

# Activists should concentrate on legislation

By CATHERINE SIEGNER  
Of the Emerald

Environmental activists should avoid fighting local, specific issues and concentrate instead on getting good initial regulations and legislation, environmental lawyer Joseph Brecher told a large crowd at the law school Wednesday.

Brecher, a Golden Gate University law professor and representative of the Sierra Club and Friends of the Earth, said litigation is the "least effective way to use the limited resources of time and money environmental groups have.

"It's difficult to do a good job and make a good living as an environmental attorney," he said. "For each one of us, there are 10 to 20 people on the other side with the ability to get their hands on expert testimony and who have access to high places."

Brecher recalled that prior to 1969 there was no National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), no strip mining legislation or Endangered Species Act.

"Today we have a huge body of regulations to implement these statutes," he added. "If any of you have had the misfortune of

looking at the Federal Register, you know the sheer volume of the body of literature.

"But pushed back in there are decisions that can determine how the air smells today," Brecher cautioned.

One problem in past environmental lawsuits has been the "burden of proof" placed on groups attempting to come into court and prove that some harm may result from a specific project, he said.

"Proponents of a potentially harmful project should have to prove that it is not harmful."

Brecher said two things are on the environmentalist's side. "We're right — that's all there is to it. And I think the public perceives that. The second thing is that people are on our side. Legislators know we can turn out a lot of cheering crowds."

Often the population in a rural area will take an anti-environmental stand, Brecher said, because there appears to be a conflict between the environment and the local economy.

"We find ourselves in painful clashes with people who say they need a project to keep the local economy going. Environmentalists then seem to be in the position of an outside minority trying to impose its will on the local ma-

iority."

Brecher discussed the Alaska Lands Bill as an example of this. "When members of Congress went to Alaska, they found person after person favored development of Alaska and resented outsiders telling them what to do with the land."

"The legislators opposed to development in Alaska are from Ohio and Arizona and places like that," he said. "But the members from Montana and Alaska were implacably opposed to what they called 'instant wilderness.'"

"Wilderness has been there a long time," Brecher quipped. "The only instantaneous thing is

the oil derricks sweeping down into the area!"

Brecher has been working since 1973 to get the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to require installation of "scrubbers" in coal-fired generation facilities. The scrubbers help remove sulphur dioxide from the air.

"There are definite health effects from sulphur dioxide," he said. "There are also ecological effects. Sulphates come back down to earth as an 'acid rain' which has ruined some eastern lakes at high elevations. It has turned the pH so low the lakes can't support fish life."

"In the Southwest, power com-

panies build plants on Indian reservations and pay the Indians for the coal. Then they send the power to Phoenix, L.A., and El Paso through transmission lines.

"Southern California Edison says 'we've got clean, cheap energy.' Well, sure — the pollution is falling on the Navajos!"

Brecher is going east in a few weeks to hear EPA's final decision on the scrubbers. "They've had five years to think about it, and last month they said 'maybe, perhaps, we may have enough data to make a decision.'"

"Well, I'm going to Washington to see if they're really going to do it."

## Author accuses schools of crushing student creativity

Rebels should not be suppressed in the gutless classrooms of America and should be taught by teachers seeking to subvert domestication, said writer and educator Jonathon Kozol in the EMU Ballroom Wednesday night.

Kozol, who taught in Cuba for nine months in 1976 and 1977, praised the Cuban system for encouraging irreverence and practicality in its students. He condemned American schools for squashing creativity and contact with the real world.

"The world is not going to remember the good American kids who learned to file in lines in school corridors and later marched off to war," said Kozol.

So-called well-adjusted kids, he said, are only adjusted to injustice in the United States.

Kozol picked the school at which he taught in Cuba on the basis of its name. Originally to be called the Che Guevara School, the name was changed before its dedication in 1970 to The Martyrs of Kent State School.

Kozol said students were taught political theory and sciences in the morning and in the afternoon applied their science lessons in work they did in the fields around the school.

He contrasted this approach to education to a school in Harlem

where he said "innovative" educators and black students play simulation games such as, "What life would be like if I lived in the ghetto?"

Kozol called "spectacular" a 1961 Cuban program which, according to UNESCO statistics, reduced the rate of adult illiteracy from 25 percent to 4 percent.

He said UNESCO statistics show a 20 percent illiteracy rate in the adult American population with a 44 percent rate among black American adults.

"How can a black American go out and look for work if he can't even read a want ad?" asked Kozol, calling for a national crusade against adult illiteracy.

A long-time critic of the American educational system, Kozol, 42, was fired from the Boston school system in 1964 after he read a Langston Hughes poem to his class of 4th graders. School officials said he was fired because of "curriculum deviation"—the Hughes poem was on the 9th grade, not the 4th grade reading list.

Kozol described his Boston teaching experiences in his National Book Award winning "Death at an Early Age."

His new book, "Children of the Revolution" details the lessons he learned teaching in Cuban schools.

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