

Iowa meeting launches U.S. drive for Eco-92

by Leif Johnson

Public hearings began in Des Moines, Iowa on Sept. 22 to kick off the U.S. campaign for the so-called Earth Summit, or Eco-92, scheduled to take place in Brazil in June 1992. The open hearing was followed by three days of closed meetings, attended by selected Third World diplomats and hosted by liberal establishment luminaries such as Elliot Richardson. The open hearings were supposedly designed to get grassroots "input" before a panel of government experts, who would then take their views to the U.N. committee preparing for the summit.

The principal topics were energy and "sustainable agriculture," the policy of returning to labor-intensive agriculture, which will have the effect of reducing world food production and population levels, the latter being the major goal of the Earth Summit.

An atmosphere resembling a family gathering of elderly peaceniks, world federalists, and Bush supporters predominated at the gathering, masking its genocidal intent. Environmentalists of the unwashed and disruptive variety were not in evidence. Leaders of the Iowa United Nations Association (sponsors of the event), Isaak Walton League, Presbytery of Des Moines, World Federalists, Sierra Club, American Association of University Women, Iowa Peace Institute, Trees Forever, YWCA, Audubon Society, and the *Des Moines Register*, coupled with Iowa officials and academics—about 175—communed in the State House to hear themselves testify before a panel of government and other experts, including representatives of the Council on Environmental Quality, the Departments of State, Energy, and Justice, the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID), and Kathy Sessions of the United Nations Association. Sen. Al Gore (D-Tenn.) and Maurice Strong, secretary general of the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), were the featured speakers.

The athletic Senator Gore

Senator Gore presented himself as a fundamentalist preacher, recently converted to an "environmentalist mission." "The problems are population, technology, belief structure," he said. "People ask, how realistic is 'appropriate

technology' and sustainable development? I ask them, how realistic was it two years ago that communism would end?" He jumped around the podium demonstrating his points with giant charts. "The air today has six times the chlorine molecules that it contained when I was born (1948), and the ozone layer is 10% thinner in Iowa than it was 50 years ago."

His remarks referenced the well-publicized and scientifically unsupported theory that the release of chlorine into the atmosphere from the breakup of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) is destroying the Earth's ozone layer and causing the surface to heat up. He leapt from floor to table to attempt to show that there was a correlation over 150,000 years between rising carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, and the temperature of the Earth, stressing there might be a difference of opinion about why this is so, but the correlation cannot be denied.

This theory, called "global warming," or the "greenhouse effect," is unsupported by data, and the computer models purporting to graph the trend have proven incapable of predicting future climate, because they deal with so many unknown variables. During an informal interchange after his speech, Gore confessed that he lacked respect for the scientific tradition associated with Plato—perhaps why he didn't mind using phony scientific theories to bolster his political priority of reducing the world's population. Gore said: "First there was Socrates, who laid the basis for Plato, and then Aristotle. Plato started the whole problem: dualism."

The kooky Maurice Strong

Following an afternoon panel on energy, Maurice Strong, member of the Club of Rome and secretary general of UNCED, which is sponsoring the Eco-92 conference in Brazil, was introduced for a keynote speech by Edmund Muskie (see p. 32, for a profile of Strong). He said that wasteful and destructive production in developed countries, and overpopulation in undeveloped countries, are causing environmental risks. The complete integration of environment and what he called "development" must be the basis for every issue on the agenda at Eco-92. "Every country has got to review its incentives, taxes, subsidies, and policies, to make sure they work toward sustainability. Human cultural, social, and ethical values must be changed."

Strong said there must be a new "eco-industrial policy." "Energy policy is at the heart of this transition. Enjoying the better life has made us the biggest security risk to the planet. People in the developed world must change their life-styles."

His closing remarks demonstrated some anxiety about the prospects for the upcoming summit. "If the conference fails in '92, when will the leaders of the world ever get together again? It must either be a resounding success, or the biggest failure in history."

Underlining this fear, perhaps, was the fact that input from the audience was limited to five minutes at the end of each session, and only written questions were accepted.