

Executive Digest

*New wave authors

The publishing industry has discovered an environmental backlash. A spate of new titles says it all. Examples: *Environmental Overkill: What ever Happened to Common Sense?* by Dixy Lee Ray, former chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission (Regnery Gateway); *ECO-Scam: The False Prophets of Ecological Apocalypse* by Ronald Bailey (St. Martin's); *Science under Siege: Balancing Technology and the Environment* by Michael Fumento (William Morrow).

The new wave authors level shotgun blasts at the weak science, hidden agendas and public confusion behind controversies from Love Canal to Times Beach to the Alar scare. Fumento, a reporter for *Investor's Daily*, likens the "environmental revolution" to France's Reign of Terror in the 18th century. He attacks claims that power lines cause cancer, that video display terminals induce miscarriages and birth defects, that ethanol is a viable substitute for gasoline. If not for environmental regulations enacted before 1990, estimates one study, the country's GNP would be 2.6 percent higher today.

Havoc in one state

New Jersey's Environmental Clean-up Responsibility Act (ECRA) has stalled business in the state on all fronts, forcing innocent companies to clean up pollution they did not create; preventing sale of industrial property; discouraging banks from making loans, and driving jobs out of the state. Bruce Siminoff presents a powerful case for all this in *Victim: Caught in the Environmental Web* (Glenbridge Publishing).

Will global warming elect a President?

Patrick J. Michaels conjures such a scenario in his *Sound and Fury: The Science and Politics of Global Warming* (Cato Institute). While refuting visions of climatic disaster, Michael imagines that if a warming trend continues for a few years, politicians

Books, publications, reports and other quotable commentary



Prince Charles and Cleese on the set

who have made a reputation for doomsaying—such as Vice President Gore and Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell—could forge into the lead in the '96 Presidential race.

Markets & closets

"Ultimately, the greatest service that market mechanisms for environmental protection may render is to bring environmental policy formulation 'out of the closet,'" write Robert Stavins and Thomas Grumbly in *Mandate for Change* (edited by Will Marshall and Martin Schram, Progressive Policy Institute). "Americans have been shielded from many of the very real tradeoffs involved in establishing our environmental goals, programs, and standards... Pollution charges and other market-based instruments can bring these important questions into the open."

The new enomics

The U.S. economy is being "environmentally restructured," says

Michael Silverstein in his *The Enomic Revolution: Reality, Prosperity, and the New Environmental Economics*, to be published this Fall (St. Martin's Press). Environmentally-linked factors are "altering the way products are made, the material that goes into their manufacture, the kinds of things people buy, the way in which planners function." Business leaders, says Silverstein, an economist, appreciate these changes more than economists and environmentalists.

A lesson for Mr. Grime

Former Monty Python member John Cleese gets an environmental lesson from Prince Charles in a new video for business, "Grime Goes Green" (Video Arts). The plot concerns some employees at Random Metals who are trying to get management to improve the company's environmental record. The plant manager, Mr. Grime (played by Cleese), tells them, "We're simply not profitable enough to start worrying about Planet Earthship." After an environmental audit at Random Metals, and a lecture from the Prince, Mr. Grime cleans up his act.

You said it

"...when we said we were going to be a leader in the environmental area, our people loved that. Nobody likes sitting around the dinner table at night with their kids saying they've heard at school that Du Pont is destroying the ozone and asking why we are doing that."

Edgar S. Woolard Jr.,
CEO of Du Pont in
Enterprise magazine.

"Environmentalists need to be very careful to watch their own psychological state. Many of my friends... get such a psychological reward from being in the battle, the good guys against the bad guys, that they lose sight of what they are trying to do."

Jan Beyer, National Audubon Society,
quoted in *The New York Times*.

How Clean Is Clean?

It may be less dangerous to leave some chemicals where they are—in the ground

by Reinhardt Krause

Through a 1985 merger, Champion International Corp. inherited an ancient wood-treating facility in Libby, Montana—as well as one of the trickiest Superfund cleanups accomplished to date. Over the years, groundwater and soil at the Libby site had been contaminated with pentachlorophenol (PCP) and creosote wood preservatives. The EPA, under its policy of seeking permanent solutions to such problems, would not accept a simple “cap-and-wrap” containment program. On the one hand, incinerating the contaminated soil would be too costly and perhaps pose new risks. But Champion’s efforts to find other solutions kept bumping into EPA hurdles, some bordering on the bizarre.

For one thing, the agency told Champion, the soil in Libby would

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have to be clean enough for children to ingest safely. How do you determine that? The EPA declines to publish specific standards for toxic removal and other numerical cleanup goals that would provide companies with working targets. But it has figured out that a typical child eats about two-tenths of a gram of soil daily—or roughly one pound by the age of six. Dining on the wrong soil can lead to cancer, if the dirt happens to contain excessive concentrations of toxic chemicals. In working out acceptable levels, the unlikely event that children would ever romp—much less eat the dirt—at the lumber and plywood facility Champion planned for the Libby site was apparently irrelevant.

What’s more, the Record of Decision (ROD) at Libby, the EPA document specifying the cleanup goals and remedies, added another twist to the story. The soil would also have to be so clean that groundwater could not be fouled by continued leaching

of contaminants. This demand required a complicated modeling of subsurface biochemical processes that proved far trickier than complying with the dirt-eating standards.

In the end, the EPA and Champion agreed that bioremediation, using naturally occurring bacteria in the soil to break down the offending compounds, could be a cost-effective solution. Libby is the first Superfund site to use bioremediation *in situ* for cleaning up groundwater. More than 45,000 cubic yards of soil are now being dug up and dumped into one-acre treatment beds, where the natural bacteria are encouraged to proliferate. Once that’s taken place, the cleansed soil is returned to its original location with carcinogenic PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons) reduced to 88 parts per million and PCP to 37 ppm—just one-tenth of previous levels. Champion has spent more than \$4 million on this process since 1989 and it appears to be working. By