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Navigating the Police State (page 3)

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Front Cover:
Two photos of Protestors and Police at the Repco Car Rally, One of the defaced posters of the Rally: changed from ‘Pure Excitement’ (article on page 8).

Inside Front Cover: Giant fig tree of Lake Toba, North Sumatra. Traditional house on the shore of Lake Toba. Villages on Samosir Island, Lake Toba. (see Paradise Polluted - page9)
Back Cover: Pedal transport in Havana, Cuba (see Learning from the Cuban Experience - page10), Cover of Peek-A-Boo by Tarang Bates (see Peek-A-Boo Book Review - page17) Circle of participants of the World Rainbow Gathering (page 18). Lake Toba photos contributed by Lea Jellinek

Welcome to the 7th edition of Nimbin News Quarterly

The Nimbin News Quarterly is published seasonally.

Subscription: $12 for 6 editions.
Back Copies: $6 for 5 editions.
Sample: $2
Costs cover postage & packing!

The views expressed in The Nimbin News Quarterly are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the publisher.

Volunteers for this edition include: Graham, Gloria, Len, Harry, Sophia, Peter and Peter.

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All contributions can be sent to pp@nimbinnews.com and can be in electronic form (on cd, floppy disk, memory stick, or by email) or on crisp and clearly printed hard copy. Each article must have the name of the person who wrote/submitted the article. Pen names are acceptable as long as the identity of the person is kept on file. Articles submitted for publication may be edited at the discretion of The Nimbin News team. Should this occur, every effort will be made to contact the author, so please include a phone number and/or contact address in all submissions. Nimbin News retains the right to refuse to publish any article at its discretion.

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History of Nimbin MardiGrass

Michael Balderstone

There never was a plan. One thing just led to another. When I arrived in Nimbin to live, it was 1985 I think, we rented a rambling old house in Thorburn St and almost immediately I rented the Museum building to trade second-hand junk. I had to get out of the house! Mardi Grass is similar. It just grew by itself like a good idea can.

History has it that after a particularly aggressive season of helicopter raids, Bob Hopkins organised a May Day Rally calling for an end to the injustice and nightmares cannabis prohibition was causing in the community. Seven hundred people turned up, and had such a good time we vowed to do it every year until the stupid laws change.

Early Mardi Grass's are now the stuff of legend. Flooded in with 50 pounds of buds year after year of pouring rain every first weekend in May, the farmers came to rely on it, or so the story went. Elspeth's imaginary posters were a major factor in spreading the word about the Mardi Grass weekend. Those early posters are keenly sought after by collectors now.

For the first ten years we hardly saw a policeman. Maybe there were a few on duty but we gave each other respect and room. Blanket stalls on the footpath with buds openly displayed and the street a cloud of smoke made one weekend a year that we felt less of a criminal. Then it all changed a few years ago. Suddenly the riot squad came up from Sydney, at massive expense, with horses and dogs and black cricket pads and helmets, like most of us had only seen at the movies. It's testimony to Nimbin's resilience that we all had a good time anyway, and by the end of that weekend many in the riot squad were openly saying what a joke it was they were there.

They came again the next year and then last year the North Coast cops tried to emulate them, but were much more rude and aggressive. Again Mardi Grass went off with a bang even though you'd be lucky to get a whiff of weed. This community has depth, and patience.

The weekend is really run by volunteers, many of them from overseas with only a smattering of English. Many locals play crucial roles year after year, and scarcely need to do much more than give a nod to another saying, "Yep, I'll be there again." That's a big part of the magic for me. This community pulls together with an extraordinary unity when it has to. There is real common understanding. For many years there was serious opposition to Mardi Grass and it took some convincing to get the unity we have today. This little village is as well educated on drugs as any in Australia, probably without realising it.

There are many sideshows to the Law Reform Rally these days. The HEMP Olympix has grown into an extremely popular event. It originated as an idea to get the crowds off the street and immediately became a great vehicle for humour, and a forum to educate visitors on the local culture of pot smokers. The Growers Iron Person event is a great self explanatory example.

Music has been a cornerstone of Nimbin's alternative community since the beginning and Mardi Grass now has half a dozen venues where musicians of all bents come to strut their stuff. Pot Poetry and Pot Art are long time favourites for locals to express themselves.

Mardi Grass has quite a reputation as a big party, and organisers strive to keep the issue of law reform on the agenda. Every year there are guest speakers from overseas, experts in their respective cannabis fields. This year Dr Bob Melamede is flying out from America to talk to us about the latest science on medical cannabis. There will be workshops on every aspect of the plant; building, papermaking, tincture and hash making and cooking classes are all on, but many are happy just to be among like-minded folks. Many Mardi Grass campers have been coming for years and it's now an annual family ritual, like camping at a certain beach every summer. It's real comfort to pot-smokers who may come from communities where they completely hide their illegal activity all year, but for one weekend in Nimbin they can relax. They won't be judged here, or alienated.

Mardi Grass has had huge, unexpected consequences on the village, none of it planned, nor expected. It has helped put Nimbin on the backpackers map. It was getting there anyway, on the back of Byron, but Mardi Grass gave Nimbin its own infamy. Many people don't like how busy the village has become and I know the feeling. On the other hand I see what a rare opportunity we have to share our thinking and lifestyle choices with visitors. On a planet in a time of great change when people are looking for answers and new ways of living, we have something to offer them. And our visitors are not the blue rinse set, or aged care tours, ours are predominantly young vital backpackers travelling the world before they get a mortgage. And we have a chance to get them to question that path!

Inhaling a herb should not be made a crime.

Mardi Grass weekend.

Looking like a sniffer dog has got into the hard stuff.

The biggest social problem with the dope smoking culture is that marijuana inspires people into political action to address an injustice. That cannot be tolerated!

Nimbin News Quarterly #7 Autumn 2010
The friendly cop who was once a part of a community service has been transformed into a para-military storm-trooper, armed to the teeth and itching for trouble. It's a global phenomenon, and a response to the hard times in which we live where any protest or resistance, especially against the master-plans of corporate conglomerates, is met with brutal force regardless of people's age, gender or disability. It's a process of intimidation few are able to resist. The end result is blind obedience, whether the actions of the police are legal or not. In many cases, people's lack of knowledge of their rights under the law results in police exceeding their powers. However, the final arbiter of any charge is the court of law which doesn't always agree with the police. In many matters relating to search and detention, the police consistently get it wrong.

The gentle folk of Nimbin, having been subjected to police hostility for so long and so often, may feel intimidated, or at least disempowered. However, as much as the police would have us think they have all the power, they don't! A little knowledge of the laws regarding search, questioning, arrest and detention, goes a long way! As one of the public defenders who studied legislative powers and regulations put it, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Despite all the fanfare, most of the laws police now use in their daily duties are simply a rehash of existing laws. Ultimately it's up to every citizen to know their rights and feel empowered enough to stand up for them, and know that in most cases they are fighting a paper tiger. Here's an example of someone whose story may bring some hope and encouragement.

In the case of the Crown v John Rondo: NSW Court of Criminal Appeal. John Rondo replied, "I am going to search your car with or without your consent. I am letting you know if I find anything I believe to be stolen or otherwise unlawfully obtained, do you mind if I search your vehicle?"

"Yes, last time they searched it, they damaged my mum's car."

The police then told him,

"Permission is now granted to stage a protest action."

The trial judge erred in determining that the provisions of s.357E of Evidence Act were established (satisfied?) by the arresting officers, thereby making the stopping and searching of the appellants vehicle lawful. The trial judge erred in determining that the detention of the appellant was therefore lawful.

(1) "...I find that the trial judge erred in finding that the provisions of s.357E of the Crimes Act were established (satisfied?) by the arresting officers, thereby making the stopping and searching of the appellants vehicle lawful. The trial judge erred in determining that the detention of the appellant was therefore lawful.

(2) "I find that the trial judge erred in exercising his discretion to admit the evidence pursuant to s.138 of the Evidence Act with respect to Grounds.

In simple terms this means that the police did not have reasonable grounds to pull him over in the first place. Their story to the court was that they were driving along the road when they noticed a navy blue coupe with a panel dent on the driver's side. They said in their report “The vehicle had a smart appearance capable of travelling at fast speeds.” They then drove alongside the coupe and asked the driver, "Is this your car?" To which the driver replied "No". (It belonged to his mother). The police then put on their beacon and siren and pulled him over. A rego check later, one of the police noticed the driver put something in the glovebox as he walked up to the car.

The constable then said,

"John, I believe something to be in your car that is stolen or otherwise unlawfully obtained, do you mind if I search your vehicle?"

John Rondo replied, "Yes, last time they searched it, they damaged my mum's car."

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Ordinary Search means a search of a person or articles in the possession of a person that may include:
(a) Requiring the person to remove only his or her overcoat, jacket or similar article of clothing and any gloves, shoes and hat, and,
(b) an examination of those articles.
Strip Search means a search of a person or of articles in their possession, and include,
(a) Requiring the person to remove all of his or her clothes, and,
(b) An examination of the person’s body (but not of the person’s body cavities) and of those clothes.

Note that under law police are empowered to request a person to undergo a search. Police are not allowed to forcibly search a person; any search conducted over the person’s objection would be an assault. However, failure to comply with the request to be searched is an offence.

Powers of Arrest
You cannot arrest a person solely for questioning. The only purpose for which you can arrest a person without a warrant is for the purpose of taking the suspect before a justice to be dealt with according to the law. However, once a person is lawfully arrested, you may detain a person for a reasonable period for the purpose of investigating whether the person committed the offence for which the person is arrested.

When you arrest, unless it is not practical to do so, take the person to a designated police station (or designated place of detention if appropriate) where a custody manager is available. If you cannot do either of the above, take the person to a police station where another officer can act as custody manager.

Safeguards: Police must provide the person before, or at the time of making an arrest, with the following:
Evidence that they are a police officer (unless in uniform), their name and place of duty, the reason for the arrest, and a warning that failure or refusal to comply may be an offence.
Police have coined the acronym “WIPE” to help officers remember these four requirements:
W = warn person that failure to comply may be an offence
I = inform a person of reason for exercise of power
P = provide name and place of duty
E = evidence that officer is a police officer.

When you arrest ensure:
There are reasonable grounds for your suspicion that an offence has been committed by the person.
The arrest is executed with minimum force – if you need to use force, you may only use such as is reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

Reasonable Force
The amount of force you (police) may use will vary according to the resistance to the arrest. You can only use such force as is reasonably necessary to make the arrest or to prevent the escape of the person after arrest. You will be judged on the reasonableness of your actions on the basis of the circumstances at the time.

Right to Communicate
People in custody at a police station or other premises have the right to communicate with a legal representative, friend, relative, guardian, support person or independent person.

Legal Advice
Someone in custody may at any time consult and communicate privately with a legal representative, but within view of police, whether in person or on the phone. Provide reasonable facilities for this to happen without the communication being overheard.
A poster advertising the right to legal advice must be prominently displayed in the charging area of every police station. Do not attempt to dissuade someone from getting legal advice.

Reasonable Grounds
The most important aspect of any charges police may lay is the definition of what constitutes reasonable grounds or a reasonable suspicion. The judgment in the Rondo case (para 53 of A.J. Smart’s) has the following to say regarding reasonable suspicion.
(a) “A reasonable suspicion involves less than a reasonable believe but more than a possibility. There must be something which would create in the mind of a reasonable person and apprehension or fear of one of the state of affairs. A reason to suspect that a fact exists is more than a reason to consider or look into the possibility of its existence. (b) Reasonable suspicion is not arbitrary. Some factual basis for the suspicion must be shown. A suspicion may be based on hearsay material or materials which maybe inadmissible in evidence. The materials must have some probative value.
(c) What is important is the information in the mind of the police officer stopping the person or the vehicle or making the arrest at the time he did so. Having ascertained that information, the question is whether that information afforded reasonable grounds for the suspicion which the police officer formed. In answering that question regard must be had to the source of the information and its content, seen in the light of the whole of the surrounding circumstances.”

Power to Issue Directions
A police officer may give a direction to a person in a public place if they have reasonable grounds to believe that the person’s conduct or presence is: Harassing or intimidating persons; obstructing people or traffic likely to cause fear to a person of reasonable firmness; or for the purpose of obtaining or supplying prohibited drugs. This does not authorise police to give directions in relation to an industrial dispute and apparently genuine demonstration or protest, a procession or organised assembly.

Having read these laws, it’s obvious that the most important aspect of dealing with the police is overcoming the intimidation. We may all have felt some fear at such times when police helicopters hover over our houses, or when they come to town fully armed with guns and tasers. They no longer fit the picture of the approachable policeman on the beat who you could ask for directions. However, the fact that they’re no longer public servants but a public hindrance should not deter a person from knowing their rights and standing up for them. It takes courage and conviction to stand up to bullies both in and out of the school yard in which we all seem to live.

The next time a policeman wants to search you or demand your name, firmly and politely ask him why, and continue to ask until you are completely satisfied. The less fear you show, the more chance you have of walking away. The thing that police hate more than anything is to prosecute the case and lose in court. Let them know you know this. Empowerment and self-confidence are the rewards for bravery.

We recently turned another decade, so where are we as a community?

New Year’s Eve, Melbourne 2010 – Imagine, 45,000 of our younger generation flocking for one major event in one city. What would this event be? Well it thought it would have anything to do with global warming, jobs, the environment or politics, you’d sadly be mistaken.

No, 45,000 of our inglorious youth spent the night at the biggest rave party at one of our converted football stadiums. This in itself is not a bad thing; let’s face it, most generations enjoy the indulgences of New Year’s Eve.

What bothers me is that a good percentage of these young adults (our future), consider it perfectly normal to take ecstasy or ‘eeez’.

I spent my first New Year’s Eve out in Melbourne, since I have been here (11 years) in the city. Now I usually work in pubs and clubs, so let’s just say I’m no prude. There’s not much I haven’t seen in front of me in the 25 years of playing in bands. Furthermore, I am no stranger to drugs and drug culture. Spending my youth in Nimbin and with an open alternative lifestyle conducive to expanding one’s horizon, drugs were always on the agenda, but there is a difference.

Firstly, these are mostly middle-class youth; there is no shortage of designer clothing, hair gel and ‘bling’ adorning their bodies. The difference lies in the fact that this younger generation cares more about money and personal image, than the fact that global warming will probably end human life on this planet, unless we change our culture.

Travelling back on the train at 4 am in the morning with the other 5,000 people was surely an eye opener, even to me. Every one of these ‘kids’ was on ‘eeez’, eyes dilated to the maximum. Maybe because of my upbringing, I can tell who is on what drugs, but the enormity of it all even amazed me. These are our sons and daughters, future doctors and lawyers, teachers and parents.

My time in the city reinforces my thoughts that salvation will not come from our younger generations. This is a culture built on alcohol, drugs, casual sex and gambling, promoted by governments, with not so hidden agendas.

Broadening its tax base with its ‘Alcopops’ tax, outwardly saying we don’t want young people to have access to easy drinking. But in reality broadening their tax base as they know young people will pay more, a standard drink in a club in the city costs $10 these days. Statistics tell us most people average 12.4 drinks, times that by the 3000 licensed venues in Melbourne alone and it’s not hard to see why the government wants people to drink, smoke and gamble. They all deliver the same result.

As a parent of 8 month old twins, I truly fear for their safety. To send my children off to a school infested with drugs and morally void children, due to their parents is of utmost concern to me. The truth is I could never let my children grow up in an environment that will eventually destroy all humanity within them. The city will eventually fall, they will then flock to the rolling hills, in search of water and power, surely the commodities that this country will cease to produce first.

Growing up with an environmentally aware parent gave me two things, the knowledge that yes, the world is in trouble, and also sadly, the knowledge that society is in total denial that any problem exists. Our children are our future, blank hard drives if you will; surely governments have an obligation to provide the correct information to them through schools, and by example. If commercialism is all that runs the world, we will all eventually fall. What will I do as a parent? Well, I will do everything I can to provide my children with the information they need to not only survive, but to inspire. My question is this; will all my work be undone the day they walk into a government school?

Footnote:
Mark is an expat. Nimbindian, and was one of the ‘green warriors’ at Mt Nardi in 1982.

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Overhearing their conversations was not hard, they speak openly and proudly about what drugs they have taken, meanwhile my partner has to let a young girl of maybe 17 take her seat as she has just thrown up in an empty McDonalds bag, eyes dilated and clearly in distress. While a drunken moron twice her age decides he likes the look of her and tries in vain to pick her up for the next thirty minutes, while she clearly fights back more regurgitation.

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Fish Out of Water [Tales from the city]
Mark Dayman

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My time in the city reinforces my thoughts that salvation will not come from our younger generations. This is a culture built on alcohol, drugs, casual sex and gambling, promoted by governments, with not so hidden agendas.

Broadening its tax base with its ‘Alcopops’ tax, outwardly saying we don’t want young people to have access to easy drinking. But in reality broadening their tax base as they know young people will pay more, a standard drink in a club in the city costs $10 these days. Statistics tell us most people average 12.4 drinks, times that by the 3000 licensed venues in Melbourne alone and it’s not hard to see why the government wants people to drink, smoke and gamble. They all deliver the same result.

As a parent of 8 month old twins, I truly fear for their safety. To send my children off to a school infested with drugs and morally void children, due to their parents is of utmost concern to me. The truth is I could never let my children grow up in an environment that will eventually destroy all humanity within them. The city will eventually fall, they will then flock to the rolling hills, in search of water and power, surely the commodities that this country will cease to produce first.

Growing up with an environmentally aware parent gave me two things, the knowledge that yes, the world is in trouble, and also sadly, the knowledge that society is in total denial that any problem exists. Our children are our future, blank hard drives if you will; surely governments have an obligation to provide the correct information to them through schools, and by example. If commercialism is all that runs the world, we will all eventually fall. What will I do as a parent? Well, I will do everything I can to provide my children with the information they need to not only survive, but to inspire. My question is this; will all my work be undone the day they walk into a government school?

Footnote:
Mark is an expat. Nimbindian, and was one of the ‘green warriors’ at Mt Nardi in 1982.
Orgasmic Universe
Tarang Bates

Do we as humans have dominion over all other beings? Do we as adults have dominion over children? Do we light people have dominion over dark people and how about straight people over bent people, men over women and so on? These seem to me delusions that society has created, based on some sort of egocentric arrogance – usually based on religious fervour, all in the name of “God”.

The concept of a “God” being who is in human form for starters, is somewhat of an egocentric assumption. It seems far more likely in my experience, that there is a vibrant and sacred life-force radiating through every one of us – brown people, white people, green people, pink people and so on, through the earth and all who exist upon the earth – including the trees, mountains, rivers and animals.

To imagine that one is more superior to the other, doesn't take into account the fact that none of us would be here if not for the sacred life energy within us all. Of course our individual, exterior physical expressions are all unique and I suppose if a person is operating from a purely externalized reality, there is bound to be some form of judgemental delusion.

Personally I don't relate to the source of the sacred energy as a being in human form, or to us humans here on earth being the only life forms within the vast, infinite universe.

What lies beyond my perception is not of my concern, it seems enough to practice “the momentary magic of the presence of sacred energy” in fact I think I might start up the Church of the Momentary Magic of the presence of Sacred Energy ... no ... only kidding, although there are always the freaks who will latch on to anything with a whiff of the sacred about it and stretch it out of all proportion!!!

It is also certain that perception is entirely capable of extending way beyond the boundaries of normally accepted reality, as that perception extends then obviously it becomes part of my reality.

I can see that giving the unknown source the name God could be a good thing – no matter. The sacred is the sacred is the sacred. To honour the life-force within us all is to be connecting and respecting ... no need to fight or have wars over who is “right” about the origins. To be in contact with this energy is to be in love and quite frankly – if you dare – to be in a state of orgasm with the universe.

On Extra-Sensory Perception
Peter Pedals

To the blind man, sight is extra-sensory, because it is outside of his range of perceptions, especially if he was blind since birth, so that he doesn't even have a memory of seeing. Likewise is hearing to the deaf man. We may describe the blind man or the deaf man as handicapped. Surely a dolphin or a bat would likewise regard a human as handicapped because we don't have sonar vision or a dog would consider us handicapped because we have such a poor olfactory (smelling) organ. Most migratory animals have a far more acute sense of magnetism. Some human beings have a far more acute sense of electromagnetic fields than others. There are so many different stimuli and sensations that we could be aware of, but generally are not aware of. We call these sensations “Extra-sensory perception”. Once we become aware of a sense and name it, extra-sensory becomes sensory.
Cars Without Windows

Peter Pedals

There was a massive recall of Toyota hybrid vehicles recently. It was reported that on rough roads there was a delay in the braking system as the computer software was having a problem making up its mind between applying the regenerative braking system which extracts energy out of the wheels to recharge the battery and the normal braking system. When I heard this I thought how confused it may be if it had a Windows operating system where you have to press the start button in order to stop. Furthermore, if you have a major problem you have to first close all the windows and then reboot the computer. MS Windows evades any liability issues by displaying “You have performed an illegal function” on the screen whenever anything goes wrong, no matter what the cause (stuff that had nothing to do with what you did). I’m a bit wary of putting my life in the hands of a computer after having experienced so many computer crashes over the years. I’d feel safer to have a regenerative brake and a separate failsafe old fashioned brake where I make the choice as to which one to apply. In an emergency it would make sense to apply both without locking the wheels up. I don’t like the idea of hurtling down a country road and having a sudden computer crash where the computer had total control until that moment.

Close all windows and hit the start button when you want to stop.

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Consume, Be Silent, and Die

Sophia Hoeben

My friend looked depressed. She tells me that listening to the morning news made her despair over the perverse nature of human beings, both in the world and in her own community. What’s the point of fighting it, she asks. She is not a fighter, just a mother and grandmother who wanted a brighter future, one in which her children and all children could live and flourish. She has my sympathy. I know her to be a sensitive and intelligent soul. Empathy also dwells amongst my many feelings, for like her, I suffer increasing difficulty in dealing with the madness I perceive in the world.

Once, many years ago when our chances of saving the local forests looked grim, we stood up to the loggers together, and won. We were younger then, and so were the corporate giants, loggers and miners. Nowadays we wouldn’t stand a chance!

What’s the point in trying any longer she asks, when they have all the power. What else can we do? Dig a hole and lie down and bury ourselves? I ask her. No! I maintain we must never give up the fight for this beautiful planet we live on. I know solidarity is hard to attain, but really, what choice do we have?

Back in the early seventies there was a car-sticker which said simply, ‘Question Authority’. Granted it was an era of protest, and being actively engaged in questioning the powers-that-be is as to what was befalling our world. As a practitioner of Raja yoga, I naturally took the saying to mean the questioning of all inner authority as well as outer authority. This bit of wisdom is surely needed today more than ever. The extent of conditioning and propaganda fed us since birth is so overwhelmingly complex as to completely eliminate our natural character and personality. Sensitive souls rarely handle it well, usually ending up with either alcohol or other drug dependencies, or a psychosis from which they rarely recover. If we could just see it all in front of us (like the inbox on a computer), we could decipher it and either delete or save it, as we see fit. However, the removal of ‘brain-spam’ is a little harder than pressing a delete button. Firstly, we would have to remove all associations, i.e. parental upbringing, schooling, peer pressure input, T.V. and political propaganda. Easy to say, hard to do, but it’s worth it! Secondly, we would have to see ourselves clearly without all these ‘overcoats’. Find out who we really are without that devil of an ego! Yes, ego is a dirty word in my book, hold onto it and you won’t learn a thing. After all, nobody knows better than you, right?

Letting all that go, we come to fear, and subsequently insecurity. This can cause us to try to compensate for the things we think are missing from our lives. Insecurity is a really big problem in the world. It is actually the cause of much disaster for it breeds greed, violence and hatred in the long run. Short-term it causes envy, low-esteem and sickness of the soul, self-abuse or the abuse of others. All of these negative outlooks and emotions are actually causing the demise of our physical and social world. Follow the links. Fear breeds insecurity (this is why the so-called security forces use it as a weapon against the people). Insecurity breeds all of the above plus a lust for consumerism. We all feel better when we eat or buy something. The compulsive consumerism of today’s manic society will spell the end of many life forms on this good Earth. Do we give up and go shopping, or keep active, resist and speak out for the Earth?
I migrated to Australia in 1973 from the USA after a history of opposition to the Viet Nam War. I served as a Curatorial officer with the Western Australian Museum before re-locating to the Northern Rivers in the 1980’s where my partner Daniele and I built our own house on a disused dairy farm at Lillian Rock, within earshot of the Kyogle-Munwillumbah connecting road. We planted hundreds of trees…and we hugged them. We also managed a tourist facility in Kingscliff on the Tweed coast and currently are self-funded retirees living part of each week at the farm and part at Kingscliff. We have children and grandchildren in each location.

I helped form No Rally Group (NRG) as an expression of popular opposition to the announcement by the NSW state government that a contract had been signed for a series of car rallies to run over 10 years in the Tweed – Kyogle region. No one asked us. During April & May of 2009 more than 2000 residents signed a petition calling for Tweed Council to reject the rally’s Development Application. Rally organizers got nervous and asked the NSW state government to circumvent normal planning processes, which they did by special enabling legislation. NRG quickly started another petition, with 3000 signatures presented to NSW Parliament by MLC Ian Cohen (Greens) in June. Local parliamentarians amended that Act to include a review provision “…to determine whether future rally events should be conducted in that region.” (Note : the wording does not specify World Rally Championship but all motor rallies.)

There are many and varied reasons for opposing the imposition of a World Rally Championship motor car event upon this region.

1. Wrong place - This is probably the most inappropriate place in NSW to host such a high speed motor racing event. This region is renowned for its biodiversity, high conservation value and is a magnet for people who appreciate nature-based activities. The residents have a high degree of concern for protection of the environment generally and a lifestyle that cherishes the natural splendor of our region.

2. Outdated & obsolete - I also believe that the era of the car crash rally is finished, at a time when ecology is gaining priority over meaningless entertainment and crass commercialism. To put taxpayer funding into a destructive, obsolete event when the public wants essential services seems insane.

3. Low economic return - The Repco Rally proponents claimed that the rally would “bring significant economic benefit” to the area. They made widely-publicized promises of $20 million and later $31 million additional profit to local business. We challenge them to provide incontrovertible evidence for their claims. We demand a cost-benefit analysis that includes the full costs of secret contract arrangements for public funding. Western Australia booted out the rally because the same promises there failed to materialize. The WA state government paid the Rally $6.8 M sponsorship in 2005, the last year there, and said good riddance. When the costs of 180 extra police, helicopters, ambulance crews, RTA, officials and guests included the NSW public has been hit for about $8 M. Tweed and Kyogle Councils made direct grants totalling more than $235,000 plus in-kind support with staff and facilities secondment. We might have given some of that money to the few local organizations which made a little money from sausage and beer sales and still financed improvements to our hospitals instead. It’s our money, why aren’t we asked … or even informed?

4. Not sporting – The only other reason given by rally proponents is that “it’s fun” or “it’s sport.” I think that people should rightly pay for their own “fun.” As a sports fan, I regard the rally’s relationship to sport as similar to what rape is to love: it is never appropriate when forced. The Rally uses its political connections to get governments to sponsor an elite event: it throws all its power into preventing the locals from having a say about the use and abuse of the infrastructure paid for by local rates & taxes over a lifetime. How “sporting” is that? No one seriously believes no mandate to spend taxpayers funds on such frivolity and certainly none to override decades of legal structure in order to promote a spectator event that benefits a foreign elite at the expense of the residents. If any government of the day can use “special legislation” to get its way, then we in Australia have no democratic protection against a political rort of the sort that Hitler and his National Socialists achieved in Germany during the 1930s. This may seem an extreme statement, but I challenge anyone to gainsay it. I trained in History (BA, University of Hawaii,1971) and have been involved in politics in Australia (at various times a member of the Nuclear Disarmament Party, the ALP and I was the Australian Democrats candidate for Richmond at the last Federal election.)

5. Cars are not toys – the misuse of motor vehicles in this way promotes an image of “fun” and glamour to a wasteful and unproductive activity. The young and impressionable then try to emulate their heroes. The resulting car crashes cost our society dearly in terms of human suffering and lost production, medical services and much more. Careful drivers and indeed pedestrians can become innocent victims of motor hooning. Rally fans throw objects from their car windows and are being yelled at as “Get a Life.” I say to them “Grow up.”

6. Attack on democratic traditions – probably the most serious complaint is the way in which the government has brought in “special events” legislation. The current political leadership has no mandate to spend taxpayers funds on such frivolity and certainly none to override decades of legal structure in order to promote a spectator event that benefits a foreign elite at the expense of the residents. If any government of the day can use “special legislation” to get its way, then we in Australia have no democratic protection against a political rort of the sort that Hitler and his National Socialists achieved in Germany during the 1930s. This may seem an extreme statement, but I challenge anyone to gainsay it. I trained in History (BA, University of Hawaii,1971) and have been involved in politics in Australia (at various times a member of the Nuclear Disarmament Party, the ALP and I was the Australian Democrats candidate for Richmond at the last Federal election.)

7. Social division - The situation has many elements reminiscent of the Viet Nam War years. Many of the residents in the Northern Rivers region have spent much of their lives planting trees and cultivating a low-impact lifestyle. We found the population along the roads affected by the Rally to be capable of considerable energy (NRG?) and creativity in their opposition to this type of event vastly at odds with their respect for nature.

The running of the Repco Rally in 2009 was greeted by hundreds of demonstrators representing thousands of rural residents. More people join our movement every day. We have no leaders so the inventiveness and effectiveness of each is maximized.

The experiences of 2009 will enable the more radical among us to more easily disrupt the running of any future rally events. No amount of policing can prevent that. Remember that the Viet Cong defeated the world’s most powerful military-industrial complex and their local client regimes.

We are like the Viet Cong: we live here. The government is arrogant and unrepresentative, subservient to foreign interests. Anytime the peace of our region is threatened we will be aroused to repel the invaders.

Opposition to the rally among local residents will not go away. This event needs to go away. At the very least it needs to pay its own way: That would be the death of it. RIP Repco.
Silimalombu, North Sumatra, Indonesia
Hello from Samosir Island in magnificent Lake Toba - the world's largest crater lake - on the equatorial island of Sumatra. This huge lake (1,130 sq. km) was formed after a volcanic explosion about 70,000 years ago so massive that it is believed to have wiped out much of life on earth at the time (including about 90% of humans).

We are alive and well among the Batak tribe. I often refer to them affectionately as the 'country bumpkins' of Indonesia. We have been for several weeks in the small settlement of Silimalombu, which clings to the steep slopes of the lake's edge with about 10 homes, a church (yes, they are Christian) and a few dozen workers' cottages and shacks. We were invited to Silimalombu by an Indonesian diplomat in Melbourne who was born and grew up here. He remembers the days when he was young and his village was pure, back before the days of throwaway plastic packaging and massive fish farms. And before his ambitious younger brother took over the ancestral home and turned it into a chaotic industrial site and fish-waste dump zone.

Over the past five years our diplomat friend has been able to tolerate little time in his formerly beloved village. The smell of putrefying fish and burning plastic has been more than he could bear. He has invited us to Silimalombu in the hope that perhaps we could help develop a recycling and waste management program similar to the one we helped to set up a few years ago in Sukunan, near Yogyakarta, Central Java.

(For more info see: <www.arts.monash.edu.au/mai/research/sukunan>). In exchange for our help, he has kindly provided our air tickets and promises of all the rice and fish we can eat. Ne'er does pass up a free meal. Lea and I jumped at the chance to return to Sumatra (which happens to be one of my favourite regions on the Earth).

At Silimalombu our bedroom is located on concrete stilts over the lake. We walk carefully to the kitchen in the main building five metres away for our generous portions of fish and rice and the occasional offering of mystery meat. We step carefully over sharp-edged pipes, jagged bits of scrap metal, 44-gallon drums,或是 vanishing piles of 'road'. Most of the forest has been felled. The villagers have scrapped out a ledge along the lake's edge where they have built their houses. The soil among the rock is very fertile, and all manner of fruit trees and vegetables could be grown if they were protected from free-ranging animals. Alas, numerous pigs, chickens and ducks survive on these precarious plots. All are eaten or sold for meat. The people here are quite obsessed with flesh eating in many forms (in-laws were once a favourite). They seem to have little interest in eating fruits or vegetables.

Silimalombu is largely controlled by one family that owns most of the land, animals, and several boats that provide transport to the mainland town of Parapat. The family also manages a Swiss-owned fish farming enterprise (tilapia, a species from the Nile delta) that employs many people at subsistence wages. Fish are fed almost constantly in densely packed cages in the lake. Many fish die (of unknown causes), providing a bonus to the villagers of cheap somewhat-freshly-dead fish.

Although they remain enthusiastic flesh-eaters, we are happy to say that the Bataks have abandoned cannibalism (according to reports, since 1816). Other positive traits are that they have an earthy sense of humour, and they will tell you what they really think. And they do not take offence easily, which is always a quality I appreciate. Bataks tend to be very patriarchal. Women do most of the work (as in most cultures). Men cultivate their skills as chess and guitar players. They drink a lot of coffee and alcohol (not at the same time) in men-only venues. Personally, I think the men lack a full appreciation of women, but I observe that this seems to be common in most societies around the world.

Compared to the largely rice and vegetable eating Javanese, with whom I've had more contact, the meat-obsessed Bataks can be a coarse, sometimes rude people. The Bataks were hunters. In the past, the Bataks lived in the hills rather than rice growers living in plains and valleys. This is reflected in their meat diet and often cool avertig gaze when encountering strangers. The Javanese by comparison are very warm and polite and more socially skilled. They have needed teamwork to grow wet rice with elaborate irrigation systems that require constant maintenance. Javanese social cohesiveness may explain their relative success in Indonesia, which has been described as a Javanese colonial empire. Keen to avoid potential conflict and disagreement, Javanese are not likely to directly say what they really think. (You have to read between the lines.) They place great emphasis on harmony and cooperation - skills needed to cope in densely populated Java.

The Bataks, by contrast, do not have a history of cooperation. Their population was sparse and dispersed. Lake Toba was an easy place to live with a mild climate, abundant fish, clean water, wildlife, and timber. They had everything they needed without having to go far. Without a need to cooperate, the Bataks could afford to indulge in constant hostilities among their clans and neighbouring groups. They did not even maintain trails between villages.

A Swiss firm named "Regal Springs" set up fish farming in Lake Toba beginning around 1999. (Google them to read how environmentally responsible they claim to be.) There can be 50 to 100 cages located in the waters off each village. Over the years, stocking rates have gradually increased to maximize profits (90% of which go out of Indonesia). Now each cage contains thousands of densely packed fish. Fish are stressed and many die, probably from overfeeding, overcrowding and lack of oxygen. We have been told that the fish grown here cannot be imported into Europe because their levels of antibiotics are too high. So they are exported primarily to the USA! Please look for frozen tilapia fish in your supermarket and let me know how much it costs.

Every day, dead fish are collected from the cages. About 75% of these (the best of the lot) are taken away by the company. The remaining 25% are taken by boat to the village shore where they are sorted by local women. All but the most visibly decomposed of these are scaled, gutted, salted, dried in the sun, and then sold to Indonesian consumers. (Salted dried fish is the cheapest form of animal protein in Indonesia.) This has become a major income earner for the women of the village. Along with the scales and fish guts, those fish too rotten to process are tossed at the edge of the lake to be gnawed upon by pigs and dogs as they rot and wash into the lake with the daily rains. The stench is extreme.

We are gathering growing evidence that the fish farming is contributing significant pollution to the lake via excess fish food, faeces, antibiotics and putrefying fish carcasses. This seems to be the most immediate problem that we are faced with. (There are others, but I don't want to overwhelm the reader.) Using the dead fish as a resource to produce bio-gas (methane) and fertilizer seems to be a real possibility. We will keep you posted on developments. Stay tuned for the next instalment.

Indonesia is a wonderful and diverse country - thousands of tropical islands strung out for 3000 miles along the equator! We encourage you to visit. Email me for tips. Lake Toba is one of the natural wonders of the world - and except for a few "hot spots" - is very clean. Great swimming and hiking! A clean, comfortable room in a guesthouse with magic views of lake and mountains can be had for less than $5 per night. (or about $2 if you, like me, don't require hot water!)

Live simply so that others may simply live. Better to light a small candle than to curse the darkness.
In 1998 I spent most of a year living and working in Havana, Cuba. I’m not sure how valuable it was to the Cubans. One of the very first tenets of permaculture is protracted and thoughtful observation, and here I was flying into a completely foreign climate and culture and trying to teach it. There were moments when world views shifted, and I still receive news of ongoing successes, but the ethics and economics of foreign aid delivery is a bigger and much more fraught question.

I am sure though about how valuable it was to me. Back then climate change and peak oil were both distant blimps on the radar. As Australians, especially Australians from the Northern Rivers, we were hugely wealthy and pretty well took our wealth for granted. My partner and our kids, (then 10 and 13) and I learned really deeply how fragile our wealth is.

As we head into the kind of changes climate change will bring on, Cuba has some huge lessons, hard won from experience and now very relevant.

1998 was seven years into the “Special Period” in Cuba’s history. Until the early 1990’s, the average Cuban had pretty much the same standard of living as an Australian hippy on the dole. That is, not exactly affluent but certainly not lacking any essentials. You could catch a bus, buy food in the supermarket, turn on the tap and water flowed out. Cuba was, like Australia, an urban and suburban culture. The big agricultural crops were sugar and tobacco grown for export and Cubans were only vaguely aware that their staple bread was made from flour imported from Europe.

Then the Soviet Union collapsed, Cuba lost most of its export market, which meant no money for imports. The US blockade stopping any trade with anyone else didn’t help. All of a sudden, within a period of months, there was no oil.

It is hard for Australians to really imagine what this would be like. It was hard for Cubans to imagine too! No food on the supermarket shelves, no buses, no diesel for agricultural machinery or the pumps that kept the city water flowing, blackouts, no garbage trucks. Not exactly none, but so little that for the ordinary person the effect was drastic.

Cubans coped. Amazingly, inspiring, courageously and peacefully, they coped. But by the time we were there, seven years into the special period, life was still a huge struggle. My ten-year-old’s classmates were a good foot shorter than him (and Cubans have the genes for tall). My thirteen-year-old’s life was still a huge struggle. My ten-year-old’s classmates were a good foot shorter than him (and Cubans have the genes for tall). My ten-year-old’s classmates were a good foot shorter than him (and Cubans have the genes for tall). My twelve-year-old’s life was still a huge struggle. My ten-year-old’s classmates were a good foot shorter than him (and Cubans have the genes for tall).

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5. Keep stock. Another of the early initiatives of the Cuban government was to distribute chicks. The big intensive chicken farms were no longer viable – no bulk feed and no way to refrigerate or transport the product. But people could raise a few chickens on their rooftop or courtyard, feeding them from scavenged food and garbage and weeds and stripping the trees in parks. They went at least some way to mitigating protein deficiencies. The really well-off people were those who had a breeding stock of rabbits, chickens, fish, pigeons, or even pigs (though in inner-city Havana there were many neighbourly disputes with the pig-keepers!). Fish bred in tiny ponds were a really valuable food source. Eggs were so valuable they were black market currency.

6. Have a skill that is of genuine value to your neighbours. Trade became very local, but those with skills needed by their community still had something to trade. Health professionals, farmers and gardeners, mechanics and engineers, electricians and welders all had wealth that the Special Period couldn’t take away. By the time we were there, in 1998, musicians, dancers, artists and writers also had a tradeable skill.

If, as seems very likely, we are heading into our own “Special Period” it may be wise to learn from Cuba’s experience and prepare some small things that make a big difference.

Nimbin News Quarterly #7 Autumn 2010
The New Killer Debate

Peter Pedals

I am horrified to learn how many ‘former’ environmentalists have been hoodwinked by the propaganda from the pro-nuclear lobby. It was so convenient when CO2 came to be seen as a major cause for global warming to then suggest that because nuclear power produces less CO2, that it must then be somehow ‘greener’ than coal power and part of the global solution to global warming. It was the nuclear industry that came up with the promotional idea to call nuclear energy ‘green’. With a worldwide media campaign and the assistance of government ministers, with environmental scientists on their payroll and with big name converts from the environmental movement they launched into a very successful campaign to convince people that nuclear power should be an integral part of our energy mix.

We have also seen the nuclear for peace campaign. It’s the nuclear power stations that are used to produce the ‘weapons grade’ material and the so-called depleted uranium used in tank busting missiles and shielding against missiles. It is the same companies that manufacture the power stations and the weapons.

Anywhere in the world where nuclear power has generated electricity for the homes, it has been heavily subsidised in order to make it affordable. Nuclear power has never been cost effective when compared to coal power. Photovoltaic solar modules are now very close to the point of being cost competitive with coal fired electricity. This is borne out by the fact that it is now almost impossible to get a loan to build another coal-fired power station. It has thus been an economic decision by the NSW government to introduce the gross Feed-In-Tariff (FIT). Paying people sixty cents per kilowatt-hour of solar generated electricity works out to be a cheaper option than building another coal-fired power station.

I often hear mention of 250,000 years in regard to radioactive decay. I don’t know where the 250,000 year figure came from, because the half-life of Uranium 238 is about 4.47 billion years and the half-life of Uranium 235 is about 704 million years. Half-life means that it loses half of its radioactivity. Uranium 238 will again lose half of the radioactivity that remains after 4.47 billion years in the next 4.47 billion years and so on. The radioactivity will in effect go on for an eternity. Whilst undergoing radioactive decay uranium will yield a range of other radioactive elements. All these daughter elements are more radioactive than uranium, including protactinium, thorium, radium and radon. Radon is given off as a gas and is easily breathed in and will again break down into half a dozen radioactive elements including polonium. One byproduct of nuclear fission is plutonium. Polonium and plutonium are two of the most toxic substances known to man. A quantity as small as one single atom will kill in a relatively short period of time, causing immense suffering in the process. Other fission products include iodine 131, strontium 90, cesium 137 and krypton 85. All these products are hazardous to all earthly life forms.

The total radiation delivered by the Chernobyl accident worldwide was caused by just a couple of kilograms of radioactive material from the damaged nuclear plant. The fission products are completely different from the products of the natural decay of uranium. They are created only inside nuclear weapons and nuclear reactors. They are the leftover pieces of uranium atoms which have been violently broken apart. There are over 300 of them. Each fission product then again has its own decay products.

It is not just the sale of uranium to politically unstable countries that you need to worry about. There is no guarantee that the sale of uranium to politically stable countries will not be used to bombard a civilian population in an illegal war (eg Iraq). The US is the only nation in the world to have used an atom bomb against a civilian population and continues to be one of a few allied nations that use depleted uranium missiles against the ‘enemy’. Depleted uranium still contains plenty of uranium 235 and uranium 238 as these isotopes are very difficult to extract. A depleted uranium missile burns as it flies through the air and is constantly giving off uranium oxide particles so small that they can remain suspended in the air for a long time. Birth defects and cancer continues to rise well after the end of the Gulf War. The Gulf War veterans also display the same cancers and birth defects as the affected people in Iraq with symptoms not usually seen in the US civilian population. If we are not going to sell uranium to politically unstable countries like Iraq, Pakistan and India, then we should not sell uranium to politically stable countries like the US and Britain either. Some politically unstable countries may well be unstable because of meddling by politically stable countries, especially the US.

Tests were carried out after the atom bombs were exploded in the atmosphere above Hiroshima and Nagasaki to ascertain the harmful effects of nuclear radiation upon the human population. These statistical results have been cited and used as a benchmark to this day. Hiroshima and Nagasaki got heavily irradiated over a very short period of time from a blast high in the atmosphere and the radioactive fall-out was then carried around the world by the air currents. It is not relevant to use such studies in relation to Chernobyl or Iraq. These locations remain heavily contaminated with radioactive particles which have settled on the ground in quite high concentrations. The environmental and health consequences of contamination with radioactive particles is much more serious and long term than the consequences of radiation alone. The ongoing effect of genetic damage will be passed on to future generations except of course where the deformities are so great that the offspring do not survive for long.

Nuclear (I call it New Killer) power is neither cheap nor clean and the legacy of its use and the genetic mutations caused by it will haunt us for an eternity.
In the foothills of the Flinders Ranges some 120 square kilometres have been set aside for the Four Mile uranium mine.

In-Situ-Leach (ISL) uranium mining
In-Situ-Leach (ISL) uranium mining is the chosen method of mining. ISL involves the massive contamination of groundwater with radionuclides, heavy metals and leaching chemicals. The mining companies had asked to be allowed to contaminate the groundwater of the mine aquifer within the 120 square kilometre mining lease area without having to restore it afterwards to pre-mining conditions, to just leave it contaminated – World's Worst Practice for ISL mining. Peter Garrett allowed it, even called it World's Best Practice. Even worse, he allowed the unlimited contamination (radioactive, heavy metal, leaching chemicals) of all aquifers at the mine site. This was not even asked for.

The mining lease area is some 120 square kilometres, probably some fifty times larger than the actual mining area. This means that the groundwater of a huge area can be contaminated without remediation. "For Australia, water of any quality is precious, and particularly so when the only secure supply of water in a region is from groundwater. With the rise of water treatment technologies such as desalination, water of any quality is a valuable resource" [Dr. Gavin Mudd, hydrogeologist, Monash University, 2007, in "In-Situ Leach (ISL) Uranium Mining Method Far From 'Benign' " There are three aquifers at the actual mine site. Also, the Great Artesian Basin (GAB) aquifer is nearby. It has not been clarified whether the GAB extends onto the mining lease.

The use of an aquifer to dump liquid radioactive wastes
In addition to the contamination of the groundwater at the mine site, the proposal also involves the injection of the radioactive liquid wastes from the processing of Four Mile ore into an aquifer at the neighbouring Beverley mine. Such a practice directly contravenes a recommendation by the 2003 Senate References and Legislation Committee report into the regulation of uranium mining in Australia:

"Failing that, the Committee recommends that at the very least, mines utilising ISL technique should be subject to strict regulation, including prohibition of discharge of radioactive liquid mine waste to groundwater, and ongoing, regular independent monitoring to ensure environmental impacts are minimised."

Again, Garrett approved the injection of radioactive waste into groundwater, some 150 million litres per year, and that for 20 years

No ongoing, regular independent monitoring
The above quote from the Senate Committee also requests "ongoing, regular independent monitoring". There is very good reason for this request. Nearly all Four Mile baseline measurements have been performed by the affiliated mining companies Heathgate and Quasar themselves. Much depends on those baseline data in terms of assessing the future environmental impact of the mine. Also, the in any case inappropriate claims that the aquifers are not good for anything but mining and can therefore remain contaminated has been based on those baseline data. Even out-sourced reports are based on data and samples supplied by the mining companies.

According to the government's Recommendation Report, Heathgate and Quasar are both subsidiaries of General Atomics, a US nuclear and weapons company which in turn is owned by the Blue brothers. General Atomics is producing the Predator and Reaper drones which are now being used by the US to kill by remote control people in countries which don't submit. It appears these drones are some sort of personal hobby of Neil Blue. He is also on the record of suggesting to the US government deceptive measures to trigger war with Nicaragua.

The environmental record of the General Atomics group is controversial. There have been numerous proceedings before the US-NRC (Nuclear Regulatory Commission) involving General Atomics subsidiaries. Heathgate operates the neighbouring Beverley mine and is proposed to operate also Four Mile. Heathgate has a record of some eighty spills at the Beverley uranium mine. Heathgate also had the tendency to send a spy to the environment group Friends of the Earth (FOE). I can't see any reason to trust these companies, but Peter Garrett obviously does.

Short list of the subsequent steps
Uranium mining always means contamination in the mining area. But this is not all. Once the uranium has been mined and extracted, a large sequence of steps follows till it finally ends up as nuclear weapons or radioactive waste:

- First, the uranium is transported to a conversion plant where it is converted into uranium hexafluoride.
- This is then transported to an enrichment facility where it is enriched for the requirements of a nuclear reactor.
- From there the uranium is transported to a fuel fabrication plant where the actual fuel rods are manufactured.
- The fuel rods are then transported to a nuclear reactor where some of the uranium turns into plutonium. Indeed, reactors are usually rather plutonium factories, with electricity being a by-product.
- The spent fuel is then taken to a reprocessing facility where the plutonium created in the reactor is extracted from the spent fuel. From there the plutonium goes into storage or directly to a nuclear weapons plant.

All these steps involve radioactive emissions, radioactive wastes and contamination. There are many risks of accidents. And there are no solutions for the safe disposal of the radioactive wastes.

The risks and consequences are:

- Risks associated with transport between all stages
- Routine radioactive contamination at all stages
- Certainty of accidents at all stages
- Potential of military attack on any of the facilities
- Potential of catastrophic accident at nuclear reactors / plutonium factories
- Certainty of permanent and ever increasing contamination of the planet due to the wastes
- Ever increasing deception and oppression
- Loss of democracy
- Depleted Uranium (DU) wars
- Nuclear wars
- Global nuclear war and extinction

Those affected by routine, accidental or intentional contamination may suffer one or several of the following consequences:

- Cancers
- Birth defects
- Still births
- Shortened life expectancy
- Compromised immune system
- Mental retardation
- and a near infinite number of other diseases

In some areas in Iraq, where the US and UK used DU weapons, cancers and birth defects have increased more than twenty-fold. Only a minute fraction of the existing DU wastes, less than 1%, has been used so far. This DU will remain radioactive for billions of years.

Future generations will have to live with an ever increasing burden of genetic damage and numerous diseases as more and more radioactive wastes breach their confinements and enter the biosphere - for up to billions of years.

Depleted uranium weapons used in Iraq and Afghanistan

Our uranium is causing horrific deformities and killing people!

Stop Uranium Mining
Shamanism in Andean and Amazonian South America

Part Two

Rob Bruce

I wish to discuss aspects of sorcery in the practice of shamanism in Latin America, including a brief critique of some western assumptions about the nature and reality of sorcery.

From my work with shamans in Latin America two fundamentally opposed images of the nature and role of their professional activities emerged. The first was that of shamans as charismatic keepers of a vast and remarkable body of archaic knowledge and techniques that they employed with unerring success to the benefit of their communities, often at the expense of the individual. The second was that of shamans as human being, part of the human world, subject to all its limitations and failures. The image of the shaman as the sacred healer; as the wise and altruistic protector of the cultural, physical, and psychic integrity of his or her people is pervasive, both in the ethnographic and other academic literature, as well as in the popular imagination. The second image, however, and the one articulated far less frequently, illuminates a darker, less favourable aspect of shamans and their activities. This image reveals the destructive capacities of shamans; their role as enforcers of social conformity within their communities, their capacity and intent to inflict sickness, morbidity and death. The fact that their techniques were, for conduct conducted on their own behalf, for their own purposes, for their own benefit, is largely irrelevant in such an environment immediately arouses the suspicions of the locals. Given the fervent Roman Catholicism pervasive in the region, and considering the fact that the people in question still retained their pre-Colombian beliefs about the spirit world and death, the man was not just a ‘crazy westerner,’ whose weird behaviours and cultural faux-pas would be more tolerated. Rather, he was one of their own, with a long history of antisocial behaviour that they were far less inclined to forgive.

Also condemning the man was the severe drought that was then affecting the countryside and its farmers in the region. He was blamed for this as well, and so was thought to be causing it by petitioning the devil himself with his village’s witchcraft accusers. It was felt that, had the man interceded on his behalf in this matter, cursing the sky and commanding it to give no rain. Also, the man never went to church, and he was seen gardening on his farm on occasion completely naked. Just to give an example of how conservative remote rural villagers in Ecuador and Peru can be, when I visited some of these places it was still absolutely unacceptable for men to wear shorts. Indigenous men may have done so, but those of mixed-blood visiting town would never do so wearing shorts. People daily bathed in the rivers in their underpants, but to be totally naked was totally unacceptable.

Given the fervent Roman Catholicism pervasive in the region, and considering the fact that the people in question still retained their pre-Colombian beliefs about the spirit world and death, the man’s fate was never in question.

Sealing that fate was his apparent confession. In the western anthropological literature it is generally assumed that all people punished for practising witchcraft are hapless victims of primitive superstition. In their arrogance, western anthropologists have mostly concluded that real witches don’t exist and therefore all persecutions of witches are entirely unjustified, barbaric acts of criminality. But here, apparently, we discover in question declaring “Alright, so you caught me fair and square. I am a witch. I deserve my punishment. I tried to kill the children and I did kill those two last year that the doctor from Loja thought was malaria. I’ve been at it for decades and I couldn’t do it enough.”

The realities of sorcery remain a perennial problem for anthropologists. Symbolic, structuralist and functionalist interpretations obfuscate the proper significance of the role and influence of sorcerers and sorcery beliefs in Latin America and the wider world. Anthropologists have long assumed that some of the activities of brujos, such as assuming the form of a jaguar, tarp, anaconda, condor or other animal, becoming invisible, hurling spiritual darts into the bodies of others, among other activities, are beyond the realm of human possibility, and that consequently, no person is ever truly guilty of sorcery, that the proper study of sorcery ought therefore only focus upon why innocent persons are so accused. Anthropology has long painted the brujo as the victim of witchcraft accusations and punishments, reversing the native perceptions of those bewitched by the brujo as the real victims.

Accusations of sorcery are of course not in themselves proof of a shaman’s malevolence. Indeed, often it must be that the only malevolence being exercised is that of the accused/its. But many more persons are rightly accused. In saying this, I am not implying anything about the efficacy of sorcery techniques. I am merely noting the fact that people in Latin America practice sorcery and therefore many must be guilty. For people living in shamanic cultures, sorcerers and the spirits they manipulate are experienced as being irreducibly real. I hope that my example of the Zamora witch has illuminated the sheer immediacy and taken for granted of the reality of brujos and spirits in tribal Latin America.

Consistent with the common western assumptions that sorcerers do not really exist, the various psychological analyses of sorcery undertaken over the years have focussed exclusively upon the collective psychology of the community at large and the possible reasons why it should sustain sorcery beliefs. The realities of sorcery would be better illuminated through an examination of the individual psychology of the sorcerer. The sorcerer should not be seen as the collective invention of a community grouping for intellectual and emotional coherence and meaning (for example, Levi-Strauss), but rather, as a dynamic, autonomous, self-sustaining figure, whose agenda may at times be anarchic, dysfunctional, destructive and wholly personal.

Anthropologists have wrongly argued that accusations of sorcery and the confessions of sorcerers serve to corroborate and legitimate the belief system of a group in order to preserve its integrity. But the reality of spirits and the shaman’s ability to manipulate them for purposes of good or ill is so taken for granted in tribal Latin America that it requires no such ongoing legitimisation. A community rarely acts collectively in accusing persons of sorcery, and even when it does, it is not seeking to prove the validity and worth of its beliefs and customs. Persons are accused of sorcery to prove that sorcerers exist, or that their alleged malevolent actions fall within the realm of human possibility. This much is already known and assumed. What is not known, and what is hoped will be ascertained through investigation, is the identity of the person’s responsibility for particular acts of sorcery, the effects of which are all too apparent.
Australia has plenty of uranium and coal deposits, and we're not shy about mining them to make a buck. As well as the dirty energy industries, we're well and truly involved in ongoing war and violence. It seems we'll do anything if it's profitable; who cares what effect it has on peoples' lives? Who cares about the effects on our communities, on society, on the planet? We couldn't stop polluting or stop going to war because it would be bad for the economy, right?

Consider this: There are at least two companies in Brisbane that are presently manufacturing fighter jet components for export to the US. Ferra Engineering and Heat Treatment Australia make parts for the Joint Strike Fighter project, including structural, weapons bay, weapon adapters, airframe, wing, and missile components. But Ferra Engineering also make renewable energy components for wind generators and solar panel frames. The resource and the talent that are used for the cause of death and destruction could be used in the growing renewable energy industry; this would benefit people both immediately and in the long term.

Lockheed Martin's plans to make the Joint Strike Fighter war planes are moving along, despite some issues with the price estimates of the planes. The program has been running six months behind schedule. Australia may delay purchase of the fighter jets by up to two years. The general in charge of the program was fired in February 2010, and $614 million in fees may be withheld from Lockheed Martin. Northrop Grumman has been making center fuselages for low rate initial production – and the plan is to make 138 new warplanes for the UK in this initial stage. Full production may begin in 2014. Asian countries, including Singapore, Korea and Japan, have shown significant interest in purchasing the fighter jets.

In early February 2010 the first F135 engine was put on show at the Singapore Air Show, after already more than 13000 hours of testing. Final assembly of the fighter jets will take place in Fort Worth, Texas.

Meanwhile, the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan continues, with 1000 Australian troops rotating through Brisbane's Gallipoli barracks in January 2010 for deployment. And the needless suffering of the civilians of these areas continues.

Barack Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize as the US sent 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan. Despite promises made by Mr. Obama, Guantanamo Bay remains open, detaining and abusing men whose rights as human beings are long forgotten in the age of paranoia. And the US shows no signs of leading by example in Mr. Obama's aspirations towards nuclear disarmament. The US maintains the largest nuclear weapons arsenal in the world, and this hypocrisy is unchallenged even after the war crimes committed at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In Brisbane, Asia Pacific Aerospace repair and overhaul military aircraft engines for the ADF. Australian Aerospace has been assembling MRH90 and Tiger helicopters in Brisbane. The MRH is a troop transport helicopter, and the Tiger is an attack helicopter armed with stand-off missiles that can defeat armoured vehicles. A typical Tiger configuration is armed with up to 52 rockets of 70mm, up to 8 Hellfire missiles, and a 30mm turreted gun with up to 450 rounds.

Australian Aerospace also signed a contract with Nexter Systems last year for maintenance of the Tiger helicopters Turreted Gun System. South Australia is Australia's "Defence State". With over 24,000 employed in SA's defence sector in 2007, and more than five times Australia's average employment growth rate, strong growth is expected to continue. SA State Government works closely with the defence industry and local education and training institutions, and invests heavily to get people into the defence industry.

In January 2010, the $120 million upgrade to ASC's shipyard, at Osborne, South Australia, was completed and officially opened. The shipyard is intended to be used for construction and consolidation for the $8 billion Hobart Class Air Warfare Destroyer Program. SA Premier Mike Rann, and Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd attended the official opening, along with key Defence Ministers.

ASC is working with the DMO and also with Raytheon Australia on the Air Warfare Destroyer (AWD) Project. Three AWD's will be built between 2013 and 2016. The project is expected to create around 3000 jobs and generate around $1.4 billion for SA's economy over the next decade.

In November 2009, tens of thousands of people gathered outside the gates of Fort Benning in Georgia, home of the School of the Americas, a US Army training school for Latin American soldiers. (In 1996, SoA training manuals were released that advocated torture, extortion and execution.) While people stood vigil in memory of the institution's victims, four humans rights advocates, aged 61 to 77, chose to take their protest peacefully across the line into the base.

In January 2010, three of the group were given maximum sentences of 6 months in federal prison. The fourth is at large with an arrest warrant after refusing to return for the trial. (More info: www.soaw.org) One of the prison sentences began immediately, and letters of support may be sent to:

Fr. Louie Vitale
c/o The Resister
PO Box 43383,
Tucson, AZ
85733, USA

In October last year the USS Blue Ridge, the flagship of the US Navy's 7th fleet, came to visit Cairns. The USS Blue Ridge is responsible for command, control and communication for US Navy vessels in East Asia and the Western Pacific.

A single man braved sharks, crocodiles and his own health issues to swim out into Trinity Inlet and get in the way of the warship as it came in to dock. He was able to hold up the ship for around ten minutes. He spoke about his actions to police, court staff and to the media, and he recorded a fine video about the action and the issues with the US led wars, which can be found on youtube. (look up "bryan law blue ridge") The next day the news came through that the US was deploying 13,000 more troops to Afghanistan. Bryan was fined $500 by the court.

A few weeks ago I sat in a packed room of people who had come to see Peter Murnane. Peter was born in Western Victoria and moved from Brisbane to Auckland in 1991. In April 2008, Peter was one of three people who used bolt cutters to cut through three security fences into New Zealand's US spy base; GCSB Waihopai. The Waihopai spy base's two satellite dishes intercept satellite phone calls, telexes, faxes and e-mails. Data collected through this network includes intelligence agencies in the US, UK, Canada and Australia, as well as NZ.

The data collection at Waihopai and its NZ sister facility GCSB Tangimoana is part of the Echelon network. Echelon is used for interception and content inspection of international data traffic (phone calls, emails, fax, etc). Data collected through this network may be used for military targeting information, as well as spying on individuals and groups of military interest, spying on diplomats, commercial spying and also domestic spying. It is believed that data passing through GCSB Waihopai may have been used for
extraordinary rendition: – when the US kidnaps people around conflict areas and detains and tortures them at places such as Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, often without trial. From 2004, accounts of physical, psychological and sexual abuse at Abu Ghraib came to public attention.

It is alleged that Pine Gap, one of Australia's US spy facilities used by Echelon, has intercepted phone calls Osama Bin Laden made to his mother on his satellite phone. Incidentally, in January 2010, the US ambassador to Australia said that both us and the Americans are investing heavily in new infrastructure at Pine Gap, and the number of US personnel working there will increase over the coming years.

After the three men cut the security fences and made their way to one of the domes covering the satellite dishes, they used a hand sickle to deflate the dome. They then built a shrine and knelt in prayer for the victims of the war without end. They took such action because "they felt compelled to nonviolently respond to the Bush Administration’s admission that intelligence gathering is the most important tool of the ‘War on Terror’. The group peacefully waited and submitted to arrest.

The action at Waihopai was a Ploughshares action, inspired by the biblical prophecy of Isaiah: They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift sword against nation; and there shall be no more training for war. Isaiah 2:4.

The jury trial for the Waihopai Ploughshares begins on March 8th in Wellington, NZ. The NZ Government claims they caused more than $1 million damage. If convicted, they face possible jail sentences. For more information and for updates throughout the trial please see: www.ploughshares.org.nz.

A year after the third occupation of Raytheon’s office in Derry, Ireland, by anti-war activists, Raytheon has finally announced that it will be closing its plant in February 2010. Raytheon is the third largest missile manufacturer in the world. The occupations include the action where nine men were acquitted of criminal damage at the office.

Between Dec 27th and Jan 18th 2009, more than 1400 Palestinians, including more than 400 children, were killed by Israeli forces. During the bombardment, six men in the UK broke into the factory of Brighton-based arms manufacturer, EDO MBM, and did some serious damage. EDO MBM make and supply components for Paveway munitions, and bomb release clips for F15 and F16 fighter aircraft to the Israeli Military.

The six men and three supporters have been charged with criminal damage and conspiracy charges. One man, Elijah ‘James’ Smith, has been in jail on remand since the action (more than a year now) and will probably be detained until the trial beginning 17th May 2010. One easy way to support is to write to James while he is in prison - it makes a big difference for him. He gets moved to different prisons now and then - so look up decommissioners.co.uk for his address. I have written to James a few times, and I sent him images of Benny Zable’s mission to Israel, as well as images of Nimbns Polite Farce.

The effects of these actions go far beyond the specifics and direct outcomes. What impact do such actions have if you look at the ongoing effects, and the effects on wider society? Surely many people are inspired. Openly and nonviolently challenging the powers on a moral level is very powerful, and it is with ideas and dreams, as well as the hammer, that the machinery of force and violence will be overcome. Right now in the US there are soldiers who are refusing to deploy. Check out: www.courageoresist.org For Australian war resistance within the ranks, check out stand-fast.webs.com.

People everywhere have hearts and consciences. Perhaps it is time to ask: Is it acceptable that the arms trade even exists? So much of people’s time and skill, and so much of the earths resources used to make weapons that destroy lives and homes. Weapons that ruin whole families and communities. What for? Money? What are the causes of war, and what are the necessary conditions? How can people work nonviolently to prevent these conditions, and create conditions favourable to peace?

Ultimately it’s about people, and how people treat each other. It’s pretty clear that going to war is not a reasonable way to behave because of the way it effects people. What then is a reasonable way to behave when we see others preparing for war and going to war?
Talkin’ About My Generation …
Forty or fifty years ago when we tuned in, turned on, and dropped out, what we tuned into was the absolute waste and futility evident in the world around us. War was everywhere and the threat of nuclear annihilation seemed very real. That was before we learned about the ‘balance of terror’. We knew that there had to be a better way to live and went our ways trying to find the right path to the future. The older generation at the time called us dirty smelly lay-about trouble makers, always questioning and protesting. We were indeed an unruly bunch, but we managed a few minor miracles.

Now it’s the 21st century and the younger generation thinks we’re a troublesome lot, always pontificating about the ways things should be, and complaining and protesting about everything. To add insult to this we are apparently a burden on society, occupying otherwise profitable space in public hospitals and doctors waiting rooms. There’s a lot to be said for consistency, so hang in there, we may well win yet!

Arbiet Macht Frei …
When the dawn of computers and automation broke, we were all told that the future would be rosy, computer driven, everything manufactured by robots, no need to get your hands dirty, plenty of leisure time and new jobs for all. The last time I looked the only thing I could see that I had gained personally through this great technological revolution was more leisure time, in fact apart from my volunteer work, I’m unemployed.

A recent television program showed the plight of a sixty-five year old self-employed man whose entire superannuation investment had been ‘lost’ in the ‘financial down-turn’. He was a courier driver and now had to keep working just to fund his retirement, there was no alternative. As he lugged a huge carton up a set of stairs, I wondered whether he would consider that work had made him free. Perhaps the only freedom he and many others like him will find will be the freedom found by the Jews in the concentration camps.

Australian Values …
There’s been a lot of talk lately about what is ‘Australian’ and what is ‘un-Australian’. Could this be our nation’s first tentative groping towards a national identity? With this question in mind, I did a bit of research, and came up with some historical Australian values. When our white fore-fathers and mothers arrived in the Penal colony of NSW, they did so largely in shackles. Upon arrival, the governor issued everybody with a ‘double portion’ of rum and there ensued a night of drunken violence and rape. The first white people to be conceived here were most likely the product of this night. The echoes of this historical value still ring in our ears today when we read about alcohol-fuelled violence and pack rape by our sporting heroes.

Australian soldiers have marched off to many wars, beginning in the later part of the 19th century. In each case, with the possible exception of WW2, we have been fighting for and on behalf of a foreign country. At first it was the British, now it’s the Americans. The exception was in the intent than in the doing, when Prime Minister Mr. Menzies begged the British to release Australian soldiers from the European war so that they could be shipped back home to protect Australia from the Japanese. The British refused, Singapore fell and Darwin was bombed. We were saved by the Americans, or so the story goes, at the Battle of the Coral Sea. We have been paying for this ever since. Fighting for one’s country is taken to be a key Australian value, however, it is false. Wherever we have fought, or are currently fighting, we are not fighting for our country … We are fighting people who are in fact fighting for their country on behalf of the Americans.

Blast From the Past…
A friend of mine swears that she has seen an advanced copy of a new Monopoly game based on Nimbin. Apparently Cullen Street is divided down the middle, and all the familiar shop fronts and buildings are there. She says that the ‘Chance’ and ‘Community Chest’ cards are the most interesting. One ‘Chance’ card reads “you have just been assaulted by a drunken yobbo outside the Hotel. Go directly to Hospital – miss a turn.” Whereas a ‘Community Chest’ card says, “You have just been insulted by a stoned hippie outside the Rainbow Café - Go directly to the Police Station – Free turn”.

May you be blessed with a bountiful harvest.
‘The water flows and the mill-wheel turns
The grinding stone makes us food for worms.
However we wish – whatever we will,
At the end of it all, we’re just grist to the mill.’
After being shown, and stirred up by the Australia Day meat promoting white supremacist posters, I researched and compiled some notes, mainly from Jeremy Rifkin’s, reviewed "Beyond Beef: the Rise and Fall of the Cattle Culture" www.mcs spotlight.org/media/reports/beyond.html and World Watch: http://www.worldwatch.org/files/pdf/Livestock%20and%20Climate%20Change.pdf

Climate Chief Lord Stern: Give Up Meat to Save the Planet, People will need to turn vegetarian if the world is to conquer climate change, according to a leading authority on global warming, Lord Stern of Brentford said (The Times 27.10.09).

One Pound of Hamburger = 12 Pounds of Grain

It takes 12 pounds of grain to produce one pound of hamburger. This could be used to grow more than 50 pounds of fruits and vegetables. Half of all water consumed in the US is used to grow feed and provide drinking water for cattle and other livestock.

CSIRO Land and Water scientists have used precise weighing systems to measure water use by various crops and the yield from the crops. The following figures were revealed:
- To produce one kilogram of oven dry wheat grain, it takes 715 – 750 litres of water
- For 1 kg maize, 540 – 630 litres
- For 1 kg soybeans, 1650 – 2200 litres
- For 1 kg paddy rice, 1550 litres
- For 1 kg beef, 50,000 – 100,000 litres


Cattle and beef production is a primary threat to the global environment. It is a major contributor to deforestation, soil erosion and desertification, water scarcity, water pollution, depletion of fossil fuels, global warming, and loss of biodiversity.

We need to examine the devastating effects of the cattle culture that has shaped and warped our world. In Australia the British invaders stole, raped, killed and pillaged aboriginal inhabitants, their land and their culture for pasture. That is the anthropology, history, sociology, economics and ecology of this land, in a world in which the poorer peoples of the planet have been starved to support the beef addiction of a handful of wealthy nations.

In Australia the introduced hard hoofed species have also altered and decimated a great deal of indigenous flora and fauna, lands and water which aboriginal people have looked after for thousands of years guided by their cultural lore.

Soil Erosion and Desertification

Cattle production is turning productive land into barren desert in the American West and throughout the world. Soil erosion and desertification is caused directly by cattle and other livestock overgrazing.

Severe desertification is most extensive in the saltbush-bluebush (Atriplex-Maireana) vegetation type occurring in New South Wales and South Australia, where overgrazing has caused degeneration of the plant cover.

Depletion of Fossil Fuels

Intensive animal agriculture uses a disproportionate amount of fossil fuels. Supplying the world with a typical American meat based diet means loss of Biodiversity. It has been predicted from within both the livestock and financial sectors that peak oil could bring about the collapse of the livestock sector within a few years. To be ahead of the competition in that scenario is another reason for leaders in the food industry to begin replacing livestock products with better alternatives immediately.

Global Warming

Cattle and beef production is a significant factor in the emission of three of the four global warming gases: carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and methane. Petrochemical fertilizers used to produce feed crops for grain-fed cattle release nitrous oxide, another greenhouse gas. Worldwide, the use of fertilizers has increased dramatically from 14 million tons in 1950 to 143 million tons in 1989. Nitrous oxide now accounts for 6 percent of the global warming effect.

Methane

The second most powerful cause of the climate crisis is methane. Even though the volume of methane released is much smaller than the volume of CO₂ over a century-long period, methane is more than 20 times as potent as CO₂ in its ability to trap heat in the atmosphere and over a 20-year period, it is about 75 times as potent.

Damage to Health

Beef contains high levels of cholesterol and saturated fat and is frequently contaminated by chemicals and disease. Beef may be one of the more unhealthy foods on the market today.

In 1990, the largest study ever done on the health effects of consuming animal derived foods confirmed the results of previous studies showing a high correlation between meat consumption and the incidence of heart disease and cancer.

Animal Liberation Australian professor Peter Singer said, "Western-style meat production is cruel, unhealthy and damaging to the ecology." In But You Kill Ants, Australian John Waddell, OAM quotes that the world’s largest, most comprehensive study of nutrition found that protein from animal sources, even at low intake levels, is associated with disease. The safe proteins, at all levels, are from plants. (Ref. Campbell and Campbell: The China Study.)

In Australia, more than half the adult population and nearly a third of children are overweight, the highest per capita in the world. (Northern Star 20/1/2010, p26) More Aust. Links on: <http://www.vegsoc.org.au/>

Economy

"Usually, the first thing a country does in the course of economic development is to introduce a lot of livestock. Our data are showing that this is not a very smart move and the Chinese are listening. They are realizing that animal-based agriculture is not the way to go....We are basically a vegetarian species and should be eating a wide variety of plant food and minimizing our intake of animal foods....

With one-third of global grain output going to cattle and other livestock, and with the human population growing by almost 20 percent in the next decade, a worldwide food crisis is imminent.

Global Hunger and Poverty

Beef production causes human hunger and poverty by diverting grain and cropland to support livestock instead of people. In developing countries, beef production perpetuates and intensifies poverty and injustice, particularly if beef or livestock feed is produced for export. Excessive consumption of beef is only a symptom of a greater problem: resource glutony and population growth by humans. Homo sapiens are the problem, cattle are the scapegoats.
“There are currently 1.28 billion cattle populating the earth. They take up nearly 24% of the land mass of the planet and consume enough grain to feed hundreds of millions of people. Their combined weight exceeds that of the human population of earth”. The world has reached a plateau where, with 24% of the world’s land mass dedicated to “beef culture” and the human population and cattle population rising, something has to give.

The sad irony of the present situation is that while the poor nations of the world are starving their own populations to produce export beef, the beef buying rich are dying from the diseases of affluence. Beef is the most dangerous food for herbicide contamination and ranks third in insecticide contamination.

“This is the triumph of the beef mystique of the conquering cowboy in America and the world – a triumph marked by the golden arches of McDonald’s in cities as distant from each other as New York, Tokyo, and Moscow.”

In Summary
So long as we tolerate and encourage such systems by purchasing their products, we too are perpetrators of cruelty and abuse though we may appear to be only bystanders.

“If slaughterhouses had glass walls, everyone would be vegetarian” – Paul McCartney.

Beef production emits a whopping 130 times more greenhouse gas than wheat and other types of grain.

Action to replace livestock products not only can achieve quick reductions in atmospheric GHGs, but can also reverse the ongoing world food and water crises.

“Because of the urgency of slowing climate change, we believe that recommending change directly to industry will be more effective than recommending policy changes to governments, which may or may not eventually lead to change in industry.”


As happened with tobacco, health warnings about meat eating are multiplying, and awareness of the environmental effects of meat production is rising. Just as cigarettes lost their allure, meat is losing its social cachet in some countries. Food marketers in the United Kingdom estimate that 2 million people in that country are strict vegetarians. More important, the number of people limiting meat in their diets is rising rapidly. An estimated 6 million people in the United Kingdom dine on meatless meals most of the time.

These are serious questions taken from different sources needing research, reviewing, community discussion and action, as Gaia (Planet Earth) struggles to find an equilibrium to human induced climate change.

I am working towards a Beyond Beef week to take place around Nimbin during Beef Week in Casino. May 22nd –June 1st.

AUSTRALIA DAY ARREST FOLLOW UP
from Benny Zable
At the revived Nimbin Bush Theatre and Café we will be staging a Beyond Beef Week from Sunday May 22nd –June1st. It is for your benefit and future generations to take note of what many climate change researchers and doctors are coming to realize: that meat, especially the red meat industry, lifestyle, habit is the major cause of climate change, plaguing the health of each other and the Earth.

Peek-a-Boo Book Review

Tamaso
This is a beautiful little book of heavy gloss pages illustrated with lovely colour photos which, unfortunately, we are unable to do justice to here.

The story is full of pooey humour that all little kids love but also sends a message of the benefit of helpful cooperation when you want to get a job done. It lends itself to being read out loud and will have the young audience in fits of laughter.

Land Shares for Sale

Two undeveloped shares for sale on a Land Sharing Community 11 km from Nimbin. We have a few cows, chooks, fruit trees, and areas of regenerating forest on 55 acres.

$80k and $40k each. landsharecommunity@gmail.com or 66891019.

18
World Rainbow Gathering
in New Zealand \ Aotearoa

Ron Fogel

During December 2009 and January 2010 the world Rainbow Tribe gathering took place in Aotearoa \ New Zealand. The Rainbow Tribe (or the Rainbow Family) is an international affiliation of individuals who share common belief and identity systems, they gather periodically and intentionally to practice exclusive rituals and ceremonies. People who participate in these gatherings, which normally last a moon’s cycle, come from all walks of life, from various cultures and religious affiliations; they travel from different and remote places of the world to celebrate various themes together. Main themes manifested in these gatherings predominantly relates to New Age spirituality, but also include aspirations for world peace, non-violence, unity and harmony among participants and ideas of reorganization of ecological systems. Participants in Rainbow gatherings and activities constitute a particular culture; Rainbow culture. Academically, Rainbow culture exhibits an affinity with indigenous peoples and their cultures, where participants draw inspiration from South-East Asia philosophies, counter-culture and hippie-culture, and contemplate aspects of environmentalism.

Participants in Rainbow Tribe gatherings claim to have no formal social organisation or political hierarchy; the economic structure is based on contribution, sharing and exchange. For example, throughout the gathering food-making is held in a shared kitchen, and meals are shared in a big circle of people, hard currency for supplies is collected (by donation) through the ‘magic hat’. Various decisions are also made through the circle, where anyone can express their opinions, suggestions or offerings.

The Rainbow gathering in New Zealand \ Aotearoa was held in a West-coast D.O.C (Department of Conservation) land, where, at its peak, around 500 people camped in primordial conditions. Rough surroundings did not interrupt people from performing Rainbow-like rituals such as music circles, sacred fire ceremony, or the exclusive full-moon rave. Recurring behaviours in these rituals include participants holding hands, hug and touch, play music, sing songs, dance and celebrate, philosophize and tell stories, express love and harmony, and share whatever they can. The essence of the Rainbow, as one woman told me, "is to engage, celebrate, and be connected". When the gathering is over, and the celebration is concluded, people resume their everyday life-style, but they remain tinted with the multi-colour hues of Rainbow culture.

International Rainbow Gathering
December 2009
Gloria Constine

It’s 8:30pm and I’m sitting by the campfire enjoying the company of an inquisitive robin, many sand flies and innumerable mice that crawl over everything. If you move they scurry away only to immediately return. Belle is resting in her tent and we have just boiled some water for drinking, after being warned that the water may not be pure.

We are at the Rainbow Gathering after landing in Auckland and have been amazed at the friendliness and interest that people have shown us during our hitch here. We have different styles of hitching, me, with my desultory finger pointing out & toward the ground and Bell, who looks like she’s hauling a cab, arm extended upward, with gusto and even demand. But it seems to work. We not only get rides but also were offered accommodation, which we accepted, giving cooked feasts in return.

Our last ride was exceptionally good, as we not only had two nights accommodation, but we were accompanied by our benefactors, who decided to go to the gathering too. So, our ride took us, and the hitchhikers we picked up, right to the festival’s door, avoiding the hour-long walk with all our gear to our camping site. The gathering was only just starting to get set up. The first-choice place was flooded out, losing two precious weeks of set-up time. There were stories of waist high water and people linking arms to avoid being washed away, with a helicopter rescue of the remaining die-hards. But, this place is OK. We are by the creek, with the Bakery and Chai shack across the river accessed by a leg, and the local accent by a leg, and the local accent with gusto and even demand. But it seems to work. We not only get rides but also were offered accommodation, which we accepted, giving cooked feasts in return.

Two meals a day were provided – breakfast mainly porridge and fruit, and dinner a vegan meal put on by one of the forty-two nationalities represented there. The Italian night was great, as was French and the Israelis with their hummus. I had left before the Australians put on their mashed potatoes with mushroom gravy, but generally there were many minor miracles enacted before our very eyes. So, the many-voiced call goes out from the plateau, “FOOD CIRCLE!” This call is echoed by all the small enclaves down the line, so everyone knows that by the time the third call goes out with the addition of “NOW” you can expect to be fed.

Once at the plateau there is a mini circus happening with jugglers, yoga, ball and Frisbee catching and musical groups practising until the food, in large plastic (salad) and metal (hot food) containers is brought into the circle. We all make one, or two circles depending on the number of people, and sing songs including about our “happy cells” and ommm! Then we all sit down in a huge circle with our plate and implements to wait for the food to be ladled out to us. But first the condoms are handed out and then the antibacterial wash for our hands.

After we’ve eaten, the magic hat is brought around to help pay for the next meal’s food. This is a happy affair with musicians playing and usually children holding the hat.

It’s often dark by this time and the central fire is built up and the musos congregate around the fire with the dancing fairies cavorting and the rest of us trying to keep warm around the perimeter. One rainy evening we found the kid’s-space tipi, so we sat around the fire, out of the rain, sipping chai and telling stories, with each person adding a bit in turn.

Going back to our camp I came across a very strange sight. There was someone lounging comfortably, in the rain, in a full sized bath. A fire underneath was fed with wood by any friendly person, and the walking track passed close by. There were many musical happenings but one of the favourite places was the Bakery. One night some of us were all sitting around the bonfire singing late sixties songs and harmonising in tune, when fresh baked cookies were handed around to us. I couldn’t believe my luck as it happened three times. In the background could be heard the shouts of “hot pan coming” which meant, ‘get out of the way’, and shortly more cakes would arrive. This is where I met my ’after the Rainbow Gathering’ travelling companion Sally. Sally had a car and we had a great time driving around, camping and playing cards, while it mostly rained. But that is later.
On going to bed I’d be crooned off to sleep with hypnotic chants and the melodious “hot pan coming” echoing around my head. After being there a few days I decided to go to town. I was very lucky to get a ride with a food-run van, but on the way we came to an abrupt stop. Being in the passenger side I looked down to a huge drop, with us barely on the road. All four of us gingerly clambered out, being careful of the 30-meter drop to the creek below. We had to get help to pull the van back away from the edge, so one went forward to the ‘Welcome Centre’ and another went back to the ‘Chai’ shack for help. Meanwhile, a few people were walking to or fro and some stayed until, with the rescuers arriving, we all got onto the towrope and pulled it back to safety. Wonderful!

People started to drift off again, but I felt something had to be done to commemorate the occasion, so we all formed a circle and I thanked ‘whomever’ for not sending us over the side, and also thanked the beautiful people who helped to pull us out; and then we did a loud WHOOSH! For good measure. Of course this incident became one of the camp stories, with some saying the empty car plunged down, but I know better. Well, I did get to the shop, which was about 60 km away and it was then I found that you couldn’t actually get dollars out at all, only buy stuff on your cards. This was bad news for the Gathering, as they needed people’s cash to buy the food; and I don’t know how they overcame that one.

Christmas day came and went without too much fuss (thank goodness) and on Boxing Day I accompanied Ron to Golden Bay. Ron stayed with friends from his kibbutz in Israel and I stayed for one night with someone who had been my Wwoofer recently. Next day I visited the Tui community where I had lunch with some members and compared notes on our respective ways of functioning as communities. We also visited the old Jacques Cousteau’s ‘Peace Pirate Espresso Coffee’ ship. I then booked into the Telegraph hotel and had the luxury of baths, that night and in the morning, where I scrubbed all my sand fly bites with a hard flannel and applied antihistamine cream. It was bliss to sleep in a bed, and a longed for chair to sit on. Leaving my comfort zone was just that, uncomfortable. But the scenery was superb. Green hills, creeks, rivers, mountains, beautiful bays, gorse, broom & foxgloves. Not so nice the beard stubble hillsides, where the cash-crop radiata pine was grown and harvested, and rain, rain, rain.

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We got back to the Gathering for the New Year. Whilst I was enjoying the company in our camp, I wanted to go to the plateau for the midnight countdown; so about 11.30pm I wended my way up, and then stood on the edge of the plateau and watched as lines of torches, from all directions, made their way toward me, with the same idea. It was quite surreal. There were fire dancers, a big bonfire and lots of people. We passed one unit place where lovely music was happening and only later did I find out that it was the son of my guests at home, in Nimbin, John.

Then the countdown started, ten, nine etc … to one then lots of whoops and cheers. Ten minutes later there was another countdown, then another…this went on for hours as each country’s midnight was commemorated with cheers and cries. It was still happening the next morning. During all this time the weather was rainy, with some exceptions of sunshine.

As with all gatherings of people there were differences of opinion. One was to do with chainsaws. More cutting boards were needed and the quickest and least labour intensive way to get some was cutting slabs with a chainsaw. A long meeting of interested people finally agreed that chainsaws would not be used.

I had conversations with some elders who told me that the previous gathering decides which country will host the next one. Then the Rainbow Tribe is informed in that country and it’s their job to make it happen. A big ask, I reckon! And so there was concern that because of the hurried acquisition of the new site, the respectful asking of permission to be there, from the Moari community had not happened. The first place chosen, on the strength of a double rainbow, and against all advice from locals, was washed out; fortunately before many people had arrived. I asked what the hope was in holding a gathering could achieve, and was told it was to have many different people to gather in one place, to experience peace and harmony as one; to work together to achieve this. My experience as an older person there was on the good side of ageism, with respect, and help when needed. I appreciated that.

Living this may be necessary in the future. Some participants go from country to country, living the Rainbow dream and that is their life for a while. Good on them; may they prosper and their light never go out.

The latest news is that some foxy person has disappeared with the money to pay the bills. I just wonder why a worn-out cynic like me is actually surprised? ... Sigh!
Mankind has depended on energy slaves for thousands of years to do work for us. These energy slaves include human slaves, animals of burden and various methods of extracting energy from burning vegetation, fossil fuels or extracting energy from sunshine, wind or moving water. Geothermal energy extraction also has quite a long history. The problem with burning vegetation and fossil fuels on a large scale is that it enslaves entire ecosystems. Human survival is ultimately dependent upon the continued survival of these ecosystems and this may well be the downfall of human civilisations if we continue on our present course.

Today, obesity is a worldwide epidemic. People eat the wrong foods, high in carbohydrates and low in other essential nutrients and suffer from a lack of physical exercise while continuing to depend on energy slaves. Homes are getting bigger whilst family size is reducing just in order to house all the mod-cons. We will have an electrical appliance to do just about anything you can think of and will jump into the car in order to go to the corner store. If we are concerned about how physically unfit we are, we may then spend a fortune on either going to a Gym or setting up a Gym at home with gadgets that do not do anything useful at all with the energy we expend in the process.

We need to seriously start looking at holistic solutions that address all the issues at the same time whilst keeping us fit by relying more on our own metabolic energy to do things and less on energy slaves. Using a bicycle instead of a car is one such example. You may think a bicycle is slower than a car but would agree that its faster than walking. If you consider all the time and energy involved in owning a car, including the time spent earning money to pay for it, to pay for your license and registration, to pay for the oil, the fuel and the repairs and add that to the time spent driving the car, sitting in the car in traffic jams and working on the car, and divide that into the distance covered over a given period, you will find that the bicycle is actually faster.

The velocipede or “fast foot” invented in 1865 was the precursor of the modern bicycle. The “bi” in bicycle refers to the fact that it has two wheels whilst a tricycle has three wheels. Many of the innovations in bicycle design were later applied to cars. The first gasoline powered car built by Henry Ford was called a Quadrcycle which was effectively a heavy duty four wheeled cycle. It is interesting to note that today we have “Quad Bikes” where quad was called a Quadracycle which was effectively a heavy duty four wheeled cycle. The first gasoline powered car built by Henry Ford was equipped with four wheels and was powered by an internal combustion engine.

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Power Station Developers Dismiss Renewable Energy

Ben Cubby

Two new fossil fuel power plants that will increase the state’s greenhouse gas emissions by between 5 and 15% will move a step closer to construction this week after developers claimed renewable energy cannot feed a growing hunger for electricity.

The carbon emissions from the power stations, which would be added to existing plants at Mount Piper near Lithgow and Bayswater in the Hunter Valley, would equal a doubling of the number of cars on NSW roads. But the two government-owned developers, Delta Electricity and Macquarie Generation, say they are essential to meet demand and replace older, less efficient coal-fired generators. Their responses to public submissions dismiss the idea of investing in solar or wind power instead. Macquarie Generation says NSW will have trouble meeting the national 20% renewable energy target by 2020 because “other states have better renewable resources”.

The environmental assessment reports for the two power stations say “clean coal” technology will not be available to them in the medium term, although they expect that the technology will eventually emerge and the stations are fitted out for future carbon capture and storage. Building coal-fired power plants, which would lock in high-emissions infrastructure for decades, is a touchstone issue for environment groups, which argue future energy needs can mainly be met with better energy efficiency, wind turbines and solar stations in the outback.

The key decision facing the utilities is whether to run the two, 1000-megawatt plants on coal or gas. Burning gas generates slightly less than half the emissions of coal, but is likely to be more expensive and would require the construction of a pipeline to Mount Piper.

The government is unlikely to express a preference for either gas or coal in its assessment.

The NSW Greens believe the need for new sources of baseload power have been overestimated.

“The NSW government has written off the state’s renewable energy future, preferring instead to rely on outdated and inaccurate predications of a shortage of baseload power to justify their expansion plans,” the Greens MP John Kaye said.

“Massive wind development in the state’s west and possibilities for solar thermal generation in the central west put paid to the Keneally government’s myths that NSW lacks renewable resources.”

Nimbin News Quarterly #7 Autumn 2010
Sleep Problems

I recently had trouble sleeping one night—unusual for me, I’m a good sleeper. I was very tired but kept awake by thoughts of problems my children were having.

Children? They have children and grandchildren of their own but there is no other word for them. So my “children” kept popping into my mind and I was trying to think of ways to solve their problems. I really wanted to sleep but these thoughts kept gnawing away at my mind.

Then I suddenly realized that here I was—the one who is always saying “stick with the here and now”—lying here and now, warm and cozy in a nice little comfortable bed and getting all churned up about things that happened in the past or might happen in the future, not to me but to other people who are all fully-grown adults perfectly capable of taking responsibility for their own lives.

Having settled that, I went straight to sleep.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo

On my morning walk recently I heard a very loud screech and looked up to see a sulphur-crested cockatoo fly into a tall tree. I stood and watched it for a few moments and then walked on. Suddenly it zoomed in on me and almost took off my hat. A minute later this happened again. I thought it was attacking me in the same way that magpies do when they are nesting so I hurried along.

Looking back, I saw that the bird was walking along the road a few metres behind me, stumbling now and again and limping as if it had an injured foot. I stopped and it walked right up to my feet and started trying to nibble at my shoes.

A car came towards us and I moved off the road and signalled the driver, pointing to the bird. The driver had to swerve right off the road as the bird made no attempt to avoid the car.

Deciding that it must be a tame escapee I “hallo cockied” it a few times but it did not respond. I bent down and stroked it, still talking to it. I tried to pick it up but it did not like that and seemed as if it would peck me. I wasn’t interested in having a chunk taken out of my finger by that big beak so I walked on quickly and it followed behind me.

It kept pecking at debris on the tarmac but found nothing to eat. I persuaded it to the verge but although it pecked at the grass blades and seed heads it still didn’t find anything to eat. I kept on walking and the bird followed but when I got too far ahead, it flew to a tree near me and then down to the road. This happened three or four times until it flew to a tree far ahead and waited for me to catch up. By this time I was back at my car and sadly said bye-bye to the bird wondering what would become of it. How would it survive in the wild after having all of its food and water provided for it each day?

There was no sign of it the next morning.

Crossword #72

ACROSS
1. Blue sun can dissolve (7)
5. Let it name (5)
8. Early start girl with two ends will complain (7)
9. Pig’s voice is great nut (5)
10. Emperor rats (4)
11. Steak above the water line (7)
13. Begin to go turned for side shoot (6)
15 Oh! Er! Sexy moment (6)
18. Drink to family Edward (7)
20. At last cat is diplomacy (4)
21. I stun single items (5)
24. Bee can wander on thorny branch (7)
25. First test here for anaesthetic (5)
26. Pull out late religious pamphlet (7)

DOWN
1. Do up fine edging (4)
2. Pertaining to above pup (5)
3. Leave carriage rat to dine (7)
4. Ow! Shout colour (6)
5. Mushrooms weapon I start fire with (5)
6. Black American music takes Margie to tea (7)
7. Choke little Leslie Grant (8)
12. Foamy water soda for cat (8)
14. Drag the slow girl (7)
16. Lay excellence and leave (7)
17. Edward declared and sat (6)
19. Pointed! That is mad (5)
21. I’m rubbish receptacle for clouds (5)
22. You old English eastern article (4)

©Tamaso Lonsdale 2009
Ever since the Aquarius Festival, the Nimbin Media Centre has been considered to be a community building with the six people named on the title deed being considered the ‘guardians’ or ‘trustee owners’ of this community asset. There is currently an ongoing dispute with five of the six ‘guardians’ wishing to sell off this community venue. The following report from the Nimbin News history files may be quite relevant in regard to this dispute.

**Media Centre Meeting - April 1983**

Ian Smith

A two-part meeting at the Media Centre on Tuesday 12th April (1983) discussed the proposed application for a “Wage Pause” grant for Nimbin women to rebuild the Media Centre building. Under the terms of grants available, 80% of the workers must be women unemployed, and capital costs must be less than wages for the project to win consideration.

Birth and Beyond people and people considering Coordination Co-op (currently 1/6th owners), Nimbin News, Treeworks, NAG/TWS and the Proposed Computer Access point discussed the future of the established wide community use of the centre, and what new legal form would be suitable for trustee ownership of the building, given that the six current owners have expressed a desire to be free of ownership and rates, electricity, insurance and other bills/costs.

A suggestion was explored that local community land groups might take on a joint trusteeship, or that a co-op might be trustee owner, holding title but not directly involved in the space and time allocation of Media Centre resources, which would be the responsibility of an association of some sort between the various users of the building, subject to an agreed deed of trust.

It was felt that this would have to be tighter than in the past, where payment of rates, bills and maintenance has too often fallen on a few individuals, who are acting as trustees for the people who benefit from the existence of the building.

Most felt that Birth & Beyond (especially beyond), was widely based, and could hold title to the building and that this would not prejudice other users. Birth & Beyond may be the group directly applying for the work grant, or it may be an association of groups using the building. Legal advice is being sought on the best form of trustee, and on the body to form to manage the centre. Professional advice is also sought from architects and builders as likely costs of materials and labour for various degrees of rebuilding.

The application with a design and costings must be completed in the next couple of weeks. Details such as use of space and some internal design are considered to be somewhat flexible within this framework.

Anyone with constructive input should contact Jane Metzner or Trish Morgan of B&B, Di Kivi (Tuntable) or Nimbin News / Neighbourhood Centre.

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Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can. And you will be blessed.

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Meet Our Staff Members

**Peter Robinson - Licensee**
Peter is the licensee here, Peter lives in the local area and is a keen sport enthusiast. He also has business expertise in real estate, rural and residential sales, and manages the office.

**Janet Robinson - Salesperson**
Janet is our young gun. Although only new to the industry, Janet has already proven herself as a leader with an enthusiastic and committed attitude. She currently leads the team in rural and residential sales, and is always looking for new opportunities to grow her business.

**John Wilcox - Salesperson**
With nearly 30 years of estate selling experience in the Nimbin area, you would think he has "OVER THE HILL," but it is not true. John still loves selling real estate with an energetic attitude and mindful of people needs. This confident and dynamic salesperson is always at ease when it counts. With a fun and easy-going nature, you will enjoy the experience whether buying or selling.

**Liz Danneaud - Salesperson**
Liz is a local expert in rural living. Having run her own cattle and horse stud, anything you need to know about land or livestock can be found. She has been selling and buying in Nimbin for more than a decade. Her advice would be, "If you need some honest advice about buying a property, see Liz." Her sale record is awesome, with some spectacular sales in the area. Come in and see Liz for all your real estate needs.

**Mathew Deane - Property Manager**
Patient and fair, Mathew is sure to get the job done. If you need a house in Nimbin or a place to rent your horse, you can always count on him to know what you're looking for.

**Karina Prevoet - Secretary**
Young, vibrant, and eager to please, she can help you with all your queries. Living locally with her family, Karina has plenty of local knowledge and has already proved to be a delight.