

Eskom and World Bank Sowing Seeds of Destruction

In this issue

groundWork is a non-profit environmental justice service and developmental organisation working primarily in South Africa, but increasingly in Southern Africa.

groundWork seeks to improve the quality of life of vulnerable people in Southern Africa through assisting civil society to have a greater impact on environmental governance. groundWork places particular emphasis on assisting vulnerable and previously disadvantaged people who are most affected by environmental injustices.

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Oilwatch International

Global Anti-Incineration Alliance

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Having for so long avoided being controlled by the World Bank, are we now being pulled into their structural adjustment trap by Eskom in the pursuit of "power"? Cover design by Barry Downard.





From the Smoke Stack

by groundWork Director, Bobby Peek

At the outset I must make some statement on the 'non-event' that happened on the 24th of December 2009. Government finally, in gazette number 32816, passed the first ever National Ambient Air Quality Standards, something we have been calling for since 1995. Every year government said next year! But what can we do with this new law? Presently, very little, for it is ambient air not emissions out of a stack and it is on very few occasions that one can isolate the polluter to the extent that the evidence will stand up in a court of law. Just ask Sasol. Whenever there is a major pollution incident in Sasolburg they blame the abattoir or some other entity - even the people for burning coal because they do not have energy. So we still have a long way to go. While we welcome this legislation, we must now not sit on our laurels.

In February we witnessed both President Zuma and Minister of Finance Pravin Gordhan make their inaugural State of the Nation and Budget speeches respectively. There is never much meat contained in such speeches and often too much is read into them - just check the thick newspapers the day after.

Many analysts indicate that these speeches are often repetitive in their promises but actually show very little delivery. The reality is that environment was a non-issue in the past, and even less thought was given to environmental justice. So, when one reads statements on water scarcity and emission taxes in these speeches we, as environmental campaigners, welcome them. As environmental justice campaigners, we can even take this a step further for reference is made in these speeches to waste management, health, human settlements and energy. These components are critical in the delivery of environmental justice. Consider people in human settlements – homes and shacks – in the Vaal Triangle having to burn coal in their homes

while industry receives excessive energy, virtually at cost, and wastes this energy just across from people's homes, where there are energy shortages!

Delivering on environmental justice, however, is also about a process of democratic engagement with the people who are most negatively affected by government's promises and policies. So, when you read that 'a new engagement between government, the business sector and organised labour is being forged' to deliver a prosperous nation, you wonder what happened to the 'people of the nation'. This reality of exclusion is most alarming in a post-apartheid South Africa where, except on a very few occasions, decisions are made through consulting those that are most powerful rather than those who are most affected. I am not in any way saying that labour is not much affected. Losing 900 000 jobs in one year is being much affected, but when is labour going to shift out of its comfort zone with government and realise that it is with the people, their families, their neighbours and their comrades that power should be vested to shape a new world.

Cosatu often calls for an industrial strategy that will meet the basic needs of the people, and Minister Gordhan was quick to reference this. It is an environmental justice position that we have been advocating for some time and which states that unless you have a development paradigm that delivers fair remuneration rather than exploitative work, affordable basic services for all and not only for those that can afford them, good nutrition and housing and clean healthy environments, South Africa will continue to grow apart, making us the most unequal society globally. How can we make government accountable for fulfilling their promises?



Excitingly, environmental taxes are spoken of but there is ambiguity in how these taxes will be used. Firstly, it is said for general revenue and then for meeting environmental objectives. Some people might scoff at environmental taxes but those who use more than what is enough to sustain them must pay society and those who use less back, in order that equity is reached. This should happen not through trading but through careful transparent societal checks and balances so the system cannot be abused.

The budget speech also highlighted the inconsistency of government positioning. While climate change is a global concern, Minister Gordhan presents two developments that take us further into the climate change death trap, with a return seemingly no longer possible. The first is that, as Eskom is running out of money, so is Petronet and now the public will have to foot the bill for the greenhouse gas intensive multi-product petroleum pipeline through the neighbourhoods of south Durban to Gauteng. Are we going to foot the bill for PetroSA's new oil refinery at Coega? Eskom's new build programme continues to suck the coffers of government dry and they are set to receive around R282 billion from the public-sector infrastructure programme. Enhancing people's health as a targeted outcome is not going to be gained by continuing to hang onto fossil fuels in the manner in which government is doing so.

You will notice that this newsletter is Eskom heavy. Together with more than 100 organisations in South Africa, Africa and globally, we are calling on the World Bank to not loan South Africa money, for all this will mean is further poverty as we seek to pay back this loan – in dollar denominations – and it would mean further development of coal powered fire stations for cheap electricity to industry. We seek to develop global resistance to this. As I write this, I just got a message from the comrades in NUMSA that they will also call for the scrapping of the loan. I hope this means that there will be stronger ties forged in future between environmental justice campaigners, communities and unions.

As always, the health care waste crisis remains topical. As I write this, the Department of Health and Social Welfare in Gauteng has not paid Phambili for removing health care waste from the hospitals

and, because this waste – which is hazardous waste – removal and disposal has been privatised, these situations are not going to be uncommon in future. Government does not pay – waste rots in hospitals. The saga of the dumping of waste in the Free State continues with the present position being that government is considering giving Wasteman permission to dump their hazardous waste illegally once more in a general landfill site in KwaZulu Natal. Waste is a critical and essential service and must be treated as one. groundWork is calling for a commission of enquiry into this waste debacle.

Finally, as we are dealing with making sense of the key national speeches this week, major corporations Anglo Platinum and Africa Rainbow Minerals have taken Richard Spoor to court for defamation. Richard has been working with community people in Limpopo to keep mining companies from taking their land and to get just and fair compensation for resources communities have and for the land they are forced to give up. How can we attempt to seek meaning from Cape Town and parliamentary speeches when across the country government and corporations continue to do things in the same manner as the past – use the might of the law and brutality against the poor – rather than differently, as our President has asked!

Finally, we do hope that you find our newsletter interesting and, at times, provocative, but we need your assistance to make it even more exciting and to break through more barriers and mindsets. So, please do write to us at team@groundwork.org.za about your views on the work we do and on environmental justice in general. We will seek to print letters that take the environmental justice debate to another level. We would also appreciate it if you could send us photos of environmental injustices that you have experienced or have witnessed. We have a large archive of photos but we recognise that we cannot be everywhere, and your reach as a collective will always be broader than the staff of groundWork's.

We look forward to your letters and photos.

Till next time,

Bobby 



Personal Reflections on Copenhagen

By Siziwe Khanyile

On balance, Siziwe found her time in Copenhagen to be disappointing and very saddening

While I was making preparations to go to my first COP in Copenhagen, my Director told me "every man and his dog will be there!"

Despite this, I went to Copenhagen hoping to be part of history, hoping that an awesome climate deal would be reached and I would be a witness to humanity's resolve to act positively *now* to protect the future of the earth and its peoples. Despite this hope, my expectations were the exact opposite. I was sceptical and did not really believe that doing greater good could trump self-interest on the part of wealthy nations.

The process of obtaining a visa was tedious and in the end my visa was hand delivered to me, at OR Tambo international Airport, just under an hour before boarding for Europe, leaving behind sunny South Africa and heading for a very chilly Copenhagen.

Wearing several hats, including groundWork, FoEI, Oilwatch and Danish Church Aid, I navigated my way through the maze of plenary sessions, strategy meetings, street protests, flash mobs, media interviews, press conferences, a church service, meeting with country (South African) negotiators, civil society gatherings, media training and much more.

All this amidst the cold weather which later turned into snow, initially confusing yet efficient metro and bus schedules, much walking, late nights and early mornings, long queues and a very present security and police force.

Highlights

Some of my highlights during the two weeks were the sheer numbers of people, particularly civil

society from all over Europe. Although the majority were not in the main conference centre they populated the civil society space at Klimaforum and we marched together during the FoEI Copenhagen flood where we demanded climate justice and an end to the offsetting of carbon emissions. This flood consisted of thousands of people, all dressed in blue ponchos, marching through the streets in a visual representation of what the effects of climate change are going to be. Many were arrested and detained on the streets in freezing weather, others were beaten. The police force was well prepared and they clamped down hard.



Participants (including our very own Siziwe at centre left) in the FoEI Copenhagen flood, march down a Copenhagen street.

Photograph by Christoffer Askman, FoEI

The African civil society impromptu protest inside the main conference venue was a highlight. This was a result of a tearful Lumumba Di-Aping, the Sudanese chairman of the G77 plus China, lamenting the unjust direction that the negotiations were taking, ranging from the leaked Danish text, which would effectively release developed countries from their legally binding obligations, to criticising South Africa and other BASIC countries for dividing the developing nations. Lumumba's speech incited



Air Quality

a lot of anger, excitement and hushed plans for a protest. This protest finally took place minutes later inside the main conference venue with much chanting, ululation and singing. There were no arrests. Imagine what the headlines would have been! But the South Africa government did not take his statements lying down and officially called for a retraction, indicating that the situation 'has to be managed'. What a typical power response!

Subsequently, FoEI, supporting African civil society, staged "flash mobs" (quick actions with a clear message) in the middle of the conference centre where we chanted support for African civil society: "We stand with Africa. Don't kill Kyoto targets!" The message was loud and strong. I guess those who heard chose not to listen.

Siziwe Khanyile at the Copenhagen Climate Change meeting



Of interest relating to civil society space was the lockout of FoEI activists during the last two days of the conference. Although a reduced number of badges had been allocated to civil society, even

those were disallowed at this point. As a result, for several hours, FoEI observers sat at the entrance hall cordoned off and surrounded by security staff. Since I did not have a FoEI badge I was able to get into the conference centre and there the treatment given to civil society was no different to being locked out. If you wanted to attend a plenary session you could not just walk in as others could, you had to stand some distance from the plenary venue until a "group" of NGO people had formed and then you would be escorted to the venue by security personnel and instructed as to where you could sit. I soon left and joined my FOEI comrades as we left the Bella Centre.

Eskom and the World Bank

Our Eskom/World Bank report was launched at a press conference inside the Bella Centre. We shared the panel with Earthlife Africa and the Chair of FoEI. This was an opportunity to highlight a 3.75 billion dollar loan from the World Bank to our electricity utility Eskom for the building of two new coal fired power stations and motivate why this was a bad idea, especially at a time when the world is concerned about climate change. The report was well received and subsequently this World Bank loan has generated global interest and resistance.

Thoughts on the outcome of COP 15

On my last day in Copenhagen I watched, with a number of others from civil society, President Obama give his speech from a TV screen at KlimaForum (the civil society meeting space) just before I left for the airport. Throughout the two weeks of conference there was great expectation from several quarters that Obama would come to Copenhagen and help seal a good deal. However, we were disappointed by the outcome. The Copenhagen Accord allowed developed countries to avoid signing on the dotted line for any commitments to curb carbon emissions. It is clear that the tears shed by Ambassador Lumumba foretold that the Kyoto Protocol would indeed be discarded for a toothless accord, courtesy of President Obama and others.

Indeed, "every man and his dog" were in Copenhagen, each pulling on opposite sides, either for a positive binding outcome, or to ensure no outcome at all. ☺



Banking on Climate Destruction

By David Hallowes

Between them, the World Bank and Eskom appear to be oblivious to the known effects of greenhouse gases and the realities of climate change

Fossil's white knight

Eskom and the Treasury have negotiated a US\$ 3.75 billion loan from the World Bank to fund the new build programme. The money isn't in Eskom's pocket yet. The loan still has to pass the World Bank's Board. Justifying the loan, the World Bank argues the need for expanded electricity production following the blackouts and notes the impact of the financial crisis. It says the loan will bring financial stability to Eskom, support future economic growth, contribute to poverty alleviation and help South Africa onto a 'low carbon path'.

The money

The Board will certainly pay close attention to Nersa's decision on Eskom's tariff application due on February 17. The application for a 35% annual hike over the next three years is opposed by everyone outside government, including the ANC, business, labour and community and environmental organisations. Nevertheless, Eskom's request is revised down from 45% and comes with warnings that it will return to Nersa for further increases if it cannot raise more capital.

News of the loan emerged in August 2008 just as the commodity boom turned to bust. Earlier that year, Wall Street credit ratings agencies had put Eskom on 'negative watch'. With credit drying up on the capital markets, Finance Minister Trevor Manuel had already given the utility a R60 billion 'subordinated loan' – effectively a capital injection. But the ratings agencies were looking for a steep

increase in the price of electricity to support funding for the expansion. Eskom applied to Nersa for a 60% hike but was granted 27%. Moody's then downgraded Eskom's credit rating by four notches so raising the cost of capital on international finance markets. News of the loan was fed to the media the next day with the Bank cast as saviour.

This was something of a turn around. South Africa had previously avoided borrowing from the Bank, regarding it, in the Bank's own words, as an "unwelcome suitor".¹ This reflected the Bank's reputation in Africa because of its record of dictating policy to indebted countries. Nevertheless, government took World Bank advice to voluntarily adopt neo-liberal policies precisely on the rationale that doing so was the only way to avoid a debt trap and the consequent dictation of policy. There was, so they say, no alternative.

There is now apparently no alternative to taking the loan. In making it, the Bank required Treasury guarantees. The rating agencies also wanted "unconditional and irrevocable" guarantees before reconsidering Eskom's ratings.² Treasury obliged. Manuel's 2009 Budget provided for R176 billion of loan guarantees for Eskom. The risk was now shifted to the public purse but a cavernous funding gap remained. From the first announcement of the new build in 2004, the five year capital expenditure has risen from R87 billion to R385 billion. The cost of the two big power stations at the centre of the programme – Medupi and Kusile – was put at

¹ World Bank (IBRD, IFC and MIGA), Country Partnership Strategy for the Republic of South Africa for the period 2008 – 2012, December 12, 2007. p.44.

² Terence Creamer, *S&P's scrutinises Eskom guarantee detail before making ratings call*, Engineering News, February 13, 2009.



R160 billion in 2007. It is now estimated at R264 billion and we have not heard the end of the price escalations. The tariff application is calculated to close the gap but it will still be some R40 billion short between now and 2013.³

In February 2009, Bank president Robert Zoellick used the Eskom loan as an example of scaled up assistance to African countries affected by the financial crisis. This was part of the Bank's efforts to reposition itself as the friend-in-need to Southern countries. The Bank, it seems, is having a good crisis. Whether South Africa will do so well is questionable. In taking on the debt, the Treasury is making a double bet: that future economic growth, and the continuous expansion of the energy system, will more than cover repayments; and that the volatile Rand will hold its value. Otherwise the debt becomes a trap as it did for many Southern economies in the 1980s. The odds on the first bet look long. The stupendous sums of money thrown at the world's banks may restore the bubble boom for a while but do not address the causes of an economic depression that is still developing. Further, 'green shoots' are liable to be strangled as oil supplies tighten during this decade. Demand growth will be met by cruel price spikes. The second bet then looks even worse. In the short term, dollar weakness reduces the purchasing power of the loans. In the longer term, debt repayments will escalate if the Rand crashes as it has done repeatedly since 1994.

Alleviating poverty

Cost recovery is integral to the World Bank's view of sustainability. It claims that 'access to modern energy' is critical to its core mission of fighting poverty and best provided by the private sector. Commercial terms are necessary to attract private investment which in turn "sharpens cost-consciousness and enforces payment discipline" according to a Bank paper put out for the World Summit on Sustainable Development and titled 'A

brighter future? Energy in Africa's development'. It gets around the problem of how people without money will pay market rates by ignoring it. Its actual projects have nothing to do with supplying local people but are overwhelmingly about getting the resources out to the global markets.

'Cost reflective pricing' was similarly made a core principle of South Africa's Electricity Pricing Policy. Although the electrification programme connected many millions of people to the grid, many cannot afford the electricity. By 2002, about 10 million people had experienced periodic electricity cut-offs.⁴ New connections now come with pre-paid meters and, in poor areas, local research shows that most people run out of electricity every month.⁵ Eskom proposes that the 50kWh free basic electricity supply to poor households be expanded to 70kWh. This is scarcely adequate but it also misses the point. FBE is means tested and, as successive community representatives testified to Nersa, many who do not qualify will be pushed into poverty by a doubling of their bills if the 35% tariff increase is granted.

The new build, however, has little to do with household demand. It is primarily designed to supply power to large energy intensive industries and mines who consume over 60% of power. Indeed, the 36 members of the Intensive Energy Users Group consume 40%. While the cost to households is relatively high and higher still for poor people on 'pre-paid' systems, the cost to industry is the lowest in the world. The very biggest users are the metal smelters supplied under long term 'power purchase agreements' at cut rates and probably below the cost of production. These customers are altogether exempt from the tariff increase rises. Their rather significant share of the cost of the new build is thus transferred to all other consumers.

Low carbon

Globally, the Bank has claimed a leading position on funding sustainable development and addressing

³ Eskom's figures show it R14.1 billion short in 2011/12 and 7.8 billion short in 2012/13. But this assumes that a private investor will put R20 billion into Kusile. The private sector response to this has been derisive.

⁴ David McDonald, 2002. *The bell tolls for thee: Cost-recovery, cut-offs and the affordability of municipal services in South Africa*. HSRC. Note that the use of pre-paid meters has the consequence of removing people from statistics on cut-offs.

⁵ Jackie Dugard 2008, *Power to the people? A rights based analysis of South Africa's electricity services*, in David McDonald (ed) *Electric Capitalism*, Earthscan.



Eskom's new build

	Technology	Name and location	MWatts
Peaking Plant	OCGT	Ankerlig, Atlantis, Cape Town.	2,080
		Gourikwa, Mossel Bay, Western Cape.	
	Pumped storage	Ingula, Van Reenen, KZN / Free State.	1,352
		Tubatse, Limpopo / Mpumalanga.	1,500
Total	Wind	Sere	100
			5,032
Coal fired base plant	Expansion	Arnot	300
		Camden, Ermelo, Mpumalanga	1,520
		Grootvlei, Balfour, Mpumalanga	1,170
	Return to service of mothballed plant	Komati, Middelburg / Bethal, Mpumalanga	955
		Medupi, Lephalale, Limpopo	4,764
		Kusile, Witbank, Mpumalanga	4,800
	Total		13,509

Source: Eskom CEO Jacob Maroga: Presentation to the Media, 23 January 2009.

Notes: Arnot and Camden were completed in 2009. Sere and Kusile are both delayed for a year. Tubatse is on indefinite hold.

Open Cycle Gas Turbines are actually run on diesel and consume enormous quantities of fuel. Pumped storage dams consume more energy than they generate and rely on off-peak base load.

climate change in particular. Amongst other things, it manages the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and is a key player in developing the global carbon market. This is rather remarkable. In the 1980s, the US instructed the Bank to invest in oil, coal and gas extraction to expand the supply to Northern markets and undermine OPEC's control of prices. It has never let go of this agenda but has, in partnership with big coal and power corporations, promoted the oxymoron of 'clean coal'.

In 2000, it initiated the Extractive Industries Review in response to mounting criticism from civil society organisations that its lending to oil, gas and mining projects contradicted its stated mission of alleviating poverty. The Review came back with the wrong answer. It found that poverty alleviation was neither the goal nor the outcome of the Bank's lending and recommended phasing out funding for oil and coal and focusing on sustainable energy. The Bank ignored it and increased lending. In 2008, on Janet Redman's analysis, "the Bank's funding for



Eskom's sulphur, nitrogen and particulate emissions.

	2008	2004	2000
Sulphur dioxide (tonnes)	1,950,000	1,779,000	1,505,000
Nitrogen oxides (tonnes)	984,000	797,000	674,000
Particulates (tonnes)	50,840	59,170	66,080

Adapted from Eskom Annual Report 2008

oil, gas, and coal projects is up 94 percent ... over 2007, reaching \$3 billion".⁶

The Bank now touts the loan as helping South Africa onto a low carbon growth path. This fits with the Bank's view of sustainable development and with the image it must cultivate to retain its position as the world's leading broker of climate funding. The use to which the loan will be put also fits with the Bank's actual practice which is starkly at odds with the image. There is nothing 'low carbon' about Eskom's new build. It expands generating capacity from 40MW to 59MW by 2018 and is based on carbon intensive coal fired power centred on the two new giant coal fired power stations – Medupi and Kusile. Less than 7% of the loan is slated for a wind farm and the new build will actually increase the proportion of coal fired electricity from 94% to 95%.

South Africa is one of the most carbon intensive economies in the world. CO₂ emissions for 2004 were estimated at 440 million tonnes with Eskom accounting for over 40% of that. In the year to March 2008, Eskom burnt over 125 million tonnes (mt) of coal and emitted 223.6 mt of CO₂ according to its 2008 Annual Report. That excludes its unreported methane emissions estimated to be equivalent to 49,874 of CO₂. Last year Eskom was

talking of coal demand increasing to 374 million tonnes a year by 2018 which would imply about 670 million tonnes of CO₂. That projection assumed that it would build a third new coal fired plant.⁷ It has reluctantly concluded that it cannot afford it but says that the equivalent capacity will have to be built by private Independent Power Producers.

Greenhouse gases aside, Eskom is a major league polluter of local environments. The table above shows that its emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides have also increased in line with production. Only particulate emissions have been in any way mitigated and that only at some plants.

Eskom has not installed sulphur scrubbers on any of its power stations. Medupi was planned without scrubbers on the rationale that there is a "relative lack of pollution" in the Lephalale area as compared with Emalahleni (formerly Witbank) where Kusile is being built.⁸ In fact, ambient SO₂ standards are already being exceeded in the Lephalale area and Eskom's existing Matimba power station is the main source of emissions. Miners and power workers in Marapong village are most directly affected. Nevertheless, in 2007 the Minister of Environmental Affairs granted Eskom permission to go ahead with its plan to build Medupi without scrubbers.

⁶ Janet Redman, *Dirty is the New Clean: A Critique of the World Bank's Strategic Framework for Development and Climate Change*, report for Friends of the Earth, OilChange International, Campagna per la Riforma della Banca Mondiale and Institute for Policy Studies, October 2008. p.2.

⁷ Martin Creamer, *Decision on another new coal power station needed this year – Eskom*, Engineering News, 5 February 2009.

⁸ Eskom CEO Jacob Maroga quoted by Engineering News, July 27, 2007. The comment echoes the notorious internal memo circulated by World Bank official Lawrence Summers, in which he argued that poor countries were under-polluted and "the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest-wage country is impeccable ..."



The World Bank's clean coal agenda comes apart without scrubbers and Eskom has accordingly committed to retrofitting Medupi starting in 2018. That gives Eskom six years unmitigated pollution. There's a catch, however. Scrubbers are water intensive and Lephalale is dry. Water Affairs promises to deliver the water but has not concluded feasibility studies for Medupi's consumption even without the scrubbers. Come 2018, Eskom may well say that installing scrubbers is not feasible.

Supplying the coal for power sector expansion will require 40 new mines. The streams and rivers around Emalahleni are already ruined by acid mine drainage.⁹ Sulphate salts are so thick on the water of the Brugspruit where it flows through the heavily populated township of Maguqa that the stream looks like it has been snowed over. Bringing Eskom's mothballed plants back to service has driven mining development into the Mpumalanga

Lake District where it threatens the source of three major river catchments – the Vaal, the Usuthu and the Komati.

Against the deal

Eskom may assume that a favourable decision by the World Bank Board is a mere formality. But the first news of the loan drew sharp criticism and opposition to it has since grown. It combines several strands in the justice movement: South Africans appalled by the social and environmental costs, Africans who argue that South Africa has already accumulated a 'climate debt' to the rest of the continent and see escalating carbon emissions as a threat to survival, and international and local groups opposed both to the World Bank's fossil agenda and to its use of debt to dictate policy in the South in the interests of global capital. The decision will not pass without a fight. 



A hut without power sits in the path of the pollution from an Eskom power station.

Photograph by Paul Weinburg.

⁹ Mine workings expose mineral rocks to oxygen which reacts with chemical elements in the rocks. Chemical and mineral salts then leach into water which seeps through mine workings. This contaminated water is known as acid mine drainage.



Coalescing against Eskom

By Sunita Dubey

All over the world civil society is banding together to oppose the World Bank loan to Eskom

The opposition to the US \$3.75 billion World Bank loan to Eskom to build a coal burning power plant in South Africa has drawn support not only within the country but from all over the world. Currently more than 65 South African civil society organisations have been joined by 100 groups in Africa and around the world. These include some of the leading community-based organisations, NGOs, citizen groups, social movements, environmental groups, academic institutions and trade unions.

Though the World Bank claims to be deeply involved in climate negotiations and to be at the forefront of the funding of sustainable development and the addressing of climate change, it has approved the Eskom coal power projects under their Development and Climate Change criteria. And some of the reasoning behind this deal is that should it not increase its energy supply, South Africa will face economic losses and thus create hardship for the poor. Many civil society groups and activists in South Africa contend that the electricity generation is mainly for big industrial users and not for people, as South Africa provides the cheapest power in the world to its industries. Eskom, after all, was established in 1923 as a state-owned enterprise to deliver cheap and abundant electricity primarily to mining and industry, which have been the backbone of South African economy.

In a Joint Statement by Multilateral Development Banks at Copenhagen, the World Bank Group President Robert B. Zoellick said: "Climate change is one of the most complex challenges of our young century..... Changes of this magnitude will require substantial additional finance for adaptation and mitigation, and for intensified research to scale up promising approaches and explore bold ideas."

However, there is nothing promising or bold about World Bank funded Eskom's power projects as they are based on carbon intensive coal burning. The two new power plants are slated for completion over the next eight years and will expand generating capacity by nearly 150%. According to the World Bank these mega CO₂ emitters are a down payment for the greener future of South Africa but the irony is that these two new plants, Kusile and Medupi, already under construction, will be the third and fourth largest coal based power plants in the world emitting tonnes of CO₂ - a primary cause of global warming.

On the 18th of February 2010 a panel of three individuals issued a report to the World Bank Group about a proposed loan. Their charge was to determine whether the project fully met the six criteria of the World Bank for financing such dirty energy projects pursuant to the Bank's Development and Climate Change Strategic Framework. Despite this charge, the panel's report failed to provide any analysis of the cost of viable alternatives including environmental externalities and no approach to incorporating environmental externalities in project analysis was developed. In many cases the panel simply accepted Eskom statements without additional examination. Of the criteria actually studied the panel did identify two for which the proposed loan fell short.

We believe that it is clear that the proposed loan does not meet the World Bank's own internal goals of alleviating poverty and mitigating the harmful effects of global warming. The panel's report reinforces civil society concerns and even incorporating some of the panel's recommendations for longer term financial support and assistance to





An Eskom power station looms large on the skyline.

Photograph by Paul Weinberg.

South Africa for clean energy does not change the fact that financing Medupi is completely inconsistent with the World Bank's goals and criteria.

In 2006 IDA approved a grant for technical assistance to Kosovo for assessing the potential development of a new lignite fired power plant, among other things. According to the Project Appraisal Document for the Kosovo project the environmental costs (mostly due to health impacts of local air pollution) were around 0.8 eurocents/kWh for a 600 MW subcritical lignite-based plant, which adds about 20% more to the levelled cost of producing electricity from the lignite plant. The environmental cost analysis was based on a dispersion model from the University of Stuttgart, Germany, along with information from epidemiological studies¹. A recent report by Environmental Defence Fund also supports these findings about the health costs of power plant emissions². Yet, the World Bank has not indicated whether similar studies were conducted for the Medupi plant. If such studies were conducted, the Bank has not released any information about the results of these studies. Given that the Medupi plant is nearly eight times as large as the plant considered in the Kosovo study, it is clear that the cost of air pollution can be significant. Already health related costs due to air pollution in South

African are estimated to be R4 billion annually of the State's expenditure.

People from all over the world are demanding that the World Bank stop funding to Eskom and they are also lobbying with the executive directors representing various countries and regions to vote against the loan when it comes up for vote this month. Even the US government, which holds a 17% share in the bank, has said that the loan does not meet the climate goal and many environmental criteria and has therefore taken a position to abstain during the vote. The groups involved in this issue want the US government to vote "NO" on this loan and for that they are ready to put pressure through their house representatives and senators.

It is time for the World Bank to put its money where its mouth is and to stop funding fossil fuel based projects. The world is today in the midst of an energy transition. The success of this transition is yet to be determined but we now have a good sense of what the challenges are and what our new technologies need to do. The answer does not lie in coal but key questions remain regarding just how willing different players of the world are to move away from fossil fuels and embark on a renewable path. ☺

¹ http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2006/09/25/000160016_20060925112319/Rendered/PDF/35430.pdf

² http://www.edf.org/documents/9553_coal-plants-health-impacts.pdf



Free State Waste Pickers' Summit

By Musa Chamane

Officials in the Free State have stood together for green jobs creation

This was a groundbreaking Provincial Waste Summit geared towards creating responsive awareness and finding solutions for the creation of sustainable jobs within the environmental sector – currently known as “green jobs”.

Waste removal and minimisation by municipalities is of great concern within this second decade of our democratic state. Waste, if not well handled, can lead to very serious negative environmental impacts that can lead to diseases, water contamination and destruction of biodiversity

In this first-ever waste summit for the Free State Province it was recognised that the above cannot be done and be implemented within a vacuum. It needs vision and bold leadership to find solutions that would address the challenges mentioned herein. This is the rationale behind the Free State's Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environment (the Department of Environment) holding the Waste Summit within the Province. The meeting was well organised and the national Deputy Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs addressed delegates on environmental issues including waste. She emphasised the importance of conserving the environment as we have borrowed this planet from future generations.

Free State Waste Pickers Recognised

At the Waste Summit we witnessed a number of stakeholders getting together for the purpose of better waste management and understanding waste as a job creation vehicle. The Free State waste pickers delegation of fifteen members attended the meeting and were given a platform to present themselves. Government showed interest

in what the waste pickers do at different landfills. It is expected that out of this meeting the work waste pickers are doing will be supported by municipalities and by the Department of Environment.

The municipal infrastructure grants were also discussed as one source of funding to support recycling initiatives by municipalities. There was a call that the municipal infrastructure grant for the environmental projects should be called an environmental grant so that it sends a clear message to officials dealing with it that this particular money is set aside for environmental projects. Waste disposal as a service that has to be provided by the municipality competes with other services such as water, electricity and housing and therefore the distinction between these services has to be clear.

Waste Act: 2008 comes with responsibilities

National Environmental Management Act: Waste Act 2008 has come with big applause from provincial officials and local governments in the Free State province. Waste is going to be one of the priority issues for municipalities. Municipal officials have to change with the times because the days of waste collection and disposal are gone. Other options for dealing with waste need to be considered, so long as those options are combustion free. The Summit made it clear that municipalities have to look at other options, such as waste minimisation, re-use, recycling and composting of organic waste, for dealing with waste. Some of the Free State municipalities have engaged in aggressive waste recycling initiatives with an aim of creating jobs for the poor.





Free State waste pickers at the Free State Provincial Waste Summit.
Photo by groundWork.

Integrated Waste Management Plans

The Act will guide provinces and municipalities on how waste should be dealt with. It will also assist municipalities to develop their Integrated Waste Management Plans (IWMP). The challenge still lies with municipalities since the implementation of most legislation occurs at the lowest level. We have heard high profile people talking about green jobs, which create hope for the hopeless. The new legislation comes with many responsibilities for all the spheres of government, especially the provincial and local ones. The Act also compels municipalities to produce IWMPs, which must have their own budgets. Most category C municipalities, which are the poorest, struggle to have enough budget for waste management. Waste is normally the last service that most municipalities look at. Even the officials who are working in waste sections of the municipalities voiced that they are not taken

seriously enough and they feel that since they work on waste they are also considered as waste by the top management. groundWork works closely with all category municipalities and understands that most local municipalities do not have IWMPs which poses a challenge to the waste management sector of those municipalities.

Waste as a Priority for Municipalities

The Act specifically states that hands-on waste management officers must be appointed to help implement the Act. We hope that the waste management officers will make sure that municipalities also take waste seriously. The other challenging factor with regard to the implementation of the Act is that tariffs from waste collection end up supporting other municipal priorities, which poses a serious treat to the management of waste in South Africa as a whole.



National Waste Management Strategy

Currently the national government is in the process of developing a National Waste Management Strategy (NWMS) for the implementation of the Act. The existing IWMP's will be reviewed in the light of the new Act. The IWMPs will be developed in conjunction with Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) by municipalities. The Act will fuel the proper waste management initiatives. There is also a hope that even the indigent or poor citizens will enjoy waste collection services. Previously, waste collection was mainly based on affordability and accessibility. We will hopefully see an increase of waste collection services in this country from the current 45%. The strategy does not prescribe to the municipality on how to implement the Act. The Strategy will be in the form of a framework for provincial and local municipalities. The detailed plans on implementation of the Act will be contained in the IWMPs. The strategy will have targets for waste recycling and waste collection and municipalities need to say how the target will be reached.

Industry Waste Management Plan.

The packaging council of South Africa (PACSA), which is an umbrella body for the whole packaging industry in South Africa, has been asked by the Minister to develop an IWMP. The question is why the PACSA has been ordered to develop a plan. The minister has a right to request any industry to submit their plan. PACSA has started developing the plan; a UK consultant has developed the outline of the document on their behalf. Waste Pickers and PACSA had a chance to engage at the Free State Waste Summit. The intention by PACSA is to involve as many stakeholders as they can. Waste Pickers welcome PACSA's request to work together in developing the plan. There is not much detail about what PACSA wants to do about their packaging material once it has been used. PACSA was asked by waste pickers to develop a draft plan and to send it to them so that they can be in a position to comment.

Green jobs and recovery of the economy

The countries that are serious about their economy have started to create green jobs. There is no better time than a crisis, such as the recent financial crisis, to change thinking. If we do not have recovery

programmes and plans for creating jobs after the huge percentage of jobs lost in the last year, the country will have a social crisis. What is important is how we see the future and how we use the current crisis to begin building a new foundation for the future.

Poor planning is our enemy

Two of the reasons we don't have a clear green recovery programme is poor planning and policy co-ordination. A third is the capacity to implement. Not all the public sector institutions perform to the levels of competence that we would like them to. Since the drafting of the response to the economic crisis a clear green recovery and investment programme has yet to be developed. Elements of a green recovery initiative are being shaped, and already exist, in part, in different departments. Officials normally are there but are not willing to implement policies and plans of the department or of the municipality. The desire to work is not there, the will to say "I want to give all my time to the South Africans pushing for service delivery" is missing.

Conclusion

Government and municipalities have different experiences. Some government departments are more visible than others and the same goes for municipalities. It does not seem as if the municipalities or government departments ever get a chance to share experiences. The issue of skills development is critical as many activities in government, be it at the municipal, provincial or national government level, are done mainly by private consultants. Officials are employed to manage consultants. When will the time come when we will have skilled people working for our government? When will the time come when people will be willing to work? When will we stop political appointments in municipalities – the appointment of people who hardly have tertiary qualifications but serve at the highest level of government and stall service delivery? As South Africans, we are the ones to blame because we elect people who are not capable or willing to do their work. Come on, South Africa, we cannot keep on paying people who are not delivering! ☺



Health Care Waste Crisis? What Crisis?

By Rico Euripidou

Let the truth be told. Recent news of Wasteman and the South African medical waste crisis has prompted calls for a Commission of Enquiry into the current situation regarding health care risk waste

Amid allegations of a rival company setup, mafia style intimidation and the kidnapping of family members, the Free State police unearthed the fifth illegal dump site of highly infectious, untreated medical waste, in an open field near Welkom. This waste has been linked to the Wasteman Group, the waste company which boasts multimillion-rand contracts with more than 150 hospitals and clinics in South Africa¹. Wasteman is owned by Marlow Capital which is not a health care waste company, rather a venture capital company which prides itself in going after 'businesses with strong cash flows, sound growth prospects and compelling value propositions'. Nothing is said about Marlow Capital in the recent scandal.

Previously, the Green Scorpions investigation, which began in November 2009, had (literally) unearthed 300 tonnes of untreated medical waste buried within a brickworks, 20 tonnes of medical waste buried in an unused Harmony Gold mine shaft and a further two illegal dumps, one on a game farm 20km out of Welkom and the other at the town's showgrounds. The owner of the brickworks where the initial 300 tonne dump was discovered was also Wasteman's contracted transporter of medical waste arising from hospitals in Durban to Wasteman's incinerator in Klerksdorp.

The dumped medical waste comprised anatomical waste (amputated legs, arms, placentas and foetuses), pharmaceutical components and general medical waste including used syringes, contaminated gloves and bloodstained material.

Before the dust had settled the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA) president, Vincent Charnley, also Wasteman's chief executive, had stepped down. Meanwhile, Wasteman have the cheek to continue to advertise their environmental ethics on their webpage.

"In recognition of the ethical relationship between human beings and the environment in which we live, we have structured our activities according to the following values:

- **Professionalism** (finding best solutions)
- **Partnership** (based on long-lasting relationships)
- **Team Spirit** (through development of innovation and creativity)
- **Ethics**, also known as the science of human duty, (mutual respect with customers, colleagues and communities)
- **Respect for the environment** (sustainable development")

<http://www.wasteman.co.za/Default.html>

Why this medical waste dumping crisis?

The reason we have this "medical waste dumping crisis" today stems largely from a medical waste crisis that we currently face concerning health care *risk* waste. You will hear, or have previously heard, from various industry and Department of

¹ Wasteman provides health care risk waste services in Kwazulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Gauteng, North West and the Western Cape. Their clients include private hospital groups such as Medicross, Life Healthcare and Netcare.



Waste

Environmental Affairs (DEA) spin doctors that the highly competitive medical waste industry is in the grip of a technological "under capacity crisis" without the necessary means to safely treat South Africa's health care risk waste! Therefore, the medical waste crisis that we currently face in South Africa is widely considered a technical one, regarding the capacity of the State and the private sector to 'safely' dispose of (read incinerate) our medical waste; however, alarmingly, this crisis is not equally recognised as a crisis of inadequate health care waste management policy and governance.

Medical waste comprises general waste, health care risk and anatomical waste, and hazardous waste. Each waste stream is equally problematic and potentially poses a health risk. However, research shows that more than three quarters of what health care facilities discard is similar to what we throw away at home. As with our household waste at home, much of the waste is paper and packaging and most of it never even comes into contact with patients. In fact, infectious waste is even less than the remaining 15% of the medical waste stream and all of it can safely be disposed of by proven disinfection methods other than incineration.

The DEA currently "rigidly" requires elements of health care *risk* waste (HCRW) to be incinerated and herein lies the root of the medical waste crisis. Health care risk waste is defined by them as: "waste capable of producing any disease and includes but is not limited to the following: laboratory waste; pathological waste; isolation waste; genotoxic waste; infectious liquids and waste; sharps waste; chemical waste; and pharmaceutical waste."

From this definition the DEA require that pathological and anatomical waste can only be incinerated and for this reason provinces that don't have incineration capacity have to transport this waste to incinerators in other provinces even though the alternative technologies, such as the autoclaves that they currently use to treat the general medical waste, meet the required international standard of sterilisation for health care risk waste. This construct further necessitates that the private sector in various provinces have sub-contracts in order to treat their waste requiring incineration... and it is in this manner that complex webs of contracts and

subcontracts are spun and is how waste eventually ends up in a ditch located in a brick factory.

In South Africa health care *risk* waste that requires special treatment and disinfection is placed into red bags at source. Nevertheless, health care facilities that use private waste contractors do not have in place segregation at source, recycling, reuse and composting policies and routinely misplace large amounts of their general health care waste (including recyclables) into red "health care *risk* waste" bags which most private waste contractors are happy to burn in incinerators because the more health care *risk* waste they process in their contracts the more money they get!

However, of the 42 000 estimated tonnes of HCRW arising in South Africa per annum the percentage of this fraction that is defined as "pathological and anatomical waste" is estimated at approximately only 5% (2100 tonnes per annum). If it were only this proportion of the waste stream that required incineration then one could safely assume we have an "over capacity" of HCRW incineration in South Africa and that medical waste that does not, in fact, require incineration is needlessly being transported, stockpiled and incinerated at a current risk to the public (considering the poor regulatory and compliance record of the health incineration industry).

Furthermore, most current HCRW incinerators in SA will not meet the provisions of the pending "listed activities and associated minimum emission standards" identified in terms of section 21 of the national environmental management: Air Quality Act, 2004 (Act No. 39 of 2004) and will in fact be shut down if the DEA applies these standards.

We consider a logical approach for the DEA to follow would be to legislate and encourage the phase-in of alternative technologies to treat HCRW.

Critically, we also need legislation on recycling, for in the Indian hospital settings no waste is wasted – even the used dialysis tubing is disinfected with a mild solution of hydrochloric acid, autoclaved and then recycled.

The South African national policy development process for health care *risk* waste management



does not even identify waste other than health care *risk* waste presented in the context of a waste that requires treatment and disposal. No mention is made of recycling and re-use even though the requirement to do so is enshrined with the National Environmental Management: Waste Act.

As I write to complete this report I hear on the news that in Gauteng medical waste companies have refused to collect waste from hospitals because they have not been paid by the Gauteng Department of Health and Social Development. This further highlights our concerns that there is no doubt that the various medical waste role players are using the perceived crisis to push home their own agendas at the expense of the public.

To some extent we are also going to use this crisis to push home our message to the advantage, support and benefit of the community: There needs to be a Commission of Enquiry into this on-going saga that will consider at least:

1. The composition and structure of the health care waste industry, with the aim of understanding how the industry operates, i.e. who has the collection contracts, who has the disposal contracts, which company sub- contracts to which company;

2. The process of how government tenders for the collection, treatment and disposal of health care waste are awarded and monitored;
3. The actual capacity of national, provincial and local authorities to monitor and enforce compliance with legislation managing health care waste;
4. Whether there are cost-effective alternative technologies available that are safer and less polluting than incineration while being just as effective at rendering medical waste harmless and ready for safe disposal;
5. Recommendations for the improved regulation and management of health care waste in South Africa.

Will the MECs of various provinces, or President Zuma, have the foresight to allow such a process to unfold, or will government be too fearful of the outcome of such a enquiry? ☺

The DEA urges the public to report environmental crimes to a 24 hour hotline number on 0800-205-005.



If this picture were in colour we would see the many red bags included in this waste.

We cannot credit the picture as it was given to us by a whistleblower who wishes to remain anonymous.



Should Poisons be in a Farmer's Arsenal?

By Nomcebo Mvelase

groundWork is working with farmers to ensure that the pesticides that they use do not kill more than just pests

After long preparation, starting with invitations and continuing with follow up calls etc, the big day finally came where groundWork pulled together a two-day workshop for farmers from all around South Africa. This workshop was held on the 8th and 9th of December 2009, at Midrand's Ogilvy Conference Centre, in Gauteng.

Most farmers use pesticides for their crop production but very few are aware of the dangers. In addition to the ability to kill a variety of plants and animals such as insects (insecticides), weeds (herbicides), and mould or fungus (fungicides), pesticide exposure is also associated with an increased risk of health complications such as cancer, genetic mutation, decreased fertility, decreased sperm count and even birth defects.

We were honoured to have the dedicated Registrar of Act 36 of 1947, Mr Jonathan Maluta Mudzunga, from the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to give the keynote address and from his presentation we came to understand the fact that pesticides are designed to be toxic and are nevertheless deliberately released into the environment. He stated that, because it is critical to ensure food security and to maintain global competitiveness, it is also imperative to use pesticides in an informed and sound manner.

So, the biggest question is how do we balance the benefits that pesticides confer against any possible adverse effects? Having representatives from different areas, including academia, researchers, medical practitioners and environmental NGOs, sit together with farmers and community people proved to be a suitable forum for the farmers to discuss strategies to broaden the protection of society and to learn and share how they could

move to and adopt safer agricultural strategies to protect health and well-being.

When they were given a platform to discuss why we should or should not move away from pesticides it was quite interesting to hear the different views from the farmers themselves. These were the responses:

"Pesticides are dangerous, they result in water and soil pollution and they are persistent in the environment. Our forefathers were not using chemicals and they were doing well. We should also have experience of farming without pesticides! On the other hand, another group was saying "seeds today are weaker than original ones. To move away from pesticides could take years and that could possibly mean no good income for the farmers".

According to the presenter from the toxicology unit in Stellenbosch, Joy Veale, every year pesticides are implicated in a very large number of accidental poisoning cases, largely in the developing world. In South Africa alone, between 2000 and 2008, 12 364 cases were reported. It is true that South Africa has created some legislation to protect the environment and the health and well-being of people. One piece of Legislation directly linked to agricultural chemicals is the Fertilisers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act, 1947 (Act No. 36 of 1947) which is administered by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. The reality, though, is that there are still many gaps that prevent effective management of pesticides such as too few outreach programs, insufficient enforcement, lack of scientific monitoring of the impacts of pesticides on human health and the environment and, in some cases, there is a lack of implementation of prevention or precautionary



measures which results in people being exposed to unsafe use of pesticides.

Some of the people working on farms complained about the fact that they suffer from time to time acute illnesses like throat, eyes and skin irritations, headaches, dizziness and sometimes even respiratory related illnesses. Some of these are women and they have had problems with falling pregnant. All these symptoms are related to pesticide exposure. In some instances these workers have used pesticides without even being given protective clothing. It goes to prove that for some people the labour law and the Occupational Health and Safety Act still carry no meaning. They do not know about their rights and therefore cannot do much to advocate for safer working conditions.

What was even more interesting on the second day was to get a live testimony from a young but very successful organic farmer, Tshediso Phahlane, who articulated the fact that as a farmer he understands that his role goes far beyond farming itself and that he is also responsible for the environment. He is doing well on his farm and has employed about 100 people. He also gives back to the community. He mentioned that they had a project where they bought shoes for school kids and have educated more than 800 learners from different schools about organic farming and the impacts of global warming. This was so motivating and it sounded so real, especially because it came directly from a farmer and slowly there was a mind shift and a lively interest in learning more and hearing more from this farmer. It is just that simple: if one person who is seriously committed can be so successful, then everybody else can be! All it takes is commitment and motivation to make a change.

As a follow up to this process groundWork has decided to plan a further event with the same farmers to strategise and map a way to move to the next step for change. We are planning to do this in partnership with other NGOs such as Women on Farms, BioWatch and the Endangered WildLife Trust. ☺

Resolution that was taken on the 9th of December, 2009:

On the 8th and 9th of December 2009 we, the small scale subsistence farmers, farm labourers on large agricultural land, organic farmers, as well as community people and non-government organisations working with communities on pesticide pollution and its impact on health, have met to better inform ourselves of the dangers of pesticides in the workplace and society in general and the challenges we face as we attempt to move away from pesticides in agriculture and society in general to less harmful processes of managing of natural pests.

We have heard from technical people working on toxicology, medical health community practitioners, community based farmers, labourers on large commercial farms, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Department of Water and Environmental Affairs and non-governmental organisations.

We have heard about the impact - such as cancers, impaired nervous system, reproductive problems, endocrine system and even immune system impairment - of pesticides on one's health and well-being as well as their impact on nature.

We believe that meeting the challenge facing us in eliminating the use of pesticides that are harmful to one's health and well-being needs an inclusive and democratic process, managed by the relevant government departments including the Departments of Health, Environment, Labour and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

We call upon government to:

- Review and update legislation relevant to pesticides in order that society can be adequately protected from the improper use and dangers of pesticides;
- Develop adequate enforcement in order that, where there is improper use and illegal use of pesticides, people are held accountable for the danger they have exposed society too;
- Continue with the 'review of pesticide products' as a matter of urgency and we commend this action. We believe that such a



process needs to collect and record data on the import, export, manufacture, formulation, quality, quantity and use of pesticide in order to assess the extent of any possible effects on human health;

- Develop information systems that will efficiently and effectively collect reliable data and maintain statistics on health aspects of pesticides and pesticide poisoning incidents;
- Develop health surveillance programs on those who are occupationally exposed to pesticides including investigation and documentation of poisoning cases, provide guidance and instruction to health workers, physicians and hospital staff on the treatment of suspected pesticide poisoning, and establish national or regional poisoning information and control centres;
- Establish training in alternative and organic ecological agricultural practices, including non-chemical alternatives that have been effectively practised in Cuba after they were forced to do without pesticides when their crude oil and chemical supply from the previous USSR was turned off as a result of the end of the Cold War;
- Give appropriate priority to pest and pesticide management in national sustainable development strategies and poverty reduction papers to enable access to relevant technical and financial assistance, including appropriate technology for the transition away from pesticides as we know them;
- Hold industry and users of pesticides accountable for the health and nature impacts of the use of banned pesticides or pesticides that have a contentious record and have been linked with impact on society;
- Hold farmers and industry accountable for worker health and safety and for the improper use and application of pesticides.

All of the above actions must happen in a transparent and democratic manner that ensures that those most affected have a rightful say in them.

We call upon industry to:

- Stop placing society at risk for increased profit by putting onto the market pesticides and associated products that have not gone through a democratic and public assessment and review process on their safety in the construction of the pesticide, the use of the pesticide and the eventual life in society of the pesticide;
- To stop lobbying our government officials and politicians to allow for pesticides to be used that are clearly detrimental to one's health and to nature, and especially to stop placing pressure to allow the use of pesticides that are banned elsewhere globally for health or precautionary reasons.

We, as participants in this workshop, commit ourselves to:

- Working with government, unions and with the community to increase pressure on government to protect society from pesticides;
- Better understanding how our health is impacted upon by pesticides and to increase awareness in order that people and labourers understand the dangers of pesticides and thereby to pressure government to act in the interest of society. Pesticide poisoning needs to be made a notifiable case and poison centres must be expanded. Pesticide containers must be marked to warn people of dangers as is the case with the tobacco industry.
- Working with government, community people and unions to develop mechanisms and 'tools' for better enforcement and monitoring in order that society is protected against pesticide abuse and those responsible are held accountable. We believe DOH, DAFF, DWEA are responsible. The Green Scorpions must act on new, stricter laws that must be developed;
- Ensuring that Government develops platforms of participation when developing new policies or reviewing old policies;
- Building awareness of the dangers of pesticides on society in general and within the workforce in particular.



Support Appropriation from Below

By Richard Pithouse

For so long as Eskom continues to abuse the electricity utility for private profit, civil society should support the appropriate appropriation of electricity by the poor

The fiasco at Eskom has been oscillating between tragedy and farce at such a rate that it's become difficult to tell them apart. No one in their right mind is likely to disagree that Eskom, an institution that should serve the public good, has been captured by an avaricious elite and turned into a *vampiric* excrescence on our society. In the wake of Jacob Maroga's incredible demand for an R85 million golden handshake even parliament has felt the need to pressurise the cabinet to end the 'looting' at parastatals.

But whatever steps are taken to address the fiasco it seems clear enough that much of the price for the extravagant folly at Megawatt Park will be paid by ordinary people. And ordinary people will, of course, have no say in how the deal goes down.

The National Energy Regulator of SA (Nersa) public hearings into tariff increases were, as mandated public participation exercises usually are in South Africa, entirely closed to any meaningful public engagement. At the Midrand hearings representatives from Earthlife and the Anti-Privatisation Forum were locked out of the venue by security guards and then assaulted and arrested by the police. The charges of public violence were dropped the next day in what has become a standard practice across the country in which the state misuses the power of arrest as an instant punishment for taking democracy seriously.

Already there are many people who have a legal electricity connection but have to get up at four in the morning to chop wood to heat water and cook food because they just can't afford to pay for electricity along with school fees, transport, medical costs and all the rest. Under these conditions unlawful reconnections are a popular strategy to sustain access to electricity. The practice is ubiquitous, but the Soweto Electricity Crisis

Committee (SECC) first organised it and give it a public political expression.

Shack dwellers, many of whom have not been connected to the grid by the state, also appropriate electricity. This is not at all unique to South Africa. On the contrary, it is one of the universal features of shack life linking up Lagos, Istanbul, Bombay, Rio and Johannesburg as nodes in a decidedly international mode of urban life.

Neither Eskom's 'izinyoka' campaign that tried to present the people who install self organised electricity connections as snakes or the often violent raids of police and the private security companies contracted to municipalities have had any success in teaching people to accept that they do not deserve to have electricity. The police raids often extend beyond ripping out self organised electricity connections and it's not unusual for them to include the confiscation of all electrical appliances, with DVD players seeming to be most at risk, on the grounds that they must be stolen.

But as the police disconnect, people reconnect and as the police steal people's equipment they replace it. In some cases the police go through periods of disconnecting daily and so people disconnect themselves every morning and reconnect themselves every evening.

When middle class residents inform on their poor neighbours it has become common for shack dwellers to respond to police raids by disconnecting their middle class neighbours en masse – usually at suppertime. Sometimes an explanatory note is left at the electricity box. Once this has been done three or four times an understanding is usually reached to live and let live.



The reality is that the attempt to stop unlawful connections has about as much chance of success as influx control had in the 1980s or, for that matter, as attempts to stop middle class people sharing music and software.

In some cases self-organised connections are arranged in a haphazard and individualised way and, while some people are careful to use and to bury properly insulated wire, others are not. There are real risks when open wires are left dangling in dense settlements and people have been killed. But people are also killed in shack fires and when connections are arranged in a carefully organised and safe way by a well organised community organisation or social movement they can be done very safely and keep whole communities safe from fire.

Following the pioneering struggle of the SECC, popular organisations and movements around the country refer to the work of organising the appropriation of electricity collectively, safely and without profit as 'Operation Khanyisa'.

It is not unusual for the media to respond to self-organised electricity connections with a sometimes racialised hostility and paranoia bordering on hysteria. Following propagandistic statements from the police and politicians, cable theft and self-organised electricity connections are routinely conflated even though it is quite obvious that these are two entirely different practices organised by different people for different purposes.

Deaths from shack fires are routinely ascribed to drunkenness rather than an absence of electricity, but when connections are made recklessly, this is seized upon to delegitimise all self organised connections - including those undertaken with exemplary care. It is regularly asserted, as if it were a fact, that all self organised connections are made for payment. And, predictably, when Eskom's executive looting, poor planning and massive subsidies to smelters leads to load shedding some newspapers are quick to blame 'theft' by the poor for the crisis.

A life without electricity is one in which shack fires are a constant threat, cell phones can't be charged and basic daily tasks become time consuming, repetitive and dangerous. It also leaves people feeling

structurally excluded from access to a modern life. There is no doubt that a critical mass of people are not willing to accept that they should be consigned to systemic exclusion and that they see the activity of appropriating electricity as a fundamentally necessary, decent and social activity.

The social definition of theft is something that changes over time and that is understood differently from different perspectives. In the words of a famous old English poem

*"The law locks up the man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the common
But leaves the greater villain loose
Who steals the common from off the goose."*

Who is really at fault when the boss of a public utility has entirely fatuous personal expenses that run into the millions and some of the 'snakes' who have connected themselves up to the wires that carry the means of access to heat and light past them have nothing more than a couple of slices of white bread and a cup of sweet tea to cook up for supper?

In its original sense privatisation was about the process of social exclusion via private appropriation rather than the question of whether or not an institution was owned by the state or private power. In contemporary South Africa, state ownership of key organisations is producing a degree of social exclusion and private enrichment every bit as perverse as that produced by private ownership. It makes perfect sense to hold Eskom and MTN in the same contempt.

As exclusion deepens in the wake of the Eskom crisis, people will respond with increasing popular appropriation.

For as long as Eskom continues to see public utilities as an opportunity for private profit, and electricity as a commodity for private consumption rather than a common good, civil society should invoke the tradition of civil disobedience and support communities and popular movements to resist state repression while they organise to appropriate electricity on a non-commodified, safe and carefully disciplined basis.

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Greenfly

2009 was advertised as the year of 'Yes we can'. And they certainly could with something between \$2 and \$14 trillion for the banks. That's a wide spread but, when you get to twelve or more zeroes, the counting gets a bit fuzzy. Which is a good thing for the presidents of countries and banks who are concerned with appearances. And it's a good thing for the folk in the street who should not know more than is good for presidents.

Banks aside, it was more like the year of 'Like hell we will'. Copenhagen confirmed the inconvenience of having to look like you are talking about the climate when you are actually talking about the money. In the end, they could barely pretend to pretend. So Hilary Clinton held up a bag and said '\$100 billion'. Everybody knows the bag is empty ... but hey, it is a Gucci. And there was a photo op with Obama's Cheshire smile.

The Chinese negotiator summed it up. Everyone should be happy. They preserved their bottom lines. And happy everyone was. For everyone preserved their interest in global capital from the appalling prospect of an effective global climate agreement. Everyone that matters. Not the disappearing island states, not the African peasants on whose behalf suicide was committed, not the rabble on the streets of Copenhagen. Taking climate seriously is just not the way to be taken seriously.

South Africa is most serious. Nicolas Sarkozy and Jacob Zuma had a chat about the real meaning of technology and financial transfer mandated by the climate convention. Nukes. South Africa wants them but can't afford them. France wants South Africa to have them from France. That's serious. Carbon emissions from the nuke supply chain and 5,000 centuries of calamitous radioactive pollution are not.

And coal is still the business. Back home, the World Bank was doing a deal with Eskom to stoke up the coal fires. Washington says it really shouldn't do that in the South. Subsidies to diggers and drillers is more properly a Northern thing. But for pesky activists getting in the way of 130 projects the US would now be enjoying the biggest coal boom in decades.

Southern reps to the Bank cried foul. Washington was dictating to the South. Merry King Coal, they said, leads the dance for industrialisation, economic growth and poverty alleviation. And poverty is certainly alleviated – by the industrial bucket load – if you're in line for a contract or two. Never mind the peasants. Think Eskom. The ANC's Chancellor House investment does very nicely from the boiler contracts, the biggest industrial consumers, starting with BHP Billiton's aluminium smelters, get the cheapest power in the world, and everyone else gets a doubling of tariffs to cover the large share that Billiton won't pay for.

Dictating to the South is what Washington does in the imperial board room. So what are the Southern reps doing at the bottom end of the table? In Washington's export oriented world, those not-so-shiny new Southern industries are under Northern corporate orders to produce stuff on the cheap for the North. Which means coal, foul water, brown haze and lousy wages. And you can follow the whiff of profit through the Southern corridors and all the way back to capital's scented halls on Wall Street. Could it be that Washington got the Southern reaction it wanted? Another set piece in the mimed conflict that secures the common interest in avoiding avoiding catastrophic climate change. ☺



In Brief

The Chinese take to protest

In Foshan municipality in southern China about 400 protesters, who had been mobilised by phone and over the internet, turned up in surgical masks to persuade local authorities to scrap the proposed construction of a sludge incinerator. Under the watchful eye of a large number of police officers, the protesters chanted "Defend our homeland, oppose pollution!" Residents in the south of China have become increasingly assertive in their opposition to high-pollution projects. Their opposition to a waste incinerator in the Panyu district resulted in the authorities putting off the project. After nearly three decades of break-neck development the area is experiencing serious environmental degradation but in recent years environmental activism has grown as the city's flourishing middle class pursues a better quality of life.

Dissident shareholders question Shell

While Shell insists that exploitation of "unconventional" hydrocarbon sources such as tar sands is justified in order to make sure that the world does not run out of oil, dissident shareholders have forced a resolution onto Shell's May AGM agenda that calls for the Anglo-Dutch group's audit committee to undertake a special review of the risks attached to the carbon-heavy oil production from tar sands at Athabasca in Alberta, Canada.

Shell disputes the extent of the pollution but does say that it will use carbon capture and storage techniques to mitigate negative impacts. Shell has played down the significance of the shareholder rebellion and pointed out that this unconventional source represents less than 2.5% of the total oil and gas production.

"The resolution is basically a request for further information around the economics and other aspects of our oil sands operations. The resolution is submitted by shareholders representing some 0.15% of our total outstanding shares," Shell said in a formal response.

Catherine Howarth, chief executive of FairPensions which has coordinated the shareholder opposition sees things differently. Describing the move as historic she added, "All (shareholders) are united in registering concern with the risks involved in Canadian oil sands. We expect that Shell's 2010 AGM could prove a watershed in the history of corporate accountability."

Africa on the auction block

The spectre of a new era of agricultural colonialism has been raised by the fact that millions of acres of fertile farmland in the developing world have been sold or leased to outside powers eager to secure alternatives that will ensure their own future food supplies and biofuels. The Gulf states, India, South Korea and other countries have bought enormous tracts of land in countries like Madagascar, Mozambique, Sudan and Ethiopia, some of the poorest, hungriest and most politically unstable nations in sub-Saharan Africa.

The International Food Policy Research Institute, a Washington, D.C. based think tank, estimates that as much as 50 million acres, an area equal to all the farmland in France, has been sold to foreign purchasers since 2006. Although the land is sometimes leased instead of purchased, the leases are very long, being between 50 and 99 years. While some of the deals are struck directly between governments, the majority also involve private companies. Private investment funds are also being lured by the prospect of being able to raise increasingly valuable crops on relatively cheap land with cheap labour.

[\(<http://oneearth.org/article/africa-on-the-auction-block>\)](http://oneearth.org/article/africa-on-the-auction-block)



Public Eye on Davos

As always, the world's powerful gathered in the snow-covered alps around warm fireplaces in Davos, Switzerland, in January this year for the annual World Economic Forum. Alongside this the "Public Eye on Davos" gathered to expose corporate malpractice. "The Public Eye on Davos" is hosted by the Berne Declaration and Greenpeace. groundWork, together with the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance, nominated ArcelorMittal for a Public Eye Peoples Award, for them having refused to release environmental information to those affected, for having polluted people's lands in the Vaal Triangle, for having failed to take the necessary action to clean up people's lands and for having delayed the creation of stronger environmental regulations on air quality. Sadly, ArcelorMittal did not make it onto the podium. Instead, it was The Royal Bank of Canada who walked off with the prize for its financing of dirty oil from the Canadian Tar sands. Oil extraction from tar sands generates three times the CO₂ emissions as conventionally-extracted oil and the process pollutes local lands and water ways and depends on cheap labour from developing countries. Nevertheless, ArcelorMittal is now aware that we are going to use whatever opportunity we have to apply pressure on them to clean up and to ensure that they tell the public the full truth about their pollution.

Human Rights officials are turned away

When Human Rights Commission officials tried to visit P.E. Harbour to investigate complaints about the manganes ore dump and fuel tank farm, they were denied entry by officials. The Provincial Manager of the Commission and two assistants had apparently initially been given permission to visit the site. They did, however, meet with the DA MP who is representing the affected beachfront community and have vowed that the commission will do all that they can to find a solution to the matter.

ICSID Dispute launched against Mexico by Spanish firms.

Abengoa S.A. and COFIDES S.A., Spanish firms that built a toxic waste disposal plant in the Zimpán Municipality in Mexico, have launched a claim with the ICSID because of the stalled opening of the site.

On April 11, 2009, the facility began receiving waste trucks which arrived under federal military escort but local citizens, united under the group Todos Somos Zimpán (We are all Zimpán), managed to turn back at least one of the trucks. Some days later the protests resulted in the withdrawal of the project's licence by the municipal council which said that there had been irregularities in the granting of the permit by the previous mayor.

On September 3, 2009, after federal government officials announced that the plant would open with or without municipal authorisation, the facility was again scheduled to receive toxic waste trucks, again under military escort. The company, apparently due to public pressure, did not proceed with the plant's reopening but held, instead, a meeting between federeal, state and municipal officials in a further attempt to resolve the dispute. There are conflicting reports about the outcome of this meeting.

Dr Ojeda, a lawyer and leading member of Todos Somos Zimpán, explained that his group opposed the facility because the regulations governing the placing of such facilities had suddenly changed just before the licence had been issued, the transportation of toxic waste occurs contrary to Mexican law and there are indigenous communities and many fresh water springs within 5km of the site.

The company, however, says that the facility is safe and without risks - indeed they claim that the true danger lies in the waste not being properly disposed of within the facility.



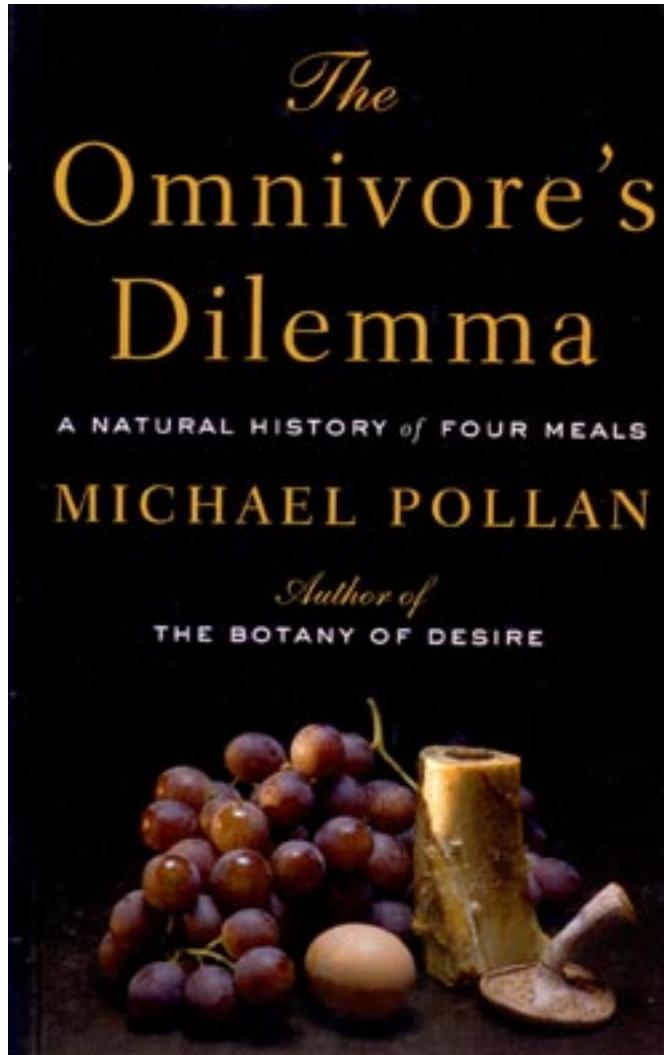
Highly Recommended Reading

By replacing the energy of the sun with energy from fossil fuels, industrial agriculture has made food impressively cheap and abundant. But this achievement has come at a cost. Today, our food system is implicated in three of the most critical problems facing our society: the energy crisis, the climate crisis, and the health care crisis. None of these problems can be addressed without reforming the way America, and those of us who have adopted the so called 'Western diet' eats

What should we have for dinner? The question has confronted us since man discovered fire, but according to author Michael Pollan how we answer it today may well determine our very survival as a species. What's at stake in our eating choices is not only our own and our children's health, but the health of the environment that sustains life on earth.

In this ground-breaking book Michael Pollan follows each of the food chains that sustain us - industrial food, organic or alternative food, and food we forage ourselves - from the source to a final meal, and in

the process develops a definitive account of the American or 'Western' way of eating. His absorbing narrative takes us from Iowa cornfields to food-science laboratories, from feedlots and fast-food restaurants to organic farms and hunting grounds, always emphasising our dynamic co-evolutionary relationship with the handful of plant and animal species we depend on. Each time Pollan sits down to a meal, he deploys his unique blend of personal and investigative journalism to trace the origins of everything consumed, revealing what we unwittingly ingest and explaining how our taste for particular foods and flavors reflects our evolutionary inheritance.



The surprising answers Pollan offers to the simple question posed by this book have profound economic, political, psychological, and even moral implications for all of us. Beautifully written and thrillingly argued, *Omnivore's Dilemma* promises to change the way we think about the politics and pleasure of eating. For anyone who reads it, dinner will never again look, or taste, quite the same.