

# Bush eyes scheme for conservation 'bank'

by Kathleen Klenetsky

The Bush administration may soon throw its support behind a Soviet-influenced scheme which proposes to use the Third World debt crisis as a pretext for enforcing stringent environmentalist restrictions on the developing sector, with the express aim of killing any potential for industrial or agricultural growth there. According to reliable sources, Secretary of State James Baker, Environmental Protection Agency head William Reilly, and President Bush himself are giving serious consideration to a plan to set up a series of new international entities with authority to force the Third World to accept malthusian "conservation" measures, in exchange for some paltry debt relief.

The plan is a direct spinoff of the Brundtland Commission. Headed by the pro-Soviet Prime Minister of Norway, Gro-Harlem Brundtland, the U.N.-sponsored commission issued a report last year containing a detailed blueprint for establishing a global eco-fascist regime. Among the commission's leading participants were Vladimir Sokolov of the Soviet Academy of Sciences; Maurice Strong, the former Undersecretary General of the United Nations; and Bush intimate William Ruckelshaus, ex-head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

A key feature of the Brundtland Commission report (titled "Common Future") calls for the creation of a World Conservation Bank, to which Third World nations would have to "donate" huge chunks of their territory, to qualify for debt relief or financial aid.

Michael Sweatman, formerly of the Royal Bank of Canada, is currently working out the implementation of that proposal, under the auspices of the Washington-based World Resources Institute.

Sweatman, who takes credit for first proposing the World Conservation Bank concept five years ago, heads up the International Conservation Financing Project, which has been charged with cooking up a politically salable version of the WCB. In its original form, the WCB drew sharp criticism from various quarters, because it could potentially absorb up to one-third of the world's land mass which is classified as "wilderness" areas.

Financed by the U.N. Development Program, the Canadian International Development Agency, the MacArthur Foundation, the Organization of American States, the Pew Foundation, the U.N. Environment Program, and U.S. AID, the ICFP issued its first report on Feb. 6. Repeatedly refer-

encing the Brundtland Commission, and calling for a "vision that transcends borders, that places the interest of humanity above the interests of nations," the 160-page report proffers recommendations for imposing a global environmental "ethic" on the Third World:

- Establishing an International Environmental Facility—Sweatman's revised version of the WCB—which would "help mobilize substantial, additional financing at appropriate terms for conservation projects from the bilateral development agencies, the multilateral development agencies, and, where possible, the private sector." The IEF's "basic function would be to help identify, design, and finance sound conservation projects in the third World."

- Setting up a World Environmental Fund, administered by the UNDP, which would be financed by fining "polluters," especially those activities which produce "greenhouse gases."

- Furthering "debt-for-equity" scams, including giving some debt relief to Third World countries which prohibit the use of tropical forest areas for cattle ranching; or directing foreign loans to preservation of wilderness areas, rather than for development.

Sweatman and his collaborators will be holding a series of meetings in March and early April in San Jose, São Paulo, Abidjan, Harare, New Delhi, and Bangkok, to sell the project to its intended victims.

Sweatman and his colleagues have privately expressed confidence that the Bush administration will soon go to bat for the ICFP's proposals, which will be produced in final form this summer. "We have many ins to the Bush administration," someone close to the ICFP disclosed. "Bush and Baker are both ardent environmentalists, and they both support the debt-for-equity idea, which is a crucial part of our proposal. That's clear, not only from the public record, but also from private discussions. We are very well connected to Baker, and, with the President's known outlook, we anticipate strong support."

Baker has already given several public indications of sympathy for the World Conservation Bank idea, not least of which was his decision to keynote the Fourth World Wilderness Conference in September 1987, whose major purpose was to build support for the Brundtland Commission report in general, and the WCB in specific. Brundtland attended that conference, as did Sweatman, David Rockefeller, and other leading lights in the international financial circuit.

People close to Sweatman's project have hinted privately that they may soon bring another "big name" on board: Britain's Prince Charles, a raving "greenie." Charles's mentor, Sir Laurens van der Post (a devotee of Carl Jung, whose Satanic beliefs earned him the sobriquet, the Warlock of Zurich) is a major backer of the project, and also sits on the board of the International Wilderness Leadership Foundation, which sponsored the Fourth World Wilderness Congress.