Fact or Fiction?

Jack W. Dini
1537 Desoto Way
Livermore, CA 94550
E-mail: jdini@comcast.net

Enviromental Health Concerns

"Westerners want to save developing countries now from the problems that they might encounter in the future, rather than help them to deal with the problems that they are actually facing today. There have actually been seat-belt campaigns in parts of Africa where the only vehicles for a hundred miles are aid-agency Land Rovers," report Mooney and Bate.[1] This mindset of telling people of the underdeveloped world what's best for them has been referred to as the "White Man's Burden," a renewed effort to impose foreign values for 'saving souls' and saving the environment. UCLA professor Deepak Lal describes this as "another crusade, reminiscent of those which led to Western imperialism in the past."[2]

A central theme of Hendrik Verwoerd and the supporters of apartheid in South Africa was that modern technology and wealth is fine for whites but it will corrupt poor blacks. White supporters of apartheid told Andrew Kenny, "Your native doesn't want what you want. All he wants is a mud hut, three fat wives, a patch of mielies (maze) and a few cows. Motor cars, air travel, electricity, flushing lavatories discharging into central sewers, brick houses with clean running water—we whites all have these things but those blacks should not have them."[3]

Wrong Information

In the summer of 2002 when famine gripped Africa, the U.S. sent massive amounts of corn to several countries, including about 17,000 tons to Zambia. But there it rotted. Turns out the Zambian government had been told by environmentalist groups such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth that the food was "poison."[4]

Says Dennis Avery, "Thus Greenpeace and Friends say that starving Africans should forgo foodstuffs that most of those organizations' American members have been eating for the past decade with no ill effects, so that Western greens can make a political point." Never mind that this was the same pest resistant corn that had been approved for safety by three different U.S. government agencies, and eaten daily since 1995 by millions of Americans in such forms as corn flakes, corn flour, and, through livestock feed, hamburgers and ice cream. Avery adds, "Biotech foods have undergone more testing than any foods in history, with no danger found."[5]

William Langwiesche reports that at Alang in the Gulf of Cambay on India's Arabian Coast, thousands of rusting old ships are dismantled by 40,000 men, some highly skilled and all working there by choice, to convert half the world's disused ships into scraps of steel to be used in Indian manufacturing. Environmentalists, instead of welcoming this approach, have pressured governments around the world to stop the practice. They argue that the practice is dangerous and potentially environmentally harmful. No debate it is dangerous for the workers. However, they earn many times the income than they would from working in the fields and willingly make this trade-off.[6] Langwiesche adds, "By local standards the industry has been a success. Even the lowliest laborers are proud of what they do at Alang. There is no ship too big to be torn apart this way. More important, the economic effects are substantial. Alang and the industries that have sprung from it provide a livelihood, however meager, for perhaps as many as a million Indians. Imagine, therefore, their confusion and anger that among an even greater number of rich and powerful foreigners, primarily in northern Europe, Alang has become a rallying cry for reform—a name now synonymous with Western complicity and Third World hell."[7]

Langwiesche quotes Pravin S. Nagarsheth, president of the Indian shipbreakers' association: "All these write-ups, I would say are biased, full of exaggerations … One, however, wonders whether such reports are deliberately written for public consumption in affluent Western societies only. The environmentalists and Greenpeace talk of future generations, but are least bothered about the plight of the present generation. Have they contributed anything constructive to mitigate the plight of the people living below the poverty line in developing countries? … Living conditions of labor in Alang should not be looked at in isolation. It is the crisis of urbanization due to job scarcity. Large scale slums have mushroomed in all cities … The fact remains that workers at Alang are better paid and are probably safer than their counterparts back in the poor provinces of Orissa, Bihar, and Uttal Pradesh. To provide housing and better conditions … is financially impractical for a developing country like India, where 45 percent of the population is living below the poverty line."[7] Says one of the workers, "The question I want to ask the environmentalists is if you should want to die first of starvation or pollution."[8] In other parts of the world similar questions are asked.

Tens of millions of old computers thrown out by Americans end up in Chinese villages where they are burned by night and hand stripped by day. Since it's very expensive to recycle computers and other electronic gadgets under the current U.S. environmental standards, most of them are transported to places such as China. Luyuan Li reports, "When obsolete computers (which contain lead, mercury, cadmium, and other hazardous content), printers, and circuit boards arrive at their destination in China they usually are recycled through primitive methods. Most Chinese processors, which include both factories and family-run workshops in poor villages, burn or apply hydrochloric acid on the plastic outer covers and wires at night

so the electronic equipment can be hand stripped the next day for valuable metals. The most sought for metal is gold—every ton of computers contains about 0.9 kilogram of gold. The next is copper, which is then sold to metal processing manufacturers. The empty 'carcasses' and broken, unrecyclable internal components are dumped indiscriminately. These improper recycling methods release large amounts of pernicious gases and toxic materials such as lead, tin, mercury, and cadmium into the air, soil, and water—causing particularly severe contamination of rivers and irrigation canals. Workers in these recycling operations usually do not wear protective gear as they melt and strip away plastic wiring. The human health costs of these toxins in the air, water, and food include stomach and lung disease, miscarriages, birth deformities, and premature deaths."[9]

As with with the ship dismantling in India, this is clearly dangerous work. But those involved provide responses similar to their Indian counterparts regarding outsiders trying to interfere with their efforts. "We need this work," said a farmer from Guizhou province, "If the government shuts it down here, it will just move somewhere else and we'll move with it."

"It's dangerous, yes, but no money is more dangerous," said an 18 year old woman named Lin. "No money means you'll die of hunger."[10]

Summary

Pravin Nagarsheth, mentioned earlier, has this to say, "Everybody knows this is bad! It is not a point of dispute! What Greenpeace is saying is even excellent! But their ideology does not provide solutions! This generation cannot afford it!"[11]

Langewiesche observes, "Too often we have a view of what is desirable for some other part of the world—on the ocean, in the slums from which sailors come, in Alang—which is so detached from daily existence there that it becomes counterproductive, or even inhumane." He concludes by reporting: At Alang, resentful Indians kept saying to me, "You had your industrial revolution, and so we should have ours."[12] ***P&SF***

References

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3. Andrew Kenny, "Energy for the poor? The Clean Development Mechanism," in *Adapt or Die*, Kendra Okonski, Editor, (London, Profile Books, 2003), 116.
4. Michael Fumento, *Bio Evolution*, 259.
5. Dennis T. Avery, "Environmentalists Turn to Terrorism," Hudson Institute, September 26, 2002.
6. William Langwiesche, "The Shipbreakers," *The Atlantic Monthly*, **286**, 31, August 2000.
7. William Langwiesche, *The Outlaw Sea*, (New York, North Point Press, 2004), 204.
8. William Langwiesche, *The Outlaw Sea*, (New York, North Point Press, 2004), 229.
9. Luyuan Li, "E-Waste Recycling in China," in *China Environment Series*, Jennifer L. Turner, Editor, (Washington, DC, The Woodrow Wilson Center, Issue 6, 2003,105).
10. Peter S. Goodman, "China Serves As Dump Site For Computers," *The Washington Post*, February 24, 2003, page A1.
11. William Langwiesche, *The Outlaw Sea*, (New York, North Point Press, 2004), 206.
12. William Langwiesche, *The Outlaw Sea*, (New York, North Point Press, 2004), 232.

Answers to I.Q. Quiz #414

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1. The current Cr^{+6} PEL is 52 $\mu g/m^3$ (ceiling concentration). The proposed Cr^{+6} PEL is 1.0 $\mu g/m^3$ (8-hr time-weighted average)

2. The Metal Products & Machinery Rule

3. The End-of-Life Vehicle Directive, mandated by the European Union, requires that producers limit the use of certain hazardous substances in the manufacture of new vehicles and automotive components and promote the recyclability of their vehicles.

4. The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive, mandated by the European Union, restricts the use of certain hazardous substances in electrical/electronic equipment and deals with the disposal of waste electrical/electronic equipment in landfills.

5. The Restriction of Use of Certain Hazardous Substances Directive, mandated by the European Union, requires producers to restrict the use of hazardous substances in electrical/electronic equipment. It specifically bans lead, mercury, cadmium, Cr^{+6}, PBBs and PBDEs. (and seems to overlap with WEEE).

Finishers' Think Tank

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versus the hexavalent baths, and are about twice as efficient. This means that flight bars can accommodate significantly more parts for plating, speeding up production. The deposit is close in color to hexavalent and is suitable for decorative finishes. Alloy zinc (zinc nickel) provides a deposited coating that significantly improves the corrosion resistance with a special chromate, compared to a traditional zinc and chromate. 500 hours to neutral salt spray and upwards can be readily achieved.

More in depth information for any of the mentioned processes is available in specific printed literature and courtesy of the suppliers. The more you know, the better off you will be when change becomes apparent.

Specification

This has become an important link to being able to do business not only domestically, but also internationally. ISO is the most common and probably predominant specification. Much of industry supports and is active in dealing only with similarly specified companies. It has, therefore, become not only good business sense, but critical in some aspects of companies working together. From a practical aspect, adhering to a specification keeps the member company on track, in all aspects of it's daily operation.

May this be not only a happy new year, but a 2006 that meets or exceeds every facet of your company. ***P&SF***