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The Planet

Western Student Publications

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Winter 2000

## The Planet, 2000, Winter

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*Western Washington University*

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# ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT

- For Sale: Happy Valley

- Western Foundation Portfolio

\* Monsanto Co.

\* Philip Morris

\* ARCO

- Hazardous Waste

WMU

*"The people shall not be deprived or abridged of their right to speak, to write or to publish their sentiments and freedom of the press, as one of the great bulwarks of liberty, shall be inviolable."*

*-James Madison, Bill of Rights draft*

These were the words of James Madison in an early draft of the First Amendment. Though they did not appear verbatim in the final document, Madison's words regarding the press as one of the "great bulwarks" of liberty established its role as the unofficial fourth branch of government and cemented its intended role as government watchdog.

America's founding fathers recognized the problems that stemmed from centralized power and censored speech. They recognized that censorship fostered oppression, and they recognized that freedom of expression would be vital to the success of their new country.

With this principle in mind, *the Planet* set out to investigate Western's impact on both the environment and Bellingham. We started at the top, with funding, and finished with a look at how people not directly involved with the campus perceive it as a member of the larger community. In between, we looked at the systems that keep the campus running: energy, water, waste and food processing.

This issue examines Western as it enters the 21<sup>st</sup> century and asks for accountability in areas often overlooked - land management and investment practices, for instance - by those of us who are only here for an education.

*- Christine W. Ross, Associate Editor*

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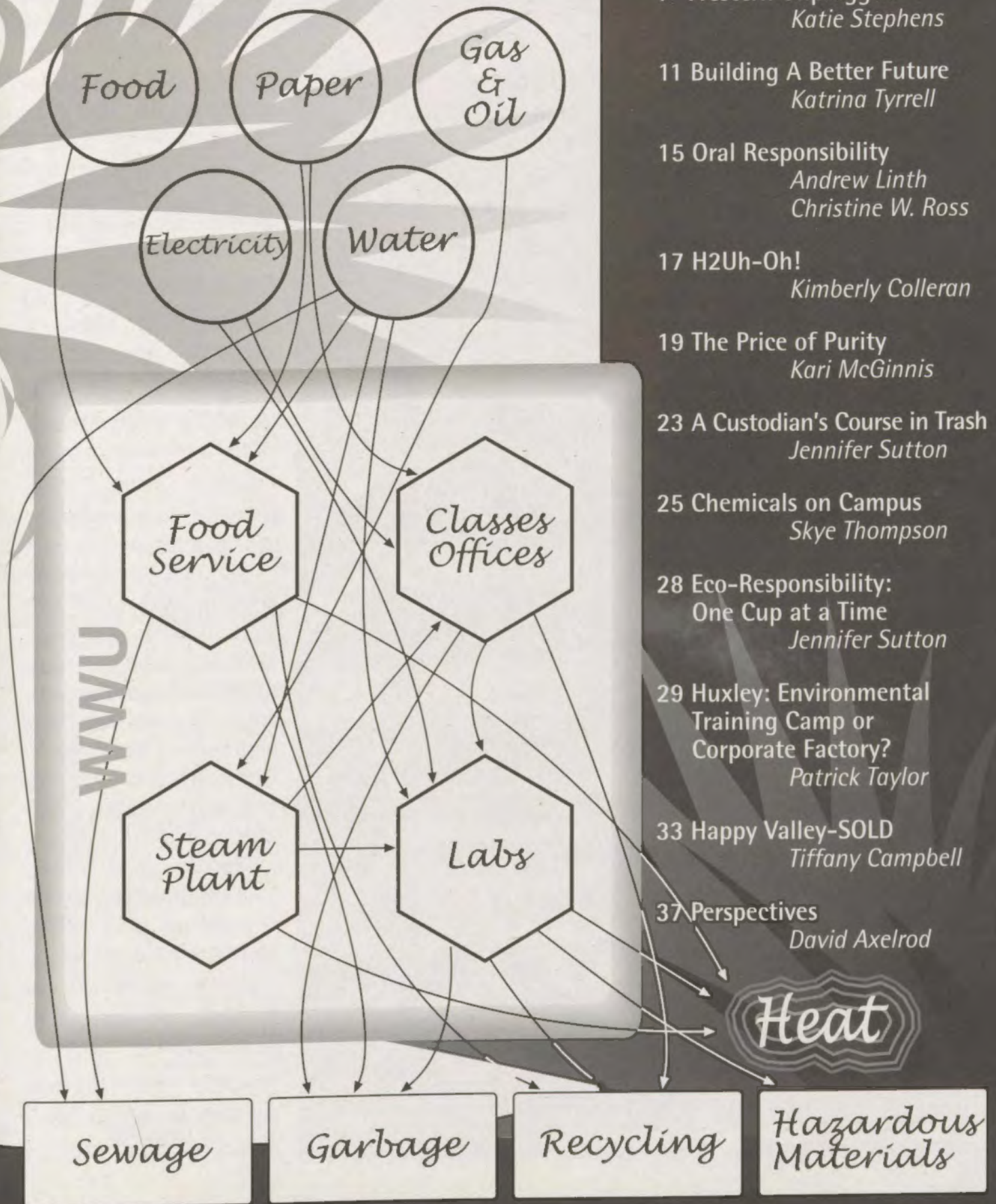
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In 1998, Washington state's Attorney General Christine Gregoire helped negotiate a multi-billion dollar legal settlement with tobacco companies accused of addicting 3,000 young people a day to nicotine - 1,000 of whom the American Cancer Society estimates will die.

"No other state (has) worked harder on tobacco litigation or negotiations," Gregoire told *The Seattle Times* in March 1999.

As of Dec. 31, 1999, Western's fund-raising arm, The Western Foundation, held stock in Philip Morris valued at more than \$60,000. Although many states and universities, such as Massachusetts and Yale, have chosen to divest their holdings in Philip Morris for ethical reasons, The Western Foundation has chosen not to - repeatedly.

"I think (our investment) is relatively insignificant in the scheme of things," said James Doud, president of the Western Foundation.



## WESTERN Value\$

by Shane Powell

Erica Oakley contributed to this story

*With companies like Philip Morris, ARCO, and Monsanto in the Western Foundation portfolio, whose future are we investing in?*

In 1995, all 5,000 members of an indigenous rainforest community in Northeastern Colombia vowed to commit collective suicide should U.S.-based Occidental Petroleum continue with a military-assisted plan to drill for oil on the tribe's ancestral lands. In the face of protest, Occidental continues moving forward with its plans.

"The result (of this suicide) would certainly garner the kind of worldwide shock ... the Exxon Valdez oil spill did in 1989 with comparable repercussions lingering for years..." stated *Oil and Gas Journal* in November 1999.

As of Dec. 31, 1999 The Western Foundation held stock in Occidental Petroleum valued at more than \$108,000. One of The Western Foundation's investment managers, Sanford C. Bernstein & Co., is the second largest holder worldwide of Occidental stock.

Such moral considerations are not a factor in the Foundation's choice of investment managers.

"Our criteria for choosing an investment manager is performance, performance, performance, and that's about it," Doud said.



Philip Morris and Occidental Petroleum are two of the many corporations sitting in the foundation's \$19-million investment mix.

According to its website, The Western Foundation is "a not-for-profit corporation designed to solicit, receive and administer private gifts that benefit Western Washington University."

Investments in stocks and bonds comprise 76 percent of the Foundation's assets, which are valued at nearly \$25 million. The returns are distributed for academic and departmental support as well as scholarships and other uses.

But some students and faculty would like to know whether or not these investments reflect the values taught at Western.

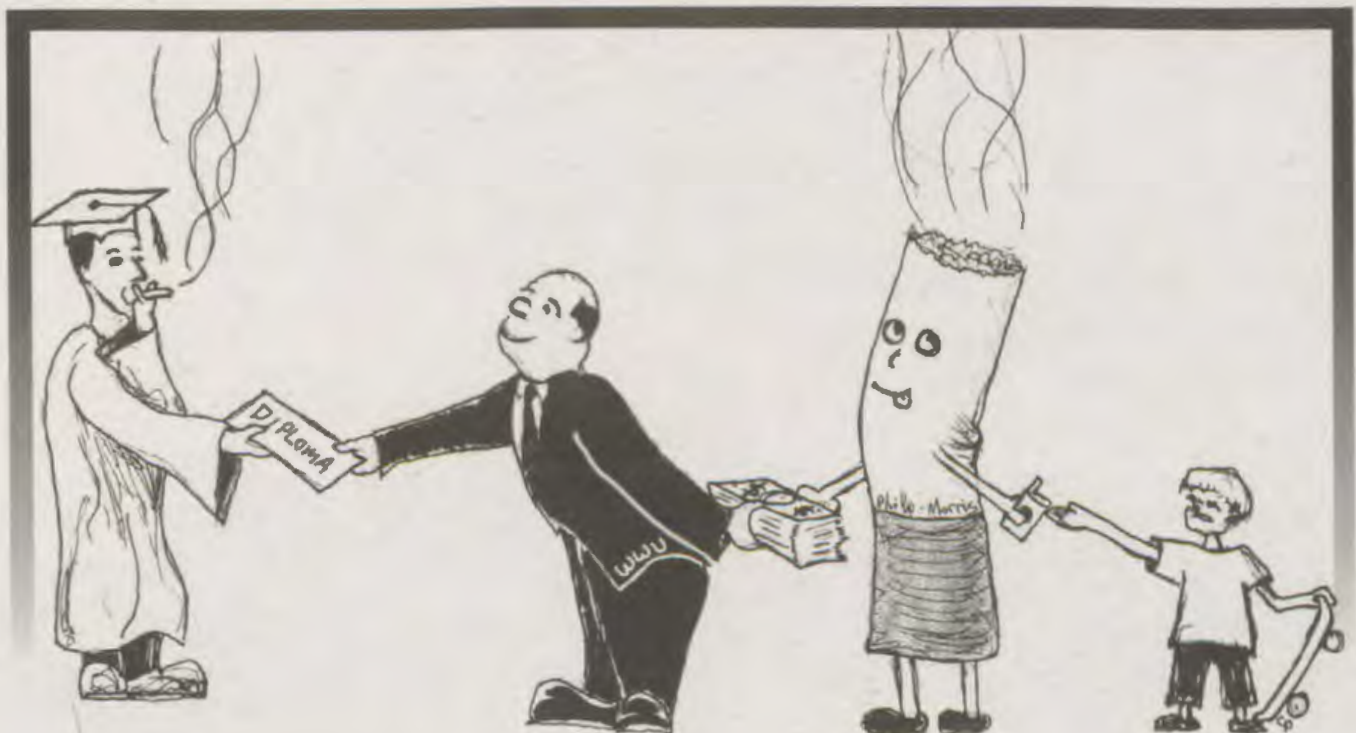
"It's contradictory that we attend a university that promotes ideas of social responsibility and then turns around and invests in corporations that do not reflect those values," said Victor Cox, Western's Associated Student Body president. "I think this is something that should be looked into very seriously."

Cox also said this was the first he had heard of the individual stocks in the Foundation's portfolio. He is the only stu-

dent representative on the Foundation's Board of Directors.

Many universities across the country have a head start correcting the contradiction Cox points out. The University of Washington, Yale, Harvard, Cornell and Stanford are a few examples of schools screening their stocks for ethical violations; a practice tagged "socially responsible investing."

"Using part ownership of a corporation and university prestige as leverage to influence corporate policies, allows a university to have a more lasting influence on ethical concerns," stated Linda Kimball,





Stanford University's manager of investment responsibility, in a 1998 *Business Today* article.

But The Western Foundation disregards socially responsible investing. The Foundation's executive director, Jean Rahn, said it is not in the school's best financial interest.

"Our plan is to invest as wisely as we can for the maximum benefit for the students and faculty and programs at Western," she said. And she added that social consideration in investment decisions poses a dilemma.

We have to ask ourselves the question: "Do we look at things like tobacco ... and (then) do we sacrifice returns for students and faculty based on these various issues?" she said.

But Doud conceded "Tobacco has been a terrible (financial) investment."

And a review of the Foundation's returns reveals that they have not done their homework on socially responsible investing. The Foundation's returns continually lag far behind many socially screened funds - last year, nearly 2.5 times behind one in particular. The Domini Social Equity Fund (DSE) was the country's first index for socially responsible investing and remains popular among the more than 15 similar funds now available. The DSE Fund has outperformed Western's

stock investments every year for the past five years. Its 1999 returns totaled 22.63 percent. The Western Foundation's 1998-1999 returns totaled 9.6 percent, a disparity of more than 13 percent and \$2.5 million in potential

### A Sample of The Western Foundation's Investments

- \* Monsanto
- \* ARCO
- \* Phillips Petroleum
- \* Tyson Foods
- \* Boise Cascade
- \* Bank of America
- \* American Electric Power

Foundation returns - hardly a dilemma or sacrifice to students and faculty.

Dr. Bradley Smith, dean of Huxley College, doesn't think there is a dilemma.

"You can't think of it as either/or; you need to think of it as you *can* have it all," he emphasized.

Smith said he would like to see Huxley's funds put into a socially screened portfolio, adding that it might even boost the college's returns.

Despite its choice to disregard socially screened funds, The Western Foundation is well educated on the premise. In 1991, students demanded the Foundation divest from companies doing business in apartheid-plagued South Africa. The Foundation's board members agreed to move 50 percent of its invested assets into a South Africa-Free Equity Fund until apartheid ended.

Following the end of apartheid, the Foundation provided itself with the option of adopting "social responsibility restrictions" by writing an exception into its investment policy. But the Foundation has repeatedly refused to take advantage of that option. The policies were written in 1993, and since they are reviewed yearly, the Foundation has neglected to use social responsibility restrictions seven times.

"We don't want to tell our investment managers how to do their job," said Doud, who has contributed more than \$25,000 to the Foundation. "We all feel that we should get out of the way and let them (investment managers) do the work."

But strangely, Doud said he agrees with shareholder activism as a method of creating change.

"It brings attention to certain issues and keeps people (in corporations) on their toes," Doud explained. He also admits the Foundation's 10 largest holdings are in companies that "do not have delightful business practices."

At \$166,875, Union Carbide is the Foundation's second largest holding with Sanford C. Bernstein & Co. In 1984, India's government charged 10 Union Carbide officials with 'culpable murder' after the company's pesticide manufacturing plant leaked a deadly gas into the community of Bhopal, India, killing an estimated 8,000 people and injuring 500,000 others. Magazines worldwide called it the worst industrial accident of the century.

The Mitsubishi Corporation is another of the Western Foundation's stock holdings. Rainforest Action Network states Mitsubishi is the world's largest harvester of tropical rainforest. Today, the corporation plans to build the

world's largest salt factory on Mexico's Pacific coast - the last pristine gray whale breeding ground in the world. The plan has outraged people worldwide. In response, money managers of 15 US mutual funds announced in October 1999 that they are done buying Mitsubishi stock.

Doud withheld his opinion on whether or not universities should be investing in tobacco and oil companies.

"I think those types of opinions are for the courts and government to decide," he said.

But the confusion doesn't end there. When social equity fund returns were pointed out to be higher than the Foundation's, Doud changed his statement regarding choosing investment managers on the criteria of "performance, performance, performance," to **"Well, the question involves a lot more than just performance. You get into a lot of other issues."**

Some of the Foundation's apparent confusion over socially responsible investing may have more to do with donations than investments.

Oil companies alone have donated more

than \$400,000 to the Foundation. And with the Foundation's investments pulling in less than half of the S&P 500 fiscal-year market returns, the risk of losing such donations could be costly.

But eventually costs must be measured by more than just dollar signs. Whether it means considering the lives of 5,000 indigenous Colombians or thousands of easily influenced children, price and profit must ultimately be gauged in the realm of social and environmental health.

The Western Foundation holds the weight and responsibility of \$19 million. Responsibility means more than just letting "the investment managers do the work." It means recognizing that we live in a world where neutrality is no longer an option. It means all aspects of the university's role in society are significant. It means investing our knowledge and values in a world we all depend on.





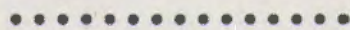
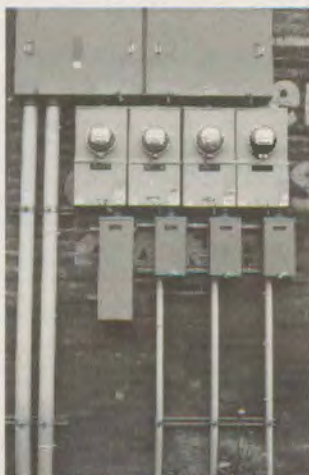
# WESTERN

# UNPLUGGED

by Katie Stephens



Wiring 11,000 students for learning is expensive. Is the environment paying the price?



The Environmental Studies Building looms solemnly in the farthest corner of Western's campus; its concrete pillars lead the eye upward to precipitous glass ceilings. Housing a variety of natural science classrooms and labs, its façade is that of an energy-friendly shrine. The vast interior atrium exposes a mid-air maze of pipes and ducts, while shelves of suspended fluorescent lights illuminate students' paths.

Despite good intentions, the Environmental Studies building is an energy hog, eating vast amounts of power as precious heat is lost through those picturesque glass ceilings and sturdy concrete walls. Fans and hoods are perpetually running, sapping large amounts of electricity to push old air out and pull new, cold air in.

The seemingly innocuous daily activities filling school routines are actually masking a continual, silent consumption of energy that sneaks stealthily into most of the buildings on Western's main campus. Keeping classes warm, providing adequate lighting and running countless pieces of office equipment are prices paid not only in dollars and kilowatts, but in the depletion of mostly nonrenewable energy sources.

The price of maintaining a facility like Western rivals the local Georgia Pacific paper mill for energy usage, consuming an average of 30 million kilowatt hours to GP's 50 million annually.

Against the backdrop of the Physical Plant, where High Voltage/Danger signs guard powerful equipment, Tom Thorp, the utilities services manager at Western,

further explains the awesome energy totals Western accrues on a yearly basis.

"Our biggest consumer of electrical energy is in lighting and other kinds of innocuous office equipment," Thorp said. "Things you wouldn't really consider, but when you add them all up, you will find a tremendous amount of energy used."

And add up they do.

Thorp explained that Western contracts utility providers, such as Puget Sound Energy, to fuel Western's own Viking substation. Totals for electricity last year averaged \$135,000 per month. Because of Western's favorable high-usage institution rate, each electrical kilowatt-hour costs the university roughly three cents. A typical Bellingham household, in contrast, pays almost five cents per kilowatt-hour.

And then there's the gas bill.

Behind the Art Annex, frantic plumes from Western's steam plant fill the sky, heating the main campus by generating steam fueled from natural gas. The standard basic measurement for gas is a therm; last year Western used 1.9 billion of them at a cost of \$600,000.

Huge numbers, however, do not necessarily indicate wasteful or excessive usage. Thorp said Western is actually maintaining steady energy use relative to increased student enrollment and continual expansions.

"Western has been expanding consistently since

the question.

In the past, Western considered cogeneration, an alternative that utilizes waste energy to produce heat or electricity. The projection and initial study, however, concluded that this method wouldn't have saved any more money than the current operating system, though it would have saved significant landfill space. The pursuit of alternative energy sources has since been abandoned.

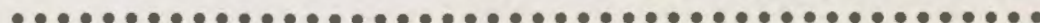
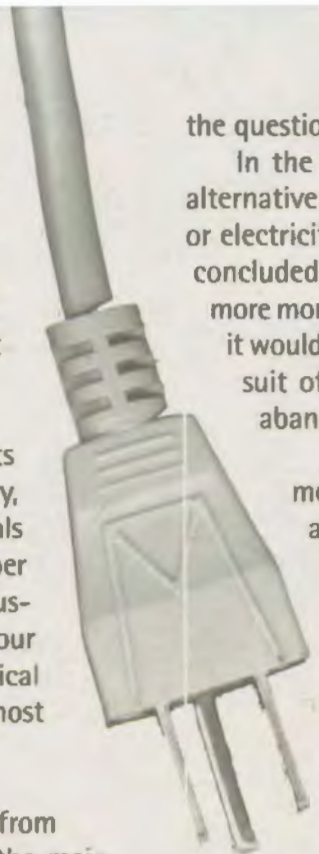
Financial backing for a new, more environmentally sound system in place of one that is already relatively inexpensive is hard to justify when applying to the state for increased funding, Thorp said.

"You won't see us trying to invent any new energy-saving methods - but we'll always take advantage of the latest advances in technology," Thorp said.

Energy-efficient devices and products are becoming more widespread in Western's core campus. Light motion detectors have been installed and retrofitted in many of the new science buildings and older buildings as well - including classrooms in Bond Hall, Humanities and Miller Hall.

However, the practicality of such devices is unfortunately undermined when buildings bustle with activity at all hours of the day.

Technologically advanced fluorescent lighting, designed to use less energy and still provide the same



The price of maintaining a facility like Western rivals the local Georgia Pacific paper mill for energy usage, consuming an average of 30 million kilowatt hours to GP's 50 million, annually.



about 1992," Thorp said. "We are becoming more efficient in the process. We've built some very expensive buildings to operate, which are the science buildings, yet at the same time they're using the latest technology to keep their operating costs down, and it's paying off."

In the long run, using alternative energy sources could pay off in terms of reducing environmental impact. But when money drives the decisions, it's out of

amount of light, Thorp said, has been used for years.

Even efficient systems, however, have their drawbacks.

Relatively clean-burning natural gas is utilized in the steam plant, creating byproducts such as water vapor, carbon dioxide and small amounts of sulfur dioxide. These products are not innocent. Carbon dioxide is the largest contributing factor to global warming. Sulfur dioxide is the leading component in acid rain.



Steve Henson, associate professor of economics at Western, explains the dynamics of energy use to students in his energy of economics class.

"Cost comes in a variety of different forms," Henson said. "Even energy sources that you might think of as being relatively environmentally benign are not necessarily so."

Henson settled back in his swivel chair, thumbing through the proliferation of at-his-fingertip facts pouring from the ceiling-to-floor library in his office.

"The point is that you have to look at every stage of the operation and you can't simply point and say

'wind is good and coal is bad,'" Henson said. "No matter what energy source you consider, there are costs and benefits, and what it comes down to is comparing them in particular situations."

The tradeoffs Henson described weigh the good with the bad of all types of energy - renewable and non-renewable. Hydroelectric plants, which generate roughly 60 percent of Washington's electrical power, alter aquatic environments and disrupt the natural habitats of marine and land animals.

Energy conservation becomes the natural solution to reducing the environmental costs of generating electricity and consuming resources - but it must be initiated on a personal level.

Each building on Western's main campus and most of the residence halls are individually metered - but they're not billed for individual usage. Students may take advantage of the virtually unlimited use of energy Western supplies, stifling efforts for conservation.

"If the good is free for the individual user, we know that it is not free to society," Henson concluded. "There will be a tendency to use more than what we call an economically efficient amount."

What about the energy bills for the Environmental Studies facility? Do Huxley students conserve more, heeding the cry for reducing environmental burdens?

Eric Youngren, graduate student of geography, said even Huxley students have trouble practicing what they preach.

"I find myself turning lights off after people all the time," Youngren said. "Even around here. I mean, we're an environmental science college and lots of people still don't think it's important to shut things off."

Last year, the Environmental Studies Building ranked fourth in heat consumption compared to the other 21 metered buildings. It ranked tenth in consumption of electricity.

.....  
"I find myself turning lights off after people all the time...even around here. I mean, we're an environmental science college and lots of people still don't think it's important to shut things off."  
.....

"It's hard to conserve here because we want to always maintain a certain environment that is conducive to what our mission is - education," Thorp said. "It's hard to go in and turn off lights if it means it's going to reduce the ability of our faculty and students to teach and learn. We could be miserly and shut these things off, but you'd be wearing gloves and coats in class."

Within the tidy confines of keeping costs down through inexpensive power, Western balances its utility checkbook with amazing accuracy. But even though energy use and increasing expansions currently fit snugly within dollar-sign parameters, the environmental impacts of old, energy-eating buildings and the myth of unlimited usage without consequences looms dead ahead.

Meanwhile, the campus still hums with activity, lights blazing and heat wafting to warm chilled bodies. The Environmental Studies building still sits quietly in its corner.

"Energy was not really a concern," Thorp said in regard to construction of the giant. "Architecturally, it just looks good."



.....  
But even though energy use and increasing expansions fit snugly within dollar-sign parameters, the environmental impacts of old, energy-eating buildings and the myth of unlimited usage without consequences looms dead ahead.  
.....



Constructing with a conscience: Does the university's building budget balance with the toll on the planet?



## *for a better* **future**

by Katrina Tyrrell

A splash of emerald paint, a floor covered in olive shag carpeting or a few newly planted fir trees may appeal to the color green-loving person, but remodeling alone is not enough to make a building truly green. The "Green" building is a term for resource-efficient buildings, buildings that use materials wisely by including recycled, renewable, and reused resources in construction. Different shades of green do exist, but the selection is a process often decided by money, at least at Western.

It costs millions of dollars to construct a building like Haggard Hall, and incorporating ecological concerns into the design of buildings is a new challenge for Western.

Western is aware of green building standards and is trying to incorporate them, but for the most part doesn't follow them, Western's Construction Manager Bob Schmidt said. Environmentally conscious issues are a low-end priority because recycled materials are generally expensive, and the university is obligated by the state to take the lowest bid possible, he added.

"Whatever the lowest price is, we generally

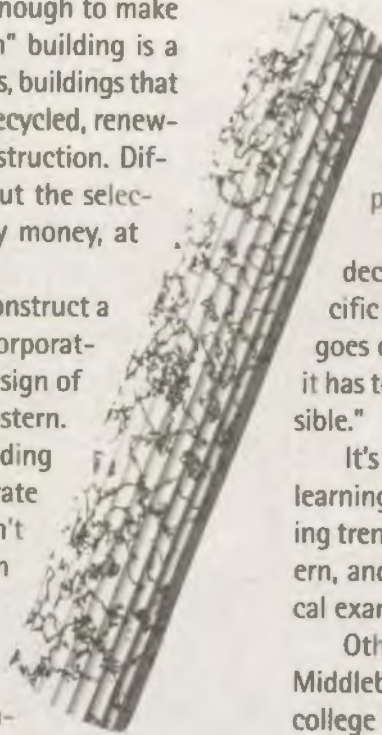
award that contractor and hire them to build the building," said Gil Aiken, senior architect in Facilities, Planning and Operations at Western, "and they actually do the ordering of the material."

Funding comes from taxpayers, and by requesting specific material Western would show favoritism and eliminate competitive prices, explained Aiken.

"Sometimes we don't make the conscious decision about what to use in terms of specific recyclable material," he said. "When this goes out to bid ... it's public money that's used; it has to be biddable from as many sources as possible."

It's ironic that Western is a respected higher learning institution, yet follows commercial building trends in order to save money. Shouldn't Western, and especially Huxley, be setting an ecological example for its students?

Other schools show the trend can be broken. Middlebury College, an independent, liberal arts college in Vermont, recently announced plans to use locally grown, certified wood and slate taken from a nearby quarry in the construction of its new Bicentennial Hall - the largest ecologically



planned academic project of its kind in the country. By using this wood, the college is helping to protect forest habitats while contributing to the local economy.

Although Western has incorporated some certified wood, which comes from forests that are managed for sustainability, they don't require it in their blueprints, Aiken said. It costs more to produce sustainable wood, making the building more expensive.

"We're trying to build buildings that are going to last at least 50 years," Aiken said. "So we kind of stick with building materials that we know are going to last."

Western uses a few environmentally friendly materials, including recycled building insulation and aluminum window frames, reused linoleum and mineral fiber ceilings. But for buildings in Western's future, traditional materials will still be used, like concrete, steel and gypsum wallboard, Aiken said.

tainable Development.

"Plans change and buildings kind of outlive their usefulness," Aiken said. "And then it's time to tear it down and build another one. Unfortunately, most of them go to construction debris yards, which are basically garbage dumps."

Reusable and recycled building materials are an evolving industry, and large, institutional facilities haven't found a lot of ways to use them, Schmidt said. The use of these materials is more common with small-scale residential homes, he elaborated.

But other colleges across the country, even in our own state, have found ways to prove reusable materials can be incorporated into their building designs. Imagine running on a surface made out of old sneakers and tires. About 4 million scrap tires are discarded each year in Washington state alone. SATECH, an environmental technology company based in Kirkland, Wash., discovered this scrap

**"It gets to be a taxpayer thing, you know. People like the cheapest way possible."**



It makes sense to employ materials that are still useful, rather than destroying or disposing of them. Construction-related waste accounts for about one-fourth of the total landfill waste in the United States, according to the United States Department of Energy's Center of Excellence for Sus-

rubber could be used in engineered athletic surfaces for sports such as basketball, football and track. The company designed a regulation court using more than 25,000 old sneakers and 1,000 scrap tires at Puget Sound Christian College in Edmonds, Wash. The basketball court is the

country's first of its kind.

Western has engaged some small-scale recycling efforts, most recently the removal of bleachers in Carver gym. The 40-year-old fine grain Douglas Fir from the bleachers, which came from old-growth trees, was reused in parts of Old Main.

"Rather than taking all that wood out of the gyms and just throwing it away," Aiken said, "we kept a good part of it so we could use it for hand rails and wood paneling. That is a good example of a building material that is too valuable now to throw away. So we recycle it and try to use it."

Traditional buildings consume valuable resources and generate vast amounts of waste. A standard wood-framed home consumes more than one acre of forest and the waste created during construction averages from three to seven tons, according to the City of Austin Green Builder Program, the nation's first environmental rating system for home construction. Using recycled materials reduces the amount of raw material taken from the land and, in the end, the amount of waste that reaches landfills.

ment to the odds of that company getting the contract."

"It gets to be a tax-payer money-thing, you know. People like the cheapest way possible," he added.

Many building products are available that are manufactured from recycled materials. According to the Center of Excellence for Sustainable Development, organic asphalt shingles contain recycled paper, and cellulose insulation is manufactured from recycled newspaper. These alternative materials also conserve resources by allowing more efficient use of scrap lumber, which might otherwise be landfilled.

Businesses, like the not-for-profit ReStore in Bellingham, divert usable building materials from going into the landfill. The store has kept more than 5.5 million pounds of used materials from the waste stream by selling them to be used again.

Nicole Champagne, employee at the ReStore for about a year and a half, took a quick break from the hustle of a typical busy Saturday afternoon.

"I think salvage is really just starting to be known and thought about," Champagne said. "I think that in the future it's possible to create net-



"Plans change and buildings kind of outlive their usefulness, and then it is time to tear it down and build another one. Unfortunately, most of them go to construction debris yards, which are basically garbage dumps."

Residents of the industrial world comprise only 20 percent of the world's population, yet consume 86 percent of the world's aluminum, 81 percent of its paper, 80 percent of its iron and steel and 76 percent of its timber, according to the Center of Excellence for Sustainable Development.

Western's geology department research technologist George Mustoe agreed that money is the reason for the lack of recycled materials.

"Imagine an architect," Mustoe said, "unless the contract specifies that everyone has to do recycled materials as part of the contract, anything that pushes the price up is a detri-

works in which usable commercial material can be reused. People are tearing down buildings all the time. Brand new buildings, like three-year-old buildings, are being torn down. The turnover rate of buildings is just immense."

Unfortunately, Western is not networking with stores like The Restore and cannot even take left-over building materials to them.

"If we just take all the windows out of an old building and take them down to the Restore, it's sort of like a gift to them, and it shows that favoritism," Aiken said. "Because it's public money that built the buildings in the first place we can't do that."



"I just think it's all about networking. If you can connect the need with the supply...it's totally do-able. There's so much material out there."

The store gets a lot of work with contractors, removing items and bringing in a lot of usable materials, but ironically it's often hard to justify the use of used materials to their clients, Champagne said.

"On the whole it's cheaper but there are definite instances where it is just easier to go buy it new," Champagne said. "Most people who hire contractors want new stuff. Especially for big projects, it's just much more of a hassle for them to try and find the material."

Material that was once used for a specific purpose is being used for totally new purposes, Champagne explains. The most popular new idea from the Restore is constructing a desk made from two reusable file cabinets and a door. The hole from the old doorknob gets used for computer cords.

Networking is one solution to utilizing reusable products, as illustrated by SATECH's discovery of used sneakers and tires.

"I just think it's all about networking," Champagne said. "If you can connect the need with the supply ... it's totally do-able. There's so much material out there."





Western's largest dining service recycles nearly 2,000 pounds of cardboard per week. That's the good news...



## Responsibility

By Christine W. Ross  
& Andrew Linth

They stand in a twisting line, feet shifting, stomachs growling, waiting for food that appears without failure three times each day. Few see or understand the verboten waste-trail of something as innocuous as a piece of pepperoni pizza.

Sodexho-Marriott is the contracted food service provider for Western. Its staff prepares fast, hot, affordable meals at microwave speed. But a quick and cheap meal does not always come at a small cost. And the final cost ultimately affects not just students, but an entire society.

Lots of students mean lots of food. Lots of food means lots of solid waste. And lots of solid waste means someone is responsible for appropriate disposal. At Sodexho-Marriott, the questions of whose responsibility that is, and why it is lacking, need answering.

Much of the company's waste, including food waste, packaging material, paper, plastic and tin cans,

**"We put the lids in a separate bag so the janitors won't get cut by them when they are handling the garbage. There's no recycling for those big cans and I know we have got to go through a lot of them."**

is landfilled. Not because it has to be, but because it is a problem ignored by many. Recycling and composting are prioritized below profits that have to allow for hungry college students on a limited income.



However, Sodexho-Marriott is not entirely at fault. Western, despite its authority to supervise the food service operation, failed to include a single section regarding solid waste management – including recycling and disposal – in its 1990 agreement with the corporation. The contract expires this summer.

According to the agreement, "The university ... may make reasonable regulations and may establish reasonable performance standards with regards to the food service operation."

Which raises the question: Are recycling and composting unreasonable?

Nori Yamashita is director of dining services at Sodexho-Marriott. He says recycling and composting shortbacks are cost-related.

"If the students are willing to pay extra, then we can (put more effort into it)," Yamashita explained. The company serves roughly 7,400 meals per day to students at the Viking Commons,

Ridgeway and Fairhaven dining facilities. The bottom line for Sodexho-Marriott, he says, is providing students with the best food possible at the lowest possible price.

Sodexho-Marriott employs about 400 students,

Yamashita said, and at most any given time at least one of them is working with recycling.

"We recycle old cardboard (without wax) and tin cans as much as we can," he said, adding that storage and sanitation issues exist with tin recycling, such as the fact that cans need to be cleaned out and crushed, with labels removed, before they can enter the recycling process.

"We can't just go out and spend extra money on labor because that is what we want to do," Yamashita explained. Students, however, notice the waste.

"We have the big industrial sized cans of apple sauce or pears or ketchup and I've noticed we throw the big tin cans in the garbage, just toss them in the garbage," said Sodexho-Marriott student employee Derek Frankart.

"We put the lids in a separate bag so the janitors won't get cut by them when they are handling the garbage. There's no recycling for those big cans and I know we have got to go through a lot of them," he added.

Up to 30 large trash bags of tin cans are sent to the trash compactor behind Viking Commons per week, each industrial-sized bag containing between 10 and 20 uncrushed one-gallon tin cans. Vegetable and fruit matter solidifies the mass. The nearby Sodexho-Marriott loading dock reveals a trash compactor stuffed with large tin cans of black beans and spaghetti sauce, bags of salad fixings and boxes of overripe bananas. The only thing missing is someone there to sort it.

What doesn't go through the recycling center goes to the trash compactor, with one exception.

For more than two decades Fairhaven students have composted organic material at their five-acre site, generally identified as the Outback Farm, between Fairhaven and Bucharian Towers, said Outdoor Experiential Learning Coordinator Cori Schlender.

"What we get from Marriott comes in little buckets," Schlender said, explaining that the farm prefers organic material and Marriott doesn't have any.

"Right now Marriott is involved with giving us their waste from the Fairhaven Commons, but the bulk of our compost comes from Terra Organica," Schlender said.

Fairhaven is implementing worm bins, or boxes containing soil and worms to break down organic food, Schlender said. Because Sodexho-Marriott doesn't deal with organic food, Fairhaven volunteers get what they can from the dining services food prep

operation.

"They come over and pick up some of the vegetable cuttings," said dining services director Yamashita, adding that Sodexho-Marriott is open to working with Fairhaven students and faculty interested in improving the program.

In 1998, an environmental seminar class spent a quarter examining Sodexho-Marriott. The report applauded Sodexho-Marriott's efforts but suggested several areas for improvement. Paper towels and paper napkins, for example, can all be composted. But many of them are not.

The same report identified 10 other universities and colleges actively engaged in composting programs throughout the country, including the University of Vermont, Dartmouth and the University of California at Berkeley.

Sodexho-Marriott workers at the Vermont campus separate food preparation scraps as well as food residuals from dirty plates for composting.

Sodexho-Marriott has made an effort to reduce waste. It recently began the Crossroads program, which Yamashita calls "just-in-time" cooking.

"We prepare most of the food items the day before," Yamashita said. "We can blanch the vegetables ahead of time and then cook them as we need them so we don't have to cook more than we need at once ... Once you cook the product there's not really much you can do."

Solid waste sorting could be the answer to recycling and composting problems. Reducing solid waste means reducing the use of natural resources, reducing the transportation of goods and packaging and reducing the material disposed of in landfills or incinerators.

It would seem that ecological responsibility comes second to profit in the case of our largest meal provider.

**Students need to eat. Sodexho-Marriott needs to make money. The environment is caught in the middle.**

Yamashita has said Sodexho-Marriott is willing to work with students to improve its program. Changes will come if students remain willing to confront the issue. Sodexho-Marriott does have the capability to improve its recycling and compost practices - Western students, with support from the administration, should be there to assist it along the way.



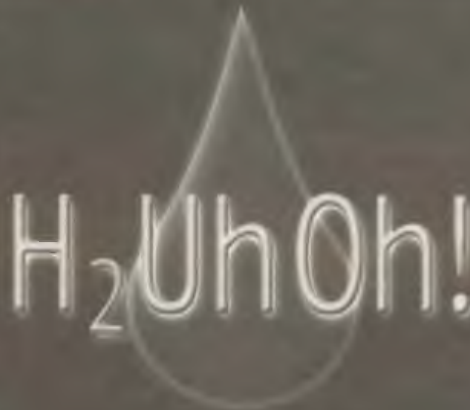
## Is Western a water-soaking sponge in a lake of limited resources, or a camel hell-bent on conservation?

The Bellingham Public Works Department compiles an annual list of its 12 largest water consumers. Between 1989 and 1998, Western topped this list four times. Of the dirty dozen compilation, Western consistently ranks in the top third.

During the past nine years, Western consistently used the most potable water out of all Bellingham Public Works' customers. Top competitors for water resources in Bellingham include Water Districts number 10, 2 and 7, which include St. Joseph's Hospital and the Bellingham School District.

In 1998, Western's third top year in a row, it consumed 250,500 gallons of water per day, or roughly the equivalent of twenty-five Carver Gym pools full.

"Western Washington University has no water conservation plan and there is no emphasis at the Physical Plant to promote a conservation program," said Tom Thorp, utilities services manager for Western. Potential benefits exist from lowering water use on campus, but Thorp doesn't



H<sub>2</sub>UhOh!

by Kimberly Colleran

know if the costs associated with these benefits will balance out.

"In talking about water conservation and the economics of it, you reach a point of diminishing returns," Thorp said.

Water in Washington is cheap, and even cheaper in Bellingham, which has a basic flat rate of \$18.00 per month compared to \$19.10 per month for the rest of Washington. But the efforts involved with water-saving plumbing fixtures and education programs, cost money. Maybe this is one of the fundamental problems with water conservation, contends Western professor Steve Henson, who teaches a class on energy economics.

"When costs exceed benefits, it makes sense to conserve," Henson said. "Retrofitting fixtures isn't cost effective, but maybe that just means water is underpriced. If the individual unit of water costs more, then more and better conservation efforts would be ensured."

Past efforts at water conservation on campus have, however, shown it is possible to save water and reduce costs at the same time. During the 1992-93 academic year, the Physical Plant installed low-flow showerheads

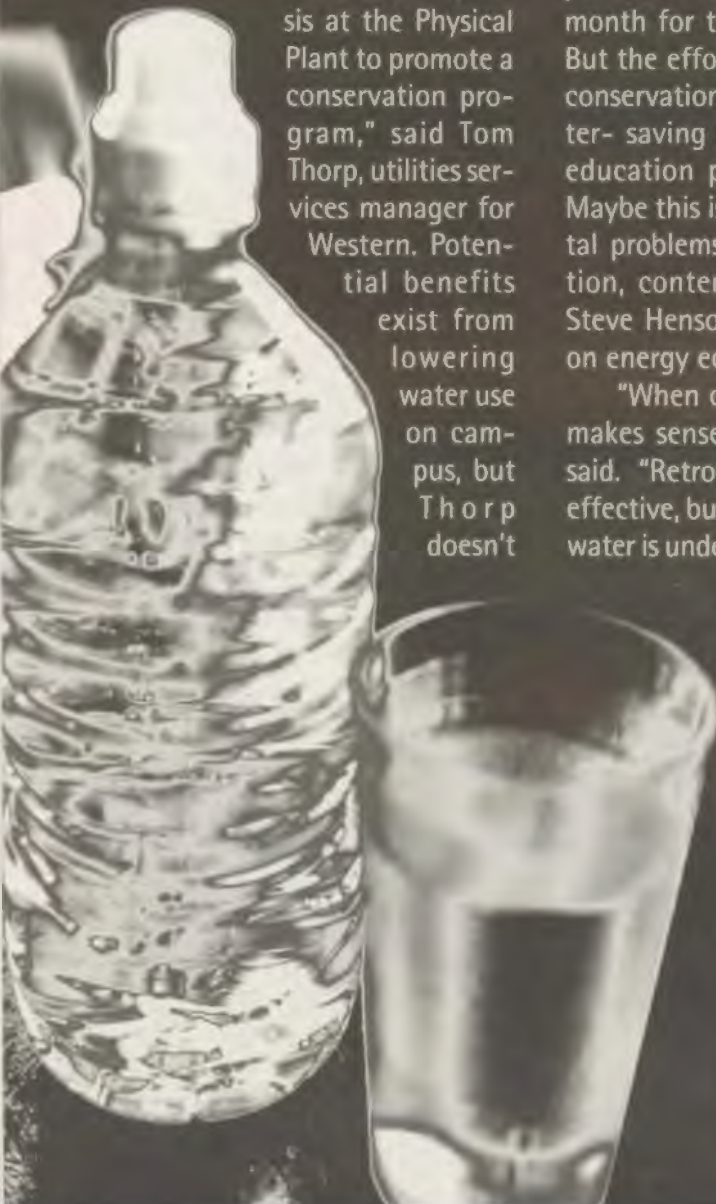
in several residence halls as part of a pilot program for the city's water-conservation plan. The new showerheads reduced water consumption by 13.5 percent in Higginson, Edens, Nash and Mathes halls. Not only did the low-flow showerheads reduce water consumption in the dorms, but they also saved the university \$10,434 over two years. Despite these savings, water conservation on campus is still not considered cost effective.

Campus water is divided into three types of use: academic, housing-and-dining and irrigation. Individual meters on campus monitor water use.



"If there was going to be a major emphasis on conservation, it would be on housing," Thorp said, "because it's on an individual basis." The installation of the low-flow showerheads may have saved some water and money, but housing-and-dining water use still accounted for 62.9 percent of Western's total water use during the fiscal year of 1998-99. Academic use was less than half of that, and irrigation less than one-third.

Education efforts at other universities and in the city of Bellingham have proven effective in reducing water consumption, but so far no efforts have been undertaken at Western.



*In 1998, Western consumed 250,500 gallons of water per day, or roughly the equivalent of twenty-five Carver Gym pools full.*

California State University at Northridge implemented a water conservation program in 1986 that included the distribution of educational materials, placement of stickers in bathrooms and retrofitting plumbing with water saving devices. A 24-percent reduction in water use resulted from the efforts. Brown University has undertaken similar efforts with a savings projection of 34 percent. This would save the university \$300,000 annually.

Bellingham Public Works Superintendent of Utilities, Tony Seman, also heads the city's water conservation program. The program includes extensive educational efforts such as placing a daily water fact in the Bellingham Herald during the summer months, holding public forums and workshops and distributing conservation pamphlets to Bellingham citizens. In indoor water conservation during the winter months, these efforts showed a savings trend between 10 percent and 13 percent in 1998.

"No coordination or emphasis has been given to the university - I can't say what the reason is," Seman said. Bellingham Public Works coordinates educational conservation

programs with Bellingham Public Schools, but has not deemed such efforts necessary with its number one potable water consumer. A few of Western's faculty members have been involved in meetings concerning water conservation in the city, but the cooperation between the two entities has gone no further.

In the Pacific Northwest, where water seems to be running abundant, some people question whether water conservation is necessary. Bellingham receives an above-average amount of rain each year, and the streams and rivers are filled with water in the spring.

"In general, people are careless with water," said Cori Schlender, of the Outdoor Experiential Learning Site, part of the Outback Farm in Fairhaven College. "The United States used to have the largest aquifers in the world, but they are quickly being depleted due to irrigation, farming and contamination. We're abusing our water rights and depleting our fresh water supply."

Perhaps Bellingham seems to have more than enough water for its residents. And perhaps the tuition of students at Western pays for the water used on campus, but Schlender is not alone in thinking that we need

a wider ecological perspective than what lies in our own backyard.

Western's water comes from Lake Whatcom and its watershed. The middle fork of the Nooksack River has been diverted to funnel water into Lake Whatcom to supplement our water use. When the diversion is kept open, it lowers the levels of streams that the middle fork normally feeds, widely affecting its ecosystem, including the highly political salmon among other flora and fauna.

Joan Vandersypen, laboratory manager for the Institute for Watershed Studies acknowledges that we have to keep in mind how our use of water affects the ecosystem.

"It's not like we're going to run out of water," Vandersypen said, "but the more we open the diversion, the lower the stream levels are for the salmon."

"Water use and conservation is not an exciting subject here because we don't live in the desert," Thorp said. This one-dimensional perspective may be right. But attitudes like this don't fully weigh the costs and benefits of water conservation, and keep Western at the top of the dirty dozen list.

With an estimated 16.5 million sheets of paper used per day, Western has some serious printing problems.

# The Price of Purity

by Kari McGinnis

Virgin paper, bursting with bleached-white purity, fills printer drawers in computer labs across Western's campus. With a click of the mouse, streams of black ink blast words and pictures onto clean sheets as they're expelled in neat stacks.

From single paragraph e-mail messages to 60-page Internet articles, paper piles up in silent representation of a cause once at the top of Western's agenda, now lost somewhere in the realm of all things taken for granted.

As recently as 1997, Western's computer labs were stocked with Unity-DP, a 100-percent recycled, 50-percent post-consumer paper. But when Unity-DP went out of production, the labs were restocked with 30-percent recycled content paper.

"A year or so later I noticed that you just couldn't find recycled paper in the computer labs and it was slowly being replaced with virgin paper," says Ellen Hutchinson, Associated Students Recycle Center Educator.

Hutchinson, who was co-coordinator of Western Environmental Watch, and Jesse Salomon, who was AS Vice President for Legislative and Community Affairs, posted petitions in all the computer labs, generating signatures to support the reinstatement of 100-percent recycled paper.

"The original intent was to get the Faculty Senate to endorse having recycled paper as a kind of mandatory thing in the computer labs," Hutchinson explains. Although their efforts didn't go unnoticed, they fell short of instigating solid legislation.

On April 22, 1998 the Faculty Senate passed a resolution endorsing, but not mandating, the use of recycled paper.

On May 17, 1998 the A.S. Board of Directors resolved to encourage the use of recycled paper and continues to supply its offices with 100-percent recycled post-consumer paper.

**"It doesn't mean anything," Hutchinson says. "There hasn't been any follow up on trying to encourage mandating recycled paper,"** she explains with a tinge of regret in her voice. "It just kind of fizzled out.

"It's a difficult thing to do as a group, and an overwhelming project for an individual," she says.

While WEW coordinator Gwen Heisterkamp acknowledges the importance of using recycled paper, she explains that with only four core members, the club can only pursue one project at a time. Composting is the club's primary focus this year.

WEW members are working to introduce worm bins into Birnam Wood, Buchanan Towers and Fairhaven. They're also investigating the possibility of an agreement between Marriot and local farmers who could benefit from composting Marriot's food waste.



Cassandra Howe, Fairhaven resident and WEW member, gathers food waste from Fairhaven Marriot and takes it to a compost pile maintained in the Outback.

"There's always this person and that person who're doing something, but it never gets fully incorporated into the system," Heisterkamp says.

This phenomenon can be observed behind computer lab doors throughout campus as one or two students take the extra step to reuse a piece of paper or print double-sided. Some might even take a moment to notice the blue and red packages containing virgin paper and call X-7600 to ask why.

In the past they'd receive a standard answer: Recycled paper jams the printers and deposits lint and dirt in them, creating down-time and increased maintenance costs. However, tremendous quality improvements in recent years leave students hanging on the line for the new excuse: Recycled paper costs more.

Computer Maintenance Interim Manager Fred Robson explains that printing expenses have gone up, especially with the addition of 125 workstations in Haggard Hall, and the budget has not reflected the increase. He emphasizes the need for an education program to increase awareness of wasteful printing habits.

"Someone might print 88 pages of a web site that they don't need and just throw it right into the recycle bin without it ever even leaving the lab," Robson says, adding that if students think twice before printing it might make room in the budget to accommodate the additional cost of recycled paper.

The additional cost adds up quickly at ATUS, which purchases about 500 reams of paper from Central Stores each month. The virgin sheets from Eclipse cost \$2.92 per ream. Eureka 100-percent recycled paper is \$4.52 per ream, a difference of \$1.60 per ream, which amounts to \$7,200 in a nine-month academic year. Eureka 30-percent recycled paper sells for about \$3.10 per ream, adding up to a modest \$810.

Stephen Baughn, Central Stores Manager, says he sells more of the 30-percent recycled paper than virgin paper, but doesn't sell as much 100-percent recycled paper.

"It's a catch-22, people won't buy it because it's expensive, but the cost isn't going to come down unless they buy it," Baughn says as he tosses down his calculator after figuring the difference in cost.

When ATUS Assistant Director Robert Galbraith decides what paper to order, he faces a fixed budget and an increasing printing cost.

"I'm already going to run out of budget before I run out of year," Galbraith says with frustration in his voice. "Another approach to conservation is moderation," he says, adding that endless printing freedom encourages waste.

As the amount of printing spirals upward, Galbraith finds himself looking at ways to pass along the cost. One idea on the table is to allot each student a baseline amount of printing and implement a charge for excess pages. The logistics of such a program depend on available technology, but could be as simple as installing a program that tracks printing through students' universal logins.



"If we were doing something like that then we'd be able to decide what paper we want because we'd know how much we'd be spending ... The cost would be in control," Galbraith says. The charge for additional printing would reflect the cost of the recycled paper, though Galbraith doesn't want to add an onerous amount to students' already long list of fees.

The list might be long, but Western's \$30 per year technology fee seems light in comparison to University of Washington's \$120 per year, Central Washington University's \$75 per year and Washington State University's \$110 per year.

"There's some technology out there I need to find; and I need to talk to students to see if it's something that would work for them," Galbraith says. "The problem with free is there's no value there, but there is value — it's the trees and toner and electricity."

Unfortunately, convenience seems to take precedence over trees in students' minds as they slide the computer mouse over the print icon and press.

Fat, blue barrels stand within feet of each printer, catching the endless stream of half-used virgin paper.

Wrapping her gloved fingers around the top of a barrel, Bridget Howe swings one leg over the edge and hefts herself inside. Gravity's force explodes from her small Converse shoe as she bounces up and down, smashing the contents in order to determine if the barrel needs to be dumped.

"I wish I could work here forever; I love my job," Howe says as she slides the platform of a hand-truck beneath the full barrel. "It's ideal because you're doing something good for the university and something good for the environment. I can go home everyday and say 'I did something good today.'"

Howe hurries around Haggard Hall, replacing full recycle barrels with empty ones. She's one of 12 employees at the Associated Students Recycle Center. She joined the center's team last spring and advanced to staff manager at the beginning of the summer.

**"One of the things that frustrates me is that people don't realize they can print double-sided in the computer labs in Haggard Hall,"** Howe says as she



grabs a handful of paper glaringly blank on one side. "We could save a lot of paper if they printed double-sided."

Howe treks across the bricks to College Hall, the second part of her run. The challenge becomes obvious when she leaves the hand-truck at the bottom of the steps — College Hall doesn't have an elevator.

Two barrels lurk around the corner — one chock full of old issues of *The Western Front*. Howe shakes her head as she transfers giant stacks of the last issue from the overflowing barrel into the half-full barrel, exposing papers from as many as 20 years ago.

"It's such a waste; why even print this many? It doesn't make sense to me," she says, agreeing that the department must be cleaning out its archives but pointing out that all the ones on top were from last week. "We always seem to pick up a ton of Fronts."

Janna Wallin, who distributes the *Front* with Leif Sanders, estimates that they pick up an average of 20-percent of the 7,000 copies twice a week, when the new issues come out.

"I throw stacks and stacks in the recycle bins every time, and I say to myself, 'they should really cut back on circulation,'" Wallin says. She keeps track of how many she picks up from each location and submits the report to Carol Brach, student publications fiscal specialist. Brach looks at the report and regenerates the distribution list when she finds too many copies are left over at one place while none are left at another.

"I've noticed they'll chew it over and act on it. They do what they can," Wallin says. After she told her supervisor Joel Hall, advertising manager for the Front, that copies weren't getting picked up in the library, they provided a nice display box.

"They go a lot better now," she says. "Sometimes I'll pick up 200 and then the next time I'll pick up 50. It varies so much, I think that's why they don't change it."

Hall says it's hard to predict how many copies will get picked up. When the ALF vandalism hit the front page under a giant headline that read "RATS!" there were hardly any copies left over. Other times an entire stack will go untouched.

Floyd McKay, Journalism Department Chair, says there's always waste with a free publication because people aren't inclined to pick it up on a regular basis the way they are when they're paying for it.

He says the department is looking hard at making distribution efficient. This year they expanded the distribution locations to include campus dorms and dining halls. They also work hard to get Friday's issue out early so students will pick it up before the weekend.

Whether they get recycled after someone reads them or they're left over when a new issue is distributed, many copies of the Front wind up in the newspaper hopper at the AS Recycle Center on Taylor Street.

A giant hand-made poster hanging on the wall inside the center's shed outlines the paper-sorting hierarchy. From notebook paper to the inside of a toilet-paper roll, examples of each category — white ledger, office pack, cardboard, newspaper and mixed waste paper — are strategically glued in place.

Standing inside one of the hoppers, Howe tips each barrel over in the back of the truck and sorts its contents. As she fills the shopping basket reserved for white ledger, it becomes painfully clear how much gets wasted. Howe estimates that more than 99 percent of the paper is only printed on one side. Some has never been used. Howe pulls a familiar blue and red package from the barrel and peers at the paper that was never even removed from the ream. A slightly crinkled corner suggests someone must have tossed it out rather than risk having it jam the printer.

"Think how much forest we could save if this entire campus used 100-percent recycled paper," she says as she drops the paper into the basket.

While Western has been devoted to recycling since a group of Huxley students formed the Recycle Center in 1971, the cycle's broken when the demand for recycled products doesn't meet the supply.

ATUS Director Larry Gilbert says he hasn't had any students ask about the possibility of using recycled paper, but he's always interested to hear students' concerns.

It's easy to print 40 pages of an Internet article to get the two pages of information actually needed. It's easy to pretend that tossing the extra pages in the recycle barrel makes it alright. It's easy to consider the 510,220 pounds of paper Western sold to NW Recycling last year an indication of an environmentally aware campus.

But when the blue barrels inside the computer labs are being filled with virgin paper, its bleached-white purity barely tainted with black ink on one side, students need to stop and think about it.





Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm

# A Custodian's Course in Trash

by Jennifer Sutton

Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

The squeaky hinges of Arntzen Hall's main-floor door mechanically swing shut and the echoes bounce throughout the hallway. Only hours before, hundreds of students filed in and out of mammoth lecture halls. After 5 p.m. the building is nearly empty except for the constant humming of a vacuum cleaner and the jingling jostle of keys.

An incessant drone envelops the stairwell and increases with each step toward the second floor. The fluorescent hallway reflects gleaming waxed tile containing few scrapes and scratches from daily battles with chairs, recycle bins and high heels. Ordinarily, one would overlook the cleanliness of the building en route to a professor's office, but close examination reveals the care and maintenance of a floor cleaner than most kitchen tables.

Out of a classroom, into the hallway appears Don Anderson, a father by day and custodian by night. His red, short-sleeved, cotton T-shirt and jeans clothe a frame that fills the doorway from top to bottom. He smiles behind a dark beard and glasses, welcoming late night visitors. He pushes a cart decorated with cleaning supplies, rags and a garbage can into another classroom; he stops to pick up an empty pop bottle.

Anderson chuckles at being in the limelight. He pauses, rubs his temples and glances at his callused hand as he pulls out a chair.

"There's something about getting the stain out of a carpet and waxing a floor that makes me feel like I have accomplished something," Anderson says.

Night after night Anderson moves from room to room, level to level picking up students' wasteful remnants. Discarded waste spreads throughout classrooms, lecture halls, bathrooms and computer labs—mostly packaging and bottles from vending machines.

M&M's, Snickers, potato chips, gummy bears, soda pop and gum are consumed because they are quick and available. Junk food easily silences an incessantly snarling stomach. The rubbish is left behind as easily as its contents were consumed.

"Seventy to 80 percent of the garbage found in the classrooms is from packaged products," said Don Bakkensen, academic custodian supervisor.

"Students no longer eat regular meals, they graze on junk food," Anderson said. He tilts a desk on its end and candy wrappers, chip bags and pop bottles plummet to the floor.

Nearly 400 pounds of garbage, dirt and grime are excavated from Arntzen Hall and the Environmental Studies buildings each weeknight, Anderson said. Recyclable material makes up a lot of the garbage.

If custodians took the time to weed out recyclable material their jobs would take twice as long, Anderson

said. Academic custodians are paid only to pick up garbage and clean spills; it's up to the students to run any recycling programs.

The Recycle Center, in effort to pinpoint student and faculty waste habits, conducted an analysis measuring what type and how much trash is thrown away. The center selected one bag each day for one week from the piles of trash bags outside Old Main and Humanities, Environmental Studies and Arntzen Hall, Miller Hall and the Fine Arts buildings. They sorted and measured the contents, concluding that 41 percent of the waste produced could be recycled.

"I want to teach Trash 101 to all students prior to graduation," Anderson said. Ideally, the course would teach students the essence of recycling and demonstrate what can be thrown in the garbage without remorse, he said.

Trash 101 would ban all spiral notebooks and fine those students who brought one, Anderson said; he suggested collected money go toward a Christmas fund for all the custodians.

To pass his class, students would need to know his pet peeves: staples in the carpet, sunflower seeds, spiral notebook dandruff and food or drinks in the computer labs.

Anderson said professors could also benefit.

"Some professors don't take out their recycling until it piles up, even though a bin sits less than 10 feet from their office," Anderson said. "The stacks of papers pile up so high that they cannot see the door or, in one case, displace large pieces of furniture."

Anderson recalls a retired mathematics professor who claimed someone had stolen his table lamp. His office had so much clutter that seven years later, when he retired and cleaned out his office, he found his "stolen" lamp.

Of all the areas Anderson cleans, the most frustrating are the computer labs. Every night Anderson picks up copies of stacked reports from computer printers.

Since Haggard Hall opened its new computer labs in January 1999, paper usage has increased by 40 percent.

"It's a major issue," said Fred Robson, computer maintenance supervisor. "It's not free and it costs Western a lot of money."

When a printer jams, students abandon their documents. Technicians fix the problem and pages of web sites, e-mails and rough drafts come pouring out of the machine, Robson said.

Students don't even account for their excessive printing mistakes. Instead, the papers build up beside the printer and are magically whisked away during the night. The final witness? The custodian.

"I'm at the bottom of the line and I don't see much recycling," Anderson said.



*Nearly 400 pounds of garbage, dirt and grime are excavated from Arntzen Hall and the Environmental Studies buildings each week-night, Anderson said. Recyclable material makes up a lot of the garbage.*



# CHEMICALS

## on campus

Tracking down Western's  
hazardous waste, part II

by Skye Thompson

In the winter quarter of 1990, Planet editor Sara Olason set out to explore the way Western managed its hazardous wastes. What she discovered was troubling. Instead of finding an educational institution with an unblemished record and a fail-safe method of monitoring and disposing of wastes, Olason found a newborn hazardous waste program already weakened by financial malnutrition and poor decision making. Renewing Olason's search a decade later, I found that while Western's new stewards of campus safety bear more administrative gravity, they still suffer from financial undernourishment. This aside, there have been drastic improvements in how well Western's dangerous chemicals are managed.

Producing hazardous waste may be as much an inevitability of operating a university as belching methane is to a pasture-bound cow. Indeed, almost every department on campus generates some hazardous waste—but what is Western's administration doing to keep students and faculty safe? What and where are the toxins—and what are the risks?

Dennis Fitch supervises the chemistry department's stockroom. He is responsible for some of the world's most dangerous chemicals, and he guards them like a mother hen tending her nest. But the maze of glass jars that line his warehouse shelves in Chemistry Building 150 aren't your average chicken eggs. Fitch stores substances so toxic that other well-known poisons pale in comparison. Describing his most exotic and potent

compounds, Fitch leans back in his office chair and lets loose a nervous chuckle. He speaks of *osmium tetroxide*, a dangerous chemical kept in supply somewhere deep in the labyrinth of the storeroom's shelves — a chemical that makes cyanide look like watered-down apple juice, a chemical more toxic than any other on campus.

"One drop in the room we are sitting in could possibly do us in," he says.

Fitch explains how we would suffocate — our lungs filling with fluid — if *osmium tetroxide* were to escape from its protective housing. He puts his hands to his throat and widens his eyes, acting out final mortal poses.

Of course the bottom floor of the chemistry build-

ing isn't the only place on campus where hazards reside. The basement of Bond Hall holds an abandoned nuclear laboratory. Its doors are marked in black miniature type: "Nuclear Lab." Under the tiny typed header, room 10's label reads: "Chernobyl," the clever graffiti of some pencil-toting, physics nerd. The second door, room 08, reads "Kiev." A faded and peeling-away nuclear materials sticker warns passers-by of the room's once unstable contents. Neither door appears to have been opened recently.

Jim Mullen, a Western science technician, has worked in the electronics shop that shares a wall with the nuclear lab for the past 12 years. Students no longer use the lab anymore, he says, because nuclear physics labs all use computer simulation instead of actual radioactive material.

"I don't know what's in there to tell you the truth," Mullen said.

Professor Bill Wilson, an ex-NASA scientist and Western's Radiation Safety Officer, oversees the nuclear laboratory. Wilson insists that the Bond Hall nuclear labs are harmless now. Five or six years ago everything in the rooms was removed and the walls, floor and ceiling cleaned. The lab's most contaminated contents, two neutron generators, were also removed and taken to Richland, Wash. for permanent disposal, Wilson said.

The cleanup left rooms 08 and 10 safe according to federal standards, but there is still some cleaning up to be done before the space is reopened. Rooms 10a and 10b, the two closet-like rooms that housed Western's neutron generators still have what Wilson called "low-grade" radioactivity and need to be decontaminated.

"It's a question of money," Wilson said. "It'll probably take another \$100,000 to finish cleaning 10a and 10b."

In 1990, when the Planet published Olason's article on Western's hazardous waste, a departmental safety committee hadn't even established a satisfactory protocol for dealing with toxic wastes.

"Western had been sending its waste chemicals to the Thermal Reduction Company, a local incinerator not licensed to burn hazardous waste," Olason wrote. In fact, a more responsible alternative wasn't found

until the Department of Ecology stepped in and ordered the old practice stopped.

John Zylstra, then part of the art department's technical support team, remembers what an awkward position it was to be responsible for the department's health and safety issues.

"If there was a spill, they would call me," he said. "But I really had limited training and no real authority."

It wasn't until 1991 that Zylstra received proper training in chemical hygiene. Today, a certificate hangs above Zylstra's desk showing that he was trained and certified in a two-week chemical hygiene course. A one-day version of the same course is now prerequisite for participation in some of Western's chemistry lab classes.

EHS, the administrative body in charge of health and safety issues at Western, was established in early 1992. Its creation absorbed the responsibility of the campus safety committee Zylstra had been on.

EHS is the primary responder for releases of hazardous chemicals on campus.

Gayle Shipley has been director since its inception. She keeps a copy of "WAC 173-303 Dangerous Waste Regulations" within arm's reach on a shelf beside her desk.

"We try very hard to do the right thing: comply," Shipley said.

But she also said there's more to be done at EHS than people to do it — a sure sign that EHS is underfunded. And the lack of funding shows.

The office in Old Main has the busy feel of an emergency room or wartime command center.

The obvious shortage of people-power and time, however, has compromised their integrity as a public office. Office workers claimed they were too busy or too disorganized to produce records on hazardous waste disposal. It took three attempts before someone agreed to look for the information.

Others on campus have felt similar frustrations with EHS operations.

"I'd like to see things picked up a little quicker," Zylstra said. "I think we tend to store waste too



Early in the 1990s, the Art Building basement was used as a campus-wide clearinghouse for hazardous materials.

long." Long storage periods are a risk to students and faculty.

But EHS is not responsible for final disposal, only for safely rounding up and storing it. A licensed contractor has been hired to export wastes from campus.

In late January, EHS reported that the contractor hired to pickup photographic chemicals for Western, Hallmark Refinery Corporation, was two weeks late on its pickup. Meanwhile, hazardous waste was accumulating in the basement of the Art Building.

Monte Robinson, EHS safety professional, was frustrated.

"[Hallmark] hasn't responded for two weeks. I had to go to G[eorgia] P[acific] to get more 55 gallon drums. The four drums I got should last half a quarter." The extra drums will be used to store backlogged photographic chemicals until Hallmark finally comes to get them.

However, since the creation of EHS, hazardous waste has, unmistakably, been managed more safely at Western than ever before. Happily, some of the improvements are answers to questions Olason raised in her 1990 article. Unventilated storage facilities, such as the one that had been in Haggard Hall basement before its renovation, have been removed. The day-long chemical hygiene class and other programs are helping to educate those who work with potentially hazardous chemicals. And, according to Fitch, the chemistry stockroom and other storage facilities are much safer than they were before his arrival.

But the 90s did not pass entirely without incident. According to Zylstra, there was a spill in the basement of the Art Building that ended safely, but was potentially very dangerous.

Early in the 1990s the Art Building basement was used as a campus-wide clearinghouse for hazardous materials.

"Nobody really talked to each other back then," Zylstra said.

As a result, hazardous chemicals from at least five different branches of the university were being stored in close proximity. And then, Zylstra said, an old, unmarked container spilled.

Authorities discovered the leak and realized that the campus police were using a room next door to load and store ammunition.

"Seeing all those things stored, that if mixed could have exploded, we decided to make a change," Zylstra said. "That's what really brought it to a head."

Zylstra said the art basement spill, while potentially very dangerous, had little or no negative impact.

"In fact," he said, "the biggest impact it did have was positive because it scared us into changing the way we do things." After the Art Building spill, EHS operations improved; monitoring, labeling and chemical segregation was better and tracking the life of chemicals has gotten better.

Because of the potential risks to human health, managing a campus-full of toxics can be as precarious as balancing a highwire trapeze act. So why bother?

Professor Wilson sees it as an issue of morality.

"There's a huge legal responsibility," Wilson said, "but even more, there's a human responsibility."

Back in the chemistry stockroom, one of Western's main chemical attractions, Dennis Fitch feels that personal pride compels him to manage responsibly.

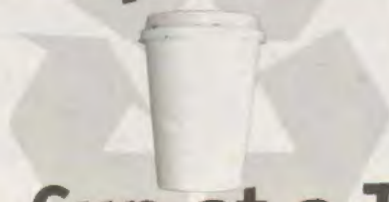
"We have a really prestigious faculty," Fitch said. "I want our infrastructure to be just as fabulous."

The office of Environmental Health and Safety is a big part of that infrastructure. Indeed the past decade has seen the treatment of hazardous waste on campus ripen to near full administrative maturity. Of course there is still some room for improvement — their administrative transparency, allowing the public to see what work they do, should be better — but EHS has done well to keep its tigers caged. And they have been at the root of every major improvement in hazardous waste treatment on campus in the past eight years. For that, they deserve a lot of credit.

I think Sara Olason, were she to return, would be grateful.



# Eco-Responsibility:



## One Cup at a Time

by Jennifer Sutton



Addiction to coffee is one thing. Addiction to buying a disposable coffee cup every day for four years is another.

The ashtrays outside Western's buildings are littered with discarded cups stained by lipstick and coffee marks. Disposable cups line trashcans. Haggard Hall's concrete receptacles overflow with remnants of addictive habits: coffee cups and cigarette butts.

"Western students throw away 3,000 disposable cups a day," Western Environmental Watch stated last year in its campaign literature.

Last year, WEW strung together discarded paper cups between Miller Hall and Bond Hall. They also had a table set up in Red Square with free buttons urging students to bring their own mugs.

**Students discard approximately 2,160,000 disposable cups during a four-year period, a stack that would stretch more than 20 miles high.**

"We live in a throw-away society," says Tim McHugh, who sells organic coffee on vendor's row. His stand generates at least 100 disposable cups each day. McHugh said the issue needs more attention, vocally and visually, to penetrate the consciousness of frequently sleep-deprived students.

"Ten percent of the students who buy coffee bring their own mugs," McHugh said. "I verbally encourage and praise those who do."

Paper cups account for 9 percent of Western's total waste measured by volume, according to a Jan. 10 through Jan. 14 waste analysis conducted by the Recycling Center, an analysis conducted to address sources of campus waste.

"Another sign needs to be made and awareness needs to continue," McHugh said. "Better promotion of a healthy lifestyle, including bringing a recyclable mug, has a lower impact on society."

The University Dining Services wrote a letter in 1998 proposing a WWU disposable cup-free-zone, encouraging students to bring their own mugs. The goal was to reduce the usage of disposable cups on campus, resulting in less waste, more storage space and reduced environmental impacts on our community. Unfortunately, the plan was never implemented.

"One effort to increase recycling isn't enough. We need a long term goal and constant incentives," said Becky Statzel, last year's coordinator for recycling education. Statzel urged the University Dining Services to adopt this plan, but said the administration did not support it.

Coffee cups make up just one part of the paper waste created on campus, but reduction is attainable: Bring a mug, help the environment and save the planet – one cup at a time.



A LOOK INTO WHETHER HUXLEY PRACTICES WHAT IT PREACHES

# HUXLEY:

## ENVIRONMENTAL TRAINING CAMP OR CORPORATE FACTORY?

BY PATRICK TAYLOR

*Sooner rather than later we will be forced to get away from a system based on artificially increasing the number of human wants, and set about constructing one aimed at the qualitative satisfaction of real human needs, spiritual and mental as well as material and physiological.*  
—Sir Julian Huxley, *The Humanist Frame*



Dr. Brad Smith, Dean of Huxley College

Every day I walk the halls of the Environmental Studies building. I walk through the smoked glass front doors of a building that looks more like the Ministry of Truth than a college of environmental studies. Past the conspicuous blue recycling barrels, I ascend the stairs on my path to what I hope is knowledge and inspiration I can use to change our ecologically and socially destructive system.

But am I being prepared to change society or am I being trained to get a job that is no different than if I was an accounting or pre-dental major? Huxley's recent survey of alumni, "Huxley and Beyond," characterized students who choose the school as "a highly motivated environmentally idealistic bunch," who view future earning potential as "a relatively minor consideration." But is that reflected in students' education?

### In the beginning...

It all started for Huxley in 1970 with humble beginnings in a house on 21<sup>st</sup> Street, a handful of professors and 63 eager students. Its goals were three-fold according to the 1971-72 general catalog, "to enable students to obtain the information essential to making responsible decisions and predictions concerning environmental problems; to identify alternatives open to society and define the common elements of the kind of life to which society aspires; and to provide, in certain areas, intensive instruction that may be incorporated into a student's vocational plans."

I sat down with professor John Miles and talked to him about Huxley's path to fulfilling the three goals. Miles was one of the first professors to teach at Huxley and has since worn a variety of hats, including that of captain when he served as dean from 1985 to 1992. He is a teacher and the director of the Center for Geography and Environmental Social Sciences within Huxley College.

I spoke with Miles about the difficulties faced by a school devoted to environmental studies and about the pressures Huxley faces from both the administration and community.

"We have a bias towards graduating technicians," Miles said, "... the perception has been that environmental problems are technical problems that require technical solutions ... it is reflected in funding, grants, resources. It is the trend in America as a whole."

Upon gaining the deanship, Miles said he was given two mandates by the Vice-Provost of Academic Affairs

to increase enrollment and do science, not politics. "I disagreed with him that we did politics," Miles said.

Miles related two stories illustrating the realities Huxley faces. A former Huxley professor, Jim Newman, in an effort to inject reality into academia decided his class would study the effects of a proposed expansion of

Squalicum Harbor. They presented their findings at the Army Corp of Engineers hearings. As a result, the Corp required a slew of mitigation to compensate for the destruction caused by the project. The next day a column in the Bellingham Herald called for the termination of the dean of Huxley, Ruth Wiener, whose job was spared by the president of the university Charles Flora.

Miles said this same pressure reared its ugly head once again in 1985. G. Robert Ross had just been hired as the new president of Western and was meeting the public at an open house. Miles said a gentleman in attendance threw out the question, "What are you going to do about Huxley College?" He was addressing the sentiment that Huxley is a training ground for obstructionists more interested in confrontation than cooperation expressed by the business community.

"By our nature we are looked on with suspicion ... it is environmentalists that are looked on with a jaundiced eye," Miles said, explaining he believes the obstructionist perception of Huxley students is false.

But I have to wonder what would have happened if Newman had done his study today in an age of corporate donations such as Georgia Pacific's 1996 \$100,000 donation to Huxley?



*"We have a bias towards graduating technicians," Miles said, "... the perception has been that environmental problems are technical problems that require technical solutions ... it is reflected in funding, grants, resources. It is the trend in America as a whole."*



### Internal Rumbling

While many students have very positive experiences at Huxley, I spoke with several students who have critical views of the college. Seth Vidana, Shelby Smith and Ryan Orth are Huxley students. All three have been involved in everything from the battle of Seattle to the battle of Georgia Pacific's water rate. Many may know Vidana as the giant Banana seen wandering around campus handing out literature on the effects of globalization. Smith, Orth, and Vidana told me that they came to Huxley expecting something more and now feel let down in many ways.

"I expected more of a social critique of environmental problems," Vidana said. "I thought Huxley would be composed of committed and active environmental activists."

The perceived emphasis on technical skills seems inadequate to Vidana and the others.

"There is another layer beneath these problems (that we study), it is a philosophy that gives rise to these problems," Vidana said.

"Huxley teaches within the frame of what is acceptable politically ... that is not true critical thinking," Orth said. "Huxley lays low and does not ever rock the political boat; but environmental studies are by their very nature political. Even a scientific hypothesis is culturally constructed and politically motivated."

Huxley's brochure claims that this interdisciplinary nature is what makes it unique. Its critics say it is interdisciplinary only in that science classes and social science classes are offered.

"(There is) a schism between the social and hard sciences," Vidana said. "There are people who would love to teach this stuff, they need to ask what prevents it."

Huxley also likes to tout its institutional prestige as one of the oldest and most cutting edge environmental studies colleges in the nation. As a leader it has responsibility to set the pace.

"What they choose to teach frames the debate for society," Smith said.

"Huxley's reputation is resting on its earlier accomplishments," Vidana said.

### The Dean that Time Forgot

Ruth Weiner was dean of Huxley College from 1974 to 1977, and taught here until 1993. She now works at Sandia National Laboratory in Albuquerque, New Mexico, one of the United States' three nuclear weapons laboratories.

"I was forced out," Weiner said. "The business community didn't like me, we were fighting a nuclear plant on the Skagit (River), Puget Power didn't like me ... My environmental activities certainly played a part ... They didn't like any faculty member or dean making anti-development statements."

She put a lot the responsibility for her ouster on campus politics.

"I lost the deanship because I fought to get John Miles tenure," Weiner said. "I had a choice, I could have gone along with the president and stayed."

As far as Huxley being political, Weiner had much to say.

"There has always been a political group, and there has always been a group that objected to it ... there has always been that tension - and I think that is good," she said. "What seemed radical then is not now ... The idea that you control pollution was very radical."

### The Party Line

I have a 1 p.m. appointment with Brad Smith, the dean of Huxley. Having met him before I know he is more personable and accessible to students than half the faculty teaching at the college. I arrive early, but his secretary tells me he is ready and sends me in. The antlers on the wall and the ranger hat – on the wall, not his head – are the first things to catch my eye. I explain I am from the Planet ... he says I should put it on my resume, then he says that if I need someone to read over my resume to bring it by.

Smith has been dean of Huxley since 1994, and is obviously proud of the school. His opinion is a stark contrast to the students I spoke with. He says the interdisciplinary, hands-on nature of the college is Huxley's strength.

"This is not a theoretical exercise we are engaged in," Smith said, "this is real."

Smith emphasized the results. Quoting liberally from the Huxley alumni survey he points out that 40 percent of Huxley students graduate with a job in hand, more than half end up in private industry – up from almost none back in the early years.

"It is not a question of the environment or the economy, it's both," Smith said. "I don't see the polarization I did 20 years ago." In a smooth and calming voice he explains that today's solutions need to come as equally from industry as from government.

"Every corporation in the country has a vice president of environmental affairs," he said. "It is not the goal of Huxley to send people out to pontificate to the world."

I tell him that some people say Huxley does a poor job reinforcing

and strengthening people's environmental ethic, and that 61.8 percent of Huxley alumni said that training in environmental ethics is important.

"We always have to be cognitive of our ethics core ... you're here because you already have it in here," he said pointing to his heart.

### Democracy

When I spoke to the Dean he referred to the graduate survey, when I spoke to disgruntled students they talked of their expectations and aspirations ... but where do the two meet? Are students and administration using two different yardsticks? It seems so. Granted, 80 percent of alumni expressed satisfaction with the education they received, but was it the education they sought when they came here?

In the end, it comes down to what we think. As students who will some day be part of that exclusive club known as Huxley alumni, we should make sure that is a title we will be proud of. Do we want it to be the certification of G.I.S. competency or the mark of a creative thinker who can see beyond the confines of our modern Babylon of greed and environmental destruction and into the New Jerusalem of a sustainable society?

Having graduates go into the private sector can be a good thing. It is like penetrating enemy lines disguised as sheep. But, what if we are never told that we are not just sheep? How can we become infiltrators, prepared to make the change and turn the tides, if we are taught only that which allows industry to polish its rusty hulks with green veneer?

Western's population, like Earth's, is climbing in uncomfortable ways. But, is Western's growth bothersome like a garden weed, or burdensome like a malignant tumor?



by Tiffany Campbell

Call it "progress" and cite economic gain, or call it urban sprawl and mourn the loss of trails, open space and uncongested streets, there is no dispute — Bellingham is growing.

Bellingham's population has increased from 52,179 in 1990 to an estimated 64,000 in 1999, making the last 10 years' growth rate approximately 23 percent, almost double the rate of the previous decade. More people equal more development — not just homes, but more stores, more traffic and more pressure on natural resources.

Western is growing right along with the city. With enrollment at more than 11,000 and future enrollment within the next five-to-seven years estimated at 12,500 undergrad, Western is on the verge of a population explosion. At 157 acres, Western has the smallest campus of any public university in the state.

The crunch of cramped classrooms, limited enrollment in classes and the chore of finding a decent place to sit and eat at noon are realities. Western has a growth problem.

The committee drafting the Institutional Master Plan (IMP) for Western is expected to decide exactly what in which of the surrounding neighborhoods is going to be displaced. And how is all this growth going to happen?

"How many square feet of land will be taken by academic buildings if we are at, for example, 12,500 students?" is the first question, said Daniel Warner, associate professor in Western's business department and the chairman of the IMP advisory committee. His committee advises Western's Board of Trustees, which make the plan's final decisions. Its practical function is to draft a zoning plan for the university: what land

uses are allowed, how big the areas are and where they will be located, Warner said.

Western's Board of Trustees wants to keep the building heights uniform with what is already on campus —

three-to-four stories, Warner said. Although a large-scale academic building would presumably alleviate space issues, a huge skyscraper is out of the question because, he said, the integrity and atmosphere the

**Western has a growth problem.**

smaller buildings lend to campus would be compromised. If Western won't grow up, it has to grow out, which leads to the real ramifications of the plan.

Warner referred to this outward expansion as "ooze," and said it is the real growth problem. More than only academic space is needed. The ooze is everything that comes with it - with more students comes the need for more dining and recreational facilities, as well as more department offices and warehouse space.

How much ooze, and exactly where it will be seeping is the main question that needs answering.

And the most obvious place to ooze into? South of campus, of course, where the university has its eye and which is already a designated-growth area. This is the Happy Valley neighborhood, 627 acres, defined by Interstate 5 to the east, Old Fairhaven Parkway to the south, Bill McDonald Parkway to the north and an irregular line from 14th to 20th Streets to the west; it is a diverse area of single-family residences and many apartment units amid gardens, open space and the Connelly Creek Nature area.

together," said Bobbi Vollendorff, a teacher at Sehome High School and a Happy Valley resident for more than 20 years. "We don't want a commercial zone ... warehouses, maintenance buildings would detract from the neighborhood."

**"Why take over a residential neighborhood when you've got empty buildings downtown?"**

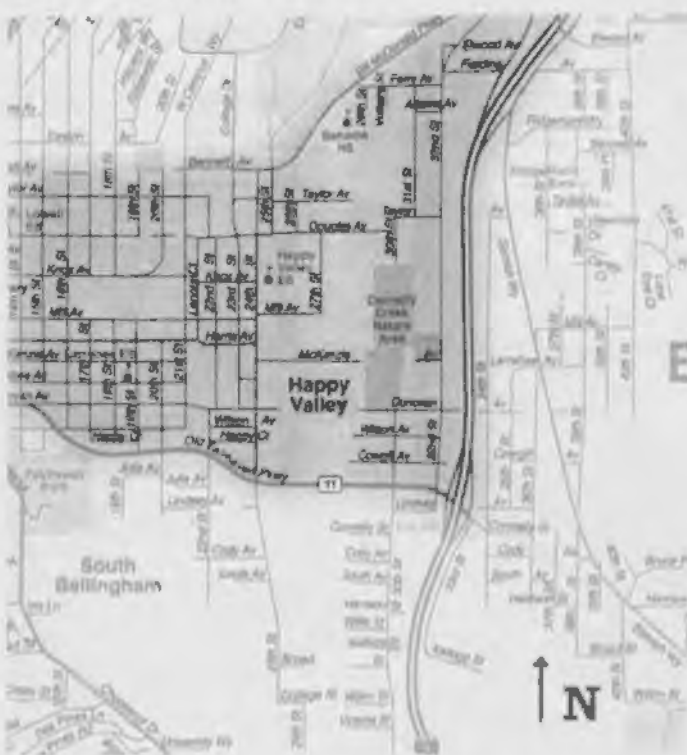
"We understand Western needs to grow ... We want to look at how we can have an integrated border, not a war zone," said John Servais, a 1971 Western graduate and long-time resident of Happy Valley.

According to the draft of the Happy Valley Neighborhood plan, apartment units have continued to replace single-family housing, particularly in the north end closest to Western. Many of these apartments house Western students. In the fall of 1998, 627 students lived in the northern part of Happy Valley, about 34 percent of the area's residents. These students, along with a flurry of building and remodeling to meet rising demands for housing, have had major impacts on Happy Valley.

Daily impacts include more traffic, more students, more parking pressure and storm water drainage. Wendy Sherrer, Happy Valley representative to the IMP advisory committee, said the north and northeastern areas of the neighborhood are some of the highest crime areas in the city. While not all of this is a result of more students, they do tend to be more rowdy and receive more noise complaints, Sherrer said.

"I am not against growth," Sherrer said. "I think Western's growth is not all that bad, either ... and that Western could do a better job than private developers if they were going to put housing in there, because they are in it for the long term; they build buildings that are going to last for 30-to-50 years, whereas we're already tearing down buildings the private developers built 15 years ago."

Sherrer is looking for long-term planning without compromising the Happy Valley character of her neighborhood. Happy Valley schools are within walk-



"The university has for a long time imagined (Happy Valley) as a place for expansion," Warner said. "Until the last 10 years, it was very underdeveloped."

It is not so much that Western wants to expand into Happy Valley that has many residents upset - it is what Western is thinking about building there.

"Happy Valley is willing to accept residence halls ... we'd rather have the students and residents living



ing distance, open spaces are still abundant, affordable housing for single families is available and deer and other wildlife can still be seen year round. While Western is not perceived by all as some greedy entity gobbling up the neighborhood, the prevailing concern is that Western is perhaps taking a few liberties, and its own plans for granted.

"We don't want a wall between Western and the neighborhood ... We don't see Western as an island with a line drawn around it with no interaction," Sherrer said.

Of course, it is not simply the impact of more students in the area that is at stake. If Western acquires large tracts of land in Happy Valley, the plans have not addressed how many single or multiple-family homes would be displaced, or how those displaced members might be compensated.

"It is my impression that there is strong sentiment on the part of the Board of Trustees that there is a need for expansion to the south, not just because it would keep the campus contiguous but because it would be easiest," said Dunham Gooding,

the other Happy Valley representative to the IMP.

Other options abound for the growth of Western, and many unanswered questions persist. Why can't Western absorb some of its own growth on campus? Sherrer asks. Instead of making Happy Valley more high density, why can't Western accept higher density on its campus?

"The city has also identified that they want a lot of in-filling downtown," Sherrer said. "Why take over a residential neighborhood when you've got empty buildings downtown?"

"It's in the best interest of the community to expand downtown," Gooding said. "It would not displace any residents and it would contribute to the revitalization of our (Bellingham's) core area."

The Happy Valley residents have expressed desires to work with Western to maintain the neighborhood's unusual character. It is not just Western's growth plans that the residents are concerned with; it is Western's land buying practices.

Servais said that Western has been less than honest about acquiring land in Happy Valley.

"Western has acted highly illegally over the past 30 years regarding Happy Valley," Servais said. "If they were a private corporation, they would have been prosecuted."

One of Servais's most serious accusation is



that Western has been acquiring plots of land by "checkerboarding." This is a practice, Servais said, of buying every second or third lot, letting them sit and run down, so that the surrounding homes' property value decreases and Western can buy those at a cheaper price.

Most of the area north of Knox Street, which Western has identified as its acquisition zone, is a sea of old and new apartment buildings with very few single-family homes. Western cannot legally develop all of the land it has bought (which is in sporadic plots all over the area) because some of the area is not zoned "institutional" by Bellingham. Some of the

have an interest in keeping the integrity of their neighborhood, and they understand we have an interest in keeping the integrity of our university."

"Western is including us, and they're nodding their heads, but are they actually listening and are they going to modify their plan based on our input?" Vollendorff said. "People shouldn't ask for input unless they are going to use some of it. I expect that of Western and the city."

Growth happens. If Western is buying, then perhaps the residents should decide how much of the neighborhood is for sale.

"...we recognize that they (Happy Valley residents) have an interest in keeping the integrity of their neighborhood, and they understand we have an interest in keeping the integrity of our university."

— Daniel Warner, chairman of the IMP advisory committee

land is zoned multi-family, including homes and apartment buildings. So, at this point, Western is technically unable to develop the land for university purposes. Philip Sun, director of planning facilities and operations at Western, contends that the university acquired most of the land the owner's own initiative..

"There is no grand scheme," Sun said. "There are plans for the properties, some homes are being demolished, one was relocated. Many of the properties were investigated and found to be uninhabitable."

Specifically, the property at 912 26th St. is scheduled to be demolished in the next two months, and, according to Western's fiscal transportation manager David Kincaid, the Bellingham Housing Authority inspected many of the homes and found them uninhabitable.

With so many other options for growth, like satellite areas and higher density on the campus, Western's insistence on Happy Valley is going to prove to be quite a fight — the residents are informed, organized and passionate about their neighborhood. They plan to follow this draft of the IMP all the way to completion.

"They (Happy Valley residents) are actively involved with representatives on our committee," Warner said. "And we recognize that they



Western has no small effect on the community of Bellingham. A complete evaluation of the impact has driven me to go in search of perspectives from the University's community environment. Is it the ivory tower of the exclusively self-righteous? Or a diverse community that has made Bellingham a melting pot? I was set on finding how Bellingham citizens really felt, uncut and uncensored.



A pile of hash browns sizzles over a range as the sun creeps over nearby rooftops. The cool of midnight blackness gives way to a radiant morning blue as flocks of weary students trickle through the streets, as I talk with a chef over crackling potatoes. A neon sign identifies the "Little Cheerful," and buzzes in the front window. Life-long resident Zack Hilty is the chef. His clean-shaven face is a sharp contrast to the greasy apron around his waist. Also part owner of Tony's Coffee House, Hilty sees much of the community, especially college students. He asserts that diversity is one of the most valuable gifts Western gives to Bellingham. The restaurant's window seems to frame the rest of his thought: A man in torn clothes staggers to a street post, while a woman in a business suit crosses his path. She trails behind a younger girl with blond dreadlocks and a small puppy that dances wildly against its leash.

To many, including Hilty, Western's doors have always been open and welcoming to the community. He feels comfortable using the university's resources and opportunities.

Hilty finishes plating an omelet and a waitress arrives to retrieve it.

"Western students?" she asks, picking up on the tail of the conversation. She takes the omelet to a paying customer and quickly returns to the counter to talk.

"They don't have much respect for the working class because they don't have to," she said. "They just don't understand why someone, like me, wouldn't be in school." She swerves around the tables refilling coffee and returns to the conversation.

"They gotta learn that we aren't here for them; that is not our main purpose in life," she says as she leaned on the linoleum counter. "One good thing is that they go out and get drunk and come here and tip a lot." She takes a bottle of ketchup to a table

# PERSPECTIVE

## What people on the outside

Ruthy and R.B. Porter have lived in Bellingham for five years. A Huxley graduate, Ruthy works at the Cascades Institute. R.B. has been a well known figure in the Bellingham community and, together with Ruthy is the co-owner of The Cookie Cafe downtown. They see growth management as the only thorn in the Western/ Bellingham relationship.

"Bellingham wants growth, the university wants growth, and even Happy Valley wants growth," Ruthy says, referring to Western's expansion into the neighborhood adjacent to campus. "They just want it up(ward)," she adds leaning forward in her rocking chair.

Sassy, their small gray-and-white cat, jumps up and sits next to me on the sofa.

"They need to improve (growth management) if they are going to grow," Ruthy explains. Western's growth has meant an increasing number of parked cars in the Porter's neighborhood and has raised some concern with local Western neighbors. Especially upset are those in Happy Valley, an area that is

# CTIVES

by David Axelrod

## are saying about the university

slated for redevelopment in the university's master plan.

"There is going to have to be some compromise, and someone is going to be unhappy," Ruthy says.

The two of them sit across from me, the twinkling lights of Bellingham visible through their glass door. The Western population has brought a lot to the community, such as jobs, people, services and liberal ideas, R.B. says. Western students have not only supported his business but also assisted R.B. with some of his accounting projects.

"Western is one of the most liberal state institutions in the country," R.B. says. Together, they add that the knowledge and information gained at Western is localized and shared, not restricted to the institution. The students use the local environment as a subject of research and actively give back by sharing the information with the local community, particularly Huxley's investigations into local environmental issues.

Clearly, there are as many opinions on Western as there are residents in Bellingham. Unbridled growth concerns both citizens and politicians. The university has the money but the community has the conscience — a successful relationship must continue to balance the two.

Mayor Mark Asmundson is a Bellingham native and a Western graduate who has been here most of his life. His office is lined with wood paneling and a series of large bookcases; a motionless American flag hangs from a small flagpole next to the window. Small pieces of Asian art dot the walls and a topographical map of Whatcom County hangs over the doorway. We discuss Western's role in the community.

"Bellingham's cultural opportunities are greatly enriched by the existence of the university," Asmundson says, adding that he believes the university has generally welcomed the local community to the use of its resources.

"But it is the norm for universities to operate in pretty good isolation from the community they are in," Asmundson adds. "Real strides have been made in expanding and strengthening the ties between the university and the community at large; as an institution it easily forgets where it is and the impacts its activities can have on the surrounding areas." He is referring to excessive traffic, parking and increased noise.

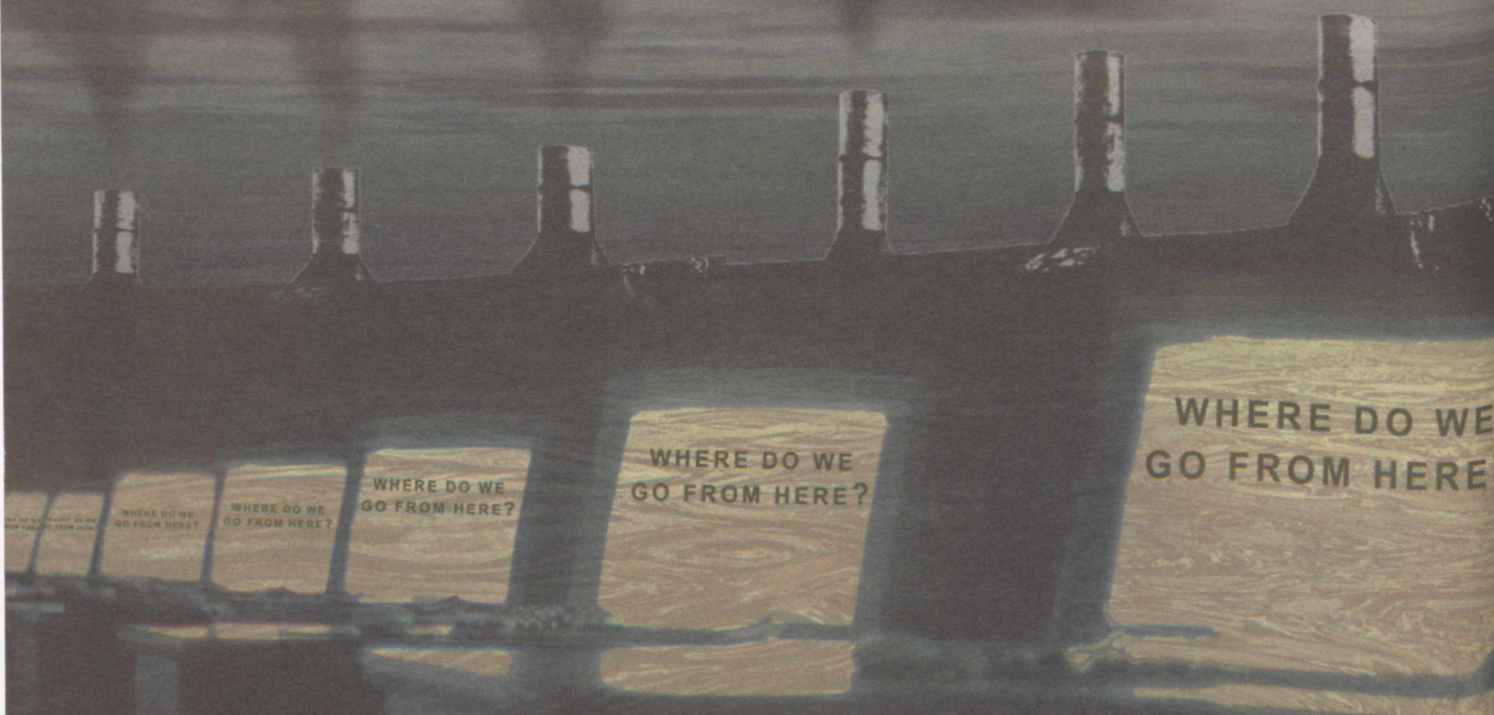
"There is a historical tendency that neighborhoods around universities get turned into dilapidated houses, and there are parties and cars are everywhere," he adds. But the impacts are not just social.

"Western is a big commercial-type operation surrounded by residential neighborhoods," Asmundson explains. "At times I don't think the institution understands how significant of an impact commercial activity has on life in the neighborhoods, and (it) is not as sensitive to that as would be helpful."

"The scarcest commodity in Bellingham is land," Asmundson says, questioning the university's motives in acquisition practices.

"The other thing the university should do — and this is just an absolute should — is abandon the notion that everything has to be contiguous and wake up and put some facilities in downtown Bellingham ... it would be good for the university and good for Bellingham."





ONE EARTH