
J'accuse! Greenpeace speaks

"What we have to do first is change our economic behaviour. Mankind must develop an economic system that will create welfare in a sustainable way. This seems to have been forgotten. Instead, the economic systems have developed their own dynamics, and sometimes it seems Man has become their servant.

"We won't need to talk about the forests if mankind cannot solve the problem of the ever-growing consumption of everything, including wood: it will be merely a matter of how quickly the forests will disappear entirely. We have to reach some kind of equilibrium between the people and the resources.

"I was in Finnish Lapland in 1991. I know and believe that the Finns realised their past mistakes in logging and now replant faster than they log. I think that in many areas, especially in the northern hemisphere, people recognised that there was a fast-declining wood stock in the forest and they successfully solved this problem. But what has been greatly overlooked is that forests are much more than just wood factories: the only chance to maintain forests in the long run is to regard them as complex ecosystems. We have to bear in mind that the non-wood 'value' is probably much bigger than the wood value of the forest.

"For industry, up to now, only the wood value counted. From an ecological point of view, change in the wood stock is not the crucial point. The crucial point is how we can manage to maintain the existing forest ecosystems in their natural richness and their diversity. How can we stop the loss of biodiversity, for instance?

"Forest ecosystems are a crucial part of our lives. They are the oceans of the land ..."

"Finland and Sweden are very good examples: at the same time as they had a growing wood stock, a loss of biodiversity was detectable. The forest companies have begun to realise this, and this will have much greater implications on the way forestry is undertaken.

"Forest ecosystems are a crucial part of our lives. They are the oceans of the land, also in terms of importance for life on

Earth. So one of the most important goals for human beings on this planet is to maintain the existing forests in their natural diversity. We accept that human beings have always needed and will continue to need wood – only we can't say exactly how much.

"We totally disagree with the opinion that the forests need the people, as is very often said by the industry. We believe that the people need the forests.

**At a meeting in Hamburg,
Dr Christopher Thies of
Greenpeace gave this provocative
interview to EnsoVision's Editor,
Victor Thorne.**

"Nevertheless, we also believe that we can take away certain amounts of wood from parts of the forest without creating damage, at the same time reserving zones of no economic activity.

"As much as possible, the remaining primary forest should be left untouched, and research is needed to see how many more areas should be taken out of use as nature reserves. The greater part of our primary forests have disappeared down through the centuries, with very little left in Europe, including Scandinavia. So, unlike Canada, it would make no commercial difference to Europe's industry if the primary forests were left alone. People have come to realise that the remaining primary forests are unique ecosystems of very great importance, and the world's heritage.

"What we're calling for is a change of attitude in forestry to obey ecological rules. The main facets of forestry are clear-cutting and regeneration in plantation form. This has nothing to do with ecology; it's purely determined by economics, by money. Any cutting should be of the 'least impact' type, its nature dependent on the type of forest ecosystem: in other words, site-specific.

"That means no clear-cuts, which are unknown in the forest's natural processes. And regeneration should be ruled by ecology; that would mean natural regeneration wherever possible. Then the local economy, meaning the forest industry, must adapt to the conditions it finds rather than manipulating them to its own economic ends.

"A very good example is these huge

forest industries based on vast *Eucalyptus* plantations in Brazil. Here our vision of sustainable development differs from industry's. Industry is trying very hard to look green at the moment, and it's becoming more difficult for outsiders to form their own opinions. So I think we have to go back to philosophical principles to explain what we mean by 'sustainability'.

"If you take these plantations where there's only one species of tree, and where you even have cloning, what you get is just one type of gene. So what you have is not only a species monoculture but a genetic monoculture. You've designed the tree according to your economic needs. Instead, we should design our economy according to ecological rules.

"Generally speaking, the vast majority of indigenous or local people will guarantee a forestry that can sustain the ecosystem in the long run."

"In this connection, I would call for more democracy in the forests, with the local indigenous people empowered generally to have a decisive influence on how much and in what way wood is taken from the forests. Generally speaking, the vast majority of indigenous or local people will guarantee a forestry that can sustain the ecosystem in the long run.

"Our first concern is the future of the forest, its ecology. Forest areas left untouched might not be nice to go walking in; but the most important function of the forest is biodiversity and sustaining life on earth.

The Main Fight

"You can see where the main fight between industry and the environmentalists will be. We want people to do less but better. Industry wants to do better, but not less and better – and that's the main fight between ecologists and industry."

This interview was reprinted, with kind permission, from Enso Vision, Enso-Gutzeit Oy Co, Finland. It provides some interesting insights into what questions may be asked of New Zealand's plantation forestry industry in the future. Ed