

Un - politicizing Earth Week

By PAUL SCHWARTZMAN

The general manager of a local television and radio station praised the Earth Week committee last week in an editorial as the first "radical" he is able to support. A few weeks ago the Plain Dealer, the bastard son of the Temple Free Press, called Earth Week a "cop out" and went on to claim that the Earth Week Committee here at Penn was in the process of selling out, both morally and financially. In terms of plain dealer philosophy, they are right, but if they want an environment to live in after the Revolution, they are dead wrong.

One week before the article was published there was a conspiracy meeting on the second floor of the Fine Arts Building. A motley gathering of undergraduates, graduate students, girl friends sporting women's lib buttons, freaks from each of the aforementioned categories, and one guy who paraphrased himself as a left-right conservative, met and conspired together. It was a meeting of the Earth Week Committee, the group responsible for Earth Week activities for over twenty colleges around Philly. On this night, the committee was to meet with the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce.

This confrontation had been arranged only a few days before, when the Chamber's plans for Earth Week were discovered by the Committee. The Chamber had planned to publish an eight-page supplement in every big Philly newspaper just prior to Earth Week (April 16-22). The supplement would have had a picture of let's say the Campbell's Soup Pollution Man with white suit in his cinderblock office, announcing how he personally swears that Campbell does not pollute anything, except your stomach with alphabet soup. Each corporation would explain how they love and care for mother and the environment, and then would go on to say "Besides, we like to have happy and



Photo by KEN SCHONWALTER
THATCHER LONGSTRETH

healthy consumers." The supplement idea was enough to make any corporate PR man foam at the mouth - another form of pollution.

The Committee sent a letter to Thatcher Longstreth, Chairman of the Chamber, and "suggested" that he not run the supplement and instead give the allotted funds for the ad to the Earth Week Committee. In addition, the Chamber was asked to commit itself to Earth Week and have each corporation that is a member of the Chamber submit raw data revealing what they excrete in terms of air, liquid, and solid pollutants.

No one from the Committee dared to guess the Chamber's response, or even if there would be one. But the answer was quick in coming - it was a brusque phone call from 'ole Thatcher saying no soap, BUT suggesting that they might like to talk it over. The Committee was flabbergasted.

"The Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce wants to rap with us?" The implication and fear was that if the Chamber was to support the Earth Week Committee, how could EWC believe its own legitimacy? No one particularly wanted to take part in a sellout.

The next question was, "OK, they're going to try to pollute us, but are they doing it out of fear of a family-sized, gasoline-filled Coke bottle," or if they lack the required amount of warm blood to have the emotion of fear, do they normally react by buying out their competition?

The representatives of the Chamber were to be at the Fine Arts Building at 8



Photo by PAUL SZAFRAN

P.M. The Committee feigned the activities of a normal meeting as the Chamber men approached in pairs, peeking in the window of the door and going back into the hall, pretending to be lost.

One girl bravely walked out to them, her un-bra-ed breasts heaving gently, and invited them in. As the Chamber's white shirts marched in they were met with beards, bells, stares, and silence. The seating was mixed, but the lines were drawn and visual.

The meeting was like a card game. The Chamber had put out an ante of \$2,000 and had cancelled its supplement, but what next? Everyone just bluffed words. Gentle, Ed Furia, a young lawyer and city planner who is the director of EWC, explained that the Committee was not just worried about publicity and public education in pollution problems, but that as concerned citizens the students wanted to do something concrete. . . now. Furia had planned a five-day technical symposia with scientifically qualified professors, students, and businessmen who would analyze raw pollution data of Philly's industries and decide what the companies should do to cut down on their pollution. A handbook was to be published of the symposia's proposals.

This information would become public knowledge and would continually be supplemented for the EWC files to be used after Earth Week. Due to heavy local and national media coverage of the event itself, that data could be used on

camera to pressure and embarrass the corporations that did not yield data or are not responding to the proposals. With a list of people like Ralph Nader, Paul Ehrlich, Rene Dubos, Ralph Lapp, Alan Watts, Senator Edmund Muskie, Senator Hugh Schott, Lewis Mumford, George Wald, Ian McHarg, Allen Ginsberg, the north American Indian rock band Redbone, Ian and Sylvia, and the cast of Hair all appearing here, the press will sure as hell be around to see what EWC is up to. Much of the Committee's initial strength was in direct correlation with how many people were going to hear the EWC corporation shit list. The larger the coverage, the nicer the companies will be about cooperating.

As the discussion continued at that first meeting, one Chamber man, who flaunted a flowered tie and white shirt, tiptoed around whispering to the other Chamber men. Gradually pairs of flannel suits went out to confer in the hall as the remaining businessman who was ad-



Photo by JEFF BRYER

ED FURIA

between students and industry. But by the time of the said Revolution, no one will want what's left if nothing is done about our eco-system. We need them and they fear us. That is not common ground for talk, but it's a start.

Many companies are realizing that it is in their own interest to come out publicly and state their guilt as polluters, and then hope to propagandize the public to believe that they will deal with the ecology problems for which they are responsible. But it is our responsibility to make sure that we don't end up with the dirty linen.

It comes back to the old "right on" bit. Enough people have to keep the pressure on after Earth Week. The unique part of EWC is that it has started programs that will carry on past April 22 and might prevent Earth Week from being another cathartic protest like Washington, which ended without tangible results except for a few smashed and now radicalized heads.

The ecology movement has to accomplish its goals. The movement is a cop out, but a necessary one. The companies are only too happy to worry about pollution instead of napalm immoralities and corporate racism, but it is much easier to confront an industry with pollution gripes to which they must hopefully be forced to respond.

Around the same time of the "conspiracy" gathering, EWC invited a black community group to come and discuss their problems. The blacks were upset that whites would rather worry about pollution than deal with racism. They were right. All the Earth Week people had to cope with the idea that they should also be out with the Panthers or Resistance and be doing something about Vietnam (over 130 Americans were killed last week). The response to this can be a half-hearted and glib, but still relevant reply that there will be many more pollution casualties on all sides if nothing is done about it now.

A certain famous biologist who was invited to take part in Earth Week refused to appear because he said that ecological doom is so foreboding that he has given up public speaking. Master of the understatement, he wrote that it is simply "too late."

The Earth Week events will present eloquent speakers and showmen, but hopefully not all as pessimistic. Paul Ehrlich, author of *The Population Bomb*, who is taking part, calmly told Johnny

dress the Committee continued on by himself and EWC tried to muffle their laughter.

The Chamber was not panicking out of confidence as was first expected by the Committee. But the Committee had expected blindness, and it was total - the Chamber people were hardly sure of their position. After EWC spent two days agonizing over whether it was or was not a sellout to talk with the Chamber, the students suddenly realized that the high cards were their own.

The Chamber and the corporations have been avoiding confrontations out of fear. Their vision of students is a nightmare that would warm a Weatherman's image of himself. The Chamber could not believe that students wanted to talk. Not sure of any common ground for communication, but with this realization of the chance for it, the Chamber was now trying to pave the way.

Since then, the Chamber and cooperating corporations have been lobbying the unresponsive companies to submit their pollutant data and support Earth Week. The Chamber has reached a stage where they feel it hurts their own image and those of involved corporations if the others don't take part. The Chamber men have almost gleefully hinted that a few student pickets might pull the holdouts into the flock.

It was a radical and unheard-of tactic for anyone to consider communications

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Carson that sure, he had done his share, he had had himself sterilized.

The big Earth Week push here, with the Naders, Ginsbergs, and Ehrlichs, is one of the most extensive in the nation. This is partially due to the efforts of Ed Furia, its director. EWC has in many ways been an implementation of his City Planning Thesis. The paper describes a long series of falling dominoes that represent how social change occurs. It is triggered, he says, by media saturation which educates the public, who influence the politicians and industries, which are forced to respond and voila, the implementation of social change.

The media coverage was first attracted to Earth Week by the big names in the program. As several activities of the Committee have developed out of the technical symposia, national media has already expressed interest with in-depth coverage as lead up stories to their news

coverage of Earth Week.

CBS already has footage for a documentary about the Committee's direct discussions with business. Shel Gordon, a 34-year-old Harvard and Wharton grad and now a stock broker who wears bells and beard, will be seen on the tube with executives of du Pont, who were asked to supply their raw pollutant data, which is of prolific quantity.

The Earth Week programs that media are starting to cover are unique. Visits to corporate executives for social reasons appeal to media as a "wild" idea. Along with Shel Gordon, men like Tom Settle, Dean of Admission of the Wharton Graduate School, are meeting with most of the major Philly corporations.

Jamie Matter, a living anachronism (a Reid alumnus and a Wharton MBA candidate), has been organizing students to visit corporations and rap with

salaried workers about ecology and maybe napalm production, on company time offered by the industries (all of which is deductible for the company).

These programs and several others are being filmed by four British cinematographers who will eventually produce, as a part of EWC, a movie for use in high schools around the nation. The Today show will use a short already completed by the filmmakers. A man who lives on Hog Island, near the airport, describes how he and his wife have lived on the small island which is an animal refuge in the Tinicum Marsh. As the man tells of their love of the refuge, the camera slowly pans back to reveal a huge belching factory dwarfing the region. As the old man continues telling how all the animals are dying, a "Whisperjet" zooms overhead and drowns out the last words of the man. Cut. Imagine that on the Today show, followed by an Eastern Airlines "Wings of Man" commercial.

The media is thus providing EWC with a platform from which the Committee

can hope to educate the public carry on its programs, and wave the names of the bad, bad corporations in front of TV cameras for all consumers to see.

The two biggest Earth Week events for putting the companies in the stew will be on April 21, and Earth Day, April 22nd. Tuesday there will be the signing the Declaration of Interdependence at Independence Mall. Senator Hugh Scott will get up to deliver his whitewash, but he will have to be careful, since he will be followed by Ralph Nader, and then Alan Watts.

On Wednesday, Earth Day, there will be a mass gathering at Belmont Plateau in Fairmont Park with Frank Herbert, Muskie, Mumford, Wald, McHarg, Ginsberg, Ian and Sylvia, Redbone, Sally Eaton, and The American Dream. Every television camera on the east coast will be there along with an expected crowd of at least 50,000 souls.

One film crew has asked what time The Earth Day activities are over, in order that they can get their equipment over to film the grounds at Fairmont Park after everyone has just left.

The movement

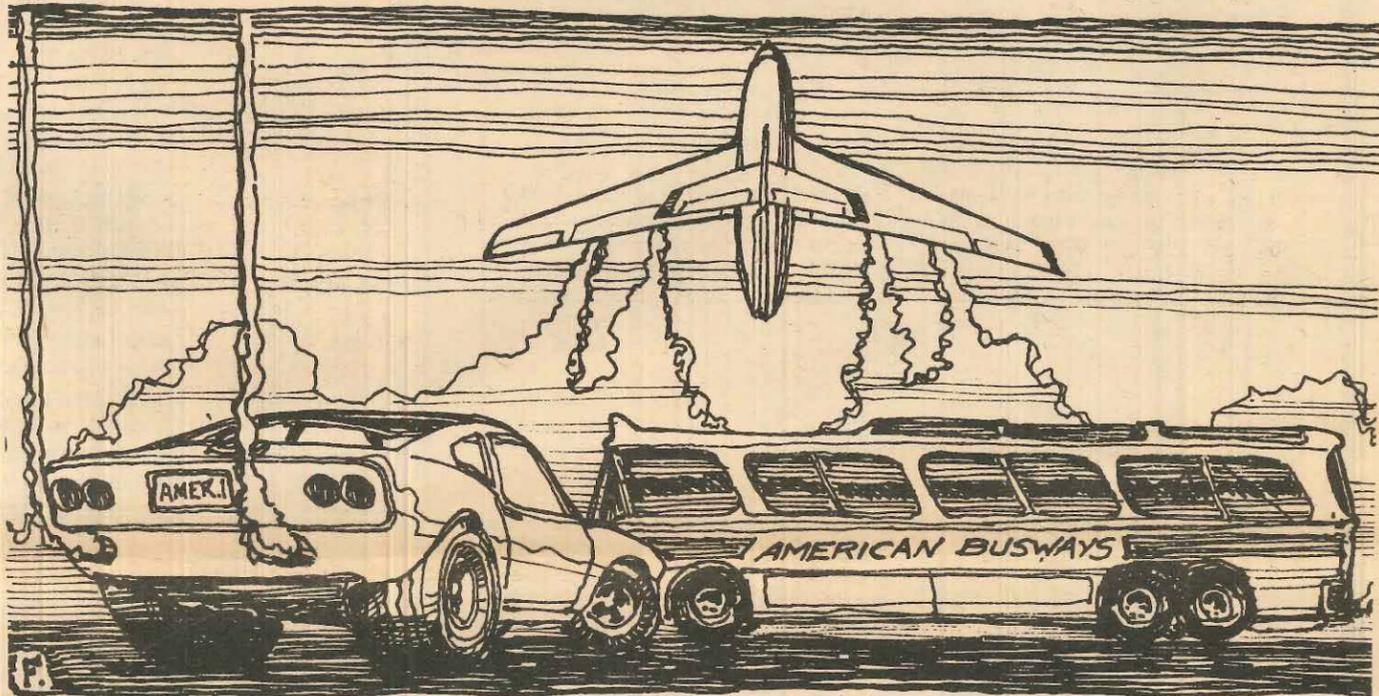
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existing institutional structures. Then there are the people outside the structure, the New Culture people who are setting up alternative life-style communes away from the cities. To date these two arms of the human ecological struggle have remained largely distinct. But there is evidence that times are changing, and will be bringing them together. The evidence lies in the way eco-activists are widening the scope of their issues, and in the way New Culture people create the occasional inner-city ecospasm.

The most notorious ecospasm was the People's Park episode in Berkeley. Here the alternative culture people adopted activist tactics to force the issue of their life-style on the prevailing institutional environment. This ecospasm constituted a critical moment in recent history because it illustrates so well the fact that some people now consider the matter of new life-style vs. old ugliness a matter of life and death. The People's Park people know that style is in fact substance, that the new life style must win or the old life-style will kill.

The Park people were among the first to recognize that there is an answer to the usual smug criticism, "why don't you go somewhere else?" The facile question is always asked whenever students take over a building or blacks raise hell in the streets. "If you don't like it, go away." Well, the Park People know it's time to stand. They know you can't just go sit on a mountain in Vermont anymore because in a few short years this mountain will be covered with a Nike base, Disneyland, retirement home, laboratory, or, at least, a sterilized think-tank—all surrounded by condominiums, of course. So, the People's Park people decided it was time to start imposing their life-style on the old one because if they didn't they might not get many more chances.

The three pieces of paper I refer to are lists being compiled by eco-activists throughout the country. In my travels to campuses I have had a chance to talk to a few of the leaders of ecology action organizations. In most cases I found that they had compiled informal lists—usually not written down—of the three different crucial elements in the ecology action equation: the specific problem areas, the offending institutions creating the problems, and the tactics to be used in attacking the problems and problem-makers. These three incipient lists are the gunpowder in the equation. Combined with the fuse of the new survival spirit, these lists are the key to the Movement of the '70s. Over the next few months these lists will become more conscious and



more explicit. Eco-activists will begin to compare lists, and thus will the chemistry of the new movement take shape.

Suppose Ralph Nader pickets the New York headquarters of General Motors. This event becomes, of course, common knowledge within hours. Which is where Cronkite comes in. He and the other trusty anchormen on the airwaves will usher in the new age by simply doing their thing. The information they pass on change because the new Life Ecosystem grid is simply going to get bigger and bigger, and bigger. Thus will begin the first truly headless revolution in history, thanks in large part, ironically, to the very modern technology that makes the revolution necessary in the first place.

Of course, this revolution has already begun. There is already an ecosystemic grid operating in the current movement on campus. The scenario I've just presented is really old hat: The whole process has already taken place inside our universities. As Berkeley in '64, and Chicago, Columbia, Harvard, Cornell et. al. hit the tubes, ripples of protest followed suit like shock waves on scores of other campuses. Most important, however, was the response: University administrators on almost every campus rushed to implement reforms which reflected demands laid down at Berkeley and other pivotal protest points. What happened was that a consensus list of student demands surfaced at the key campuses, got a lot of publicity because of disruptions, and then became the one night about a Nader picket will trigger the New Life Ecosystem into action. If the target company of the

original protest, in this case GM, is near the top of most institution lists around the eco-activist campus, these groups will strike at the local GM manifestation—whether factory, dealer, or office—utilizing one of the initial-level protest tactics from the tactic list. Cronkite will dutifully report on the presence of the nationwide expansion of the protest and will trot a reporter out to get GM's reaction. GM will undoubtedly have nothing to say. At which point Cronkite's boys, being good reporters, will ask various local eco-activists why they are attacking GM. The issue lists are trotted out, along with detailed research on GM. Implicit in the analysis will be demands on GM for specific changes. Some of these demands will already be public knowledge thanks to groups like the Committee to Make General Motors Responsible; others will be new, total-life eco-systemic demands. GM will be approached by reporters asking what the company plans to do about the demands. If GM says "nothing," then that will be instant news to the New Life Ecosystem, triggering an escalation of one or two notches down the staircase of protest tactics. Since GM will obviously be in possession of the consensus tactical-escalation list, and will see Weathermen in the wings as well as New Life people on the stage, they will know how much more escalation they can tolerate before they are going to have to make concessions. Eventually, if not on the first round, GM is going to have to make a life-style handwriting on the wall elsewhere. The old university life-style began dying from a severe case of Cronkitis.

Cronkitis will soon be visiting the

tubes where it really counts: in the corridors and boardrooms of business and governmental bureaucracies. Since these power points represent the body of society, and not simply the mind like the university, the action is going to get rough. Real power is now being challenged. The institutions that currently render us powerless are now to be confronted with the one power that cannot be beaten—the power of the New Life Ecosystem become aware of itself and acting as a single community fighting for its life.

The people who brought us Vietnam, ABM, the widening poverty gap, racism, and the ugliness that is slowly killing us are about to have their life-style jammed down their thorats.

There's a jail-break comin' down.

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