



THE

# MSE

NEWSLETTER



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## Who we are

The McGill School of Environment (MSE) was created by three McGill faculties -- Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Arts, and Science. We are now building co-operative relations with five additional faculties: Medicine, Law, Engineering, Religious Studies and Management.

The MSE Newsletter is a forum for members of our community.

## Contributions

Marilyn Scott writes an article about the conference on The Land and the Health of the James Bay Cree and an MSE student Aaron Chang reports on a presentation given by Dr. Robert Watson on climate change. Raissa Marks writes about her experience on the semester in Panama, Serge Aucoin explains why he wants to join the MSE, and an exchange student, Zdenka Dobiasova gives her thoughts on the environmental protest.

## Dedication

We would like to dedicate this issue to the Charter Class of graduating students from the MSE. A small party was held to celebrate their success on May 29<sup>th</sup> at the downtown MSE office.



In an effort to cut down on the use of paper in the production of this newsletter, we'd like to know if you're interested in receiving the next issue electronically. Please let us know at: [outreach@mse.mcgill.ca](mailto:outreach@mse.mcgill.ca). Telephone (514) 398-5826.

Sincere thanks to everyone for their contributions to this issue of the MSE Newsletter. Submissions for the next issue should be e-mailed or otherwise communicated to Teresa Alper ([teresa@mse.mcgill.ca](mailto:teresa@mse.mcgill.ca)) at the MSE building, 3534 University, Montreal, Quebec H3A 2A7.

## In the month of March

Dr. Robert Watson has come to McGill to talk about Climate Change. Read more in the article "WATSON ON CLIMATE" on page 2.



# Recent Events

## Dansereau in NFB Film

On January 29<sup>th</sup> Peter Brown and 12 MSE students participated in the filming of a documentary on the life of the renowned Quebec ecologist, Pierre Dansereau who has been referred to by the Canadian Museum of Nature as Canada's *homme de science*. The film, entitled *Quelques raisons d'espérer*, reflects the diversity characterizing Dansereau's career and achievements, with sequences being shot in Africa, the Arctic, Brazil, North America and Europe.

## Watson on Climate Change

On Sunday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, while in town for a conference at the UN Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Chair of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Dr. Robert Watson, visited the MSE and McGill University. Following an informal lunch with faculty,



Robert Watson presented to a group of 250 people the findings of the IPCC's Working Group on the contribution of human intervention to an increasingly abnormal climate. The presentation was followed by a panel discussion with members of the McGill Centre for Climate and Global Change Research and question period, moderated by the Honorable Clifford Lincoln. The public sought Dr. Watson's opinion on various environmental issues as well as on the role environmental activists play in effecting change. Dr. Watson emphasized that action must be taken and the public should be educated to promote a more environmentally friendly lifestyle.

*N.B. If you would like an electronic copy of the 28-page transcript of Robert Watson's presentation, please see the MSE web-site at:*

<http://www.mcgill.ca/mse>

*A copy of the audiotape will be added to the McGill University library collection.*

## Hogs on the web

Dr. Whalen taught in the team-taught environmental research course required by U3 students in the MSE program. A summary of the research's major findings by the "Factory Farming of Hogs" group she supervised in the fall semester, 2000 can be viewed at:



<http://www.nrs.mcgill.ca/whalen/hogs/fIRST.web.page.htm>

## Fabry interviewed on CBC

Professor F. Fabry appeared in the science show "Découverte" on CBC television as an expert on the topic of aircraft icing. This followed his January interview on CBC Radio, where he commented on the Environment Minister David Anderson's announcement of the plans to purchase modern weather radars. Prof. Fabry is a meteorologist who teaches in the Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences at McGill University.

## Peter Brown on Water

On Thursday May 24<sup>th</sup>, the McGill Alumni Association of Halifax hosted. Peter G. Brown, the director of the McGill School of Environment. Invited as the guest speaker, the subject of his lecture was: "Should Water be an Internationally Tradeable Commodity?"

# CANSEE

Coming soon: there's time left to register!!!

## CANSEE comes to McGill

The MSE will be hosting the Fourth Biennial Conference of the Canadian Society for Ecological Economics from



August 23-25<sup>th</sup>, 2001. The theme of the conference is

“Ecological Sustainability of the Global Market Economy” and the event will bring together national and international scholars,

practitioners and decision-makers to

share their research, exchange views on policy issues and debate solutions to overcome conflicts between ecological sustainability and economic progress.

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

The keynote address of the conference will be delivered by **Lester R. Brown**,



Founder and Chairman of the Board and Senior Researcher with Worldwatch Institute (Washington, D.C.), and founder of the recently created Earth Policy Institute. Lester

Brown is the author of numerous books, such as *Man, Land and Food*, *World without Borders* and *Building a Sustainable Society*, and has contributed to many *State of the World* reports.

Some of the scholars, government officials and students who will be attending include:

Louise Bergin (Assistant Director, Natural Resources Canada),

Johanne Gelinas (Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainable Development),

Pierre-Marc Johnson (Counsel, Heenan Blaikie, Former Quebec Premier),

Mariette Maillet (Canadian International Development Agency),

William Rees (U of British Columbia)

and

Peter Victor (Dean, Environmental Studies, York University).

For program and registration information, visit our website at:

<http://www.mcgill.ca/mse/cansee/>

# ***Congratulations !***

To Maurice Strong who was awarded an honorary degree on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001 by the Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. Maurice Strong serves as senior advisor to both the UN Secretary-General and to the President of the World Bank and is President of the United Nations University for Peace. Following his position as Secretary of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit), Mr. Strong founded the Earth Council based in Costa Rica. Mr. Strong was Chairman and CEO of Ontario Hydro from 1992-1995.



# New faculty Appointments

## Biodiversity

The search for a tenure-track position in the field of Biodiversity, has been successfully completed. This position, which is a joint appointment between the Redpath Museum and the MSE will be filled by Anthony Ricciardi. Dr. Ricciardi holds a PhD. in Biology from McGill, where he previously worked as a research consultant and Teaching Assistant. Until his appointment, he held a postdoctoral fellowship in the Department of Biology of Dalhousie University. His research is directed toward developing a predictive understanding of biological invasions, focusing particularly on the study of North American freshwater habitats. In his teaching, he wants to encourage critical thinking in students and wishes to provide them with opportunities to become directly involved in research, even at the undergraduate level.

He proposes to develop a freshwater biodiversity and invasion ecology lab in the Redpath Museum.

## Environmental Assessment and Management

The School of Urban Planning and the MSE have filled the joint tenure track position in Environmental Assessment and Management. Dr. Madhav G. Badami is an Indian born Canadian resident, and is a widely recognized scholar in his field. He studied Mechanical Engineering in Madras, India and has worked for ten years as a Development Engineer. Upon moving to Canada, he studied at the University of Calgary and then the University of British Columbia, where he completed his doctoral dissertation. His professional interests combine Urban Environmental Policy and Planning, Urban Transport, International Planning and Environment and Development. He is an accomplished teacher, with extensive academic experience as lecturer and teaching assistant.

## Plant science

The Department of Plant Science and the MSE have managed to secure Sylvie de Bloies for the joint position in Landscape Ecology. Dr. De Bloies has formerly been active in the Plant Science Department at McGill, assisting research. She holds a PhD. from the Universite de Montreal, where she has conducted many research projects and where she worked first as Teaching Assistant and recently as Faculty Lecturer in Biology. She has also worked with Hydro Quebec, Institut de Recherche en Biologie Vegetale and has conducted research for the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization in Canberra, Australia. She is a young scientist with great potential, who has received several scholarships for her research in addition to being awarded several student awards. Her research interests include landscape ecology, plant ecology, rural landscape dynamics and environmental management. She is a member of several professional societies and a generally recognized author in her field.

## Philosophy of Biology

The Philosophy of Biology position, a joint appointment with the Faculty of Philosophy has been awarded to Greg Mikkelson. Dr. Mikkelson is a man of many interests, with competence in domains of Ecology, History of Science, Environmental Ethics and Philosophy and Literature. His area of specialization, as prove his numerous publications on the subject, is the philosophy of science and more specifically biology. He holds a PhD. from the University of Chicago, where he has also taught "The Conceptual Foundations of Ecology" and has until recently worked as a lecturer at Rice University. He participated in an Earthwatch expedition to study the population, community, ecosystem, and landscape ecology of Lake Naivasha in Kenya. He also speaks German.

# Articles

## *The Land and the Health of the James Bay Cree*

By Marilyn Scott

On June 22, 2000, the McGill School of Environment, together with the Grand Council of the Crees and McGill's Centre for Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Environment sponsored a three hour symposium as part of the 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on the Environment, held in Montreal. It proved to be a terrific example of everything the MSE is about!

The session was opened by Matthew Mukash, Deputy Grand Chief whose inspirational words provided a context for the whole morning. Raised on the land for 15 years, he grew up with the teachings of the elders. Every day, he learned about the spiritual connection of people to the land. He learned that even the trees and the rocks have a spirit. He was taught to honor all parts of the land, to see everything as connected. He spoke of the distress caused when Hydro Quebec proposed to flood the land that was held so sacred, of the different perspectives among the Cree raised on the land and those educated in the south, and of the confusion introduced when Christianity taught the Cree that the ancient ways of communicating with spirits were wrong.

The morning proceeded with presentations on the historical roots of the Cree, with the dangers and changes that white men brought. Toby Morantz (Department of Anthropology, McGill) explained how the arrival of the white man brought infectious diseases like measles that killed up to 50% of the populations of some communities, how the political reach from the south facilitated that return of the beaver populations yet opened the door to control over the Cree lands, how the introduction of guaranteed annual income and the presence of produce in the community changed the lifestyle away from the traditional hunting, and led to social and dietary problems. The constant threat of famine shifted to current threats of obesity and diabetes. The increased efficiency of hunting, through improved transportation and improved weapons, resulted in increased idle time with increasing abuse of alcohol. Norman Gull (Director of Community Service, Cree Regional Authority) reinforced this message of rapid change with examples of a life span that encompassed seeing white skin for the first time to living in a house with electricity, VCRs and walk-mans. He highlighted the capacity of the Cree to adapt to change - be it political, social, cultural or economic. Despite the changing values that are so evident, there still remains a strong sense of sharing and of community well-being - a message reinforced in the presentation on the healing movement by Adrian Tanner (Department of Anthropology, Memorial University).

The theme of conflict continued when Colin Scott (Department of Anthropology, McGill University), then Alan Penn (Cree Regional Authority) spoke about the challenges facing the Cree in land claim discussions. On the one hand, the Cree are struggling to protect fishing and hunting rights over vast expanses of land and water that contain hunting and fishing "territories" with dynamic boundaries, in an effort to preserve a lifestyle of communion with the land. Yet on the other hand, they are being advised not to eat fish and game, for fear of high level of contaminants. Their options are rapidly diminishing as external forces to the north and to the south constrain and complicate all negotiations.

The contaminant dimension was addressed directly by Alan Penn, by Laurie Chan (CINE, McGill) and Elisabeth Robinson (Cree Health Board). Mercury accumulates through the food chain, with high concentrations in the predatory game fish that are so important to the Cree diet. As top predators, the Cree have levels of mercury that are cause for major concern in the public health sector. Similar concerns were expressed regarding lead, believed to come principally from lead shot still used in hunting, although Chan and Robinson presented evidence to suggest that lead may not be as elevated in Cree tissues as is mercury. Matthew Mukash highlighted the need for the Cree to work with the scientific community to gain data that could support their negotiations. Clearly an experienced negotiator, he noted the limitations imposed on such debates if the arguments focused entirely on preserving the ancient life style. He also noted the importance of identifying the parallel "bads" that accompany positive economic indicators - citing diabetes as a perfect example.

Diabetes was addressed directly by Jill Torrie (Cree Health Board) and Olivier Receveur (Department of Nutrition, Université de Montreal). As during several of the

previous presentations, the opening of the Cree lands by construction of highways needed by Hydro Quebec and the forestry industry was established a direct cause of change, in this case leading to access to store-bought foods. The striking patterns of decreased consumption of fish and game, of increased purchasing power, of increased availability of market produce, and of increased Type 2 diabetes transmitted a powerful message of a major, still increasing health problem in the Cree – one directly related to altered interactions between the Cree and their environment.

Both the examples of contaminants and of diabetes highlight the challenges facing the Cree. Not only are the causes complex, but the perspective of the Cree to these problems are also complex. For centuries, the Cree have existed on the edge of famine – always concerned about whether or not sufficient food would be available from the hunt. How can the community be convinced that overweight is not a good thing? How can the risk associated with an invisible contaminant that can't be tasted, and whose effects are not noticeable be communicated effectively? Does the health risk of contaminants warrant a message that encourages the Cree to reduce the fish and game in their diet and turn instead to store bought food, thereby increasing the risk of obesity and diabetes, of inactivity and increased reliance on the “outside world” as a food provider? How can these concepts be explained, discussed and debated in a language that has no words for the concepts of physics and chemistry? These issues were highlighted by Solomon Awashish, Health Promotion Agent within the Cree Public Health Module.

Despite all the efforts from outside, at least one answer is coming from within the Cree communities themselves. Adrian Tanner and Solomon Awashish spoke of the success. Returning to the traditional values of community, a “new” healing movement is gaining momentum. Problems of alcohol abuse are not treated as problems of an individual, but problems of the community. The pow-wow and the sweat lodge are now being used to help communities gain inner strength to handle their current social challenges. More and more, the Cree are attempting to regain an identity in a world of change.

Finally, Matthew Mukash concluded the session with a vision of balance. He explained that the elders have a world view that every race, every nation, every bird and every tree was given specific instructions on what their purpose was. He explained how the Cree view balance as coming from physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions. Our scientific advances have the effect of diminishing the spiritual side, thus leading to imbalance. If we have any hope for the future, it must come from working together toward a goal of global balance – so say the elders.

The Cree want to be a partner in this process. They see their part on earth as contributing to the healing of nations. With their keen sense of the intimate ties with the land, with their philosophy that argues that animals are members of the same moral community as humans, with their unabashed commitment to the importance of spirituality, they may well be a part of the answers we all seek. At the McGill School of Environment, we look forward to developing a partnership with the Cree Regional Authority – a partnership whereby we may be able to help in their many struggles to live with their environment in light of contemporary world events, and a partnership where our students can come to appreciate their perspective on the environment and their message of hope.

### MESS REPORTS

Well another great year has come to an end for both old and new MSE students in the 2000-2001 session. This was the 3rd year in which MESS, the McGill Environment's Student Society could be apart of all MSE students McGill University Experience. Students enjoyed many of the same events from past years with various new twists such as our winter camping event, which was held at the McGill Outing Club house this year. This cabin, located in the Laurentians, allowed for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and of course an environment where MSE students could socialise and interact with their peers. As well, some faculty and staff were able to attend some of these events. This allowed students the invaluable opportunity to learn from their mentors outside the classroom. Other events included the Orientation BBQ, the annual Christmas Potluck gathering and the Cabanne a Sucre. There were also new events such as the Halloween party where many students were able to show off their recycled costumes often with an environmental theme. Other initiatives brought to our attention by MSE students were also supported such the GMO's conference, the Water Conference and as well the new environmental magazine entitled Elements, which is entirely student run. In this coming year the council will be represented by the new co-presidents Owen Watson, previously the 1st year representative and Leah Tivoli, a new addition to the council. As well, other members include, Raymond Holboger Treasurer, Klara Vodicka and Murielle Vrins sharing position of U3 representative, Jeremy Labrecque U2 representative and Maryse Bourgault MacDonald campus representative. We are all looking forward to the New Year and the opportunity for more great events and learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom.

## *The Watson presentation : Commentary*

**By Aaron Chang**

I attended Dr. Robert Watson's lecture on climate change on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. He demonstrated that the issue has various aspects, all of which must be addressed if human contribution to climate change is to be reduced to a minimum. In addition to the alarming facts and observations, the predictions for the future compel us to act immediately in order to avoid a potential peril that we could bring to ourselves.

Indeed, since the Industrial Revolution, the atmospheric carbon dioxide level has been rising. Currently, it is at about 360ppm and the increase is likely to continue because fossil fuel is still being used while forests are being cleared and burned. Within the last hundred years, extreme weather events also became more frequent and more intense. These events are likely to reappear at shorter intervals in the foreseeable future. These climate change events have direct and/or indirect negative effects on humans. I am sure that people who experienced the devastation brought by a flood or a drought do not want to see the disaster to repeat itself. Though I am a science student, I am very interested in history and archeology. Numerous examples from the past reveal that humans are vulnerable to even minor instabilities in the surroundings. The Anasazi of southwestern United States abandoned their home and moved because they experienced severe droughts. Ironically, the splendor of antiquity is preserved by the desolation of the desert. Similarly, although the increasingly dry climate was not the only cause of the decline of the Silk Road centuries ago, it certainly played a role in the deterioration of the numerous oasis towns along the ancient highway of cultural exchange between the East and the West. The ruins seem to remind us that we are defenseless in a variable environment.



The immediate effects are also observable. As PR Epstein and other scientists indicated, there is a connection between the climate and human health. Heat waves can cause death, and the elderly are especially at risk. The danger is even greater as higher temperature combined with stable air mass can increase ground-level ozone concentration, which may lead to respiratory illnesses. Moreover, the extreme weather events create favorable conditions for breeding of insects and rodents that spread diseases. Outbreaks of cholera, fever, malaria and other diseases often follow storms and periods of intense precipitation. The developed countries are not immune to such epidemics either. Cases of malaria were still reported in New York in the last few years. Deer mouse, which can be found throughout much of North America, is the primary carrier of the viruses that cause Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome. According to the US EPA deer mice populations may increase when their predators are suppressed by droughts. Cases of HPS have been reported in western US and Canada and now the disease is penetrating into Ontario. With a mortality rate of up to 75%, this disease should not be disregarded. Its connection with the climate should not be ignored either.

We have much influence on the climate; we are accelerating the rate of climate change and at the same time we are amplifying the extent of such changes. These are the reasons to emphasize the importance of reducing human contribution to climate change. Even the most selfish individual should realize that irresponsible attitude and actions would only accelerate our downfall.

## *O Panama!*

By Raissa Marks



O Panama...the land of rice and beans, fresh pineapple, mangoes right off the tree, SUVs, hissing, and Balboa Ice beer. Twenty-seven McGill students have just completed the Panama Field Study Semester 2001, lovingly referred to as PFSS 2001. I am lucky enough to be one of those students.

The Panama Field Study Semester is a partnership between McGill and the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI). It is a program which sends 26 or 27 McGill students to Panama every winter semester to study in a new and exciting locale. The goal of the program is to apply knowledge already gained in the classroom setting to the “real world”, and to experience life and work in a developing country. Three classes from three different departments -- biology, sociology, geography -- are taken by the participants. These classes are taught by professors from McGill, as well as Panamanian pros. Participants also complete an Internship while in Panama, to further the immersion in a new culture.

The first class took us to visit Barro Colorado Island, an island protected for research, which was isolated from the mainland with the creation of the Panama Canal. We also lived for four days with Kuna families. The Kuna, one of Panama’s native peoples, were wonderful hosts, and we came away from this adventure with much to ponder. The second class took us to visit Colon’s Free Trade Zone, a couple of archaeological sites, and numerous cities in Panama. During the geography class, we took a tour of the Canal, and visited a mine, a hydroelectric dam, banana and coffee plantations, and an island in the Caribbean which is just starting to realize its potential as a tourist location. These classes were taught by enthusiastic professors, who were just as eager to learn as we were. All in all, we visited every province in Panama (except for one which is considered dangerous). As for our Internships, the work we did ranged from designing environmental education programs to institutional strengthening to studying malnutrition to creating webpages for a primate sanctuary.



And that was just the work! Weekends were free time, which we spent at the beach, scuba diving, in the mountains, or hanging out with new-found Panamanian friends. We discovered that Panama is a place full of friendly, interesting people, who are willing to share their lives with you, and all they ask in return is to share a little bit of your life with them. I think I speak for all the participants when I say that this was truly an amazing experience, one that has changed my view of the world, its problems, and how everything fits into place.



From being escorted around Panama City by the Tourist Police to being mistaken for Panamanians. From struggling with Spanish to imitating almost perfectly the Panamanian accent. From iridescent white to incredibly tanned. All this on top of learning a new culture, and making life-long friends. This was PFSS 2001. And the 27 of us will never forget it.



## *From a future MSE student*

By Serge Aucoin

As an arts student at McGill a few years ago, I took my first biology course as an elective. I wasn't sure what I cared to study then, and school seemed more about finding out what I didn't want to do. This particular biology professor had been a literature major as an undergraduate, but now had his doctorate in molecular biology and cared very much to meld both together. I thought his class and methods fascinating. The following semester, having now decided to pursue studies in biology, I found myself thanking him for partly helping me find my vocation in biology, specifically as a marine biologist. Jokingly, he didn't know if he should be flattered or sorry. Today, I've completed a Bachelor of Science and I'm far from sorry for having crossed over from my initial arts degree.



During my undergraduate, I did marine biology internships at the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture and the 'Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad', in New Brunswick and Costa Rica, respectively. These were of my own volition and against the will of my advisors, but I felt it necessary to see where all this I studied fit. I experienced the complexities of many socio-political facets involved in the policy arena and realized firsthand how pressing so many conservation

issues were and remain today. I eventually finished my degree and started work as a research assistant for a marine conservation authority, namely 'Project Seahorse', and as a teaching assistant for an aquatic conservation class here at McGill.

I've always had the desire to go beyond the traditional breath of university training and I hope the MSE will be able to satisfy this need. Conservation is what is most important to me and I intend to build the skills and acquire the wide array of pertinent experience needed to lead in this discipline. This school offers the chance to interact with a great diversity of experts and other students in a setting that best suits my interests. It's broad scoped and I'm aware of the opportunities it presents in gaining valuable perspective on a complex set of ecological and sociological issues.

I've applied to start the 'Diploma in Environment' this fall. I'll keep you posted...

*Serge Aucoin graduated with a Major in Biology from McGill University (class 2000) and is currently working as a field assistant for a McGill PhD candidate looking at the artisanal conch fishery in the Dominican Republic. He will further be examining population functioning of seabirds in relation to the Ericka oil spill through an internship at the 'Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique' in Paris this summer.*

The URL for Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad is:

<http://www.inbio.ac.cr/es/default.html>

The URL for Project Seahorse is:

[http://www.seahorse.mcgill.ca/#Project Seahorse](http://www.seahorse.mcgill.ca/#Project%20Seahorse)

## Environmental Action Ltd.

By Zdenka Dobiasova

I am an exchange student at McGill. I am not even in the School of Environment. This doesn't mean that I am not interested in the environment at all, on the contrary. My situation enables me to see things a little differently and I feel it important to sound an alarm that will undoubtedly sound somewhat outrageous in an environmental newsletter.

Taking a few courses at the MSE, I got a chance to meet many students who had a real passion for the environment and I have learned a great deal. The conversations in and outside of class would deal with space, animals, water and air, pollution and conservation. A great number of my colleagues were active in some way or other in associations protecting dolphins, birds and other species, many were vegetarians to avoid animal suffering. And I, a student in Political Science, therefore almost an "enemy", sometimes wondered where the people were in all this...

Indeed there is need for action. I would not have been active in the protection of environment myself if I considered it a futile effort. I am convinced that we have no more rights than any other species to waste this world's resources and I want to avoid unnecessary suffering for any living thing.

My complaint lies in the fact, that for the idea of preserving forests and wildlife, we often forget that there are people around the world who starve to death every minute, who die from easily curable diseases, who kill each other in senseless conflicts for causes they don't understand. Caring for the environment should not excuse the lack of attention we pay to issues such as epidemics and conflict prevention and the protection of Human Rights. It is not because they have been here longer than the issues of environment that they merit less regard.

It is a happy development that the care for the environment is increasingly considered as a priority by young people. Knowing anything about it, one must agree with the generally accepted goals such as preservation of biodiversity or stopping human induced climate change. But there is a measure to be observed in all things, and one should bear in mind that even the worthiest of causes turns dangerous when it becomes a dogma.

Having followed the events of Quebec City during the Summit of the Americas, I feel it has already become one. Some protesters mindlessly jeopardized the legitimacy of everyone else's struggle by the use of random violence. It wasn't the first time. But what use was it to attack the policemen who were only obeying orders? The police presence and the security measures were actually a brilliant Machiavellian move on the part of the authorities. They managed to turn the larger public's attention to the streets and away from what was actually debated. It appeared that to many of those present protesting itself mattered more than the reasons for protesting. An author whose name unfortunately slips my mind once said that every generation needs their revolution and that ideals are the sparks which set fire to it. That is what I see when I look at Quebec.

I am afraid that openly looking for enemies is not a viable solution. One should rather learn to change matters from the inside by education and by dialogue, as the Peoples' summit tried to do. It is a pity that this part of the Quebec experience didn't get a greater piece of media coverage. Throwing Molotov cocktails in front of the cars of government officials and breaking security fences only reduces the image of the environmentalist to that of troublemaker in the eyes of the rather conservative population and takes away from him the advantage of a valid contribution to the discussion. No one likes to listen to a voice that shouts, even if it is telling the truth. Many self-righteous activists (not only in environment) should open their eyes beyond their own discourse to see the greater picture and give more thought to the possibility that the real oppressors might not be the ones they blame anymore, but more themselves. Confrontational attitudes won't make things change.