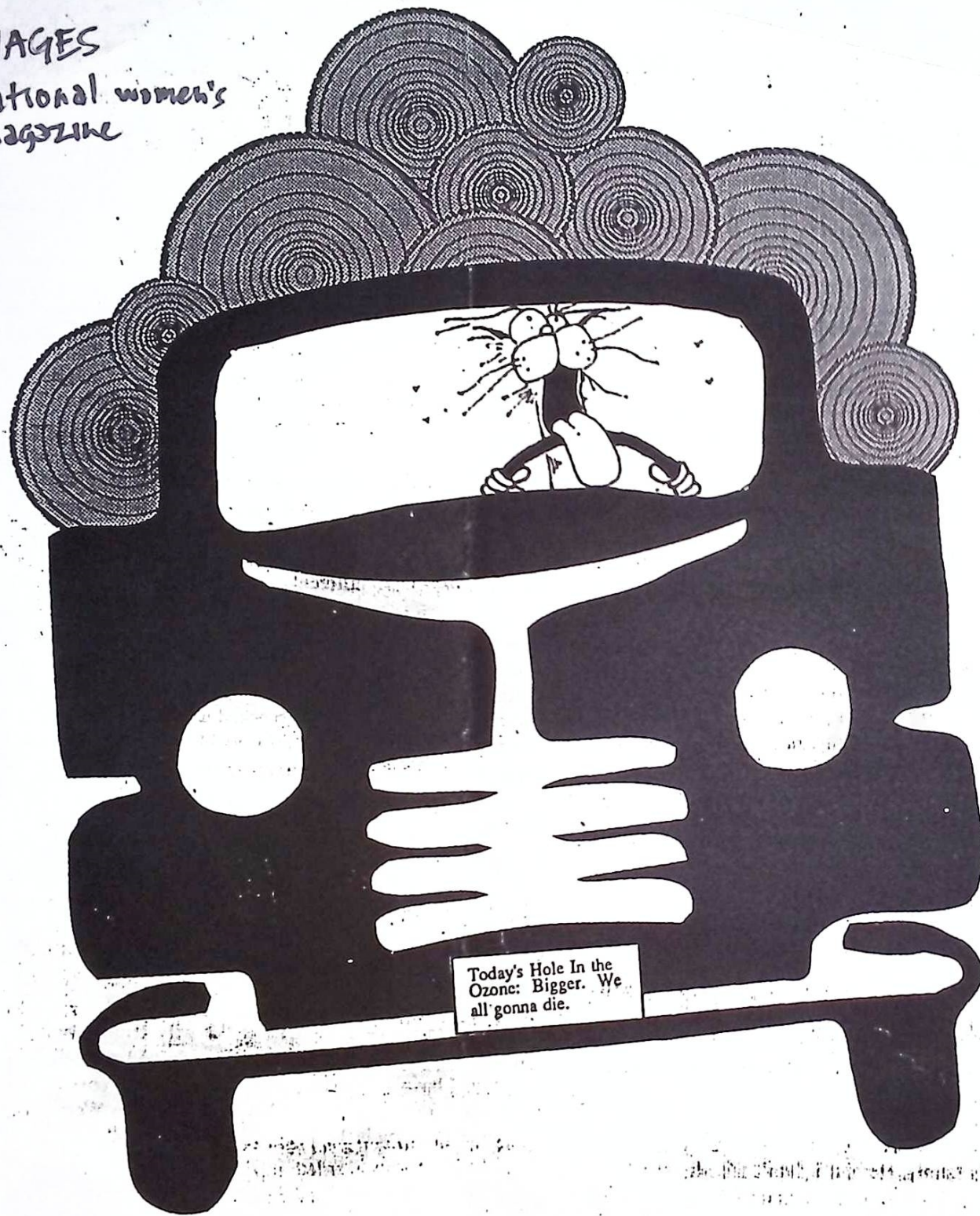


IMAGES

national women's  
magazine



Graphic by Moe and David

by David Lewis

They said the theme this issue was: MEN. What would this man in particular write if telephoned and given the word: FEMINISM? I sounded blank. How about YOU? I said I was totally burnt out and hiding in the bush telling myself I was getting firewood. I already had two years worth but was planning to go for more. "Write about firewood," a friendly, soothing voice said, "I'll call you in a couple of weeks."

A few years ago I was desperate to write for *IMAGES*. Feminists struck me as the most revolutionary, most together, solid, serious fighters on the political landscape. I had detected hysteria in the scientific community who were studying the evidence for planetary ecological collapse and felt driven to communicate this perception to anyone at all. Feminists would understand and they would know what to do: my desperation would fade away. Sure.

"I studied ecology five years ago and gave it up because I couldn't handle what I was finding out," said one. "How can you know this?" said another, implying my credentials as a potter who hardly ever managed to produce pottery were not that well recognized in the fields of ecology or atmospheric chemistry.

So very few were wandering around with "THE END IS HERE" signs stapled prominently to their chests at that time. This was before Suzuki did "It's a Matter of Survival." These days all the two-year-olds are writing letters to the editor pleading with the adults to save the planet.

I lived with a vision of a hole in the sky. Radiation streamed through, slowly and excruciatingly burning my old conception of life away. I knew no one I could share this perception with and started to project a wild, intense energy that could totally alienate just about anyone.

After a few microseconds of me demanding that something be DONE, female activists in particular would never want to be in the same room with me again. I learned from each disaster, but I totally fried.



# K · E · W · U · U · U

Vicki Husband

number of relationships. I heard that a nationally prominent female environmentalist reacted to me recently in this same way: what she saw was nothing in comparison to what some had to suffer through in my early days. I imagine some of the people I brushed up against then still think: give the man a few hundred years to calm down.

I started to realize that no one knew what to do. It's as if everyone has been unconscious for hundreds of years. Feminism is politics built up over the centuries and individual feminists can appear as flat-footed as anyone else as it suddenly dawns on us all that the shit is going to hit the fan during our lifetimes.

Some environmentalists I met realized that I knew what I was talking about and recommended that Canada pay my way to the Changing Atmosphere conference in Toronto in the summer of 1988. It turned out that there were a lot of profoundly disturbed individuals on the planet at that time and a representative 400 showed up to hammer out a statement to the civilization over four days.

It was the most high-level, stimulating intellectual experience I have ever had. The North American drought of 1988 focused media attention on the conference, and a lot of people point to it now as a turning point, the most significant environmental conference to have been held on the planet in the last fifteen years.

I didn't know what to expect when I introduced myself as an artist who saw the need for revolutionary change in a dying civilization. I told the scientists I could read their journals. Many of them appreciated my dead serious, outspoken, manic intensity: I looked like someone who was convinced his planet was dying. What else could anyone expect to see on a dying planet? I tried to express what was in my heart. As I found my voice my energy started to shake the conference. I wanted this group to call out to humanity that it must transform itself or die.

Even if people disagree with you, they do appreciate the spectacle of witnessing someone reaching into their

*Colleen McCrom*  
depths for everything and more than everything that they have to contribute, especially if it is delivered without regard for any personal consequence. Canada's Ambassador to the UN introduced me to the historic final plenary session in recognition of the effect I had had.

Nothing meaningful changes until the whole population gets together in that kind of effort.

I was in Vancouver recently for another international conference, Globe 90, which supposedly was going to "bring business and the environment together." If the Changing Atmosphere conference in Toronto was like coming from the bush league to score the Stanley Cup winning goal, Globe 90 was the daily grind of league play on a good team.

I seem to operate for months well beyond my capacity then find out I'm dead. A song from my youth runs through my brain: "Sometimes the light's all shining on me.... Other times I can barely see...." Nothing is in sight right now. I was sleeping 24 hours a day for weeks back there.

This is not about firewood.

Last month I heard the frogs were dying all over the planet and the frog-ologists (actually, herpetologists) were frantically searching for the cause. They say the frogs are real survivors who outlived the dinosaurs, and, if they are all at the front desk checking out now, it is significant.

When I heard this another large "TOO LATE" sign burst into my consciousness like a military flare parachuted over the front lines, floating slowly down over the killing ground now open for me 24 hours a day. And there is always another something to make another sign come up.

A friend makes sure I hear about the coral reefs. Raise the global ocean temperature a fraction of a degree and the shallows over the reefs heat up: global bleaching of reefs is occurring and no one can point to anything like it as far back as they have records.

At the White House, senior economic advisors argue that the relative importance of the biosphere (i.e. fish-

eries, agriculture and forestry) to the economy of the declining American Empire is about 10%, so who cares?

If food can't be grown naturally anymore, they'll bring out the lights and the factories and the profits will just be that much higher. These are the people who were going to build Star Wars. Bush insists that America's biggest problem is drugs. They can't stand tall on the brink of apocalypse facing the Soviet Union anymore so maybe America will devote its attention to putting men on Mars. Dali makes more sense every day.

The plan is to run full speed ahead regardless of unprecedented risks because, if growth is fast enough, a dollar invested today calculated at compound interest becomes an absolutely fantastic amount of dollars very soon. Quite unbelievable levels of global environmental damage can be sustained and be made to look profitable this way. No one has ever seen a planetary life support system blow out before, and no one will ever prove it is about to happen — to the standards of evidence required by a court of law — until the planet is dead.

High-level Bush Administration types crank out these economic arguments when asked why they appear to be allowing the U.S. to commit suicide, or "geocide" as the killing of the planet is coming to be called. The last defence is beginning.

The civilization is the Titanic after it has hit the iceberg. The politics of who gets to steer is irrelevant. I wander around saying I can feel a profound disturbance in the collective unconscious that will erupt soon in a political upheaval greater than what has happened in Eastern Europe, greater than the change from feudalism to capitalism. The 1990's will make the 1960's look like everyone was asleep.

It's time to get back to stalking the wily birch. My visions and pain fade as the pile of cordwood grows. Janie says I have to leave a path to the house if I cover our whole acre with firewood ten feet high. The West Kootenays in spring is the place to heal the wounds. *David Lewis is a backwoods deadbeat, erstwhile potter, and occasional delusion salesman.*