Environmental Injustice in Northfield: an ENTS 110 project

Dear Members of the Northfield City Council:

We are two sophomores at Carleton College, and as part of a final project for an Environmental and Technology Studies class, we investigated the possibility of the existence of environmental injustice in Northfield. Our study focused on the trailer home communities off Highway 3, which are predominantly made up of Mexican immigrants.

For purposes of our study, we defined environmental justice as equal rights under the law regarding environmental decision-making by the government and industries without discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or class. This includes the consistent application of environmental regulations to the entire community, that certain communities do not receive direct benefits from industrial production while the costs are sent elsewhere, and finally that environmental decisions reflect the goal for equality regarding race and class.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether environmental injustice exists in Northfield and, if found, to document it and propose possible solutions to the problem.

To determine if environmental injustice existed in Northfield we:

[1] Visited a frequent food chain store, Petricka’s, where we were bound to find Northfielders of all types of backgrounds. We conducted a series of informal question-and-answer conversations with various people about their feelings about Northfield, their particular neighborhoods, and other neighborhoods in Northfield. We then asked them about their feelings on environmental issues in those three aspects. By these informal conversations, we gained a better idea of what areas to look into in order to determine if environmental injustice existed in Northfield: waste disposal, water quality, and placement of low-income housing.

[2] We conducted formal investigative interviews with residents of the trailer home communities (Las Floreillas and Viking Terrace), the owners of Mexican businesses in town (Las Delicias and the Mexican store at Second Street and Highway 3), and a Carleton faculty member who resided in town (Gary Wilson ’00, full-time fifth-year ENTS intern).

More for information, go to http://www.cooltheplanet.org

Organic Food in Marriott

What is organic? What is Biodynamics? What is Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)? The further I explore these things, the more complexity I find. What started out as a meal, or part of a meal to celebrate Earth Day 2000, has turned into something potentially much bigger.

The organic meal that Sodexo Marriott put on in conjunction with Earth Day back in April was very well received. It is my desire to have more organic meals in the future, and to further the organic offerings on a daily basis here at Carleton College. Much thought and emphasis is being placed on the vegetarian and vegan formats that will be in the new dining facility. Initially, my goal is to be able to offer these formats using organic foods. Unfortunately, there are some obstacles - the biggest of which is the added cost of the organic produce. The produce that was purchased for the Earth Day meal was roughly twice as much as the normal produce that we buy. Some other issues include the availability of organic products in large enough quantities and the safety of organic produce.

As traditional farms are forced to close due to modern efficiencies, and consumer interest in organic and biodynamic farming grows, I believe that organic foods in some form will be represented at Carleton College in the near future.

ENTS Personnel in 2000-2001

Dale Jamieson, currently director of ENTS, will be on leave next year. He will be a Laurence Rockefeller Fellow in the Human Values Center and a Fellow in Ethics and Public Policy at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. He will be teaching a seminar for Ph.D. students at the Wilson School on research ethics in the social sciences. He will also be completing his book, tentatively entitled, “Philosophy Down to Earth: Science, Values, and Global Environmental Change.”

Next year, Norm Vig from Political Science will direct the ENTS program. Max Wilson ’00 will be the full-time fifth-year ENTS intern. Sarah Montag ’01 will be the Student Departmental Advisor.
ENTNS IS ON-LINE WITH STYLE

Rachel Smit

The new ENTS website is up and ready for you to peruse. Many thanks to Ellen Carvill '00 who helped me finish this project before the end of the year. As with most sites, it is a work in progress, so check it out and let me know your ideas for improvements and links.

Many student projects, both curricular and otherwise, are now on-line. A long-term goal will be to create an on-line, searchable database of projects. This will help students to expand on prior projects. Ultimately, such a database would be a resource to both the College and the Northfield community, for both academic work and advocacy.

Watch Out World: Here They Come

Say good-bye to these ENTS concentrators before you leave campus. From the Society, Values and Policy Track: Sarah King, Economics; Nina Berglund, Geology; Katie Elderkin, International Relations; Daniel Hiser, Political Science. From the Environmental Science Track: Ann Isaksen, Biology; Shona Mookerjee, Biology; Heather Ristow, Biology; Joanna Reuter, Geology; Sarah Mittlefeldt, Social Ecology. From the Natural History Track: Rich Higgins, American Studies; Stacy Meyer, American Studies; Max Wilson, Philosophy; Caitlin Daum, Religion.

Keep in touch, matriculating folk. If you ever get nostalgic for your fellow ENTS alumni and wonder what they are doing with themselves, subscribe to the ENTS Alum email list at http://lists.carleton.edu/mailman/listinfo/ents-alumni. You will not be deluged with email like you were this year, I promise.

– Rachel Smit

Environmental Advisory Committee Gets Off the Ground

-Rachel Smit

The new Environmental Advisory Committee, which advises the Vice-President of the College on matters of environmental quality, has met three times this term. Committee membership consists of staff/administration, students, and faculty. The current staff on the committee are all from Facilities, Management, and Planning: Richard Strong (Project Manager), Dennis Easley (Superintendent of Grounds), and Wayne Beierman (Engineering Supervisor). The students on the committee are: Laila Parker '01, Ani Kameenui '01 (liaison to CSA Senate), and Laura Hmelo '02. Faculty members of the committee are: Dale Jamieson, Phil Camill, and Norm Vig. Jamieson will be on leave next year, and a new faculty member will take his place. The secretary of the committee is the ENTS fifth-year intern, Rachel Smit '99. Smit will be replaced by Max Wilson '00 next year.

The Committee has already tackled a number of issues ranging from energy-efficiency to light pollution from the new Rec Center. At their second meeting, the committee drafted a resolution that recommended the College buy EnergyStar refrigerators for the new student housing. Beierman was able to find EnergyStar refrigerators within a reasonable price range, and they have already been ordered.

During the summer, the committee will communicate via email about developing an environmental mission statement for the College. Summaries of meeting minutes will soon be posted on the EAC web page, which will be linked to both the Facilities, Management, and Planning site, and the Environmental and Technology Studies site. If you have any environmental concerns that the EAC should discuss in the fall, please contact one of the committee’s co-chairs, either Richard Strong (rstrong@acs.carleton.edu) or Laila Parker (parkerl@carleton.edu) -Rachel Smit

Green Network Wrap-Up

Update on Carleton’s Endowment and Socially Responsible Investing

Ani Kameenui ’01 and Zach Katz ’00 recently met with the chair of the Board of Trustees Investment Committee, when the trustees were on campus earlier this spring. During winter term, Kameenui, Katz, and Jean Dixon ’00 had presented a proposal to two member of the Investment Committee that outlined some rationale for socially responsible investing, a list of investors that screen companies, and a proposal to take a small portion of the endowment and earmark it for green, socially responsible investing.

In this most recent meeting, the trustees told Kameenui and Katz that they appreciated the proposal, but thought that an even better strategy would be to examine all investments. For example, the Trustees should ask all their investors to include lines in their reports on companies’ practices with respect to environmental and social responsibility. Of course, this does not mean that they will divest from all irresponsible companies, but it does mean that it may become a factor in decision-making. Kameenui will be continuing contact with the Investment Committee next year.

Reusable Mugs in Snack Bar and Libe

Hannah Chapin ’03 and Max Wilson ’00 have been working with Sam Demas, Librarian, and Sodexho-Marriot management to discuss ways to encourage the use of reusable mugs over disposable mugs in the snack bar. Demas says that the disposable cups are discarded in the library trashcans, attracting insects that damage the books. This effort will continue into the fall. If you have any ideas, or if you would like to work on this issue during the summer, contact any of the people listed above.

Other on-going projects (contacts on website):

Composting, Green Buildings, Reducing Paper Use, Carleton Organic Garden

The Green Bean has been edited by Rachel Smit, for better or for worse. It’s been fun. Wish Max luck next year as he battles the computer.