

Environmental Supplement

Ecology and the food chain

By A. Chisholm

VEGETARIANISM IS COMMONLY CONSIDERED a choice made for reasons such as animal rights, or for personal health. However, adopting this diet can also be an environmental choice.

Our diet is our primary connection

sion then occurs rapidly. It has been said that overgrazing is only the result of poor management and carelessness. However, every system in history that has used large scale grazing has suffered large losses of soil. According to "A Vegetarian Source" by Kieth Akers, "A total



with the earth's resources. What we choose to eat affects all facets of the world's ecology. Our forests, land, and water can be destroyed and damaged. Or they can be saved.

We should begin by clarifying the term vegetarian. In common understanding, a vegetarian is a person who meets their nutritional needs with plant sources instead of animal sources. Degrees of vegetarianism can vary from lacto-ovo vegetarians who eat no meat but will consume milk and eggs, to vegans who will not consume anything of animal origin, including milk, eggs, cheese, and even honey.

There is no question of meeting nutritional needs with only plant sources. All nutrients found in meat, including protein, can be provided through careful selection of plants, nuts, and seeds. Vegetarian information and recipe books are readily available.

By subsisting on plant life, we can make the best of the earth's potential while doing the minimum of damage to her dwindling resources. The production of livestock for human consumption requires a much greater investment of resources than plant food agriculture for the same nutritional return. Many of today's environmental problems can be linked to meat consumption-- soil erosion, deforestation, and water pollution.

Much of the world's soil erosion is due to livestock agriculture. It is inevitable that some erosion will occur, and it is balanced by the process of soil formation. However, livestock agriculture increases the rate of erosion. Grazing cattle has a dramatic effect. The trampling of the animals first pulverizes the soil, and the grazing removes vegetation that would anchor the soil. The trampling grinds the soil into such small particles that it becomes much more susceptible to wind and water erosion. When the water cannot infiltrate the soil, the rainfall runs off the surface causing the soil underneath to dry out. Ero-

vegetarian economy, even in the absence of other reforms, would eliminate 90% of such erosion."

Our forests are depleted for many reasons but the demand for cattle land remains the primary enemy of forest lands. While it is possible to reforest lands that have been overgrazed, we must remember the time it takes to grow a forest compared to the rates at which they are being cut down.

Water is our most precious resource. It is critical to our daily survival. Not only does it take 50 times more water to produce beef than wheat, but water is also becoming polluted. Livestock pollutes the water in two ways: through direct waste, and waste products from slaughterhouses. Oxygen is taken from the water by the bacteria which decompose waste. If the bacteria cannot be sustained, the water will become unsuitable for any human purpose. Oxygen dependent life, such as fish will also die as a result.

All of these effects can be prevented, or lessened by adopting a vegetarian diet. Plant agriculture is more efficient ecology and nutritionally. For example, an acre of cereal products will produce five times the protein than the same amount of land devoted to meat production. Animal based diets, as opposed to vegetable based, have higher incidents of diseases such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and cancer.

Reasons such as these are enough to encourage a complete vegetarian diet, although many of us are not willing to make that lifestyle change. By incorporating vegetarian aspects into your diet, like making meat-based meals the exception and not the rule, we are doing as much for the environment as when we recycle or compost.

*For more information on this subject refer to *Diet for a Small Planet* by Frances Moore Lappe and *A Vegetarian Sourcebook* by Keith Akers.

Environmentally friendly company celebrates anniversary

By Colleen Easter

WHEN YOU MEET MARK MACLEAN THE first thing that you notice is the enthusiasm he has for his work. Mark, a 1993 business administration grad from UPEI, and his previously retired dad, Dave Bagnall, started the Island distributorship of LaserWorks, which celebrates its one year anniversary this month. And this company has a lot of other things to celebrate as well. Not only is it totally committed to helping the environment, and saving businesses money, it also seems to be growing by leaps and bounds. In the last year it has converted 200 businesses into green ones.

LaserWorks is a Maritime company started about six years ago by three Dalhousie graduates, and now has distributors all over the Maritimes and in Bermuda. LaserWorks' biggest function is recycling toner cartridges from laser printers. Normally this big hunk of plastic is just thrown away and a new one is bought. LaserWorks takes this contraption, completely disassembles it-- all 126 parts-- cleans and repairs it, installs a new drum and toner, and then reassembles the cartridge. The remanufactured toner cartridge is just as good as a new one, and you wouldn't believe how much garbage is saved.

It is said that if all the printer cartridges and their packaging thrown away in the last year in Canada were piled up, it would make a pile 16 feet square and as high as the CN Tower! And every year this figure is increasing at over fifty percent. "We tell our clients that each cartridge represents about 0.7 cubic feet so that they get a mental picture of exactly how much their efforts are contributing to solving the landfill situation," says Mark McLane. That means small businesses save at least 5 cubic feet of landfill a year and big businesses that use recycled cartridges, such as law firms, can probably save five times that amount of garbage. LaserWorks on P.E.I. has saved approximately 1000 cubic feet of garbage in the year it has been operating.

LaserWorks is even more environmentally friendly than it first sounds. Their

reusable boxes are made so they don't need any tape. They don't use styrofoam in the packaging but a more friendly foam. The foam, box and just about everything else is reused along with the cartridge. 98% of the material used at LaserWorks is reused. The business cards and paper are recycled. Even the pens they give out are specially made out of recycled paper!

This environment friendly company has another way to make their customers green - by saving them money. The remanufactured cartridges are 25% cheaper than the new ones. There seems no reason not to deal with this company since the cartridges are certified and meet government standards. They are also unconditionally guaranteed and do not void the manufacturer's warranty. They also sell and service the printers and deal with photocopiers. So LaserWorks can meet all your needs as you save money and the Earth.

When asked about why he thought he could run a small business Mark is fairly confident. He says that UPEI provided him with a good business education, and managing the Barn was invaluable experience. Now LaserWorks sells cartridges and services the printers at the X-Press, AVC, the Student Union and Computer Services.

Starting the business was almost a matter of necessity. For Mark it was a case of graduating and just not seeing any work. Mark and his father both believe that this is the wave of the future, graduates not waiting around to find a job but creating their own. The only other option seems to be leaving the Island, which Mark has seen many of his classmates do. Instead he has build up this Island branch of this unique Maritime company.

So when you deal with LaserWorks you save an incredible amount of garbage, you save money, deal with an Island company, and help support a young entrepreneur. The next time you change your cartridge think about what you want in a business. They even pick up and deliver.

