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BETWEEN THE ISSUES

May 1981

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Ecology Action Centre

Halifax, Nova Scotia Dalhousie University **Forrest Building** B3H 3J5

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HOW IT IS WITH US

by Ginny Point

"The human brain, so frail, so perishable, so full of inexhaustible dreams and hungers, burns by the power of the leaf."

- Loren Eiseley, The Unexpected Universe, 1969

This quotation literally jumped out at me from a journal which I was reading the other day. I thought it would be particularly appropriate for this issue of Between the Issues (BTI), much of which focuses on agriculture and energy.

Today, after having planted this year's garden at home (finally!) I know that I appreciate the power of the leaf that much more.

Moving on to how it is at the office, I'll just say that everything is doing very well. Susan Holtz just returned from her first Canadian Environmental Advisory Council meeting (CEAC), which she enjoyed very much. She still intends to have her various research projects finished by the end of June, and will be extremely busy until then.

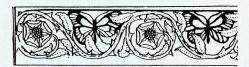
Since the last BTI a working committee was set up within Ecology Action Centre specifically to look at the question of uranium mining. Thanks to member Daphne Taylor and others, it has been very active.

Elizabeth Greenhavens worked long and hard this winter reorganizing some of the administrative files. Now that she is almost finished, the administrative tasks should be more streamlined. She has begun to work part-time again, and we hope that works our well.

I will be working on a summer project funded by Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC, or Manpower as we used to call it). The goal of the project is to select key articles on a variety of environmental issues in the Maritimes, and to write a teacher's manual which will outline classroom

activities, field trips, and discussion questions for Jr. and Sr. High School teachers who want to cover environmental issues in their classes. Any thoughts you have about class activities would be very helpful. Also, if any of you are teachers, or know of teachers who might want to sit on a steering committee for the project, or review any draft material that is produced, I'd really appreciate your help. Teacher input is critical.

There is much more to say, but I'll stop here, except to invite you to the upcoming pot luck supper and summer gathering on June 6. The topic for the evening is uranium mining. (see inside for more details)



UPCOMING EVENTS

"The Growing of Hydrocarbons"; Sunday May 31 from 4 - 6 p.m. in the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium. This is a public lecture to be given by Dr. Melvin Calvin, Nobel Prize winner, and Professor of Chemistry at the University of California at Berkely. The event is sponsored by the Chemical Institute of Canada. For more information, please call 424-3305.

"Community Brainstorming Session"; Wednesday, June 3 from 7:30 - 10:30 p.m. at the Institute of Public Affairs, 1261 Seymour St., Halifax. This session is to help plan a series of public workshops on the "Impacts of Offshore Oil and Gas Development" which will be co-sponsored by Community Palnning Association and the Institute of Public Affairs. For more information, or to let her know you are coming, please call Joanne Lamey from CPAC at 422-5564.

"Environmental Law"; Tuesday, June 16 8-10 p.m. in the auditorium of the Nova Scotia Museum in Halifax. Last in this year's lecture series, this evening will feature a panel discussion on some of the key issues in environmental law. Guest panelists include Ray Cote, Manager of Integrated and Coordinated Programs in Environment Canada, Atlantic Region.

ECOLOGICAL AGRICULTURE: AT HOME AND ABROAD

By Ginny Point

Sixth in the Centre's Environmentmental Lecture Series this year, was a very thought-provoking look at agriculture. The event took place on April 17th at the Nova Scotia Museum. Although billed as "Ecological Agriculture: at Home and Abroad," a better title might have been "Sustainable Agriculture" because the event focussed more on the broad socio-economic and political implications of different agricultural systems as opposed to looking at strictly physical considerations (i.e., soil health, pest control and energy inputs).

The evening began with some introductory remarks by Peggy Hope-Simpson, moderator for the evening, and then moved on to a showing of part of an NFB film entitled "North China Commune." Peggy explained that the film was in lieu of a presentation which Chai Chu Thompson of the Canada Chinese Friendship Association would have given if her schedule had not been overbooked at the time. An agriculturalist by university degree, Chai Chu would have been an ideal speaker.

The film was no disappointment, however. It focussed on the inner workings of a commune, touching on its efforts toreuse and recycle, as demonstrated in its rigorous program of using virtually all of the animal manure produced each year (about 100,000 metric tons) for methane gas production and organic soil building. Another scene focussed on education, health care and local government, again stressing the importance of self-reliance and self-sufficiency.

After the film, Peggy introduced Cathy Kneen, the keynote speaker, explaining that Cathy is a commercial sheep farmer with about 350 head on her homestead in Pictou county. She is also a regular quest on Radio Noon III.

Cathy began her talk by saying that she had three main prejudices which were important for the audience to know, in terms of understanding her perspective on sustainable agriculture:

- that healthy agricultural systems are the basis of a healthy economy and that healthy agricultural systems implie a considerable degree of regional self-sufficiency; - that she has "no patience for vegetarians" who buy their protein in the form of nuts imported from California, for example. She said there are excellent grassland areas in Nova Scotia that are not suitable for vegetable production. Animal-growing is appropriate for that land; thus meat from animals raised on the grasslands should be seen as a good source of protein here in N.S.;

- that some of the current agricultural practices are neither helathy for the land, nor for the rural community.

Implicit in her assumptions was a basic belief that sustainable agriculture for Nova Scotia means regional self-sufficiency and self-reliance wherever possible, with a reduced reliance on chemical pesticides, chemicals fertilizers and non-renewable imported energy supplies. She then asked the fundamental question, "Is 'sustainable agriculture' what we, as a society really want?"

Yes, it is what most farmer's want, according to Cathy Kneen. Farmers feel a responsibility to the land; they want to leave it better than they found it. While not aiming for large profits, they do want the benefits of the kind of lifestyle which is available in rural areas. They want a healthy agriculture so that they can continue their preferred lifestyle for the long term. Why then do so many farmers rely heavily on petrochemical pesticides and fertilizers and why, also, are so many farmers leaving the land?

Cathy said that many farmers feel that without 'modern methods' of pest control and fertilizers, agriculture wouldn't be sustainable at all, because farmers wouldn't be able to afford to stay on the land. In other words, the bottom line for sustainability is whether or not farmers can afford to be in operation for another year. They can't begin to think about long term sustainability; they have to worry about short-term survival.

YOU HAVE YES, WHAT IS THIS TEMON MY BILL TO GOVER THE ENGGEST OR FRANKE TO EXPLANATION IN THE WORLD EXCLUSE OF THY COMING OUT PROBLEMS OF THIS KIND PRONE

"Industrialized agriculture" is the chief culprit in the economic squeeze facing farmers today, according to Cathy Kneen. By definition, industrial agriculture is a process whereby food is produced as cheaply as possible in monetary terms, irrespective of the real costs. For example, the dollar cost of grain grown on chemically fertilized fields does not reflect the real cost of depleting the world's supply of petroleum (which is used to make fertilizer). As long as it is "cheap" in terms of dollars and cents to grow grain on chemically fertilized soils, and pay low wages to workers on large scale farms, industrialized agriculture will do so. Small family farms, can't compete directly, so they lose out.



However, Cathy's argument was that we should not be counting cost/benefit in terms of dollars and cents only. For example, "what is the real cost/benefit of manure from milk cows that is plowed back into the soil?" How do you measure the real cost/benefit of having a non-wage earning family member work on the land, especially when s/he has a personal and professional commitment to the long term health of the farm and is willing to work extra hours to improve the land.

Family farms, which are more likely to employ these practices of land stewardhsip, my lose out on the balance sheet in terms of dollars and cents. However, Cathy felt that these same family farms should be encouraged to stay in operation because they bring unquantifiable benefits to the land, such as long term care and improvement.

Cathy also stressed again that family sized farms are vital components in a healthy rural society, and that healthy rural societies are fundamental to a healthy wider society.

After answering "yes", that farmers do want sustainable agriculture, Cathy asked whether the consumers of our society would prefer sustainable agriculture and would be willing to have food prices actually reflect the real cost of production (resource depletion for example). Would we want to buy apples instead of oranges, or Nova Scotia lamb instead of cheaper New Zealand lamb?

Most consumers automatically reach for those items which are least expensive. We look for convenience items and we buy foods which advertising industries have taught us to want - often highly processed foods which are also high profit foods for the processing industries. When we buy these imported or processed foods, our Nova Scotia farmers suffer. But, we as consumers suffer in the end through the disappearance of family farms and the breakdown of rural fabric.

Such changes do not happen overnight and it is not yet too late to reverse current trends towards industrial agriculture. By the same token, the effects of industrialized agriculture are not easily or quickly erased. It takes years to return valuable nutriants to a depleted soil base and it takes even longer to rebuild strong rural communities once they have broken down.

To sum up, Cathy listed the choices we face. Under industrialized agriculture systems, we can rely on cheap labour, imported foods, multinational controls over food processing and an industrialized approach to research on pest control, seed breeding and soil fertility. Or we can choose self-sufficiency in terms of produce, self-reliance in terms of labour, local control over food production and publicly funded research programs. The industrial model would result in a phasing out of local farmers and healthy rural communities. The choice is ours as individuals.

What you can do

- 1) Several people commented in the discussion that followed that urban people are losing touch with rural community. To provide better communication between producers and consumers, it would be benefical for urban people to work on a farm when appropriate. We could keep a list at EAC of consumers and/or producers who want to connect up with one another. Let us know if you are interested.
- 2) Another point raised was that supermarkets have a poor record of buying local produce. Apparently they get a steady supply year round from California or elsewhere and they do not consider it worthwhile to interrupt their system in order to buy local produce. Cathy Kneen suggested that people could repeatedly ask store managers for local produce or could picket target stores for example, thus inducing those stores to change their policies.

3. Lastly, it was suggested that people could make their concerns known to MLA's and MP's but also to the civil servants in charge of different aspects of agriculture. Dr. Edward Lister, newly appointed Regional Director General (in charge of research for the Atlantic area) identified himself at the meeting and stated that Agriculture Canada was involved in research on energy conservation, integrated pest management and soil health. To re-emphasize points made during Cathy's talk - or any other ideas of your own which you think Agriculture Canada should hear, you could write Dr. Lister at

Agriculture Canada Atlantic Regional Office 1888 Brunswick St., Halifax, B3J 3J8

MR. FLUGG



Tenth Year Anniversary

This year marks Ecology Action Centre's tenth year of operation. We are hoping to celebrate this important year at the next annual general meeting and in an upcoming edition of JUSUN. This year the annual general meeting will be held in September- tentatively scheduled for September 19 - so that the auditor's report will in act be ready for the meeting. We are looking for momentos of the last decade, old photos, newsclips, letters, whatever.... And we are hoping to pull togehter a committee of people to help us organize the festivities. Please contact Susan Guppy at 424-3672 (w) or 429-7438 if you can help. Thanks.

The federal position—despite recent strong postures and policy initiativescould be seen as largely defensive and reactive, with initiative having passed to the producing provinces (notably Alberta), the private energy sector, and the public in general.

Federal "control" will be suddenly, forcefully gained with announcement of the "package". This, however, will be a lumpy, almost indigestible mass of policy. Unless that initiative is retained by merchandising both the package and its individual elements, and existing programs in the fields of supply, allocation and conservation, that initiative will go by default to the inevitable detractors (including a largely hostile media, the producing provinces, the foreign-owned multinationals, and the Opposition).

12 Retaining Control-Although it is difficult to conceive of a worse season for conventional or "free" publicity for the initial announcement of the package, the plan in fact is to rely less on that "free" coverage than on paid advertising, as set out below.

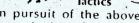
In any event these matters are relative. For potential opponents, the timing is even worse, provided we build on the initial communications advantage by

continuously selling the federal position through the late Summer, Fall, and Winter. These detractors will be disadvantaged by surprise, encumbered by the necessity of applauding many of the policy initiatives, and possibly even nonplussed by our bwn noisy charivari. . .

1. The energy-15sue "take ou!" Despite some expected difficulty in the early going with regard to the impact of the energy package on the constitutional talks, it should be possible-given the general cast of the strategy thus far-to make substantial gains towards the removal of "energy" from the pantheon of major national issues.

This is regarded as the assence of the trategy, recognizing that it may take sevgral years to achieve such a goal.

No propagandizing is envisaged here. The unassailable premise is that through klean, attractive, relevant informationbasic information, completely in line with overall federal communications objectives—we can dramatically alter the public's perceptions of the energy situation, and thereby change their beliefs (and perhaps even their attitudes and behaviour)



In pursuit of the above goals, no communications plan can be devised that would successfully sell to the public something called a "national energy strategy".

"National" is good, for now. "Energy" is /acceptable in the early going, and perhaps for now unavoidable (though we can do better in the longer run, as described below).

But "strategy", as useful as it has been as an internal descriptor, should never see the light of external day. It typifies what is wrong with the previous approach. It says, in-effect, that we have another plan, another intention, another hope: "we're working on it",

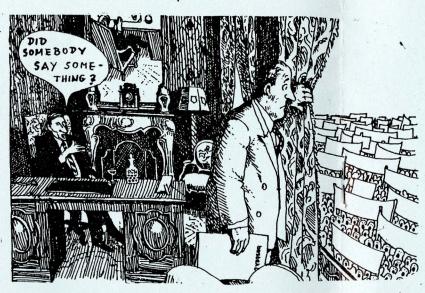
What we must now tell the Canadian public is that we have moved beyond plans and hopes and aspirations, to a set of hard decisions.

We need certainty in the situation and that can't be won by ideas, notions, studies. All of those things the public expects us to have. The idea here is that we say, if we must, that we have them-and keep them in a top drawer. What the public wants to hear is what decisions we have reached.

The package is not a set of plans, not a "strategy". It is a parcel of decisions, and that is how it should be presented.

In devising a communications strategy that has some hope of success (which strategy we keep to ourselves, it is hoped), not enough emphasis can be placed on using the right "set of words".

This can best be explained through the following contrasts. But keep in mind that the purpose of these contrasts is to illustrate the planned tone and tenor of a new total approach, not to severely criticize the old one.



The semantic contrast would be approximately this:

Until Now	From Now On
Crisis	Resolution
Vulnerable	Manageable
Waste	Conservation
Imbalance	Balance
Depletion	Discovery
Studying	Deciding
Uncertainty	Certainty
Indecision	Decision
Variable of the state of the state of the state of	- Decision

The entire effort should be bent towards informing (educating, if you like) the Canadian public about achievement in the energy sphere.

We have a great deal to say that we have not yet said very well or very often.

As an example of the necessity of telling these stories, one can imagine the sheer impossibility of convincing the Canadian public of the importance of residual oil upgrading without explaining what residual oil is; or how upgrading occurs, or what it gives us. The latter element has been missing; it must be added.

It is this kind of information that should form the backbone of the forthcoming communications program



MORATORIUM ON URANIUM EXPLORATION IN NOVA SCOTIA

At the request of the Uranium Sub-committee of EAC's Energy Committee, the Board of Directors passed a resolution on March 25th calling for the government of Nova Scotia to declare a moratorium on uranium exploration, mining and milling in the province. This decision, as you are no doubt aware, was made because of exploration activities in West Hants Co. (8 miles from Windsor) and Digby County (near Bear River), and the danger that uranium mining may become a reality in Nova Scotia. Our biggest concern is the highly radioactive waste materials or tailings that remain in the vicinity of a uranium mine and mill and for which there is presently no known safe method of disposal. 85% of the radioactivity of the uranium ore is left behind in the tailings, and this material retains its radioactivity for a halflife of 77,000 years. Should Aquitaine, the company with exploration rights for uranium in West Hants, open such a mine, the highly radioactive material from the tailings ponds could leach out into the ground water and thus seep into the Avon River system. A similar occurence would happen in Bear River.

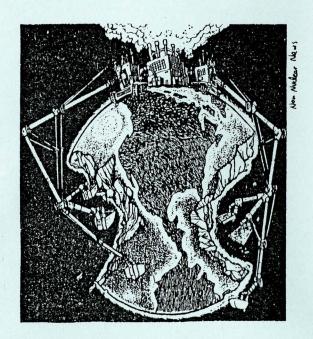
The Uranium Sub-committee is representative of people from the Halifax area, West Hants County and Colchester Co. We are attempting to coordinate the activities of those concerned about the environmental and health hazards of uranium mining. Our resolution (see page 8), together with a covering letter and FACT sheet on uranium mining, has been sent out to nearly 200 organizations across the province, suggesting that they too pass a similar resolution calling for a moratorium and offering further information and/or speakers. Already resolutions have been passed by West Hants Municipal Council (as the result of a brief presented by the West Hants Women's Institute), WHEN (Women's Health Education Network), Voice of Women Nova Scotia, Church & Society Committee of the United Church in Bass River, Truro area, Maritime Energy Coalition and West Hants Agricultural Association, and we hope for many more.

This is an urgent matter. Should Aquitaine or Shell start a uranium mine in Nova Scotia it would be virtually impossible at that point to call for a moratorium. IT MUST BE DONE NOW DURING THEIR EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES.

Elizabeth May, who is presently putting together a booklet*to be entitled "Citizen's Guide to Uranium Mining", has agreed to share her knowledge with the membership at our Summer Gathering on SATURDAY, JUNE 6th. Through the political process we have a good chance of preventing uranium mining in Nova Scotia, as we done in British Columbia last year. We therefore ask everyone to come forward and take up some aspect of the work necessary to put a permanent stop to uranium mining in our province. See you at the Summer Gathering. The more the merrier.

Susan Mayo Daphne Taylor Uranium Sub-committee.

* The cost of printing this booklet has been provided by Rudi Haase, for which we are tremendously grateful.





ecology action centre

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B3H 3J5

Resolution passed by the Board of Directors, March 25

CONSIDERING THAT:

Uranium mining/milling bring radioactive dust and gas into contact with the atmosphere and surface and ground water, with the potential for severe contamination of the environment; and that such environmental contamination has been severe from operating uranium mines/mills; There is currently no known method for safe and permanent storage of uranium mine/mill waste products or "tailings" which contain 85% of the radioactivity associated with the ore and which remain dangerous for over 100,000 years; and that radiation from tailings can enter the human body through direct exposure or as a contaminant in food, and is shown to cause or contribute to a long list of diseases;

There is evidence of increased cases of cancer, mental retardation and ill health among people who work in uranium mines/mills and who live in the vicinity of such an operation;

And that, above all, the benefits derived from the mining/milling of uranium are not worth the risks; specifically, jobs in the uranium mines or mills would only last a dozen or two years, and the risks of increased cancer, increased health costs, radioactive contamination of surface and ground water, wildlife and agricultural produce would last virtually for ever;

THEREFORE,

On the grounds that uranium mining/milling poses the above-mentioned risks to terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, and public and occupational health, as well as ultimately providing the material for either nuclear armaments or nuclear reactor fuel, ECOLOGY ACTION CENTRE calls upon the government of Nova Scotia to declare a moratorium on uranium mining and milling in the province of Nova Scotia, followed by a public judicial enquiry with terms of reference determined by all interested parties.



URBAN GARDENING (FARMING)

E.A.C.'s Agriculture Committee-sponsored lecture series held at N.S. Museum

by Catherine McCartny

The Urban Gardening - Farming evening at the N.S. Museum, March 17, was a resounding success. The overflow crowd indicated the growing interest in and practice of urban farming. More and more urban people want to grow their own food to save money and enjoy tastier and healthier fruits and vegetables. Tending a garden also offers the added benefits of exercise, relaxation and the satisfaction of watching plants grow.

Agriculture Committee member, Betsy MacKinnon set the tone for the evening's presentation, defining urban farming as growing more than just a few radishes. Urban farming is producing enough of your own food to cut down on grocery bills and attain some self-reliance. Betsy referred to the October, 1980 edition of Organic Gardening magazine to point out what a large impact home gardens can have on food production. The editorial talked of Rodale Press's Cornucopia Project plans to study the U.S. food system, enlighten public awareness of who controls the production and distribution of food, and emphasize the potential for more local food production. The project hopes to initiate some positive restructuring of the food system and ward off a possible food crisis.

Betsy also cited a July 1979 Harrowsmith article on urban farmers, outlining the vast potential of urban food production. The article moted that victory gardeners in the British Columbia lower mainland produced 31 tons of fresh vegetables and fruit in the summer of 1943, the equivalent of \$20 million dollars' worth of supermarket produce today.

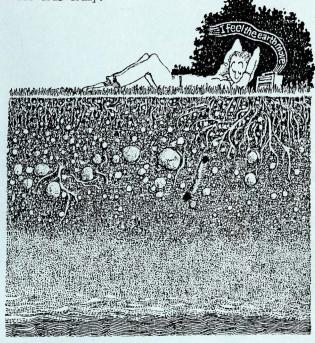
With that historical note, Betsy introduced our first guest, Lou Collins. An historian, educator and gardener, Mr. Collins began by presenting a map of his neighbourhood in Halifax as it appeared in the 1940's. The map showed the area of the city bounded by Oxford St, Chebucto Rd., Connaught Ave. and Bayers Rd. At that time the community was overwhelmingly rural, consisting of mainly dairy farms and pasturelands. Despite the fact that it was one mile within the city limits, the area remained rural until the post-World War II housing boom.

To demonstrate the development of his neighbourhood up until the 1940's, Mr. Collins presented the 1878 atlas of Halifax. Then the same area was open fields and woodland, much of which was surveyed and known as the Hornsby Woodal subdivision.

Mr. Collins related stories from his youth and quoted novelist Hugh MacLennan, who said of this neighbourhood, "It was a place where you learned life and learned quickly." The neighbourhood was considerably more self-reliant than urban living today. Most people raised hens and grew much of their own food. There was plenty of garden fertilizer supplied by the neighbourhood farm

animals. Large varieties of produce were grown. Rhubarb, potatoes, lettuce, carrots, parsnips, scarlet runner beans, chives and cucumbers, to name but a few. Assorted fruit bushes, strawberries and Indian pear trees were part of every garden, as were numerous ornamental shrubs and flowers. A 1928 seed catalogue from local seedsman Fred Settle showed the abundance of vegetable seeds from which to choose.

Concluding his presentation, Mr. Collins read from the 1872 Canadian fruit, flower and garden book by D.W. Beagle. The author referred to gardeners as "nature's noblemen," and upon questioning an expert gardener as to what fertilizer he used, the gardener's reply to Mr. Beagle was, "Brains, sir, brains. I manure my garden with brains," or in other words, using good common sense. The century-old advice found in Mr. Beagle's book still holds true today.



Our second guest for the evening, Carol Bowlby, has been gardening in her Halifax backyard for five years, turning the infertile ground into rich black humus. Now she is able to grow enough vegetables from her 360 sq. ft. garden to feed her family for seven months of the year.

Ms. Bowlby presented slides showing her garden's growth throughout the season. Many people in the audience were astounded that she was able to produce such a bountiful harvest without using chemical fertilizers or pesticides. By following similar gardening principles, Ms. Bowlby assured the sceptics that their gardens could be just as productive.

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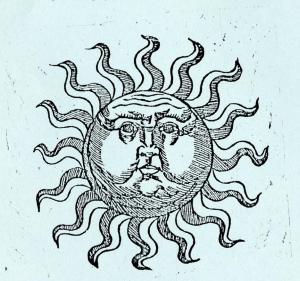
Ms. Bowlby outlined that the main components of a good garden are:
1) having a healthy organic soil, 2) extending the gardening season, 3) selecting crops for the season, and 4) following intensive practises to maximize the available space.

By employing raised beds and allowing for good drainage of soggy spring soils, Ms. Bowlby is able to start her garden as early as the soil can be worked. The beds are 7' x 4' and enriched with all sorts of organic matter, such as seaweed, leaf mold, compost and pigeon guano. To warm the cold March soil, the beds are dug deep, the bottom filled with fresh manure, covered with soil, and then early crops like peas, Swiss chard and brocolli are planted. The heat from the decaying manure provides warth to the young seedlings, giving them a head start. Hot caps are also placed over the early vegetables to keep the heat in and the frost out. To extend the season in the fall, cold crops and lettuce are planted in July for autumn harvesting.

One-crop-per-season vegetables, such as pole beans, squash and tomatoes are an integral part of the garden, as are continuously harvested crops such as celery and parsley. Ms. Bowlby also makes room for luxury produce like cantaloupes and leeks.

To maximize the limited space in a small garden, cucumbers are grown on a trellis and watercress and fiddleheads are grown in the shady spots. Peas, beans and zucchini are all grown in one bed. The peas cascade over the sides of the raised bed, and the bush beans are harvested long before the zucchini leaves grow large enough to over shadow them. Despite the size limitations, Ms. Bowlby has room for flowers and herbs growing amonst her vegetables.

Following Ms. Bowlby's presentation, both she and Mr. Collins were inundated with questions about specific gardening problems. Ms. Bowlby recommended that beginning gardeners read the book, Success with Small Gardens by Louise Riotte to obtain practical advice on starting a city garden.



UPDATE ON AGRICULTURE

The workshop on "sustainable agriculture" which was held on April 11 in Tatamagouche, and co-sponsored by Ecology Action Centre, The North Shore Organic Growers, and ACTC, was excellent. The entire day was devoted to identifying the needs and concerns of the group, and working to identify some possible ways of addressing those needs and concerns. It was a very long and exhausting day, but in the end very worthwhile.

One concrete resolution which was agreed upon was to start a campaign for the establishment of a position for a sustainable agriculture specialist to act as a resource person to local producers (and consumers). The group hoped that people would write letters to appropriate people in support of this idea.

At the end of the day, a small committee was set up comprised of Carol Huntsberger, Cathy McCarthy, David Butlin, and Gordon Stokoe. Its purpose was to pull together the ideas generated, and to make up a list of people who should be approached about the idea of a sustainable agriculture specialist. Their notes were sent out to everyone who went to the meeting and a number of other interested individuals. If you would like a copy of their report, let us know.

If there is sufficient momentum generated, the group might want to consider a follow-up workshop, or pther possible activities, and we might want to set up some kind of formal structure.

- Ginny Point





Stauber/Süddeutsche Zeitung/Munich

Editor : Between The Issues: Ginny Point

