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ADVOCATING FOR GOD’S CREATION

Young Adults Speak Out

God created the earth and entrusted its care to humanity. Accordingly, each generation passes that same responsibility, and debt, to the next.

Environment and Change

BY KRISTA ZIMMERMAN

“The times, they are a-changin’ . . .” Bob Dylan first sang those words more than 40 years ago and he’s kept singing them to enthusiastic crowds, both young and old, ever since. The song continues, “come writers and critics, who prophesize with your pen, and keep your eyes wide, the chance won’t come again.”

This year, the *Washington Memo* looks to the writers and critics of a new generation, as it adds the perspectives of Anabaptist young adults from around the world to its pages. As these emerging voices reflect on public policies and national legislation from their own contexts and experiences, we hope fellow church members and members of Congress will “please heed the call.”

It is perhaps fitting that the first issue in this new series explores environmental policy and care for creation. As we read in Genesis, God created the earth and entrusted its care to humanity. Accordingly, each generation passes that same responsibility, and debt, to the next.

The writers in this issue express unique Anabaptist perspectives on that responsibility, and a prescient sense of the environmental challenges facing people of all ages.

Barbara Kärcher, a German young adult, compares environmental politics in Germany and the United States, including her responses to both. Valerie Showalter, an American young adult, makes the connection between nutrition and environmentalism. Elina Ciptadi, a young adult from Indonesia, focuses on the importance of linking personal practice with advocacy and public policies.

From MCC’s Washington Office, Theo Sither explains the impact U.S. trade agreements have on environmental conditions in other countries and Korin Leman writes about the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam and the need for restitution for Vietnamese victims. J. Daryl Byler equates care for creation with the biblical mandate for faithfulness, love, peace and justice.

As environmentalism gains acceptance in broader American culture, the perspectives of the “writers and critics” in this issue suggest that Anabaptist thinking and values will help inform that discussion with several important points of view: 1) that personal practices should inform our call for changes in public policy; 2) that environmentalism affects how we conduct ourselves in the world, both as individuals and groups; and 3) that care for creation is necessary for peace and justice. ■

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Step by Step

BY J. DARYL BYLER

The United States comprises less than five percent of the world's population but accounts for some 30 percent of the world's greenhouse gases.

When our car broke down in the fall of 2005, we decided not to replace it. Cindy and I can easily walk to work and church. Our son uses D.C.'s excellent public transportation to get to school. On those few occasions when we do need a vehicle, we rely on rentals. We have cut our gasoline use by half.

It is not practical for everyone to discard their cars. But all of us can make choices to reduce consumption.

The United States comprises less than five percent of the world's population but accounts for some 30 percent of the world's greenhouse gases—the major contributor to global warming. Global warming is already causing dramatic changes to our climate and environment. Scientists warn that temperatures are rising and glaciers are melting at alarming rates.

Why is global warming and our national over-consumption such an important issue for people of faith?

It is an abuse of power. The very first verse in the Bible states: "God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). The psalmist and Paul remind us that the earth and all its fullness belong to God (Psalm 24:1, 1 Corinthians 10:26). "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine," God declared in establishing the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:23). As humans, our task is to "till and keep" God's creation, not to dominate or exploit it (Genesis 2:15).

It violates the Great Commandment.

"The consequences of climate change are going to be severe, especially for the poor in poor countries," says the Evangelical Environmental Network. "For Christians, addressing global warming is a new way to fulfill Jesus' most basic ethical teachings to love our neighbors . . ."

It contributes to injustice and war.

"America is addicted to oil," is the most quoted line in President Bush's 2006 State of the Union address. To protect U.S. energy consumption, our nation has codified oppressive governments like Saudi Arabia and overthrown governments in Iran (1953) and Iraq (2003). How can we claim to be pacifist Christians if our lifestyles are contributing to global injustice and war?

For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility solicits both personal and public responses to global warming: "We urge Christians to shape their personal lives in creation-friendly ways: practicing effective recycling, conserving resources, and experiencing the joy of contact with nature," the 2004 document states. "We urge government to encourage fuel efficiency, reduce pollution, encourage sustainable use of natural resources, and provide for the proper care of wildlife and their natural habitats."

The MCC resource, *Trek: Venture into a World of Enough*, says that to consume only our "fair share" of the world's resources, North American Christians will "need to reduce our emission of carbon dioxide, use of fossil fuels, paper consumption, and use of fresh water by about 75 percent." That's a radical change! To learn more about your own "carbon footprint" on the environment, visit www.climatecrisis.net.

Using more energy efficient light bulbs, appliances and vehicles is a good start. We can walk more, ride bikes and carpool. And we can insist that the U.S. government ratify the Kyoto treaty and raise fuel efficiency standards.

No single action or piece of legislation will end global warming immediately. But we can begin to make a difference—one step at a time. ■

WASHINGTON MEMO is written by Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office staff. It interprets national legislation and policy, seeking to reflect biblical concerns for justice and peace as represented in the work and statements of MCC U.S. and Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches. All biblical quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

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A Slice of the Cake

YOUNG ADULTS SPEAK OUT

BY VALERIE SHOWALTER

Valerie Showalter, a native Virginian and graduate of Eastern Mennonite University, currently resides in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where she continues on her journey to find ways to integrate faith and social justice through everyday actions.

Talking about the quality and future of our environment is typically a daunting task that most of us feel is too complex to understand. So, we avoid talking about it at all, lest we feel hopeless, cynical, and disillusioned.

We are paralyzed by our decaying forests, fearful of the air we breathe, and slather our skin with chemicals that deflect the sun's rays from damaging our skin. We're often too busy being afraid of and overwhelmed by the problems we've already caused to realize that we have three simple ways each day to make small but significant steps towards an humble awareness of our earth. What are these three ways? Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

I believe that the health of the natural world also includes our own bodies and what we put into them. When our hearts and minds are physically healthy, we are more apt to work towards the health of our fields, deserts, trees, and oceans. But how can we make the environment of our bodies healthier while improving the earth around us?

One way that I am trying to address my concern for both the health of my body and the health of my environment is by starting a chapter in my city of what I call "community-supported baking" or CSB, which is modeled after the movement towards community-supported agriculture or CSAs. I bake bread once a week using all organic ingredients (some of which are also locally-

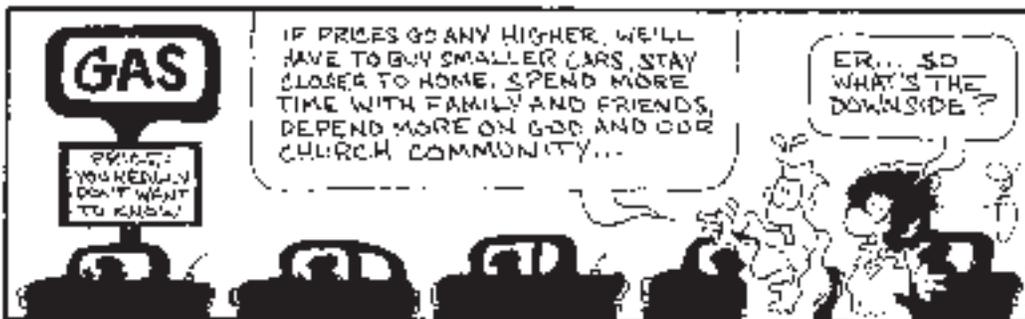
grown), which I purchase at a local grocery cooperative. The bread, then, is delivered to persons in the community who bought a "share" of bread for the given time period (I do four month increments). Thus, as the baker, I am dually concerned for the health of the environment and for the consumer. I conscientiously choose locally-grown organics as much as possible to maintain the fragile earth around me and to support those farmers who are committed to sustainable practices. I also conscientiously choose to provide my baking skills as a service to the community so that my friends and neighbors are assured that the food they are eating is both good for their bodies and for the environment.

In a more general sense, it is my hope that the U.S. government will see the benefits of addressing betterment of the environment through a focus on nutrition education, starting in public schools. In current education settings around the nation, there is little, if any, correlation mentioned between the way one eats and the impact diet has on our environment. As Wendell Berry states, "How we eat determines to a considerable extent how the world is used."

I believe that we can have our cake and eat it, too—preferably if it's made from ingredients grown nearby in a fashion that isn't destroying natural habitat, and made with hands that might get a slice of the cake, too!! ■

We have three simple ways each day for us to make small but significant steps towards an humble awareness of our earth. Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Pontius' Puddle



BY BARBARA KÄRCHER

Barbara Kärcher resides in Freiburg, Germany and is the European representative to the Executive Board of Mennonite World Conference's Amigos Committee: A Global Community of Young Anabaptists.

As an international witness to the position of the United States in the world, I think it should ratify the Kyoto Treaty and take steps to obey it.

Shift in Political & Natural Environment Germany and the United States

Germans generally expect the state to take leadership on many issues, including protection of the environment. The most important political party for environmental issues is Germany's Green Party (*Die Grünen*). Since 1970, they have passed needed reforms and initiatives to protect Germany's environment. One long-term goal of the party, enacted through the Nuclear Exit Law, is to phase out the use of nuclear power in Germany. Many of the country's 19 nuclear plants are closed and all civil usage of nuclear power should be completed by 2020. The party insists on finding more renewable sources such as solar power.

The Green Party of Germany is the world's oldest and thus far the most successful. They were part of the governing majority (in coalition with the Social Democratic Party of Germany) until 2005.

They have incurred losses in recent years because the people of Germany are angry that *Die Grünen* capitulated on their four core principles in order to become politically mainstream—deciding only after they were elected to support the U.S. war in Iraq and the rollback of crucial German social programs. The Greens' original principles were (and still are): ecological wisdom, social justice, participatory democracy and nonviolence.

As a Mennonite Christian, I find legitimate reasons, including biblical reasons (from the books of Genesis and Matthew, among others) to vote for the Green Party. Since they have recently supported war (which destroys the environment), I have cast my vote for other parties (as is very common among German youth). Some of the other German parties have also made positive environmental and Christian-based reforms. Most Christians vote very centrist here; they don't often vote for far left-wing parties, and voting for right-wing groups is considered unchristian.

We are able to hold our government accountable to environmental responsibility through our votes. The only comparable entity in the United States is the American Green Party. It would be very good to increase its strength and influence. Because Greens often campaign on a platform of environmental justice, you can vote for them and pressure them to keep their promises. In this way, you would not have to rely on advocacy or lobby groups to voice your opinion. It is my view that neither Democrats nor Republicans have consistent and comprehensive views with regards to the environment.

The U.S. government often gives the excuse that because the cause of global warming is uncertain, it does not have to act. It stated this clearly when it did not ratify the Kyoto Treaty. Since then, it has been one of the biggest obstacles to implementation of the treaty. As an international witness to the position of the United States in the world, I think it should ratify the Kyoto Treaty and take steps to obey it. Germans also do not necessarily know the root cause of global warming, but we have accepted that it is happening and are doing our best *not* to contribute to increasing the mess. Our government programmatically supports responses of individuals, by having a well-organized recycling program, ride-sharing programs, investment in public transportation, and constant consideration of the environmental impact of policy. ■

Urgently Developing a Need to Teach Environmentalism

YOUNG ADULTS
SPEAK OUT

BY ELINA CIPTADI

I was taught by my parents that I should only take food that I can finish, and not allow a single grain of rice to go to waste. After all, there were starving people in the United States. My parents also taught me not to litter or waste paper, and to use water and electricity with care.

In 2005, I read Doris Janzen Longacre's *Living More With Less* which intrigued me. It contained contributions about environmentalism from around the world, and suggested specific lifestyle changes in order to live with less. Through this book, I found out more about the Mennonite way of life, beyond the three tenets introduced here by Mennonite missionaries in Indonesia: evangelism, peacemaking, and believer's baptism.

Genesis 2:15, when God put Adam in the Garden of Eden to *work it* and *take care of it*, convinces me that responsible use of the environment is biblical. The tradition of evangelism, peacemaking, and believer's baptism is strengthened by the twin tenets of simple living and environmentalism. This, I believe, is true whether you live in a "developed" or a "developing" country.

Indonesia is one of the world's lungs: large areas of forest land turning CO₂ into usable oxygen. However, because we are a developing country, our government's focus remains on attracting foreign investment. Not much attention is paid to environmental standards, even when the local communities have evidenced the negative impact of their operations on the environment—higher dust emissions, diminishing forest lands, mud floods, and hazardous waste in open dumps.

In the spirit of lowering CO₂ emissions, the government of Indonesia has ratified the Kyoto Protocol, an international treaty for action to reduce greenhouse gases, but it seems like this important protocol cannot be enforced unless a superpower like the United States ratifies it.

The challenges are different in every country. In the United States, it is clear that consumption per capita is disproportionate to the rest of the world. Here in Indonesia, I've noted that our challenge is to stop the reduction of green areas. While we all do our part personally, let's also connect our struggles together. As Mennonites in our two countries we have worked together to promote peaceful conflict resolution, and stood together in times of recent natural disasters like the December 2004 tsunami and the August 2005 Hurricane Katrina.

With the environment and available resources degrading at alarming speed, I urge Mennonite churches worldwide to educate their members about care for creation, and help them to understand the depth and urgency of maintaining the environment. This issue, in fact, should not just be a Mennonite concern, but everyone's.

When Mennonites are known as people who consume carefully, dispose of rubbish with wisdom, and advocate environmental responsibility, we add to our renowned peacemaking witness. Along with peacemaking, advocacy for environmental care can be a great door-opener for us to share our faith and about a God who taught us to *work the earth* and *take care of it*. ■

Elina Ciptadi resides in Jakarta, Indonesia and is the Asia/Pacific representative to the Executive Board of Mennonite World Conference's Amigos Committee: A Global Community of Young Anabaptists.

With the environment degrading at alarming speed, I urge Mennonite churches worldwide to educate their members about care for creation.

Trade: The Environmental Side

BY THEO SITTHER

“How much environmental degradation should we tolerate, if it allows us to have a higher GDP?” —Joseph E. Stiglitz (2001 Nobel Prize in Economics)

Globalization and trade cannot be ignored in a world that becomes more connected and smaller every day. Many of us wear clothes, eat food and drive vehicles that have traveled thousands of miles before reaching our homes. However, we are disconnected from the realities of the labor that goes into each product, the land used to produce the products and the fuel burned to transport the products. We have become dependent on the labor of faces we will never see and lands we will never visit.

Globalization is possible because of trade pacts or so-called “free-trade” agreements. Free trade, simply defined, is the process of opening up foreign markets and products for consumption without duties or tariffs. It allows foreign investors to set up stakes in a country for the sake of profit and growth. Companies can set up shop in countries where the labor costs are low and the environmental standards below par. This results in large quantities of products moving across borders. In the past decade the United States has been actively pursuing free-trade agreements with nations around the globe in the interest of U.S. commercial expansion. However, these trade agreements often overlook environmental effects and are written for the benefit of corporations.

Growth in trade fuels global warming.

Over the past two decades, trade between the United States, Canada and Mexico has significantly increased. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed in 1993 and, as a result, the flow of goods within North America has skyrocketed. Trade between the three North American countries has grown at twice the rate as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), from \$350 billion in 1994 to \$700 billion in 2000. Since then the United States has entered into trade agreements with many other countries such as Singapore, Bahrain, Morocco, Oman, Thailand, Australia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, Colombia and others. (Some of these

agreements are yet to be ratified.) This growth in international trade requires that huge quantities of goods be moved long distances. The increased burning of fossil fuels by ships, trucks and airplanes creates greenhouse gases, which are the leading contributor to climate change.

Free trade enables corporate bullying.

Free trade agreements are written for the interest of corporations, not the environment or people they affect. Measures in the agreements do not spell out or set up institutions that implement or enforce environmental regulations and laws. According to treaties like the Central American Free Trade Agreement in 2004, corporations have the ability to sue governments who pass strict environmental laws that might restrict trade.

Growth or stewardship? At what cost are we willing to enjoy our luxuries? How are we going to care for God’s creation? Our choices, disconnected as it may seem, have a ripple effect across the globe. Taking care of creation is not only about personal choices. If we do not speak up, if we only make a personal choice to live better, then we are not doing all we can to improve our global environment. Many trade agreements have passed with no public discourse; many awful policies have been enacted without our voice.

Trade agreements with Peru and Colombia have been signed, but await ratification by the U.S. Congress. It is yet unclear what the new Democratic Congress will do; however, these agreements are likely to come up in 2007.

How can we be good stewards of the land, seas and air? We must engage our government and speak up for God’s creation and the people who face injustice because of our choices and policies. ■

At what cost are we willing to enjoy our luxuries? How are we going to care for God’s creation?

Will the U.S. Choose the Healing Path?

Acts of violence against people and the environment often reach beyond their projected scope. During the war in Vietnam, 12 million gallons of a potent chemical complex called Agent Orange was sprayed by the U.S. army in order to quickly kill dense jungle foliage that provided safe haven for the Vietcong. Over 30 years later, these deadly chemicals are still active in soils and streams.

Today, Vietnamese children who have never known war or hatred of the United States are suffering the effects of Agent Orange. This happens when parents unknowingly consume fish and produce from contaminated sources. Although the adults may suffer minimal side effects, genetic distortions in eggs and sperm produce deformed bones, mental retardation, and persistent pain in the child's life.

These children cannot receive physical restoration. And their families are often limited in their own ability to earn a decent living, since their children must be physically aided almost constantly. Although the normal, healthy life the parents and victims truly desire cannot be provided, a promise that their daily needs will be met is possible.

Since the war ended, the United States and Vietnam have contended over who is responsible for the environmental and human tragedies. Recently, a team of Vietnamese and U.S. scientists conducted tests

on sites believed to be contaminated with Agent Orange. In some cases, results showed the level of harmful chemicals 100 times the standard amount. This may require the United States to clean up toxic spots. Acknowledgment is one important step towards restorative justice for the Vietnamese people.

Restoration is already being pursued for U.S. victims. H.R. 4739 was passed by Congress in 2006, providing compensation to employees of the U.S. government and Department of Defense who suffer from exposure to Agent Orange. Yet, no such legislation currently exists for Vietnamese nationals. With the evidence provided by the environmental tests, the United States must take responsibility for these past actions. James 5:16 advocates for the confession of sins "so that you may be healed." Let us encourage Congress to go down the path of healing and pass legislation to clean up contaminated sites and provide restitution for victims of Agent Orange. ■

BY KORIN LEMAN

Vietnamese children who have never known war or hatred of the United States are suffering the effects of Agent Orange.

CAPITAL QUOTES

"There's no question in my mind that this president and this administration would never have invaded Iraq, especially on the flimsy evidence that was presented to the Congress, if indeed we had a draft, and members of Congress and the administration thought that their kids from their communities would be placed in harm's way."

—Rep. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.), on his plan to reintroduce draft legislation in the 2007 Congress

"I don't want to deal with global warming."

—Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, during oral arguments in a case over the Bush administration's refusal to regulate greenhouse gases

". . . [O]ur broken immigration system can only be fixed by putting politics aside and offering a comprehensive solution that strengthens our security while reaffirming our heritage as a nation of immigrants."

—Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.)



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SOUND THE TRUMPET!

Over the past year, we asked readers to respond to a variety of issues. Here is a summary of where they stand.	
Debt	Rep. Maxine Waters introduced The Jubilee Act (H.R. 1130) to provide for the cancellation of debts owed to international financial institutions by poor countries. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Financial Services. At the close of the 109th Congress, it had 83 co-sponsors.
Immigration Reform	The House passed the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 (H.R. 4437). The bill was the catalyst for the immigration rights protests that occurred throughout the United States in the spring of 2006. The Senate also passed an immigration bill, but a House-Senate conference committee was unable to reconcile the two bills.
Military Spending	President Bush requested \$439 billion for U.S. military operations for the fiscal year that began Oct. 1, plus additional funds for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In September, the House and Senate authorized \$533 billion—roughly half of all global military expenditures.
Minimum Wage	S. 1026 and H.R. 2429 were among several minimum wage proposals considered by Congress in 2006. In the end, Congress failed to take any action to increase the minimum wage above the ten-year-old floor of \$5.15 an hour. Speaker-elect Nancy Pelosi recently stated that raising the minimum wage is a top priority for the new majority in the 110th Congress.
U.S.-Iran Relations	In April 2006, Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) introduced H.Con.Res. 391, calling for the President to obtain authorization from Congress before taking military action against Iran. The bill had 45 co-sponsors when it was added as an unsuccessful amendment to the Defense Appropriations Bill.
Democratic Republic of Congo	In December 2005, a bipartisan group of U.S. Senators introduced S. 2125, a bill to establish core principles of U.S. policy to save lives and rebuild this war-torn country. The Senate unanimously passed S. 2125 on June 29 and sent it to the House of Representatives, which passed it by a voice vote on Dec. 6.