

Environment

A quarry can be reclaimed

By SUSAN COX

Several years ago, when the RSI proposal for the Acton Garbage Dump was just beginning to surface, the phrase 'alternate uses' was heard often. In fact, many people felt that under the term "rehabilitation", RSI should be required to show what else the quarry could be used for besides a garbage dump. The fact that RSI did not present alternative uses was hardly a surprise, since their plan would make them more money, even though in the long term it would cause problems for all Halton Hills residents. When suggestions were made for uses such as a park or a garden (like Butchart Gardens in Victoria), it was implied that something like that could not be done as it would not be financially feasible.

In fact, this is just not the case. A recent article in Whole Earth Review showed just how a limestone quarry in Kenya was rehabilitated. "The quarry has been transformed from a lifeless pit into a food and timber producing nature preserve." As you walk through the area you see new trees all around. Insects and birds fly about and hundreds of fish swim in pools. Herds of cattle, sheep, and goats graze on new grass. (Haller has restored more than 250 acres out of the 900.)

Years ago, the Bamburi Cement Company was producing cement for a developing country. The cement was so important in the beginning that people did not complain about the horrendous



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quarries that were being carved out of the landscape. However, as time went on the cement company itself became concerned about the scars of its quarrying so they hired a Swiss agronomist, Rene Haller, to help them reclaim the quarry.

Haller, with the help of local species of plants and wildlife, used nature to restore life to the quarry. The results are remarkable and the importance of his work goes beyond the mere reclamation of a derelict quarry. Haller has made this quarry an example for the African continent to follow. (Africa has some of the world's worst environmental problems.)

Haller has used a technique called agriforestry which combines growing trees with raising crops and livestock. Among the many benefits of this process is the fact that it presents a sound approach to the greening of the Earth again.

The main feature of Haller's results is the low cost involved. The restoration of the quarry and the development and maintenance of the preserve is essentially self-financing. Haller sells fish, meat, fruit and

firewood, and collects entrance fees from tourists. According to the interview with Haller in Whole Earth Review, "It is a measure of the profitability of his enterprise that it keeps on expanding - and that Haller can keep trying new ideas." Haller states, "I would not want anything else...how could I possibly promote it to others if it did not stand up commercially!"

It certainly is commendable that a company in a developing nation such as Kenya is concerned enough about the environment to commit themselves to these changes. It is also quite sobering however, when we consider the lengths RSI is going in order to put a garbage dump in place of something more fitting for the Niagara Escarpment. It makes you wonder who has their priorities in order, and who we can call upon to stop this degradation of the landscape if companies cannot be relied upon as good corporate citizens to police themselves.

Everyone is welcome to hear Debbie Mitchell from Stouville speak at P.O.W.E.R.'s General Meeting Wednesday, Sept. 25h in Georgetown.



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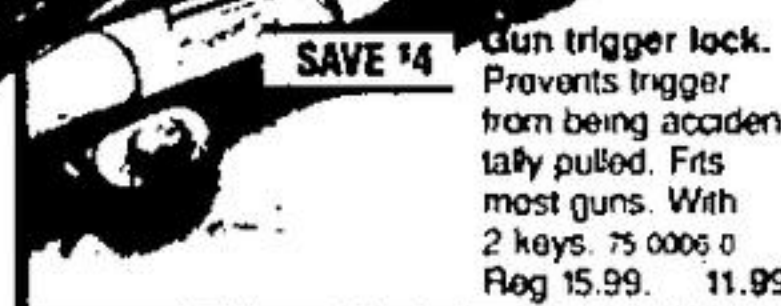
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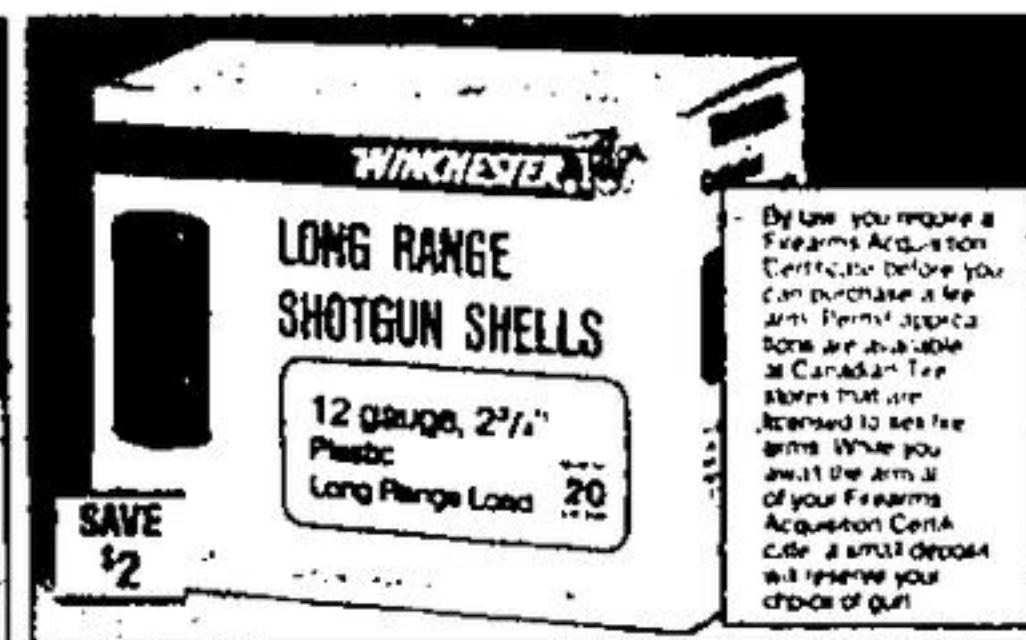
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