



Champion COMMUNITY Page

People must start thinking globally to save planet, says concerned university professor

BY TIM WHITNELL

Special to The Champion

At times humorous, often earnest and occasionally controversial in his views about how humans mistreat the Earth and each other, Alan Morgan's unwavering message is that people better start thinking globally to save our planet.

Part ancient geological primer, part socio-economic/political commentary, the Earth sciences professor from the University of Waterloo enthralled his mostly teenaged audience with a slide show and talk on global environmental changes long ago and today and its

lasting and detrimental effects on the biosphere.

Mr. Morgan was the keynote speaker at Assumption Secondary School's On The Edge — Exploring Local Environmental Issues conference.

Spoke to Burlington students

The ambitious day-long event attracted nearly 300 students from 26 schools in Halton Region and Hamilton February 20. They attended their choice of two of 10 workshops put on by university professors and environmental activists invited from around the GTA.

In his hour-long address Mr. Morgan educated and at times railed on a variety of subjects ranging from the rapid proliferation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and subsequent global warming to the population boom and the increasing and unbalanced devouring of natural resources.

He told the crowd that it took 100,000 years for one billion humans to populate the planet. The next billion arrived in just 100 years.

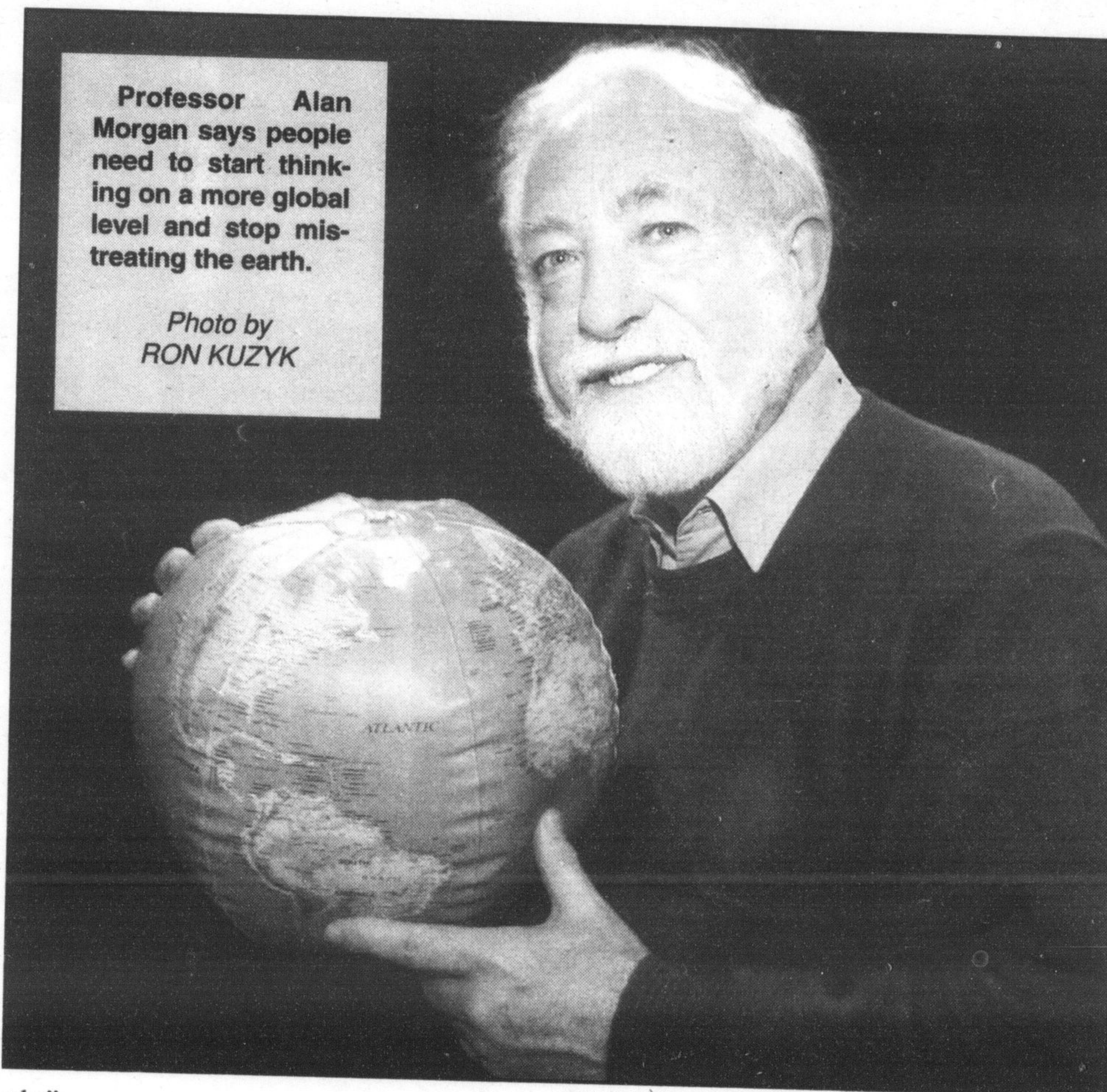
In his 60 years on Earth the count has risen to about 6.2 billion people, putting pressure on essentials like food production and water and air quality. "If you think we have problems at the moment, wait until we have nine or 10 billion people," which will happen in about 30 years, he said.

Mr. Morgan showed a slide of the Caribbean island of St. Lucia, which he said has no landfill sites, with refuse tumbling into the sea and damaging the reef ecosystem.

"One of the challenges you students face," he said to his audience, "is managing the water sup-

Professor Alan Morgan says people need to start thinking on a more global level and stop mistreating the earth.

Photo by RON KUZYK



ply."

Large countries are at fault too when it comes to pollution, said Mr. Morgan. He noted the tourist mecca Greece has trouble handling the 16 million plastic water bottles it sells annually.

Mr. Morgan directed much of his disdain for resource wastefulness and socio-economic imbalance at the United States.

"The 'best' country in the world, the U.S.," he said sarcastically, "has the same (refuse) problem, it's just that it has better quality garbage."

"The First World uses 80 per cent of the world's resources but accounts for just 20 per cent of its population. I hope I don't offend but the events of September 11 are partially due to this imbalance."

Mr. Morgan conceded there are religious overtones to the current tensions between the U.S. and Iraq but said there are sociological circumstances as well.

"A potential war in Iraq could cost \$20 billion,

(money) which could do a lot of good in the world. The Americans would probably be better off to drop dollar bills," instead of bombs.

Big business, politicians the culprits

Mr. Morgan laid blame for many of the world's environmental problems on big business, politicians, the Industrial Revolution and the consumer-oriented society.

"We live in an enclosed bubble in space and the faster our businessman and politicians realize this the better. As you go out into business or politics," he told the students, "please remember we live on a finite planet. We are a transient species and hold it (Earth) in trust" for the next generation.

"Huge houses with two (gas-guzzling) SUVs in the driveway should not be a sign of success in life," he added.

The warming of the oceans and the atmosphere by carbon dioxide given off by burning

fossil fuels at factories and in vehicles has mankind headed for catastrophe, Mr. Morgan said.

"Eight out of 10 cars on our highways carrying only one person (the driver) has got to change."

Studies have shown, he said, that carbon dioxide levels have risen dramatically in the atmosphere while snowcaps and ice are melting in polar and mountaintop regions.

"The ice sheets are melting all over the place. The Kilimanjaro ice sheet (in Africa) will be gone in 2020 and it is 12,000 years old.

"When politicians say there is no global warming they are lying. Permafrost is melting just 800 kms from the North Pole," he said.

Global warming 'real concern'

Mr. Morgan reiterated the prediction by many scientists that global warming will make some weather phenomena even more widespread and devastating. He said the U.S. Mid-West and parts of Alberta will probably experience worsening periods of drought while hurricanes and typhoons will increase in intensity.

Despite the dire warnings, it's not all doom and gloom, said Mr. Morgan.

"We still live on an incredibly beautiful planet (but) recycling has to become commonplace and we have to limit our water use and use no pesticides. We're trying to repair the ozone layer but it's going to take a long time."

One Burlington student said Mr. Morgan's speech and the workshops she attended were inspiring, even if the current message was scary.

"I know some people who didn't have any awareness of these environmental issues," said OAC student Katie Willott.

"Today opened my eyes. I don't just live in Burlington, Ontario or Canada; I live in the world. The biggest problem is people (here) are not educated about other countries and their needs."

Franca Ianni, a Burlington history/civics teacher and co-organizer of the conference, along with fellow teacher Tina Di Clemente, said the nearly five months of preparation was worth it.

"The message has to be sent that issues about the environment begin in your backyard but it's a global issue. One thing people don't understand is that kids are fantastic and want to get involved — they just need direction. Now we have kids who can go back to 26 schools and focus on issues or a project," said Ms Ianni.

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COGECO 14

Programming Schedule — Tuesday, March 11th - Monday, March 16th, 2003

| Tuesday, March 11 | | Wednesday, March 12 | | Thursday, March 13 | | Sunday, March 16 | | Monday, March 17 | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|--|--------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|--|
| 5,6 & 7:30pm | Plugged In! Early Week Edition | 5,6 & 7:30pm | Plugged In! Early Week Edition | 5 & 6pm | Plugged In! Early Week Edition | 5,6 & 7:30pm | Plugged In! Late Week Edition | 5,6 & 7:30pm | Plugged In! Late Week Edition |
| 5:30pm | Seniors Showcase | 5:30pm | Kid Connection | 5:30pm | Osler Health Connection | 5:30pm | Faces Savoline/Smith | 5:30pm | The issue is... |
| 6:30pm | Optimist TV Bingo (Live) | 6:30pm | Swap Talk (Live) | 6:30pm | Main Street | 6:30pm | Senior Showcase | 6:30pm | Faces Savoline/Smith |
| 8pm | The War Amps Present... | 8:00pm | 2003 Georgetown Hockey Heritage Awards | 8:00pm | Halton Region Council (Mar 5) | 7:00pm | Osler Health Connection | 7:00pm | Money Week |
| | | | | | | 8:00pm | Main Street | 8:00pm | SportsZone Live |
| | | | | | | | | 9:00pm | Cogeco Sports: BCW - Border City Wrestling |