especially in the area of energy issues. EAC remained in the Forrest Building, although it moved from "the northwest corner in the basement... down the hall into the middle of the basement under the big tower" (*Jusun*, Nov. '78).

As coordinator, Susan Mayo was involved in all the issues of the time and also supported Susan Holtz' and Ginny Point's work on energy. After five years of splendid leadership from Susan Mayo, Ginny Point sadly included a farewell message from her in the Summer, 1980 issue of the EAC newsletter *Jusun*. A new office manager, Elizabeth Greenhavens, took over the administrative work, but the task of coordinating EAC's activity fell to the Board of Directors - a situation very similar to today's. Despite financial ups and downs, however, these five years benefitted from stable staffing by excellent people.

## Finances

EAC continued to suffer the familiar and periodical financial crises, such as the ones in 1975, 1977 and 1980, when special calls went out to save the Centre. Leslie Shaw of the Membership Committee wrote in



(left to right) Ginny Point, John Scheibelhut, Susan Holtz, Susan Mayo, and Grant MacDonald in the EAC offices, Dalhousie University, 1980.

December 1980 that "once again we are teetering on the brink of acute financial embarrassment. Our present funds will just see us through December. If we are to survive, we must have new members." The support of membership was crucial in weathering those cash crunches, then as now.

Budgets between 1976 and 1979 hovered between \$17-20,000, shored up in 1978-79, for instance, by a grant of \$3,500 from the Quaker Friends for Susan Holtz and \$3,150 for the "energy library." A big leap occurred in 1979-80 when core funding rose to \$28,000 and the total to \$42,810, including projects on rights of way, an environmental law text for schools and paper recycling. But money was always scarce. When Susan Mayo left in 1980, it was felt that it would be impossible to hire someone to take over all of her responsibilities, which constituted "more than a full-time job" at what was really a part-time salary.

## Newsletter

In January '76, EAC's newsletter, *Fine Print*, was renamed *Jusun*, which is the Mi'kmaq word for "wind" but also conveniently suggests the English word "sun." *Jusun* was intended to be a monthly publication, though this was rarely achieved. In fact, it eventually become so infrequent that it was published only twice a year. It was said, however, to reach 2,000 readers per issue. *Jusun* typically had 4-6 pages and was edited and written by staff members, with contributions from members. Many of the articles concerned energy issues, and there were quite a few on transportation and urban development, reflecting the

vibrancy of the Centre's activities.

In the summer of 1980, EAC began a newsletter that would appear "Between The Issues" of *Jusun*, but quickly supplanted it altogether.

## Education / Outreach

In March '76 EAC published its first and only book, *Stop It! A guide for citizen's action to protect the environment of Nova Scotia*, edited by Paul Edmond. Linda Christiansen-Ruffman commented in 1979 that the board of directors had tried to change the title to "Do It!" to reflect the more positive purpose of promoting citizen involvement in environmental issues, but "production had gone too far." The book analyzes the means at a citizen's disposal to make sure that companies and governments do what's best for the environment.

Occasional lectures or presentations were common and topics centered on the EAC's main work of energy, anti-nuclear issues and urban development, with speakers nearby and away. EAC set up an excellent lecture series for the general public for 1979-80 and 1980-81. Topics included home energy conservation, electricity pricing, alternative agriculture, urban development and the "Conserver Society." Curricula for schools were also developed; in particular a high school text book on environmental law.

## Energy

What characterizes these five years more than anything else were the excellent efforts, led by Susan Holtz, on



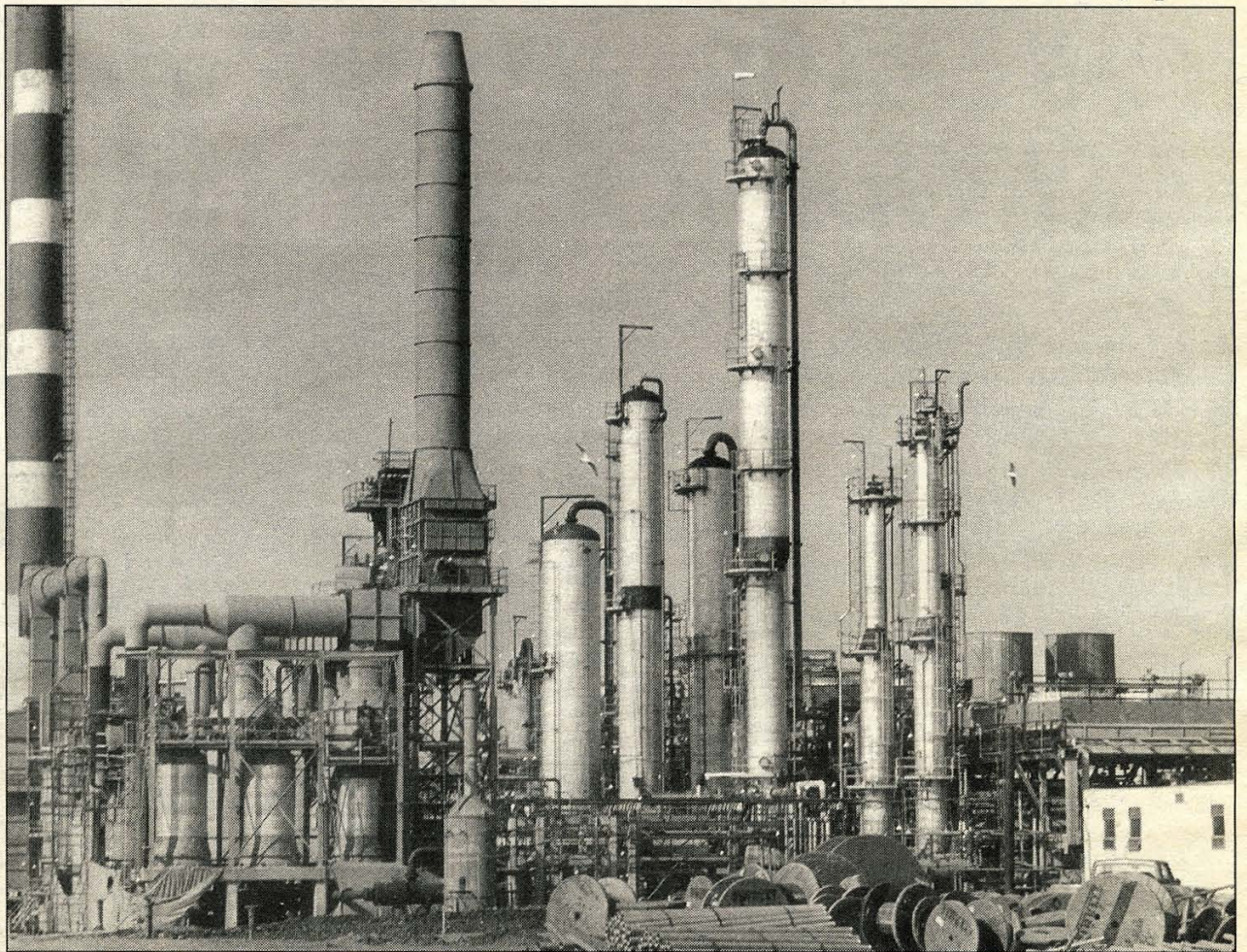
energy issues. The Energy Options Committee met for the first time on November 29, 1975. Many who attended had worked together on and were motivated by their opposition to atomic energy and their wish to promote alternatives to it. The policy sub-committee included a representative from Toronto's Energy Probe and a Professor at Montreal's Vanier College. Already at this early point there were plans to develop an energy library and produce pamphlets.

As Susan Holtz reflected in the March '77 *Jusun*, "our most ambitious undertaking was the Centre's decision to become a legal intervenor in the Nova Scotia Public Utility Board hearings into the Nova Scotia Power Corporation's proposed rate increase, work that spanned three months (from October '76) and "cost the equivalent of \$35,000." EAC argued that the rate structure needed to provide incentives to conserve electricity and reduce the need for more power generation. *Jusun's* April issue was devoted to explaining EAC's position that electricity should be priced according to load, so that peak daytime hours and winter would be more expensive than at other times. Thus, the reasoning went, consumers would find ways to reduce their overall use. The Public Utility Board's decision amounted to a partial vindication of EAC's arguments and earned the Centre a great deal of respect as a result.

At a second hearing in June 1978, an EAC team of fifteen people (imagine!) undertook the intervention, including "the Centre's lawyer," William Biggs. Since, however, the NSPC did not provide any new data (as they had been directed by the Board), the focus shifted to ways of improving the process of Utility Board reviews to enable broader public participation. This lack of forthcoming data was to continue as the Power Corp. dragged its feet. In the end, and to the



**EAC Recognizes the best and the worst each year**  
In 1980, Peggy Hope-Simpson and Fase Croft received the Sunshine Award for their extensive personal efforts in environmental work. New Brunswick Premier Richard Hatfield won the Tarred Duck that year.



**Energy issues have been a major focus of EAC for much of its history.** The Point Tupper Oil Refinery, Nova Scotia.

frustration of environmentalists, there was little change to the rate structure.

The Centre also moved to challenge the federal energy policy. Energy self-sufficiency was the goal, though to the apparent detriment of environmental concerns about mega-projects (*Jusun*, Nov. '77). Similarly, EAC participated in debate about nuclear waste disposal by critiquing reports to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Natural Resources and submitting a brief on March 8, 1978. Susan Holtz and Dr. Om Kamra, Professor of Radiation Genetics at Dalhousie, travelled to Ottawa to present the brief and participate in the proceedings (*Jusun*, Aug. '78).

At some point in 1978 the holistic approach that the Energy Options Committee was developing began to be identified as the "Soft Energy Path." In keeping with this concept, articles were published on solar heating of homes, wind power, and energy-efficient wood stoves, though the primary stress was on energy efficiency (just as material use should be reduced, before turning to recycling). EAC participated in a nation-wide NGO effort to present viable soft-path scenarios for the provinces and for Canada as a whole.

### **Transportation / Urban Development**

Headed up by Don Chard, the Urban Development and Transportation Committee continued to be active in urban issues, particularly in Halifax City. This meant trying to influence urban policy to include more environmentally sound means of transportation, i.e., public transit systems, fewer highways, better conditions for pedestrians and cyclists. Thus, EAC opposed the so-called Barrington Street re-alignment that expanded and re-positioned the street between Scotia Square and the MacDonald (old) Bridge. This was one battle that was

won. Car-pooling alternatives were offered as one way to cut down on traffic congestion, an idea that turned into a \$15,300 LIP project. Other developments were opposed on the grounds that they gave too little thought to the aesthetics of the city or to broader development issues. They included proposed projects in front of the Citadel (Market Place Plaza high-rise) and Marina Arms, on the North West Arm.

### **Recycling**

EAC closed its recycling centre in February, 1975, but continued to concentrate its recycling efforts on paper, which at that time was arguably the easiest material to collect and re-use. In the spring of 1979, two students from Dalhousie's School of Business looked into the feasibility of recycling paper in the Halifax/Dartmouth area (*Jusun*, Ap. '79). By the summer, the Paper Recycling Committee was working on a proposal to sponsor a business to begin collection in Spryfield, initially.

Fortnightly collection began on October 4th 1979; in the new year it expanded to include Fairview. The project collected an average of 6,000 lbs. of paper from Spryfield and 3,800 lbs. from Fairview (with an estimated 18% of households participating), but once again it proved difficult to find a stable, economically viable market. When in addition Scotia Recycling announced that it was planning its own city-wide paper collection service, EAC was forced to cancel the programme after just a year (BTI, Oct. '80). The battle for municipal participation in recycling schemes was, of course, to be protracted, even never-ending, as it seems today.

*Ronald Wood is a former vice-chair of EAC and editor of Between The Issues. He has just completed his master's thesis in Philosophy.*



# 1981-85: "Herbicide Trials" and Other Issues

In the first part of the eighties I was living in Queens County and working in community development. I knew that a few "radical" neighbours like Sue Hower and Hester Lessard were members of the South Shore Environmental Protection Association and had ties to Ecology Action Centre. Reading the back issues of BTI for this period, I realize that exciting environmental work was going on, and EAC was in the thick of it.

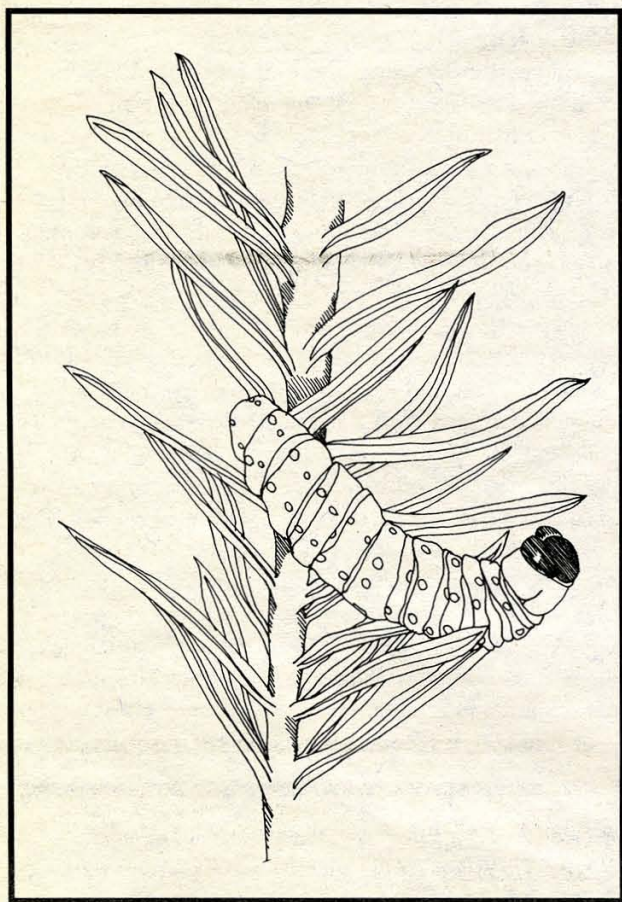
Back in those days, EAC's work had a more provincial focus than the metro-centered activities I found when I came to the Centre in 1990. The board was made up of regional as well as local representatives. With the staff leadership of first Ginny Point and in late '82 Elizabeth Archibald Calder, EAC worked on an astounding variety of environmental issues. However, the two "hottest" issues of the time were herbicides in forestry, and uranium mining.

## **You, Me, and 2,4-D**

Since 1976, Cape Bretoners Against the Spray had been fighting the aerial spraying of pesticides. EAC board member, lawyer and activist Elizabeth May was a key figure in these struggles, which she chronicles in her book *Budworm Battles*. The Forest Products Improvement Board had angered the pulp and paper industry by its stand against budworm spraying and by its opposition to the wide use of aerial spraying of herbicides. This prompted the Nova Scotia Forest Products Association to pressure the Buchanan government to hold a Royal



EAC members have long been involved in opposing the spraying of herbicides. These unidentified activists protest near Tatamagouche.



Commission on Forestry and to repeal the then-existing Forest Improvements Act.

The Royal Commission held 33 hearings from August 1982 to December 1983. EAC's forestry committee prepared and presented a brief to this commission. When the commission handed down its blatantly pro-spray report, Elizabeth May observed that "the Royal Commission was premised on the assumption that the forest is the pulp and paper industry" (BTI, Jan/85). The Royal Commission on Forestry was the 1984 winner of EAC's Tarré Duck Award.

Concurrent with the Royal Commission were the herbicide trials. A group of 16 landowners in Cape Breton, including Elizabeth May and members of the Mic Mac Nation, launched a legal challenge to aerial spraying of the herbicides 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T by Nova Scotia Forest Industries (NSFI). EAC helped to raise the funds needed for legal fees and other costs through the Herbicide Fund Society and also worked to raise awareness of the issues at home and abroad.

On September 13, 1983, Justice Merlin Nunn handed down a decision in favour of NSFI, also awarding them costs. This decision flew in the face of public opinion in Nova Scotia, other parts of Canada, and abroad. Partly in an attempt to improve its highly tarnished image,

NSFI agreed not to press for the full costs from the plaintiffs. Cape Breton film maker and activist Neil Livingstone described these events in his NFB film *Herbicide Trials*. Needless to say, NSFI and its chief counsel, George Cooper, panned the film.

## **Too Hot to Handle**

The issue of uranium mining in Nova Scotia was another preoccupation for EAC members in the first half of the eighties. (There was a huge increase in exploration activity in the late seventies.) In March, 1981, the uranium mining subcommittee of EAC's Energy Committee passed a resolution calling for the government of Nova Scotia to place a moratorium on uranium exploration, mining and milling in the province. EAC subsequently presented a brief to the McCleave Uranium Inquiry, a process that dragged on until the report was made public in January of 1985. This inquiry enjoyed a better outcome than the Royal Commission on Forestry — a moratorium on uranium exploration and mining remains to this day.

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Other issues of note at EAC during these years included attempts to prevent high-rise development in the downtown and around the Public Gardens. EAC's Urban Committee was very active at this time, as was the Agriculture Committee, which organized annual



Alternatives in Agriculture conferences in association with the Atlantic Christian Training Centre at Tatamagouche. The work of this committee eventually developed into an independent group called MARSAN (the Maritime Sustainable Agriculture Network). EAC's famed lecture series was also in full swing.

The 1981/82 series gives a capsule of what the issues were:

- Toxic Waste
- McNabs Island
- Environmental Protection
- Civil Disobedience
- Life After Oil
- You and Me and 2,4-D

### **How About a Sewage Treatment Plant?**

On Tuesday, June 15th, EAC's Urban Committee sponsored the first meeting of Friends of McNabs Island. The goal of the group, as stated by member Alan Ruffiman, was "to develop an organized constituency for McNabs before any final decision is made regarding development on the island — *be it a Dome shipyard, a park, or anything as yet unplanned* [my italics]."

### **Notable Publications**

A 1981 grant allowed Ginny Point to write and compile *Pathways*, a compendium of key articles on environmental issues for use in junior and senior high school. This volume included suggested activities and discussion questions for use by teachers. *Pathways* proved so successful that it was revised and reissued in 1984. EAC also produced a series of well-researched pamphlets on such issues as forestry, uranium exploration, and offshore development.



Anti-nuclear and peace activities were important for many in the late seventies and eighties. A die-in on the streets of Halifax. Photo: Jan Meyerowitz

### **Susan Holtz**

On October, 1981, Susan Holtz, EAC's Senior Researcher, attended the first North American meeting of Friends of the Earth International. Susan reported that "the priority issue identified by groups from all over the world was the threat of thermonuclear war" (*BTI* Nov/81). Earlier that year, Susan was appointed to the Canadian Environmental Advisory Council, only the second representative to be chosen from an NGO group in the nine years of the Council's existence. Susan continued as EAC's Senior Researcher during the early eighties, working on projects funded from a variety of sources, notably the United Church-sponsored Soft Energy Path Study.

### **Liz Archibald Calder**

When Liz Calder left in late 1987, after five years of devoted service as coordinator of the Centre, Lesley Griffiths wrote a warm tribute (*BTI*, Jan-Apr '88). Here are a few snippets:

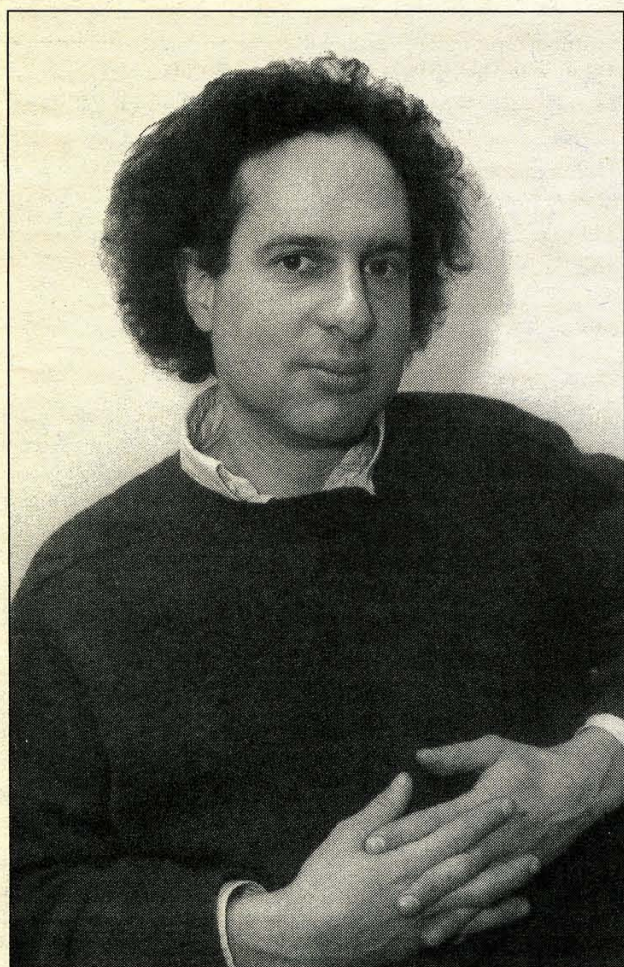
"Liz brought to EAC...a breath of fresh air from Cape Breton. She helped to remind us that the world didn't end at the Halifax city limits...For five years she threw herself heart and soul into the job of coordinating the work of the Centre...Liz worked many evenings and weekends and she apologized when she took a vacation...

"...you will quickly realize that EAC is held in high esteem, largely because of the way Liz represented us at national meetings, with other groups and with Envir-onment Canada." Lesley particularly mentions Liz's work on forest management issues.

### **Leaving Home**

In the fall of 1985, at 14 years of age, Ecology Action Centre had to move out from under the sheltering (and rent-free) wing of Dalhousie University. EAC's first off-campus location was in the Roy Building on Barrington Street. With the move came a new letterhead designed by Dereck Day of Graphic Design Associates.

This move seems to have heralded the start of a period of greater financial instability for EAC that continues to this day. There was a serious financial crisis in the early spring of 1982, but members and supporters responded and finances seemed fairly stable for the next three years. Without Dalhousie's generous support, EAC may not have gained the necessary momentum and sense of purpose necessary to weather the financial storms to come.



Neil Livingston: Cape Breton film-maker of note, forestry activist and maple syrup producer.

Photo: Daily News



Anne Corbin worked at EAC in 1990-91 on a project dealing with household waste reduction and recycling. She served on the board from 1992-4 from her home in Queens County, NS. She now lives in Halifax.



# 1986-90: EAC Is The People Involved

By early 1986, EAC had moved from the Dalhousie campus to the Roy Building on Barrington Street, a more central location in terms of public access. Liz Archibald Calder was Coordinator of the Centre and Lesley Griffiths chaired the Board of Directors. John Buchanan was Premier of Nova Scotia.

What issues were important during this period? Herbicide and pesticide spraying and informed consent, Vision and Roundup, chlorine bleaching of pulp, monoculture woodlots, clearcutting, Boat Harbour - these were all forestry issues.

The Ship-To-Shore Garbage campaign, inshore vs. offshore fishing fleets, cod stock depletion, overfishing in general, impact of effluent on fisheries, harbour pollution in Sydney and Halifax - all these and more relate to the fisheries.

By the late 1980s, a host of difficult and complex political issues were of concern to environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) like EAC. They included:

- free trade and the environment;
- governmental discretion in requiring environmental assessments;
- whether stakeholder consultations such as the National Round Table on Environment and Economy and its Nova Scotian equivalent (NSRTEE) co-opted participants or were a realistic means of coming to consensus;
- government subsidy of big business and megaprojects;
- the time and dollar costs for ENGO intervenors in the environmental assessment process;



EAC's Auctioneer (shown here in 1987). The annual auctions began in 1980; John Dunsworth just gets better and better.



Meet the Press at a Green Plan Consultation, May 1990. (left to right) Roberta Bruce, Aaron Schneider, Lois Colbert, and Charlie Restino. EAC took an active part in the hearings. Photo: Brian Receveur

- the need to monitor and make submissions on legislation and regulations both provincially and nationally;
- report cards on governments;
- political parties and candidates at election time.

At this time, too, EAC was networking with ENGOS and others at all levels: municipally (the It's Not Garbage Coalition), provincially (Point Aconi and the Nova Scotia Environmental Network), regionally (the Atlantic and Maritime Environmental Networks and the fisheries), nationally (the Canadian Environmental Network and the fisheries, federal legislation), and internationally (the Environment and Development Coalition); with the Micmac (Kelly's Mountain) and the Innu (NATO low-level flights in Labrador); and with students and youth (e.g. the Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group).

For Nova Scotians (and EAC), the bad news items included the Sydney tarponds, the dirty dozen pesticides, VIA Rail emasculation (Use It And Still Lose It), and the Point Aconi environmental assessment farce. Metro Halifax continued to dump raw sewage into the harbour.

Internationally, Chernobyl goes critical in April '86 and a cloud of radiation disperses around the world; the catch-all, feel-good phrase "sustainable development" enters everyday discourse from the 1987 Brundtland Commission report Our Common Future; the Amazon burns and Chico Mendes is murdered; in March '89 the Exxon Valdez goes aground in Prince William Sound, Alaska. Preparations for UNCED 92, the Rio Conference on Environment and Development, begin.

There were some bright spots as well. Susan Holtz recommends protected areas within Nova Scotia in late 1986, EAC hosts Household Hazardous Waste Day in October 1988, Minas Basin is made a Shorebird Reserve in the fall of 1988, Sunship Earth becomes a City of Halifax program, Catherine Pross completes EAC library holdings bibliography, the NS Government and Micmac implement an interim agreement on hunting and trapping, the federal government defines "organic crops," December 1990 the federal government releases its Green Plan.



Over 600 Households participated in Metro's first Household Hazardous Waste Day in October, 1988. Mary Dwyer-Rigby, shown here at one of the six drop-off points, was the coordinator of the event.



# CRIS & LOIS

*A personal take on just two of the many dedicated co-ordinators who have guided EAC through its 25-year history...*

When EAC hired co-directors in the summer of 1987, they wanted two people to share a role that had become simply too big for one person. Cris Pekarik, EAC's Communications Officer, and Lois Corbett, a freelance journalist, were two people with strong analytical and communications skills who worked well together and sometimes referred to themselves as Cris-and-Lois. I'm sure

the provincial Department of the Environment has fond memories of these two ladies; they offered constructive criticism of government policy from the perspectives of social justice, respect for the ecosystem and just plain common sense. Cris and Lois weren't unique in this regard - these traits have prevailed among all the directors of EAC I have had the privilege of knowing.

I'd like to give you some idea of the personal side of Lois and Cris, because the public face is usually serious and critical - admirable traits in the role, but not particularly charming.

Charming definitely describes Lois Corbett. If Lois isn't smiling, she must be trying to figure something out. She is an easy-going New Brunswicker who listens to what you have to say and gives you the opportunity to say it. She will argue with you in a gentle way when she sees things differently, hoping

to lead the two of you to common ground. If you refuse to come to your senses on an important point, she will tell you clearly but diplomatically that you don't see eye to eye, a trait that I'm sure endears her to politicians, with whom she occasionally disagrees.

Lois likes reading, playing bridge - she is always looking for a fourth - doing the NY Times crossword puzzle, and the occasional beer. She is a proud Maritimer and a proud Canadian. When Lois lived on St. Margaret's Bay Road, she carried on the noble Maritime tradition of "there's always the couch if you need a place to crash."

Lois came from a farm household, and learned early to take what officialdom told her with a grain of salt. She tells the story of a spray program that included an assessment of the impact of spraying on the bird population. The scientists did a

count of birds in the trees before and after spraying. The impact was minimal - as long as you didn't count the birds lying on the ground.

Cris likes driving her motorbike fast and canoeing in the Atlantic (and Pacific) surf. When she moved to the Yukon she built a greenhouse - how else to get home-grown tomatoes? She likes music, dancing, literature and poetry, and returned to university after leaving EAC to pursue a masters/mistress degree in creative writing. Cris doesn't always smile, she is very serious about many things, but she has an infectious laugh and a joie de vivre which she is eager to share with others.

Kathryn Morse filled the role of co-director opposite Lois after Cris moved on. Kathryn's talents now show themselves in the role of reporter for the local CBC television news.

## Point Aconi: An Important EAC Campaign

Let me set the scene for one of the issues of the day, the Point Aconi Power plant.

Lucien Bouchard is federal environment minister, John Leefe the provincial minister. The federal government had proclaimed a new Environmental Protection Act in 1988; the province passed similar legislation in 1989. In December 1989, the federal court had ruled that the Environmental Assessment and Review Process Guidelines are no longer discretionary, but a law of general application and enforceable by the courts. Nova Scotia Power is still a public utility, and its major undertakings, such as a 165-megawatt power generating station, are thus subject to review by the Public Utilities Board.

At the time, and still today, global warming was a high-profile issue. Like most scientific issues, global warming is open to discussion among scientists, policy makers and others. That carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), along with methane and other gases, is a greenhouse gas, is well accepted. What is much less clear is the rate of warming and its short and long-term consequences.

A national campaign (The Heat Trap) was attempting to raise awareness of the need to decrease production of greenhouse gases such as CO<sub>2</sub>. The Canadian environment ministers had "encouraged" everyone to work towards a 20% reduction of 1988 levels of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, although they had not officially adopted this as a target.

The scene is set. Action! John Buchanan and the provincial legislature exempt the Point Aconi plant from a Public Utilities Board review. The province schedules only one day of hearings on Point Aconi, "pursuant to

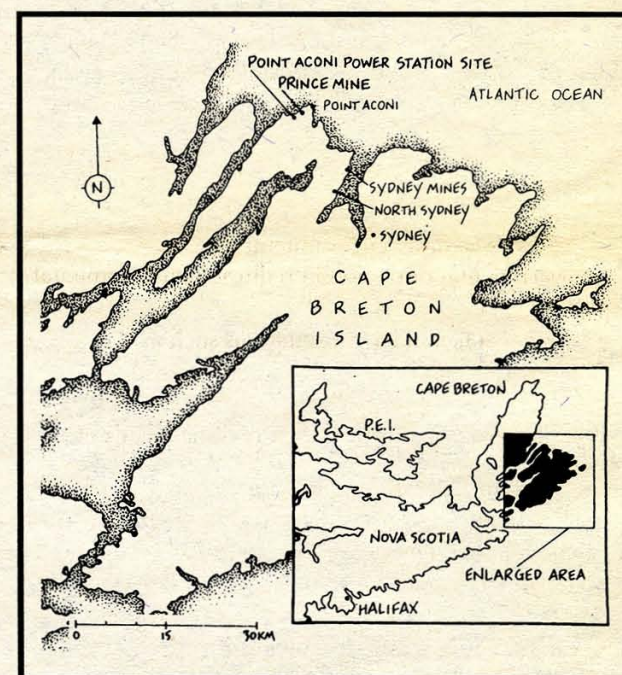
the Nova Scotia Environmental Assessment Act." NSPC calls for contractor tenders within days of the hearings, before the environmental assessment report is released to the public. The federal government decides that an internal review by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (which declares the impact of the project on fisheries habitat to be "insignificant or mitigable with known technology") is all the assessment it needs.

The federal situation is remarkable. Under federal law, the department deemed the most affected is the only department required to do an assessment. For example, there is no need to review the impact on the nearby Bird Islands (which are under consideration for an International - Biological Program), or to consider the effect of a coal-fired plant on national commitments to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

At Point Aconi, several residents' wells run dry following tests at the plant site. The completed plant is expected to consume 2200 litres of fresh water per minute when in operation.

EAC's submission to the Point Aconi hearing emphasizes conservation, the approach Ontario is following with great financial success. EAC also criticizes the limited scope of the environmental assessment process both provincially and federally, especially as regards the federal commitment to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

EAC, in concert with Greenpeace, the Cape Breton Coalition for Environmental Protection, and the Save Boularderie Island Society, take the federal government to court in December of 1990, demanding a federal environmental assessment of the project. They argue



that the federal government cannot shirk its broader responsibilities with such a limited review. By the time of the hearing, John Buchanan will be in the Senate, Lucien Bouchard will have resigned from cabinet and Robert de Cotret will be environment minister.

The environmental groups will lose the case and face substantial court costs. Lois Corbett will leave EAC, the loss weighing heavily on her shoulders. A special fundraising event, the Stars Recycle Quilt Lottery, will eventually pay the larger part of EAC's share of the court costs. Carl Sandburg said, "Tell him to be a fool every so often / and to have no shame over having been a fool / yet learning something over every folly." I don't mean to argue that EAC was foolish to take the government to court, rather the opposite. The question is: have we learned from the events?

*Mike Ruxton is a former EAC board member and a long-time contributor to Between the Issues.*



# 1991-96: Rebuilding and Ready

As a student looking for a summer job, I saw an advertisement at the local UI office:

## **ECOLOGY ACTION CENTRE LOOKING FOR CANVASSERS.**

I didn't know who or what Ecology Action Centre was, but the office at Veith House had deep wooden colours, friends from Oxfam (their office was down the hall), plants, posters, petitions and a flurry of activity. Howard Epstein, the unpaid coordinator, sat opening mail in one room, while EAC's Development Director, Mary Catherine LeVatte, coached a team of fifteen on the fine points of how to drum up membership (and money) at the door. I was hooked.

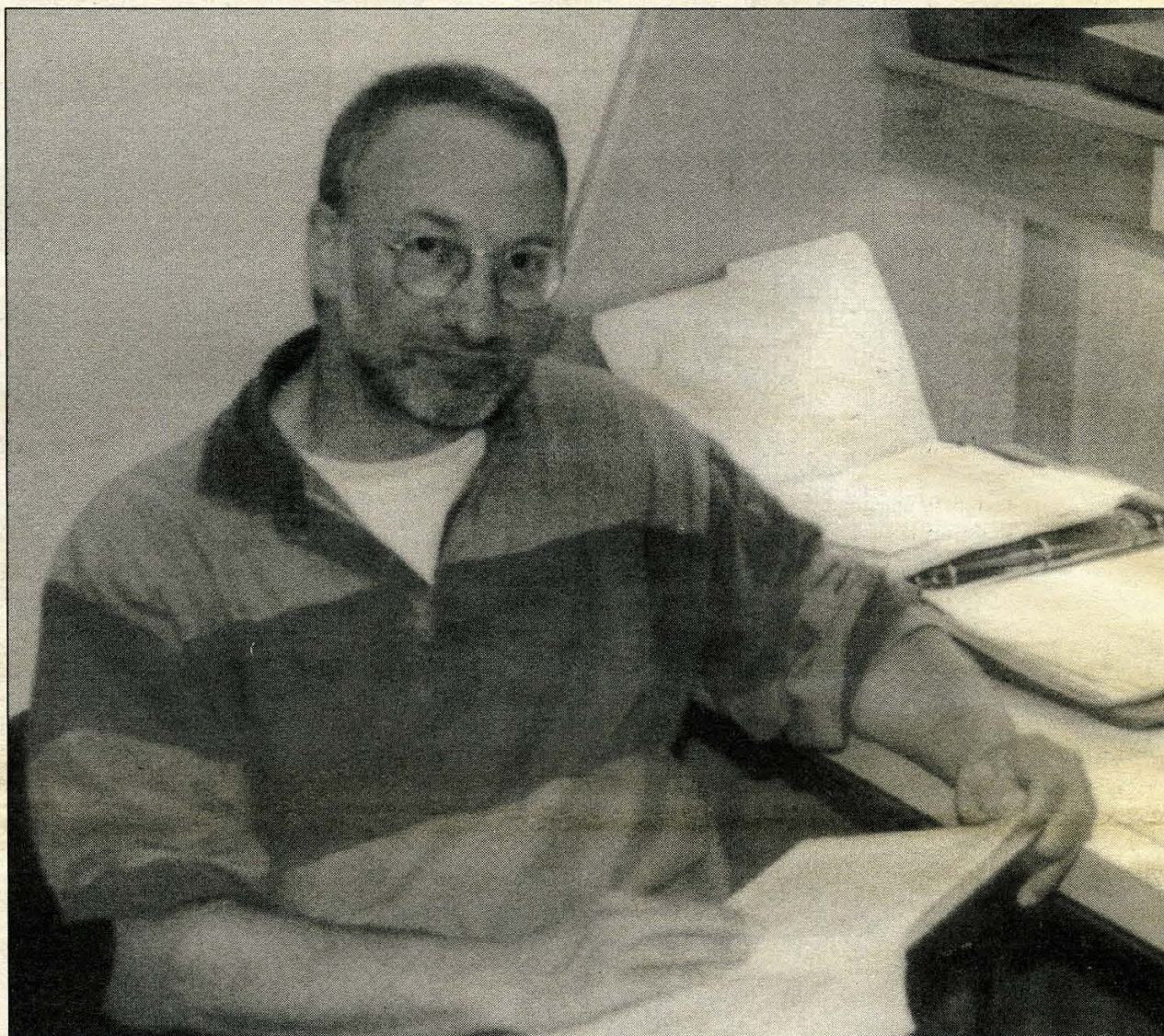
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At the beginning of the nineties, Lois Corbett left to pursue other environmental interests in Ontario. Dan O'Connor, a long-time colleague, has described Lois as "knowledgeable, ignorant, sophisticated, clumsy, naive about the way the world works, with a mature analysis of decision-making...that's Lois." EAC was saddened by her departure.

By 1991, EAC had lost the battle over the Point Aconi power plant, which was threatening Bird Island and the fishing community of Boularderie Island. A few trusted friends had launched a counter-attack at the powers that be. People like Allan Nicholson, Jimmy MacNeill, Bruno Marcocchio, Roberta Bruce and Neil Livingston had cooperated with environmental groups (see p.18) in demanding a full-scale environmental assessment of the project. Once again, EAC had grabbed national media attention in bringing the issue to the public, though at a cost of \$20,000 for court and lawyers that left EAC with a whopping debt. No matter the cost, EAC remains proud of the credible alternative voice it offered.

The early nineties were a turbulent time for the Ecology Action Centre. For a while, the possibility of incineration loomed over metro. EAC helped the residents of North Preston to protect their community from a landfill, and if the question in 1991 was "how to deal with garbage" (sound familiar?), then the city's answer looked absurd: *Let's Burn Everything* and *How 'bout we stick a sewage plant on McNab's Island*. Forgive the triteness, but these were the municipal solutions offered at the time. It is no wonder that EAC members fought and continue to fight for environmental stewardship in respect of solid-waste management. Imagine what could have happened without activist intervention.

Back in 1991, Dr. Paul Connet, a waste management guru, said, "No one can pretend that any solution to the trash is going to be simple or cheap. What is important is that we choose a solution which takes us in the right direction...we must start handling our discarded materials as if the future mattered." Hopefully, we (as citizens) and our leaders are finally getting the message. An entire edition of BTI could be devoted to Metro's political love of garbage; this article, however, has to cover five years in 1500 words.



**Howard Epstein - an active EAC supporter from the early days who continues to be involved today.**

Highlights for EAC in the '90s were due to the exhaustive efforts of people like David Wimberley and the "It's not Garbage Coalition." Justice Constance Glube must have felt some kinship with environmentalists when she rejected an attempt by the now-defunct Metropolitan Authority to have a lawsuit against them dropped by the Coalition of Citizens for a Charter Challenge (EAC, Greenpeace, and the Public Interest Research Group).

By 1992 Howard Epstein had become EAC's most contentious director and a media magnet because of his skill as an environmental educator. Howard had been a volunteer at EAC since 1973, and as director forged ahead on the Halifax Harbour issue and kept a close eye on the privatization of Nova Scotia Power. EAC was a member of the Metro Coalition, which received \$77,500 to initiate a provincial and federal assessment of the proposed harbour clean-up. Other members were the Halifax Field Naturalists, the It's Not Garbage Coalition, and the Friends of McNabs Island.

In 1993, Dr. Shirley Conover, Chair of the Environmental Assessment Review Panel, had this to say about the Metro Coalition: "The content and innovation that characterized these submissions are greatly appreciated

by the Panel, and in our view, represent a strong justification for this federal support program. It is worth noting that the Federal Environmental Assessment and Review office staff judges these submissions to be among the most comprehensive and informative Intervenor submissions seen to date under this program." These remarks made canvassing a lot easier - we were supporting the good work of folks like Alan Ruffman and Howard Epstein.

Along came the summer of 1993 and a train filled with radicals bound for British Columbia: EAC's own Mark Butler were on the rails! The protests over clearcutting in Clayquot Sound focused national (and international) attention on forestry issues out west, providing a chilling parallel to fisheries issues back home.

Pesticides and organic gardening were in vogue and EAC launched a very successful "Get Your Lawn Off Drugs" public education campaign, marking a new wave in environmental awareness. "Get Your Lawn Off Drugs" offered those who suffer from environmental sensitivities a forum, and simultaneously helped protect natural surroundings and play areas. People like Melanie Briand and Gwenda Wells brought the issue to the forefront of community



education as parents, teachers and other educators began to react to the detrimental effects of pesticides and the benefits of safe lawn care and gardening.

It's easy to be entirely swept away by issues, but it takes more than issues to run a non-profit organization. It takes members, volunteers, staff and of course money. If anything characterizes the '90s for EAC it is the sheer will and determination of the volunteers who organized the luncheons, quilts, auctions, membership drives, coupons, bird houses, Christmas trees, and many other fund-raising initiatives that have kept a roof over our heads. At times we almost lost our shirt—and it was close, believe me!

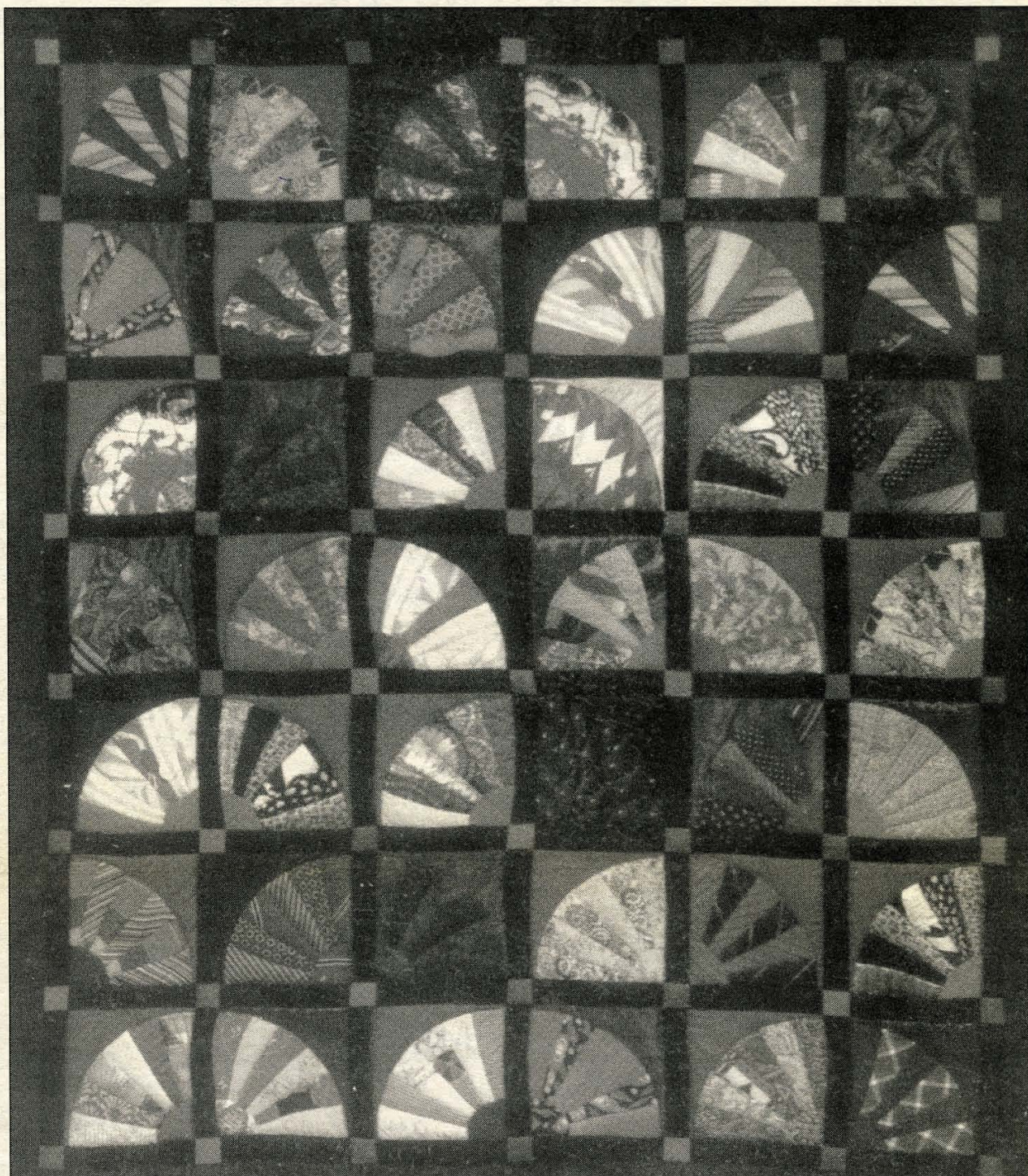
During 1994 and 1995, EAC went through a variety of administrative changes. Fund-raising remained a major focus of the organization. Between the Issues featured countless pleas for membership and equipment. We needed a new computer system, new printers and a photocopier. Even the answering machine looked as if it had been through a war. Years of worthy activism were being threatened by financial hardship as EAC struggled to stay afloat. It was getting harder and harder



**Veith House: Our out-of-the-way home for the late eighties and early nineties. Still many fond memories.**

for non-profit organizations to get government support - there were fewer grants and, as everyone in the environmental community knows, there were more groups asking than before.

It all pointed to one thing - the focus of the organization needed to shift. In keeping with the growing popularity of organic gardening, a more hands-on, community-based approach overshadowed traditional environmental activism. EAC attempted to meet people on a more one-to-one basis. In addition, individuals like Karen Hollett,



**Stars Recycle Quilt which helped the EAC get back on track in 1992. This quilt raised over \$15,000 for EAC.**

Fred Gale, Ronald Wood and Luke Pelot began rebuilding EAC's administrative structure. With a new board, a renewed sense of energy, an improved computer system, and an office downtown (after about five years at Veith House), EAC prepared to meet the mid-nineties.

Last year, EAC managed an environmental audit of the *Greening the Summit* initiative of the 1995 G7 Economic Summit; the *Garden Green Teams* were educating communities on organic gardening; and *Colour the City Greens* focused on teaching kids about natural areas. Coordinators - Gillian Mann and Chrystal Fuller were critical to the success of these projects.

By February of 1996, EAC was officially out of the red, due in part to the wonderful teamwork of fundraisers Wendy MacGregor (EAC's current co-chair), Lisa Bugden and Margaret Poole, as well as a whole host of dedicated board members, volunteers and devoted members. Sadly, EAC's membership remains lower than at almost any other point in our 25-year history.

### ***Toward the future***

For those of you who may feel that EAC has lost its teeth, keep your eyes on the Marine Issues Committee. A competent and noteworthy Nancy Shackell, Mark Butler and Martin Willison may have a few tricks over the summer, and when someone knocks on your door or you receive mail asking for support, please remember that EAC has a long and proud history of protecting this beautiful province. Take this as a challenge to let us know what you think, become a member of EAC, renew a membership and keep environmental activism alive for another quarter century in Nova Scotia.

**Happy Birthday, EAC!**  
Without you, we truly would be lost.

*Veronica Sherwood has been involved with EAC since 1992; she has worked as a volunteer, a staffer, and a board member. Veronica is a communications officer in the Adult Learning and Innovation Division of the Department of Education and Culture.*



# ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT CARD

by Martha Granatstein

G.H. Brundland High School  
M. Strong, Principal  
FOURTH ANNUAL RIO INTERIM REPORT  
Based on commitments made at the United Nations Conference  
Curriculum: Development, June 1992

PROVINCE	SUBJECT	GRADE
Newfoundland	Climate Change	
Nova Scotia	Biodiversity	F
	Climate Change	F
Prince Edward Island	Biodiversity	D-
	Toxics/Pollution	B
New Brunswick	Climate Change	F
	Biodiversity	D
Quebec	Climate Change	C
	Biodiversity	D+
Ontario	Climate Change	D
	Biodiversity	D+
Manitoba	Toxics/Pollution	C+
	Climate Change	B
Saskatchewan	Biodiversity	F
	Climate Change	D-
Alberta	Biodiversity	F
	Climate Change	F

The grades are in from the Sierra Club's Fourth Annual Rio Interim Report Card on the environment! Nova Scotia receives a failing grade for its efforts with toxic chemicals and pollution, to a somewhat better than average mark for its attempts to protect biodiversity. The report card rates Canada's provinces and territories in three areas: climate change, biodiversity, and toxics/pollution.

Here's how we rated:

## B for Biodiversity.

Nova Scotia has performed extremely well in the category of protected areas and rates an A. Following up on the 1993 announcement of an interim development moratorium at candidate sites, 31 sites now have protected status. This is 8% of our total land base, or 20% of provincial Crown land. To reach the target of 12% of total land base, more critically threatened ecosystems will need protection, including some among the 75% of privately owned land. The Sierra Club cites failure to protect Kluscap Mountain, lack of endangered species legislation, failure to protect biodiversity away from protected areas and in industrial forest practice, failure to renew the moratorium on uranium exploration, and failure to manage the inland fishery as contributing to a lowered rating of:

## F for Toxic Chemicals/Pollution

F is for failure - failure based on the provincial government's decision to opt for a "burial plan" for the Sydney Tar Ponds and failure to go through the public environmental assessment process. Calling the Sydney Tar Ponds a "huge toxic nightmare" comes as no surprise to most Nova Scotians. The Sierra Club cites the governments unwillingness to address the issue through a public environmental assessment process as cause for the waste of million of dollars and years of time. The time wasted has had uncalculated impacts on the lives of the families in the area. And the end is not in sight! The Nova Scotia government is expected to take up to a year to register the current plan with the federal environment assessment agency, after which it is likely to be scrapped, and finally followed by a public environmental assessment. The costs to the taxpayer, the environment and public health by taking short cuts with environmental assessment cannot be overstated.

## D- for Climate Change

Nova Scotia Power's increased emissions (up 4% from 1990 to 1994) from electricity generation, the probability of further increases due to its marketing of electricity for home heating, and its production of a children's comic book were all given a failing grade. In the comic book, Louie the Lightning Bug feeds children propaganda such as: "stacks are built high enough to carry emissions safely away from local areas". Is Louie really saying that emissions are not a problem if they are blown over our neighbour's area and not our own? Not only does it diminish the reality of pollution, it does not feature

alternative energy sources, such as wind or solar. To its credit, the Bay of Fundy tidal power station is featured. The second factor in this rating, offshore natural gas at Sable Island may give NSP access to a lower carbon fuel for energy production and displace oil or coal consumption. However, when exported to the USA, it may, in fact, increase overall energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, particularly if used to displace nuclear production in Maine. Distribution of natural gas for home heating is unlikely to be considered cost-effective for Nova Scotia. The final factor in this "D" rating is increased transportation emissions, up 91 kilotonnes over 1990, and likely increasing as a result of highway expansion.

# Be a Friend of Beauty...



If you visit the Public Gardens either to enjoy its beauty and order, read a book, or fatten up the ducks why not contact a group which cherishes the Gardens. The Friends of the Public Gardens was incorporated as a society in 1984 and is dedicated to the preservation, enhancement, and protection of the Public Gardens for the continued enjoyment of everyone.

One of the current endeavours of the Friends is to ensure that the restoration of the Hall (canteen) goes ahead. Approximately \$70,000 has been set aside in the capital budget of the Halifax Regional Municipality to begin this process.

The Halifax Public Gardens is one of the finest remaining public Victorian Gardens in North America. The Gardens were officially opened in 1867 and designated as National Historic Site in 1984.

Membership in the The Friends of the Public Gardens is available by sending a cheque for \$10 to our postal address. Members receive periodic newsletters and invitations to public lectures and the annual general meeting.

For more information call: Deborah Post at 479-0228, or write P.O. Box 3544, Parklane Centre, Halifax, B3J 3J2.



# Brooks on Books

To an astonishing degree, evolution has conserved through hundreds of millions of years a basic strategy in vertebrates for embryonic development that is dependent on hormones.

Our Stolen Future is the result of a collaboration between two zoologists and an environmental journalist, and to judge from the many references to *Silent Spring*, the authors wish to continue from where Rachel Carson left off. They demonstrate that very little has changed in the last thirty years - we are still bombarding all living creatures with a huge assortment of chemicals.

*We have all grown up afraid of cancer - the big C, the yardstick by which a substance is usually considered dangerous - but Our Stolen Future discusses a very different threat, a threat that may change the very nature of our being, making us more stupid and more violent...*

We have all grown up afraid of cancer - the big C, the yardstick by which a substance is usually considered dangerous - but *Our Stolen Future* discusses a very different threat, a threat that may change the very nature of our being, making us more stupid and more violent.

Drawing on a wide range of sources, the book documents the effects of estrogen-mimicking chemicals. It discusses some pretty disturbing animal studies - from the alligators in Lake Apopka, with their shrunken penises, to female gulls in the Great Lakes region which nest with other female gulls, instead of with males. The authors use the DES scandal of the '50s to illustrate how the human body can mistake a man-made chemical for a hormone. DES (diethylstilbestrol) was prescribed for many women as a preven-

## OUR STOLEN FUTURE: Are We Threatening Our Fertility, Intelligence, and Survival? A Scientific Detective Story

By Theo Colborn, Dianne Dumanoski,  
and John Peterson Myers

Dutton, Penguin Group, 294 pp, \$34.95

Reviewed by Lynn Brooks

tive measure against miscarriage; at one point company ads even boasted that the drug produced "bigger and stronger babies." The babies displayed no obvious abnormality at birth, as did thalidomide victims, but while still in their teens, many of the girl children developed an extremely rare form of vaginal cancer almost never seen in women under 50. The sons of these mothers were not immune; they displayed fertility problems and greater rates of testicular cancer.

Another frightening discovery was made by two breast cancer researchers. They found that a chemical was leaching from the plastic caps on test tubes containing breast-cell cultures and causing the cultures to grow. The chemical, p-nonylphenol, is added to polystyrene and polyvinyl chloride (PVC) to make the plastics more stable and less breakable. It is everywhere, from pesticides to personal-care products.

The possibilities are frightening. According to the authors, several European countries are moving to ban this group of chemicals in household cleaners because of the toxicity to aquatic life.

The chemical age has created products, institutions and cultural attitudes that require synthetic chemicals to sustain them.

The authors feel the greatest damage is being inflicted on the unborn and the young. Chemicals that have little effect on adults can cause serious and permanent

damage to a baby during its rapid prenatal development. In studies on mouse pups, tiny shifts in hormone levels had a significant impact; the exact timing of the exposure was critical.

Nevertheless, I had problems with some

*Chemicals that have little effect on adults can cause serious and permanent damage to a baby during its rapid prenatal development. In studies on mouse pups, tiny shifts in hormone levels had a significant impact; the exact timing of the exposure was critical.*

of the conclusions. Even with my rudimentary scientific knowledge, I felt the case made for hormone imbalance as a cause of declining sperm counts, declining school test scores, and hyperactivity in children was an interesting theory, but too easy an answer. There are many social factors - from tight jeans to television - that could have a role in these problems. To make the connection from mouse pups to out-of-control kids was just too much of a leap for me.

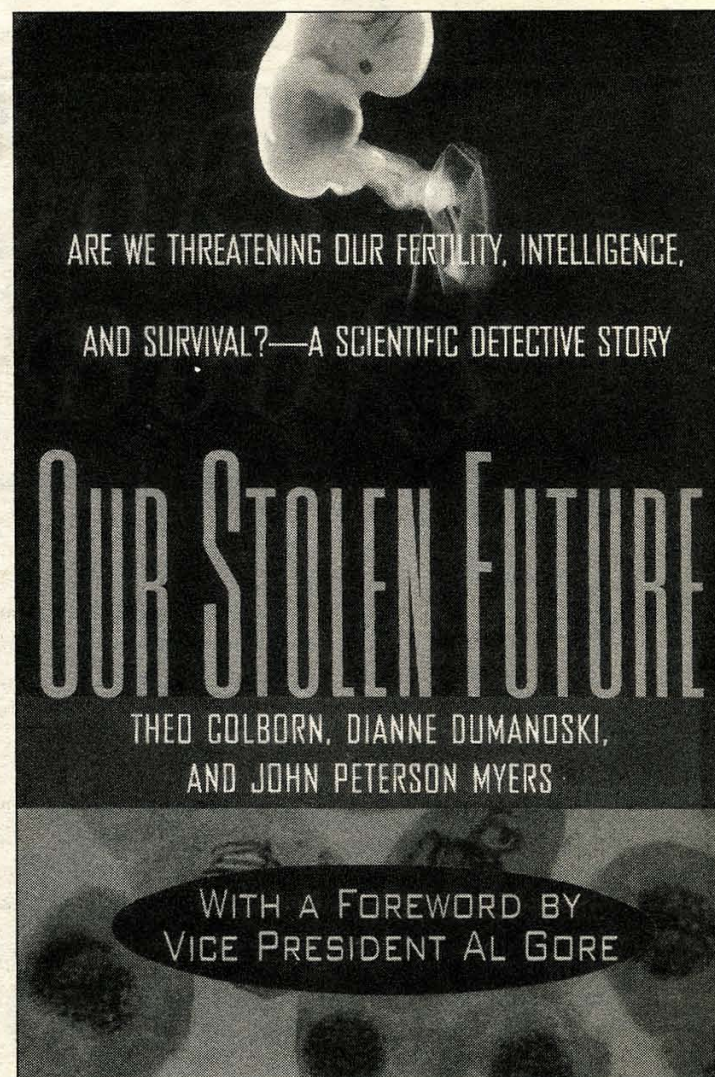
I also had problems with the way the book was written.

In some passages the authors seem to be aiming at a mass-market audience, but then the next chapter tells the reader more than anyone other than a mouse researcher would ever want to know about the importance of position in the womb to the social behavior of mice.

This is not a great book, but it certainly raises some interesting and disturbing questions. The authors also offer up some solutions; one of the best is the following:

*"Shift the burden of proof to chemical manufacturers. To a disturbing degree, the current system assumes that chemicals are innocent until proven guilty. This is wrong. The burden of proof should work the opposite way. Because of the current approach, a presumption of innocence has time and again made people sick and damaged ecosystems."*

Whether the authors prove to be prophets of the greatest change in human evolution in the shortest period of time remains to be seen. It is interesting to remember, however, that thirty years ago, Rachel Carson was dismissed as an alarmist and a poor scientist, yet everything she foretold in *Silent Spring* has turned out to be true.





# Ecobriefs . . .

by June Hall and Mike Ruxton

## **An Ailing Continent**

The most comprehensive assessment ever conducted of Europe's environment highlights serious environmental degradation in many countries, especially in states of the former Soviet Union. The report, *Europe's Environment: The Dobris Assessment*, was prepared by the European Environmental Agency and the European Commission in cooperation with United Nations agencies, individual European countries, and other agencies.

Major findings of the report include:

- Urban air quality is a continuing problem. Concentrations of sulphur dioxide, particulates and lead are declining, but nitrogen oxides and tropospheric ozone are not. If excessive acid deposition is to be prevented in highly populated and industrialized regions, emission levels of sulphur and nitrogen oxides must be reduced by 90% and ammonia by 50%.
- The European Union standard for total pesticides (0.5 micrograms/L) is exceeded in soil water in 60-75% of agricultural land. River and lake eutrophication caused by excess phosphorus and nitrogen from agricultural, domestic, and industrial effluents is a pan-European problem of major concern.
- Except for the northern seas, areas of all European seas are facing eutrophication problems, with related adverse effects such as algal blooms. Contamination - by organic micropollutants affects fauna in almost all Europe's seas. Concentrations of DDT and PCBs in fish are 3-10 times higher in the Baltic than in the North Atlantic.
- Soil erosion is increasing, affecting an estimated 115 million hectares and causing water pollution and a significant loss of fertility. Critical values for acidification are estimated to be exceeded in about 75 million hectares of Europe's forest soils.
- Forests once covered 80-90% of Europe's territory; they now account for 33% of land cover. Extinction threatens 53% of fish, 45% of reptiles, 42% of mammals, and 30% of amphibians in Europe.

Despite the wide-ranging data in the report, its policy recommendations are vague and its distribution to date is limited. It is currently available only in English, although there are plans to translate it into 26 languages. A summary of the assessment is available on the WWW at <<http://www.eea.dk/products/reports>>.

*Environmental Science & Technology*, v.30 no.4, 1996

## **Oily Birds**

In an article in the April issue of *Ibis*, ornithologist Brian Sharp describes what happens to birds that are rescued, cleaned and released after oil spills. His findings are grim. Guillemots, for example, have survived for an average of only 9.6 days; without the oil, we would expect them to live 20 to 100 times longer.

Although cleaning methods have improved greatly in recent years, so that a high percentage of cleaned birds recover enough to be returned to the wild, long-term survival, the real measure of "success," thus remains in doubt.

*New Scientist*, 9 Mar 1996

## **Piping Plovers**

In 1986 a survey of beaches from Maine to South Carolina found only 547 breeding pairs of the piping plover, and the Atlantic Coast population of the species was listed as threatened under the US Endangered Species Act. Since then, the status of the bird in most states has changed little.

Massachusetts, however, embarked on a draconian series of measures, including closing beaches to off-road vehicles during the plover's nesting period. As a result, the little bird has made a spectacular recovery. The number of nesting pairs in the state has more than tripled since 1986 (to 447), and the average number of chicks fledged per plover has almost doubled (to 1.8 in 1994).

The recovery team aims for a self-sustaining population of 2,000 pairs, but this may not be possible. Federal and state officials were planning this spring to issue permits to landowners that would allow increased recreational use of the beaches.

[Dr. Ian McLaren, of Dalhousie University, says that there has been no such recovery in Nova Scotia, although beach closures in the early summer months in provincial parks and the Kedji Adjunct are helping.]

*Audubon*, March-April 1996

## **Acid Rain's Legacy**

Scientists in the United States have analyzed data going back over 30 years to uncover a likely reason why forests, lakes and streams are not recovering from acid rain as quickly as expected.

Gene Likens, Donald Buso and Charles Driscoll report that over the years, acid rain has leached from the soil vast quantities of the base mineral ions (e.g., calcium and magnesium) that neutralize acids and are essential to plant growth. While calcium loss has slowed in recent years, rock weathering won't replenish the pool of available calcium any time soon, and it could be many decades before the acid-

ravaged ecosystems recover, even if the Clean Air Act is strengthened.

The paper provides a solid base of long-term data that fits well with other observations and helps to confirm what many scientists have suspected for some time.

*Science*, 12 April 1996

## **Biotech Maize**

It appears likely that Swiss-based multinational Ciba-Geigy will not be allowed to sell, in Europe, a genetically engineered crop plant that has already been cleared for sale in Canada and the US.

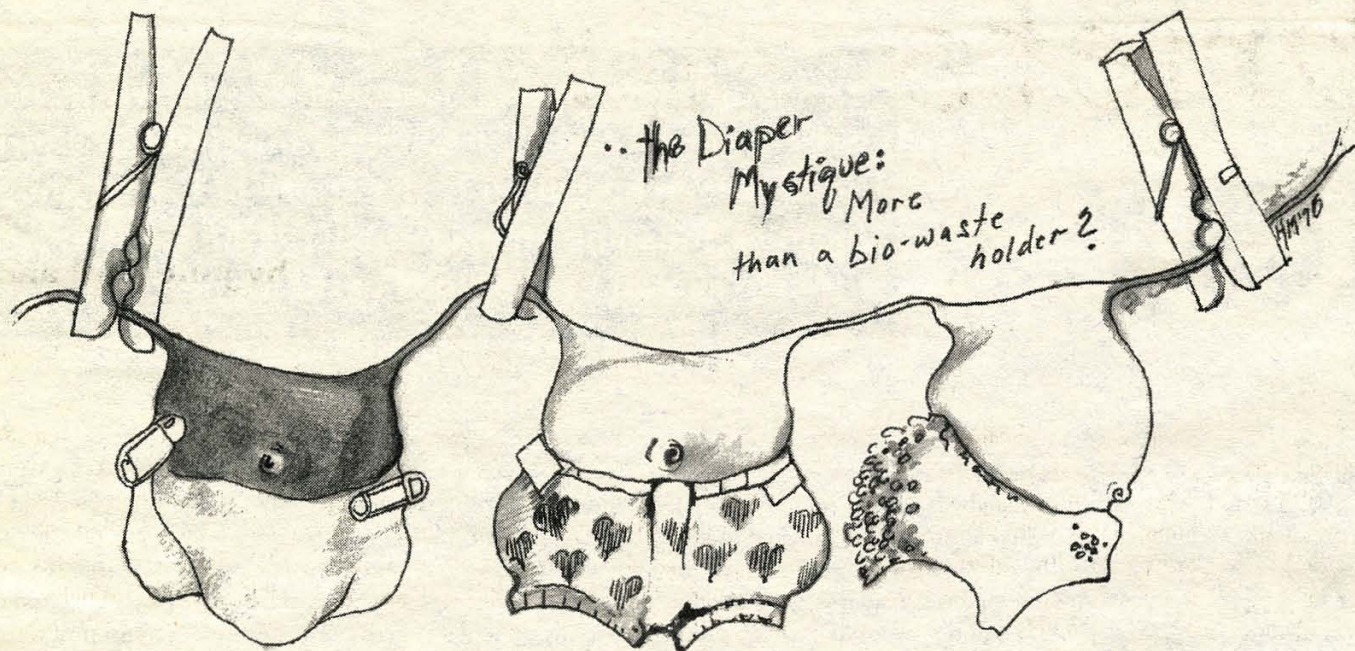
The maize variety in question carries a bacterial gene capable of protecting it from the European corn borer, and a gene that makes the plant resistant to glufosinate-ammonium, a herbicide sold by Ciba. The main objection to the new variety is that it also carries a gene that makes it resistant to ampicillin, an antibiotic used to treat infections in both people and animals.

In June, European Union environment ministers postponed their decision, but they revealed how they would have voted - 13 against and one abstention. Biotech-



ACID RAIN IN THE 90's.





nology companies are complaining that EU regulations governing genetically engineered products are too strict.

*New Scientist*, 4 May and 6 July 1996

### Deep, Cold, Dark and Old

Since 1990, an international team of scientists has been drilling through the ice at Russia's Vostok Station in Antarctica. Early this year, they reached a depth of 3,348 metres, equivalent to almost 400,000 years of ice accumulation. This is the latest and deepest of the ice cores obtained at this station; the team hopes to unlock fresh secrets about how the Earth's climate works.

Under the ice is a big surprise — an enormous, freshwater lake which is 200 km long, covers an area of 14,000 km<sup>2</sup> and is up to 500 m deep. About 70 smaller water bodies are known to exist under the Antarctic ice sheet, and they may be a unique habitat for ancient microorganisms. Extreme care will have to be taken if scientists are ever to study these lakes — the potential for contamination is enormous.

*Nature*, 20 June 1996; *Science News*, June 1, 1996

### Recycling Diapers

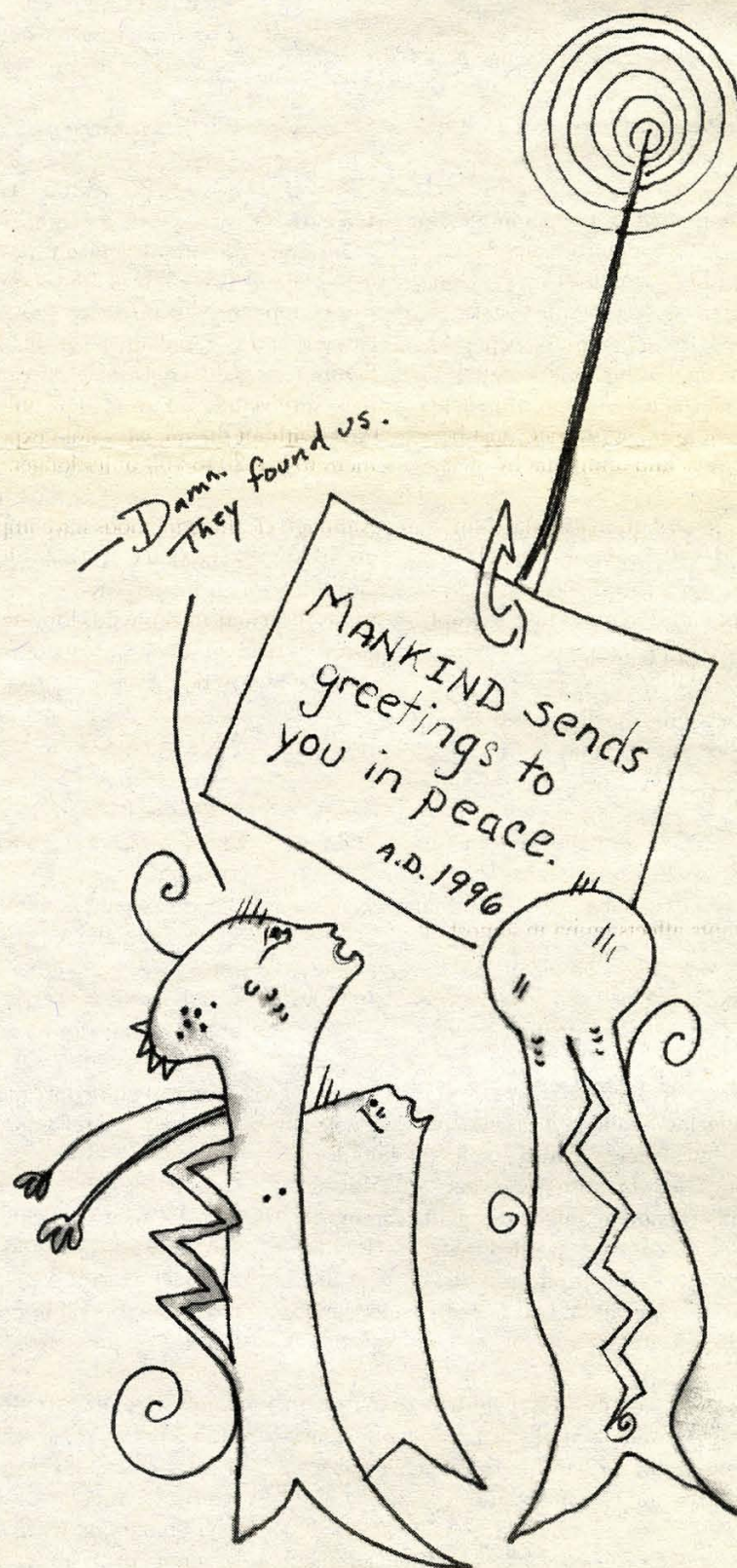
In July, Toronto began weekly doorstep collection of disposable diapers from 1100 homes; the city already collects 100,000 diapers a month from its 200 daycare centres and 12 recycling centres. If the experiment in home collection is successful, the city could soon be diverting as many as 100 million diapers a year from its landfills and saving an estimated \$300,000 in landfill costs.

A local company, Knowaste Technologies, pulps the diapers, screens out any plastic, and washes the remaining slurry. Chemicals are used to remove the absorbent gel, and the pulp is washed again and pressed to remove most of the water. About 90 per cent of the recycled material is long-fibre wood pulp, which is sought after by the paper industry and fetches between \$400 and \$800 a tonne. The separated plastic is sold for use in absorbent pads used to clean up oil spills, while the recycled gel may find use as a soil improver (agricultural trials are under way).

Toronto was forced to stop collecting grass clippings because of complaints about the smell of the composting centre, but similar problems are not anticipated with diapers.

There are critics. The Women's Environmental Network is calling on people to stop using disposable diapers altogether.

*New Scientist*, 6 July 1996





# **oikos**

by sean kelly

The words ecology and economics derive from the same Greek word - oikos - meaning household or home. Ecology (logos meaning study) is the study of home, and economics (nomics meaning management) is home management. So, the two should be flip sides of the same coin...

## **The Green Sales Tax**

Here's a real alternative to the GST - the "Green Sales Tax."

There are only two things certain in life, the saying goes, death and taxes.

While there isn't much we can do about death, many Canadians are determined to do something about taxes. Newspapers are filled with stories of tax revolts, exposés of wasted taxes, political promises to slash taxes, arguments that corporate taxes are either too high or way too low, and on and on.

The Goods and Services Tax seems especially despised. The federal Liberal party won the last national election in part by promising to either abolish or replace the GST, depending on whether you ask Shiela Copps or Prime Minister Jean Chretien.

The GST is being replaced in stages across Canada with a combined national and provincial sales tax. Nova Scotia was one of the first provinces to buy into the concept, but it hasn't been without controversy. The Nova Scotia government claims the new 15 percent blended sales tax will not take more out of the wallets of Nova Scotians, while the opposition thinks otherwise.

So how about something completely different - an alternative tax that doesn't cost citizens any more than they already spend, yet helps the environment.

Green economists and many environmentalists have long advocated replacing established tax systems with green or 'eco-taxes'. In essence, the idea is to tax pollution and the use of non-renewable resources while NOT taxing environmentally friendly manufacturing, the careful use of renewable resources, and recycled materials. By the time goods and services get to market, the ecologically sustainable product has a lower sticker price and is more attractive to the consumer.

Eventually, the costs of non-renewable resources and energy, and harmful methods of production would be more expensive than such things as solar energy, sustainable forestry and organic methods of agriculture.

As it is now, the toll our economy takes on the environment

is rarely reflected in the prices we pay, which place an artificially low value on non-renewable natural resources. When a resource is exploited to near exhaustion (as in the case of Atlantic cod) this loss does not register in the economic equation. The mainstream marketplace also ignores 'external costs' of production to the air, the water and the soil; for example, the cost to the environment - and to a healthy society - of toxic effluent running into a river, or of the air pollution that results from transporting a product half-way around the world.

But are these 'eco-tax' ideas politically feasible?

Taxes serve several basic functions. Obviously, they raise money for government coffers for operations, defense, the many (but diminishing) social programs, etc. Taxes - sometimes - reduce the gap between rich and poor Canadians, and can be used to discourage harmful practices such as smoking.

Taxes also send a message to the marketplace. Green taxes could be designed to ensure larger economic policies favour products that sustain our ecosystems. Tax burdens and tax breaks would provide environmentally-sound signals and incentives to the market, making prices more closely reflect true environmental costs. Our economy is about more than profit maximization; it should provide meaningful jobs, contribute to a better society, sustainably use our natural resources, and reduce (and ideally eliminate) waste and pollution.

In an example from South of the border, the chairwoman of the House Tax Committee in the Minnesota state legislature has introduced legislation that would tax carbon emissions from the burning of fossil fuel, a major cause of pollution contributing to problems such as acid rain. The bill would phase in a tax on carbon emissions over five years; however, renewable energy sources such as wind, hydro and ethanol would be exempted from the taxation. Nuclear power would be taxed at the same rate as the average for all non-nuclear electricity — although it doesn't generate carbon emissions, it does generate pollution in the form of radioactive wastes, which must be stored and safeguarded for hundreds of years.

Calling the bill "visionary," State Representative Ann Rest says roughly half of the revenue raised by the bill would be used to lower property taxes, with the balance going toward a payroll tax rebate. Lower payroll taxes will hopefully spur businesses to increase the size of their workforce.

Some argue that like the GST, eco-taxes are regressive, hitting poor people relatively harder than the rich. It is true that overall, prices would likely go up. Presently, costs such as pollution are externalized (paid for by the environment or, when things get really bad, cleaned up by government using our tax dollars), creating an arti-

cially low price that only looks like a bargain to the consumer.

Often, the environmental product is more expensive, requiring more investment in environmental technologies, ecosystem stewardship and product design than the cheap throw-away merchandise. But with the introduction of eco-taxes, the internalized costs of this style of production would make this eco-friendly product relatively competitive. To counteract the negative effects of this inflation, an eco-tax system should probably be linked to greater progressivity in the overall tax system.

At the very least, these new taxes should be revenue-neutral: given the current social context, suggesting higher taxes would be political suicide. As environmental taxes go up, income taxes (particularly in lower and middle classes) go down. There isn't a real change in income, only a shift in expenditures.

One of the most 'marketable' aspects of eco-taxes is that they can be avoided! For the consumer, purchasing products made from recycled materials means you don't pay the tax, and you save money. Similarly, the more efficient a company becomes by reducing non-renewable inputs through reuse and recycling, the more it reduces pollution, and the more it relies on renewable sources of energy, the more money it saves on taxes. These savings can be passed on to the consumer, and lower prices at the cash register makes your product more enticing.

As Jonathan Rowe of U.S. based "Redefining Progress" says, "Green taxes are the only taxes where tax avoidance would be both legal and encouraged!"

Shifting our tax systems towards sustainability won't be easy. Suddenly adding new taxes could create a cascade of new political problems, as targeted sectors are forced to change. The taxes would most likely be hidden in the price tag, not paid as one 'green tax' at the case register; a product could be made of both renewable and non-renewable resources, and produced in either a benign or harmful way. And in an era of cross-border shopping, it will be important to have most or all provinces — i.e., Canada — adopt this green vision.

But as government at both provincial and federal levels struggle to create a new national sales tax, environmentalists have a window of opportunity to promote eco-taxes, and let in air that much cleaner.

Sean Kelly is a freelance writer and editor of the *Sustainable Times*, published by CUSO.



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### Other ways to contact us if no one is in:

telephone 429 - 2202

fax 422 - 6410

e-mail ip-eac@ccn.cs.dal.ca

# Annual General Meeting



The Annual General Meeting of EAC, held June 1, 1996, said farewell to the outgoing board members and welcomed the new board members. Although we will miss those who are leaving, we are very excited about the varied skills, dynamic energy and fresh ideas of the incoming board.

Our farewell to EAC's Granville Street location and relocation to Blowers and Argyle on June 15 provided an opportunity to draw media attention to the demolition of EAC's quarters in the Wallace Building (to make way for a parking garage). Addressing such environment and development issues which do not receive the attention they deserve can help to attract new and lapsed members to EAC. Mark Butler suggested a target of 1000 members, pointing out that a strong membership reduces reliance on government and corporate funding. An active membership also allows EAC to reach a wider audience and conversely allows more people to have input into the direction and work of EAC.

The internal organization of EAC has been strengthened by the hiring of a very capable office administrator, Lynn Brooks. Our volunteer work force has been introduced to EAC through orientation sessions intended to identify volunteer interests and channel volunteers to committees with similar interests. Our library continues to add to its collection to fulfill public inquiries for environmental information. Four editions of *Between the Issues* were published since the last AGM. This magazine continues to be our primary means of communication with members, and the public. EAC closed the year in a healthy financial position, primarily the result of fundraising events such as the Gala held February 3, 1996, and Christmas tree sales at the Farmers' Market. The Gala dinner and auction netted EAC \$9,034.

EAC's commitment to advocacy, education and community action is effected through a number of committees and projects. The Garden Green Teams and Discover the City Greens projects achieved modest, but appreciable results in the community, and valuable experience for EAC in community development. The former, six-month project was designed to train a network of people in techniques to reduce the use of toxic chemicals for lawn and garden care. They would then be responsible for working with households in their community to make the transition to organic lawn and garden care. Happily, this project has been carried over to a new project called the Edible Commons.

The Marine Issues Committee organized a week of ocean events for all ages at the Biology Department, Dalhousie University. The Committee's future plans include a campaign aimed at ensuring that the Canadian government adheres to its own credo of "Conservation First" with respect to fisheries and other marine issues. The committee hopes to work closely with other environmental groups in Atlantic Canada, fisheries groups, and native organizations.

The Policy Committee met with staff of the Regional Municipality of Halifax and other environmental NGOs on the greening of the amalgamation. A report is forthcoming.

This committee also participated in the scoping session for the raising of the Irving Whale, development and projection of offshore gas and oil from Sable Island, and submitted reports to the Westray Inquiry and Utilities Review Board hearing on NSP's request for a rate increase. They continue to monitor environmental impact assessment reports, remain involved with the Integrated Resource Management Process and the uranium issue.

by Martha Granatstein





# Celebrate EAC's 25th Anniversary!

Come to a Birthday Party  
Saturday October 5th, at 2pm  
at the Garrison Grounds in Halifax  
Food, Music and Friends.

If you are a past, present or future member of EAC ...

## **YOU'RE INVITED**

Hope to see you there!