

It is anticipated that initial funding would be for a three-years' programme with the possibility of future extensions, if this should prove necessary. During that time, workshops would be held in various locations world-wide, to broaden the perspective of the research and encourage other independent research in the field. The proceedings of the workshops would be published and widely circulated.

Co-sponsors and research co-workers are being approached in a broad cross-section of countries and from both the private and public sectors. Those desirous of

receiving additional information on this new initiative in major accident prevention are encouraged to write to: Dr Roger Batstone, The World Bank, Washington, DC 20433, USA.

JAMES A. LEE, *Director*  
Office of Environmental and Scientific Affairs  
The World Bank  
1818 H Street, NW  
Washington  
DC 20433, USA.

### Proposed Greek Law Could Kill Remaining Forests and Reduce Wetlands

The Greek Government should withdraw a bill, now being debated in Parliament, which could drastically damage the country's already-endangered forests—according to conservation officials at WWF International, who feel that it 'could be the finishing stroke for much of the Greek forests', and claim that 'None of the economic, ecological, or social, problems were faced before the law was drafted.'

The bill, introduced by the Ministry of Agriculture, would free 61% of Greece's remaining woodlands for grazing. Woodlands freed for grazing are not reforested in Greece. Indeed already some three-quarters of the forests of Greece have disappeared during this century, while the remainder have suffered seriously from mismanagement during recent years, according to Greek conservationists.

The same law would free drained marsh and arid lands for agricultural use. Ill-conceived drainage has already greatly reduced Greek wetlands, including those protected by the international Ramsar Convention. It is moreover to be feared that, in addition to the loss of soil, water, and

wildlife, which could follow if the law is passed, rehabilitation of threatened wetlands could be hampered, and further illegal drainage encouraged, if the law is allowed to go ahead.

Illegal and authorized encroachment for grazing, agriculture, and building, excessive woodcutting, and fire, are steadily reducing what is left of Greece's southern and central forests. Insufficient reforestation efforts do not compensate for losses by fire, while wildlife is dwindling and erosion spreading. Yet in northern Greece, the few remaining forests are still among the least disturbed in Europe, and contain a diversity of plant and animal life that is unequalled on the rest of the continent, including as it does populations of large mammals such as bear, wolf, and lynx.

PETER KRAMER, *Director of Conservation*  
WWF International  
Avenue du Mont-Blanc  
1196 Gland, Switzerland.

### The Federation of Ontario Naturalists, Canada

In 1931, a group of naturalists in the Province of Ontario, Canada, formed a conservation organization named the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (FON). The primary purpose of this non-profit organization, according to one of the founding members, was 'to provide the means whereby naturalists throughout the Province might be able, collectively, to formulate policies and provide the machinery for taking whatever action is deemed necessary in support of such policies.' From the original seven clubs with a total of only 28 members in 1931, the FON has grown to an organization representing 69 member clubs and approximately 20,000 individuals, and employing 15 permanent staff and numerous volunteers. The original purpose—of providing a provincial voice for naturalists on environmental issues—remains as one of the Federation's objectives, in addition to which there is now a second objective of promoting the understanding and appreciation of Nature through public education.

Those objectives are met through a wide variety of activities which are undertaken by FON and its members. Perhaps the most visible and colourful FON activity is the quarterly magazine, *Seasons*. Feature articles analyse current conservation issues and introduce readers to the Province's flora, fauna, and natural areas. Regular departments report on environmental news, bird migration, volunteer projects, and events for naturalists.

Public education is also attained through the activities of the Education Program. Comprehensive kits on current environmental issues—such as acid deposition, wetland conservation, endangered wildlife, and hazardous waste—are available for different age-groups, and a recent endeavour of the programme has been the production of education videos about hazardous-waste management and acid deposition. In addition, the Education Program runs a summer camp for young naturalists.

Wetland conservation has been a specific focus for public education. Through a generous grant from the Donner Canadian Foundation, fifteen volunteer wetlands awareness groups have been organized across the greatly-populated, southern portion of the Province. These groups raise local awareness of wetlands through public seminars, shopping-mall displays, school events, and in meetings with local government officials. FON staff work at the provincial level, keeping track of wetlands legislation and case-studies, and initiating contact with agricultural associations and with other conservation organizations.

The FON is also involved in active supervision and management of natural areas in Ontario. Through gifts and purchases, the Federation has developed the largest private Nature Reserve system in the Province. These Nature reserves protect, in perpetuity, a wide spectrum of botanical and faunal habitats for Nature appreciation and education.

Providing a voice for the viewpoint of naturalists and conservationists is the mandate of the Environment Program. The program staff make submissions on provincial resource-management issues, review and comment on park management plans and new environmental legislation, and provide advice to individuals and groups taking on local environmental campaigns. The staff becomes actively involved in issues that have Province-wide ramifications, such as participation in the environmental assessment process on forestry practices in Ontario, and the campaign to establish a National Park on the Bruce Peninsula.\*

Other activities of FON include support for the production of an atlas of the breeding birds of Ontario, based on five field-seasons of work by some 1,600 volunteers, the

\* Successful as of 20 July 1987.—Ed.

development of slide presentations geared to the senior crowd, and membership in provincial, national, and international organizations—such as the Conservation Council of Ontario, the Canadian Coalition on Acid Rain, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN).

Recent polls in Canada have placed protection of the environment as the *number one* priority of a majority of Canadians. This receptive atmosphere should help the Federation of Ontario Naturalists to continue gathering support for its ongoing efforts to ensure that resources are used wisely and the environment is protected for the pre-

sent and future generations. Further information may be obtained from the undersigned.

SUSAN MONTONEN, *Environmental Research Worker*  
&  
DONALD HUFF, *Environmental Conservation Director*  
*FON Conservation Centre*  
*Moatfield Park*  
*355 Lesmill Road*  
*Don Mills*  
*Ontario M3B 2W8, Canada.*

### UNEP Honours the Calcutta Social Project

The people and groups selected by UNEP for the first batch of their Roll of Honour of the Global 500 this year\*, included some well-known world figures in environmental work (although some others were conspicuously absent) and some groups 'working at the grassroots' who have received little attention locally or internationally to date. Among the latter is the Calcutta Social Project (CSP), a small NGO in Calcutta that is devoted to working among the poorest of the poor in that City. CSP was created in the 1970s by Kalyani and G.V. Karlekar—a couple now in their seventies, who were convinced of the need for a 'grassroots group' to help development (as opposed to charity) among Calcutta's poor.

The symbol of the CSP is two hands interlocked with thumbs up, signifying working together with determination, and the slogan—'a community builds itself'—reinforces the goal of self-reliance. The Karlekars chose to work with hitherto completely neglected groups—at first, some small and crowded slums in the south of Calcutta. Later they became aware of the desperate plight of the 'fringe dwellers' who live by picking the dregs of the City's garbage at the large dump in the wetlands on the eastern fringe of the City. These, members of India's 'scheduled castes', and often refugees from political disorder and war, can find very little in the refuse that reaches the dump, as it has been extensively picked-over for recyclables before it reaches that end-point. Most of what they can find consists of fragments of wood and coal cinders. They grind up the cinders and mix them with animal dung to make a small briquet that is the chief fuel of Calcutta's poor communities.

The Karlekars have worked tirelessly under appalling conditions for the betterment of those Dhapa pickers†. It has meant many a dusty and hazardous journey in their 20-years-old car or the CSP jeep out to the dump-site. There they found an abandoned municipal shed which they cleaned out and began to use as a schoolhouse. There voluntary helpers of the CSP have established an elementary non-formal programme for basic literacy, health education, and some vocational skills such as woodworking and sewing. For years the shed was dark and dank, and the supplies available were most elementary; but in the last two or three years, aided by support from Oxfam, UNICEF, and Kissho Kisei Kai (a Japanese Buddhist group devoted to social action), the CSP has been able to make improvements in the Dhapa school. The shed has been painted, a water-pump supplies water, and a simple latrine

\* See John Shaw's account on page 179 of our Summer issue.—Ed.

† Namely the people who pick over the garbage-dump of Dhapa—see also the paper entitled 'Ecological History of Calcutta's Wetland Conversion', by Dr Dhruvajyoti Ghosh & Susmita Sen, published on pp. 219–26 of this issue.—Ed.

has been built. Each year on Environment Day the children learn about environmental improvement by tree planting, and these shrubs in time will change the grim surroundings of the old refuse (the shed itself is built on the dumping-ground).

The programme has furthermore been extended significantly: the medical aid is more extensive, with pregnant and lactating women getting nutritional supplements and advice on prenatal and neonatal care. A creche and day-care are run so that parents can be free to attend the school. Those attending are paid small sums as a compensation for work foregone and an incentive to continue in school. Those who cannot attend even then may go to part-time classes. 'Graduates' of the school are aided to enter formal education. A club of Dhapa students and 'graduates' organizes cultural events and recreation, such as the periodical sports-day.

This attention to the needs of the garbage-pickers is part of a wider consciousness in the CSP of the significance of the eastern Calcutta wetlands—the most extensive wetland area adjacent to a large city anywhere in the world—and the fringe communities which live there. The wetland area is highly productive, harbouring extensive fishponds that use the City's sewage as a nutrient resource, and supporting the main vegetable farms for the metropolis (the vegetables being planted directly on the mature refuse in what may well be the world's most significant 'garbage farm').

Another recent project of the CSP is a refuge for battered and abused women and abandoned or neglected children. It began when the Karlekars took into their own home an 11-years-old country girl who was badly abused by the household that had offered to be her guardians in an attempt to obtain a free, and captive, servant girl.

In spite of the help from international organizations and the interest shown in their work by a few individuals from Canada and Australia, the CSP's Dhapa project has only a precarious status. The Corporation of Calcutta has never recognized what to them is an invasion of the garbage dump and squatter possession of the abandoned shed, although the Karlekars have made frequent requests for their work to be legitimized. Now one can only hope that, as the UNEP award to the Karlekars becomes known more widely, they will receive greater support in Calcutta itself, and the City corporation will be induced to cooperate and aid their efforts at the Dhapa dump. The address of CSP is: 1–2–3 Rashbehari Avenue, Calcutta 700 029, India.

CHRISTINE FUREDY, *Associate Professor*  
*Division of Social Studies and*  
*Faculty of Environmental Sciences*  
*York University*  
*North York*  
*Ontario M3J 1P3*  
*Canada.*