THE INVASION OF THE BODY SHOPPERS: SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE CAPITALISM MEETS THE CRISIS OF REPRESENTATION

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"The Invasion of the Body Snatchers", the science fiction horror movie that parodied the paranoid American Zeitgeist of the 1950s so successfully that it became a cult hit, tells the story of aliens who infiltrate themselves into the bodies of ordinary citizens, thereby subverting the American body politic from within. The infiltrated bodies remain outwardly normal and unchanged; the inwardly transformed citizens continue to keep up the appearances of the American Way of Life while secretly working for its overthrow. This resonated with the collective anxieties of a time when social homogeneity and ideological consensus, appearing as the natural expressions of a stable social and political order, were nevertheless successfully exploited by paranoid political demagoguery that called in question the stability of the national consensus by casting doubt on the sincerity of individuals' commitment to it. What seemed in question were not the outward forms of civility and personal identity, but the inward conformity of individuals to the common social and ideological values on which they supposedly rested; not the body and the conventions of appearance and comportment it assumed as a matter of course from a hegemonic social order, but alien(ating) internal manifestaions of individuality and deviant subjective identity.

The conformist consensus of the '50's, with its emphasis on standardized personal appearance, conventionalized personality and a homogeneous national culture, has long since disintegrated, along with its social and political base in welfare-state class consensus and cold war anti-subversive paranoia. In contrast to the '50's, when normative forms of personal appearance and identity were felt to be socially determined, and conformity to them was imagined as a process of internal struggle by problematic individual subjects, we now see the external forms of personal appearance and identity as socially indeterminate, in the absence of any hegemonic consensus on social and cultural values. Social existence is now increasingly felt to consist in a process of construction of a specific and distinctive personal identity by the individual, in large part through the management of external appearance (meaning above all bodily appearance and life-style), achieved mainly by the knowledgable and tasteful consumption of commodities. Commodities, as the visible components of the face the individual presents to the social world, are increasingly felt to be the real source of personal identity rather than the old notion of an authentic inward subjectivity.

Surface appearance, meaning above all bodily appearance and condition, and the socially unregulated exchange of the commodities through which it is constructed (i.e., free market capitalism) has thus become the convergent focus of individual and social consciousness alike for the citizens of the advanced capitalist world. Preoccupation with the body, its care, presentation and expression, as the vehicle of personal identity has become the leitmotiv of the popular culture and, to a considerable degree, the cultural theory of our age. One of the distinctive features of contemporary life has thus become an unprecedented commodification of all aspects of bodily identity and

appearance: fitness, hygeine, diet, exuality, clothes, and cosmetics. From a nation that feared body snatchers, the U.S. (along with other First World centers of Late Capitalist consumerism such as the U.K.) has thus become a nation of body shoppers.

THE BODY SHOP AS REPRESENTATION OF THE ZEITGEIST

The concern with the body is one aspect of a more general turning away from the social, encompassing the repudiation of traditional norms of gender relations and sexuality and the rejection of the political as traditionally understood in terms of collective social action. The body is seen as an alternative to socially and politically imposed forms of identity such as class and citizenship because it is natural rather than social or political. The environment and threatened species of animals constitute the extra-social aspect of nature, complementing the body's internal, infra-social nature. Aspects of human identity and activity, from human rights to free-market commodity exchange, that are seen as prior to or free from social and political determination or regulation comprise the trendy political ideologies of the day. These themes are represented by the new social movements for ecological preservation, human rights (especially for ethnic minorities and Third-World peoples), cultural survival for exotic non-Western peoples, and neo-conservative parties advocating free-market economics with its repudiation of state regulation and ideology of individualism.

If one were to imagine how this whole set of themes might be embodied in the corporate image of a single capitalist enterprise engaged in the production and marketing of consumer commodities, so that that corporate self-image, as a sort of quintessence of the Zeitgeist, would become the basis of the public appeal of its products, one might be led to envision a manufacturer of products for the care and enhancement of the body, composed of natural, organic substances obtained by non-exploitative free trade with exotic non-Western peoples, who produce them by traditional processes of extraction which sustain their natural environments. The trade relations themselves would be represented as exemplifying capitalist free-market principles but nevertheless as scrupulously fair, non-exploitative exchanges between equal partners, thus providing the exotic Others in question with a more potent and self-empowered alternative to dependence on governmental aid in the struggle to preserve their traditional cultures.

It could plausibly be argued that if such a virtuosic synthesis, such a masterpiece of capitalist poetics did not exist, it would have to be invented. At any rate, it has been. The creative synthesis has actually occurred, and is embodied in the British-based international cosmetic firm, The Body Shop (or more precisely, in the corporate image it projects).

The commercial success of the Body Shop, which has grown from humble beginnings in 1976 as a single cosmetic shop in the faded resort town of Brighton on England's south coast to a trans-national enterprise of over 1,000 company shops and franchises in 45 countries, grossing over $700 million in annual sales, bespeaks the accuracy with which its founders and owners, Anita and Gordon Roddick, have read the temper of their times and guaged the forces they were able to ride to riches. The Body Shop, in contrast to other cosmetic companies, has succeeded not so much by selling fantasies of personal appearance, like the gracile models in the Estee Lauder or Revlon ads, as by identifying its products with its own corporate image. People buy Body Shop products primarily to associate the symbolic attributes of The Body Shop's

corporate identity (natural purity, ecological concern, support for indigenous peoples, advocacy of other progressive social causes, etc.) with their own personal identities.

The founder of the Body Shop, Anita Roddick, has made herself the personification of the Body Shop's mythic corporate identity, to the extent that the corporation and its identity have been made to appear to the public to be expressions of her brash, honest, idealistic, and irrepressibly exuberant personality. She has become a public figure by identifying herself and her business with a series of progressive social and environmental causes, while presenting herself as an outspoken critic of conventional business practices, especially in the cosmetics industry. "I bloody hate the beauty industry", she has said (Moberg 1994: 13), because, as she has repeatedly charged, other cosmetics manufacturers "lie", "cheat", and "exploit women" (quoted in Entine 1994: 24). In contrast to them, she has said, "I, honest to God, didn't know you were allowed to tell lies" (Moberg 1994: 13) Roddick's protestations of innocence, however, have rung increasingly hollow as lie after lie has been exposed in Body Shop claims about its products and operations. The truth appears more likely to lie with an erstwhile Body Shop consultant who remarks,

> Anita is a mythomaniac...She instinctively understands the facile nature of the press and plays to it." (M. Amats, quoted in Entine 1994: 24)

The wide popularity and appeal of the public image of the Body Shop has not been created by conventional advertising; on the contrary, it is Anita Roddick's proud boast that it has never paid a penny for advertising. Instead, The Body Shop has relied upon media coverage of its advocacy of progressive causes and its trading projects with exotic peoples, also represented and amplified by the photographic displays and literature distributed in its shops, to convey its self-representations to a receptive public. To buy and use Body Shop cosmetics, so these representations imply, is to transcend the contradictions of post-modern individualistic post-social consciousness: to reconcile the egoistic narcissism of the consumer of beauty products with the selfless political virtue of supporters of threatened indigenous peoples, and the artificiality of cosmetizing one's own bodily image with Body Shop products with the natural authenticity of their ingredients and the exotic peoples who make them.

The message resonates with some of the central themes of post-1960's (anti-)politics and Post-Modern cultural theory. The personal is the political! Private acts of self-pleasuring comprise the most authentic political resistance! The egoistic cultivation of the nature of one's own body coincides with participation in the body of nature. Or as Anita Roddick summed it up in her book, Body and Soul, a personal history of her founding of the Body Shop and all of its multifarious good works and benefits to others, "Make no mistake about it--I'm doing this for me!" (Roddick 1992:256) The Body Shop story, as told by Roddick and as offered for vicarious participation by all Body Shop consumers by the publicity displays in Body Shop outlets, is a quintessential parable of Reaganism-Thatcherism: inspired selfishness represented as practical social and ecological messianism rewarded by business success on a world scale.

THE BODY SHOP'S CRISIS OF REPRESENTATION

Depending as it does on selling back to consumers re-presentations of their own ideological and cultural representations, however, The Body Shop obviously renders itself vulnerable to the very "crisis of representation"

that has emerged as the unhappy consciousness of the same Post-Modern Zeitgeist it so successfully embodies in other respects. The crisis of representation has been defined by Post-Modern cultural theorists as a double-barrelled loss of confidence, firstly in the ability of cultural and theoretical representations to describe or correspond to reality, and secondly in the legitimacy of representation in the political sense, in particular any claims of First World researchers, colonial administrators, or cultural theorists to represent the interests, needs, or ideas of Third- or Fourth World Others.

In the case of The Body shop, this translates itself into the question of whether The Body Shop's self-representation or corporate image corresponds to its actual practices, and whether its representations of the way its trading projects with tribal and peasant communities serve their interests, specifically whether the projects promote their "empowerment" and operate with their full and informed support. In so far as they do not, the further questions arise of whether the misrepresentations in question appear to be accidental misstatements or deliberate fabrications and hypocritical hype; and if the latter, then to what extent they, and the real practices the misrepresentations serve to conceal, may be integral to The Body Shop's distinctive modus operandi rather than isolated aberrations or the excesses of a few overenthusiastic staffers.

These issues are now being raised by a series of reports by investigative journalists, public radio and television exposes, complaints by Body Shop franchisees and consumers, investigations by U.S. and British ethical investment firms, and the launching of an investigation by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission, all of which have been impelled by apparent inconsistencies between the Body Shop's claims and its actual practices in virtually every aspect of its operations. In September, the trickle of critical attention from these various sources became a flood, erupting into a major media scandal, first in Britain and now increasingly in the U.S. As its shares fell on the London Stock Exchange under the impact of the charges and disclosures, The Body Shop responded, as is its wont, by rejecting all criticisms and threatening to sue its critics. On several past occasions, it has successfully forestalled the publication of critical reports by threatening to bring libel actions. The spate of criticism, however, has lately attained a volume and weight of documentation that can no longer be contained by the menace of punitive legal action.

In a critical report entitled "Shattered Image" published in Business Ethics, Jon Entine wrote, "The gap between image and reality at the Body Shop appears to be huge". Among the specific discrepancies between representation and reality Entine mentions are

(1) numerous franchisees have charged the company with being devious, misleading and exploitative in its dealings with them, belying its warm, nurturant image as "a different kind of company". The U.S. Federal Trade Commission is currently investigating some of these complaints;

(2) quality control has on several documented occasions been slovenly and inconsistent; some products have been found to contain microbial contamination and others formaldehyde, and these products have not always been recalled from retail outlets; (3) despite its presentation of its products as innovative formulas based on natural ingredients, The Body Shop's products turn out upon analysis to be based on standard formulas using petrochemicals, with only token amounts of the natural substances after which the product is named (e.g., "Carrot Moisture Cream", Mango Body Butter", "Watermelon Sunblock", etc.); and

(4) claims of the exotic origins of cosmetic recipes using natural ingredients (e.g., pineapple face-wash, supposedly discovered by Anita Roddick on a visit to Sri Lanka, but actually concocted by the company's chemists in London) are often simply made up "to make it a bit more romantic".

An instance of this ethnographic hype is cited by David Moberg in another recent expose:

> ...while Body Shop literature claims a particular hair gel is based on a southern Ethiopian tradition of using ochre, butter, and acacia gum, "every single ingredient in it is pertochemical," argues Debra Dadd-Redalia, author of two envirnomental consumer guides. "There is no ochre, butter or acacia." (Moberg 1994: 13-14)

Dadd-Redalia's general assessment of the Body Shop, quoted by Moberg, is that its claims to "naturalness" are spurious:

> I would say there is virtually no difference in the safety or environmental friendddliness of the Body Shop ingredients from any major cosmetic company [product] sold in department stores, except that they've added a few ingredients that are natural, like banana, that are a small part of the product. (Moberg 1994: 14)

The same deceptive tokenism pervades the Body Shop's "Trade Not Aid" program, through which it sources natural ingredients and products from tribal peoples and peasant communities such as the Brazilian Kayapo or the Mexican Nahual. This program, which plays a major part in the company's public relations self-image, accounts for only a tiny proportion of the content of Body Shop products (estimated by several sources at around 1%). The presentation of Body Shop products often imply that they are largely or wholly based on substances obtained by "fair trade" with such exotic peoples, but the representation often bears as much relation to reality as its pineapple face wash bears to pineapples. A case in point is one of the leaders in the company's product line, "Brazil Nut Hair Conditioner", which contains Brazil Nut oil pressed by Kayapo Indians, whose larger-than-life photographs frequently adorn Body Shop retail outlets. Adams of the British consumer organization New Consumer has noted that while Brazil nut oil makes up only about 1% of the conditioner that bears its name, only a small proportion of that actually comes from the Kayapo, the rest being derived from conventional market sources (cited in Moberg 1994:15).

The Body Shop's representation of itself as a "different" kind of capitalist firm, one which puts human and environmental interests first and uses its economic power to advance social causes, rather than using advocacy of trendy social causes to advance its economic interests, is called in question by several aspects of its corporate performance. David Brook, an environmentalist lawyer who was hired as the Body Shop's first manager of environmental afairs in the U.S. and is now a deputy attorney general in New Jersey, quit in disgust when he found that the company regularly desregarded ecological considerations and environmental regulations in its manufacturing operations. In an interview, Brook said,

> They've been able to perpetrate a lot of lies. O haven't seen a shred of evidence they've done anything in this environment that's progressive. (Moberg 1994: 16)

Brook was also outraged at the company's treatement of its workers and franchisees:

> The company just treated people like crap. There were so many people who were incredibly vivacious, enthusiastic and naive. They embraced the philosophy on such amazing waays and worked their butts off. Yet the company didn't give a damn about them. Anita would say, "Speak out, question authority, make the company do things we say we do," and they would do that and get fired. The people who ran the place were extremely ruthless. (Moberg 1994: 16)

Another major discrepancy between the company's image and its actions is its bullying and abusive style of dealing with critics and even neutral researchers requesting routine information. It has frequently employed threats of punitive lawsuits to intimidate would-be publishers from publishing critical articles, and circulated fictitious but damaging dossiers about major critics rather than respond directly to their criticisms. Franklin Research and Development Corporation, a socially responsible investment firm, which recently produced a comprehensive report for its investors on the Body Shop, summed up its major problems with the Body Shop under two heads: firstly, "the gap between the Body Shop's image and its reality" (a monnotonously repetitive theme in Body Shop criticism); and secondly,

> ...its response to criticism...the Body Shop's constant use of character assassination and its habit of assuming motives is offensive and virtually unheard of in our experience. The Body Shop's bombastic tactics have set back any legitimate attempts by the company to change...the wounds left by the company's defensiveness will be hard to heal. (Franklin 1994: 8)

Because the Body Shop has made its altruistic self-image the keystone of its marketing appeal, the issue of the veracity of its self-representation is vital to its corporate survival, far more than would be the case for most corporations that make no claims to superior ethical principles, enlightened ecological values, or progressive social policies. If the public, as a result of the current wave of criticism, were to become convinced that The Body Shop's representations of its principles, projects and policies are in reality hypocritical and self-serving misrepresentations, the results could be economic disaster. In the Body Shop scandale, the crisis of representation, as Marx might say, has forcibly reencountered its material conditions of existence, and the contradiction of representation and reality has asserted itself, not merely as an epistemological question, but as a material issue fraught with economic consequences.

"TRADE NOT AID": THE KAYAPO CASE

The real character of BS corporate policies and priorities, and their social, political and economic implications for the indigenous and peasant communities where the Body Shop has installed trading projects, are manifested in the actual running of the projects and the relations of Body Shop representatives with the members of the communities involved. The Body Shop has declared that the aims of its "Trade Not Aid" projects include the "empowerment" of local people through their control of production and distribution of the income from the projects, their integration as equal trading partners in the world economic system, and the provision of an alternative income to allow them to forego dependence on environmentally destructive activities such as logging and mining. Whether and to what extent these corporate representations correspond to local realities can only be guaged by looking closely at specific cases.

The BS's projects with the Kayapo of Brazil are the showpieces of their Trade Not Aid program, and play a prominent role in the company's public self-representations, so the Kayapo case is the logical choice for such a study. As an anthropologist who has conducted field research with the Kayapo for over thirty years, I have frequently visited the three of the four communities in which the BS projects are located, and have had a chance to talk with many Kayapo about the BS projects. I have also been part of several meetings and other encounters between the Kayapo and the BS, each in its way revelatory of significant aspects of the BS's relationship with the Kayapo. I have also met and talked with several BS personnel associated with the Kayapo project, including both Roddicks. Last and perhaps least, I have found myself the object of a bit of vintage BS character assassination in print by Gordon Roddick as my reward for having served as a source of information for an article criticizing the BS. On the basis of all of these experiences, I feel relatively well qualified to speak about the BS's Kayapo projects.

1. The inception of the BS relation with the Kayapo: Payakan and Altamira, 1989

The Kayapo attracted world attention in 1988 and 1989 when they organized a campaign to stop a plan of the Brazilian government. with World Bank financing, to build a series of huge dams on the Xingu river, which runs through the heart of their territory. The leader of this campaign was the brilliant and charismatic Payakan, who toured Britain and other parts of Europe and North America in 1988 to raise money and political support for the campaign. The culminating rally in March 1989 at the proposed dam site of Altamira on the Xingu was a huge meddia success. Anita Roddick, who had met Payakan in Britain, came
to Altamira and gave money to help bring members of distant tribes to join in support of the Kayapo at the rally. She also gave money, on behalf of the Body Shop, to two Brazilian NGOs that were instrumental in making the Altamira campaign a success (CEDI of Sao Paulo and NDI of Brasilia). These grants were renewed the following year and then discontinued.

2. Setting up the Kayapo Projects (1990): the airplane for A'ukre, the Brazil nut oil press in A'ukre. Saulo Petean appointed manager.

The success of Altamira made Payakan a world media star: an Indian from a jungle tribe fighting to save the rainforest and his people's culture from the World Bank, big government and destructive "development", the symbolic leader of the new alliance of peoples of the forest, green activists, and

supporters of human rights and the survival of indigenous peoples and their threatened cultures. Roddick moved swiftly to identify the Body Shop with Payakan, bestowing an airplane on his community and setting up a project in it for the pressing of oil to be used in the company's hair conditioner from Brazil nuts, a wild forest product that can be gathered on a sustainable basis without damaging the trees.

Saulo Petean, a Brazilian who had worked for FUNAI, the Brazilian Indian agency, was appointed manager of the plane and the oil project, to ensure that they were run in a businesslike manner.

3. Payakan's problems after Altamira and new career as inter-cultural mediator; the BS's role in this; logging concessions continue side-by-side with BS projects

Payakan's political triumph at Altamira was ironically also his downfall as a Kayapo political leader. An inspiring leader but with no head for administrative detail, Payakan had promised the leaders of Kayapo communities present at A'ukre to hold back some of the funds that had been contributed abroad to the Altamira campaign to be distributed among them for community projects. By the time the expenses of the rally were paid, however, there was no money left. Those to whom he had promised money accused Payakan of keeping back funds for himself. Payakan had exacerbated his problems by not taking the other Kayapo leaders into his confidence during the rally, relying instead on a small group of non-Kayapo Indians with administrative and communicational skills and Brazilian NGO workers for the day-to-day running of the five-day rally. A few days after the rally, Payakan had no more political following outside his own village of A'ukre (and even that, it proved, was divided). His support among non-Indian activists (who remained unaware of his troubles with his fellow Kayapo), however, was undiminished, indeed at an all-time high. This non-indigenous support from Brazilian and First-World activists fell into two groups. One group comprised political and indigenous support activists, who looked to Payakan to continue to lead the political struggle of Amazonian indigenous peoples to save their cultures and environment. This group could offer political support, organizational skills and media connections but no money. Its support, of course, was contingent upon Payakan's continuing participation in the political struggle. The other group comprised ecological activists and NGOs, including the Body Shop. This group made no political or organizational demands, and asked of Payakan only that he continue to serve as a symbol of their cause. They had a great deal of money.

The outcome was perhaps a foregone conclusion. Payakan resolved his political crisis by blaming his political supporters for spreading the rumors that he had embezzled the funds, thus simultaneously providing himself with a pretext for (in his words) "retiring from the political struggle", and a way of displacing the blame for the alienation of the support of other Kayapo. He henceforth devoted himself to cultivating his relations with the other group: rainforest activists, ecologically concerned media personalities, and above all, the Body Shop. From this point on, Payakan created a new career for himself as an intercultural mediator and symbolic mascot for non-indigenous (and almost entirely non-Brazilian) ecological activists. He travelled frequently to Europe and North America and moved his family from A'ukre to the Brazilian town of Redencao, where he took on the life-style of a middle-class Brazilian. He continued to play a role in A'ukre as the uniquely skilled and well-connected mediator with the outside world who could bring the benefits of that world to the community. The Body Shop airplane and the Brazil nut oil project, as the most impressive fruits of his mediation, were instrumental in

consolidating his authority in this leadership role in A'ukre, as well as his extra-communal lifestyle in Redencao.

latent contradiction was posed by the potentially embarrassing fact that most of the money to pay for the Redencao lifestyle (a house, a car, a pickup truck) came from a logging firm with which Payakan had secretly negotiated lucrative contracts for cutting mohogany on A'ukre land. As this sort of thing was what he was supposed to be resisting in his symbolic role as cultural eco-warrior, he took the precaution to have another Portuguese-speaking Kayapo from A'ukre sign the contracts and manifests. This assistant, by name Mokuka, constituted a potential political problem for Payakan: he was ambitious on his own behalf and resentful of the secondary role, and scanty monetary compensation, to which Payakan continued to relegate him. The rivalry between the two men was to have an effect on the subsequent history of A'ukre and the Body Shop's project there.

As one of the most impecunious of the "political" group of supporters, who had actually personally brought the money that Payakan was later accused of holding back for himself to him at Altamira, and who not only spoke Kayapo but was known to be on good terms with the Kayapo leaders who had taken the lead in accusing Payakan of embezzling the funds, I was the one Payakan first accused of originating the rumors and thus being responsible for his political downfall (although he later made similar accusations against most of the other major Brazilian political activists who had supported him at Altamira). My role as symbolic scapegoat for Payakan's political troubles has relevance for a later point in the story.

4. Inital problems with the airplane and oil project at A'ukre; Saulo assumes more complete control. New oil project opened at Pukanu. Women's bead bracelet projects at A'ukre, Pukanu, Kapot and Kubenkakre

From the outset, the Body Shop project at A'ukre was plagued by tensions between the Brazilian manager, Saulo, and Payakan, arising both from Saulo's resistance to Payakan and his immediate relatives' demands for use of the airplane and Payakan's unequal and impolitic use of his influence to have his own relatives and supporters hired for the Brazil nut work, to the exclusion of others, including most of Mokuka's relatives and supporters. Resentment grew over perceived inequities in the distribution of jobs and income from the project. At this stage, the BS paid the community collectively for the work performed; deductions were made from this total amount for expenses such as mainetenace of the airplane, and the remainder distributed to the four village chiefs, who were expected to spend the money in shopping for their followers in Redencao, and the rest destributed among private individuals. In 1991 there had been nothing left over for individuals, which aroused keen indignation. Resentment over the oil project was greatly exacerbated by the perception that Payakan, his wife and her family were monopolizing the use of the airplane for personal commuting between the village and Redencao. Not only were other villagers denied access to the plane, but it was not being used for mercy flights to take emergency medical cases from neighboring villages out to Brazilian hospitals, as the BS had originally intended and had so informed the Kayapo. Saulo was in the thankless position of having to mediate between the demands of Payakan and his relatives, the other villagers, and the BS in London. He had a series of disputes with Payakan. Meanwhile the resentment of Mokuka's faction against the BS project built to the point where they threatened to burn down the shed housing the Brazil nut oil press.

This Luddite escapade was narrowly averted, but it had become plain to the BS that the ambiguous division of authority between Payakan, as symbolic leader, and Saulo as practical manager, which was the root of most of the difficulties, would have to be clarified. The BS attempted to offset the growing problems at A'ukre by installing a second Brazil nut oil press at the neighboring village of Pukanu, whose canny and photogenic chief, Pukatire, was in far smoother control of his community and who quickly proved to be an altogether less difficult business partner. Photographs of Pukatire began to appear in BS outlets and publicity in place of Payakan and his father-in-law and ally at A'ukre, chief Kuben-nhikaynti. The BS also started a different set of projects for the manufacture of beadwork bracelets and pendants by Kayapo women. The women are paid individually on a piece-work basis, and the bracelets are sold at BS stores. Beadwork projects were begun at A'ukre and Pukanu, but also at the Xingu Kayapo villages of Kapot and Kubenkakre. They were immediately popular.

At this point (June 1992) Payakan, who had been drinking heavily, assaulted a Brazilian girl and was accused of rape. The Brazilian media exploded with vicious attacks aimed at destroying the symbolic persona of Payakan as noble eco-savage and the hypocrisy and gullibility of his foreign environemntalist supporters. Payakan (in my view innocent of the charge of rape, if only because he was interrupted before a sexual act could be consummated) was convicted in the Brazilian press without a trial. Although his actual trial was eventually aborted and now seems unlikely to be held, it was clear that Payakan was finished as a symbol of primitive ecological purity and indigenous cultural values; from the BS perspective, he was no longer going to sell much soap. He was forced to abandon his house and lifestyle in Redencao and return to A'ukre, legally confined to the Kayapo reserve. The mediatory role upon which his authority in A'ukre had been based was thus greatly undermined, and his influence in the community accordingly diminished.

Gordon Roddick flew to A'ukre to sort out the multi-faceted crisis. At a stormy meeting with villagers controlled by Payakan in his roles as translator and chief medidator with the BS, Roddick was regaled with complaints about the airplane and the management of the project, many of them directed at Saulo. Roddick's response was to promise that Saulo would in due course be replaced, but meanwhile to place managerial control firmly and unamabiguously in his hands. Payakan was relatively marginalized. Pay for the Brazil nut work was placed on an individual basis of compensation for work actually performed.

These reforms could not alleviate the smoldering tension between Payakan's faction and Mokuka and his followers, which stemmed primarily from the logging concessions. This finally erupted early in the following year at the end of a day-long combined meeting of Pukanu and A'ukre, at A'ukre, to deal with further disputes with the BS. One group proposed to seize control of the Body Shop presses and try to market the oil themselves; there were renewed calls to fire Saulo and take direct control of the management of the projects. These extreme measures were not adopted and the meeting ended peacefully with the two villages deciding to stay with the BS for another year.

After the meeting, however, with tensions still high, an argument broke out between Payakan's wife's sister and Mokuka's mother when the latter upbraided the former over an adulterous affair. Payakan, angry with Mokuka from the meeting and reportedly more than a little drunk, attacked Mokuka's mother with a knife. Mokuka succeeded in wrestling it away but received a gash on his arm. Men ran for their weapons, and in an instant two lines of armed

men from the two factions faced each other in the village plaza. An actual battle was averted when Mokuka's faction, approximately half of the village, resolved to leave the village the next day and found a new village of their own. They went first to Pukanu, where they camped for several months, but gradually trickled back to A'ukre when resources for constructing the new village failed to materialize. As of this writing, only Mokuka and his immediate family remains in exile, and now lives in Kubenkranken. The BS oil project continues at both A'ukre and Pukanu; in A'ukre, the men are reportedly satisfied with the new individual pay system, and although grumbling against Saulo continues, he remains in firm managerial control. Gordon Roddick has promised to put a Kayapo in charge of the bookkeeping and management of the project in A'ukre by the begining of 1995, but there is no one in Pukanu able to take on such a task, and Sulo will have to remain in charge of keeping what recors are kept there. Saulo is to remain in ultimate authority, but will devote only half of his time to the oil project and airplane, the rest being channelled into the new BS project of commercializing Kayapo cultural property (about which more below).

5. London September 1992

The scene now shifts to London, and a bizarre series of incidents that transpired there in September of 1992. Although trivial in themselves, these events are nonetheless revealing of BS attitudes towards its indigenous partners in its Trade Not Aid projects, not to mention towards non-indigenous critics of those projects.

In mid-September, I attended the Royal Anthropological Institute's Festival of Ethnographic Film and Video in Manchester together with two Kayapo, Mokuka of A'ukre and Tamok of Kubenkakre, with whom I had been working in the Kayapo Video Project. This was by then a three-year-old collaborative effort to make video cameras and editing facilities accessible to the Kayapo so that they could produce a documentary record of their own culture. The project was supported by a private Foundation and had by then produced an impressive body of videos. Mokuka and Tamok showed and discussed videos they had shot and edited as part of the Project. Their presentations at the Festival were very favorably received and were widely reported in British radio and newspapers.

Following their presentations at the Festival, the two Kayapo and I (as their interpreter) went to London to take part in a press conference organized by Survival International and hosted by Glenda Jackson, MP, in the Houses of Parliament. The subject of the Conference was the continuing oppression of native peoples of the Americas, on which topic Survival had just released a book. Survival had publicly criticized the Body Shop for its "Trade Not Aid" policies (among others), and was known to be skeptical of its public representations of its projects with the Kayapo anddother groups, although these criticisms were not part of the program of the press conference.

Two days before the conference, The Body Shop contacted Survival to say that it too was bringing two Kayapo to London and would like to have them and the chairman of The Body Shop, Gordon Roddick, meet with Survival, to explain its Kayapo projects. Knowing that Mokuka would be speaking at the press conference, The Body Shop had reasonable grounds to fear that it might come in for criticism.

That it clearly did fear something of the sort was evident from a letter from the Body Shop's lawyers that arrived more or less simultaneously with the proposal for the meeting with Roddick, threatening to take "all necessary steps" if Survival were to make unfounded criticisms damaging to the reputation of their clients at the press conference. Legal intimidation of

this sort is standard operating procedure for the Body Shop, as several recent reports have disclosed.

There were thus now two pairs of Kayapo in London, invited by rival organizations, one of which expected to be attacked by the other's Kayapo. The two Kayapo who had been brought by the Body Shop, Ropkran from Pukanu and Bebnhoti from A'ukre, directors of the Body Shop projects in their respective communities, had been hastily summoned to London on 10 September, shortly after Survival had publicly announced plans for the press conference. They were apparently not told the specific reason why they were being brought to London, and even once there they continued to insist, when asked (both by me and by Mokuka and Tamok), that they had no idea why they had come or what they were supposed to be doing. The reason for their presence, however, was obvious: the BS clearly intended that "its" Kayapo would be on hand to confront and respond to whatever criticisms Surival and/or Mokuka might make at the press conference.

In the event The Body Shop's fears proved groundless; neither Mokuka nor Corry mentioned the Body Shop nor criticized its Kayapo projects at the conference. By then, however, The Body Shop had set in motion an extraordinary series of manoeuvers obviously calculated to limit the damage from the anticipated criticisms by Survival and Mokuka. These took on a destructive momentum of their own, continuing over the day of the press conference and the following day. They combined manipulation and cooptation of indigenous people (some successful, some attempted but unsuccessful) with amazingly dishonest p.r.

After the press conference, the Body Shop, through their Portuguese-speaking functionary, a Ms. Juneia Mallas, invited Tamok and Mokuka to an almost continual series of meetings, luncheons and dinners with Gordon Roddick and/or "their" two Kayapo. These seemed timed as far as possible to overlap with appointments Mokuka and Tamok had made with journalists arising from the press conference; cars would abruptly arrive from the Body shop in the middle of a scheduled interview, demanding to take them away for some unscheduled Body Shop meeting; or they would not be returned as promised in time to make an appointment (Survival had informed The Body Shop of the Kayapos' appointment schedule).

The most bizarre of these occasions was a meeting with Gordon Roddick the BS set up for Mokuka and Tamok for the day after the press conference. The BS functionary who arranged the meeting mentioned en passant that they might want to "take a few pictures" at the meeting, but said that details on this and the time and place of the encounter could be left for the morrow. Mokuka told her that he and Tamok had an interview with a journalist at 11:45 the next day, so the meeting with Roddick could be at any other time. The next day at 12 noon, in the middle of the interview, a car arrived from the Body Shop with Ropkran and Bebnhoti to take Mokuka and Tamok to their meeting with Roddick. There had been no prior call or attempt to arrange a time in advance. The driver did not park, but waited impatiently in the street, demanding to take Mokuka and Tamok away immediately. A member of the Survival staff explained that they couldn't come then because their interview was still going on, but said she would call when it was finished to let the BS know when to come back for them. The driver, ostentatiously disgruntled, gave her a number to call. When this number was called in due course it was found that it belonged, not to The Body Shop, but to a film studio in Hammersmith (far from the Body Shop offices). This, it was confirmed, was the intended venue of the meeting with Roddick.

The BS staffer's vague reference the night before to "taking a few pictures" now took on, in retrospect, a more specific meaning. The Body Shop had evidently planned to film Mokuka and Tamok meeting with Roddick, giving the Kayapo no prior notice of their intentions, and of course being able to edit the film to represent the encounter as it wished, supplying the captions, translation and narration. Mokuka, himself a skilled video editor with a sophisticated grasp of the potential political uses of editing, told the people at the studio upon his arrival that he wanted no pictures taken. He insisted on meeting privately with Roddick, as originally agreed, without cameras.

The meeting with Roddick began at 1:00. The functionary who arranged the interview, the same Brazilian who had evidently been assigned to Mokuka and Tamok's case, had been told that they had another interview at 3:00, and had agreed to get them back by then. After the interview was over, however, no car appeared to take the Kayapo back to Survival until 5:00--they arrived about 5:30. When a Survival staffer telephoned to protest to the Brazilian staffer that she/The Body Shop should have the courtesy to help the Kayapo keep their appointments as promised, she angrily retorted that Survival should have had the courtesy to send the Kayapo with the Body Shop's car (which she of course well knew had been deliberately sent, unannounced, to arrive in the middle of their earlier interview) when it came for them, and slammed down the phone.

While those at the Survival offices were awaiting the return of the Kayapo, a copy of that morning's Independent was passed around, with a large picture of Mokuka at the Manchester Film Festival accompanied by a story about Tamok and Mokuka's work with the Kayapo Video Project. The story explained the purpose of the project as cultural self-documentation through video. An hour or so later, a press release from the Body Shop arrived by fax, announcing that the Body Shop had brought over two Kayapo to London, "firstly" in connection with the "Kayapo video project" which it had launched to promote cultural self-documentation through video. The two Kayapo were in London, the release further specified, in order to edit the videos that had been shot for this project. An information contact number was provided.

I called this number, and reached Mr. John Grounds, one of the two information contact persons named in the release. I introduced myself, and Mr. Grounds said he recognized my name. I asked him about the Body Shop "video project". Which editing facility were the Kayapo using in London, and where was it located? How many videos had been shot? Had the two Kayapo who had been brought over been the video cameramen (and if not, why had they, and not the actual cameramen, been brought)? What arangements had the Body Shop made for local Kayapo control of the videocameras and finished videos? Had cameras been given to the Kayapo, or had Body Shop cameras merely been lent to the Kayapo to shoot a few tapes? To all of these questions this unhappy "information contact" responded that he could give me no information, other than to say that no videos had yet been produced because none had yet been edited, and that the two Kayapo who had come were not, he thought, the actual cameramen. The question of why it had been thought necessary to bring Kayapo all the way to London to edit videos, when perfectly good editing facilities are available in Brazil, was left moot.

After receiving all of these pieces of non-information from the designated "information" contact, I suggested to him that the Body Shop's story about its video project was false from beginning to end; there was no such project and had never been; the story was in fact a blatant attempt to

claim as the Body Shop's own the Kayapo video project that did indeed exist, exactly as described in that morning's Independent, and which was indeed the primary purpose of the visit to England of the other two Kayapo then in London, whom the Body Shop had been at such pains to coopt and control for the past two days. At this Mr. Grounds became shirty, saying that he found it unbelievable that I should imply that the Body Shop would knowingly misrepresent the truth.

That evening, Mokuka and Tamok kept another dinner appointment arranged by the Brazilian functionary with the Body Shop's two Kayapo. Once again, Mokuka asked them what they had been brought to London to do. Once again they protested that they still had no idea. Mokuka asked them point blank whether they had anything to do with, or knew anything of, a video project organized by the Body Shop, and if so whether they were actually doing, or expecting to do, video editing in London. They replied in the negative on all points. Mokuka then read to them a Portuguese translation of the paragraph in that afternoon's Body Shop press release about the purpose of their visit being connected with their work on the video project. They were incredulous, and disclaimed any knowledge of the Body Shop press release. Further efforts to follow up the Body Shop's story about its video project in England have proved fruitless.

This piece of breathtaking sleaze left me almost as incredulous as it did the two Kayapo who were its ostensible subjects. Up to then I had found the crude and deceptive attempts at manipulation of all four Kayapo by the Body Shop's special Kayapo handlers, if inconsistent with the non-exploitative relationship with indigenous peoples it publicly professes, at least understandable as defensive tactics against a feared threat to its corporate image. The cynical disregard for truth of their mendacious press release about "their" video project, however, could not be explained in these terms. It seemed rather of a piece with the fanciful claims the Body Shop has made about many of its products. Indeed, it seemed to me at first almost wantonly self-destructive. Surely, I thought, they must have realized they would be caught out? But then I realized that, just as surely, they knew and they didn't care, knowing that those in a position to recognize their lie (i.e., me) would not be able to raise enough fuss to spoil the p.r. effect.

6. The Body Shop spreads rumors in Kayapo villages to discredit Mokuka upon his return from London

At their final dinner with the Body Shop's Kayapo chaperone, Mokuka and Tamok were closely questioned by this functionary about their travel plans: which flight were they taking back to Brasil, and when did they plan to arrive in their home villages? They freely gave out this information, even showing their tickets when asked to do so. When Mokuka asked the chaperone when the two Kayapo who had been brought by the Body Shop would be returning, she said that they did not yet have a definite return date. When Mokuka arrived back in A'ukre several days later, he found that the two Body Shop Kayapo had returned two days earlier, and had told everyone that Mokuka had publicly criticized the Body Shop and its Kayapo projects and denounced them in the British media. The Body Shop functionary's puzzling preoccupation with establishing their exact time of arrival home seems explicable in retrospect as part of a deliberate scheme to make sure the other two Kayapo arrived first, with time to spread their story before Mokuka could confront them in person.

Since Mokuka and Tamok had maintained a principled silence on the Body Shop projects in all their public appearances and media interviews, on the

grounds that they were matters of communal concern and they had not been authorized to speak on behalf of their communities, this was a particularly outrageous lie. It seems to have formed part of the program of corporate retaliation that the Body Shop had prepared in the expectation that Mokuka and Tamok would publicly criticize their projects, and put into practice anyway despite the fact that they did not, perhaps out of pique at their association with Survival International at the press conference or the complaints that Mokuka privately communicated to Gordon Roddick. The false rumors had an impact; many of the villagers were furious with Mokuka for having done, as they believed, precisely what he had deliberately refrained from doing, and it was difficult for Mokuka to deny the reports once they had been put into circulation.

7. Personal attack on me in the press by Gordon Roddick

I happened to be in A'ukre in August 1992 when Roddick and Saulo arrived for the meeting with the villagers to hear their complaints about the oil project and the airplane that I mentioned above. This meeting, significantly, was not held in the village men's house like an ordinary communal gathering, but in the house of Payakan, which he has had rebuilt slightly outside and apart from the circle of village houses. Payakan, in his preferred political role as translator and middleman between powerful outsiders and monocultural insiders, was very much in control of the meeting. Feelings ran high, most directed against Saulo, as the local flack-catcher for Roddick, but some also against Payakan and his wife's family, the core of his factional support in the village and the group most closely aligned with the Project. The meeting was being boycotted by Payakan's main local political rival, Mokuka, in whose house I was staying (I had come to discuss plans for the video project on which we were collaborating). Some of Mokuka's supporters, however, were attending the meeting as a "truth squad" to ensure that the community's grievances would be accurately represented to Roddick and Saulo, and to report accurately on the proceedings to Mokuka.

Here is Roddick's account of the A'ukre meeting, which he appends to his rebuttal of criticisms of the Kayapo project by Stephen Corry of Survival International in The Statesman. After noting that Corry had cited me as a source, he continues:

> I was present at a meeting of the whole village with all four chiefs in attendance...We were sorting out numerous problems, as is usual in any relationship. It ended with complete support for the project, voiced individually. Terry Turner came into the meeting at the beginning and asked if he could join in. The Indians, with one voice, asked him to leave; they do not trust him. It was this same man that Corry (Stephen Corry, Director of Survival International) naively insisted be the sole interpreter at a meeting called for by two Kayapo visiting London a short while ago. Both Indians...were dismayed at the grave discourtesy of Corry...

What actually happened was this: I walked over from Mokuka's house when the meeting had already been going on for two hours (not at the beginning as Roddick says), and had no chance to "ask to join in", for as I arrived Payakan's wife told me, in a voice audible to all, that she did not want me in the meeting. As I made to leave, Payakan turned to Roddick and asked him whether he wished me to stay: Roddick replied (reasonably enough) that he didn't know me and the decision was up to the Kayapo. Payakan then put the question to the meeting as a whole: should I stay or go? Merely for him to put

the question in this way, in this context, after his wife's intervention, was of course to indicate the answer expected, which many present duly gave: I should go. All the Kayapo present, of course, knew that Payakan had singled me out as the man responsible for the repudiation of his leadership by other Kayapo after Altamira, to which supposed offence everone knew I had now added friendship and collaboration with his arch-enemy Mokuka on the video project. No one was in any doubt as to which answer to Payakan's stage question was required for the meeting to go forward.

As soon as the stormy rehearsal of grievances was over and Roddick and Saulo left, however, the community chiefs and other Kayapo present (most of whom have remained on friendly terms with me despite Payakan's hostility) obliged Payakan to send a messenger to bring me back to the meeting, where they warmly welcomed me and asked to address the gathering--precisely to make the point that there were no hard feelings, let alone a lapse of "trust', despite Payakan's and his wife's exclusionary ploy. Contrary to Roddick's claim, none of the grievances aired in that four hour discussion was in fact "sorted out" at that time, nor indeed (so far as my information goes) since. Roddick heard them out but made no changes or decisions on the spot; nothing was resolved. Saulo, whose departure was called for by many, is still at his post and in administrative control. Roddick is correct to say that the Kayapo affirmed their support for the oil project, but disingenuous to imply that they were satisfied with the way the "problems" they raised were dealt with.

Roddick's tendentious distortions, strategic omissions, and outright misstatements of fact do not stop with his account of the meeting. His statement that Stephen Corry of Survival insisted that I be the "sole interpreter" at a meeting with two Kayapo brought to London by the Body Shop in September is likewise quite untrue. At no time did Corry or anyone else from Survival approach me to act as translator at this meeting, which (as a non-member of Survival) I did not even plan to attend. The Body Shop to the contrary, there was in any case no need for a translator at this meeting, since all who were to be present, including the two Kayapo, spoke Portuguese, save Corry himself, who speaks Spanish and was to be accompanied by a Survival staffer who speaks both Spanish and Portuguese.

The "dismay" Roddick claims was felt by the two Body Shop Kayapo at Corry's "grave discourtesy" in suggesting that I act as translator is trebly fictitious: Corry never suggested it, there was no discourtesy, grave or otherwise, and the Kayapo thus had no grounds for "dismay". Roddick's mendacious attempt to discredit me as a person not trusted by the Kayapo seems much of a piece with the personal attacks he has made on other critics of the Body Shop. Roddick's penchant for scurrilous personal attacks on Body Shop critics was singled out by the Franklin Investment Corporation in its recent report as one of its two most serious criticisms of the Body Shop's modus operandi.

8. Brasilia Meeting, September 1993

In September 1993 I travelled to Brasilia to observe and take part in the rally and demonstration of all the indigenous peoles of Brazil in support of the indigenous rights clauses of the Federal Constitution, then threatened by a powerful movement to repeal them, and in condemnation of the massacre of the Yanomami of Haximu, which had occurred a little over a month before (the killers were still at large, as they remain to this writing). The rally was attended by about eighty Kayapo from over half the 14 Kayapo communities. The Body Shop invited all of these Kayapo to a meeting to be held following the rally, to meet with Gordon Roddick and other Body Shop personnel, to discuss

problems and possiblities for their continuing collaboration. I attended this meeting, which lasted all day (Saturday, Sept. 19).

Most of the Kayapo who came to the meeting hoped that the Body Shop would be willing to start new Brazil nut oil or bead jewelry projects in their villages, and assumed the meeting had been called to discuss this possibility. Gordon Roddick, however, bluntly disabused them of such expectations, firmly asserting that the Body Shop would start no new projects, because the existing ones already produced all the Brazil nut oil it could use and all the bead bracelets it could sell. Instead, he said, the Body Shop was willing to help the Kayapo negotiate contracts with other companies for other products. It had, he told them, prepared a model document setting out the principles that should guide all them and any private companies that might be interested in setting up such contracts with them. The Body Shop was, he said, prepared to assist them in finding potential contractual partners, in conformity with the general principles outlined in this document, on one condition. This was that the Kayapo must clean up their act. Sternly, Roddick admonished the assembled Kayapo leaders and followers that media reports of the lavish life-styles of certain Kayapo leaders in Brazilian towns on the borders of their reserve, paid for by concessions to loggers and miners who were destroying their forests and polluting their rivers, while none of the money reached the ordinary villagers, had alienated public opinion. He frequently received calls in London, he said, from businessmen who asked him, "Why should we help the Kayapo when they are already spending fortunes from illicit mining and logging contracts on booze, prostitutes and personal airplanes?" If they hoped to do business with other companies like the Body Shop, he told them, they would first have to set their moral and social houses in order, revise their priorities, and show themselves to be deserving of commercial partnership. Roddick's explicit description of trading relationships such as the Body Shop's with the Kayapo as aid which the Kayapo must morally deserve, rather than as trade based on a profitable quid pro quo that the Kayapo could offer, was revealing of how the Body Shop actually views the trade content of such projects. Not "trade", but "aid", to be granted only if the Kayapo would make the effort to restore their pristine image as ecologically principled, culturally uncorrupted noble savages, that could once again help to sell soap for the Body Shop .

9. The contract that wasn't

The month following this meeting in Brasilia, a staff member of Survival Interantional, Fiona Watson, visited the Kayapo villages of A'ukre and Pukanu where the Body Shop has its Brazil nut oil projects. She asked to see the contract for the project, and was told, to her great surprise, that there actually was no written contract. The Kayapo were dependent solely on the Body Shop's verbal assurance that they would continue the project on the terms they had negotiated with the Kayapo for the ten-to-fifteen year period they had undertaken. Watson also raised the question of why the Body Shop was not paying the Kayapo for the use of their image in their publicity, since this was clearly a major source of valuable custom for the Body Shop.

Several months later, perhaps provoked by Watson's visit, a Body Shop representative did bring a written contract to be signed by the Kayapo. It affirmed the rate of pay for the Brazil nut oil that had been agreed upon, but added that since this rate was above the going market rate, it should also be taken as payment for the use of Kayapo images in Body Shop publicity and the right to research potentially commercializable Kayapo cultural knowledge of the environment (i.e., the very products for which the Body Shop had offered to act as go-between with potential buyers at the meeting in Brasilia). The

Body Shop actually pays Kayapo workers at about three times the going rate for unprocessed Brazil Nuts (about $20.00 for a ten-hour day). It claims that the price it pays for processed Brazil nut oil is some 30 times this rate (presumably calculated for equivalent weights; it pays $36.00 per kilo for the oil). There is, of course, no "market" in Brazil nut oil, the Body Shop being the only buyer in the world with the exception of one other small NGO in Peru that organizes its own production. The Body shop's claim to be paying above market rates is thus questionable: a good part of the work for which it pays is for the shelling and pressing of the nuts to extract the oil, which adds up to thirty times the market value of the unprocessed nuts.

The main point, however, is not that the Body Shop is not paying relatively well for the Brazil nut oil by Amazonian standards; it is that loading the far more valuable rights to the Kayapo image, and the potentially even more valuable rights to seek and identify commercially viable forest substances known to the Kayapo, onto the same contract, for the same rate of pay that had previously been negotiated for the work on the nuts alone, is patronizing and exploitative manipulation: company store stuff. The Body Shop says that Kayapo have approved its use of their images in its brochures and shops; this simply indicates how little the Kayapo understand of the value of their image to the Body Shop, or that that image is the real reason the Body Shop has come among them.

10. The "treaty" that never was: the Body Shop's secret plan to exploit Kayapo cultural knowledge

On May 14, 1993, the conference on "Intellectual Property Rights, Indigenous Cultures, and Bio-Diversity Conservation", meeting in Oxford, England, was presented with a dramatic announcement by Darrell Posey, an anthropologist working for the Body Shop who has also worked with the Kayapo. Posey was then at the Foundation for Ethnobiology at Oxford, which was heavily subsidized by the Body Shop. The Body Shop had earmarked part of the funds it donated to the Foundation for the support of Posey and the project he was working on on their behalf. This was to develop an arrangement between the Body Shop and the Kayapo of A'ukre and Pukanu whereby the Kayapo would make available to the Body Shop their knowledge of plants, natural substances and any other biological features of their environment that might have commercial value. Posey's announcement to the conference (immediately circulated as a press release by the Foundation for Ethnobiology) was essentially a proclamation of his project with the Body Shop and the Kayapo as a fait accompli--or at least all but accompli, if one read between the lines. The Foundation's press release began:

> THE FOUNDATION FOR ETHNOBIOLOGY CELEBRATES A NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH THE kAYAPO AMERINDIANS AND THE BODY SHOP INTERNATIONAL plc.
>
> The Body Shop International have launched a bold plan to be the first company ever to sign an Intellectual Property Rights agreement with an indigenous group--in this case, the Kayapo Indians of Brazil...This treaty which will be jointly developed with the Foundation for Ethnobiology aims to protect the products and molecules harvested by the Kayapo, and develop them commercially to their benefit. (Foundation for Ethnobiology Press Release 14/5/93)

This announcement was a sham. There was no agreement, much less a "treaty" in existence at the time, nor has any been signed since. A "Covenant on Property and Intellectual Rights", evidently drawn up by Posey, was taken to the Kayapo of A'ukre and Pukanu some six months later by a Body Shop staffer. This is a

far cry from a "treaty" or even a contract. It is a "legally non-binding" statement of general principles that should ideally guide, or at least not be infringed by, commercial contracts for Kayapo cultural knowledge (e.g., that Kayapo cultural autonomy should be safeguarded), but says nothing about the specific terms or provisions of such contracts. The Kayapo of those communities are said to have agreed with this "Covenant" (it would be difficult to disagree with its anodyne generalities). They are now waiting for the other shoe to drop: the actual commercial contracts that the Body Shop has declared its interest in arranging "to their benefit".

After the initial fanfare, the press release carried an exhortation by Anita Roddick:

> By signing the first intellectual Property Agreement with a group like the Kayapo, we can change the way the world sees indigenous peoples. This sort of deal treats them as equal partners...The motive is deadly serious. Think of what wonderful opportunities we lose, if their knowledge is stolen from them or fades away forever. (Foundation for Ethnobiology Press Release 14/5/93)

For skeptics who might wonder why a for-profit business like the Body Shop was undertaking such a high-minded project on behalf of a tiny group of indigenous people half-way around the world, the release further explained,

> Now, the Body Shop is determined to halt [the] exploitation of ...tribal knowledge of plant and animal species...
>
> The Body Shop and the Foundation for Ethnobiology are dedicated to educating the world about the link between cultural and biological diversity...By guaranteeing the Intellectual Property Rights of indigenous peoples, we can help conserve the rich and vital environments these peoples live in and the cultures themselves. We might also find molecules and compounds which may benefit all humankind. (Foundation for Ethnobiology Press Release 14/5/93)

"Wonderful opportunites"..."benefits"..."commercial develop-ment"...coming from the Body Shop, these words have an unavoidably ambiguous ring, carrying not only altruistic but also earthier, more pecuniary connotations. The unusual delicacy with which the Body Shop has thus far avoided any reference to any commercial interest of its own in this project in itself inevitably arouses suspicion. What's in it for them?

A clue is provided by the repeated linkage in various Body Shop statements of the intellectual property rights project with its desire to help the Kayapo find other companies as trading partners. This insistence on pushing the Kayapo to enter into contracts with other firms seems odd in itself. The Body Shop has presented it to the Kayapo as an alternative to increasing their production of beadwork and Brazil nut oil, which it has said it cannot use (obviously untrue, since the Kayapo production comprises only a fraction of one per cent. of the Brazil nut oil used in its hair conditioner). With every appearance of selfless solicitude, it has coupled its refusal to buy any more Kayapo products with the offer to help the Kayapo find other trading partners, ostensibly purely as a favor to them. These new partnerships would be the real contracts negotiated under the aegis of the Body Shop's non-binding "covenant".

The Body Shop has gone ahead with preparations for a sizable volume of activity in the identification and preliminary chemical analysis of Kayapo forest products. Their Brazilian manager, Saulo Petean, has been assigned to this project for the coming year on a half-time basis (the other half of his

time will still be devoted to overseeing the Brazil nut oil and beadwork projects), and a cosmetic chemist has been engaged full-time to carry out chemical assays of whatever Saulo's Kayapo workers bring in at an ethnobiological institute in Belem.

For several years now, a global race has been on to discover and control commercially valuable natural molecules, provoked by the development of biotechnology and genetic engineering into potentially the most profitable of all industries. The major contestants in this race are a few giant pharmaceutical and chemical companies, which have the capital and technological facilities to develop and market products based on newly discovered molecules. Most of the "prospecting" for sources of new molecules has been done by economic botanists and zoologists who as a rule take little account of local peoples' knowledge and use of plants and other natural substances for medicinal and other purposes. The Body Shop has neither the technological capacity nor the capital needed to develop new molecular forms and market products based on them. They do, however, have a potential niche in this enormously lucrative market: they have privileged access to a few indigenous peoples in ecologically rich tropical forest areas with extensive knowledge of the properties and uses of the plants and animals of their ambient ecology. If the Body Shop could identify potentially interesting plants or animal substances on the basis of indigenous knowledge, and do the necessary preliminary chemical analysis to establish the plausibility of the indigenous claims, they would be in a position to go to the competing pharmaceutical giants and offer to sell the rights to develop and market the products to the highest bidder. Depending on the nature of the molecule and its uses, the price could be very high.

If this is what the Body Shop is actually planning, the deals they will make as middleman between the Kayapo and the corporations that will develop and market the finished products will be fraught with danger for the Kayapo. The Body Shop will not be in a position to dictate all the terms of these contracts; they will therefore not always be in a position to defend the interests of the Kayapo. What form of profit does the Body Shop envision making for itself from these deals? Does it hope simply to purchase potentially interesting products from the Kayapo for a fee, and then, as itself the owner of the substance in question, seek a buyer at the best price it can get? Or will it take a commission on contracts it would negotiate between buyers it identifies and the Kayapo, attempting to secure some form of royalty for the Kayapo from the marketing of the product, or even some control over product development? In either case, its own financial interest in the contract is likely to conflict with the best interests of the Kayapo.

Whether one of these conjectual scenarios or some other is what the Body Shop really has in mind, one thing is certain: they have not told the Kayapo or anyone else what they are planning. The Kayapo are being rushed pell-mell into an intensive commercial effort to pick their cultural brains with no attempt being made to explain to them the practical issues and dangers of Intellectual Property Rights contracts, including the social risks and inequities of dealing with one or two Kayapo communities or knowledgable individuals for cultural knowledge that is the common cultural birthright of all Kayapo. The Body Shop may represent its vague and evasive "Covenant" as an attempt to do this, but it skirts and evades all of the crucial specific issues. Above all, the Body Shop has never taken the Kayapo into its confidence about what its own business interest is in the deals it hopes to negotiate "to the benefit of the Kayapo". Simply to represent their whole intellectual property rights program with the Kayapo as a disinterested effort

to "help" them is patronizing and deceptive, and gives grounds for grave concern as to what they are really up to.

CONCLUSIONS: MISREPRESENTING TRADE AND AID

These incidents, despite their relatively microscopic scale, nevertheless exemplify macroscopic problems and contradictions that run through all levels of Body Shop operations. They replicate in microcosm the BS practices that have been singled out for criticism by investigative journalists and investment research firms. These include the "enormous gap between image and reality", including outright lying on a startling scale, found in virtually all aspects of BS operations, and the resort to character assasination and evasive misstatement in response to criticism. With specific reference to the BS's "Trade Not Aid" projects with indigenous communities, they include the contradiction between the BS's claims to be engaging in "trade" in the normal economic sense and the reality that it is actually engaging in these projects primarily for their value as symbolic public relations, and the consequences that flow from this fundamental contradiction. These consequences include

(1) the de facto exploitation constituted by the unremunerated use of the image, which constitutes an unpaid surplus extracted from the indigenous producers of far greater value to the BS than the ostensible trade commodity;

(2) the lack of economic incentive for the BS to expand the production projects beyond small token operations that suffice for p.r. purposes, thus curtailing their economic potential as sources of communal income, and

(3) the resulting need for the BS to maintain control over the projects to limit production and investment, both through direct regulation of the production process and indirectly through regulation of demand in its capacity as sole purchaser and marketer of the product.

(4) Rather than "empowering" its trading partners to control their own economic destinies through participation in "free market" economics, i.e., "trade" in the sense implied by BS propaganda, the BS is thus led to maintain them in a state of de facto dependency.

The events comprising my mini-ethnography of the BS's Kayapo operations exhibit the human face of these themes. Aspects of that human reality are:

the maintenance of a non-Indian as administrator and local boss of the Kayapo projects from their beginning in 1991 to the present despite persistent Kayapo objections to his role and demands for his removal, and repeated promises by the BS to do so;

the failure of the BS to sign any written contract for the projects with the Kayapo until this year, making the Kayapo totally dependent on the BS's verbal guarantees with no legal force;

the fact that when the BS finally produced a contract confirming the price it had originally fixed for the Brazil Nut oil production, it inserted rights to the use of the Kayapo image in its publicity and rights to investigate Kayapo cultural knowledge of the environment for commercially viable products as also covered by the same price, on the grounds that it was above market value for the product (despite the lack of any market for the product beyond the BS itself);

the failure to make genuine remuneration to the Kayapo for the use of their image, or to explain to them that this use is the real reason for the projects, or attempt to convey to them some idea of its true value to the BS;

the readiness to manipulate individual Kayapo as corporate symbols without regard to their own will or understanding (e.g., the two Kayapo brought to London to counter expected criticism by two other Kayapo and Survival International);

the readiness to resort to outright fabrication about its Kayapo projects for publicity purposes, as in the wholly fictional press release

about the non-existent BS Kayapo video project, made without the knowledge or consent of any Kayapo;

the willingness to attack and discredit Kayapo perceived as critical by tactics reminiscent of the company's style of personal attacks and intimidation of journalistic and NGO critics (e.g., the false rumors it had spread about Mokuka in his village before his return from London in September 1992, and the various attempts to disrupt Mokuka's contacts with press and media while in London);

the warnings delivered to the Kayapo by G. Roddick in Sept. 1993 that they must behave in a manner morally deserving of aid by business partners if they expect any to be willing to trade with them, thus explicitly recognizing that the real business interest of the BS and similar corporations lies in association with a pristine Kayapo image as unspoiled forest natives of the rainforest rather than capitalistic "trade", and on the basis of this interest presuming to lecture the Kayapo about their social and moral conduct;

the announcement in England of the agreement with the Kayapo on IPR before any Kayapo community had had a chance to discuss or agree to it (possibly, no Kayapo had yet seen it).

All of these actions are inconsistent with the "relation between equals" that the BS represents itself as maintaining with its trading partners., as well as with its representation of the relation as one of "fair trade" for the products of Kayapo labor (Brazil nut oil and beadwork jewelry). They are consistent only with a relation of inequality and dependency, which the BS crassly exploits whenever its corporate advantage seems to demand.

Within this framework of dependency and exploitation, the BS's slogan, "Trade Not Aid" misrepresents its relation with the Kayapo and other indigenous and Third World trading partners under the same program in three fundamental ways. In the first place, the BS projects with peoples like the Kayapo are not really "trade" in the normal economic sense of open-ended free-market exchange as implied in BS publicity, but rather strictly regulated operations based on total control by one partner of production volume and demand. They are not engaged in by the controlling partner, the BS, for the ostensible motive of trading for the product, but for the publicity value of its association with the project. In the second place, the projects are actually predominantly "aid" projects, in which the subordinate indigenous or peasant partners in effect bestow free advertising and p.r. copy as unpaid aid to the dominant partner, the BS. The Body shop pays a good wage by regional standards for the Kayapo Indian labor employed in producing Brazil Nut oil and bead jewellery. By far the most important value the Kayapo contribute to the Body Shop, however, is not the oil and bead bracelets they produce, but their photographic image, and reportage about the projects in the media, which serve as free advertising for the company and for which it pays not a penny to the Kayapo. The Body Shop boasts that it does not pay for advertising; it relies solely on such images and accounts of its projects in its shops and coverage in the media to build the "politically correct" image that is the basis of its consumer appeal. But is this not a covert form of "aid not trade" by the Kayapo to the Body Shop? To call this "fair trade", as the B.S. does, is to make a mockery of the term.

In the third place, the slogan is deceptive because it suggests that "trade" projects like the Body Shop's represent a viable alternative to aid for the Indians from governmental and non-governmental sources. This is patently not so. The real implications of the "Trade not Aid" slogan in this respect have been made brutally clear by the Brazilian government, which has cut off its appropriations for aid to indigenous peoples. Faced with the suspension of medical, educational and other services, indigenous peoples like

the Kayapo have been driven to rely on the only forms of "trade" available that can provide anywhere close to the amounts they need to pay for the services they so desperately need: mining and logging, the most destructive forms of extractive production. The small Body Shop projects, maintained essentially for their value as advertising rather than as serious productive enterprises, do not begin to meet the need for communal income in the absence of government and private aid, and cannot become viable alternatives to the much larger sums easily available from the loggers and miners. The Kayapo communities with the Brazil nut oil projects have both granted concessions to loggers, and one to gold miners as well.

So "Aid" turns out to be essential if the "Trade Not Aid" projects of firms like The Body Shop are not to become mere smokescreens concealing the economic desperation that drives such communities to open themselves to the most environmentally, physically and culturally damaging forms of "Trade". It is thus not only deceptive of the Body Shop to tell its customers that buying Brazil Nut Hair Conditioner "give[s the Kayapo] an income to help protect the Amazon rainforest", but also politically retrograde for it to imply that its sort of "trade" renders non-commercial forms of "Aid" such as government support for basic services and political and legal struggles for land and human rights redundant.

THE ECOLIBERAL VISION AND THE "RAIN FOREST HARVEST

These ethnographic and critical observations about the BS's Kayapo projects fall into line with more general criticisms that have been leveled against the "ecoliberal" strategy of saving the rainforest and its native inhabitants by converting the latter into "productive" workers producing crops for export to world markets on a sustainable basis, thus simultaneously preserving the ecosystem and rendering it profitable.

The resulting synthesis of free-market liberalism with ecological activism and anthropological advocacy of cultural survival for indigenous and forest peoples has been baptized the "Rainforest Harvest" by the most prominent theorist of the movement, Jason Clay. The idea shared by the "ecoliberal" partisans of the "Harvest" approach, among whom the BS numbers itself, is that getting indigenous communities and other forest-dwellers like the Brazilian rubber tappers involved in sustainable kinds of production of marketable forest products, by demonstrating that rainforest ecosystems like that of the Amazon can be economically productive, is the only realistic way of saving them from economically motivated destruction by settlers, ranchers, loggers and miners. Making the ecosystem yield a profit, they argue, is in the long run a more effective and reliable way of saving it than conventional approaches relying on aid from governments and private organizations. Commercial production of ecologically non-destructive types, so the argument runs, is also superior to dependence on aid as a basis of coexistence of indigenous communities with the outside world, and at the same time provides them with a more reliable and less environmentally destructive source of funds with which to meet basic needs such as the provision of medical, educational and other services than either government aid or destructive forms of extractive enterprise such as gold-mining or logging.

The approach clearly fits in with the currently fashionable neo-liberal idea that the free market is the best solution to social and economic problems, and for-profit capitalist companies are the most effective agents of social policy. The Body Shop's "Trade Not Aid" program is modelled on this Rainforest Harvest approach.

The Rainforest Harvest in general, and the BS's "Trade Not Aid" program in particular, have come in for a good deal of cogent criticism. The most trenchant of the critics, Stephen Corry of Survival International, for example, has distinguished between straightforward "fair trade" projects designed to help local communities produce for local markets on terms that guarantee them a fair return for their products (which he supports) and Rain Forest Harvest schemes like the Body Shop's Kayapo projects in the following terms:

> [Rain Forest] Harvest projects [such as the BS's] relate explicitly to trade with a foreign company...there is no local market whatsoever. The company is able to set the price unilaterally, and to dictate how much or how little it will buy. This is dependence, not empowerment...It is simply another example of a powerful company selecting and controlling a powerless labour force, in a way not dissimilar to the structures maintained by colonialism--in other words, it is business as usual. (Corry 1994:3)

Corry rejects Rainforest Harvest arguments that the only (or at any rate, the best) way to save the forest and its peoples is to make it profitable on the grounds that it plays directly into the hands of development-oriented governments and international financial institutions that dismiss susbsistence producers as of no social value and justify the invasion and take over of their lands in the name of economic productivity. He insists that the rights of forest peoples to their lands and ways of life should be recognized on grounds of historic rights of prior occupancy rather than making them dependent on economic productivity. He points out that the more economically productive the natives make their traditional areas, the greater will be the incentive for others to take them over, as the long history of indigenous societies in the Americas attests. One might add that the fact that Indians or rural rubber-tappers are managing to make a profit form ofrest production is unlikely to appear a significant argument to private urban corporations, government development agencies, or impoverished settlers from other regions who have no way of sharing in such profits or participating in the productive activities in question. These, however, are the groups that hold political, economic and demographic power, and that have invariably been the sources of the invasion and destruction of forested areas.

Corry further argues that income from the sustainable production of forest products can never approach the far greater (if non-sustainable) profits to be had from logging and mining, and therefore is not a realistic alternative to them as a source of income for most communities of forest people. Ecologically sustainable production will therefore tend to be regarded as a supplement rather than a substitute to ecologically destructive forms of extraction, and thus cannot be regarded as an incentive for conserving the ecosystem.

Reinforcing this point is the fact that the proportions of total product actually sourced from forest peoples in commodities marketed by Rain Forest Harvest schemes such as those of Cultural Survival, Ben and Jerry's and The Body Shop have tended to be minuscule, the great bulk being made up of conventionally sourced items produced in the usual socially and environmentally exploitative ways. The implicit or explicit claims of such schemes to constitute economically significant incentives to save the rainforest, in other words, are mere hype:

> There is no evidence that it helps conserve rainforests, it does not empower rainforest peoples, and, worse, it subverts the case for tribal peoples' land rights. It arises from the marketing ploys of profit-making companies, not from the real needs of rainforest communities or an intelligent consideration of their rights or environmental concerns. (Corry 1994:4)

THE KAYAPO PERSPECTIVE

Most of these general criticisms of Rainforest Harvest theory and practice apply to the BS Kayapo projects. They have certainly not led the Kayapo to give up their dealings with loggers and miners (Pukanu did expel its miners, for reasons unrelated to the BS projects, last year, but A'ukre opened negotiations with a group of miners during the past year, inviting them to explore in a corner of their territory: fortunately they did not find any gold). The BS refusal to expand the volume of production in its existing projects or to initiate any further projects in other Kayapo communities means that for the Kayapo as a whole, and even for those communities with projects, the amount of income the projects provide is far short of meeting what the Kayapo now feel to be their needs. Furthermore, the BS's maintenance of tight administrative control, and its continuing role as sole supplier of capital equipment and sole customer, able to fix unilaterally the levels of production and demand, means that there has been little "empowerment" of the Kayapo as "equal trading partners" as BS publicity has claimed. Fortunately, the Kayapo have already obtained government recognition of their control of their land, so they do not face the problem of the substitution of market production for legal land rights that has been one of the main criticisms of the Rainforest Harvest approach.

Such, at any rate, are the criticisms that can be made of the BS's operations among the Kayapo from the standpoint of an objective observer. But what of the views of the Kayapo themselves? Here we immediately find that, in apparent contradiction of the critical views advanced on their behalf, the Kayapo are enthusiastically supportive of the BS. Kayapo of the communities with BS projects want them to continue, and there is no shortage of willing workers for both Brazil nut oil and beadwork production. Other Kayapo communities would like the BS to install similar projects, and have been disappointed with Gordon Roddick's announcement that the BS will not expand the number of its Brazil nut oil and beadwork projects. Kayapo opinion, in short, seems fairly unanimous that the BS projects are good for them.

The question must be asked, however, it Kayapo enthusiasm and willingness to work implies fully informed consent to, and agreement with, the terms of the BS's own definition and representation of its operations among them. The answer to this question is clearly "No". The Kayapo start from a recognition of their fundamental dependency on the Western economic system, Brazilian, British or Transnational, for a whole series of commodities they have come to need but cannot make themselves. They know the only way to get these commodities is either to persuade the state or other parties to give them as "presents", in the style of the old Indian Protection Service or visiting film crews, or to somehow get money to buy them with, either from timber and mineral concessions or, as a last resort, by working for wages. All of these, they are aware, are varieties of political-economic dependency; they do not expect them to be "empowering" (they have done quite well empowering themselves through organized political action and diplomacy, notably in obtaining official demarcation of their reserves, but that is another story). They chafe at the unaccustomed degree of subservience and regimentation exacted by the firm and efficient management of the BS Brazilian project

manager, but they are willing to put up with it for the sake of the income the work brings in.

They do not look upon the projects as straightforward "trade" relations with themselves as "equal trading partners"; they see them rather as aid mixed with trade. That the BS has gone to the apparent inconvenience of coming to them from half-way around the world, bringing them elaborate oil pressing machines and great stocks of beads to be made into bracelets, all to allow them the opportunity to earn money through individual work, impresses them as the gesture of a benevolent patron. They know that it is not being done simply for pecuniary gain from the trade in the commodities they produce through the projects. Precisely why the benevolent patron has gone to such lengths to aid them, however, remains obscure. Not a single Kayapo, I believe, has yet fathomed this ultimate mystery, and the BS has not thought fit to explain.

Meanwhile, they prize the degree of individual empowerment the income form the work makes possible. Women, especially, have benefitted from the chance to make money of their own, independently of their men, through the manufacture of the bead bracelets. Few of them would otherwise have this chance. For ordinary men (not chiefs or leaders) the Brazil nut oil work brings in more than they could acquire without going off to work in a mine or for a logging crew. For Kayapo men and women alike, the BS therefore represents a valued option they want to keep open.

This, however, is not to say that they have any idea of closing off any of their other options for monetary income, political concessions, territorial expansion, medical or other basic services, or other forms of aid, simply because the BS option is available. They have learned to say the right words to the BS, thanking them for making available an alternative to reliance on logging concessions (which might well come in handy at some future time when the timber is exhausted), while continuing to signing logging contracts with the Redencao sawmills. Payakan, the A'ukre leader who for some time served as the BS's chief Kayapo symbol, was particularly adroit at keeping all the balls in the air in this way, producing noble ecological rhetoric for the BS and other eco-patrons while secretly negotiating mahogany concessions and having other Kayapo sign the papers. The same policy is pursued by Pukatire, the leader of Pukanu, the other village where the BS maintains a Brazil nut oil press.

It would be missing the point to see these canny leaders as fallen ecologists or "corrupt" sellouts; the Kayapo, despite the large amounts of nonsense to this effect produced by romantic journalists and some anthropolgists, were never cultural ecologists in the contemporary Western sense, and they never saw their title to their own land or their relations with NGOs like the BS as restricting their freedom to use their resources for their own economic purposes. Leaders like Payakan and Pukatire are simply following the policy that most Kayapo see as their best option, namely that of exploiting all opportunities for strengthening themselves economically, politically, and territorially through all available forms of trade, aid and political action.

The Kayapo, in sum, are pragmatic eclectics, who are no more concerned with the ideological rhetoric of Western ecoliberals than were their 16th Century ancestors with the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Their acceptance of the BS projects does not imply their agreement with the policy of Trade Not Aid, or with the BS's representations of the linkage between its trade projects and the preservation of the ecosystem, or with the BS's

representations of their own empowerment or equality in the relations of production and trade. Nor does it imply that the Kayapo understand the BS projects for what they really are, namely symbolic operations undertaken primarily for p.r. purposes, whose value as "trade" to the BS is virtually incidental. This means that the Kayapo do not understand how they are exploited by these projects, through the unpaid extraction and use of their representations in BS publicity. Although the BS, in an attempt to forestall criticism on this fundamental point, has obtained the consent of Kayapo leaders to the use of their words and images, the Kayapo have no conception of the value of this publicity to the BS. They cannot be said to have agreed to what they do not understand.

Meanwhile, the pragmatic Kayapo approach to the BS, which essentially comes down to making the best of a not very good deal for the lack of anything better, may serve as a model for a practical resolution of the debate between proponents of the Rain Forest Harvest and their critics. If peasant or indigenous communities like the Kayapo want projects such as the Body Shop's for the limited benefits they bring, then critics of these projects should also support their continuation in the communities in question, while continuing to call for the correction of their exploitative and dependency-inducing aspects and criticizing their self-serving misrepresentations. This essentially means transforming the BS projects and other "Rain Forest Harvest" efforts into genuine "fair trade" projects such as those that have been developed, with far less fanfare, by organizations like Oxfam. These are projects run by local communities aimed wholly at generating a return to the producers from their work, without the ulterior purpose of promoting the interests of an external profit-making corporation. Opened up to competition from alternative customers, including local markets where practicable, stripped of their pretensions as substitutes, rather than supplements, for governmental aid, legal rights and political struggle, and given the chance to expand their production to economically significant levels rather than merely functioning as tokens to lend credibility to non-indigenous businesses or philanthropic organizations, such projects can play a constructive role, and to that extent should be encouraged. In the case of the BS, however, the essentially symbolic function of the so-called "trade" projects holds out little hope for such developments.

CRISIS OF REPRESENTATION AS CRISIS OF CORPORATE IDENTITY

And so we return to the problem of representation. The Body Shop, as a seller of cosmetics, is a merchant of representation. Its genius has been to make the construction and cosmetizing of its own corporate self-representation the basis of its appeal to its consumers, inspiring them to cosmetize their own self-representations in its image rather than their own. The Body Shop has succeeded in shifting the focus of the appeal of cosmetics as a commodity from the finished cosmetized image to the process of producing that image, from the appearance of skin, hair and face to the qualities imbued in the cosmetic products which alter their value and meaning. These qualities with their values and meanings (naturalness, irreverent expressiveness, authenticity and spontaneity), it has managed to suggest, are in turn imbued, by sympathetic magic, in the identities or personalities of the consumers who buy and use the products. The BS offers empowerment of personal identity rather than beauty. Its success has been based on the insight that, at least in our own time, the former has more seductive appeal than the latter.

The BS's p.r. represents the whole process of sourcing, producing, and marketing its products as an expression of the personal qualities, ecological and social commitments of its founder, Anita Roddick. Extraction of raw

materials, production and sales, in other words, are represented as a complementary projection of the same cosmetized self-identity acquired by consumers of the products. Representation thus becomes both producer and product; the constructed image seems to construct itself in a hermetic process that seems to exclude the relevance of questions about whether the charmed circle actually corresponds to any reality outside itself. The appearance of self-sufficiency, however, can only be maintained as long as the focus of representation is limited to the self, and reality is limited to representation and as such is regarded as the expression of the self. In the cosmetics biz it is probably possible to approximate this sublimely tautological state of consciousness more fully than anywhere else, outside of certain forms of Post-Modernist philosophy and cultural theory. Even here, however, the real conditions out of which both representation and self arise cannot be kept from oozing out around the edges of the cosmetized image. The result is a "crisis of representation."

In Post-Modern theory, the crisis of representation is held to arise from the intrinsic weakness of representation: its incapacity to describe objective reality. Representation itself, in other words, is held to be the source of its own crisis, the producer of the fatal gap between itself and reality. It may be asked, however, if this way of stating the problem is not itself the problem. By excluding the role of the real conditions in which representations are produced, and the process through which they are produced by real actors, this formulation cuts itself off from the very realities that could resolve the "crisis".

The current crisis of the Body Shop's self-representation, the perceived gap between its image and its reality, epitomizes this prototypically Post-Modern contretemps. As in the case of Post-Modern cultural theory, an attempt to represent representation (the BS's corporate self-representation) as itself comprising reality, and furthermore as a reality capable of imparting its qualities to other representations (the individual identities of the consumers of its products) has resulted in severing the connection between representation and the real conditions of its own production.

This situation, in practice as in theory, is inherently unstable; the nervous awareness develops that the real connection between representation and reality, by the sheer fact of its existence beyond the purview of representation, limits its power and effectiveness. The repressed realities, although excluded from representation, are apt to assert themselves in uncontrollable ways, short-circuiting the gap between image and reality and spoiling the picture.

In the practical example of the BS, the pressures giving rise to the weakening of the connection between representation and reality are easily recognized as arising from the reality of the corporation's character as a business whose profits dependent on its public image. The temptation to redefine the crass reality of business operations to conform more closely to the cosmetized face the corporation turns to the public as an idealistic bunch of maverick social and ecological activists has proved to be chronically irresistible to Body Shop representatives. The problem is clearly structural rather than merely a matter of lapses of character on the part of one or two individuals. Part of the problem arises from the Body Shop's refusal to use paid advertising, relying instead (thus far with brilliant success) on public media coverage of its good works and idealistic campaigns for worthy causes, which is both one of its proudest claims to corporate virtue and a policy requiring this virtue to be seen in its corporate good works. Virtues,

however, may have their vices as well as the other way around. The Body Shop's enormous commercial interest in the public representation of its projects and activities clearly puts enormous pressure on those who speak for the company to put the most attractive possible spin on news of its corporate activities, and to deny at all costs whatever bad news or well-founded criticism may crop up. The sleazy practices of commercial advertising and political reality management thus reassert themselves, in a sort of corporate return of the repressed, amid the altruistic protestations and feel-good rhetoric of the Body Shoppers.

When cosmetic representation becomes the real object of processes of social production, however, the distortion of the connection between the image and the process through which it is produced may assume bizarre and extreme forms. The production of Brazil nut oil by some Brazilian Indians, for example, may appear to be the real source of its value as a social activity, and its photographic or verbal representation appear to the producers to be a mere valueless reflection of that process, whereas in reality the production is undertaken only for the sake of generating representations of it as its truly valued products. That whole processes of production might someday be set up for the sake of producing representations of themselves as their most valued products was a possiblity undreamed of by Marx or his time, but it is clearly an idea whose time has come.

It is not only the BS's representation of itself and its products that is at issue, however, but its representation of others: the indigenous peoples and peasant communities among whom it sources a tiny but (in terms of its own self-representation) enormously important porportion of its materials. As we have seen in the case of the Kayapo, the BS's representation of these peoples as participating in its projects as fully informed and satisfied, independent and equal partners in its "Trade Not Aid" projects is apt to conceal as much as it reveals. The most disturbing aspect of the BS's politics of representation in this connection, however, is its pressure on the people in question to become representatives of itself, the BS. Thus the Kayapo are marshalled to respond, collectively and individually, to critics of the BS; induced to speak from their own mouths the BS's claims for its projects, such as that they are helping them save their environment, and led out to demonstrate their support for BS projects by appearing at press conferences in European capitals.

That a cosmetics company with a chronic penchant for substituting cosmetized representations of its own corporate identity, practices and products for their decidedly less becoming realities has been led to create and exploit this improbable series of inverted relations of representation and reality is perhaps not remarkable in itself. The parallels between these problematic forms of representation and the "crisis of representation" in contemporary culture and cultural theory offer a suggestive insight into the latter. The current crisis of the BS's public image essentially consists in the reconnection of its corporate self-representations with the real practices and exploitative relations of their production. It, and its public, are being forced to recognize that its representations do not, after all, produce their own reality--even, by themselves, their own crisis. Representation may not adequately describe reality, but as cae of the Body Shop shows, even where the divergence between them is the result of deliberate misrepresentation and concealment, reality has a way of catching up with representations that diverge too far from it.