

Bob Hunter's Column in The Vancouver Sun

1970 & 2005

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The original Mr Green

In 1971 he sailed a dilapidated vessel towards a US nuclear test to ‘wake up the world’. With that stunt, Bob Hunter, who died on Monday, changed the face of environmental protest. John Vidal remembers the media-savvy warrior — Greenpeace member 000 — who set out to save the planet

John Vidal

The all-black former trawler flaunting the skull and cross bones was steaming through a flat, calm sea past the Faroe Islands way north of the Shetlands. It was summer 2000 and through binoculars from the bridge of the MV Sea Shepherd it was clear that everybody ashore had turned out to watch this nautical spectre sent to harass the islanders for their annual habit of slaughtering minke whales.

Even as a Danish navy frigate and a helicopter shadowed the ship’s every movement, the young volunteer crew prepared their grease bombs, water cannons and booby traps to repel possible boarders. The radio crackled. “Sea Shepherd. You are not welcome. Repeat. You are not welcome. Turn round or you will be arrested as terrorists.”

Up on the bridge, both with their feet up, both totally unexcited by the mayhem they were causing in Faroese and Danish government circles, were two men: Sea Shepherd’s veteran vegan-warrior skipper, Captain Paul Watson, and his friend and mentor, an older, slighter man with a pony tail, a gas mask and a notebook. While it was clear that Captain Watson had effectively declared war on the Faroese, no one could see that Bob Hunter was wearing a bulletproof vest.

Hunter, who died on Monday aged 63, and Watson were two of many “co-founders” of Greenpeace but together they probably best represented the group’s early spirit of courage, defiance and media-savviness. “There used to be an old Sioux Indian chief who would send his medicine men to the warriors before a battle. I was that medicine man, Paul Watson was the warrior,” said Hunter that day in the north Atlantic.

Hunter (Greenpeace membership 000) and Watson (membership number 007) went back almost 30 years to Vancouver, Canada, 1970. British Columbia was at that time the most environmentally conscious and certainly one of the most intellectually revolutionary states in north America, overflowing with radicals, draft dodgers, hippies, yippies, crazies and a new breed of people calling themselves ecologists.

The young journalist who leaned towards Buddhism, and unformed, but radical counter-culture politics, fell easily into the Vancouver mix. He had spent a year in Paris trying to write his novel and developing his ideas about the media, and then several months in London, where he had joined the nascent British peace movement and had marched from Aldermaston. Returning to Canada, he had joined the Vancouver Sun, British Columbia’s main newspaper, in the mid-60s.

As possibly the world’s first “ecology” columnist, he was licensed to be both political and controversial, and in 1971 he warned readers that an imminent American nuclear test in the faraway Aleutian Islands off Alaska would cause tsunami and earthquakes and probably devastate the Pacific west coast. “The US will [now] begin to play a game

of roulette with a nuclear pistol pressed against the head of the world ... no one will know what the consequences will be," he wrote.

The test went ahead without any wave, but the consequence of his column was that 7,000 people demonstrated and a group of Vancouver peaceniks set up the "Don't make a Wave committee". After meeting occasionally for several months, they hit on the idea of taking a ship right into the next nuclear-testing zone. It had been done just a few years before by Quakers, but in Hunter's view, this was to be a media exercise to "wake up the world".

The problem was the boat. Without money or any nautical know how, the group had found an old tub called the Phyllis Cormack, owned by a heavily indebted Vancouver fisherman who could not refuse their paltry offer. Hunter, no sailor, was appalled: "I was deeply shocked [when I saw it]. Paint peeling and damp, ropes like mossy vines from her rigging, she looked too dilapidated to start up, let alone get across the Gulf of Alaska. I concluded the whole thing must be a joke. When I got home I was laughing harshly: 'Forget it,' I told my wife. There isn't going to be any trip."

But the 10 protesters set off into a disaster zone mostly of their own making. The crew began bickering and then became mutinous. The captain got angry. The boat broke down and almost sank. The nuclear test was delayed and they got lost. Lifelong enemies were made, and as the boat chugged past glaciers and wild mountains, everything that could possibly go wrong seemed to go wrong. "Saving ourselves became far more important than saving the world," said Hunter of the epic 45-day voyage.

But out of that day in the Faroes, he said, came something more important that pointed to the way in which Greenpeace would define environmental politics over the next 30 years. On a personal level, he had crossed the journalistic line from being an observer to a participant, and collectively something greater had emerged.

"We became a brotherhood. Right from the start we learned the power of the mass media to change political ideas, and also the power of activists using boats to shake the imagination."

Without knowing it, Hunter and the 10 disparate Canadians had laid the foundations for the future global organisation called Greenpeace, which, within 20 years, had 2.5 million members in 40 countries, a turnover of more than £100m a year, a flotilla of boats and the reputation of being prepared to do anything to defend the earth.

"We began to see it as a media war," Hunter was later to write. "We had all studied Marshall McLuhan [and his 'global village' theory of mass communication]. I had pretensions of being a media theorist in my own right. I had finished writing a book that suggested that a radically new consciousness had evolved in the postwar period and this has taken as its task the goal of creating "ecological awareness" in the mass mind. I had predicted the emergence of [what I called] the Green Panthers."

Hunter's theory was that the slightly crazed boat of "rainbow warriors" (a name he took from an Indian legend which he happened to be reading on the Aleutian trip and which he later gave to Greenpeace's flagship) was a "mind bomb" sailing across an electronic sea into the minds of the masses. "Madison Avenue and Hitler had

changed the face of the world through image projection; and the nascent environmental movement could hardly attempt to do less,” he said.

And when the Phyllis Cormack, chastened, returned, the world had, in a way, changed. No one had predicted the political shockwaves that their voyage had made, or how unprepared the Canadian and US governments were to counter Hunter and others’ passionate advocacy for something which the public immediately recognised as fundamental. Rachel Carson may have awakened an earlier interest in the environment, but the first truly global action group had been born.

Central to everything that followed were Hunter’s views on the media. In the Faroes, even as he was filing copy to Canada, he said of that time: “We generated huge coverage. We realised that to make enough waves and political changes, we needed to actually be the media, too. Otherwise you were doing things in a vacuum — I lecture in journalism now, I take sides. There’s room for advocacy. Ultimately, there is no real objectivity.”

Hunter went on to leave the Vancouver Sun and help merge the peace and ecology movements, becoming Greenpeace’s leading thinker. “My task was to put the ‘green’ into Greenpeace,” he said. “This movement grew out of a flickering awareness that all our relationships are political, and that the crucial one is man’s relation to the earth itself.”

Yesterday, Watson was distraught at his mentor’s death. “Hunter was the best teacher I ever had. The fact is that if there had been no Robert Hunter, there would not today be a Greenpeace organisation. It would simply be a footnote in the history books from the early 70s,” he said in a statement.

He recalled how Hunter, who had persuaded Greenpeace to move on from bombs to whales and seals, had been prepared to die, if necessary. “In 1976 we stood together on the heaving ice floes off the coast of Labrador. A large sealing ship bore down on us. The ice cracked and split beneath our feet as I said to Bob, ‘When it splits, I’ll jump to the left and you to the right.’ Bob looked straight ahead and calmly said, ‘I’m not going anywhere.’ And he meant it.” Because he stayed, I stayed and we brought that seal-killing ship to a dead stop,” he said. On another occasion, he was nearly killed by a Russian harpooner.

But above all, the ideas of Greenpeace, and particularly Hunter, flashed around the world and Hunter was intoxicated by the almost messianic effect his ideas were having. On Watson’s boat in the Faroes he read out a passage from his book, *The Greenpeace Chronicle*: “It is like we are a seagoing gang of ecological bikers who have adopted the philosophy of Gandhi but who ride roaring machines across the waves. It felt as if we were reincarnated Indian warriors whooping and hollering as we surged down the hills towards the wagon train … we had a breathtaking confidence in ourselves … night after night we sang at the top of our lungs.”

Within a few years of returning, Hunter had become the first president of Greenpeace. There followed an extraordinary time when Greenpeace, under Hunter, built up its “navy” and found a worldwide audience. Its second great coup was being beaten up

by the French navy when protesting against nuclear testing on Moruroa in 1972. The test went ahead but the world was outraged.

And then, like almost everyone else, he had a falling-out with Greenpeace. He loathed the administration side, he hated the way it was becoming institutionalised and, he feared, less courageous. He left to write books and journalism, lecture, and to become a respected environmental philosopher, not afraid of evoking the spiritual.

Above all, he respected Watson's fervour. "The time has arrived when we must begin to examine the realities of our relationship to all life around us. We need to move neither further to the left nor to the right — rather we must begin to inquire into the rights of rabbits and turnips, the rights of soil and swamp, the atmosphere and ultimately the rights of the planet," he said.

And well before anyone had understood the potential of global warming to affect all life, he warned the world what was at stake: "An eco-shitstorm is coming ... everything rests upon whether or not we come to terms with the politics of earth and sky, evolution and transformation. Otherwise, in our lifetimes, we shall suffer ... the fall of nature itself."

Eco-hero Bob Hunter used mindbombs to raise awareness

Church basements are most commonly associated with bake / sales and bingo games. But in 1971, a church basement played host to a very different kind of meeting when Vancouver journalist Bob Hunter and other hippies hatched plans to stop a U.S. nuclear weapons test.

Hunter and 11 of his like-minded colleagues decided to sail a fishing boat called The Greenpeace into the test site, and eventually, the United States shut down its testing program. The boat gave its name to what soon became a worldwide ecology movement, and Bob Hunter became its leading light.

Hunter, who died Monday after a battle with prostate cancer, was born in Winnipeg in 1941. He began his career as a journalist at The Winnipeg Tribune and then moved to The Vancouver Sun.

He went on to publish widely in newspapers and magazines across Canada, wrote 10 episodes of The Beachcombers television series, and completed more than a dozen books, including Warriors of the Rainbow and The Greenpeace Chronicle. His Occupied Canada: A Young White Man Discovers his Unsuspected Past won a Governor-General's award.

In 1988, Hunter became an ecology specialist with CHUM's City TV and CP24 channels. He was perhaps best known to many viewers for his show Hunter's Gatherings on CP24 and for his Breakfast Television segment Paper Cuts, in which he would provide a sarcastic take on the day's headlines while dressed in a bathrobe.

Hunter's studies in journalism and communications, and in particular, his reading of Marshall McLuhan, also informed his activism. He specialized in developing what he called "media mindbombs," sounds and images that he would detonate to raise people's awareness of ecological issues.

The decision to sail The Greenpeace into the nuclear test site was the first of such mindbombs, and was quickly followed by others that called attention to the seal harvest in Newfoundland, to Russian, Japanese and Australian whale hunting, and to oil companies and pesticide manufacturers. For his efforts, he was named one of Time magazine's top eco-heroes of the 20th century.

While making him a hero to some, Hunter's tactics enraged other people and amused still others. But they were unquestionably successful in achieving what Hunter set out to do: To raise public consciousness about ecological matters and to change a few minds in the process.

1970

July 22nd

Reflections on the Le Dain commission interim report:

Like every other advanced industrial nation, Canada has its old and its new *cultures*. These cultures, here as *elsewhere*, are on a collision course, mainly because the new one — the counter culture — tends to reverse almost all the priorities of the old.

Philip E. Slater argues in a new book, *The Pursuit of Loneliness — American Culture at The Breaking Point*, that these differences are fundamental and cannot be resolved by simple compromise.

“A cultural system is a dynamic whole ... change must therefore affect the motivational roots of a society or it is not change at all ... prolonged, unplanned collision will nullify both cultures, like bright pigments combining into grey.

“The transition must be : as deft as possible if we are to minimize the destructive chaos that inevitably accompanies significant cultural transformations.”



In the new (and by a all In the new (and by a all earlier standards, alien) world fashioned by our technology, the gathering forces of change can only be resisted at the enormous risk of disembowelling our own potential for growth.

Evolution, from the viewpoint of the species being surpassed, is always a corrupt business, an endless process of “degeneration” from standards which already exist and which are held to be the best, even though the world to which they represented an adaptation has ceased to exist.

That’s one of those horrible facts of life which real “maturity” allows us to appreciate without flying off the deep end, seeking to destroy our own children lest they surpass us.

The U.S. situation is different, of course, in that the counter culture cannot extricate itself from the explosive issues of racism and militarisms. It is forced by circumstances, to. battle the old culture head-on.

A civil war to that effect has already begun and cannot be turned back now except by larger and larger doses of repression — until, sooner or later, something breaks. Either the spirit of the young, or the determination of the old.

As political analyst Samuel has pointed out, the “hidden crisis” in America turns on the apparent fact that the juncture of irreversible polarization has been passed. The inability of Americans at this stage to reconcile the conflicts between the old and the new cultures can lead only to violence.

It is a deadly trap, and once a society has plunged into it there is seldom any way back.



Canada would seem not to have yet passed the point of irreversible polarization. But we are probably very close to it. It is likely to be passed within two to five years -unless we move deftly to unlock the door to rational change.

That is, if our own counter culture can be “let in” to society as a whole, it will not be forced- as the young are being forced in America -to storm the door with a battering-ram.

In Canada, as American historian Theodore Roszak told me last year, we still have a chance to make it: to avoid a senseless and mutually destructive conflict between the old and the new cultures.

But only if we begin the serious work of reshaping the motivational roots of our society enough to allow the entry of the outlawed counter culture, with its new blood, new ideas, fresh insights and visions.

It is only in a context this large that the importance of the Le Dain commission inquiry can really be measured. For the issue of the non-medical use of drugs — the psychedelics in particular has become, as Margaret Mead notes, the “chief symbol” of the conflict between the old and the new cultures.

Until there is some rapprochement on this issue, there can be little hope for further easing of the fundamental conflict.

It is a mistake to think of the Le Dain interim report as “a study of pot.” It is much more than that, nothing less than a detailed examination of the social terrain which has become one of the main battlegrounds between the new culture and the old.

What happens on this battleground will largely determine how the conflict go elsewhere.

July 23rd

Most criticism of the Le Dain interim report has been frivolous and fatuous, simply because at a time when the whole world is being ripped inside-out by technologies and pressures we barely understand, the critics are loudly announcing their old • values.

Attorney- General Les Peterson, for instance, has let it be known, in connection with the Le Dain report, that he liked the world better the way it used to be. So what?

The report is probably the best of its kind ever produced. It faced the central issue head on, realizing that what is involved is no isolated “*youth* phenomenon,” but rather a major shift in values.

The report, from one standpoint, is radical all right: at a time when most countries (the U.S. in particular) are reacting to the question of drug use by becoming more reactionary, not less so, the Le Dain commission suggests an opposite course.

It did not swallow, in effect, the World Health Organization’s definition of drug abuse. WHO considers it “abuse” when any drug is used other than for strictly medical purposes.

To go along with this attitude is to force the counter culture down the road leading to the barricades. For, although no authorities want to admit it yet, the debate over drugs, insofar as it pits young against old, stems from the fact that some of the young are saying that many psychedelic drugs *are good for you*.



Meanwhile in the other camp, the most that is being allowed is that some drugs, pot for instance, may not be any worse than booze.

When protagonists in any debate are this far apart, no matter how loud they shout they can’t possibly hear one another. This is exactly what is happening in the drug debate. And one of the great values of the Le Dain report is that it sets down what each side is saying, allowing those in favor of drug use “equal time” to explain their viewpoint.

It is silly to say the report is biased in favor of the pro-drug people. The shock for most “straight” readers comes from experiencing, for the first time, a fair balance in the presentation of viewpoints. Most official literature about drugs is so deeply, even if unconsciously biased against drugs that this kind of balance never emerges.

So, in this sense, the report is once again radical. It departs strategically from the basic premise that all drug use is a completely bad thing.

It allows — ever so slightly that some people feel that their own sensory, psychological and spiritual needs are served by the use of certain drugs, such as pot, hashish and LSD.

The report never quite gets to it, but comes closer than any other comparable document, to acknowledging that in the eyes of the counter culture, the illicit drug industry is a service industry, not ing more or less.



The dominant culture wants to rehabilitate drug users, including the users of soft drugs.

And the users of soft drugs, at any rate, want to rehabilitate the dominant culture, by easing its obsessions with power, wealth, consumption and phoney, one-dimensional human relationships.

Down in the counter culture, the basic premise is that the “straights” are the sick ones. Drugs — soft drugs — are considered to be the only means available for getting enough people out of their deadly ruts in short order. The drug culture has more than its share of evangelists.

The thing to understand about evangelists, or converts on of any kind to any cause, is that they are not amenable to any system of “rehabilitation,” because they are convinced that those who would cure them are in fact sicker than they are.

They can only view these “rehabilitative efforts” (jail sentences, in particular) as systems of repression, efforts old culture to reject the insights of the new. Dopesmoking thus sometimes takes on the trappings of an overtly political act.

There have been no authorities around who seemed capable of even acknowledging this. And the refusal to treat the use of psychedelics as anything more than a symptom of mental illness (or 25 “alienation”) as only succeeded in forcing many of the young to put their backs to the authorities, to ignore them or held throw stones at them.

July 24th

The Le Dain Commission understood one of its functions as being to provide the basis for an informed public debate on the non-medical use of drugs. To date, except for the hearings organized by the commission itself, “public debate” has mainly been a matter of often ill-informed authorities shouting their loathing and fears into the megaphone of the mass media and very little being heard from the other side, except in the underground press.

The Le Dain report, if it accomplishes nothing else, has at least set the stage for an open dialogue.

In order for dialogue to take place, both sides must be allowed to present their beliefs. The alternative to dialogue is — well, look at what’s been happening around English Bay these days. Look at the ghettos and universities in the United States.

Although most advocates of “better living through chemistry” will find the recommendations of the commission disappointingly conservative, and foes will be dismayed at how “radical” it is, the report actually manages to strike a truly objective balance. It allows, for instance, that there is no objectivity if moral judgments are constantly steering the line of argument. The central issue in the drug debate, it acknowledges, is one of opposing value-systems.



For instance, many who do not find it immoral in any way to drive to the supermarket in the jockstrap of a mechanical monster, who do not find it immoral to consume alcohol, nicotine and caffeine, nevertheless find it immoral to be carried off on a trip in the arms of some psychopharmacological “angel.”

The value of psychedelic drugs, in the view of their users, lies in their power — as Reginald Whitaker puts it — “to offer an alternative vision, a glimpse of that which technological society has erased from our consciousness, a sense of the older, deeper, perhaps even the wiser, part of our senses.”

Opponents of the psychedelics can foam at the mouth all they want about these kinds of statements. However, the burden of proof is on those who would deny it. This is precisely the kind of challenge which “the authorities” have not risen to meet. Instead, they have contented themselves with saying drugs are awful, period. Obviously, many of the kids have long since stopped listening.

The Le Dain report, even if can’t do on its own to close the generation gap, should at least go a long ways toward closing the credibility gap which lies in large part at the root of the conflict between the generations. Bob Dylan years ago sang, “Don’t criticize what you can’t understand, for the times they are a-changing.” The assumption among the young has been that “the authorities” don’t understand what the use of psychedelic drugs is all about.



The report notes: “The conclusion we draw from the testimony we have heard is that it is a grave error to indulge in deliberate distortion or exaggeration concerning the alleged dangers of a particular drug, or to base a program of drug education upon a strategy of fear.

It is no use playing chicken with young people; in nine cases out of 10 they will accept the challenge. What we have to ask is whether drug use is the way to life; the way to the greater vitality, consciousness and sense of selfworth which they seek.”

And: “We believe that the purpose (of drug education) must be to provide the basis for informed and wise personal choice. The ultimate effect that we would hope for is reasonable control and even over-all reduction in the nonmedical use of drugs. But in our opinion that effect is unlikely to be achieved by exhortation or propaganda, but rather by helping people to see where their real personal interest lies — in the long run. Drug education that is not based on a realistic view of human motivation is doomed to failure. We can no longer rely on the appeal to a sense of morality.”

And the issue here is that morality is the clothes worn by a given value system. As change, what was once “moral” is suddenly not moral, what was once “immoral” is suddenly not immoral at all. There is nothing “immoral” about the use of at least some drugs in the minds of an ever-increasing portion of our population.

And if the laws are not altered to reflect that change in values, then these people are turned into outlaws. The question is: Do we want to “lock out” the young from the future growth of this country (as the Americans are evidently doing) or do we want to bring them back in?

August 13th

Bob Hunter

The interim report on spectrum management, now in the hands of the federal department of communications, is, needless to say, a completely “rational” document.

The spectrum is becoming congested in the large urban centres, the demands for spectrum “space” are mounting, it is being used in ever more varied ways, and *clearly* something must be done to prevent the situation from becoming any more chaotic than it is already.

Fair enough so far. To deal with this problem, the Centre of Applied Research and Engineering Design at McMaster University, has recommended that Ottawa move decisively into unknown territory. The problem of spectrum “scarcity” has never existed before. It is a problem peculiar to highly advanced technological nations.

The electromagnetic spectrum is more heavily-used in North America than anywhere else, although Japan and Western Europe are making more and more use of it.

The United States, faced with worse problems of congestion, is closer to legislation establishing absolute control of the spectrum than Canada.

And since the airwaves do not recognize border lines, some aspects of the final Canadian legislation will inevitably be dictated by international agreements. Which is to say: what the Americans decide to do.

Still, within our own country there is plenty of room for uniquely Canadian legislation that might side-step some of the possible adverse long-range effects.

Unfortunately, the interim report on spectrum management fails entirely to respond in anything other than a purely technological fashion. What is purely technological is not necessarily uniquely Canadian. The pattern of thinking revealed in the report is, in fact, about as uniquely Canadian as the transistor.

☒

The “price mechanism” suggested as the most efficient means of controlling use of the spectrum is designed to satisfy the needs of the “highest value users.”

Highest value is determined on the basis of total expenditures, cost of alternatives and profits. The major premise of this approach is that “those who can best use the spectrum space will be willing to pay the most for it.” Also: “No one need be denied spectrum space provided they are willing to pay for it, to pay price receive the quantity of spectrum space in the range (of frequency) they want.”

The going price, of course will depend on supply and demand conditions in a particular, be region. highest The going in areas price where the congestion is greatest, places like Vancouver and Toronto. It would be lowest in uncongested areas like northern B.C.

The report states: "In its simplest formation this necessarily means that the highest value users will be accommodated, and if necessary the lower value users will not be. In principle this meets the major objectives of spectrum management."

For "highest value users," we may correctly read: those with the money, who expect to make even more money out of utilizing this great natural (presumably public-owned) resource.

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The report concerns itself mainly with what it calls the first two objectives of spectrum management.

"The most *important*" objective is that "the highest value uses of the spectrum ought to be satisfied." That is, the people with the most money ought to be kept happy. "The second objective," the report states, "is also concerned with over efficiency."

So after making sure the money interests are satisfied. the government should concentrate on making sure they are not just satisfied, but satisfied efficiently.

Finally, in a brief two-paragraph pasasge, the report notes that the price mechanism approach is "consistent with the third objective of spectrum *management*, namely the concept of fairness or equity." If the rights to spectrum space were sold or rented, the proceeds would "presumably" go to the federal. treasury so that taxes could be reduced, or additional public programs could be undertaken.

A remark by former secretary of state, Judy LaMarsh, is quoted. She once said, "You (the broadcasting people) do not like to acknowledge that the airwaves belong to the people of Canada."

The report concludes, in effect, that regardless of how this relatively minor question of fairness or equity is decided, "it is still true that the price mechanism can be used to achieve efficient spectrum management." Efficiency is the big thing. Fairness? Well, worry about that later.

More tomorrow.

October 14th

The eco-fronts are opening all over...

Skagit Valley. The Point Grey Foreshore. Amchitka Island. Boundary Bay. Cypress Bowl. And, of this Saturday, Robson Street.

Members of the Take Back The Earth Committee plan to be down at two points on Robson at 7:30 a.m. Saturday. They are going to put up a "barrier" of trees. Potted plants. Nobody wants to call this a barricade. but that's what it amounts to.

A barricade of living plants holding back a wave of nonlife, meaning cars.

Irving Stowe, organizer of the action, is counting on it not turning into a violent confrontation between conservationists and police. Stowe, a non -violent type himself, believes that the police have even more to gain from the action than those taking part.

"After all, those guys spend their days saturated in carbon monoxide. Their lives are made shorter as a result."

By establishing an ecological beachhead along six blocks of Robson, Stowe hopes to bring support for the idea of a pedestrian mall into focus.

"If there are thousands of people there on Saturday, it will mean we'll get a pedestrian mall."

If only 50 people show up, the project will probably collapse. But thousands are another matter. As Stowe sees it, with an election coming up not even the loose lip of Mayor Tom Campbell will dare to give the signal sending the police into battle with individuals who are, after all, demanding nothing more than some action to make the city habitable again.

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City council has repeatedly shown itself to be more interested in the welfare of land developers and real estate hustlers surprise! surprise! than the people who have to crawl in clouds of poison between the stumps of giant steel mushrooms.

So, finally, the initiative is being taken out of the hands of council.

If you want to see a pedestrian mall downtown. get to Robson as early as possible Saturday.

And, If you are no more thrilled by radiation than you are by carbon monoxide, get down to the Vancouver Ticket Centre and buy your tickets to the Greenpeace Benefit Concert to be staged at the Pacific Coliseum 8 p.m. Friday.

The concert, featuring Joni Mitchell, Chilliwack, and Phil Ochs, has been organized by the Don't Make A Wave Committee. Proceeds will go toward the purchase of a ship to go up to Amchitka Island prior to the next American nuclear weapons test.

The idea is to park the ship, loaded with Canadian scientists and citizens, just outside the 12-mile limit, forcing the U.S. to recognize the fact that there are many Canadians who feel more strongly about the hazards of the test than the federal government.

External Affairs Minister Mitchell Sharp has indicated that he "doesn't know" if the findings of Canadian scientists who investigated the previous Amchitka test will be made public. One of the aims of the Greenpeace venture is to find out what damage is being done and, definitely, to make the findings public.

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Don't forget that the next Amchitka atomic test will likely be the biggest underground blast in history. And it will be set off within a few miles of a "crack" which runs around the entire planet.

Last year, efforts to stop the test failed. One reason, obviously, was that the demonstrations and protests came too late. The countdown had already begun.

Don't wait until a few days before the next test to act. Act now. Go down to the benefit concert Friday.

Tests have indicated that the radiation from the last Amchitka blast will be with us for 66 years. And this is radioactivity which registers above the so-called "maximum permissible level." This level itself has been challenged by many scientists as being, to begin with, 10 times more than it should be.

However, if you can't relate to Amchitka or Robson St., SPEC is holding a meeting at the Labor Temple at 8 p.m. Thursday, featuring Chief Dan George, some films and speeches about environment, pollution, and what has to be done to avoid further deterioration.

Today, by the way, is Survival Day in Canada. Did you do anything to make your survival any more likely?

November 6th

ESSONDALE — There is a stranger in the mirror, someone you have never seen before. Someone as completely unknown to you, as different from you, and separate from you as a man passing on the street.

You were washin g your face in the sink. You looked up, expecting to see yourself reflected in the glass, but no, instead there's that stranger. With a cruel mouth. A crazy-look-ing guy. He's mocking you. He looks like he hates you.

Your nervous system reacts like a window hit by a stone. It starts to shatter. Schizophrenia.



Arriving at Riverview Hospital, you are assigned to the Crease Unit and given some drugs to dull your horror and fear.

You are classified as being at Level One.

That means that you can wear only pyjamas and must eat all your meals in the ward.

However, if you attend ward meetings, prove "co-operative in treatment programs," maintain "appropriate personal appearance." and keep a "tidy bed area," you may be promoted to Level Two.

All the doubts that used to prow! along the. edges of your mind have moved right in They straddle all your thoughts Not shadows any more. Certainties. You ARE useless. You know it now. You ARE incompetent You ARE a coward. You ARE impotent, ugly, disgusting.

Vaguely, you recall being confident, certain, sure of yourself. But not any more. That confidence was an illusion. You yere only kidding yourself. What a joke.

You look out the window and nothing you see stirs any feelings or urges. Nothing excites you. Nothing appeals to you. You sit or lie or stand motionless. There is nothing making you do things anymore. The engines have stopped working.

Alive But not really alive. Your body is alive. But inside you're dead. Empty.

You want to kill off your body as well, just to get relief from the horror of being a corpse dragged around by muscles that won't stop their meaningless coiling and uncoiling.

Acute depression.



Having attained Level Two at Crease Unit, you may wear your own clothes and go to the dining room to eat, although only in the company of other patients who have reached, by good behavior, a higher "level of responsibility."

Then, IF you show that you are "able to socialize with others," IF you continue to participate in meetings, and IF you "maintain appearance" ...

Well then, you might get to go out on the grounds In the company of others who have behaved so well they've got to an even higher level.

You look at the ceiling and it explodes. The faces of devils and monsters, things you have no words for, shapes that change the instant you look at them. They spread out like fans, like flames. Your dog comes up to you and you reach for him — but jerk your hand away because you see in his eyes that he wants to eat you alive.

Psychotic.



If at Level Three of Responsibility, you show "increasing involvement with others," IF you improve your appearance even more and make your bed area even tidier, and IF you are careful to keep "reasonable sleeping habits" ...

You will actually be allowed out on the grounds by yourself.

Someone is out to get you. Hurt you. Maybe even kill you. Your mind says no, that's crazy. But your nerves, your nerves are singing with tension, your heart works like a machinegun, your palms are sweaty Every noise, no matter how small, how distant, crashes into your head, landing every time on a bruise, setting off a jangling, crackling alarm.

Paranoia



There are two more levels after Level Four of Responsibility, Each one gives you more little privileges. Eventually, if you are careful and obedient all along the line, very neat, very tidy, very keen, you will get out of Riverview.

But there's a catch.

If at any point you break the rules ...
You get busted down to a lower level, with your hard-won privileges stripped away.
So learn the rules. They're a big part of what is called psychiatric treatment.
(Continued tomorrow.)

November 7th

ESSONDALE — The ward is the size of a large classroom. Pale lavender walls. Huge windows. A dozen beds. In a corner by the door to the washroom an oxygen tank has been set up. A tray of syringes. Curtains on metal frames have been rolled into place.

Heavy duty extension wire uncoils from a socket halfway around the room, winding under the curtains, connecting to a small black box. Filaments dangle from the box, attached to a transparent green plastic head-set, as fragile-looking as dragonfly wings.

The box has gauges showing voltage (up to 190) and time in fractions of seconds. It is a model B-24, EKG Sol, whatever that means.

Beside the box, a small jar of white jelly to be smeared on the patient's temples before the head-set is fixed in place.

One by one the patients are trolleyed in.

Two nurses take up positions. A burly anesthetist sticks a needle in the patient's arm. A muscle relaxant, so he won't suffer any fractures during the convulsions to come.

Then a rubbery device is fixed in his mouth, so that he won't choke to death.

The doctor, a young woman, red-haired, very business-like, waits several seconds for the relaxant to take effect, dabs the jelly on the temples.

Lightly, she fixes the headset in place.

With the nurses and the anesthetist now gripping his arms and legs, the man's eyes roll wildly for a few seconds. His forehead turns glassy with sweat. His toes curl and uncurl. He writhes. Then his eyelids slide down...

The doctor touches a switch on the black box.

No sound.



BUT THE NEEDLE ON the gauge leaps to between 130 and 140 volts. For about half a second.

Electricity surges into his head. All the normal bioelectrical energy flickering through the brain abruptly, cataclysmically, is forced to DISCHARGE, A flood of messages go screaming down through the body, alarms clanging, all the nerve cells being screamed at: CONTRACT! CONTRACT!

He snaps into an arched, frozen position, flesh on his face surging upward as his teeth crunch like a trap into the rubber thing in his mouth. Then he begins to convulse.

At first a ripple that goes right through him. Then a shudder, A sloughing wave of muscle tissue, every tendon, every cord trying to rise up and tear itself out of the electrified chaos of his nerves. The movement becomes rhythmic. Pistonlike. He turns into a giant hammer pounding furiously against nothing...

Ram! Ram! Ram!

It goes on for almost a minute.

Then the spasms ease, His body begins to uncoil. The headset and the rubber mouthpiece are removed. He's wheeled to another part of the room.

The next patient is rolled immediately in.

This is ECT.

Electro Convulsion Therapy. Nobody knows exactly how it works or what it does. But it makes acutely depressed people less depressed. Three times a week at Riverview, roughly a dozen people go through this.

Not all of them co-operate.

☒

THE RED-HAIRED DOCTOR is explaining to me how the little black box works when I hear an odd noise, Far-off. Can't make out what it is.

But the doctor knows right away.

"This next patient is going to be a bit difficult," she says.

It takes eight nurses and attendants to get the old man into the room. He is pale, stubbly-chinned, rheumy-eyed. Thin arms. Yet this moment he has the strength to fight them all.

"No! No! No! CAN'T! LEAVE ME ALONE! CAN'T! I CAN'T! NO! MY HEART! MY HEART!"

Two of the male attendants are giggling.

He thrashes frantically, possessed, his screams and cries pushing his voice beyond cracking point, and by the time they have him pinned down, all eight of them, on the table, and get the needle into his arm, all he can do is make a hacking, croaking "AH, AH, AH, AH ..."

Forty-three times he makes that noise after the needle goes in.

Then the head-set.

But no convulsions. And so another blast from the little black box. And finally, feebly, weakly, he convulses.

And is wheeled away.

(Continued next week.).

November 10th

There are categories of information that resist translation into data bits or news stories. Television spouts this stuff endlessly into our living-rooms, as though the set

were a kind of X-ray scanning the mass mind at will. One can detect shifts in the collective psyche, changes in direction, new movements, currents, developments that would likely never be otherwise noticed.

This is the kind of information that attracts the attention of neither the academics nor the news analysts.

Yet it comes bubbling daily out of the picture tube.

Back in the 1950s, when rock music stormed out of cracks appearing in the stucco of the Eisenhower Era, it was evident that something that had not been programmed was beginning to happen in Technology Land. As Eldridge Cleaver put it in his book, *Soul on C Ice*, “a radical break, a revolutionary leap out of sight, had taken place in the secret parts of [America’s] soul Bing Crosbyism, Perry Comoism, and Dinah Shoreism had led to cancer, and the vanguard of the white youth knew it ...”

A new rhythm and style sprang up like weeds among the neat rows of suburban petunias.

It took almost a decade for the “rock revolution” to be recognized by anyone except the kids whose bodies were released from the cramped postures induced by classrooms and malt shops.

Now another shift is taking place.

And by using one’s television set as a kind of periscope, one may zero in on it.

There was an informative flash on the Johnny Cash Show last week. A little monster named Bobby Curtola (or something like that) came on and began waving his hips from side to side. A complete sexless motion. Had it been back and forth (the old fornication movement. of off-camera Elvis) it would have been banned. But the sideways movement okay, no more “suggestive” than patriotic waving of a “the flag.

Curtola’s music was about as bland as a milkshake. He kept pointing his finger into the audience, triggering squeals and squirts of girlish gasping and screaming...

Sounds familiar?

Yes, but ... unlike the panting, maucous rock style of the early 50s, this was pure pablum, de-fused and unplugged from its animal sockets.

And no wonder. For once the camera switched to the audience, one saw, not a bunch of squealing teen-age girls, but a bunch of squealing children. Some were, I swear, no more than eight years old.

Perhaps the oldest was 12, maybe 13. But 13 at the most. Any suggestion of real, actual, physical sex would have frightened the hell out of these tots.

So where is the psychic shift that is taking place?

Put it this way: more outlets are opening all the time. Previously, a handful of singers (Crosby, Como, Sinatra, etc.), all singing in basically the same pop style, were enough to satisfy the general cravings of white America. Rock emerged at a time when the nation was beginning to splinter into different cultural camps — now roughly polarized into “culture” and “counter culture.”

But now the pitch is coming on at different levels. Just within the framework of rock music, there are four major streams. This Bobby Curtola prepuberty pitch. the

commercial older teens stuff. Then the heavier, acid stuff for the more sophisticated (or jaded) types who started off on Elvis. And finally, the really far-out electronic stuff.

The emergence of rock in the early 50s revealed a psychic split in America. The emergence now of multi-leveled approaches to popular music signals yet more splintering, like cells dividing.

The conflicts we have today will be seen, by the time the small kids of today have grown up, as being simple and sweet compared to the conflicts yet to come.

It's all there on the tube.

1971

September 23rd

ON BOARD THE GREENPEACE — Our karma so far has been terrific. Mainly good vibes. Crew morale high, and all that.

We figure we can't be stopped. Our luck is running as beautifully as the lovely old engine of the boat, and it pumps like a whale w with a dozen hearts.

The weather for the first four days was a dream. When we passed Alert Bay we got a radio message inviting us to drop in. A delegation of Kwakiutl Indians was waiting to wish us good luck. We were given a couple of fresh salmon.

One of the women in the delegation was Lucy Sewid, daughter of Chief Jimmy Sewid, who is the author of a book called Guests Never Leave Hungry. That is one book I'm going to read when I get back.

Just before we left, we were invited to return on the way home and carve our names on a totem pole.

Well, we left Alert Bay in a state of near-Nirvana.

It seemed as though nothing could really get us down after that.



BUT THINGS GOT EVEN better. At a place called Klemtu a day later last Friday — we ran into a happening. We had pulled in at a rotting old wharf at the Kitasoo Indian village, about 350 miles north of Vancouver, to do some last-minute work on the boat.

While we were moored we cooked the salmon and drank the last of some wine generously donated to the boat.

Suddenly we heard O Canada being sung. About 20 children were gathered on the wharf. Our departure from Vancouver had carried on television been, kids knew we were coming.

They wanted our Greenpeace button, with the peace and ecology symbols. Peace symbols were popular in Klemtu — we saw them painted on the walls of houses, on oil drums and carved on the dock.

From the moment they saw that peace symbol painted in bright yellow on our green sail, the kids could not be kept away. No ship had ever come into Klemtu carrying the peace symbol before. We might as well have been the good ship Lollipop.

On top of that, the kids had us figured as hippies.

Most of us have got long hair. And hippies, we soon learned, were these children's favorite people.

We weren't about to spoil their fun. So we all got out on deck and started joking with them and swapping stories.

Soon, they started singing. They hit on a catchy tune, something called We Love You Conrad, from the Broadway musical Bye Bye Birdie.

And they got an inspiration. They left the name Conrad out and stuck in Uncle Ben, in honor of Ben Metcalfe, our radioman, who had been taping the whole episode.

Then, they looked at me — perched in the rigging, with a headband tied around my noggin to keep the hair out of my eyes, and sang: We Love You Hippie. They sang the song over a dozen times, each time using a name for one of us.

☒

IN TURN, GATHERING on deck like a chorus line — thinking of ourselves for a moment as Captain Cormack's Lonely Hearts Club Band — we sang a rousing chorus of We Love You Klemtu.

Someone yelled to the kids:

“What do you think of the Greenpeace?”

And right away we all started singing:

*We love you Greenpeace,
Oh yes we do
We love you Greenpeace
Oh yes we do,
Oh oh Greenpeace
We love you.*

The National Film Board had been flying in a plane behind us for the first part of the trip and had left a camera and film on board so we could make a movie out of the voyage of the Greenpeace. Well, the NFB has a theme song for the movie now.

Jim Bohlen has a theory that this voyage to Amchitka is mainly guerrilla theatre. If so, it is also possibly the first scene of guerrilla musical comedy to be attempted anywhere.

The Ted K Archive

Bob Hunter's Column in The Vancouver Sun
1970 & 2005

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