

A Word from the President

Think globally, act locally . . . Action Saint-François members and volunteers certainly put the second part of this famous environmental maxim into practice in many ways in our daily lives, and by participating in seasonal clean-ups. Above and beyond these concrete actions in the field, many of us are staying informed, keeping a close watch on global problems that end up having very real impacts on our lives. Now, in spring 2001, with the wave of hoof-and-mouth disease in Europe and the Summit of the Americas about to begin here at home, it is more important than ever to respond to the ravages of a globalization process motivated exclusively by the interests of a financial and economic elite, and closed off from citizens' concerns. In this issue, we will devote much space to the important debates around globalization and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations.

Guillaume Paul-Limoges has prepared an excellent article, entitled *Globali-*



Source : Recto Verso, novembre/décembre 2000

zation or Commoditization, which unmasks the dark side of the trade agreements negotiated without public consultation by our politicians. Guillaume invites us to get involved in today's citizens' movements and join others who don't want to stand idly by while our social, economic, and environmental future hangs in the balance.

As for myself, I offer some critical reflections on the important issues around natural resource conservation and the threats posed by the current economic

model. Clearly, agriculture in Britain is already facing a major crisis, largely due to years of deregulation, privatization, and headlong pursuit of intensive production modes.

Robert Léo brings us back to more everyday concerns. First of all, as he does every spring, our coordinator heralds the arrival of the fine weather — and with it, the return of our Saturday morning rambles along Estrie's rivers and streams. Robert Léo also suggests some simple things to do at home, which, combined with thousands of other small gestures (including taking the time to find out what's going on and take action on major issues), will help to improve our environment.

Pleasant reading!

Pierre Dansereau

Talks on agriculture and the environment at our next annual general meeting

We would like to draw your attention to the notice on page 2, announcing our next annual general meeting, which will be held at Chaudronnée de l'Estrie on Saturday, April 28. At the meeting, you will have a chance to hear two talks on the agriculture/environment issue in our region. Luc Charest, Agri-Environmental Agent at Fédération de l'UPA-Estrie, will talk to us about the Federation's agri-environmental action plan. Former RAPPEL president Jean-Claude Thibault will then tell us about his hopes in view of the change to more environmental practices announced by the agricultural sector.

Would you like to take a look at our newsletter on the Internet ? With the same pictures in color ?

<http://www.asf-estrie.org/asf/journaux.htm>

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Volunteering

For a sixth year running, Action Saint-François has received a grant from Environment Canada, allowing them to continue their work cleaning the banks of waterways that form the basin leading to the Saint-Francis River.

This year, cleaning activities will occur between April 30 and November 3 – a period of 27 consecutive weeks. Several municipalities will benefit from our work and residents will be asked to help as volunteers in our clean-up projects. The areas being affected include Ascot, Compton, Eaton, East Angus, Huntingville, Lennoxville, Waterville and Rock Forest. We aim to reclaim 25 metric tonnes of waste, 75% of it recyclable.

If you're interested in getting involved, you can help with any of our clean-up days throughout the year.

Call us any time after the third week of April, and we'll tell you how

you can get involved. Have a great season!

*Robert Léo Gendron
Coordinator,
Cleanup Sessions
563-5362*



Notice – General Meeting

Members of Action Saint-François are invited to participate in our next Annual General Meeting. It will be held:

Saturday, April 28, 2001 at 3:30
Chaudronnée de l'Estrie
470 Bowen Sud, Sherbrooke
(access via School St.)

The opening of the general meeting will be preceded at 1 p.m. with a special session on the problem of agriculture and the environment in our region. We will be welcoming Luc Charest, an agro-environmental agent from the Fédération de l'UPA-Estrie and Jean-Claude Thibault, former president of RAPPEL. Luc Charest will be speaking about the Fédération de l'UPA-Estrie's agro-environmental action plan. Jean-Claude Thibault will follow that by sharing his hopes for the environmental initiatives announced by the agricultural industry.

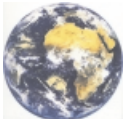
Here is the proposed agenda: our members are welcome to provide suggestions for agenda changes.

Proposed Agenda

1. *Word from the President*
2. *Nomination of President and meeting secretary*
3. *Reading and adoption of agenda*
4. *Approval of minutes of the AGM of April 25, 2000*
5. *Presentation of the financial report for 2000 and the budget for 2001*
6. *2000 Activity Report and projected actions for 2001*
7. *Donations Policy*
8. *Election of the Board of Directors*
9. *Varia*



Globalization



Drinkable water: human right or commodity?*

In 1977, a Mar Del Plata in Argentina, during the first global water conference, the international community recognized human rights connected to water without writing it explicitly in a binding legal form. Regardless, this was evidence of an acceptance of the obvious fact that access to potable water is a fundamental right, essential to the protection of life and human dignity. Sadly, it is easy to predict that encroachment on this right will be creating more and more victims in the near future...

The neo-liberal discussions being held on this topic pose a horrible threat to millions of human beings. The ideology of a market economy has multiplied the actions over the last few years to make water viewable as a commodity like everything else. In 1997, 20 years after the Mar Del Plata conference, a UN report said, in the spirit of the times, *"a more market-based approach is needed to manage water suppliers, water should be a commodity where price is set by supply and demand."* **How can an essential human right be transformed into a financial equation?**

The principle of sustainable development rests on respect for the interdependence and complexity of ecosystems, their survival ensured by the rights and responsibilities shared by those using natural resources. Opposite this logic, market thinking dictates that we must *"stop thinking that water is a different sort of resource (...) we must treat it like merchandise and fix a price following the rules of market."*



Can we really believe that through the magic of supply and demand, by the sole virtue of the market's "invisible hand" theory, the million and a half humans who currently have no access to drinkable water are a "solvable request?" On the contrary: an emphasis on the basis of supply and demand will hasten the draining of this vital resource to the richest users and not those who need it most urgently.

In March 2000, during the Hague ministerial conference during the Second World Water Forum organized by the World Water Council, itself closely linked to the World Bank, the assembled governments – including that of Canada – explicitly

refused to include in their declaration that drinkable water was a **right**, preferring the term "base resource" – a term that lends itself far more easily to monopolies and hoarding.

We believe – with ample historical evidence – that the market is not capable of guaranteeing human rights or of ensuring the preservation of our resources and the environment. In this sense, we are like many others who want to *"Exclude water from all international transactions, putting it beyond the reach of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its international investment treaties, and consider how to manage sharing it on a global level."*²

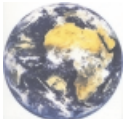
¹Reported by Paul Lewis, "UN Report Warns of Problems over Dwindling Water Supplies," *New York Times*, January 20 (1997) (Translated from French, non-verbatim)

²Valérie Peugeot, "L'eau, patrimoine commun" (1988) (translated), *Transversales Science Culture* no. 54, November-December, p. 12.

*** Reflections taken from the brief *Le Québec et la Zone de Libre-Échange des Amériques: Effets Politiques et Socioéconomiques* presented by the Association Québécoise pour la Contrat Mondial de l'Eau (ACME Québec) to the Commission des Institutions de l'Assemblée National du Québec, September 8, 2000.**



Globalization



Globalization or “Market-ization”

King Commerce

From April 20 to 22, 2001, the city of Québec will be hosting the Summit of the Americas. It will be welcoming 34 representatives of “democratically elected” countries (a condition to exclude Cuba) to pursue negotiations regarding the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). During this third Summit of the Americas, which follows one in Miami in 1994 and another in Santiago (Chili) in 1998, heads of state and governments will present a final version of the trade agreement.

By Guillaume Paul-Limoges

This agreement extends to all countries in the Americas, with the exception of Cuba, and will overwrite regional accords like NAFTA (Canada, the U.S. and Mexico), MERCOSUR (Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay), CARICOM (the Caribbean common market) and the Andes Pact. It will become a new source of commercial power with an all-powerful authority over all aspects of life in Canada and throughout the Americas.

Whether you are or are not in agreement with the neo-liberal philosophy that characterizes the FTAA, the lack of democracy that surrounds it is disquieting. Unlike what has happened in the European Union (EU), the public has been told very little about the content of the negotiations – and consulted even less. In Québec, the organizers of the Summit have created a “security perimeter” of concrete, fencing and barbed wire to ensure that they will not be disturbed by public – and legal – actions.

But, according to Dorval Brunelle, a sociology professor at the UQAM and co-organizer of a research group on continental integration (GRIC), *the surreptitiousness of the process becomes an aspect which is all in all separate from the general situation that we can see being put into place through the commercial negotiations throughout the Americas, nothing less than an alternate regime founded on direct and strong collaboration between governments and the world of business.*

“I define globalization as liberty for my company to invest where they want, when they want to produce what they want, to buy and sell where they want, with the least amount of restraint possible regarding workplace rights and social conditions.”

**Percy Barnevik
President, ABB Industrial Inc.**

In effect, through the American Business Forum (ABF), the business world has been invited to closely follow the negotiations and to have a consulting power equal to that of heads of state and governments. Governments and businesspeople support themselves financially, the first subsidizing the second to hold a number of forums, while the large companies finance the international official meetings.

Environmental Rights

The business world wants to place all aspects of life under market logic, market law, competition and



Opération SalAMI

“The protection of nature is not “negotiable.” To apply market logic to it is to destroy it in advance.” (Monique Chemillier-Gendreau, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 1998).

“competitiveness.” During commercial agreement negotiations, large financial and industrial corporations, motivated solely by economics, are opposed to clauses that accommodate social and environmental rights. These rights should have priority, but are placed at the bottom of commercial agreements and are not subject to the secondary clauses of the negotiated texts.

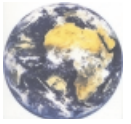
Deluded by the neo-liberal idea that well-being and prosperity come through free trade and market law, the governments, through greed and in-

Source : Recto Verso, novembre/décembre 2000





Globalization



sidiousness, have become accomplices of giant financial and industrial corporations. For example, government spokespeople claim that questions linked to workers and the environment should be discussed exclusively inside institutions with a clear mandate and expertise in such things, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO).

These officials neglect to mention that the ILO and its environmental analogue, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have no actual power to act within the global organization. These organizations cannot end abuses being inflicted on workers or the environment, or punish businesses or individuals who commit these abuses. On the other hand, business organizations like the WTO, and economic agreements, like NAFTA and the upcoming FTAA, grant immense powers on the legislative, executive and legal levels to protect the interests of businesses and investors – but never those of government or citizens. These legal proceedings fell within Chapter 11 of NAFTA, demonstrating the colossal unbalance between one side – the powers granted to businesses and investors – and the other, the meagre means granted to governmental, social and environmental organizations to protect the public's interests and well-being.

Globalization is too serious an issue to entrust exclusively to private interests. (François Normand, *Le Devoir*, Tuesday, November 30, 1999).

Alternatives for the Americas

Faced with the total dominance of commerce, faced with a global economic system that Albert

Jaquard, in his *J'accuse l'Economie Triomphante*, compared to a car with no driver and an engine that just keeps getting more and more powerful – social, labour, feminist and ecological groups from across the Americas are mobilizing. This alternative movement keeps gaining strength and has been organized under the name *Alliance Sociale Continentale* (ASC). The ASC's *raison d'être* is not to oppose globalization itself, but to propose globalization with social and environmental responsibility, globalization where citizens have the right to speak.

If you'd like to take part in this democratic adventure, you are invited to Québec this April 20 and 21 for a day of public education on globalization and its alternatives, as well as for a giant march to support a citizens' FTAA – and because behind all economic and political causes, the values guiding globalization ask each of us a very personal, human, and even ecological question first posed by Romain Gary in his 1956 novel *Les Racines du Ciel*. **"Are we really still capable of respecting nature, of living freedom, without any returns, without convenience, without any purpose other than to allow its contemplation from time to time?"**

To learn more:

Contact Guillaume Paul-Limoges at the following address:

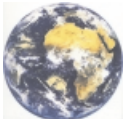
info@csisher.com, or at 566-8595

x29. You can also consult the following (French) texts, mostly available at Action Saint-François' offices and through this Web site:

- Rémi Bachand *Les poursuites intentées en vertu du chapitre 11 de l'ALENA, quelles leçons en tirer?* (Site internet du GRIC : <http://www.unities.uqam.ca/gric>).
- Réseau québécois sur l'intégration continentale et Opération SALAMI. *Comprendre la mondialisation pour changer le monde*.
- Maude Barlow. *La Zone de libre-échange des Amériques et la menace qu'elle constitue pour les programmes sociaux, la protection de l'environnement et la justice sociale au Canada et dans les Amériques*.
- Dorval Brunelle. *Deux options pour les Amériques en 2001 : l'Alliance sociale continentale ou la Zone de libre échange des Amériques*.
- Sylvie Paquerot. *L'eau c'est la vie... et la vie n'est pas une marchandise*. Le Bouquet écologique, novembre 2000.
- François Normand. « Et le bien commun? » *Le Devoir*, mardi 30 novembre 1999.
- François Normand. « Les enjeux négligés : le Canada et la mondialisation ». *Le Devoir*, mardi 21 novembre 2000.
- Monique Chemillier-Gendreau. « Marchandisation de la survie planétaire ». *Le Monde diplomatique*, janvier 1998.
- Consultez les sites Internet suivants : <http://www.sommetdespeuples.org>, pour le sommet des peuples des Amériques; <http://www.attac.org/quebec/> pour l'Association pour la taxation des transactions financières pour l'aide aux citoyens; <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr> pour les textes d'analyse et d'information publiés dans Le Monde diplomatique.



Globalization



What can we do for the environment?

Do you sometimes wonder what you can do to improve the state of the environment — worldwide and in your own neighbourhood? Do you wind up thinking, “Anyway, what’s the point, it’s already beyond hope”? You know, you’re not alone; lots of us get discouraged and start thinking nothing can be done. But if we each put a little time into improving the environment, all of us together can change things — as Marjorie Lamb tells us in her wonderful book *2 Minutes a Day for a Greener Planet: Quick and Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth*. Here are a few excerpts.

By Robert Léo Gendron

*“What can we do about a hole in the ozone over the Antarctic, global warming and the destruction of rainforests? We’ve got three loads of laundry to finish before going back to the office. . . . We’re all busy people. Most of us don’t have the time or even the desire to **climb smokestacks or confront whaling vessels. Sometimes we can’t even find the time to write letters to our politicians.** [take on tasks that are too big for us].”*

*“I have a daughter. **Before I became a parent, I never thought I could ever love anyone so intensely.** . . . I want my daughter to have a special life. I want her to have clean air to breathe, clean water to drink, healthy food to eat and a green planet to enjoy. . . . If all of us do a little bit every day, together we can make a world of difference to our planet Earth.”*

[Everybody accepts that the way we use paper and water, the way we clean ourselves and our houses, our gardening techniques, our behaviour at work, at school, and in our car, all affect the planet we live on.]

Water

L’eau de la Terre est salée dans une proportion de 97 %, tandis que l’eau douce ne constitue que 3 % de nos réserves et presque toute cette eau est gelée. Moins de 1% de toute l’eau de la terre doit suffire à nos besoins. Il est donc très important d’être économe et d’utiliser l’eau de manière intelligente. Nous ne pouvons pas créer de nouvelles sources pas plus que nous ne pouvons créer de nouveaux territoires De plus l’eau qui arrive à nos robinets n’est pas gratuite. Il faut d’abord trouver une source d’eau, construire l’équipement qui la pompera à la surface, puis le pipeline qui la transportera et les usines de traitement.

*“Of all water on our planet Earth, 97% is salt water. Only 3% is fresh water, and most of that is frozen in the polar ice caps. Less than 1% of Earth’s water is available for our use.” [So it’s very important to use water sparingly and intelligently.] We can’t make new water, any more than we can make new land. **If we misuse the water we have, we can’t send out for some fresh stuff.***

And we generally assume that it’s free, or almost free. But before clean water comes out of our taps, several things have to happen. We have to find a source of water, build machinery to pump it, piping to carry it, plants to treat it. . . .

Once we’ve got water, what do we do with it? We put it through our washing machines, toilets, sinks, dishwashers, car washes and pesticide-filled lawns. We use it to wash our windows, our sidewalks and streets. We spray it in the air for pretty fountains. We put out fires with it. We clean wounds with it. We make concrete with it. We use it in the production of plastics, steel and paper. We hose down chemical spills and industrial work sites with it. We clean paintbrushes in it. And we drink it. . . .

Then we have to deal with getting rid of it. We need to build another whole network of drains to carry away our dirty

Some simple ideas to put into practice every day at home

- Turn the tap on briefly to wet your toothbrush, and turn it off until it’s time to rinse.
- Keep a bottle of water in the fridge rather than letting the tap run for two minutes in the summer when it’s hot.
- [Instead of stepping into a bath containing 100 liters of water,] take a five minute shower.
- Turn off the shower while you lather your hair and body.
- Wash your face and hands in cold water.
- Fill a large plastic yogurt or cottage cheese container with water, and put on the lid. Then slide it down into the space in the toilet tank behind the flush handle.
- Each time you want to wash the car, put it off for one day.
- Use a bucket instead of a hose to wash the car.
- Only do the laundry when the washer can be filled.
- If you have to do laundry before you have a full load, set your water level control for a smaller load.
- Check the weather forecast before watering the lawn [or garden]
- Think of saving water this way: what if you had to carry home all the water you needed every day — in jars on your head?

water and sewage. We need to build treatment plants, and hire people to run them. And we need to elect politicians who will vow to ‘do something’ to clean up the water that we’ve polluted.

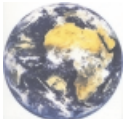
The process costs billions of dollars worldwide, and still people suffer and die in many parts of the world for want of clean water, while we blithely open our taps and let our most precious resource pour down the drain.”

2 Minutes a Day for a Greener Planet is packed with sensible advice and smart tips; I definitely recommend it. What’s more, the author is really funny and inspiring. Pleasant reading!

¹ Marjorie Lamb is a journalist who specializes in environmental issues. For many years, she has been an environment reporter for the CBC radio and television networks and Chatelaine magazine.



Globalization



Let's not lose our heads!

In a lucky find while surfing the Net recently, I came across the text of an excellent lecture given by Hubert Reeves entitled “*Société de surconsommation et environnement*” (Overconsuming society and environment). Mr. Reeves reminds us of one of the great truths of our time: “We have always lived with the idea that the planet was infinite, that we could keep on pumping out all the resources we wanted and they would never run out. Now we must face up to a very simple fact: the planet is not infinite, and neither are its resources, and we’re well on the way to exhausting them.” This unavoidable reality highlights the absurdity of an economic model inherited from the 19th century, which is based on maintaining continual growth in our production and consumption.

By Pierre Dansereau

Of course, we North Americans are not the ones who suffer the most from water and food shortages. While our rich natural resources are part of the reason for this, it has a great deal to do with our economic power and our disproportionate consumption of the planet’s resources (North Americans make up less than 10% of the world’s population but consume more than 40% of its resources).

And yet, if we accept the unavoidable reality facing the planet, if we think about our own grandchildren’s lives, if we show some solidarity with the human community as a whole, we are forced to admit that the current economic model is an insult to common sense.

Remember that the sciences that deal with the environment and ecology are physical and biological sciences, exact sciences that study natural laws. The models behind economic rules, on the other hand, are developed in line with objectives that are open to debate and that arise from a democratic decision-making process. The current model is grounded in a financial ideology which assumes that return on investment must take precedence over

all other considerations, be they economic, social, or environmental. Growth is therefore perceived, and promoted, as the supreme good, even though it in no way guarantees the greater wellbeing of the people. Indeed, our developed societies’ subordination to the idea that economic growth is sacrosanct, is the main long-term threat hanging over our planet.

We believe that economic rules should bow to natural realities — and here we include the respect for life and human dignity. This is not impossible; it’s simply a matter of adapting the economic model accordingly. The basic objectives don’t have to be far-fetched or unrealistic; quite the reverse, the goals are entirely rational: greater wellbeing for all of the world’s population and the certainty of leaving our descendants a viable planet — one where, at the very least, they can breathe pure air, drink clean water, and eat healthy food.

On this topic, here’s what Hubert Reeves has to say about the future of our planet:

“So we can see that the problem is not purely ecological, but also social and political. Today, there are six billion of us. In about 2050, the world’s

population is expected to be about ten billion; it will likely level off and may even decrease. Here’s the question: can we ensure a decent life for ten billion people without totally destroying the planet? This is a very hard question. The answer is probably “yes”, provided we put our minds to it. Without a doubt, this is the greatest crisis humanity has had to face. Humans are brilliant and they can do astounding things like sending rockets to Saturn or discovering the Big Bang. So when human beings put their minds to something, they’re brilliant. But they’re really going to have to put their minds to it seriously if ten billion people are going to live a decent life on this earth. And there’s not much time: 2050 means your children or your grandchildren.

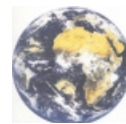
There are two challenges here. There’s an engineering challenge: figuring out how to manage the whole thing, how to keep the planet green. But the most serious problem, the one that worries me the most, personally, is the political problem. This problem is much more serious, because while on the one hand there are countries like ours where the issues get discussed and pressure groups can have some influence, on the other there are countries like China, where an ecologist is a dissident who you put in prison. But China has one billion two hundred million people...”

These musings on China demonstrate the huge irresponsibility of our political and economic decision-makers, who seek to export the Western overconsumption-based model to the rest of the world. Now that the model has brought guaranteed wealth to the world’s financial elite, it’s time to





Globalization



Cont'd from page 7

open up new markets and win "the battle" in Asia . . . (fine words!).

Wouldn't it be better to back new production and consumption models, to create and support movements towards constructive solutions that we will eventually need here, in our developed countries? Certainly, organic agriculture, community-supported agriculture, and the fair trade movement are some examples of concrete initiatives that are growing rapidly and opening the door to change, letting in some pure air to keep the future alive.



If you'd like to learn more:

- Hubert Reeves. *Société de surconsommation et environnement* (in French). Visit the Equiterre movement's Web site at <http://www.equiterre.qc.ca>. Text also available at the Action Saint-François office.
- Serge Mongeau. *La simplicité volontaire*. Éditions Écosociété.
- Murray Bookchin. *Une société à refaire*. Éditions Écosociété. (Trans. of *Remaking Society: Pathways to a Green Future*. Boston: South End Press, 1990.)
- Moreover, we recommend all of the works published by Éditions Écosociété, a Quebec publishing house devoted to environmental, ecological, and societal issues.

Talks on agriculture and the environment at our next annual general meeting

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Check us out on the Internet at :
<http://www.asf-estrie.org/asf/>



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ST-FRANÇOIS**

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ISSN 1197-043x
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Nos archives :
<http://www.asf-estrie.org/asf/journaux.htm>

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ACTION SAINT-FRANÇOIS A NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION FOUNDED IN AUGUST 1992 BRINGS TOGETHER CITIZENS CONVINCED OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ENVIRONMENT. THE GROUP IS INTERESTED IN THE RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION OF AQUATIC MILIEUS OF THE SAINT-FRANÇOIS RIVER WATERSHED. CLEAN UP, EROSION CONTROL AND REPLANTING PROJECTS ALONG WATERWAYS AND FLOOD PLAINS ARE ORGANIZED BY ACTION SAINT-FRANÇOIS. WE WANT TO HEIGHTEN AWARENESS OF THE POPULATION TO THE NECESSITY TO ACT IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE HYDROLOGICAL NETWORK OF OUR TERRITORY. ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE 25\$. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL US AT (819) 563-5362..