

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPERIALISM

THE DIRTY HANDS OF THE WWF AND OTHER FRIENDS OF BACONGO

By Norris Hall

We've been meeting some shady people these days. First we had to meet in December with the President of the U.S. Chapter of the World Wildlife Fund. She obviously came to Belize to double-speak on the issue of dams and against Chalillo. This was an attempt to protect and spruce up the interest and AES, a large energy company which has its own agenda to sell electricity to Belize.

This dear lady, who obviously was suffering from an overdose of "Slim Fast", profiled as "the Mother Theresa" of the world environment until her cover was blown. She also discovered that she was competing for environmental sainthood with the keeper of the "La Democracia Hilton", the prison for animals which is located down the road on the Western Highway. But for these two people to be wearing haloes would be as odd as dressing up a scarecrow in a Versace, or even more pathetic in Victoria Secrets.

And then came along the high-cholesterol-boy Herszkowitz from the National Resource Defense Fund in Washington. From the looks of his copious waistline, he appears to have indulged in too many Taco Bell burritos of late. He too has been spouting off sanctimonious bull, first by trying to arrogantly dictate to the Department of the Environment and then by wagging his tail of the weekly TV talk show- Straight Talk- which by the way is now a registered Trade Mark. Big deal! The only thing that saved this NRDC ugly American from standing on his hind legs is that the host of the show usually does more opinionating than his guests.

The guy just loves to talk. But you are right, it's HIS SHOW!

Now the Zoo gal is not happy with the satellite town which is to be built at La Democracia. However she feels that her "credibility would be seriously questioned" if she would protest this project.

That's cool! What credibility? Especially as she is now in the Real Estate business aggressively "creating a buyer's link between Searl/Cutlack's 6000 acres of land and the Foundation for Wildlife Conservation in Milwaukee. Ain't we got enough protected areas- 60 percent of the country and a growing population? Or is it about land speculation dressed up as green zones?

It is about time our Belizean brothers and sisters, especially those in the environmental community stop doing the naive "native dance" and stop cozying-up to the hoaxes being played out before our very eyes. Stop being fools and allow entire environmental and sustainable development issues be exclusively a part of the national debate.

Meanwhile we will watch and see how other related issues on accountability in the NGO community will play out with the passage of the NGO Bill

It calls for transparency and already there are some huffs and puffs. Reliable sources says that the Belize Association for Environmental Non-Government Organizations (BACONGO) is spewing venom in opposition to the bill while the Association for

National Development Agencies is taking a reasonable approach but with some disagreements on certain sections of the bill. However, ANDA, as we have been informed, agrees to the principle of accountability and transparency.

Let us talk about transparency for a bit. Recently published information points to the dark side of what the American environmental movement calls "No debt for Nature"-a recent scam. The proposal which was made in 1984 by Thomas Lovejoy then of the World Wildlife Fund, is debt for nature swaps involving North American environmental groups who pay off part of the debt of a Third World country in exchange for the country agreeing to protect forest land. But there is now evidence that the environmental movement's growing concern with Third World environmental issues, proven now in the "debt for nature" swaps to save the world's rainforest, is "yet another expression of industrialized country imperialism".

The fact is that many of these environmental groups are linked to multinational corporations which then, through these groups, seek to exploit these countries natural resources. Could this be the case with the WWF/AES relationship? All indications are this is one of many.

In a recent article The Environmental Board Game, by Jim Donahue, published by the Multinational Monitor, an increasing number of environmental groups are working closely with the businesses and industries whose practices they are trying to reform. However, these environmental groups are working along with these companies for big money. Among them are the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) and others. Three WWF directors and seven members of its National Council are directors for corporations listed in the Toxic 500, companies guilty of dumping 2.9 million pounds of toxic material. A WWF Director is president of Exxon Chemical Co., a subsidiary of Exxon, USA., the corporation now best known for North America's worst oil spill. The WWF has the largest number of individuals with corporate affiliations- many of them spoilers of the environment.

The Environmental Defense Fund, and the National Resource Defense Council (NRDC) are on the Board of Union Carbide, Southern California Edison. A Board member of Union Carbide is a member of the Chairman's Council of the NRDC. In 1984 Union Carbide was responsible for a toxic gas leak that killed thousands.

However the chubby-boy from the NRDC, with too many Taco Bell burritos under his belt could assume to assert his arrogance to our the Department of the Environment and other groups with the support of the idiots on BACONGO. Wasn't his much-ado-about- nothing on the proposed landfill off the Western Highway minuscule in relation to the sins mentioned above?

What is happening here is that the BACONGO crowd and a few others continue to think that these people are genuine. It is a Colonial thing which is synonymous to Union Jack thinking, if you know what I mean. These foreign NGO's are being tolerated as they continue to meddle in the genuine process of this country's development. Their entire conduct is hypocritical proving to damage the environmental movement worldwide and locally.

Do we still want to talk about transparency?

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