

# Plutonium is your friend

## Oil runs thicker than water

THE TITLE AND SUB-TITLE ABOVE might lead you to believe that the following editorial is an environmental rant and that wouldn't be an altogether unfair description. Humankind's environmentally destructive tendencies are as constant and pervasive as they are devastating, so there's never any shortage of things to rant about where these matters are concerned. Therein lies the focus of this particular rant, though: constancy. No matter how often lives and resources are senselessly wasted by neglect, exploitation and greed, human beings never seem to learn the folly of destroying their own habitat.

The methods of environmental suicide are legion: the production of ozone-depleting gases; the overconsumption and exhaustion of resources like the fisheries; the disruption of the ecosystem by construction and development (like a certain bridge breathlessly anticipated by many Islanders); the contamination of habitats by nuclear waste and radiation; the production of "disposable" but non-biodegradable products; the transport of hazardous materials ranging from oil to plutonium, and the list goes on and on. Humankind's industries continue to pollute our ecosphere in increasingly varied and harmful ways.

Despite the worsening epidemic of environmental breakdown, many people (or at least those in authority) seem too complacent or mercenary to care. The global nature of this environmental malaise is illustrated by recent developments in Japan. Now an economic superpower, Japan was once a hostile nation and the first country in the world to be attacked with atom bombs, effectively ending World War II. They, more than anyone else,

should understand the inherent dangers of radioactive materials and atomic power; however, the Japanese have just made plans to import thirty tonnes of plutonium as fuel for power plants; to assuage public fears, they have produced a promotional video starring the animated mascot Mister Pluto (no relation to Mickey Mouse's dog or the Roman god of

the underworld), a cherubic, cuddly cartoon character who embodies plutonium and tries to convince folks of how safe and beneficial he is, expressing regret for his unwilling role in the creation of nuclear weaponry. If that testimonial isn't enough, he goes on to proclaim his harmlessness by shaking hands with a grinning youngster who is drinking a plutonium-laced soda, while the narration claims that plutonium, if ingested, would for the most part pass through the body without harm. The potential threat of plutonium in the wrong hands as a bomb or poison is downplayed by the tape as "rumours", cheerfully ignoring the substance's hazardous properties-- though plutonium is highly dangerous in that it is absorbed by bone marrow, and as little as one ten-thousandth of a gram is sufficient to induce lung cancer if inhaled; still, what's the potential of a slow, lingering death between friends? After all, as the Japanese nuclear agency says, plutonium's our pal.

One needn't visit exotic locales to seek

environmental evil-doing, though. Just peer into the waters off pristine P.E.I., and you'll find one of the Maritimes' dirtier environmental secrets-- the Irving Whale. It sank in a storm while loaded with oil and settled to the bottom without breaking up; however, rather than trying to salvage the wreck or drain its contents, the Irvings and the government have been

**"proof that the environmental consciousness of the past few years was just a passing fad."**

content to let the barge just sit there and slowly leak oil into the ocean for years, despite complaints from fishermen and environmentalists-- though every once in a while the issue, if not the vessel, resurfaces. Salvage would be a risky, time-consuming and expensive operation, so the government is reluctant to pursue it-- and perhaps even more reluctant to pursue the matter with the vessel's

owner, the Irvings, Atlantic Canada's answer to the Kennedys. Money talks, but an oil-laden hulk at the bottom of the sea is quite a bit quieter-- out of sight, out of mind.

Only recently, within hours of this editorial's composition, did the new federal government promise action on the Irving Whale: either the salvage of the oil barge or drainage of its cargo, which is already purported to have tainted water and wildlife. This resolve is commendable, and speaks well of the new Liberal administration given the years of blissful ignorance, procrastination and buck-passing practised in this matter. One hopes this

damage control has not come too late.

The most glaring and almost blackly comic example of local disregard for the environment, though, is the purportedly imminent construction of the Fixed Link to the mainland, which some Islanders regard with a hopeful expectancy ordinarily reserved for the second coming of Christ (it's a bloody bridge, get a grip on yourselves). Beyond the fact that this much-heralded construction project is of questionable value beyond short-term, spin-off jobs, it will be a massive disruption of our waters' ecosystem. No one has proven that the bridge and its construction will not significantly harm the strait's floor and marine life, much of which is already reeling from overfishing. It is utter folly that, at a time when the fishery that has been this region's lifeblood is on the verge of collapse, we should consider the initiation of a massive construction project which could irreparably damage the strait, its inhabitants, and the fisheries, all in the name of potential economic profits that may prove fleeting if indeed they arrive at all. Progress of a sustainably beneficial kind is of course desirable, but environmental irresponsibility in pursuit of alluring short-term construction and development is simply ludicrous. The potential existence of the Fixed Link is, in the words of another writer, "proof that the environmental consciousness of the past few years was just a passing fad."

The almighty dollar seems to be just that in our society, and almost any atrocity can be rationalized in the name of profit and progress. We can only develop, consume, and sell so much of our planet's resources, though, before there's nothing left. Making a living means nothing if we are left with nowhere to live. People who looked admiringly at sky-blackening factories once said that where there's smoke there's progress. An older saying holds that where there's smoke there's fire, and if humanity doesn't develop a sense of foresight and environmental responsibility, we may all get burned.

Sean McQuaid  
Plutonium-free editor



CUP Graphic: Guelph Peak

## The football hits the fan

X-Press, In response to Scott MacDonald's well-written letter in January 18th's issue: "One more anti-

football fan." I found some problems with what Mr. MacDonald stated.

Scott mentions cost. Football is something many people are interested in; more so than soccer anyways. Instead of bashing people who are trying to bring a good thing to a well deserving school, why not bash the people that are making school so unaffordable? We should be asking questions like: "Why are tuitions increasing at such a rapid rate?", and, "Why are books such a ridiculously high price?". And we should demand solutions to these questions, not just answers and "spending cuts". It seems like the more money a student pays, the less he/she gets in return. I think making an argument out of these issues would be a great deal more productive (I'd hope).

Scott also seems to feel that organized sports are not an educational experience. They contain a variety of important "lessons".

I always thought University was supposed to be a combination of academics and learning about life and its variety of workings. There are some things you can learn through either playing organized sports or being a fan, that you just can't learn in a classroom. I don't think I need to go through them. There are many great people throughout history who have excelled at both academics and athletics. Football notwithstanding.

As far as telling people to watch soccer. It's quite obvious that football attracts more fans than soccer games here. There must be a reason for that. Forcing people to watch something they don't enjoy isn't the answer.

Scott goes on to further insult football players on P.E.I. by suggesting that they're not good enough to play university football. When did you last scout players, Scott?

In regards to Scott's statement; "You have to be realistic enough to realize that the university cannot afford a luxury like a football team." I feel the university cannot afford to listen to an opinion like Scott's. This university belongs to the students, if you want something, fight for it!

As far as the "stay home and watch NFL football" goes-- stuff it, Scott. You go home and watch soccer. It's on T.V all the time, probably because it's so popular.

Sincerely,  
Jean-Claude Van Damme  
January 21, 1994

X-Press, Recently there were two articles published in continued on next page