

# Care of the Environment, and RC

by Wytse Visser, International Commonality Reference Person for Care of the Environment

A new RC goal for care of the environment (COE) was adopted at the World Conference of the RC Communities in August 2013. (See the goal on page 3 of this *Present Time*.) It has been fantastic to see so many minds working on it. The goal will be carried out by a big and broad group of leaders.

## CARE OF THE ENVIRONMENT, AND INCLUSION

In the past, few people targeted by racism, if any, came to COE workshops. This was also true of working-class people. Slowly the work has progressed. There are participants from a wider variety of backgrounds. I have always wanted the real stories—from those whose lives and lands are most exploited—to be visible in the work on care of the environment.

Last year a group of all-white COE leaders tried to write a COE draft policy. Each member was asked to include the thinking of the people targeted by racism they were close to and of people from non-privileged parts of the world. It was understood that if we wanted a draft policy on COE, it had to be inclusive—from all and for all. It did not develop as we'd hoped. We have stopped working on it until the group has more representation of people targeted by racism, Indigenous people, and people from outside the Western world. This will take time. Many people in these groups feel easily intimidated about sharing their thinking. We all have to keep discharging in this area and reaching to be more inclusive. And we have to work on our feelings of urgency.

Environmental racism and genocide have been almost invisible

to white people in the wide world. Also, the environmental work of Indigenous people and people targeted by racism has been almost completely separate from the work of white environmental organizations. We see a reflection of this as we try to build COE in RC.

Much work on environmental racism and genocide was done at the ten Pre-World Conferences. Our awareness is growing. Our thinking about COE has more depth because of the work done at the Pre-World Conferences. People of the global majority shared how their lives, peoples, and lands have been affected by racism and genocide. This gave all the participants a chance to be more realistic about where we are. We are seeing oppression more clearly as an unaware putting down of, and taking profit from, all life. We are breaking through numbness about the threat we are facing. More RC leaders are participating and giving input into the new goal. COE leadership is developing at all levels in RC.

As we keep pointing our noses in this direction, we can work to find ways to help wide-world environmental organizations become

more inclusive. We can work to become a model of how to bring unity to an organization.

## UNAWARENESS, DISCONNECTION, AND NARROW THINKING

In today's world, a relatively small number of privileged people exist in an ocean of inequality. Activists in the Western world have been standing up for oceans, forests, and animals but are often unaware that stricter environmental laws in their own countries mean that companies move to India, China, South America, and Africa. This leads to unemployment at home, increased travel time for food and materials, and more pollution in the less privileged countries. The privileged countries buy products from far away more cheaply than they can buy local products. The result is a vicious circle of degradation. Clothing is one example: Where is our clothing made and under what circumstances? Of what is it made? How has its manufacture been harmful to the air and water and therefore to the whole ecosystem? How many hours did the workers have to work, and how little were they paid? How were they risking their health and lives?

We have the best of intentions. However, our efforts are often based on a narrow way of thinking. If we protect trees from being cut down, what happens to the income of the workers who have to feed a family? How can we care for a tree and not for people? As activists, what do we need to discharge to reclaim our connection with people? What made many of us decide, early in our lives, to trust no one but ourselves?

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## WIDE WORLD CHANGING

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Harvey Jackins talked about the difference between intellectual action and intelligent action. The development of technology is often an intellectual and narrow activity. The focus is on making a profit. There is little regard for humans and nature. Examples are the nuclear power and oil industries. *Intelligent* technology has an all-inclusive perspective.

In the world of science, things often follow a narrow path. Within the capitalist framework, little thought is given to inequality. A good innovation or solution that does not serve capitalism is ignored or destroyed.

All—governments, technologists, scientists, workers, Indigenous people, people targeted by racism—must unite and put intelligence before profits.

The best things in life cannot be bought. Our future lies in our connection with all of life, and with ourselves. Our early distresses, heavily influenced by a capitalist perspective, make us feel vulnerable and not good enough. We are told to focus on appearance as the way to succeed and be cared for. We are pulled to buy things in order to look like we are successful. Advertisements falsely promise that we will be wanted and loved if we use certain products. In fact, the more an individual owns, the more disconnected he or she tends to become from all of life. Such disconnection may be the biggest threat to human life on earth.

### **HUMANITY AT A CROSSROAD**

Our miraculously complex ecosystems are in danger. There is too much pollution for these systems to maintain the balance needed to sustain all life. Humanity is at an interesting crossroad. We have

to choose which path to follow: continuing down this destructive path or changing course to one that sustains all life.

Our oppressive limitations are in our face. We have no choice but to end the domination of greed. We also have to give up the victim role and the blaming of others. Together we stand, divided we fall. Oppression relies on “divide and rule.” As long as we blame another group or country, oppression wins.

Revolutions often happen when oppressed groups have nothing to lose. However, in addition to any gains they make, these revolutions disrupt societies and confuse people. Then the ruling class gets enough people to follow its lead that it can establish another oppressive system. We want to break this chain. We want *a revolution in people’s minds that will end all oppression*. Standing together, all for one and one for all, is our best chance for our survival and a sustainable planet.

### **MAKING UP OUR MINDS**

In sessions we can connect with the innocent child that is still within us. We can encourage that child to speak and to break through the feelings of discouragement and defeat. That child still knows what is real and is waiting for our help in freeing our locked heart and limited mind. That child is still outraged at not getting to live the life that she or he wanted.

We humans have to make up our minds. We have to make choices that are very different from what we’ve been used to. We have to live with integrity. We have to choose all people and all life over greed and unequal privilege. Old feelings of discouragement and insecurity, handed down through many generations, keep most of us

conforming to the dictates of the oppressive societies. We are at the point of realizing that there is no security except in connection. Even the oppressor’s life is no longer secure. We are now being forced to get rid of oppressive societies and create and establish intelligent ones in which all life is of the highest value and no form of oppression is tolerated.

### **THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF RCERS**

As RCers we are committed to freeing ourselves and each other from all that keeps us small and limits our intelligence. We understand that discharge is key to reclaiming our full intelligence and seeing ourselves as leaders.

We focus not only on individual liberation but on liberation for all. We are getting better at leaving no one and nothing behind. Our awareness of environmental racism and genocide is growing. We continually add to our theory and update our *Guidelines*.<sup>1</sup> Every mind counts in our organization. This, along with what we know about leadership, can play a key role in sustaining all life.

With an increasingly clear direction and perspective we can play important leadership roles, and back<sup>2</sup> each other’s leadership. If we do this, environmental destruction will end much more quickly than it would otherwise. We can stand side by side. Discouragement will not stop us. We can help the transition to an intelligent society go less harmfully and more elegantly.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*, the policies for the RC Communities

<sup>2</sup> “Back” means support.