

Ben Sichel visit Chiapas for the 10th anniversary of the Zapatista rebellion ¶ Karen Houle on citizenship as “contribution” ¶ Kate Kennedy on the future of BC’s parks ¶ Jane Henderson reviews *Shooting Indians* >>>

The Dominion

dominion, *n.* 1. Control or the exercise of control. 2. A territory or sphere of influence; a realm. 3. One of the self-governing nations within the British Commonwealth.

CANADA’S GRASSROOTS NATIONAL NEWSPAPER • FEBRUARY 2004 • DOMINIONPAPER.CA • Vol. I, #14

World Social Forum Examines Alternatives to Neo-liberalism

An estimated 100,000 organizers, activists, and workers gathered in Mumbai, India, to discuss alternatives to “neo-liberalism,” “imperialism,” and “domination of the world by capital” at the World Social Forum (WSF). Established in 2001 as a counterpoint to the World Economic Forum where CEOs gather annually to discuss economic policy, the WSF has become a global convergence for representatives of social movements and civil society organizations.

Traditionally held in Porto Allegre, Brazil, the Mumbai event addressed topics close to the hearts of tens of millions of people involved in social movements in Asia, including caste issues, women’s rights and land ownership. The forum also featured several high-profile critics of corporate globalization and imperialism.

Former World Bank economist and Nobel Prize winner Joseph Stiglitz condemned “market fundamentalism” and said that new leadership was needed to keep globalization from undermining social security. The alternative to fundamental reforms, he said, is widespread violence.

Indian writer Arundhati Roy called for a direct action campaign against companies that benefit from the US occupation of Iraq. A Filipino researcher argued that “flexible” labour policies adopted by governments to attract investment



An estimated 50,000 World Social Forum attendees at a session entitled “Women on War, War on Women.” *Indymedia India*

have the effect of “institutionalizing unemployment.” Zambian researcher Austin Mu Bnau described the local impact of the Shopright supermarket chain, which bypasses local suppliers and has weakened unions. British journalist George Monbiot suggested that Third World countries should collectively threaten to default on debt of over \$2.2 trillion unless basic levels of fairness are applied to global governance.

At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Bill Clinton said that opponents of globalization “have got their criticism right.”

“We do not have the systems the world needs to respond in a comprehensive way” to the problems posed by globalization, he said.

The forum will return to Brazil in 2005, but plans are being made to gather in Africa in 2006. An African WSF, some attendees said, would be a powerful tool for drawing attention to AIDS and what activists call

the “criminal debt.” Some African governments spend close to half of their budgets servicing debts, often due to excessive borrowing by former dictators.

“[The World Social Forum] has now emerged as a matrix, a structure, that can be reproduced in any part of the world,” said Flavio Aguiar, a Brazilian professor who has been involved with the forum since 2001. (*Independent SA*)

Racial Inequality in US Not Improving: Study

At 10.8 per cent, unemployment among African-Americans is more than twice that of white Americans. Infant mortality is 146 per cent higher than that of whites. For every dollar of white income, African-Americans have 57 cents—two cents more than in 1967.

These are some of the findings of “The State of the Dream 2004,” a report released by United for a Fair Economy.

The report estimates that at the current rate of improvement, it would take 581 years to achieve income parity between blacks and whites. (*New Standard*)

Citigroup Unveils Environmental Plan

Citigroup, one of the largest banks in the world, announced plans to adopt a comprehensive environmental policy in conjunction with the Rainforest Action Network. Dogged for years by direct action, campus boycott campaigns, protests, and an award for the “World’s Most Destructive Bank,” Citigroup asked the Rainforest Action Network for a last-minute “ceasefire” on the eve of a major protest planned for the corporation’s shareholders’ meeting.

Citigroup had been criticized for its investment in polluting industries, including a Peruvian oil pipeline project that the Rainforest Action Network said displaced indigenous people and threatened hundreds of endangered bird and tree species. Critics also targeted Citigroup’s lack of investment in sustainable technologies and its unwillingness to modify its mortgage plan to account for the long-term savings of solar heating systems.

The corporation’s new policy includes protection of zones of “social or ecological fragility” and takes climate change into account.

“We believe we can make a difference by holding ourselves accountable for our own impact,” said Charles Prince, CEO of Citigroup. (*CorpWatch, PR Newswire*)

Ipperwash Surveillance Tape Records Racist Comments

The September 1995 Ipperwash, Ontario, land dispute that resulted in the death of a Stoney Point First Nations man has resurfaced due to a surveillance tape—its existence previously denied by the provincial government—being released by the Ontario Privacy Commissioner.

In the tape, two Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) officers at the 1995 scene refer to a native as a “big fat fuck Indian,” and joke about how they could bait natives with beer, much like how they could bait blacks in the southern US with watermelon. The officers recorded these comments just one day before the OPP’s Kenneth Deane shot and killed native Dudley George.

Deane was convicted of criminal negligence causing death, but he never lost any pay from his position with the OPP and he now instructs other officers. CSIS and an OPP intelligence spy determined that the natives were unarmed at the time of the shooting.

—Kim Petersen

Prohibiting PCBs from Crossing Border Violates “Investors’ Rights”: Court Ruling

A federal court ruling will result in Canada paying S.D. Meyers of Tallmudge, Ohio, \$9 million US under Chapter 11 of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The ruling states that Canada violates the US company’s “investors’ rights” by attempting to prohibit the export of hazardous waste contaminated by polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

The United Nations Basel Convention on Hazardous Waste, ratified by 130 countries,



The Peace Arch at the US-Canada border in BC. A NAFTA tribunal has ruled that Canada violated “investor’s rights” by preventing the import of hazardous chemicals.

restricts hazardous waste from crossing borders. However, an earlier trade tribunal decision on the S.D. Meyers case refused to acknowledge the convention because the US is not one of the 130 countries.

The Council of Canadians and Sierra Club of Canada are asking the Canadian government to appeal the ruling, and were unsuccessful in applying for intervenor status—in the public interest—before the federal court

“Astonishingly, the fact that the importation of this hazardous waste was illegal under US law didn’t deter the tribunal from ruling that Canada had nevertheless offended the rights of the US company,” commented Andrea Peart of the Sierra Club of Canada. (*ViveLeCanada.ca*)

Anti-Terrorism Act Worries Minorities: Study

A recent study entitled “Minority Views on the Canadian Anti-Terrorism Act” has found that ethnic minorities have strong concerns about the act. The study was conducted by the Montreal consulting Createc and was commissioned by the federal justice department. Focus groups were held in five cities, and 138 people of 60 dif-

ferent ethnicities participated.

A main concern of participants was that people of ethnic backgrounds may no longer be considered innocent until proven guilty—a basic legal tenet. The act, enacted as a result of the events of September 11, 2001, enables the government to brand individuals as terrorists, and enables police to make “preventative arrests” of people suspected of planning a terrorist act.

Most people involved in the study felt racial discrimination had risen since the World Trade Center attacks, and that the new act will lead to increased ethnic stereotyping. Participants were specifically concerned about terrorist lists being made public, broad powers of arrest, and new powers of authorities to seize suspicious property. This last provision made it possible for the RCMP to recently confiscate materials of *Ottawa Citizen* reporter Juliet O’Neill in the ongoing Maher Arar case. (*Canadian Press*)

NB to Potentially Increase Logging Land and Decrease Environmental Protection

Canadian conservation organizations are asking the NB

government to reject a proposal put forth by six major forest companies that, if implemented, would greatly increase logging rates and weaken environmental protection measures.

The proposal is based on a government and industry sponsored report prepared by Finnish-based Jaako Poyry Consulting. The report recommends immediate reductions in environmental protection measures on public lands, spending over \$1 billion over 30 years in order to double the taxpayer tree-growing subsidies to industry, and increasing the amount of public land available for softwood tree harvest to 40 per cent—double the current percentage available.

The recommendations in the Jaako Poyry report go against Maritime conservation organizations’ attempts to respect nature’s limits, produce a variety of forestry products, and sustain community employment through forestry for generations to come.

A Select Committee of the New Brunswick Legislature is currently studying the report and the industry proposal. Its recommendations are expected in the spring of 2004. (*Sierra Club Canada, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Canadian Nature Federation*)

Zapatistas Celebrate 10 Years of Colourful Resistance

by Ben Sichel

OVENTIC, Chiapas—On a damp, foggy night in the tiny town of Oventic, way, way up in the mountains of the Sierra Madre de Chiapas, about 1,500 people gathered to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the 1994 Zapatista uprising.

It was, coincidentally, New Year's Eve, and the diverse, multinational crowd enjoyed live music, dancing, theatre, games, fireworks, and revolutionary speeches in Spanish and Tzotzil, the local indigenous language. Celebrations went on all night and continued the following day.

The Zapatistas are the indigenous rebel group in Chiapas, Mexico, that shocked their country when they occupied several Chiapan towns on January 1, 1994, demanding autonomy, dignity, and basic necessities. Initially as surprised as everyone else, the Mexican army soon recovered and violently quelled the rebellion. But by the time the rebels retreated to the highlands, it was clear they had captured the imagination of sympathizers around the world. Public shows of support came from all over Mexico, as well as from labour and civil society groups from Nebraska to Rome.

Zapatista supporters came to the autonomously-run community of Oventic from all over Mexico, North America, and Europe this year, accounting for about 40 per cent of attendees. The rest were local indigenous Mayans, on average almost a foot shorter than their Northern visitors, and almost always covering their faces with bandanas or balaclavas. The men's plain jeans and T-shirts contrasted sharply with the colourful, traditional dress of the women.

"It's like a folk festival here" said Canadian writer Simon Helweg-Larsen. "A sur-



A colourful mural in a Zapatista village. The text reads "rebellion for humanity". Simon Helweg-Larsen

real, radical, political, Zapatista folk fest." Indeed, but for the masks worn by the local people, the festive atmosphere made it easy to forget that we were in a low-intensity war zone. Bright murals decorated outside walls everywhere, mostly full of slogans and symbols of life and hope. Outside Oventic, however, in several surrounding communities, conflict continues to rage. The Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Centre reported threats of "displacement" against residents of nine Zapatista communities shortly before the anniversary celebrations. This past week, Mexico City's *La Jornada* reported 23 homes burned in the town of Nuevo San Rafael.

Such intimidation tactics have been the norm in Chiapas for the past 10 years. Many come from paramilitary groups with ties to the PRI, or Institutional Revolutionary Party, who hold power in Chiapas's state government. Towns have been raided in this time, homes destroyed, Zapatistas and their sympathizers kidnapped or tortured. The worst single incident was the December 22, 1997 Acteal massacre, where 45 Christian pacifists, including

pregnant women and children, were killed while hiding in a church.

As well, observers say that poverty and standards of living have worsened in Chiapas in the last 10 years. The Zapatista uprising was timed to coincide with enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and everything they said about NAFTA is proving to be true, said Peter Brown of Schools for Chiapas, a San Diego-based nonprofit organization. "There's more hunger. There's more people being forced off the land," he continued. With millions of tons of cheap, subsidized, American corn flooding the Mexican market and forcing down prices, smaller growers can't afford to keep farming.

The Zapatistas do seem to have gained one important thing through their rebellion: dignity. "Before, indigenous people walked around with their heads down," said Heike Kammer of SIPAZ, a peace organization based in San Cristobal de las Casas. "Now...they've taken on protagonist roles in social struggles." The word "dignity" indeed appeared perhaps more than any other in the slogans

painted on the walls in Oventic.

It's anyone's guess as to what to expect in the future. The rebels have already voiced their opposition to the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the hemisphere-wide extension of NAFTA, and Plan Puebla Panama, a massive infrastructure project that would cut through thousands of acres of indigenous lands. Just before the anniversary, *La Jornada* published a speech by Zapatista Comandante David, entitled "The Time Has Come to Act." In it the commander urged indigenous people in Mexico to unite and claim their rights, because "it is clear that no government will give us the right and the liberty to live with dignity."

~ ISSN 1710-0283 ~

www.dominionpaper.ca

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The Dominion is a not for profit free newspaper covering topics of interest to Canadians. We aim to provide a counterpoint to the mainstream papers, direct attention to independent journalism, and establish a venue where alternative forms of journalism can be practiced.

The Dominion is published every three weeks and in print and on the web.

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What if we Gave it Away?

Citizenship as “contribution” and alternative economies

by Karen Houle

Think about ‘contribution,’ outside of the box.

The box is economy. The dominant economy—capitalism—is only one among many possible models of social organization.

How we think about economy and how we structure our activities as economies shapes what we think a contribution is, what kinds of activities are contributions, and who a contributor is.

In short, economies select what counts as valuable and virtuous. Economies also define what counts as contribution’s opposite: who and what are burdens, parasites or deadbeats. If we want to change those definitions and the populations they point to, we have to change—or at least multiply—our economies and economic practices.

One way to conceive of a more just society is to focus on and participate in alternate economies which, by their nature, multiply the possible meanings of ‘contribution.’ This is one way to discover a conception which will contribute to the creation of a world in which many more are recognized as ‘contributors.’ Yet, this work is quite different from efforts like getting women in philosophy to ‘contribute’ to that discipline. That kind of thing is a timely and important effort, but it preserves the same basic economy that came before it. It just tries to add more to it.

To attempt to expand the present model of economy to include what single mothers or unemployed Italians or adults with disabilities or women

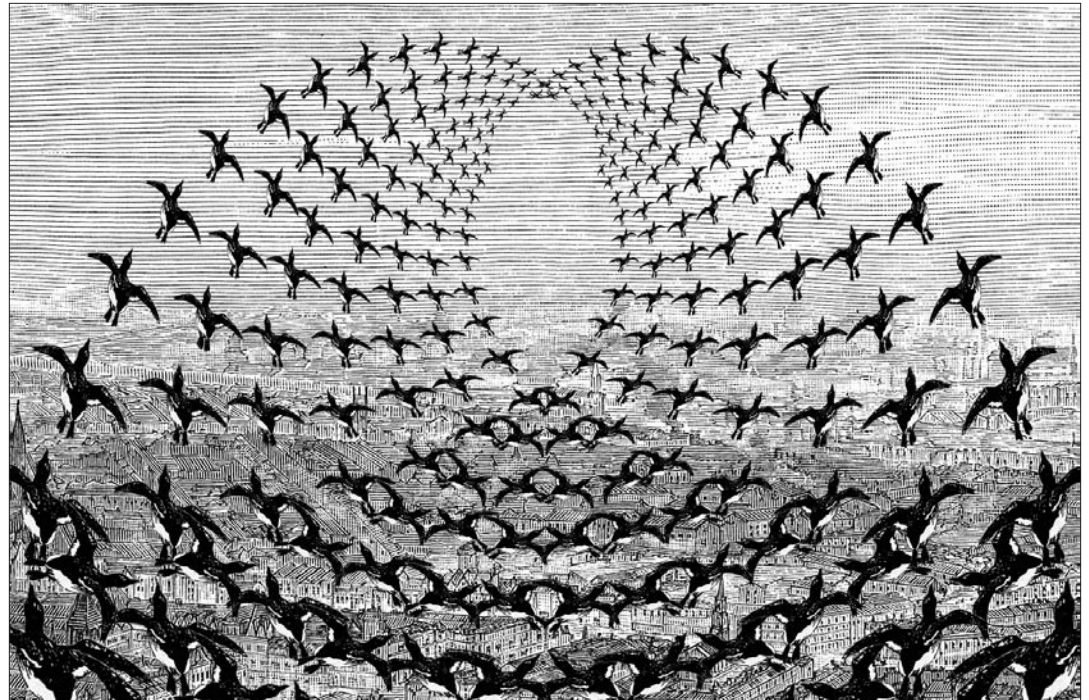


Illustration by Sylvia Nickerson (sylvianickerson.ca)

really do contribute to the system, is not to go entirely in the right direction. This is not only true for these groups of people who do not presently appear to be ‘full contributors,’ but true for all of us.

Let’s be clear about the term ‘economy.’ When we say these terms: economy, economic, we mostly think of money in exchange for goods or services, but this is only one form of economy among many. An economy is a complex system of organizing transactions and transmissions. It can be linear, it can be a web. There can be some at the bottom, or no bottom at all. It can involve money but it can also not involve money. Love is a kind of economy: it’s an economy of the heart, of affection, of desires. An economy involves people and things in relations with one another. Sometimes the people are the key bits, sometimes something else like ‘spirit’ is, and people are chiefly in its service, its vehicles.

The economy which pres-

ently dominates our social relations, including our civic relations, is the money economy. The web of all-possible relations comes to be largely reduced to relations between someone who can, or must, buy something and another who can, or must sell it. Consumer relations. The central human interaction is commercial, and takes place between the have’s and the have not’s, initiated by the have’s and defined on their terms.

Our model of good citizenship, sadly, takes something of its style from this economy: to be a good citizen is to have something and then to spend—usually time or money—on public projects. Either through ‘direct contributions’ (endowment, sponsored giving) or through indirect contributions (taxation, volunteer work). These are good things. But notice that to be a model citizen, requires in the first place that we be the kind of person who has something to give, thus understood. Underneath

this view is a deeper view of personhood. Personhood itself is defined by having something, some amount, some trait, some capacity.

This seems correct and even unproblematic. It is only when we ask that an inkling of another possibility appears. For having is not quite the same as doing and not quite the same again as being.

Let us consider what is valuable about this money economy and what is damaging about it.

What is valuable is that the money economy is necessary for many things to take place. Basic needs, let alone preferences, could not be met if this sector of our transactions was chaotic or weak. This economy is not inflexible: we can, in fact, transfer our holdings and buying power, according to moral or spiritual concerns, by buying Fair Trade products, pulling investments out of corrupt companies, or even refusing to pay taxes.

Into such an economy,

we can introduce conservation measures: private spending, public spending, or limitations on either. There are ways to adjust within the money economy in order to include more people (fairer markets, wealth redistribution) or different values (a wage for mothers' child-care tasks). We could aim for sustainability as an outcome of our consumer choices. The same logic can be used in the same way toward the question of how to achieve inclusive

“Without question, the ‘best citizens’ are the ones with buying power. Who or what they contribute to isn’t of great concern. The sheer capacity to do so is.”

citizenship: we might argue to expand the definition of ‘person’ to include beings who don’t have X but do have Y. Or have X and Y. Again, this is one way to do things, and more markets, more persons, and more products can be included in the economy by these measures. But notice that the basic idea—that membership is based on having something—and the basic structure—that those who have more will always be more valuable, more virtuous—remains the same.

From a social justice perspective, the following things about our economy and its definition of contribution are troubling: 1) Those who have little or nothing cannot be seen as contributors. At best, they are tolerated. 2) Those who already have some will end up higher on the virtue scale whenever additional criteria are added. The order never changes. 3) The interactions within this dominant economy are not required to be between actual persons. They often aren’t.

The basic relation which must be forged and kept vital in order to enable ‘The Good Life’ is the relation between you and

your holdings and, secondarily, the relation between you and where your holdings are held (bank, trust funds, shares). The good life is lived if you can get what you want, when you want, wherever you are. As one of my heroes, Vandana Shiva, recently remarked: it’s not a global village, it’s a global supermarket.

Happiness is cilantro in January in Athabasca. Yet in the act of happily munching salsa verde in January in Athabasca, people have, for all intents and purposes, disappeared from view (except insofar as you might buy something from them, or buy them something). Living the good life within a strong money economy does not require you to be good at being with, let alone caring about, people. Even that last bastion of The Face-to-Face, the bank teller who you have to go up to to get your cash from, well, you don’t even have to deal with her anymore. “That’s just fine with me,” you say to yourself, remembering the cranky “enforcer” at the CIBC, and how bloody slow she was.

Let’s pause there.

Do we forget? Humans are cranky and slow. It is going to take me about 76 years to do the work of becoming who I am. That’s pretty slow. To be a human is to be a human (that is a temporal being with non-linear personality) and to be among humans; not removed from them. But this economy, this model of contribution-means-having actually short circuits that. InstaBank Civil life.

Without question, the “best citizens” are the ones with buying power (and this can apparently involve either malls or votes). Who or what they contribute to isn’t of great concern. The sheer capacity to do so is.

The money economy—our economy—will perpetually disqualify any of those who don’t have money or time or good looks or rationality because they can’t be virtuous, as virtue is a positive demonstration. This should make us all uneasy

because among other things we are humans and to be a human is to perpetually lose something—our fortunes, our minds, our umbrellas. Also, it fails to register preservation or acts of restraint as forms of virtue: it will not compensate these the way it will compensate or reward donations, output, maximizing. Lastly, even if some people never lost anything, there must be something fundamentally wrong with a model that dictates that the virtuous human doesn’t have to be among—or give a damn about—any other humans.

Alternate economies and how ‘contribution’ and ‘contributors’ morph

Alternative economies do not need to be invented or started. They have always been part of the fabric of human interaction: it’s just a question of shifting our focus and our practices in their direction, so as to get them squarely in our sights and to multiply what we understand—what we are able to see—as contribution.

I am not suggesting that the money economy be abandoned. What I am suggesting is that taking care to recognize the significance and the centrality of these other economies, and to involve ourselves in practicing them, is an essential part of the project of reorganizing what it means to be a member of society. It is a piece of the social justice puzzle.

What follows are brief descriptions of four alternate economies, and how they treat contribution. This exercise is just a preliminary gesture. You fill in the blanks.

1. Barter exchange.
2. Gleaning
3. Gift economies
4. Total systems (something like ‘Potlatch’)

1. Barter exchange. A barter is any worthwhile exchange or trade between two or more parties. Each brings something and takes something, so the verb ‘to have’ remains

central. But barter is different from money economies. It is, by virtue of the lack of a middle man (‘capital’), a direct exchange, a singular and direct mutuality tailored to localized needs and surpluses. We all have too much of something and not enough of another. What does a contribution consist in? Whatever is needed, is wanted. What is valuable and not valuable, and therefore who is a good trade partner or a poor one, is not dictated from afar by forces like advertising. It can involve anything so long as it meets the condition of shifting too much of something and too little of another.

To be a contributor here, is to have or to be a lot of something. I, for one, have many excellent muffin recipes but know no jokes. Contribution requires sleuthing out relations of excess and poverties. To contribute requires that there be someone else who wants what you’ve got. It’s a two-way street. There isn’t, strictly speaking, A Giver (who gloats) and A Recipient (who slinks away like a charited leech). This system undermines the steady hierarchical build-up of cultural capital that the money-economy raises for givers alone. Finally, barter rewards good match-makers, those who are able to organize relations of specificity, inventiveness, and flexibility.

2. Gleaning. Go rent Agnes Varda’s film, *Les Glâneurs*. Across the world people endeavor to make use of what has already fully passed through one cycle of the primary economy and is ‘wasted.’ Bugs and fungi do this too. Gleaning means following the swath of primary economy, picking up waste and using it either for its originally designed purpose (pulp wood left in a clear-cut is gathered and brought to the mill) or for an entirely different purpose (used french fry oil runs a school bus). What counts as a ‘contribution’ within a gleaning economy? To contribute is to

More Than a Memo?

Legislating the integrity of British Columbia's parks

by Kate Kennedy

After spending decades establishing its world class park system, British Columbia may be leaving its wilderness up to expressions of good will in lieu of legislation. On Thursday, January 22, a memorandum of understanding was signed by the BC and Yukon Chamber of Mines, the Mining Association of British Columbia, and the Council of Tourism Associations of British Columbia. The memorandum is not binding, though.

Gwen Barlee, a policy director with Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society's BC chapter, calls the agreement "a good faith commitment" from the mining industry to respect the province's parks system.

The agreement may be significant for South Chilcotin Mountains Park in particular, where mining companies have been lobbying for a smaller protected area in order to provide access for mineral exploration inside current park boundaries. One of British Columbia's newest provincial parks, South Chilcotin was established on April 17, 2001, following five years of negotiations in the Lillooet Land Resource Management Plan. The process resulted in the proposal for the South Chilcotin and 13 other protected areas in the region as a 71,400 hectare area 80 kilometres north of Whistler. When this area achieved park status, the announcement represented a victory for those who had campaigned for its protection.

But as David R. Boyd, author of *Unnatural Law: Rethinking Canadian Environmental Law and Policy* (2003) says: "Relying on most current provincial and territorial park laws to protect biodiversity is like expecting a security firm's sticker in your window to pro-



Outside the South Chilcotin Mountains Park, where mining companies are lobbying for a smaller protected area. *Kate Kennedy*

tect your home." The recent pressure from the mining community on the South Chilcotin Mountains Park is not the first or the least worrying threat to this and other provincial parks in BC.

On November 18, 2003, the province introduced Bill 84, the "Parks and Protected Areas Statutes Amendment Act, 2003." It is an amendment to the Provincial Park Act that authorizes oil and gas exploration beneath park land, changes the boundaries of seven existing parks, and affects the classification of new parks. Mark Haddock, a lawyer with West Coast Environmental Law, refers to classification as a way of ensuring that there is some legal effect to the purpose of the park being created. Until recently, legislation dictated that provincial parks in BC had to be classified upon creation in order to define their primary purpose.

This is similar to the concept of zoning in municipalities and was designed to ensure that, for example, a park (or portion of a park) designated for the protection of a particu-

lar animal species would not be subject to commercial or recreational development in that animal's habitat. By no longer requiring classification of a park at the time of its establishment, the province has made it significantly easier for development to take place in ecologically sensitive areas. It leaves the decision up to the Minister of Water, Land, and Air Protection, and on the whole makes the Park Act and the areas covered under it somewhat discretionary.

In fact, Haddock says, the ministry had largely ceased to classify parks even before the amendments came into effect.

When asked whether this had been raised publicly, Haddock responded, "I don't think people were aware." According to Haddock, this problem is not only a matter of legislation, but also of funding. "The parks budget has always been miniscule in BC," he said, and with additional cuts to parks staff more recently, the capacity to create master plans for these areas has been severely limited. Ultimately, this may have had the effect of limiting public awareness about what

happens within park boundaries with respect to planning and the maintenance of ecological integrity. It begs the question of whether increased funding for parks might have permitted more attention to the specifics of the Park Act and the degree to which it has been followed.

Friday's announcement is good news for the park if it signifies, as Gwen Barlee states, that the mining community is "backing off the attack on BC's parks." Still, this promise needs to be considered in the context of the amendments contained in Bill 84 and the increasing fragility of protected areas legislation.

A memorandum of understanding is not legally binding nor formally connected to the legislation that governs the creation and maintenance of protected areas. With the Park Act itself no longer the legislation it once was, does the future of BC's remaining wilderness areas depend on these kinds of occasional gestures? Or will the province take steps to maintain the integrity of the parks system that it once used to define itself?

Lessons for an Audience

Kazimi's *Shooting Indians* explores representations of authenticity

by Jane Henderson

In Ali Kazimi's 1997 documentary *Shooting Indians*, a whole sequence of studying is going on. Kazimi studies Iroquois photographer Jeff Thomas, who is mining the century-old works of white photographer and filmmaker Edward Curtis. The three are transformed.

It took more than a decade to make this quietly ironic film, which got a rare public screening in Victoria, BC last night. Looking around the filled-to-capacity auditorium, it was obvious that a non-native audience is hungry for the dialogue that this film, and the native speakers who followed its screening, made possible.

As Kazimi quipped, the documentary is a story of two Indians. As a child in Delhi, Kazimi was introduced to "cowboys and Indians" in 1961 by the gift of figurines from a visiting English relative. Arriving in Canada some years later to study film, he said he was startled to find a belief that "the red man was doomed to extinction," observing that "these Indians do exist, but they have no India to return to!" In the early 80s, as an idealistic film student from a country with hundreds of living languages, he met and began work with Iroquois Jeff Thomas.

Thomas' photography, now his strategy for approaching alienation issues, began with doubt and hesitation, as captured in Kazimi's footage of Thomas returning with a camera to his childhood reserve near Buffalo, NY. Resident attitudes were formed by the history of anthropologists and ethnographers, the only people taking pictures of natives. "People came, took something, left, and never came back," he said. "Never an exchange."

It is just such photography for which Edward Curtis (1868-1952) is famous.

"Prolific" is an understatement when applied to Curtis' body of work. More than 40,000 photos, transcriptions of hundreds of stories, and wax-cylinder recordings of songs were taken of First Nations throughout southern and northwest North America. "Resented" and "discredited" are just as inadequate in expressing most present-day attitudes to his collection. Hailed at the time as tokens of the "vanishing race," in the 1980s people spoke up about how severely his photos were staged, retouched, and essentially falsified.

But Kazimi calls Curtis "the shadow... with whom [Thomas] seems to have made an uneasy peace." After a decade of studying Curtis' photos (he even got a job at the National Gallery for access to their collection) Thomas explains that "I was uncomfortable with his work," but uncomfortable enough, crucially, "to find out why."

One of *Shooting Indians'* strongest segments is the journey to Alert Bay, the Kwakwaka'wakw community near northern Vancouver Island where Curtis' feature-length film was shot around 1913. Originally the incomplete *In the Land of the Head-Hunters*, its footage was resurrected in the 1960s as *In the Land of the War Canoes*, a movie I was surprised to recognize from school trips to the Royal BC Museum in the 1980s. But Thomas' interview with Maggie Frank, the movie's 100-year-old protagonist princess, complicates any simple rejection of the film for its blatant inaccuracies. It's a funny, poignant interview which surprises even Maggie's translating daughter, who explains that to Maggie the film is basically "a home movie" of friends and relatives. To many



A portrait by Iroquois photographer Jeff Thomas.

people whose ancestors acted in it, the film was a compromise between what Curtis wanted to make, and the images that the mainstream would buy. He was trying to capture a "pre-contact purity" in a village where whites had intermarried for some 60 years.

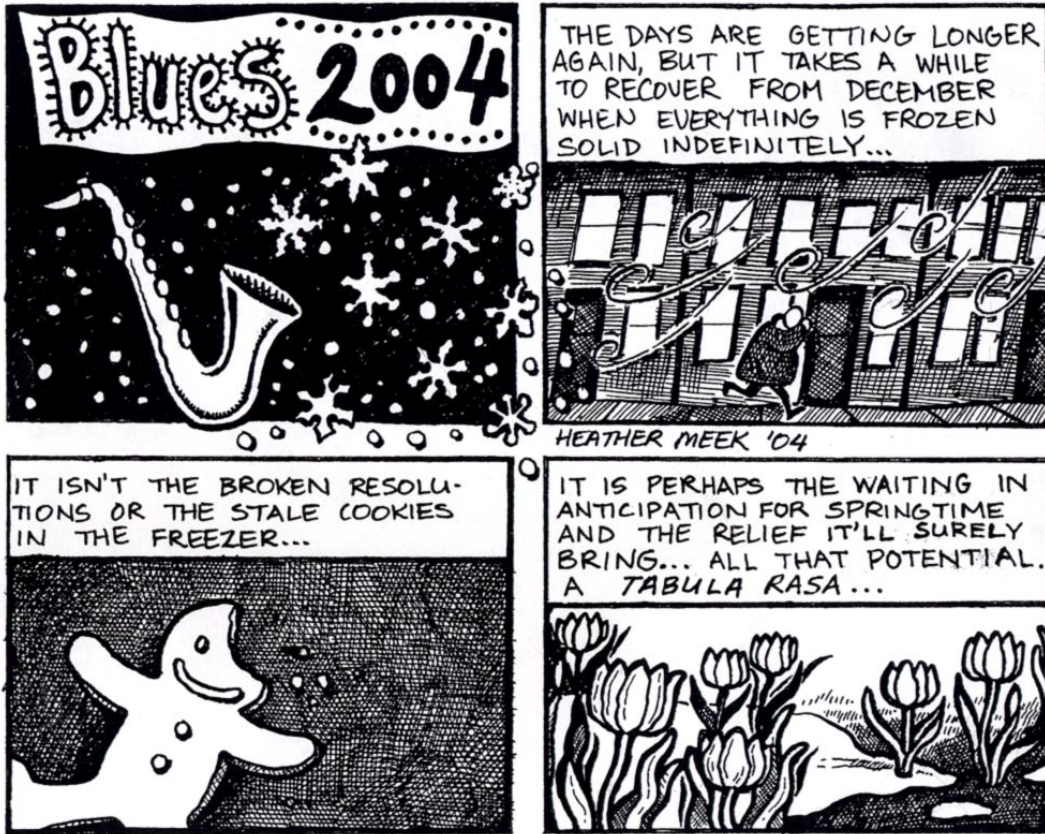
Along the same lines, to watch *In the Land of the War Canoes* as an exploitation of the culture it misrepresents is to deny that participating in it was, as Maggie Frank believes, an expression of choice. And market-tailored as the shooting was, Gloria Cranmore-Webster makes the point that Curtis' arrival in 1913, *encouraging* the potlatch and its performances, was just the opposite of the intense and increasing government pressure to exterminate such traditions altogether. And so people took part.

And within Curtis' romance and retouching, between those absurd scenes staged for a white, city audience, Thomas found moving and empowering portraits. He went on to curate 150 such photographs into a

show at the Ottawa Art Gallery. To cynics wondering how he could make this selection, Thomas offers an explanation that can guide the viewer through Thomas' own body of work. He explains that these pictures are much the same as any portraits of Toronto's aristocrats of the time. They are people dressing up for and looking into the camera. These are not stereotyped Indians, and to assume so (because of the rest of Curtis' work, and the time in which they were taken) is natural but misguided.

The error is in the search for authenticity. This was Curtis' mistaken reason for handing out cedar capes for his models to wear, instead of the bowler hats they were already walking down the street in. This is also the mistake of those who reject Curtis' artifacts today, and the school of thought he represents. It is what Thomas rejects by returning to Curtis' work. Because, as Thomas explained to Kazimi, "To look at my own history I don't think about Indianness." Far more personal insights of compassion and self-analysis arise instead.

For Kazimi, who began the project expecting to see totem poles on Thomas' NY reserve, what disappeared was the mythic Indian image he'd been taught. For Thomas, what appeared was the courage to demand nuance and a determination to return photography's focal point to its subject. And along the way they reinterpreted Curtis as a man whose mission changed from preserving historical curiosities to trying to protect living traditions. Taking a personal, reflective approach to the often-abstracted realities of aboriginal oppression, *Shooting Indians* practices the very message it carries.



“What if we gave it away?” continued from page 5 »

make less, to render invisible, to disappear. The good economist here bears the opposite features as the contributor in the money economy, the one, remember, who makes more, renders visible, exceeds. What kinds of virtues are required to succeed as gleaner? Patience, good timing, imagination, modesty, humility, and friends, too. This happens in groups.

3. ‘Potlatch’ economies were prevalent throughout Polynesia and Melanesia, and up and down the Pacific Northwest Coast, noted from early contact through the early 20th century, when it was outlawed. There are many versions of it, some probably highly distorted, but some features seem to be common to all renditions.

Potlatches were total economies. Persons did not give or take as individuals but as members of groups, as heads of family groupings, acting for groups and on behalf of groups. Wholes gave and wholes received. The second

feature involves the virtue associated with paring down radically. Prestige and power could be demonstrated insofar as one was prepared to give the whole of it away, even destroy the most valuable belongings in front of others. Status could be gained by being the kind of chief (head of a group) who gave it all away. Not just a tax-deductible donation or philanthropic funds generating interest; the whole amount was squandered. One ‘flattened’ ones rivals with the total girth of what one had in order to gain in that what could not be otherwise gotten: status, respect, a name, power. Importantly, even though there were short-term shortfalls for whoever’s group had given the potlatch, the fact of mandatory reciprocity meant that these shortfalls were, at best, only that. Under this kind of arrangement, who turns out to be ‘a contributor’? Interesting: the one who contributes the most here is the one who receives, who has nothing to begin with, because without

that full transfer, the system couldn’t do its work of reward and redistribution. To contribute in this sort of an economy means to participate, to remain fully within a vast system of dependency and fluctuation.

4. Gift economies. ‘Gift economies’ involve Marcel Mauss, not the Clinique” counter. Yes, it’s always ‘gift time’ at Clinique, but I’m thinking about something much older and stranger than the newest shade of lipstick. What Mauss tells us is that ‘economies of gift’ make use of human agents in order to pass—as opposed to hold—the life, the spirit of the thing. He calls it the hau of the thing; the power in the object. Gift economies are not so much exchanges between two agents as they are transfers, the sheer moving of stuff through webs of human relations. Gift economies were organized so that the life-givingness of the gift could pass through, pass along in time and not be extinguished by ‘private property,’ as when a beautiful

thing is taken into one hand and kept there. What is strange and wonderful about ‘gift’ is that the contributor, really, is spirit. Those ‘around’ the spirit play supporting roles. Whether one (temporarily) receives or whether one (briefly) gives, these roles are secondary to the event of transmission, yet this transmission establishes webby human networks which are of utmost importance for any number of other economies. A good contributor is one who receives well, and also one who gives well. These are descriptions of caring, are they not? Oddly, good work is done by being the kind of person around whom and through whom a maximum number of relations pass. One isn’t important by possessing the largest capacity to give; one gives insofar as one has the largest capacity to receive. This idea is especially dear to me since it helps me to think about my grandmother’s last months in a new way, in a way that preserves, for her, dignity and power. But not in any standardly understood form of dignity or power. After all, she was very very sick. But, this much was also true: the number of people who were required to touch her, to enable her, to feed her, to move her, to read to her, to wash her, to speak about her, to be with her turned out to be many. When I think about her death through the lens of gift economies, I see that she was, at that point, a great ‘contributor’ precisely because her needs were the kind of needs which marshalled many relations, (even without intending to), yet held none of the benefits of these for herself, ultimately. This view of economies radically inverts the story of contributor and virtuous member of the collective, and places those persons with little or nothing at the very centre of their mechanisms. It is only through such a radical reframing of economies that those presently ‘on the margins’ of society find themselves at the heart of the matter. ...