



The Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice

Working for social and economic change tackling poverty and exclusion

Members: The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, The Vincentian Congregation, The Daughters of Charity and The Sisters of the Holy Faith

The Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice Ozanam House 53 Mountjoy Square Gardiner St. Dublin 1 Tel: 8780425 Fax 8780423 vpj@eircom.net

Contents:

- Environment
Choices and the Future
Prayer and Reflection

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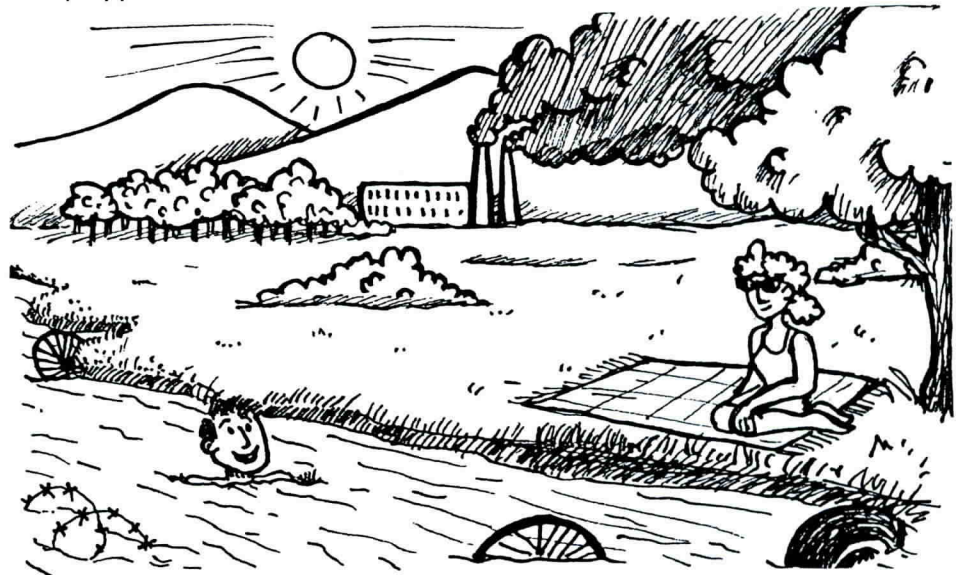
May 2003 Justice Briefing

Summer and the Environment under Threat

Treat the earth well: it was not given to you by your parents; it was loaned to you by your children (Native Indian Proverb).

Summer days draw near and with them the opportunity to enjoy our good green earth - its rivers, lakes, mountains, seas and clean, fresh air. As citizens of our world we are trusted to care for it so that we hand on a healthy environment to future generations

This issue of JUST.NOW deals with environmental issues that are important to all of us. It looks at one giant corporation, ESSO, that actively opposes commitment to conservation.



Environment: In the News

Transport Planning is the Road to Nowhere

Road transport is the fastest-growing contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. On a per-capita basis, Ireland's emissions are outstripped only by the U.S.A., Canada and Australia. Yet we are doing very little to reverse this trend or to fulfil commitments under the Kyoto Climate Change Protocol. (Irish Times. April 18th 2003)

Deadly Sewage Bug find at 19 Beaches and Two Lakes

A shocking 19 beaches and two lakes tested positive for the streptococci bug which comes from sewage contamination. In addition, the latest Environmental Agency Report on drinking water found that more than 30% of all private group water schemes were contaminated by sewage and farm slurry. (Irish Independent, May 14th 2003)

The Future will be Shaped by Our Choices

ESSO Campaign

As long as a decade ago a multi - government panel warned that the impacts of global warming would be "second only to nuclear war".

Their predictions are coming true.

The Citizens of the drowning Pacific atoll nation of Tuvalu are packing their bags to leave their homeland for New Zealand. Insurance companies predict that annual losses from natural disasters could come close to \$150 billion by the end of this decade if current warming trends persist.

Various international gatherings of national representatives have sought to address this issue. Climate change negotiations have sustained a ten-year attack by the World's largest oil company, ESSO (known in the U.S. as EXXON).

This company has systematically:

- ❖ urged officials to block agreements on the control of fossil fuel emissions.
- ❖ denied that burning fossil fuels like oil and gas causes global warming.
- ❖ refused to invest even €1 of its \$15 billion - a - year profits in clean renewable energy. ESSO has done more than any other company to undermine the Kyoto Protocol, the only international treaty that set targets to halt global warming.

From:
Exxon's Weapons of Mass
Deception.
The Assessment of Greenpeace
International.

What choices can you make that will respect and treasure our planet?

- First of all, be aware. Know what is happening to attack and destroy our earth community.
- Join the increasing number of people who refuse to buy Esso Petrol and Fuels in protest against Esso's opposition to conservation.
- Cut down on the burning of fossil fuel - walk or cycle instead of using the car.
- Avoid the use of aerosols and dispose carefully of chlorofluorocarbons.
- Don't leave taps running; reduce water usage and make sure washing products you use contain no phosphates.
- Appreciate the graciousness of good, fertile soil and trees.
- Reduce, reuse and recycle
- Above all be sensitive to our oneness with the web of life and respect all our natural world



Environmental Issues

We live in a single sacred community of life. We are dependent on many life forms to keep us alive, healthy and flourishing. Yet in recent times we have forgotten or ignored this fact. As a result our world has been severely damaged. An inventory of earth damage in six key areas includes:

1. Global Warming

This means we burn fuels, (coal, gas, oil) that give off dangerous gases. These gases stay in the atmosphere, trapping the heat from the sun. The trees soak up some of these harmful gases. But as the rain forests are chopped down, more gases remain in the atmosphere. In this way the earth is becoming a giant greenhouse.

Result: The climate gets warmer; changes occur in rainfall (either more or less); sea levels rise and there are more droughts, floods and storms.

2. Acid Rain

Car-exhaust fumes and gases from industry are dissolved in rain and fall on the soil and water as corrosive agents.

Result: Fish and forests are killed; people get lung and heart disease and cancers. Ancient stone buildings are damaged.

3. The Hole in the Ozone Layer.

Ten miles up in our atmosphere lies the protective layer of ozone gas. This saves us from the harmful impact of the invisible ultraviolet rays of the sun. The ozone layer is being 'eaten up' by chemicals called chlorofluorocarbons (C.F.C.s) which are used in fridges and some aerosols and solvents. There

is an ongoing debate as regarding the extent of the loss of the ozone layer. However, there is total agreement as to the risk posed to our earth by its depletion.

Result: The thinning of the ozone layer leads to an increase in skin cancers and eye diseases and less food production. Plankton dies and leaves grow smaller.

4. Contaminated Water

Contamination of water is one of the most serious aspects of earth damage. Water is being contaminated by chemicals, sewage, the dumping of waste and careless accidents. The World Health Organisation estimates that water-related infections hit more than 3 billion people every year, killing more than 5 million of them.

Result: Rivers and lakes die and sea creatures and plants become extinct. Human health deteriorates.

5. Soil Degradation

Soil is damaged by the overuse of chemicals in fertilisers, over-grazing and the cutting down of trees

which serve as anchors and windbreakers.

Result: The land is less fertile and so all insect, animal and human life is impoverished.

6. The Disappearance of Forests and Life Forms.

Trees are being cut down faster than they can grow to make space for farming, mining and the building of new towns and villages. Every year rainforests covering three times the size of Ireland are lost.

Result: Birds and insect species become extinct, soil erodes, rivers silt, and yet more gases remain in the atmosphere, adding to the greenhouse effect.

(Make a Difference, C. Harrison & M. Wilson).



Look What's Happening To Me!

Reflection and Prayer

Litany of Healing

We join with the earth and with each other
To bring new life to the land
To restore the waters
To refresh the air.

We join with the earth and with each other
To renew the forests
To care for the plants
To protect all creatures.

We join with the earth and with each other
To celebrate the seas
To rejoice in the sunlight
To sing the song of the stars

We join with the earth and with each other
To promote justice and peace
To remember our children.

O Great Spirit, whose voice we hear in the
wind and whose face we see in the morning
sun, blessed is your name.

Help us to remember that you are everywhere,
and teach us the way of peace. **

World Environment Day Prayer

You called us by name, O Lord,
As the waters of Baptism
Washed over us.

We are called to your ministry,
To let justice flow freely,
To share you gifts of Creation
Without concern for profit,
To provide for those who thirst.

We pray that all your children
May feel and taste
Healing water,
Fresh and clear
As mercy raining upon us all

Amen **

Litany of Intercession

We gather in prayer for our world and its
people.

We remember:

- All who suffer cancer because our
earth is exploited
- All who suffer hunger because greed
has left infertile soil
- All who live in destitution because
their natural environment has been
destroyed
- Holy Spirit renew our hearts to
appreciate earth's beauty and
mystery that we may treasure this
bountiful gift and enable its
flourishing for future generations

*"The ecological problem is
intimately linked to justice for
the poor. The option for the
poor makes us aware that it is
they who suffer most directly
from environmental decline and
have the least access to relief
from their suffering."*

*(A Guide to Catholic Social Teaching,
Kevin E. Mc Kenna)*