

Zerzan faults most environmentalists for “plodding along” and “not ever getting radical and getting down to what this is really about.” He notes a recent article in *The Nation* magazine supportive of globalization. “Globalization is the virulent metastasizing form of civilization,” Zerzan says. Much of environmental rhetoric is “ridiculous,” he says. “Sustainable this and that, there’s nothing sustainable about the system.” He faults “the whole world system of cancer,” noting, “there’s no mother’s milk that doesn’t contain dioxin.”

Rigor Sue, of Cascadia Forrest Defenders and Cascadia Rising, says from the panel that there’s many people like herself that don’t call themselves anarchists but are still “fully in line with these same thoughts.”

“As we see more and more environmental laws taken away, we are going to see more people involved in direct action,” Sue says.

She says activists need to guard against burn out and despair. “When you’re talking about destroying civilization, the list of what you want to do becomes very long,” she says. “Unfortunately, there haven’t been a lot of victories.”

Another danger she says is male domination within the environmental movement itself. “We saved a tree, but we’re still being the same authoritarian assholes when it comes down to it.”

Another woman raises her hand. She describes herself as a long-time environmen-



John Zerzan, Robin Terranova and Rigor Sue.

talists sympathetic to many anarchist arguments, but says she can’t understand actions like blowing up a power line tower. Such destruction makes enemies, causes environmental damage and is quickly repaired, she notes. The civil rights and anti-Vietnam war movements had success with a non-violent approach that didn’t alienate potential supporters, she says. “As long as your staying with the nonviolent tradition, you’re hope for converting the opposition is so much better.”

Sue says the question of property destruction comes up frequently. She says the movement has enough room for people to take different approaches. “We can all work together

on multiple levels.”

A younger woman with nose rings stands up, “This is a discussion I’ve heard eight million fucking times,” she says. “Blah, blah, blah, blah fucking blah,” she says, calling for less debate on the issue and more action. Radicals in social movements play a crucial role, she says. Whites compromised with Martin Luther King Jr. rather than face the alternative of the Black Panthers, she says. “It makes you look so much more reasonable when you’re sitting next to something that is smashing everything.”

A man in the audience says he works for GI rights and was in Seattle at the big 1999

WTO protests in Seattle in which the mainstream media blamed anarchists for violence. “The most violence I saw was from the police violence,” he says. “It’s already the state that starts it. That starts beating people’s heads in and then it accelerates.”

A young man with long hair and beard, asks, “If I’m enslaved and I break the chains that bind me, isn’t that property destruction?”

Another audience member asks how the world could move to anarchist primitivism “without a huge loss of human life.”

Zerzan says the world is already suffering massive species die-offs under the current system. “Nobody has the answers of how fast that [anarchist move] can happen or exactly how,” he says, but society needs to face the need for a big break from the current system.

Terranova says technological civilization’s “artificial life support system” is already severely damaging the planet with the current population. How many should the artificial system keep alive, he asks, 10 billion, 20 billion?

“Keeping this artificial life support system going is certain death for all the other species and probably our own,” Terranova says. “We’re in a tough spot no matter what.”

But it’s unclear how much of the anarchist rhetoric is reality. After the panel, one of the more radical-sounding people in the audience could be heard trying to take a call on her cell phone. “Hello? Hello?” she said, frustrated at the poor reception. “Damn!” **EW**

Vetoing Vinyl

Battling the ‘worst consumer product on the planet.’

■ By Jacquelyn Lewis

The first thing many of us do when we slide behind the wheel of a new car is take a deep breath. Ahh, that “new car smell.” But according to the Oregon Toxics Alliance, we might be huffing more than a pleasant aroma. The scent is actually the smell of toxic off-gassing from carcinogenic “plasticizers” used in the manufacture of vinyl.

David Monk and Margie Kelly from the OTA along with UO Biology professor Joe Thornton, spoke about the dangers of vinyl and the OTA’s Vinyl Out of Oregon Campaign (VOO) on Sunday.

Vinyl, or PVC, is currently produced in large amounts and used in countless products across the globe. It is most often found in homes (approximately 75 percent of all PVC manufactured is used in building materials), hospitals, toys and food packaging. Fourteen billion pounds of vinyl were produced in North America alone last year.

“This is no longer a local problem, but now a ubiquitous problem that effects the health of the entire human population,” Thornton says.

He explains that vinyl, both in its production and use, is one of the most hazardous consumer materials on the market, mainly because huge amounts of chlorine are used in its production. During the industrial processes — creating the plastic or disposing of it by incineration — a dangerous, cancer-causing by-product known as dioxin is formed. Dioxins can



The Verdict Is In – Vinyl Is Out!

cause both air and ground-water pollution. By-products are globally distributed on currents of wind and water, and significant levels of toxins are found in animals and tree bark in remote parts of the world, far from the source of the pollutants.

“Very small amounts of these chemicals released in the environment can end up being a very significant problem for animals high up on the food chain,” Thornton says. “Plasticizers” also break down and are released from their

‘We don’t need to discuss whether vinyl should be phased out, it’s a matter of when.’ – Margie Kelly

products during normal use. Thornton cited vinyl toys for infants as one of the cases where this might happen, causing damage to the brain, liver and kidneys.

Kelly says the VOO Campaign is working to shift the market to reduce demand for vinyl building materials in favor of safer alternatives. “We don’t need to discuss whether vinyl should be phased out,” she says. “It’s a matter of when.”

One of the ways OTA attempts to do this is by reaching key decision-makers (designers and builders) during a building’s conceptual phase. “Many of them have never looked at vinyl as a problematic material,” Monk says.

OTA works with UO students, the Healthy Building Network, the Center for Health, Environment and Justice, as well as other organizations to get the word out. It provides research, resources ideas for design specifications, and also launches media campaigns with the goal of phasing out vinyl.

Monk is optimistic. “It’s not going to happen tomorrow, but I’ve had some really promising conversations,” he says. “When consumer demand increases, suppliers will start supplying and promoting the alternatives.”

Many large companies such as Nike, Sony and Mattel are taking action to phase out vinyl from their products, and some cities have passed or proposed resolutions to address public health concerns regarding vinyl. Eugene city planners and firefighters have teamed up to design vinyl-free buildings.

Monk says it is imperative that we take further steps to reduce the use of vinyl in all products. “In my opinion, there is no question that vinyl is a bad product and arguably the worst consumer product on the planet,” he says.

To find out more about the OTA and VOO, visit www.oregontoxics.org or call 465-8860. **EW**