



greenpeace



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In recent years we have been bombarded with a great deal of information about the ecological catastrophe that the world is heading towards. We now know about our population increasing by 72 millions each year; about persistent use of DDT that kills birds and fish and will continue to do so for years even after we finally decide to ban its use completely; about industrial and urban refuse turning rivers and whole lakes into open sewers, now threatening even the oceans; and as natural resources dry up we can watch the mad scramble to find more, encroaching upon our National Parks, the sea-beds and valuable farm lands.

A recent doomsday prediction, from the Club of Rome, gave "civilisation" only 100 years before total collapse. All such predictions have been accompanied by demands for a radical change in our approach to industrial growth, population, agriculture and other basics of life style. The present-day crises are, in fact, relatively minor warnings of a greater catastrophe ahead. . . . But what can we do?

Near to the heart of the matter is the question of "growth". Throughout the world we talk of it, and strive for it. Yet clearly, infinite growth cannot be sustained by finite resources. Even if Britain, for example, were to bring an immediate halt to any increase in its standard of living, there would not be enough

resources to ever allow the developing world to reach the same standard. We must add to this the fact that today's technology has as its most important end result, more and more pollution and destruction of the environment.

But when we talk of our local environment, we must also bear in mind that in many ways there is only one environment—what happens to a part, affects the whole. Poisonous substances such as mercury, lead and DDT, which penetrate the food chain, have been found in fish and birds far removed from the origins of the poisons; industrial smog from Britain affects the countryside of southern Sweden; the extinction of an animal species and the resultant break in the ecological cycle on a distant continent; supplies the furrlers on our High Street.

A major part of the solution must therefore lie in the day to day life style of each individual. For example, we all accept too easily the "necessity" to define ourselves by what we possess: the size and colour of a TV screen, the range of kitchen gadgets, the virility symbol of a car, the latest fashions in clothes. On a larger scale, developing nations accept that they must define themselves by the size of their military parades and hardware. But the things of the TV commercial and the military overkill are not the things of Life—they are in a very real sense anti-Life.

If to ensure our future is to be selfish, then that is basically what we have to be—self and Life affirming.

We cannot depend on governments to make anything more than occasional token gestures. We haven't the time to wait for "The Revolution" to come and solve the problem. We must not look to technology to tackle its own pollution problems—by making anti-pollution machines. We cannot leave it to the next generation to deal with, for even if we could stand their curses in our old age, we really do not have that long.

What we can do is to start acting for ourselves in our everyday lives and start developing our understanding of what has to be achieved. The major destroyers of the environment depend upon our support for their continued existence, whether they are the makers of non-returnable bottles or non-returnable fall-out. We can learn to criticise and then to oppose the social myths of "growth", "progress" and "development"—to end the "I want" needless consumption where need equals greed. This is something that must be done by us, the affluent. It's no use telling the poor to lower their sights. They will justifiably retort "How can you expect us to reject what you taught us to seek and what we've never had?" It is the affluent who must show by example and who must re-create non-destructive standards.

We can bring this into our everyday lives now. Rather than just a rejection of the state of affairs as they exist, we have to start taking the future into our own hands. More and more people are moving in this direction. It is not of course enough to concentrate on putting our own house in order while neglecting direct action against the larger political/business concerns. These continue to destroy our environment in many ways, from concrete swatches of motorway madness to mercury discharges in our waterways, and they must be confronted. In other words, personal action should inevitably lead to local community action. The bureaucracies of organisation will break down to a human scale once again, the Community will re-assume greater importance than the State, husbandry will replace industry, and craftsmanship, mass manufacture. As we lose the idea that Man must assert domination over Nature, we will forget that man used to dominate over man.

The following ideas concentrate on the simple nonviolent tactic of daily withdrawing support from that which destroys Life. It is by no means a complete list and deals mainly with personal action rather than larger-scale social/political action. All are doors to further action and greater awareness but they are not rules to prove a radical commitment, merely a direction. They must be added to and developed. As you discover new alternatives, big or small, please share them with people and help each other change the course that the world is presently on.



you and your environment— a new way of life

★ It's time to cultivate an awareness of ourselves, not merely as skinbound individuals threatened by the rest of the world but as integral parts of the entire planet inseparable from every other biological and geological process.

★ The population explosion is your baby. If you have to have more than two children, then adopt them. It has been estimated that a child born in Britain will, on average, consume during her or his lifetime at least 20 times as much as one born in India and contribute 50 times as much pollution to the environment. In ecological terms therefore the developed countries are the most dangerously overpopulated. Help all efforts at disseminating birth control information at home, in the streets, in schools. Support campaigns for better birth control methods—especially for men.

★ Stop smoking—an important personal commitment to stop polluting your own body, not to mention the air for others. Also a great deal of good land is wasted in the growing of tobacco.

★ Discover ways to stop using cars, or at least to cut their use to an absolute minimum. Change right

away to a much greater use of bicycles. If you find yourself being choked and poisoned by car fumes in the city, wear a gas mask occasionally as a practical protest; do this with lots of people for an anti-car demonstration. Try walking more. If you still need a car never use it just for one person, always share. If the Car God could be effectively challenged, the result in terms of human sacrifice, air pollution and oil resources would improve many areas of human existence.

★ As an interim stage encourage the development of a free, and greater use of the existing, public transport. But remember that although trains use 1/10th and buses 1/5th the fuel that cars do, they still cause a great deal of waste and pollution. What is really needed is a move towards much more local living and production, a demystification of the ideal of mechanical movement for its own sake, and a return to a slower speed of life.

★ Work to get cars banned from residential streets. Turn them into play and rest areas for the people living there instead of brain-damaging lead poison zones. Traffic-free shopping areas are also important. Help noise abatement groups in their work against excessive traffic noise.

★ If you eat plant matter direct it gives the maximum amount of energy and nutrients, but if it is first eaten by an animal and you then eat that animal, its flesh will provide much less food than the plant matter that fattened it. (eg a cow needs 21 lbs of protein to produce 1 lb of protein for human consumption.)

Also, a very large proportion of our meat is now produced in factory farms. In 1970 over 300 million broiler chickens were produced in machines and now battery cages for pigs and rabbits are being introduced. Nearly all veal is produced in this horrible fashion. Help campaign to end this. Eat less meat. Become a vegetarian.

"You are what you eat" is probably a better maxim to live from than "You are what you possess".

★ Grow your own food and avoid the use of artificial fertilisers. Start a compost heap for kitchen and organic wastes. Rather than weighing down the dustbin man composts can be used to replenish the earth, returning some of the nutrients removed during plant growth. Compost is the most complete and revitalising and least expensive additive that a garden can receive. Artificial fertilisers may give short term benefits but

have proved in the long run to be destructive of the soil and of natural waters.

★ Do without disposables. The manufacturers of disposable products encourage a vision of the future where kitchenware, then clothes, then even houses will be disposable. But nothing is truly disposable. In particular, paper, plastics and metals come from limited resources put aside by nature and not intended for careless and massive exploitation and irretrievable loss. Making disposables increases the destruction of these resources and the thrown away products then destroy the environment.

★ Start a household campaign to see how little you can throw into the dustbin.

★ Conserve energy: use as few electrical devices as possible, many are really unnecessary and for others there are man-powered alternatives. It is also possible to develop the use of non-polluting power sources, such as wind, water and sun, sufficient to our needs—especially when we cut down on our "needs".

★ Share with friends and neighbours any electrical appliances that still seem essential, such as washing machines, power tools . . . and electric toothbrushes.

★ Turn off the lights when not in use: open curtains and blinds to let in as much natural light as possible: replace high wattage bulbs with low wattage ones where such intense light is not needed. "Turn off your lights—in the silence of your room you can hear a thousand rivers and the earth whispering their thanks."

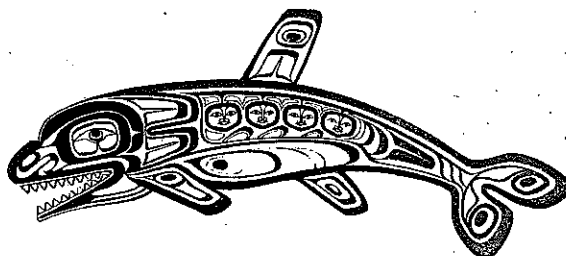
★ Radioactive particles from peaceful and arms race sources always result in a number of deformed babies, proportionate to the quantity of released particles. Consider this fact when the next nuclear power station is erected and the next weapon tested.

★ Conserve water. Directly and indirectly each individual uses about 95 gallons per day. Mend faulty taps and toilets: don't run taps unnecessarily. Appliances such as washing machines that use water should only be used with full loads. The London Water Board is so concerned about wastage from faulty taps that they will replace washers free of charge. If your local WB doesn't do the same they should be encouraged to do so.

★ Put a brick in the toilet cistern to reduce the amount of water it uses. Do this in every toilet in your place of work/study and write an "ecograffiti" to say what you've done and why.

★ Bath with a friend.

★ Make sure that all goods are used rather than duplicated and/or hoarded. Start a "Free Exchange" with friends and acquaintances. Better still, open a "Free Store". As people learn to take without having to pay in any way, they will learn to give without expecting payment—and that's revolutionary.



★ Consider the possibility of setting up a commune—one advantage of which is the reduction of unnecessary duplication of material possessions.

★ Plant trees. Defend trees due to be chopped down, by obtaining a Tree Preservation Order from your local council, or, if necessary, by direct action—such as a "sit-down" or "climb-up" that blocks the tree fellers and their equipment. Apart from their natural beauty, trees reduce soil erosion, traffic and other noises, and to a certain extent, help purify the air. Develop the possibility of guerrilla tree planting in your area.

Support campaigns against the digging up of hedgerows; they are an important habitat and refuge for wild plants and animals whose extinction we allow at our peril. Protest to people and institutions who cover the earth with concrete and paving.

★ Pass on this leaflet, magazines and papers for other people to use. Try to limit the amount of paper products you use: due to the chemicals used in their manufacture they cannot be returned to the earth. Remember, a tree has to be cut down in order for us to have even the smallest paper product.

★ Do something to stop junk mail. For example a door-to-door collection in your own street asking for spare junk mail—then post it all back to the senders, without stamps. Always return your own supply with suitable comments.

★ Return excess wrapping materials, especially the supermarket hard-sell variety. Ask the store manager to pass on your complaints, or send the stuff directly to the manufacturer. Ask shop-keepers not to put your wares in paper bags when it's not really necessary.

★ Investigate the possibilities of recycling material. During World War II, 66% of paper was recycled. Some local councils will collect paper refuse separately. If your local council doesn't, pester them until they do. Paper is a good substance to start with but almost all materials can be recycled, even plastics—also aluminium cans, steel cans and glass.

★ Always return non-returnable bottles, either to the shop where you bought them or to the offices of the company that produces them.

★ Agitate for non-polluted conditions in your place of work. Educate your unions on the issues. In most factories even the existing inadequate safeguards are ignored. Polluted working conditions maim people (and sometimes kill) through excesses of chemical and abrasive dusts, noises, noxious fumes; vapours or sprays.

★ Sit very still for a while each day and listen to the noises around you: traffic, planes, TV, radio, fridge, compulsive chatter. Some carpet cleaners are designed to make more noise so they will sound more powerful. See what you can do to cut down on noise in and around your own home.

★ Stratospheric pollution, tremendous increase in exploitation of oil resources, extreme noise levels at airports and sonic booms, are just the start of a host of good reasons for supporting anti-supersonic transport campaigns.

★ Refuse to be a part of the inanities of fashion trades that turn our clothes into throwaways after one year of partial use, and dull our abilities to perceive real beauty. Learn to recognise the ways in which we are deceived by fashion changes and planned obsolescence. Mend clothes, swap clothes, pass them on.

★ Free yourself from "whiter than white" fetishes. We just don't need brilliant, dazzling, snowy etc etc

whiteness. Detergents contain two ingredients that are ultimately lethal to our environment—surfactants and phosphates. The surfactant used in America is LAS and quite easily breaks down in water (biodegradable). In Britain, however, the surfactant is ABS (Alkyl benzene sulfonate) which is much more difficult to break down even if you try (which we don't). ALL leading detergents contain this.

A recent royal commission stated that "half the total phosphates in our lowland rivers come from household detergents". These overfed the algae causing them to multiply and choke off precious oxygen supplies, killing fish and other organisms (eutrophication). Most detergents contain phosphates.

So switch from high-phosphate detergents, especially enzyme varieties ("biological"), to soaps and washing soda. Lux is almost pure soap, Persil and Rinso about 50%. If you've been using detergents the residue will turn yellow when you first use soap—this can be avoided by washing once with hot water and washing soda.

Learn to make your own soap.

★ Don't be coned by packaging that has over-large holes to pour the product through. Make your own gap. Use less of everything.

★ The most horrific crime against the environment is the direct destruction of mankind itself. Refuse to supply the wherewithal for wars and other murders, and boycott the products of the most repressive regimes—South African goods for example.

★ Try fasting for a day.

★ Household and garden chemicals labelled "keep out of reach of children" are generally not much good for the environment either. Try not to use them at all. Pesticides especially are getting into the food chain, contaminating the food we eat and the milk we drink.

★ Teach yourself, friends and children to distrust advertising, to see through the gross manipulation of our minds that is involved, to understand the dangers and shallowness of consumerism.

Be imaginative in your defacement of advertisements.

★ Get over hang-ups about insects and other animals. Learn the ways in which they are our friends, and respect them. The natural world is beautiful in all its variety and is not there to be crushed or sprayed.

★ Join the fight to save endangered species of animals. They, and their environment are being destroyed in many parts of the world so that their skins may adorn unthinking ladies here. London is the world centre of the fur trade and we must make it set a better example.

★ As a nation of animal lovers we feed our pets over one thousand whales each year. Many species of whales are almost extinct. We also kill whales to make our soap a bit softer and for many other trivialities, all of which can be catered for without destroying yet another form of life. "When the last individual of a race of a living thing breathes no more, another heaven and another earth must come to pass before there can be such a one again".

★ Think twice before acquiring pets—remember that the question of resources that applies to the maximum of children we should have applies also to pets.

★ Talk with other people about these concerns. Share them, experiment with and discover, new alternatives together.

The above list was compiled with a good deal of help from Peace News readers, especially from Nottingham University Peace Society. Please send comments and new ideas to Greenpeace, Peace News, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1. Thanks.

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Paul Wesley was formerly features editor of the paper.

Peace News—a radical weekly newspaper—is committed to nonviolent revolution both in everyday life and in the structures of society, involving both resisting oppression and making alternatives.

Its ecology coverage attempts firstly to analyse how we are endangering the planet, the social forces at the root of this, and to point to the need for non-hierarchical, decentralised social structures; secondly, to publicise particular instances of environmental aggression; thirdly, to suggest and report on strategies of action—at the level of personal change (the "Greenpeace" suggestions, for instance), group action (such as bike-ins or community action against pollution), or making alternatives (food co-ops, community workshops, experiments in harnessing renewable energy resources).



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