

the tune of about \$10 billion every year compounded; this amount is perhaps half of what is necessary to spend annually for safety, vehicle maintenance and fuel efficiency on our roads today. It is indisputable that more roads and lanes create more traffic congestion, although pavers pretend otherwise.

Although entrenched global political and economic forces have increasingly had things their way, GATT wrings the last amount of "growth" that the Earth's resources can support. However, there is hope for fighting the destructiveness and effectiveness of GATT, NAFTA, and turning around oil dependency, road building, motor vehicles, and the poor economics of buying unnecessary products shipped from afar. First, a review of world trends and some non-transportation aspects of GATT is in order. Everyone's long-term ability to survive has already been compromised past the point of small reforms being able to protect the environment or stretch energy supplies. A call to action beyond GATT is contained in this paper, so as to further objectives which include a paving moratorium. Overdevelopment has created a crisis that compels society now to start really saving farmland and wildlife habitat, and to begin a restoration phase. Halting road construction will also prevent complete deforestation and stop much of the growth of greenhouse-gas emissions and ozone-layer depleting products.

#### Background on the Big Picture

The recently completed Uruguay Round of GATT goes far beyond just trade and tariffs. Binding enforcement powers for a newly created "World Trade Organization" will affect national and provincial policies on health and environment. Presumably, local, state, or national paving moratoria could be voided by a federal government complying with GATT, or by the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its panels. GATT would thereby tighten the economic and political control which multinational corporations and (their) governments already have. However, the difference if GATT is fully implemented will not merely be quantitative: The WTO will assume authority over much of the governing and regulation that big business wants streamlined. The trend of internalizing environmental costs of energy and manufacturing will be reversed, perpetuating or causing unfair trade advantages for nations most willing to pollute their own communities and the biosphere.

Worries that people have about missing the boat on GATT are perhaps based more on fear than on wanting to maximize corporate profits or keeping the citizenry from meddling in decisions. The U.S. is afraid of being left out, fearing a stronger Canada, European Economic Community, and Japan. The U.S. wants to avoid further harm to the local and national economy by our multinational corporations which have already abandoned U.S. communities in droves, but this probably will accelerate under GATT. It is understandable that well-meaning people support GATT, out of fear and being poorly informed or lied to. But when economic and ecological developments worsen in this country as they will, due to petroleum gluttony and world corporate trade run amuck, will people have the vision or the resolve for an alternative way of living based on fairer distribution of wealth? Can we imagine a smaller economic pie within bioregional limits, or do we push the ecosystem past its breaking point? Will an alternative way of living (to some, a lower standard of living) happen anyway, as wages in the U.S. continue to go down, closing the gap between rich and poor nations? Free trade agreements will accelerate the lowering of

living standards in the U.S. which has been under way since oil prices went way up in the 1970s.

Fearing for our national stability and security should mean questioning the U.S. military budget, which President Clinton has downsized only as much as his predecessor promised to do. Bush's Secretary of Defense Cheney stated after the breakup of the Soviet bloc that more roads had to be built for testing weapons and maneuvers on additional military land to be acquired in the U.S. A major challenge for Americans is to confront the fact that our industrial government is the top arms dealer in the world. How our military could be restructured into proportion to any real threats is beyond the scope of this paper, but the matter is related to the problem at hand of paving and the New World Order of oil.

GATT and the process of putting profits and growth first—cancelling out many troublesome democratic and environmental features of pre-WTO business and government—will mean a huge increase in transportation of products and raw materials. This increase has been happening anyway and will continue with or without the WTO, but under the WTO, trade across borders would increase faster. Borders would also come to mean less, but not in terms of freedom for people. It would be rather in terms of freedom for corporations, governments and the WTO which represent the corporate elite: fewer impediments to trade (as well as to profits and control over the population) through weakening labor rights, public safety and environmental standards.

The nation-state period of history has been fairly recent, and may be ending as the next phase—One World Corporate Government, or, the New World Order—seems to be upon us. Today, many multinational corporations control more assets and funds than most nations. Accountability is not in the current picture to protect "developing" nations from being exploited or taken over. Instead of addressing or reversing this problem, the multinationals, strong governments and the WTO will have further leverage over other nations. Cultural genocide will be accelerated to get at valuable forests and minerals, under the guise of alleviating poverty or perhaps under the name "sustainable development." The term "nation" will mean less, as capital and jobs will hop borders and oceans, and the WTO/New World Order will be determining what was formerly national, provincial or local policy. Classical economics is obsolete, as human values are further stripped from the minuscule genteel generosity of the philosophies of Adam Smith and David Ricardo. The value of community will be lessened further by the WTO and by capital flight, especially in the U.S. which has a "pathological disregard for community," as stated by economist Herman Daly.

Although nation-states and the Industrial Revolution stole rights from individuals (e.g., via "enclosure" in England), and although modernized people today work more than the serfs did, some improvements in living standards and freedoms were returned or created after the initial brutalities of capitalism. Among these improvements and freedoms were laws restricting corporations, child labor, assuring a modicum of safety of food and water, and the creation of labor unions. Finally, as a response to industrial pollution, environmental regulations were passed to avoid outright killing of people and animals

useful to people. When capitalism showed its weaknesses in depressions, and having experienced workers riots, a welfare state for the rich investors was established as well as for most workers. Later, "socialist dictatorships" failed due to factors such as insufficient democracy, over-spending to compete with the capitalist nations in the arms race, and environmental degradation (which Marxism failed to properly foresee or prevent). Now, because of population growth and other factors, the capitalist state is increasingly unable to take care of its workers and unemployed. To

maintain order and make more profits, capitalism's kinder and gentler reforms are being cut back under GATT.

To prop up national economies teetering with debt, unemployment, and diminished productivity of the soil, water and air, GATT rewrites many rules of trade and local democratic governance by requiring member nations to void laws that can be judged as barriers to trade. Ignoring the realities of economic weakness caused by the long-term impacts of "growth" and depletion of local resources, GATT member nations and the multinationals endeavor to thoroughly maximize profits via growth and lax standards that have barely protected the public and often go unenforced. WTO panels will be unelected, unaccountable individuals voting secretly on nations' established laws. Unanimous votes by all member countries would be necessary to overturn the WTO panels' rulings. With these outrageous features known to the White House, the question arises: do liberals or conservation-oriented conservatives still have any doubt about the agenda of this administration or of big government? Economic growth and its main engines—roads, vehicles and oil—clearly have priority over environmentally sound policy or local or state sovereignty. "Harmonization" under GATT—standardizing regulations for environmental and consumer protection, for example—would lubricate trade above all other considerations. High standards are to be challenged by the WTO, but not standards "too low." This turns back the clock for public and planetary health. But this should be no surprise to those who questioned big corporations' joining Earth Day festivities, or to those who noticed that politicians often talk green while usually just maintaining business as usual.

#### The World Bank Model

The World Bank is a kind of precursor of the WTO. The Bank's record on funding giant road projects and promoting car and truck sales is an ongoing disaster for the ecosystem. Four times as much funding from World Bank loans goes to highways as rail. Despite lip service to respond to criticism, and after some window dressing to alter policies, non-motor

vehicle transportation is funded cynically by the Bank so as to partially replace certain train and bus systems (to help pavers and motor-vehicle sales), with some bike programs.

The World Bank's loans to India and that nation's foreign debt considerably softened India's initial resistance to GATT. The same nations and multinational corporations which control the Bank are pushing GATT; therefore, the mega-developments favored by the bank and its contractors such as Bechtel would be still favored and forced upon the planet and local economies. The Bank rationalizes this by saying it's easier to process one big loan-project than many small ones—even though the latter may do more to help people and do less harm to the ecosystem.

Development, whether part of urban sprawl in the U.S. or as exemplified by the World Bank, is always through some kind of government intervention into the market such as through subsidies, waivers, etc. So much for "free" market and "free" trade logic, particularly when the results are obviously destructive for people, species on the decline, as well as for long-term economic survival.

#### Overpopulation is Already Upon Us

The makers and promoters of GATT assume availability of unlimited world wide natural resources and that the planet has unlimited ability to accept the waste generated by consuming resources. If this capability was real, and if we were not witnessing the effects of overpopulation in the North and South, there would be no decline in fishing yields. Nor would there be any major desertification, loss of farmland, lack of safe drinking water, major deforestation, or ozone-layer depletion. There would be no landfill crisis with garbage barges exporting waste to other countries including to the U.S.

The industrial world is overpopulated by several times the number of humans that the natural environment can sustain. The U.S. is populated over two times or even ten times the number of humans that the country's ecosystem can support. Our carrying capacity depends on topsoil and fresh water, which have been diminished largely through roads, expansionist development and oil/petrochemical-oriented agribusiness. Meanwhile, road building enables and contributes to population growth.

Oil is a heavily subsidized commodity, and in turn subsidizes agriculture, providing in effect a fossil-fuels "free lunch." Aside from the ecological costs, petroleum supplies will be running out

in the U.S. by approximately the year 2020. From that point until the Middle East runs out of oil, by approximately 2045, our country might not still embrace the kind of oil-based world trade and petroleum agribusiness which we have foolishly instituted. Even conventional economists know that "most sizable cities are only a few days away from hunger with starvation but a week or so off," according to the *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 19, 1994.) Oil dependency will only get worse as population increases, and the U.S. population is growing faster by far than any other industrialized nation. The biggest global downside to this is that we are the top polluting and resource-consuming nation in the world. GATT is sold to other nations as a way to attain U.S. consumption levels, but many energy analysts have said this is unattainable.

NAFTA and GATT will force more people off the land into cities, creating more migration within and between countries. Immigration into the U.S. is responsible for half the anticipated growth in our population, something that many multinational corporations support financially in order to lower wages and promote growth—but the support is under the charitable banner of immigrant rights.

Whether due to economic collapse from the debt/deficit overload which saps the life blood of the United States, or from our dependence on multinational corporate trade for our jobs and food, or from sudden petroleum shortages, *starvation and urban chaos are probably guaranteed* within the first few decades of the 21st century. Although renewable energy, cooperative economics within communities, and other alternatives to business-as-usual do work, they are suppressed and will come into their own again (after a hundred years or more absence in the "developed" world) only when the playing field is unencumbered by cartels. When that happens, there will very likely be no substitute for petroleum's capability to provide most chemicals and materials such as asphalt, tires, lubricants, etc. This oil industry analyst maintains that we are better off getting away from them now or as soon as possible.

#### GATT's Impact on Agriculture

Agriculture is dominated by agribusiness, which has secured massive subsidies from the government to pay farmers the difference between the low price big grain traders pay farmers and farmers' costs of production. This export subsidy for developed nations is exempted from GATT. So-called developing countries will be permitted "in return" to subsidize capital costs of such infrastructure programs as roads, ports and dams. But this will do nothing to compensate for the further expected loss in agricultural produce consumed by people per capita in such nations as India due to exporting food. In keeping with the scheme of the Northern nations' multinationals and trade visionaries, countries are forbidden to impose bans upon the export of food, under GATT.

California produce is sold in New England due to climatic advantages, we are told. But water is provided to California farmers at as little as 5% of the market rate. Water is an unstable resource in California, and furthermore, New England could provide more of its own produce if distortions from subsidies were not present. Environmental impacts are just beginning to be included in some pricing of goods and services, but GATT seems to be arresting this progress. GATT would not bring about ecosystem-driven costing, and impedes it, so this is another way local agriculture is threatened everywhere, resulting in more produce trucked on highways.

GATT would accelerate the trend of depopulating the countryside as people must move to the city for jobs or to receive welfare. The trend continues upward, as agribusiness and supermarket chains take over locally produced food and livelihoods. This migration, coupled with topsoil destruction from petroleum-driven machinery and petrochemicals, amounts to a global replay of the main causes of the decline of the Roman Empire (a great road building state).

In the "Sanitary and Phytosanitary" GATT text section, countries are only guaranteed the ability to maintain or establish food or environmental standards if they are not more protective than international standards named in GATT. The problem in this is made clear when one considers the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) standards—named in GATT and NAFTA—for residues of carcinogenic pesticides: there are weaker standards in over 50% of the instances than current U.S. standards. The FAO is heavily influenced by agribusiness, as is the U.S. The U.S. is not even enforcing its standards due to the Clinton EPA's lack of respect for the Delaney Clause which protects us from petroleum-derived carcinogens. Pesticides are part of petroleum dependence.

It will be interesting to see how free trade affects hemp for the U.S. This crop is always ready for a



(These could be electric "clean" vehicles—don't you feel better?)