

'Harvest Moonshine' taking you for a ride

A critique of the 'rainforest harvest' - its theory and practice BY STEPHEN CORRY

...and believe this of me: there can be no kernel in this light nut; the soul of this man is his clothes; trust him not in matter of heavy consequence...

Shakespeare - All's well that ends well II.v

Some say that the "harvesting" of rainforest products and their marketing on an international level can save the forests and their inhabitants. Others, including the author of this article, believe this is at best a money-making gimmick and at worst a harmful idea which could have exactly the opposite effects and lead to more destruction. Focussing on the predicament of tribal peoples, the author argues that it is vital for their future that the "harvest" ideology is rejected and that support for them is channelled, not into purchasing power for forest products, but into a worldwide outcry demanding respect for their rights. These beliefs have been attacked by the companies promoting the "harvest"¹ and the debate has become a very serious difference of opinion, the eventual outcome of which could shape the way rainforests and tribal peoples' issues are seen by the general public for years to come.

Five hundred years ago, when Columbus sailed the ocean blue, he was seeking new ways to trade, or at least a new artery to trade along. And he found what he was looking for; it was not China of course, but it was a new trade route which led to immense profits and the birth of major world empires. Columbus was a man of vision seeking wealth. When selling his audacious idea to his Spanish backers, he argued that it would be enormously beneficial to the "civilised" world - Spain. He was right. Half a millennium later, Spanish is second only to English as the world's most spoken European language. Of course everyone knows the

consequences for the indigenous peoples of the Americas.

The parallels with today's situation should not be exaggerated but they are nonetheless there. Trade remains supremely motivating and the importance it has acquired is not only economic. It is invested with powerful symbolic values, linking it to concepts of prosperity, security and even freedom. Trade (or the rules of trade - which is the same thing) recently brought violence onto the streets of Paris - a quarter century after the riots which toppled de Gaulle. Demonstrations which were held this time not by radical students externalising their youthful rebellion and their new found

political philosophy, but by farmers directing their ire at the US government's attempts to secure the profits of American companies.

With the demise of the Soviet empire, the US must rely increasingly on trade to maintain its position as the world's most powerful country.² Together with its devotional attitude to the "market", and by no means unrelated to it, goes the fundamentalism of much of the American establishment's political and religious thinking; in this the USA is perceived, often literally, as God's chosen land. In the richest country in the world these allied and closely linked philosophies make for a potent stew indeed.

NOTES

1 See Cockburn; Roddick G.; Solo & Friedman.

2 "In the wake of the Gulf War... the Bush Administration announced the establishment of the 'Enterprise for the Americas' scheme... Columbus bore the banners of a world order about to subordinate Latin America; Bush's initiative for the 1990s sets out to impose a uniform subjection to the priorities of a world market... Bush correctly saw in the irascible and greedy Genoese trader an ancestor to his own project" Gonzalez.

Combine Harvesters

Cultural Survival Inc. and the Body Shop

THERE ARE DOZENS of companies involved in the "harvest". But the principal proponent is the US organisation, Cultural Survival Inc. (CS) which is supported by the US government (strictly speaking it is that part of CS called Cultural Survival Enterprises but as this is the biggest part of CS in terms of turnover and staff [Cultural Survival 1991], I have used CS in this article for simplicity). Although CS defines itself grandly as, "The international advocate for the human rights of indigenous peoples" (Cultural Survival 1992b), it has in fact become largely a trading organisation. It supplies products to a wide range of groups including several so-called "Fortune 500" companies - the biggest corporations in the US.

Progress?

Even before it invented the "harvest" it saw its role as, "Both advocates for indigenous peoples and economic progress" (Wilck). It now makes the grandiose and paternalistic claim that, "In... using the marketplace to transform it, (CS) will strengthen indigenous groups by creating a niche for them in the world economy" (Cultural Survival 1990).

Most of CS's money in the mid-1980s came from one department of the US government, the Agency for International Development (US AID). Nowadays government support is mostly in the form of loans; "US AID recently lent CS \$3 million to finance trade... and to lend to... Amazonian producer groups" (Clay 1992b).

(CS also receives funds from some pretty odd sources; for example Turtle Tours Inc. of Carefree, Arizona, promotes tourism to tribal peoples and has a brochure which includes such remarks as: "[An expedition to the] primitive tribes still emerging from the 'Stone Age', gives you a rare opportunity to walk back in time..." The same document states; "For each one of our trips that you take, we will make a \$50 contribution in your name to a Cultural Survival organization." This turns out to be CS itself.)

Outside the USA, though to a much lesser extent than CS, the cosmetic company called the Body Shop is promoting the "harvest" - mainly

through one project in Brazil. The Body Shop provides CS with funds and the two companies are closely linked. The Body Shop, in an unwitting display of its own ethnocentrism, describes CS as; "An American organization dedicated to helping indigenous peoples retain their rights and culture as they learn to live within the modern world by helping them establish trading link" (sic).

No advertising?

Although the Body Shop began in England, its ideas (and even its name) borrow heavily from American entrepreneurial thinking. It is loud and



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brazen and (like McDonald's fast foods or the Holiday Inn) Body Shops everywhere in the world strive to look and even smell the same. Its staff are indoctrinated into a fierce company identification through in-house videos etc. (see Keily). It relies for its advertising on a personality cult centred on its founder, Anita Roddick (see Mackenzie), on marketing gimmicks and on appropriating other organisations' work and campaigns. As it itself explains, "We don't advertise, to do so would add 60-70p to the product. Whereas our marketing methods only add about 3p"... Marketing methods have included support for organisations such as Greenpeace..." (Tuck & Sanderson). Or, in the words of its founder; "Many of our projects that appear to be philanthropic are in fact designed to end up being self-financing... Other projects result in enormous media coverage and so could legitimately be costed as public relations" (Roddick A.). The Body Shop has been extremely successful and profitable

and currently has shops in no less than 41 countries including some of the most repressive to tribal peoples (such as Indonesia and Malaysia).

The Body Shop's Brazilian project is in a settlement of Kayapó Indians; where the company makes several exaggerated and paternalistic claims. It says, for example, "We can offer (the Kayapó) a vastly better alternative (to logging and mining): an intact environment and a mutually respectful relationship with outsiders" (letter from Mark Johnston, Body Shop, 1 June 1993). It claims that it can, "Guarantee them their Intellectual Property Rights" (ibid.). It even goes as far as saying that the Kayapó are its "employees" (statement by Mieke Van Leemput, Antwerp, 4 May 1993).

Promoting conservation?

Some of the Kayapó provide the Body Shop with Brazil nut oil. But others have complained bitterly that the project is very divisive because it favours only a small group in the community and has been responsible for angry confrontation and much jealousy amongst the Indians. The project was badly conceived and is badly managed and even the Body Shop's agent there has admitted that the community's financial accounts became mixed up with those of individuals. It has certainly not helped the Indians come together as one people; on the contrary, it has contributed to internal antagonisms and divisions, not to mention social dislocation and alienation which recently ruptured the community completely.

In this article I focus on these two companies firstly because the "harvest" idea is largely the brainchild of CS. As it itself says, "CS created this concept for consumers and is responsible for virtually all rainforest products on the market that promote conservation" (Cultural Survival n.d.a). And secondly, because the Body Shop is the best known company pursuing the "harvest" within Britain. I also focus primarily on the effect on tribal peoples in particular, rather than all so-called "rainforest peoples" (see note 33, p.11).

The first rule of Trade (as it is perceived in the West) is of course to make profit. Who trades deliberately at a loss?

This is the stuff of the American Dream and it is never effectively challenged. When environmental and ecological concerns are brought into the picture, as they have been in recent years, they are usually reduced to questions of recycling. That essential *sine qua non* of “real” eco-thought - to consume less - is quietly shelved. “Consume less” is unlikely to be a rallying cry for any company from the nation which consumes most.

Over half of all new products, and many old ones, marketed in the US over the last few years are packaged and advertised as “Earth friendly”. From dog food to petrol, hair conditioner to nuclear power, advertising men and women are consistently trying to fool consumers into believing that by buying their product they are helping the world. In most cases the only thing that really is green, of course, is the colour of the dollar profits.

So it should come as no surprise that the “rainforest harvest” idea should have originated in the US and be promoted, almost entirely, by US organisations and the government. Their world view would subsume everyone, everywhere, to a market-led future in which the companies control the purse strings.

What is the “rainforest harvest”?

“Rainforest harvest” is a clever expression. It starts with the current craze for rainforests, which everyone thinks are good things (except the governments and some of the people in the countries which actually have them). It links this new fad with the ancient and highly charged symbol of the harvest which has many of the same connotations as “motherhood” and as few detractors.

Strip away the hype, put the idea under serious scrutiny and it begins to dissolve very quickly indeed.

The bare bones of the theory appear simple; if it can be shown that forests contain more value if left standing than if they are felled, then they are more likely to be

preserved. The “value” is taken to be the monetary price of products which can be extracted from forests. These are mainly fruits and nuts although timber has also been mentioned, albeit very quietly (see “Logging - tomorrow’s harvest?” p. 8, below).

Advocates of this theory are far from quiet. The idea was forcefully sold to the US press starting in 1989 when it was given widespread publicity. The concept was itself marketed as a key, even *the* key,³ to the future for both rainforests and tribal peoples. Its virtues were extolled in glowing terms and compared with other projects which were denigrated as “handouts”; for example, “Trade is much better than a handout and it will be *far more* effective at protecting forest people... It’s good business, not just for business, but for human rights and the environment.” Or, and more recently, “One of *the best* ways to help indigenous groups preserve their native lands is to discover markets for... products.”⁴

So what’s wrong with the theory?

Value and profit are not the same thing

A little thought about this rather bizarre idea that a natural area can be preserved by foreigners eating more of its produce - will quickly throw up some rather difficult and complex questions; particularly if the enquirer bears in mind that a lot of rainforest areas, as with many zones of the rural third world, are used to provide subsistence, and not monetary gain, for millions of people. These folk may have very little cash income or even none at all. But anyone who has lived with those who grow or gather their own food will know that they have a much better deal going for them than the urban poor - who grow poorer and poorer as the years pass.

This “subsistence value” of the rainforest is not generally given a monetary equivalent - how can it be, what scale of values would be applied, the price of a daily meal in the nearest village, in Rio, in New York? It is excluded from the “rainforest harvest” equation in the same way that many of the things which people value very deeply are

cut out from the so-called “development” process promoted by governments and companies the world over. Where people were born, where their kin are buried, the location of their sacred sites, the complex web of relationships which form a community, even the view from the window, and so on; all these things can be tremendously important to people and all are regularly swept aside by planners who are, themselves, invariably far wealthier than those they are planning for.

How can a price be put on these facets of our lives? But does it not dehumanise us all to ignore them?

The *real* rainforest harvest is the one which is gathered daily by people who live with and from the forest; and which they eat and use themselves. The new jargon does not refer to this however but only to what can be sold for money.

History teaches something else

The “harvest” concept is rooted in two theses. The first is that increasing the income produced by so-called wilderness areas, in this case rainforests, is fundamental to their protection. The second is to project the future of the inhabitants of these zones as producers of raw materials for North American and European consumers, arguing that forest dwellers will become more secure and empowered as a result.

But in all the publicity which the “harvest” advocates have gained, not one piece of evidence has been presented to support either of these assertions. On the contrary, the historical record shows that neither is probable and that the real effect is more likely to be the exact reverse of what is claimed.⁵ If a particular product, say a resin, is found to be more valuable from live trees than is the wood from dead ones, the most likely outcome is the increased cultivation or exploitation of those particular trees and not the conservation of the forest itself.

The principal threat to tropical rainforests is not mining or even logging, but colonisation and settlement. If a forest plant is suddenly found to be valuable to outsiders

3 “Trade, not aid, is the key” (Forster 1992b).

4 Clay, the head of CS Enterprises, quoted in Christensen 1989; Solo (emphases added).

Consider also the following, from the Body Shop’s comic book, “Fight for the forest”: “(Anita Roddick) considers *all* the options currently open to the Kayapo... They can sell off their land to cattle ranchers. They can sell off their land to mineral prospectors. They can sell off all their tropical hardwood to logging companies. They can establish trading links with conscientious companies... Raw ingredients can be harvested... and sold in the industrialized world” (emphasis added). The suggestion that the “harvest” is the *only* option for the Kayapo apart from selling their land or wood displays an astonishing degree of ignorance for a company which has made so much of its support for rainforest causes.

Most Amazonian Indians live largely from their own subsistence activities and derive some monetary income from localised and small-scale trade in forest produce and, in some places, from selling their labour on an occasional or seasonal basis. No Indian people has sold its land. In any case, the Kayapó cannot sell their land as Brazil remains the only Amazonian country where Indians are considered to have no rights of land ownership.

5 See Dove; Gray 1990, 1991.

it will simply attract more colonists and companies into the area to exploit it.⁶

Far from encouraging conservation, international marketing has resulted in products being over-exploited to the point of extinction. For example, the extraction of rubber and ivory - the basis for the brutal colonial penetration of the Congo basin in the late 19th century - all but eradicated the rubber vines and elephants over vast areas. The same is true in southeast Asia, where the trade in hornbill ivory, rhino horns, bear paws, bezoar stones, gaharu incense and birds' nests has led to over-extraction and eventually the local extinction of the species and so the demise of the trade itself.

Rattan has become a very important cash crop in southeast Asia (worth more than \$3 billion a year). It is indigenous to the rainforests and is now collected from huge cultivations by labourers who eke a poor living out of lands which were once their own and which once provided everything they needed.

On the other side of the world the story is the same. Although the first European incursions into the South American rainforest were in search of gold, certain plants were also recognised by the very earliest invaders as being of especial value. For example, the first Christian mission established in Amazonia is still named Canelos; after the cinnamon which attracted the Spaniards who were searching for their own "rainforest harvest" of rare spices which could be sold for great profit in Europe.

Coffee grows moderately well in western Amazonia in Peru, an area of stunning beauty where the forest gains altitude before it dramatically folds into the sky to form the Andes. The inevitable result has been the widespread clearing of the rainforest, and eviction of the Indians, to grow coffee. The fact that it is not an indigenous plant counts of course for absolutely nothing at all.

Perhaps the most notorious of all rainforest products in history was Amazonian rubber which was once essential for making tyres for the growing motor car industry. The rubber "boom" in the first decade of this century was built on the deaths of tens of thousands of Indian slaves.

For example, in just one of the exploitation areas - the Putumayo - 80% of the Indian population was destroyed and several tribes were utterly annihilated within a few years of contact with this "harvest".

Rural inhabitants, including indigenous peoples, have *not* become more secure or empowered by becoming suppliers of raw materials for foreign markets. At best they have become exploited and dispossessed. At worst, dead...

A stale integrationist idea trying to look fresh and green

There are other reasons why the conceptual framework which produced the current "rainforest harvest" hype is ultimately disastrous for tribal peoples...

Over the last quarter century an immense amount of work has been done by indigenous peoples and their supporters in opposing the main threat to their survival - the invasion of their lands by outsiders and the denial of their land rights. However, when organisations were first formed in Europe in the 1960s to support tribal peoples' rights, the philosophical debate centred not on land but on what were seen as the opposing poles of "integration" versus "isolation". "Integration" was the philosophy promoted by governments. Generally fearful of anyone with a separate identity and eager to appropriate tribal lands, governments of all political persuasions declared that indigenous peoples were to be "elevated" into the rest of national society and "integrated" or "civilised".

Indigenous peoples' supporters knew that "integration" spelt death for societies and individuals. But it was not until the emergence of indigenous peoples' own organisations (initially in North America, and in Colombia in 1971) - federations which were at first designed to make a stand for their moral and legal rights and later to publicise their struggle to outsiders - that support groups realised that the real fight was not against integration and for isolation, but was really to support indigenous peoples' right to self-determination. And self-determination was inextricably bound up with, and dependent on, the recognition and enforcement of their right to the lands they

use and occupy. Indeed, what self-determination actually means is largely the right to control one's own land and resources - and so one's own future.

Support groups were slower to recognise this than either indigenous peoples themselves (not surprisingly) or the governments of the countries in which they live⁷. For a century and more, the laws stacked up against tribal peoples; from the infamous Dawes Act in the US in 1887 which laid down the conditions under which a Native American would cease to be legally regarded as an Indian and so not be "protected" by any treaty, to the notorious Chilean laws brought in by the Pinochet government in 1979 which legislated for the breaking up of communal land holdings, the onslaught on land rights was universal and all encompassing. What the introduced diseases and military and missionary invasions had not completely achieved, new integrationist laws would finish.

The fact that "integrationism" has been pretty well killed and buried must be judged one of the most successful aspects of the campaign for tribal peoples since the 1960s. In 1989, twenty years after the formation of groups such as the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs and Survival International, tribal people and their supporters even succeeded in changing the international law at the ILO in Geneva.⁸

In Brazil, where the campaign started and where much of it is still focussed, recurrent attempts to revive the "emancipation" of the Indians through new laws (designed to deny their identity and special status) have been repeatedly defeated. Today, integrationist thinking rears its head only in the most extreme political doctrines, both right and left, and in the most repressive regimes, such as Indonesia and Bangladesh. The push for land rights has taken a quarter century to really enter public awareness. But it has succeeded. Nowadays, all serious observers of these issues, and much of the concerned general public, are well aware that the survival of tribal peoples hinges on land rights.

The ideologies of both integration and isolation should have disappeared from the

6 "Other experts say large-scale businessmen might start their own plantations. Their lower operating costs would allow them to sell at lower prices, thus stealing the market from the very people (CS) is trying to help" (Feldman). This point is actually admitted by CS; "It is inevitable that some of the most promising... commodities will... be produced on plantations and make it difficult... for forest residents to compete" (emphasis added) (Clay 1992b).

7 Some were very slow indeed; CS's "mission statement", entitled "About Cultural Survival..." printed in its regular publications had no mention of land rights until 1991 when its materials were revised (it is now called, "What is Cultural Survival?"). CS's Annual Report 1989-1990 includes the following remark, "The rights of indigenous peoples to control *access to and use of* their lands must be universally acknowledged" (emphasis added). However, "access to and use" falls far short of the ownership rights which tribal peoples are demanding should be recognised and which are in fact largely provided for under international law.

CS's policy statements on land rights are thus considerably weaker than the international Convention, in spite of the fact that the latter contains many weaknesses and loopholes. For a group claiming to be, "the international advocate for the human rights of indigenous peoples," this is simply disgraceful.

8 ILO 1957, 1989.

debate; and certainly the terms themselves are hardly ever used in serious discussion. But on examination the “harvest” ideology reveals itself to be essentially an integrationist argument dressed in snazzy, green clothes; a retrograde philosophy which, if allowed to gain momentum, could set the campaign for tribal peoples back 25 years or more by playing right into the hands of those who want to oppose the movement for land rights.

The principal objection *against* recognising indigenous peoples’ land has come from the governments, land owners and military forces of the countries concerned, and the main plank in their argument is that the tribes are asking for far too much; tens of thousands of hectares for thousands of people. They argue that the people do not use the land productively, they do not really work it, so why should they be “given” it, especially when the urban conurbations are seething with millions of landless poor. The intelligent reply to this is simple; no, indigenous people do not use the land in a way *we* would necessarily recognise but these areas are not productive in the way that farm land is - the rainforest is really just a wet desert living off its own rotting detritus - and the people need these large areas to live in the way they choose. They do use it but not necessarily in our terms. The acute problems in many of these countries, which fuel the invasion of tribal lands, do not arise from a lack of land but a lack of land *reform*; practically all the good, productive areas are owned by a few dozen companies and families. The poor become poorer whilst the rich become richer. Fobbing the poor off with the territories of indigenous peoples who cannot properly defend themselves and who are asking for their moral and legal rights to areas which have always been theirs, simply perpetuates the injustice. It can never solve it.⁹

But tribal peoples’ fight for the recognition of their land rights is profoundly subverted by the “rainforest harvest” philosophy which declares that land *can* be valued by its productive capacity and measured in terms of cash. “Harvest” advocates argue that indigenous peoples, “Can strengthen land tenure status by demonstrating gainful use of the land.”¹⁰ The message here is clear; tribal peoples’ land rights are linked to their joining the market economy and using land in a way



Extract from the Body Shop's Comic No. 1

we recognise as “gainful” - in other words excluding hunting, gathering or growing subsistence crops. Land rights are related to profit and productivity for outside markets. This thesis from the “harvest” advocates precisely conforms to the arguments which have been used by anti-Indian politicians, for example, in Brazil since the 1970s. It would find hearty endorsement from Costa

Cavalcanti, the president of the government’s once notoriously corrupt Indian agency, FUNAI, who said in 1969, “We do not want a marginalised Indian, what we want is a producing Indian, one integrated into the process of national development.”

If allowed to take hold, this new integrationist ethic masquerading as

9 Colchester & Lohmann 1990, 1993.

10 CS Quarterly 13(4). This point has been repeated several times in CS’s publications. For example, “Claims to land and resources are strengthened when indigenous peoples are actively and obviously engaged in using and managing their resources” (Cultural Survival 1991). Or, and more directly, from CS’s marketing director; “We help communities by encouraging profit schemes which go towards other kinds of local improvements - *purchasing* land rights...” (emphasis added) (Body Shop 1991).

Perhaps even more insidious is the CS recommendation that there should be, “Titling for those areas that are *most densely* occupied by traditional forest residents” (emphasis added) (Clay 1992b). Tribal peoples have a right to the lands they use, not just to those parts they “most densely occupy”. If the CS recommendation were followed it would, for example, exclude most of the area of the recently created Yanomami Park which so many people have fought for since the 1960s and which is vital for the survival of the Yanomami.

environmentalism will be deeply corrosive to the struggle which so many indigenous peoples' organisations are waging to teach the outside world that their land is not for sale and that they will not put a cash value on it any more than they would sell their own mother.

Ordinary marketing versus the hyped "harvest"

But, for the sake of the argument, let us for a moment put all these general objections on one side. Suppose an indigenous community wants to get a cash income from selling some product - surely there is nothing wrong with that? Of course there isn't! Many do and have been doing so for years, if not generations. This often involves outside intermediaries; for example, practically all Roman Catholic missions in rainforest areas - and there are literally thousands of them - encourage indigenous people in the marketing of their goods and produce. A few do this fairly and honestly, many do it unfairly and dishonestly, but either way no one has ever promulgated the fanciful idea that such marketing is going to help preserve the rainforest. It won't. It may provide some cash income; making the "fair trade" concept a helpful idea when it is appropriately applied to people whose real crisis stems from acute poverty. But it is very wrong to pretend it is a solution for tribal societies who grow or gather most of their food and who face an entirely different set of problems - principally the invasion and expropriation of their lands.

The best marketing schemes are those which arise from the people themselves and



Extract from the Body Shop's Comic No. 1

are controlled by them; are appropriate within their economic and social situation; lead to genuine economic independence from exploitative middlemen; promote cohesiveness rather than division within the communities concerned; and are not carried out by outside organisations for their own profit. Profits should belong to the community which should be under no coercion if it wishes to abandon the scheme.¹¹

Dozens of support organisations have assisted these kinds of marketing projects over the years. The main difference between

these usually quite small-scale enterprises and the "harvest" - putting aside the hyped-up claims - is that the former are usually geared to supplying a local market with a food crop, usually a staple, or some handicraft, whereas the "harvest" is based on producing for a foreign buyer¹² who controls the project and will use the raw material in non-essential and even luxury goods such as candy bars or hair conditioner (or dog food, some of which is now marketed in the US under a rainforest label!).¹³

Commercialisation is obviously important for many indigenous peoples and it goes without saying that many will willingly use the "harvest" as an opportunity to make some money. Naturally they have every right to do so and to choose their own intermediaries with outside and, if they wish, international markets. However they should be under no illusions about who is controlling "harvest" schemes or about the risks involved in gearing output to these faddish products.

Indeed, they might be well advised not to rely too heavily on the high prices currently offered by "harvest" proponents. They are unlikely to last.

Dependence and bondage, not freedom and empowerment

The "harvest" will not empower the rainforest community. By making it dependent on a foreigner who must pay more than any local buyer¹⁴ the real effect is to tie the people into exactly the same relationship of dependence and patronage as any of the

11 Or, in the words of the International Alliance of the Indigenous-Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests, real development means: "A redirection of the development process away from large-scale projects towards the promotion of small-scale initiatives controlled by our peoples. The priority for such initiatives is to secure our control over our territories and resources on which our survival depends. Such projects should be the cornerstone of all future development in the forests... Our policy of development is based, first, on guaranteeing our self-sufficiency and material welfare, as well as that of our neighbours; a full and social and cultural development based on the values of equity, justice, solidarity and reciprocity, and a balance with nature. Thereafter, the generation of a surplus for the market must come from a rational and creative use of natural resources developing our own traditional technologies and selecting appropriate new ones" (International Alliance 1992). See also Colchester 1982, 1992.

12 Indeed, that is part of the very definition of the "harvest" as proposed by its advocates. CS says, "It isn't CS's place, as a foreign NGO, to become involved directly in local or national marketing" (Cultural Survival n.d.a).

13 "Harvesters" are also looking at extracting pharmaceutical products from the forest. This raises the question of whether indigenous lore will simply be pillaged for the gain of others or whether so-called "intellectual property rights" will be respected. In spite of quite a lot of thinking and writing on this topic, so far no one has any clear notion of how this could be done (see Gilbert & Colchester 1989, Gray 1991, WRM 1992, Posey 1993).

14 Otherwise there is no purpose in the foreigner being there at all; the whole point, according to "harvest" advocates, is to increase the income of the local community. Concerning the degree of control which the "harvest" companies are pressing for, consider the following remarks by CS, "(By 1992) we will be able to begin to dictate not only the terms of trade with our customers, but for all commercial wholesalers who want to do business with our customers" (cited in Treece).

traditional forms of exploitation through which the wealthy dictate trading terms to impoverished people and countries.

The argument in defence of the “harvest” which asserts that tribal peoples can choose if they wish to join in or not - “it’s their choice” - is irrelevant. Even if the “harvest” spreads, it will affect only a few, selected rainforest communities - those near viable methods of transport¹⁵ which in addition have: something valuable to outsiders; the time and desire to harvest it for cash instead of using it for subsistence; internal structures able to cope with receiving and allocating considerable amounts of money;¹⁶ and who have actually been approached by a foreign company willing to buy from them.

A handful may earn a lot of money, perhaps even get rich - that is not being disputed. In fact they will earn just as much, or as little, as the company wants to pay. They will have no influence over this. They will not control the transport of their product to the market or have access to a range of buyers; the markets and buyers are thousands of miles away, operate in a very different culture, in a different language, with a

different currency, and are driven by a fierce competition geared to profit. When the forest communities become dependent on the monetary income earned, their future will be entirely at the whim of the company, at the mercy of consumer demand in the rich countries - demand which can fast fluctuate or collapse.¹⁷ Should the company change its mind about the price, or the amount it wants to buy, or should it want a different product, or to pull out of the deal altogether, the community would be able to do absolutely nothing about it. It may, or may not, earn more cash than its neighbours, but the only partner becoming empowered by the whole sorry process would be the foreign company and *not* the rainforest community. For people who are already producing for markets, such projects simply replace one “patrón”, one “patrão”, one big boss, for another, locking those who collect the product into just another chain of dependency; one which may actually be worse than if the community dealt with local buyers for local markets because, at least then, the price would be verifiable and the expectations would be realistic.

To present this theory as an innovative way to save the forests, as a trail blazing system to liberate rainforest inhabitants, is at best a dangerous naïvety. At worst it is little more than a fraud springing from an opportunity to profit from consumers’ goodwill.

Same old debt

A characteristic of the “harvest” companies since the criticisms began to emerge is that they fail to provide any real financial details of their projects. One fact which is hardly ever mentioned in the public hype is that many (or even all?) of the schemes use seed finance in the form of loans rather than grants.¹⁸ This makes it difficult to escape the conclusion that the forest communities concerned are being tied to the product in a way which does not appear to be so very different from the old system called “debt-bondage” which chained hundreds of Amazonian communities to “bosses” who advanced loans against produce and so exploited the workers to the hilt.

In addition, there is a question mark over what happens to all the profits. Do they actually find their way back to the

15 CS itself admits; “The development of markets for sustainably harvested commodities *and the destruction of the rain forests...* both depend on... improved transport...” (emphasis added) (Clay 1992b).

16 Contradicting its own public hype, CS itself actually thinks that, “There is not a single organisation in the Amazon - be it a small, forest-based group or the region’s largest institution - that could not benefit from better financial analysis and planning... probably no more than 50 Indians in the Amazon can balance a checkbook. The training... they need to enter the market economy on their own terms is considerable” (Clay 1992b).

17 Already the price of Brazil nuts has swung enormously since these schemes were launched. The increased demand from North American consumers initially caused the price to rise thereby increasing the profits for the ordinary, commercial (and exploitative) suppliers in Brazil (including the notorious Mutran family-owned concerns in Pará). More recently on the other hand the price has fallen. The companies themselves, are also subject to expansions and contractions. For example, the Body Shop has seen its share price more than halved in recent months. The company’s assurance that it will continue to buy off its Brazilian Indian suppliers may count for little when the law of the profit margin is applied. The Body Shop has already responded to the criticism that it is profiting from the Indians by saying that it will not trade at a loss (radio interview with A. Roddick, 1991).

18 For example, in 1990-91 the “flagship” project run by CS in Brazil, at the rubber collectors’ community of Xapuri (which figures prominently in CS publications), was, “Provided (with) a total of \$140,000... in the form of 1-year, 10% interest, working capital loans” (Clay 1992b). The factory manager is paid a salary by the American organisation (does this make him a CS employee?) which is the only buyer of its Brazil nuts.

The parallels with the old debt bondage system go so far that the Brazilian community uses the same word - “patrão” (boss) - when referring to CS. The American company seeks to expand its operations in exactly the same way as the old-style bosses; “We are looking for similar...financial mechanisms to finance, through *loans that can be repaid in produce*, the expansion of this factory and construction of other similar ones” (emphasis added) (Clay 1990). CS itself has admitted that the nut producers, “Have been a little unhappy with us,” and that one of their leaders, “Has criticised us for trying to squeeze him” (Dennett Colby).

The nut collectors at Xapuri are not Indians (and there is no reason why they should be of course!) but see note 33 below for an outline of how CS has obfuscated this fact so that consumers can infer that the nuts *are* provided by indigenous peoples.

19 Consider the following confusing remarks in adjacent paragraphs in Cultural Survival 1991... “A *portion* of the value added in the manufacturing chain is shared with the producers of key materials. *All the funds* generated through revenue sharing and environmental premiums are returned to forest groups or support organisations” (emphasis added). “CS also reinvests environmental-premium and revenue-sharing money to fund land rights, core support and resource management, as well as to help build infrastructures to support production within forest communities.” This “revenue-sharing” can be as little as 1% of profits. But how do these statements square with the following from Clay 1992b; “CS currently uses the 5% environmental premiums and profit-sharing agreements that it requires of each company it sells commodities to as collateral when lending funds to forest-based groups in the Amazon, Africa, Asia, or even the US” .

Also, consider Cultural Survival n.d.a. At least two different versions of this paper were produced (in 1992?). In the second, the word “profit” has been replaced by “revenue”. Both include the statement, “We guarantee that 100 percent of the funds will be used to fund forest-based groups or their supporters.” This sentiment is echoed in a leaflet entitled, “Rainforest imports, the marketing program,” which explicitly states that, “*All* proceeds from sales are used to support rainforest projects” (emphasis added). The use of expressions such as “all the funds”, “100 percent of the funds”, and “all proceeds from sales” seems to suggest that *all* the money gained is returned to “the field”. But is this the case? Or are the funds used to support CS itself? Do the “rainforest projects” include salaries for CS staff, for example? Not

communities?¹⁹ It does seem clear that hundreds of thousands of dollars are flowing into the “harvest” companies’ coffers²⁰ and that the US government itself is offering support to the tune of several million dollars more. Who is really profiting - the rainforest communities or the companies?

Logging - tomorrow’s harvest?

It is important to note a quiet fact which may be peripheral now but could prove central in years to come if the “harvesters” continue to win support. As well as inventing the “rainforest harvest” itself, its advocates play heavily on another piece of jargon which is worth examination, “NTFPs”. This stands for Non-Timber Forest Products and is taken to mean mainly fruits and nuts. But “harvest” proponents have let slip, here and there, that they actually believe that timber itself could eventually prove an important plank in their schemes (no pun intended!).²¹ They keep this largely to themselves because they are struggling to give the impression that they are both ethically and environmentally sound and many of the organisations they are trying to seduce are fervently opposed to logging because of its role in rainforest destruction. “Harvest” proponents do not want to be seen as potential lumberjacks even though their, barely whispered, message is more or less identical to the one being peddled by the timber importers who have now mounted their own campaign, called “Forests Forever”, in a cynical public relations exercise to try and subvert the fierce criticism which has been mounted against their activities over the last few years.

The timber traders say that judicious felling can actually *preserve* forests and is

therefore environmentally sound. This is not necessarily quite as daft as it sounds. It may be that careful logging could extract timber which is far more valuable than any fruit or nuts, and still not destroy the forest entirely. The problem is, firstly, that no one has any idea if tropical rainforests actually can be logged sustainably or not; as the valuable wood takes years to grow, the forest takes decades to regenerate, and the research has only been under way for a short time. But secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the logging is not and will never be carried out “judiciously and carefully”; any more than any other extractive industry is, in countries where controls are ignored and corruption starts at the top.²² Already British mahogany importers are hiding behind Brazilian certificates attesting that their wood is most definitely not being taken from Indian reserves or conservation zones. These certificates are falsified. In fact most imported timber is now coming from Indian areas.

“Harvesters” say that higher prices paid for forest produce will promote conservation. But reality proves the reverse. Higher prices for timber, for example, translate into more ruthless cutting and make extraction from more and more remote areas financially attractive. Higher prices mean more intensive exploitation²³ and where the timber roads go devastation soon follows.²⁴

The above arguments about the fundamental flaws in “rainforest harvest” theory are viewed from the perspective of the rainforest and its inhabitants. Before moving on from criticising “harvest” theory, which is bad, to looking at “harvest” practice, which is worse, attention must be

given to the effect on the intended consumer in the “west” and whether he or she can play an important role in the future of the forests and, if so, what that may, or more importantly *may not*, be.

Turning campaigners into consumers

Imagine a rainforest community extracting Brazil nuts and selling them to a foreign company which pays more than local buyers. The company exports the nuts to North America and Europe and also sells them at a higher price than its competitors. It has to charge more (or be content with smaller profits²⁵) in order to pay the producer more than others will. But why should consumers pay a higher price for one lot of Brazil nuts than for another? The answer is that he or she thinks that the money is going to help save the rainforest and its inhabitants. The buyer is prepared to pay a bit extra, secure in the knowledge that he or she has done some good by buying the “right brand” as opposed to cheaper nuts which do not help anyone.

That scenario is not hypothetical. It is actually what “harvest” advocates say is happening now. And they are certainly right on one count. Recent studies have shown that a significant number of people are prepared to pay extra if they think a product is environmentally or ethically sound. Of course for them to think this, they have to have been told it and told it loudly. This was the reason for the vigorous media onslaught in praise of the “harvest” and its leading product, a candy bar called “Rainforest Crunch”, which began in 1989 in the US. Both the establishment and alternative press became greatly enamoured with the story which secured far more column inches than any other tribal peoples-related issue; in spite

according to Cultural Survival n.d.a which states that, “CS doesn’t keep any of these funds for its overhead costs. We return all funds to the country of origin...”

Of course, selecting the beneficiaries of the funds that are “returned” is entirely controlled by CS itself. Money earned through the “harvest” is presumably used to fund only those field projects which CS approves of. It is very difficult to see how this differs from “ordinary” funding provided by the many non-governmental organisations (and, for that matter, governmental ones) to diverse projects in the third world in general. The only real difference seems to be that in the “harvest” the funds are derived from the profits of indigenous and/or third world labour. As one observer of these projects remarked, “If that isn’t sleight of hand, what is?”

And note also this CS recommendation; “(The US government) can guarantee loans for local... projects. This could be done in some countries with blocked currency... or it might also be done without any money ever leaving the US... The US government could establish a fund with which it could guarantee the Bank of Brazil that it would cover 50% of that bank’s loans for agreed-upon... income-generating projects in the Amazon...” (Clay 1992b).

20 Notwithstanding this income, at the time of writing it seems that Cultural Survival’s Brazil nut project is failing in economic terms due to the recent drop in the market price of the nuts. CS cannot shift the produce it has bought. Having extolled the virtues of the marketplace for so long, CS itself now seems to be finding it hostile. If this US organisation, closely associated with Harvard University and employing people from the elite Harvard School of Business Administration is floundering, what chance will third world peasants or indigenous people have in the cut-throat North American market?

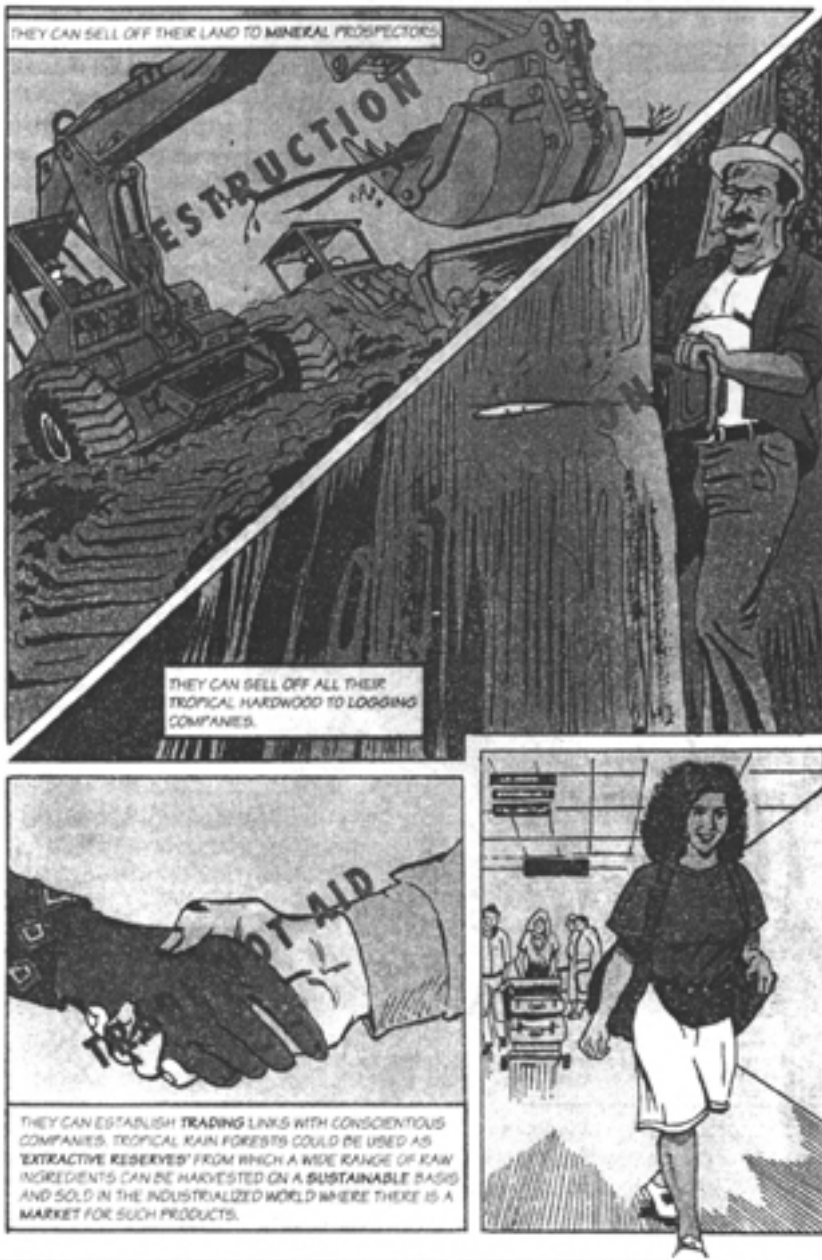
21 Clay 1990, 1992b.

22 Colchester 1989, 1990a, 1990b, Johnson & Cabarle 1993.

23 Reitbergen 1989, Gregersen et al 1990.

24 Colchester & Lohmann 1993.

25 Or rely on US government grants which are being provided to the scale of several million dollars; which is, of course, an acknowledgement that the projects are not genuinely, economically viable.



Extract from the Body Shop's Comic No. 1. This comic gives four solutions as "all the options currently open to the Kayapo." See note 4, p.3.

of the fact that the same year saw the most intense phase of the genocide against the Yanomami - one of the largest relatively intact Indian people remaining in the Americas.

This illustrates one of the most important reasons why the "harvest" should be opposed by those seeking justice for indigenous peoples. In 1989 and indeed subsequently, there were far more Americans who knew about Brazil nut bars supposedly coming from Amazonia than there were who knew

that the 500 year-old invasion was alive and well and killing Yanomami children²⁶ at the same time as the comparatively wealthy were gobbling their "ethical" candy.²⁷

In reality there are only two ways by which small populations of tribal peoples living in resource-rich areas are going to survive (and, perhaps also, by which rainforests are going to continue to shield parts of our only planet in their warm, fecund and life-giving shroud when our grandchildren and their grandchildren walk

this Earth). They would be saved by the demise of "western civilisation" - and there are those who believe that is inevitable. Or they will be saved when many people know deeply, and are prepared to say loudly, that indigenous peoples' rights to their land must be upheld. This is already happening, at least in some sectors. The opinion held by the general public can change the world. Indeed, apart from cataclysm, it is the only thing that ever has.

There is absolutely no doubt that the huge advances in tribal peoples' rights which have been secured over the last 25 years have resulted from a sea-change in international public opinion. As indigenous peoples have fought their own battles, with considerable success in many areas, the general public's concern has acted like a shield, making it far more difficult for governments and armies simply to kill them. It has also stopped wars, forced repressive dictators out and pushed governments into acknowledging environmental and human rights issues which were once ignored or even denigrated.

But the "rainforest harvest", also, can only work if public opinion is firmly behind it; if people really think that by buying such products, they are helping indigenous peoples and saving their forest homes. It is not difficult to understand why it is so easy to get press attention for this fairy story. For the last five or six years, widespread concern has been very effectively aroused about the future of the forests; and now the public is desperate for "solutions". With the claims made for the "harvest", no one can lose. Consumers can consume even more, companies can make profits, forest communities can earn an income, the environment is saved... No one and nothing is criticised. The *causes* of rainforest destruction and the invasion of tribal peoples' lands are not addressed. This is not a panacea, a placebo or even a quick fix, it is just slow poison.

The message to the consumer will become: don't worry about lobbying your Member of Parliament, or the timber importers, or writing to governments, the press or companies, don't worry about mobilising public opinion with hard-hitting international campaigns - just eat more Brazil nuts. With Orwellian logic, the "harvesters" actually go so far as to claim that buying these products is, in itself, *action* for human rights and the environment.²⁸

The level of this press coverage will now have to be stepped up if the "harvesters" are

26 15% of the Yanomami in Brazil died as a result of the invasions of their lands in 1989/90.

27 CS is consciously using the press in this way. For example, it has been quoted as saying, "We're going to companies... and saying that companies which acknowledge their dependence on the rainforest and contribute 1% of the value of their purchase of raw ingredients back to rainforest conservation will get a great deal of favorable press" (Clay quoted in MarketAlert Publications).

28 "Purchasing products through Cultural Survival is a way for consumers to transform their concern over human rights abuses and environmental destruction into action" (Cultural Survival 1992a).

going to come anywhere near meeting their own targets. Turnover in the principal US “harvest” company stood at \$824,000 in 1991 but is projected at a staggering \$48 million in the “current five-year marketing strategy.”²⁹ On average, that is an increase of well over one thousand per cent. By the year 2010, it envisages “returning” nearly one thousand million dollars to “forest based groups”. No one pretends that this can be achieved unless there is a great deal of media attention extolling the virtues of the “harvest”. Such publicity is bound to eclipse serious human rights concerns, as it has done since 1989.

“Harvest” companies seek press coverage for their schemes and not for the real issues confronting tribal peoples. If the “harvest” is allowed to grow, then public awareness of indigenous peoples and rainforest issues will be demeaned to the level of buying one sort of nut crunch as opposed to another. This is profoundly subversive to campaigns which tribal peoples and their supporters have waged against apparently insurmountable odds for two decades and more.

The whole “harvest” scheme depends on exaggerated claims. An examination of how the “harvest” is actually applied, rather than how its proponents say it is applied, shows those claims to be not only exaggerated but in many cases simply false.



And what's wrong with the application?

“Harvest” advocates argue that the labels on their goods are an important educational tool. They say they, “Use product packages to educate consumers about both rain forests and the peoples who live in them. In 1991, some 30 million Americans bought products that explained the importance of the rain forests, how consumers could help...”³⁰ To comment on this it is of course important to examine exactly what these wrappers say. But before turning our attention to this claim, there is a wider sense in which the “harvest” depends not on the enlightenment of the consumer but specifically on his or her ignorance.

The principal “harvest” product - the one which has received most of the press attention - is Brazil nuts. But far from educating the consumer, the project’s commercial success depends on him or her remaining ignorant of the fact that the Brazil nut industry is a major extractive business (with a turnover of \$20 million in 1989) which incorporates a wide gamut of exploitation and dependency in Brazil. It relies on an unskilled and very poorly paid labour force. It is dominated by the wealthy and powerful. And workers’ rights, minimum wages, unionisation etc. are all ignored or suppressed.

As I have mentioned above, the flagship of the “harvest”, indeed the only product which has become

at all well known is “Rainforest Crunch”, a candy bar containing Brazil nuts from the Brazilian tropical forest and many other ingredients which are nothing to do with rainforests.³¹

“Rainforest Crunch” was originally sold with the following claim emblazoned on its packet; “The nuts used in Rainforest Crunch are purchased directly, with the aid of Cultural Survival, from forest peoples...” In fact, this was not true. The Brazil nuts do come from rainforest areas, but for two years or so, *all* of them were bought on the normal commercial market; including from the most notorious and exploitative suppliers who saw their profits increase as a result. Even now, none are provided by *indigenous* peoples.³²

29 Clay 1992b. MarketAlert Publications gives even higher figures for CS Enterprises, “In 1991 the company did \$1.3 million in business... For 1992, the company projects \$2.5-3 million in sales. Five years down the road, projected revenues are in the \$20-25 million range.”

My own predictions about the future of “harvest” products are somewhat different. As a firm believer in that other, nobler American philosophy that you cannot fool all the people all the time, I am optimistic that the projects will largely fizzle out. Doubtless they will leave a residual legacy and rainforest hype will continue to be used in advertising and packaging. But those who are serious about these issues will perceive it to be on the same level as learning that every washing powder washes whiter or that fast cars are as good as, and similar to, beautiful women.

30 Cultural Survival n.d.a.

31 In fact, most of the products sold under a “rainforest” label are nothing to do with rainforests. Mac Margolis says, referring specifically to CS’s products, “There is a slight deception involved in the corporate sales pitch. The majority of these products are not rain forest products at all. Banana, oats, papaya, coconut, cupuassu, cacao, honey, and guava are not culled from the wild woods but husbanded from land where forests have been removed. (Some, such as cashews, don’t even come from the Amazon)” (Margolis).

32 “Rainforest Crunch candy and other trendy new items... may make consumers feel good... But... To meet the demand for Brazil nuts, for example, eco-entrepreneurs have had to buy on the open market, benefitting businesses and land owners who have long monopolized the trade, not the rain forest people themselves” (Christensen 1991).

The company’s response to this criticism is to assert that the text on the packaging did not have its authorisation. But not only was it a very long time indeed before the false claim was amended, the company also flatly contradicted its own defence when it asserted to complaining Indian organisations that it, “Insists that all agreements with companies give (us) the right to sign off on copy for packaging, press releases and promotional materials... (and that) this has been our policy *from the start*” (emphasis added) (Clay 1991).

So why make ethical claims for the product if it was, in fact, derived from commercial, and very unethical, sources? The company's response to this was a truly staggering piece of consumer deception. It said that it had firstly to create the market for rainforest products and that, when doing this, it needed large quantities of the nuts, more than any "ethical" supplier could provide. This is of course tantamount to admitting that the product is entirely dependent on its publicity, on the creation of a new "need". Consumers are not really buying Brazil nut candy bar at all, they are buying a "feel good" gimmick. But one in which the "feel good" factor is in fact a fake.

But why, even now, four years after the sorry scheme started, is none of the product coming from indigenous peoples? After all, the company concerned describes itself only as working on indigenous, tribal peoples or ethnic minorities' issues. In none of its promotional literature does it include in its objectives any mention of alleviating poverty in non-indigenous communities.

The term "forest peoples" which is used on the "Rainforest Crunch" packs is often taken to mean *indigenous* peoples.³³ Indeed, the use of the plural for "peoples" strengthens this assumption - each tribe is "a

people" and not simply a segment of a wider population.³⁴ In this vocabulary, the Yanomami Indians, or for that matter Brazilians as a whole, can be defined as "a people" but sectors such as Brazilian factory workers or children, for example, fall outside the definition.

The term "forest peoples" is still carried through into recent packaging, but the claim itself has been considerably watered down. It now says, "Profits... are... used to develop Brazil nut... factories that are cooperatively owned and operated by forest peoples." There is no mention of who supplies the nuts used. One of the several ancillary products now available, "Rainforest Crunch Popcorn", makes even vaguer remarks and simply says, "Brazil nuts grow wild in the rain forest." Though it still makes the claim, "Thanks for helping *us* save the rain forest by buying this... popcorn."³⁵

Before leaving this detail and turning our attention to what tribal peoples think of all this mess, it is worth dwelling a moment longer on the claims the company is making about the so-called educational value of the packaging. As the dubious methods behind "Rainforest Crunch" have begun to be exposed, the company has elevated this argument to a more prominent position.³⁶

But *is* the packaging performing an educational role in telling consumers about how to, "Help to save *our* rainforests" (whose rainforests - the consumers)? Three courses of action are suggested to the innocent purchaser: "Don't buy tropical wood..."; recycle the package the "Crunch" came in; and, believe it or not, "Ask before you buy any pet parrots to be sure they weren't imported from a rainforest." This does not appear to be a joke, though if this is the level of education the "harvesters" are advocating for the concerned general public, then it certainly is a farce.

Haven't the "harvesters" thought of all this?

"Harvest" advocates cover a wide spectrum of people and companies from those who have considerable experience of rainforest issues³⁷ to those who have none and whose expertise lies rather in knowing how to make profits fast.³⁸ There is nothing in the present article which the experts amongst them will not have considered. Indeed some companies (eg. Cultural Survival) are deeply divided internally over this question and they include people who think that the "rainforest harvest" is flawed and should not proceed. Unfortunately, "harvest" advocates,

It seems that sourcing from commercial suppliers is much more widespread than just for Rainforest Crunch. For example, "Brazil nuts gathered by rubber tappers in... Acre and copaiba oil collected by tappers in... Rondonia are the *only* important supplies coming directly from forest people. Commercial suppliers and brokers provide *most* of the rest of what Cultural Survival imports" (emphasis added) (Long & Fox).

33 Though not always... The term "rainforest peoples" is being increasingly used for anyone who lives in rainforests. This nomenclature is itself debatable for reasons unconnected to the "harvest". Lumping together communities such as tribal peoples, rubber tappers, colonists, farmers, loggers (even Japanese colonists in Brazil, see Lamb) etc. depoliticises the tensions and antagonisms at work in rainforests today. Many of these people do not identify themselves as having interests in common. It is also pertinent to point out that the majority of those who currently inhabit the Amazon Basin actually live in cities and large towns and have about as little connection with forest issues as people in Lima or Rio. Are they "forest peoples" as well?

Consumers are clearly supposed to infer that the "rainforest peoples" *are* indigenous peoples. Consider the following remarks, "Cultural Survival Enterprises... helps *natives* form cooperatives to harvest and sell rain forest products... Says Clay: '...These people don't want to live in Stone Age zoos'" (emphasis added) (Fortune). The following claim is made in Cultural Survival 1991, "More than 50 percent of CS funds supported programs and other field activities among *indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities*" (emphasis added). CS's "mission statement" entitled "What is Cultural Survival?" published in its 1991 Quarterly specifically says of CS Enterprises that its, "Marketing arm, builds and expands markets for products that *indigenous groups* extract..." (emphasis added). Although it is *not* buying off Indians in Brazil, CS explicitly states that it *does* deal with Indians in "harvest" projects; "Once CSE identifies a product, it approaches local groups - initially, *Brazilian Indians* and rubber tappers..." (Clay 1992a). Yet neither the rubber tappers nor the other commercial Brazil nut collectors which CS is working with can be described as "indigenous peoples" or "ethnic minorities".

There is, of course, no reason why rubber collectors should not be helped to market forest produce (if it were done appropriately); and CS is dealing with indigenous groups for its other products; but this does not alter the fact that the claims are at the very least confusing, not to say downright false, when they pertain to its principal product used to promote the "harvest" - "Rainforest Crunch".

34 Furthermore, the term, "a people", has an important nuance in the jargon of United Nations' conventions and declarations. "Peoples" have certain specified group rights - principally rather vaguely worded rights to self-determination - in addition to the human rights recognised for individuals or "populations".

35 Emphasis added. Oxfam informed Survival International in December 1992 that it accepted the arguments against "Rainforest Crunch" and would not continue selling the product.

36 "If we can introduce into consumers' minds the fact that they can have an impact on an environmental problem half a world away, as they get more and more informed about that issue they will take the same skills and begin to look at their own backyard" (Clay quoted in MarketAlert Publications).

37 Such as Cultural Survival.

38 Such as the Body Shop.

employing people from top business schools to assist them, have gained the upper hand in these organisations and have drawn the lion's share of the available resources and personnel into their shoddy schemes.

Undoubtedly they have convinced themselves of the benefits of the "harvest". But when confronted with the very powerful arguments against it, their reply is confined to repeating that they know forest communities who want to do it, and that it "is working".³⁹ What they mean is that their products are selling and generating money. They certainly are, that is not in dispute! Of course it is easy to find people, particularly poor people, who will jump at the chance to make some money faster and who will swallow, or appear to swallow, the exaggerated claims which the companies must make to gain their position of patronage over the suppliers. "Harvest" advocates are so completely convinced that the Earth's spin is powered by profits, that it colours their judgement on everything; they believe that if it's making money, it must be good!

But in spite of their fervent and orchestrated attempts to silence their critics,⁴⁰ what began with a few discontented murmurs in 1991 is gaining in volume and turning into a chorus of criticism.

What do tribal peoples make of it?

One of the earliest rebuttals of the "harvest" was rather more than a murmur. It came in a detailed 10-page attack from the Rainforest Peoples' Alliance in Brazil⁴¹ and was directed specifically at the main "harvest" supplier.⁴² Accusing the company of "conceit", and referring to it in terms like, "self-important", "careless", "irresponsible", "colonial", "paternalistic", and "negative", it described how the company had failed to

refer to any Brazilian grassroots organisations and had simply pursued its own goals which were, "Completely detached from (our) reality," and which had turned it into, "Yet another intermediary in the complex social relationships of Amazonia..." Overall its assessment was that, far from helping poor Brazilians, the company had aggravated the situation and made it worse, interfering with local initiatives along the way. It went on; "Cultural Survival created an island with potential for prosperity, but increased the difficulties in all the other regions of Amazonia which are still exploited by the same bosses who become richer and richer. Their investment in a viable alternative is insignificant compared to the disadvantages caused in other regions... We don't recognise any advantages in our association with Cultural Survival, since their concrete help with our initiatives has been minimal, and their negative repercussions have been enormous."⁴³

More recently, "Indian Unity" the newspaper of the national Colombian Indian organisation,⁴⁴ published its own criticism of the harvest which it called a "green swindle". It said; "In Europe and North America people believe that only by buying certain products they are helping to protect tropical forests and indigenous peoples, this is called the 'rainforest harvest'. This is weakening the international campaigns in support of indigenous peoples' struggles ... People think that by consuming some product they are guaranteeing our protection. Our communities' independence is also weakened as our well-being is made dependent on western markets. There are many outsiders who are interested in profiting from our resources, manipulating environmental and indigenous issues for their own gain."

At the other end of the continent, the Argentinian "Bulletin of Indian Communities" recently saw fit to publish, in full and without comment, a Survival International paper on the "rainforest harvest" which makes many of the same points as the present article.⁴⁵

The world's tribal peoples at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 came out with a statement pertinent to the "harvest"; "Indigenous peoples must be self-reliant. If we are going to grow crops, these crops must feed the people. It is not appropriate that the lands be used to grow crops which do not benefit the local peoples."⁴⁶

As the 1992 "Charter of the indigenous-tribal peoples of the tropical forests" states; "There can be no rational or sustainable development of the forests and of our peoples until our fundamental rights... are respected."⁴⁷

Conclusion

Harvest protagonists have become so concerned with marketing that the social implications of their activities have been all but lost sight of.⁴⁸ Of course to give them the benefit of a not inconsiderable doubt, the "harvesters" probably think they are doing good; but that is because their view of the world is entirely coloured by their zeal for profits and "progress". They have always held that resource extraction on indigenous peoples' land is inevitable, that big development schemes will go ahead regardless, indeed they have always believed that tribal peoples will disappear.⁴⁹ They see themselves as "realists" and their critics are viewed as "romantics" fighting against the inevitable. They have never understood the simple truism that the world is not, has never been, and will never be changed by those who accept the *status quo*. Their cynicism is actually the thing which has to be changed;

39 Clay 1992c etc.

40 For example, Lovell White Durrant.

41 Aliança dos Povos da Floresta, which incorporates; the Union of Indian Nations - União das Nações Indígenas, Brazil nut gatherers, rubber tappers' trades unions and other long-term residents of Brazilian Amazonia.

42 Cultural Survival.

43 Some eighteen months after this hostile criticism was sent to CS, the latter publicly rubbished the paper by claiming that it was not an "official" document. In this counter-attack it did not mention that it had taken it very seriously at the time, replying to it with a very detailed, 16-page, and very conciliatory memo dated 5 April 1991 (Clay 1991).

CS is no stranger to criticism from Indian organisations, in 1991 the Coordinating Body for the Indigenous Peoples' Organisations of the Amazon Basin published an attack on Cultural Survival in a Bolivian newspaper accusing it of manipulating Indian meetings (COICA 1991a,b,c).

44 "Unidad Indígena", published by the Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (ONIC q.v.).

45 Survival International 1992b.

46 World Conference... 1992.

47 International Alliance 1992.

48 Clay 1992f.

indeed it, itself, lies at the very root of the destruction. They are not rainforest traders, but rainforest raiders, squeezing what they can out of the public's goodwill and the latest forest fashion.

It's dangerously ironic that increased consumption in western markets, the cause of much environmental degradation in the first place, is now hailed as a way of supporting forests and the people who live in them.⁵⁰ Encouraging tribal peoples into our markets, on our terms, particularly into artificially created, ephemeral, foreign sales of non-essential fads such as Brazil nut candy or hair conditioner, will not promote tribal peoples' self-determination and will

not solve their problems. Far from giving rainforest dwellers more security and control over their own lives, it is much more likely to have the opposite effect.

It is vital for the future of indigenous peoples' rights that the "harvest" ideology is rejected and that the growth in support for these peoples is channelled, not into purchasing power for these essentially useless products, but into a worldwide outcry demanding respect for their rights. Such an outcry *will* eventually succeed; in some cases it has already. The situation for these peoples will begin to look secure when ordinary (non-indigenous) people believe that tribal peoples' land should not be stolen

from them under any circumstances. This conviction will then win through in the same way that the anti-slavery campaign succeeded 150 years ago.

Or... are we really only going to conserve those wildernesses which can pay their way... are we really only going to stand up for the dispossessed if they start producing something we want... are we really going to let business and profits dictate conservation and human rights' strategies and goals?

Are we really only going to support people who can pay? And if so, what about those who don't want to... or can't?

49 CS, for example, works as a consultant for the US government and the World Bank and acts as a broker for US government funds. These are not institutions noted for their respect for tribal peoples' rights.

Consider the following quotes: "Resource development of course cannot be halted" (Cultural Survival brochure). "Cultural Survival has... helped ethnic minorities cope with the inevitable encroachment by larger outside forces. Note that I said 'inevitable' encroachment" (Maybury-Lewis n.d.). "If they are given half a chance, they can not only survive, but they can flourish very well as fellow citizens *in our own society*" (emphasis added) (public talk given by the President of CS, Maybury-Lewis, London, 17 June 1992). "We show... that traditional societies are not intrinsically obstacles to development, and that they can, if given the opportunity, become *productive participants* in multiethnic states" (emphasis added) (Cultural Survival n.d.b). "(These are films about) the wisdom of tribal peoples... before they are all gone." (Maybury-Lewis in the "Millennium" television film series which was made with CS and funded by the Body Shop. The films have been severely criticised for misrepresenting tribal peoples and, in Peru, for filming against the wishes of the local Indian organisation which has called them, "robbery". The Body Shop clearly sees the films in terms of commercial advertising. Its 1992 annual report says they, "Will be screened in many of our *markets* over the next two years" [emphasis added].)

The Body Shop also seems to think the forest is doomed; "Experts from the developed world and the Indians... can work together... *before the forest disappears*" (emphasis added) (Body Shop n.d.).

See also Multinational Monitor; Bodley.

50 "The more we consume, the happier Clay (the head of CS Enterprises), the forest and its people will be..." (Spencer).

The author would like to thank The Ecologist and the many people who encouraged him in the writing of this article and who gave advice - particular thanks are due to those who commented on drafts: Marcus Colchester, Honor Drysdale, Andrew Gray, Jonathan Mazower, David Treece and Fiona Watson.

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*A shortened and edited version of this article
appeared in The Ecologist, Vol. 23, No. 4, July/August 1993*

Appendix

DO YOU KNOW ME?

“Trade Not Aid” is a way of trading honorably with indigenous communities in disadvantaged areas... we listen to what these people need and try to help them with it...

Customers come into the Body Shop to buy a hair conditioner and find a story about the Xingu Reserve and the Kayapo Indians who collect Brazil nuts for us. We showed them a simple process for extracting oil from the nut... The result is we pay them more for it, and that gives them an alternative to their logging income, which in turn protects the rain forest...

The travel I do is often dangerous I am in bizarre places, remote places. What I use for that is the American Express® Card. There is no option; there is no debate.

American Express knows a lot of stores that are good for your body. And Anita knows one that's good for your soul.

ANITA RODDICK
FOUNDER, THE BODY SHOP

EXTRACTS FROM AMERICAN
EXPRESS ADVERTISEMENT

That'll do them over nicely

American Express & the Body Shop

In her autobiography, the founder of the Body Shop, A Roddick, says: “We have never spent a cent on advertising... I would be too embarrassed to do it.” And, “The trouble with marketing is that consumers are hyped out. The din of advertising... has grown so loud that... they are becoming cynical about the whole process. They have heard too many lies.”

In spite of these claims, the Body Shop runs joint advertising campaigns in the US with American Express. In these A. Roddick extols the virtues of both her impact on the Kayapó and her credit card.

American Express (through its wholly-owned subsidiary, Lehman Brothers) is heavily involved in arranging financing for James Bay II, a massive hydroelectric scheme which will flood vast areas of Cree Indian land in Quebec. Not surprisingly, the Cree are totally opposed to this. Bill Namagoose, Executive Director of the Grand Council of the Crees (of Quebec) said, “American Express is involved in arranging financing for the destruction of our lands. That American corporate interests are using indigenous peoples’ plight for their advertising is inexcusable. That the Body Shop’s ingredients are ‘environmentally friendly’ adds insult to injury.”

American Express has been criticised from several other quarters as well. It is the subject of two separate boycotts: for its promotion of fur products; and for its involvement in the “development” of an ecologically-sensitive area in Colorado. It is also known for its intimacy with the US government (Kissinger was a director and ex-President Ford an adviser) and its trade

union wrecking in Pakistan. It was one of the loudest supporters of the North American Free Trade Agreement and is also in the forefront of pressing for liberalisation in the banking services trade, which the UN Conference on Trade and Development said, “spells dangers for the Third World.”

All this can hardly be squared with Roddick’s constant reiteration about corporate responsibility. She says in her autobiography: “(Green consumers) will be looking for products which hurt no one, which damage nothing... Aware of the knock-on effect of what we are doing to others, to the environment, to the Third World and to the planet itself, they will demand information, want to know the story behind what they buy...” “If (Body Shop customers) realize the connection between certain products and major issues like the destruction of the rainforest, global pollution or the threat to primitive cultures, they will avoid these products.”

Like American Express, for example?

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