

# Vermont Environmental Report

## STATE ENERGY OFFICE:

## One Year Later: What Does It Look Like?

### the attack

"What about the performance of the Vermont State Energy Office over the past year? What about the effectiveness of Vermont's energy chief, Brendan J. Whittaker?"

These are questions that have been raised in recent weeks in the wake of speculation that Brendan Whittaker may be the most likely candidate to succeed Martin Johnson as Secretary of the Agency of Environmental Conservation.

Putting the case against Whittaker, the Energy Office, and, by extension, the Administration of Governor Richard Snelling, are energy specialist Charles Sheketoff and student intern John Jagelsky of the Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG), Representative William Field, a Democrat from Chelsea, and two private entrepreneurs who are promoting alternative energy.

Charles Sheketoff was responsible for VPIRG's lobbying effort on energy matters in the 1978 General Assembly. He had the opportunity to gain a first-hand impression of the performance of the State Energy Office at the Legislature. And he didn't like what he saw.

According to Sheketoff, State Energy Office representatives at the Legislature were slow off the mark, lackluster in their support of key energy bills, and at times, simply out of touch with what was happening. "If they put in a lot of staff time with the Legislature," says Sheketoff, "they wasted a lot of time."

These are specific points the Sheketoff makes against the performance of the State Energy Office during the last Session.

- On H.666 and H.405, the "gas guzzler bills" that would have taxed cars on a sliding scale based on their energy efficiency, Sheketoff says, "The Energy Office appeared only once before the House Transportation Committee." But they didn't push hard for this legislation. They simply let these bills die in Committee.

This is despite the fact that a "gas guzzler bill" was on the list of the Governor's priorities for the Session.

- About Bren Whittaker's response to a bill that would have reorganized the Vermont Public Service Board (PSB), Sheketoff says, "Whittaker fought the PSB reorganization bill." Here, as in other cases, Sheketoff says, "The Energy Office was reacting to legislation instead of proposing its own program."

- After the Legislature passed H.555, a bill to provide tax credits to Vermonters who invest in renewable energy devices, the Energy Office thought that H.555 would take effect on July 1, 1978. In fact, the tax credit program was to take effect on "Sun Day" May 3. It seemed incredible to Sheketoff that the Energy Office should be so badly misinformed about legislation within its own area of presumed competence.

- When an amendment that would have provided an alternative energy tax credit for 'electric storage heat' was offered to H.555 (a notion that Sheketoff characterizes as "absurd") the State Energy Office was slow off the mark. "Everyone knew this amendment was being introduced," says Sheketoff. Everyone except the State Energy Office. "They were simply left behind."

These lapses, some of them admittedly nit-picking, are to VPIRG's Chuck Sheketoff symptomatic of the failure of the Energy Office to provide spirited leadership. Sheketoff finds this mediocrity somewhat incongruous. A year ago when Governor Snelling appointed Bren Whittaker as Director of the Energy Office, Snelling promised a reorganized Office with a new, more activist mission.

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Sheketoff goes on to raise other questions. He wonders if the Energy Office has put together a real energy conservation plan. To take one example, he notes that the Energy Office proposals for (energy conservation) heating and lighting standards are based on heating and lighting standards that haven't passed and that may never pass the Legislature. "The State Conservation Plan," says Sheketoff, "is merely a grant proposal for federal funds."

Sheketoff is surprised that it took the State Energy Office 12 months to establish a toll-free, citizens telephone "energy hotline." He wonders why the Energy Office hasn't publicized the availability of low-interest loans for energy conservation from the Vermont Housing Finance Agency. Sheketoff is contemptuous of Bren Whittaker's willingness to embrace nuclear power as an acceptable form of energy generation. At the same time, the Energy Office is passing out bumper stickers with the slogan "Declare Your Energy Independence."

"Isn't this hypocritical?" Sheketoff asks.

Student intern John Jagelsky is another VPIRG man who is unhappy with the performance of the Energy Office during the 1978 Session. Jagelsky faults the Energy Office for its failure to lobby effectively for alternative energy bills at the Legislature. Jagelsky is not denying that the Energy Office submitted testimony. But they failed to raise energy issues to the attention of either the legislators or the public. They failed to establish a major presence. Jagelsky thinks the Energy Office should do more than respond to federal money and federal program ideas. He thinks the Energy Office should apply federal money in a way that will serve the needs of Vermonters. "You go to where the people are, to the auctions, to the bingo halls," says Jagelsky about the failure of the Energy Office to develop an effective outreach program.

Representative William Field is another critic of the State Energy Office. Field says, "In terms of developing a public awareness of the energy situation, this has not happened." Field sees no reason why the Energy Office couldn't have come to the Legislature and asked for an appropriation instead of relying wholly on federal grants. Field notes that the Energy Office is waiting on the formation of a Joint Energy Committee before bringing in its recommendations for energy conservation standards in heating and lighting. Field doesn't think this is aggressive enough. "They may wait a long time," says Field, about the likely pace of the new Joint Energy Committee in considering and then acting on heating and lighting standards.

Field was disappointed by the opposition of Energy Office representatives to a bill that would have unified the planning functions of the Public Service Board. It looked to Field as if the Energy Office was out to protect its own institutional apparatus by opposing PSB reorganization. Overall, Field thinks that the basic problem is Governor Snelling's failure to provide leadership.

Two of the sharpest critics of the Energy Office are business people in the alternative energy field. These entrepreneurs have to sustain a relationship with the Energy Office so they asked not to be named. They talked about the huge flows of federally-generated paperwork that are clogging up the Energy Office operations, about opportunities missed, about letters and telephone calls that went unanswer-

ed, and about the failure of the Energy Office to mount an effective public information program.

These two critics saw the Energy Office as nothing more than a receptacle for federal grants. While they acknowledge that there are some good, well-meaning people working for the Office, they cannot discern in the performance of the Energy Office anything that resembles the activist organization that Governor Snelling promised a year ago.

## the defense

The VER talked to Energy Office Director, Brendan Whittaker, Deputy Director Bruce Haskell, and Information & Education Chief, Norman James. In this interview and in a subsequent follow-up letter with enclosures, the State Energy Office stoutly defended its performance over the past year.

Whittaker was not claiming that the Energy Office had been as effective as he would like it to be. He said, "We are not satisfied with the level of achievement." But in returning the fire of his critics, he said, "The Energy Office is a lightning rod, -- it's going to be a target of criticism."

As Whittaker continued talking, he described an Office that has grown from a staff of three or four people a year ago to an Office with 17 people and a budget of \$600,000. Whittaker is proud that over 50 percent of this money is spent on programs, not salaries.

As to the performance of the Energy Office at the Legislature, Whittaker said, "We put in an awful lot of staff time on the Legislature." Whittaker explained why the Energy Office had not brought in its own legislative recommendations to the 1978 Session. This was a function of the state government budget process. Preparing the budget for the upcoming legislative session begins in July of the year before. Last July, Whittaker and his staff were embroiled in meeting federal requirements. "Just to accept our on-going federal funds," said Whittaker, "we have to go through the hoops." So there was no time left last summer to draft a legislative program.

This year, things will be different. Whittaker is looking forward to working with an on-going Joint Energy Committee of the General Assembly. Over the summer, the State Energy Office staff will be working with the Committee to consider Energy Office proposals for heating and lighting (energy conservation) codes. Whittaker feels the heavy hand of the federal government in determining what the Energy Office can do. But he says, "What we can do here in Vermont, we are doing."

In response to the question of what the legislative program of the Energy Office would look like in the January 1979 Session, Whittaker talked of plans to strengthen the Act 250 review of energy concerns. When pressed for further details on the legislative program that the Office would offer, Whittaker said, "We are going to convene the staff and brainstorm on the subject."

It was clear from Whittaker's remarks that while there may be problems with the public's perception of what the Energy Office has done, he and his staff think the Office has compiled an impressive record of achievement.

Here are just some of the projects and achievements that



Whittaker and his staff have been involved with over the past year.

- The Energy Office has been involved in an audit of nearly 200 (about half) of the public and certain private schools in the state. The Energy Office claims energy savings resulting from these audits in the thousands of dollars.

- The Energy Office is administering a Housing & Urban Development (HUD) Solar Hot Water grant program. Under this program 150 Vermonters will receive \$400 apiece to install solar hot water devices in their homes.

- The Energy Office has conducted a recent survey of the use of wood as a source of energy. Findings indicate that 18 percent of all homes in the state are heated entirely with wood, and 63.4 percent are heated with wood as either a primary or a secondary source of heat.

- The Energy Office is working with the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission to develop a "share-a-ride" program through the use of computer matching. The Energy Office is pushing the use of commuter "vanpools" and there are currently 24 such vanpools in operation.

There are other projects: an information & education program with a new Director hired last December, an Energy Office newsletter that goes out to 1200 readers, an element on energy conservation in the drivers' education programs offered at Vermont secondary schools, and a program to monitor and reduce the use of energy in public buildings.

In discussing the pace of work at the Energy Office, Whittaker said that his staff was working 'flat out' with everyone doing about three different things.

If Whittaker's own timetable is representative, it suggests a man who is constantly on the go, -- Montpelier, Vermont, Boston, Washington D.C., conferences with energy officials in New Hampshire and Maine, and with counterparts from eastern Canada. Whittaker sits on an advisory council that is launching a Northeastern Energy Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He feels the Energy Office is supplying good data, and undertaking the quieter work of laying the base for developments that are coming. It's not all breastbeating and heroics.

One development that Whittaker thinks is most promising is the use of wood for energy. In the past few months a forester was added to the staff at the Energy Office. In letters that Whittaker shared with the VER, there were examples of some of this quieter work. There was a letter to James Wilkinson, Commissioner of Forests & Parks, that expressed excitement over the possibilities of wood for energy. But in that same letter Whittaker expressed concern that the forest land in Vermont not be abused in the name of energy procurement.

There was another letter to Mayor Gordon Paquette, in which Whittaker talks of the consequences of removing the oil tanks from the lakefront in Burlington. These tanks represent approximately 75 percent of Vermont's in-state petroleum

storage capacity and would be indispensable if supplies of oil were once again cut off.

## the conclusion

Who is right about the Energy Office? Whittaker and his staff? Or the detractors who have raised sharp questions about its level of performance?

One of the more rigorous ways of evaluating the success of the Vermont Energy Office, indeed any state energy office, is to see what the results have been.

Is the State consuming less petroleum this year than last? Is the use of renewable alternatives growing? Is the demand for electrical power being reduced? Are we beginning to approach the level of energy conservation that experts like Denis Hayes of the Worldwatch Institute in Washington D.C. say is possible, -- a savings of 50 percent off the rate of present consumption?

By these admittedly rigorous standards, the Vermont Energy Office, -- any energy office in the nation fails. The consumption of gasoline has risen once again in Vermont, beyond pre-Embargo levels. Deputy Energy Director Bruce Haskell explains this rise by the banner ski seasons of 1977 and 1978.

As to energy conservation, the State of Vermont has accepted the federal goal, instead of defining a more ambitious target of energy reduction. The federal goal assumes a rise in the use of energy of 24 percent by 1980 and calls for a savings of 5 percent off that rate of growth in the next two years. This hardly begins to approach the discipline that Denis Hayes and others are calling for.

As to the shift to renewable alternatives, there is sharp criticism that the Energy Office has been dragging its feet on solar energy. One commentator asked this question, "How do we improve the quality of our life by getting off purchased (expensive) energy?"

But in the use of wood, for heat, for energy, Vermont is forging ahead, and is leading the rest of New England, if not the rest of the nation. How much of this move to wood is due to the efforts of the Energy Office? The Office would like to think it had played a major role in this. Says Bruce Haskell, "We like to think that Vermonters have heard this message from us."

No analysis of the performance of the Energy Office would be complete that failed to examine the role of Governor Snelling in providing leadership.

Whittaker praises Governor Snelling for the attention he is giving to the use of wood for energy. Whittaker listened to Snelling's opening-day address to the 1978 General Assembly last January. "I have never seen a Chief Executive give as much time to wood," said Whittaker of the Governor's support for wood for energy and forestry improvement efforts.

On the other side of the ledger is the growing suspicion that Governor Snelling may not completely understand the nature of the energy crisis facing us.

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Here is how the **Burlington Free Press** reported a talk by Governor Snelling to a group of students in Montpelier last February 23.

*The governor said he would like to see energy supplies double, triple, or quadruple per capita in the coming decades and he predicted technological advances will meet the challenge.*

*"I believe (the governor said) that within the lifetimes of most of the people in this room we will look back and chuckle a little bit about the amount of energy we are now talking about conserving."*

*Snelling said the idea of a civilization "in which there were less energy per human being than we have now is really not acceptable to me."*

*Although he advocates conservation for the short term, he said he views it only as a means "to get us to a time when we'll consume far more energy than we do now."*

This newspaper report hangs on the bulletin board at

VPIRG. Says VPIRG's Chuck Sheketoff, "The Governor has confused energy conservation with energy curtailment. He has bought the argument for expanded energy growth from the energy industry and the Chase Manhattan Bank."

As energy researcher Denis Hayes points out, "Curtailment (of energy) means a cold house; conservation (of energy) means a well-insulated house with an efficient heating system. Energy conservation does not require the curtailment of vital services; it merely requires the curtailment of energy waste."

In Sheketoff's view, the Governor's failure to make this important distinction puts him in the camp of those who are proposing more waste, more energy production, more nuclear power plants.

Sheketoff offers a choice. We can go with those who would expand our use of energy, and go with projects like Seabrook (nuclear) at an estimated cost of \$2.6 billion. Or we could divert this money. The 2.6 billion to be spent at Seabrook, if distributed equally to the homes that Seabrook would serve, would provide each family with \$20,000 for insulation and energy alternatives.

"How can the State Energy Office be effective," Sheketoff asks, "if it is led by a Governor who misunderstands the problem, and therefore offers us the wrong choices?"

## Opposition Intensifies to ICRB Report

Over the past month, there has been a growing chorus of opposition to a proposed \$16 million flood control dam on the Richelieu River, near St. Jean, Quebec. The proposed flood control structure was a principal recommendation of a Canadian-American study team known as the International Champlain-Richelieu Board (ICRB).

These are some of the most important recent developments in the Champlain-Richelieu story.

● On Tuesday evening, May 9, the ICRB held a Public Information Meeting at the Sheraton Hotel in Burlington. At this meeting, members of the ICRB admitted that after \$2 million in studies they were unable to set a dollar figure on losses to the environment that would occur if the Richelieu flood control structure is built.

The ICRB also admitted that they were unable fix a dollar estimate on losses to Vermont's recreational resource base if the \$16 million flood control dam was built.

● Vermont's Chief Wildlife Biologist, Ben Day, of the Fish & Game Department, attacked the ICRB Report.

Day said that the ICRB Report failed to account for the ecological benefits of extreme low and extreme high water that is part of the natural fluctuation of lake water levels. He further said that the Report failed to indicate what the loss of these benefits could mean.

Day criticized the ICRB Report for its failure to produce a promised photographic reconnaissance of Vermont's wetlands. This failure had made it impossible to gather proper information on Vermont's furbearing animal populations. These populations would be affected if the Richelieu dam were built.

Day questioned the criteria that the ICRB said would be used in managing the water levels of Lake Champlain if a flood control structure was built. Day speculated that under a strict interpretation of these criteria, Vermont could lose virtually all of its wetlands in Lake Champlain.

● On Sunday, May 21, the Lake Champlain Committee voted formally to condemn the ICRB Report and to oppose the proposed flood control dam on the Richelieu River.

Members of the Lake Champlain Committee lashed out against the ICRB Report, saying it had been "rigged" and saying that it was in wide variance with preliminary studies that had been commissioned by the international study team, but which were subsequently ignored in the final report.

● On Monday, May 23, Governor Richard Snelling came out in opposition to the Richelieu flood control structure. He cited dangers to the environment. He said that he would personally appear at hearings before the International Joint Commission and testify against the Richelieu flood control dam proposal.

The Board of Directors of the Vermont Natural Resources Council will meet to consider the ICRB Report and the proposed flood control structure on Wednesday, May 24. Their decision will be immediately announced.

*The first of three hearings on the ICRB Report and the proposed flood control dam will be held at the Marsh Life Science Building, at UVM, in Burlington, on Tuesday, June 6, at 2:00 p.m. and at 7:00 p.m.*



# Commoner Roasts Carter Energy Plan

In a hard-hitting speech before an audience of students at Middlebury College on Monday evening, May 1, environmental scientist and author Dr. Barry Commoner ripped into the Carter energy proposals and made a link between the present energy crisis and the plight of the nation's poor.

Commoner told the students, "You have individuals who say they cannot deal with the energy crisis. You have government officials who say they cannot deal with it. They cannot deal with it," explained Commoner, "because it is involved with issues of social justice."

Commoner predicted that the exponential rise in the price of energy would take a heavy toll on the poor. We have taken out the cheapest stuff said Commoner about energy supplies, and now we are faced with the inevitable result, an exponential curve of rising prices. Commoner drew a link between rising fossil fuel prices and the rising costs of food, clothing, and shelter. He noted that American families in the lowest 20 percent of the income brackets spend at least a fifth of their incomes on energy. The result? Rising energy costs that will hurt the poor the most.

For the affluent, the situation is different. They will be the first to make the shift to alternatives. This is already happening in California. People who own swimming pools are shifting to solar energy and getting a 50 percent tax rebate. "That," declared Commoner, "is taxing the poor to help the rich."

Commoner attacked the Carter energy proposals. The heart of these proposals was not energy conservation but the development of coal and nuclear power.

"Nuclear power is the most capital expensive way to produce energy," Commoner said. He likened the operation of a nuclear power plant to heating a bottle of milk with a blowtorch. "Is nuclear energy a suitable way to boil water?" he asked. Commoner observed that most of the capital cost of constructing a nuclear power plant is not in boiling water to produce electricity, but in the complicated equipment needed to keep radiation and surplus energy away from us. Added to this are the ever-increasing costs of re-designing plants that malfunction, and the costs associated with decommissioning atomic power plants when their useful life has expired.

Commoner described the Carter Administration approach to the energy crisis as a strategy of permitting the price of energy to rise in the marketplace until the costs of alternatives begin to approximate the cost of fossil fuels. This strategy would have a devastating impact on the poor. "If this is done," Commoner declared, "we will put the burden (of shifting to alternatives) on the backs of the poor. "If this is done,"

Commoner called the present energy situation "as explosive an issue as slavery was in the 1860's. Access to energy," Commoner said, "is essential to all human activity. Is energy available at a price that people can afford?" he asked.

In remarks following his speech, Commoner predicted that the nuclear power industry would soon come before Congress and seek a "Lockheed-type" rescue operation. Commoner

reported that both Westinghouse and General Electric are losing money in the manufacture of nuclear components. He went on to say that a shift to renewable resources such as solar energy, which he called "democratic because it is decentralized" would be a severe financial blow to utility companies.

Commoner said the nation was at a crossroads. "You either let the free market operate and let the market determine how solar technology is introduced or you intervene in the freedom of the owners of capital to say what they can do about investing their money." Commoner clearly favors governmental intervention to accelerate the shift from fossil fuels and nuclear power to renewable, solar energy.

Commoner spoke confidently about the promise of solar energy, not just the effects of sunlight falling on a solar collector, but solar energy in all its forms, wind, water, sewage and garbage.

"There are tens of thousands of methane gas generators in India," Commoner said. And when citizens in Chicago boil a pot of coffee they are using an infinitesimal amount of methane gas generated from animal feedlot wastes and which has been introduced into the natural gas pipeline that supplies Chicago. Commoner takes the perhaps surprising view that the price of natural gas should be regulated, that the use of natural gas should be expanded, so that the natural gas pipelines will be in place when the system is converted to methane.

Photo-voltaic cells that generate electricity from the radiation of the sun are another promising alternative. The technology exists. The only difficulty in producing photo-voltaic cells for widespread use is the need to manufacture them in sufficient numbers to bring down the cost per unit.

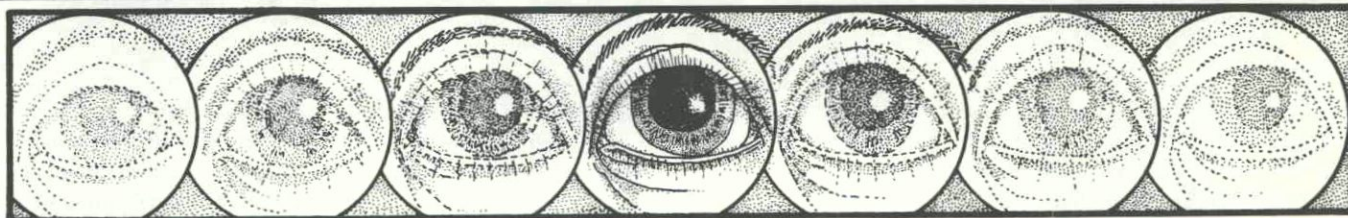
Commoner compared the performance of the past few presidential administrations to a line of 19th Century presidents that no one remembers. "Tyler, Polk, Pierce, and Buchanan. Who remembers them?" "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too" was a fine slogan. But what did it mean? Absolutely nothing. According to Commoner, the campaigns of Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter were empty exercises in image-building while the crucial choices before the nation went undiscussed.

"Should the nation develop solar or nuclear power?" Here, said Commoner, was a critical question that would affect the lives of the nation's poor. Commoner predicted that enormous strains will be placed on the economic and social system if we divert the nation's wealth from meeting human needs to the construction of nuclear power plants or for the conversion to coal.

Calling himself "almost Pollyannish" in his optimism, he told students at Middlebury College he believed if the present crisis of energy was explained as a matter of conscience, that the American people would be able to respond intelligently.

Dr. Barry Commoner is University Professor of Environmental Science at Washington University at St. Louis.





## A PERSONAL DIMENSION.

*The following statement by D'Ann Calhoun Fago on the place of crafts in Vermont life is the inaugural essay in a new VER series.*

*D'Ann Fago was Director of the Vermont Arts & Crafts Service from October 1968 until October 1976.*

*The Arts & Crafts Service was instituted by the Vermont General Assembly at the end of the Depression in 1941. Its mission was to encourage crafts, particularly in rural Vermont, as a way of providing a supplement to the incomes of farming families.*

*The Arts & Crafts Service was abolished by the State Department of Education, ostensibly for budgetary reasons, in 1976. At the time that the Service closed its doors, its newsletter was going out to more than 4,000 readers.*

The experience and training that I brought to my job as Director of the Vermont Arts & Crafts Service was not that of a specialist from a respectably delineated field such as economics, science, government, or business management.

My background was in art, and in teaching art, at different levels. But I think that my knowledge and experience as an artist provided me with a compulsion toward synthesis. As an artist, I found that a failure to bring experience and ideas into some sort of picture or whole left me with a feeling of incompleteness.

To me, painting, like other art forms, mirrors the life process. Why do certain things work, unlikely combinations, --- while others, logically and meticulously conceived, are without life or purpose in a particular context?

In a painting, each color must exist beside its neighbor. There is a constant search for colors that can live together, that need each other. All details build toward a whole. There are no unimportant details. So in life, there is a profound relationship between every element, --- no person, no event, is an unimportant detail.

Before going further, I would like to explain that I have always considered crafts as primarily a part of rural, farming life. I have always seen crafts as part of a simple, independent economy within which it is sensible to produce useful articles that supply essential human needs. In a simple rural society

the network of dependencies both within the human scale and between the human scale and the larger natural order is apparent. The potter with clay, the weaver with wool, the farmer with weather, the human with life, create a visibility of purpose that can be seen.

In the past, our creature needs were built around a simple system of exchange. Our production was for each other, and what we consumed was based on needs that we understood.

On a recent trip to the Phillipine Islands, I visited a Muslim village near Zomboanga. I had heard of the straw mat weaving done there that was unlike anything else in the world. These people were a minority who until recently spent most of their lives on small boats around the islands of the Sulu Archipelago.

I first saw their boats outside my hotel window. There were infants, too young to walk, crawling precipitously about the edges of the boats as they rose and dipped in the swell.

In the evening, just off the hotel terrace, a few of the boats lay, displaying for sale the colorful mats to the people dining just a few feet above the water.

There were also children, like over-large rats, that swam in from the boats to the edge of the terrace and ducked down beneath the surface of the water if a waiter approached. From the table nearest the water, they begged for anything. It puzzled me that they begged to drink the water left in our glasses.

The boats disappeared before I went to bed, but at first light of morning they were back. A child's hoarse voice woke me, crying over and over an insistent "Hi Mum, Hi Mum," and this voice was soon joined by others. These voices were pleas for attention and coins to be thrown from the hotel windows.

A Phillipine friend, who has great love, respect and concern for his people, took me to visit the Muslim village where the water people live, and where the mat makers are. We crossed an arched wooden bridge to a huge collection of shacks built on stilts and connected by several long wooden walkways with innumerable branches. The water underneath was polluted, fetid, and trash covered.

I saw straw mats that were beautiful. They were pulled from a one-room shack, crowded and dirty. The dyes used by the weavers are no longer local but the process of preparing the grasses is the same. The weavers now are old.

There was a sadness and irony in the condition of these



people. Theirs was a simple system that no longer fit. Water, their source of life, is now polluted. Their barter economy had changed to a money economy they cannot understand.

They are a begging people, --hungry, diseased, and corrupted. I saw a people, once self-contained, healthy and alive, connected now to the larger world of technocracy and pollution, unwanted and destroyed.

Nonetheless, there was still the memory of their pride alive in the beauty of their weaving. But the warped and spidery old fingers, smoothing out the mats I saw, indicated a shortening of time for that memory.

It has been said that we need new symbols.

If the shopping center has become our symbol of "the good way of life," seemingly containing for a price, or a small down-payment, a product of some description that furnishes some kind of answer to every conceivable need of man, --how can we talk about standards?

If the products bear no relationship to the process of creating them, to the expense in terms of their abuse of natural resources, to the destruction of human values, to the fragmentation of any concept of wholeness and unity, --how can we talk of quality? We can talk about fashion, but we have no basis for talking about quality.

Nature has for centuries provided man with accessible analogies concerning scale, time, continuity, and endurance. Nature has led us to appreciate the unfailing relationship of all parts to the whole with a strong hint of an underlying purpose.

Our constant backdrop, the sky, still embraces the canyons and dynamics of cities, the thrust and silence of mountains. Even the visual emptiness of a shopping center seen against the proper sky can provide poetry, dignity, and regeneration of self. Open to all, the sky still offers the possibility of study and response without the need of diverse translations for disguising or changing meanings and their potentials. So far, sky reading is still open. Available in every language. Uncensored and distributed in urban, suburban, rural and wild environments. Its vocabulary has remained through the centuries for all levels of perception.

In Vermont, our mountains have shaped a particular kind of people, independent, shrewd, frugal of resources, with a

necessarily sharp sense of humor developed from the remarkable act of simple endurance. In a world where places and things around us have lost their unique expression, Vermont has become a symbol to many people who are seeking a reality they can comprehend and for origins as well as purpose in life. These people have come to Vermont in search for deliberate means of creating new forms, new lives, based on the values, people and land that were here before.

We are, in a curious way, living in a workshop that is new, --like babies walking through a lethal laboratory. We have lost contact with our old images, old selves, and old gods. Yet our visionary lens has not widened sufficiently for us to see our new location.

But I am now as troubled as just about everyone else about conditions of the world at large and Vermont in particular regarding land use, air and water quality, food production, employment that has potential for skill development and dignity for the worker, as well as education for our children that is committed to developing values, confidence, and skills within a framework of creative problem-solving that takes into consideration individual needs and worth.

Our world seems to have become over-simplified on a vast commercial plane, with the ideal being to produce in volume, transport in volume, sell in volume, and consume voraciously. The hallowed areas of education, religion, philosophy and government have become strongholds for an unrelieved business mentality that runs a course too narrow, hence too dangerous.

Many people in positions of authority today are trying to convince us that the world is flat. We need a chorus of voices to reaffirm that the world is not only round but also multi-dimensional and that there are many choices open to us.

It is time for our visionaries to come forward: artists, farmers, craftspeople, inspired teachers, prophets, statesmen, workers of all kinds, people whose tendency is to think in round and inclusive terms about the problems of life and living. We need a new inventory of qualities necessary to living that have somehow been mislaid while we have been preoccupied with the pursuit of "things." It seems that the world needs a new infusion of dreams.

And the sky must continue to belong to us all.

## PYRAMID...

*These are recent developments in the continuing review process of the Pyramid Company's application to build an 80-store, \$10 million shopping center in the Town of Williston.*

● The Vermont State Water Resources Board is still considering evidence on VNRC's appeal of the Board's decision to grant the Pyramid Company a stormwater permit. The Board is expected to rule on this matter in June.

● The Agency of Environmental Conservation is still considering new information that the Pyramid Company has submitted to support its application for an air pollution permit.

● Act 250 hearings before the District No. 4 Environmental Commission are still continuing. The one remaining issue yet to be heard by the District Commission involves questions of air quality. A final decision on the entire Pyramid application is expected to be handed down by the District Commission within two months after the hearings are completed.

The Conservation Society of Southern Vermont (CSSV) has announced plans for the 12th season of its annual Summer Conservation School. The School is located on 3,000 acres of the West River Greenway, near South Londonderry, Vermont. The summer camping program is for boys and girls, ages 9 to 14. The first of six (one-week) sessions begins on Sunday, July 9. For more information, write Bill Painter, Executive Director, CSSV, P.O. Box 256, Townshend, Vt., 05353, or call (802) 365-7757.



## FOREST MANAGEMENT WORKSHOPS OFFERED

The Vermont Natural Resources Council, the Vermont Tree Farm Committee, and the Green Mountain Chapter of The Society of American Foresters are offering six free forest management workshops in June.

These workshops are designed to meet the needs of the woodlot owner with no formal training in forestry. The workshops will cover forest management practices such as timber stand improvement, fuelwood production, managing the forest for wildlife, how to develop a forest management plan, and, at several sites, the implications of the land use assessment law passed by the General Assembly this year. A forest management workshop in Plainfield will concentrate on the subject of maple sugar production.

Seward Weber, VNRC's Executive Director, described the workshops in this way, "Here's a chance," said Weber, "for the woodlot owner to get out into the woods under the guidance of a professional forester and learn the ABC's of good management." Weber added, "Over 200 people attended the workshops last summer. They were enormously successful."

The workshops will be held as follows: Saturday, June 10, in Plainfield; Saturday, June 17, in Waterbury; and Saturday, June 24, in Bellows Falls, Albany, Shelburne and Rutland.

For further information about the workshops, including their locations, and a set of instructions on how to get to them, write, VNRC, 26 State Street, Montpelier, VT., 05602, or call, (802) 223-2328.

## VNRC PUBLISHES "BOTTLES AND CANS"

The Vermont Natural Resources Council has announced the publication of a 24-page booklet entitled, **Bottles and Cans: The Story of the Vermont Deposit Law.**

**Bottles and Cans** was written by Peter Franchot, edited by Susan Bartlett, illustrated by Edward Epstein of The Laughing Bear Associates, and published in cooperation with the National Wildlife Federation in Washington, D.C.

The purpose of **Bottles and Cans** is to help citizens in states across the nation who are working to achieve bottle deposit legislation. According to VNRC's Executive Director, Seward Weber, "**Bottles and Cans** provides a fair and balanced account of the Vermont container deposit story." A chief object of the new booklet in Weber's words is "to counter the often misleading, erroneous, and too often false information that has been used to discredit the Vermont deposit law."

Single copies of **Bottles and Cans** are available by writing VNRC, 26 State Street, Montpelier, Vt., 05602. Please enclose a 13-cent stamp to cover postal costs. For further information, call Seward Weber at (802) 223-2328.

(Early Notice) The Nominating Committee of the VNRC Board of Directors is inviting nominations to the VNRC Board from the VNRC membership. Please submit names and background information on persons you think might qualify for a seat on the VNRC Board, to the Council's offices in Montpelier.

# VNRC

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## THIS ISSUE • MAY • 1978

## No. 75

### Contents

- Brendan Whittaker's Energy Office: What It Looks Like One Year Later
- Commoner Hits Carter Energy Plans
- D'Ann Fago, -- A Personal Dimension

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

VERMONT NATURAL RESOURCES COUNCIL, 26 STATE STREET, MONTPELIER, VERMONT