

From the Editor

MIKE NAHAN

It is easy to ridicule UN gabfests. They generally achieve nothing other than provide a stage for the unelected to bully governments and corporations into doing their bidding, and at the recently completed Earth Summit in Johannesburg the unelected outnumbered the elected by ten to one. The gabfests consume massive amounts of money and resources—indeed the Earth Summit cost taxpayers around the world a minimum of \$1 billion. Thankfully, the bill was largely borne by our European friends. Furthermore, the gabfests regularly give a stage to the world's most despicable despots such as Mr Mugabe, who received a standing ovation at the Earth Summit after blaming whitey for his domestic problems.

Nonetheless, the Earth Summit achieved a good deal. First, economic freedom won over eco-socialism. The prevailing theme of the Summit's 30,000-word communique is that wealth and markets make for a healthy environment. The vision proffered by the NGOs and their UN mates—that environmental disasters warranted eco-socialism, was rejected.

Second, a new coalition of nations was formed which effectively thwarted the push by the Europeans and their friends in the UN and the NGOs. The G77 group, (composed largely of less developed countries) together with the US, Australia, Canada, Japan and sometimes the UK, took on the Europeans and won. They rejected Europe's push for targets on renewable energy such as wind and solar power. Instead, the conference gave the green light to 'efficient affordable and cost-effective energy technologies, including fossil fuel technologies'. Global warming was barely mentioned, except in the Australian media. The proposal to set up a World Environmental



Organization—naturally under the auspices of the UN, located in Europe and with special rights for NGOs—was killed off. The Europeans and their NGO friends' attempts to outlaw the use of genetically modified crops received no support either, except from a few 'Uncle Tom' NGOs from developing countries, such as Malaysia's Third World Network. Europe's push to stop the development of new dams to save water was ignored. Indeed, the Ugandan delegation was successful in getting new hydropower re-instated as renewable energy.

The rainbow coalition of NGOs, less developed countries and the UN failed to materialise. Indeed, the LDC joined the other camp—the pro-growth countries. In truth, this was always on the cards. LDC may be burdened with despots and dictators, but they are not dumb. They want what we have, not what the NGOs want to give them—which is more of what they already have: poverty, lack of markets and technology, and too many dictators. The LDC have made this view crystal clear at every UN forum for decades. The NGOs' plan for Johannesburg was to buy the LDCs' support for eco-socialism with the lure of foreign aid. Accordingly, aid became the main focus of the Earth Summit and many environmental

NGOs became aid agencies. It did not work. After 50 years, LDC leaders know that foreign aid, even if delivered, does not provide a path from poverty. Some even know that socialism does not work. They also know that the many NGOs would, in the end, give preference to rhinos over people.

The Summit also gave rise to a new pro-market and pro-development group of NGOs who provided an effective alternative voice to the anti-globalization groups which have long dominated the sector. Many of the most articulate of this new breed of NGOs, such as the Free Market Foundation of South Africa, the Inter Region Economic Network of Kenya and the Institute of Public Policy Analysis of Nigeria, come from Africa.

Finally, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth were exposed to the world for what they are—eco-fascists. These organizations were exposed as the lobbyists behind the decisions by the dictators of Zimbabwe and Zambia to withhold maize from their starving masses because it may be genetically modified. This was done in the full knowledge that GM maize has been eaten by over 300 million North Americans for six years without a single problem, and has been cleared for human consumption by every health agency in the world.

The Summit had its low points. The lowest being the joint statement made by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (representing 160 of the world's largest corporations including, ironically, Monsanto) and Greenpeace urging countries to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. Karl Marx was probably right when he predicted that capitalism contained the seeds of its own destruction.

IPA

REVIEW