

# Creative Distraction



ISSUE IV – MARCH 2004

Cover image courtesy of <http://mystic-caravan.com/kdcard.htm>  
It is a Keltic Mandala that we think encapsulates some of the ideas expressed in this issue.

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Economics vs. the Environment:  
Who's Winning???

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# EDITOR' S PAGE

Welcome to Issue IV of Creative Distraction, the ESA Newsletter – the first issue of 2004!

For those of you who are not familiar with Creative Distraction, it is an ESA publication designed to provide ‘space’ for anyone interested in economics to air their opinions. We encourage a diverse range of economics-related issues to be discussed, as well as a broad range of perspectives to be heard. Your submissions can take on any form (articles, cartoons, poems etc.) as long as they relate in some way to economics. They can be as formal as informal as you wish – as long as they are not distastefully offensive of course... but we DO THRIVE ON controversial opinions!!! Indeed, Greg Bihari’s article from Issue II is still generating debate as you can see from this issue...

We have a wide range of topics discussed in this issue, as well as the ultimate range of contributors – from a first year undergraduate student to a university Professor! This diversity reflects exactly the type of publication we want Creative Distraction to be, so please feel free to send in submissions. Our email address is: [esa@mailbox.uq.edu.au](mailto:esa@mailbox.uq.edu.au)

Don’t hesitate to contact us about any questions/comments you may have about Creative Distraction: we value your opinions!

Thanks to all the contributors for this issue, and to all who helped out in putting it together.

Finally, some ESA business: keep an eye out for more of our events – we will be letting our members know via email. Thanks to those people who attended our ECON Careers and Cocktails Evening on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May; it was a great success and gave us a chance to really build some social capital in the UQ economics community! For those interested in joining the ESA, you can do so by coming down to the Office (Room 117 Colin Clark).

All that is left to say now is GOOD LUCK for this semester – we look forward to hearing from you!!!

Creative Distraction Team

Prerna Mankad (Editor)  
Justin Hardman (IT/Website Manager)  
<http://www.uq.edu.au/esa/>

P.S. The photos you see in this issue are from our staff/student cricket match held at the end of Semester 2 – 2003. At the request of the student union we have posted the student cards of former UQ economists who have yet to pay their student services charge (thanks Alex!)

# The Economics of Terrorism

By Matt Ogg

***Borders are scratched across the hearts of men,  
By strangers with a calm, judicial pen,  
And when the borders bleed we watch with dread,  
The lines of ink across the map turn red.***

~Marya Mannes, *Subverse: Rhymes for Our Times*, 1959

At the sunset of the British occupation of America there were some interesting ideas that the liberated people decided to put forth. They praised a way of life called “liberty”, an idea that all people should be free to do as they wish: unchained and unleashed. France, an integral ally of the people, even gave them a statue in the honour of this great ideal. The revolution made the hearts of American men and women beat to the sound of a new drum that in years to come would give *them* the power to change the world. There was so much potential, as from this moment on the Americans were free:

Free to live, free to take lives, and free to take away freedom itself.

The economic progress of America in this time was so great that it was almost like a train, hurtling forward in the knowledge that the train tracks three hundred miles ahead were still being placed. They were convinced that by the time they got there, everything would be fine; and who would argue with the driver? He did, in the end, get to his destination, so to speak.

But is this destination what America and its western allies planned for? No, and as a result, the third world workers who slaved away to create the American (made Global) dream are realising that they want to be on that train, and are very disappointed, and very angry.

On the issue of terrorism, the people in charge like to blame religion. George Bush himself even accidentally muttered the word “crusade” in regards to combating terrorism. But can religion be blamed for something that is a result of economic oppression and blatant human rights abuses by the powerful few? Let’s turn everything around and look at a hypothetical situation. *If* all the Muslims in the Middle East, South East Asia and Northern Africa were enjoying the standard of living of America, Australia or Britain, would they be committing acts of terrorism in the name of religion? No. It is not religion that causes terrorism, it is emotional damage caused by oppression that leads people who would otherwise do nothing, to commit such acts.

The Madrid bombings were shocking, as were the Bali bombings, September 11 and other such incidences. But blaming religion and the terrorist is not going to help. Clamping down on Al-Qaeda won’t do anything. Such occurrences need to be stopped but intensified security cannot stop these unpredictable acts. Intensified desire for change on the other hand, will.

Firstly, the average American household spent \$1509 on the war in Iraq. Imagine if the American government were to put all this money towards foreign aid instead, not just after acts of terrorism, but every year. The unrest in developing countries would eventually decline. Terrorism may continue and public opinion for this idea may decline, but if we could persist in acts non-violence, including economic non-violence, the world would be a better place; not perfect, but better. Money makes the world go around, and western nations need to realise that they can still live with a good standard of living *and* not keep all the money to themselves

Secondly, the apartheid in Israel needs to end, for it holds a great proportion of the fuel that drives terrorism. For the atrocities of World War Two the Jews deserved to be given a state, but the state they were given was not legitimate and this is not fair for the Palestinian people. A minority of Jewish Israelis currently own 90% of the land in Israel while they continue to oppress the Palestinians who live there. People like to blame the acts of violence in Israel on religion, but once again, violence is not a result of religion, it is a result of oppression. To be honest, I have no idea how the situation in Israel could be solved. I can't believe that the most powerful nations in the world could have been so stupid as to create the situation in the first place. But, if other nations don't intervene with acts of violence, a solution, even though the means might be undesirable, will be found.

Thirdly and finally, people need to open their minds to other cultures if they really want terrorism to stop. Ignorance makes us blind, and it is undeniable that there is a prolific amount of ignorance in the world today. There is a cure to this blindness however, through libraries and an honest media, and hopefully the west will 'see' again (if that's to say we've *ever* 'seen'). In 1953, the American President, Dwight D. Eisenhower made the following statement,

***Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed."***

In conclusion, liberty is possible but peace is not. As much as we like it, the ways of human nature mean that there will always be war. But, if we retaliate to terrorism with acts of violence, we will solve nothing. We should learn from Eisenhower's words and follow this simple plea for liberty. We must get to the very roots of the problem, rip them out of the soil, cut down the weeds of ignorance and inhumanity, and hence defeat the power of terrorism.

PROFESSOR **JOHN QUIGGIN** ON THE

**UNITED STATES-AUSTRALIA "FREE TRADE  
AGREEMENT"**

*Editor's note:*

*Professor John Quiggin is one of Australia's leading research economists. He has recently been elected a Fellow of the American Agricultural Economics Association (AAEA) – a highly noteworthy achievement, particularly for an Australian economist. More information about Professor Quiggin's research can be obtained through the School of Economics website, which also has a link to his own personal website.*

*In keeping with Creative Distraction's theme of including at least one submission from a member of academic staff in each issue, we are delighted to be able to publish this article from Professor Quiggin on an extremely timely and relevant issue.*

It is widely recognised that the 'Free Trade Agreement' between the United States and Australia is nothing of the kind. Immediate responses have naturally focused on what was missing, such as any market access for sugar. But it's a mistake to view this deal primarily as a free trade agreement with some pieces missing. If that description was correct, it would be reasonable to support the deal.

But far as free trade in the traditional sense is concerned, Australia has almost no trade barriers of any significance to the US, and therefore nothing to remove. Our general tariff of 5 per cent is at a level which implies minimal distortions and can be justified under the revenue tariff provisions of the GATT.

The US has a lot of relevant barriers and distortions, but the most important, the production and export subsidies in the Farm Bill, weren't even on the table. In addition, most of the specific barriers to Australian exports of any relevance remained in place. The announcement trumpeted the removal of restrictions on imports of lamb, but we've never had any success in persuading the Americans that eating lamb is a good idea.

If the agreement isn't about free trade, what is it about? The real issue, is that of economic integration with the US. As the example of the European Union, cited by FTA supporters like Alan Oxley, shows, economic integration means common economic institutions. In the present case, it's obvious that this means Australia adopting the institutions of the United States, and not *vice versa*. Examples that have come to light so far include the extension of copyright from 50 to 70 years and a range of other measures that enhance the capacity of US owners of intellectual property to act as discriminating monopolists.

There are two issues in deciding whether economic integration with the US is a good idea. The first is whether, in general terms, the economic and social institutions of the US are better than those of Australia. If you read the writings of FTA supporters, it's pretty clear that they think this is the case, that we would be better off with less government intervention of all kinds, weaker unions, greater income inequality and so on.

The second issue, thrown into relief by the FTA negotiations, is whether it's a good idea to let our economic institutions to be determined by a government that is responsive to American interest groups, but not concerned with the welfare of Australians. The issue of copyright provides a nice example. There are a lot of arguments for and against long periods of copyright, but there are also issues of income distribution. In aggregate, an extension of copyright terms will redistribute income from Australians to Americans because the Americans own more copyrights of general interest than we do. Whatever the balance of the economic arguments, it's a safe bet that American decisionmaking processes will err on the side of long copyright terms.

A final observation on the FTA process is that it illustrates the validity of a traditional argument against unilateral tariff reductions. If you cut your tariffs unilaterally, you'll have no bargaining chips to trade for reductions by less high-minded bargaining partners.

More precisely, unilateral tariff reductions made sense given our previous focus on multilateral negotiations. In these negotiations our free-trade credentials gave us credibility as leaders of the "Cairns group". But now that we're moving to a bilateral approach, this counts for nothing, as we have seen.

**If you are interested in this topic:**

There will be a **Discussion Group** on the **US-Australia Free Trade Agreement** on **Wednesday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June**, held in the **Prentice Building, Room 116** from 2pm – 4pm. There will be 3 academic speakers, from the School of Economics and the School of Political Science and International Studies. All are welcome to attend and voice their opinions on the issues discussed. HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!

There is also a **Discussion Group** on the topic of **Sustainable Development** to be held on **Wednesday the 5<sup>th</sup> of May** from 2pm – 4pm at the above location. It is a great opportunity for you to hear from some experts in the area and informally discuss the relevant issues with other interested people – that's what uni is all about right?!!!



# Forecasts, Backcasts and In-Between Casts, but we're not catching any Fish

David Dolan

Despite the inherent unreliability of forecast accuracy, most economic institutions within Australia and the rest of the world, put a completely unreasonable amount of faith in forecasting economic variables. A cursory glance at the financial markets reveals the complete and utter lack of usefulness of forecasting, despite the ideological mutterings of general equilibrium theorists. One has to ask, after the numerous failings of basically all economic commentators to foresee the recent global economic crises, such as the Asian Financial Crisis and the collapse of the tech boom within the USA, why we are still obsessed with the value of forecasts. If models cannot foresee these catastrophic economic and social events then obviously the understanding that they give of the economic system at large is sadly lacking. To quote a famous 'scientist', "Why is this so?"

One reasonable explanation is that with so many economists having spent a large part of their life perfecting the recipe of orthodox economic theory and econometrics, even though the taste is awful, they will continue to defend themselves to the bitter end, rather than opening their minds to other possibilities. It is curious to this writer that with all the advances in mathematics and computer technology, in the last 20 years

especially, orthodox economics is still using the mathematics of 19<sup>th</sup> century engineers and refuses to change. Stagnation can only lead to the death of the usefulness of the subject. Economics needs an overhaul, one that allows reality to re-appear as a concept of value within the subject. Is the purpose of studying economics to build elegant theoretical models devoid of practical applications, or to study the real economic system within which we all reside with a view to understanding economic reality in order to facilitate real improvements in the quality of life, both economic and otherwise, that this system enables.

Within both the political and public policy landscape of Australia, we have seen economic fundamentalism of the highest order, if one does not worship at the altar of neoclassical doctrine, one is not allowed to preach. It is curious, no hypocritical, that neoclassical high priests cry "economics is a 'hard' science," at the same time refusing to acknowledge the ideological belief structure which forms the basis for their 'religion', that "rationality is next to godliness." This is not to suggest that orthodox economy theory has no practical applications. Rather that understanding basic assumptions of the theory and recognising their consequences,

enables application of the relevant theory only in instances where that theory is applicable, and dare I say it, actually has something to offer us in a practical sense.

In conclusion, blind ideological fervour has been partially responsible for some of the darkest days of human history. Whilst it is extreme to compare orthodox economics on this basis, the theory is sound. Intelligence is being able to think for oneself, not just regurgitate another's bile, however

tasty it may seem. Economics needs once again to concern itself with the real world, and use the insights from the theoretical one to assist in attempting to practically improve it. We as economists need to separate ourselves as much as we can, from blind ideology and look for theory useful for the real world, not isolated instances of reality that can be misused to justify theory. In short, "QUESTION EVERYTHING, BUT BLIND REJECTION OF ANYTHING IS IGNORANT!!



Thanks **SIMON QUINN** for letting us capitalize on your image!

# Malthus' Population Theory Resurrected

James H.B. Cheung

Upon finished reading Gregory Bihari's article on "The Limits of Population Growth" in Issue II of Creative Distraction, I was perplexed to have conjured up images of an ancient once-upon-a-time renowned "economist" named Reverend Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834), whose renounced ideas have been resurrected by Bihari.

In 1968 Malthus paper on "An Essay on the Principle of Population" was published. He based his theory on three principles. First, food supply is the sole constraining factor on the growth of human population. Second, human population grows at a geometric rate. Third, food production could only be increased linearly. The result of such disequilibrium, in Malthus' view, would be widespread food shortages and the inevitable Armageddon for the human race.

Subsequently, an economist modelled his theory using the logistic growth equation:

### Logistic Growth Equation

$$dN/dt = rN((K-N)/K)$$

where  $N$  = population,  $r$  = growth rate,  $K$  = carrying capacity,  $r$  = Malthusian parameter ( $r = (\text{birth rate}(b) - \text{death rate}(d))$ ),  $t$  = time

The logistic growth equation models the dynamics of exponential population growth ( $rN$ ), moderated by an upper limit or constraint known as carrying capacity ( $K$ ). This is exhibited in the equation by the fact that  $N$  cannot be greater than  $K$ . Malthus' theory embodies a seemingly legitimate intellectual flavour of economic logicity. Empirical evidence and the reality, however, do not support the growth pattern purported by the logistic growth equation for human population nor Malthus' null hypothesis.

With regards to carrying capacity, a concept that relates to Bihari's inquiry on the limits of population growth; it can be defined as the maximum population quantity that a nation can sustain. In the past many academics, including biologists, have struggled to estimate this number. Kenneth Arrow, a past Nobel Prize Laureate in Economics who specialises in mathematical economics, believes that "carrying capacities in nature are not fixed..... contingent on technologies, preferences and the structures of production and consumption..... A single number for human carrying capacity would be meaningless....."

Ironically, without being able to quantify "the limits" of population growth with any degree of precision, isn't it premature for Bihari to limit his argument to his limited argument that mathematically, in the limit, there is a limit in which a nation's population can afford to grow within its limits?

## **A COCKTAIL OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND ECONOMICS: CAN ECONOMISTS SWALLOW IT?**

**Prema Mankad**

George is from Kerala, in the south of India. He has worked as a roadwork labourer in the United Arab Emirates for twelve months, and for the past five months he has remained unpaid. His employer is vested with all of his legal documents – passport, work permit, visa – and it is effectively the sole discretion of his employer as to whether George is allowed to continue working in the country or not. If he lodges a formal complaint to either his employer directly or to another agency, he risks losing his job altogether. George's family still live in Kerala (he has not seen any of them since he began work) and he is unable to sponsor even his wife to join him, as his income is well below the amount permissible to grant dependent visas. She, and his four children, entirely depend on the remittances George sends them; when he is unpaid, they are directly and significantly impacted. In addition to this, George still owes his agent in India, who found him his position in the Emirates Rs. 40,000/-. George lives in a labour camp and shares a small room with two other workers.

"George" is fictional, but his story is certainly not. There are thousands of workers in the Persian Gulf region living under the same or similar conditions. They have little to no control over their working conditions – unions are not authorised by law in the UAE for example, and many workers' very independence is curtailed by the fact that their employers control their movement through possession of their legal documents. Working conditions in some cases contravene international labour and even human rights standards (the UAE has not ratified the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families among other conventions); human rights organisations including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have petitioned the UAE government to institute laws to remedy the situation. There have been a number of reports in the media (e.g. through the BCC and even the Gulf News) of migrant labourer suicides, which illustrates the severity of working and living conditions for some workers who became desperate enough to take their own lives. While the situation is demonstrably improving, for example, transportation of manual labourers to their construction/work sites must conform to certain safety standards (whereas in the past many workers would be crammed into the back of a truck and driven for kilometres standing up) and the visa sponsorship process is undergoing reform, there is still much to be done in terms of upholding human rights in the UAE. So what does this have to do with economics?

This is a classic example of the tension between economic liberalisation, individual human security and the issue of choice. It illustrates the issue of globalising labour without the commensurate globalisation of labour standards. It depicts the struggle of those people who have been given an alternative – perhaps 'better' option (relative to remaining in their home country) due to liberal foreign working rights: open borders for economic exchange, and the potential abuses that can occur when sovereign states do not respect international standards in other areas. Host governments favour national economic interests and/or may not be directly aware of individual abuses while workers fear the repercussions, including deportation, of 'making waves' by complaining.

Country of origin governments (such as India and Pakistan), which are usually LDCs, are unwilling to pressure the host governments because their own economies depend considerably on worker remittances, particularly from this region. This effectively leaves only the nebulous 'international community' to advocate change and place pressure on governments to protect the security and ensure equity for *all* workers within their state.

Some people may argue that this is not, and should not be, a concern; migrant workers have the choice of whether they go abroad to work, and know that they face risks – especially when the country they are applying to work is not a liberal democracy, employs media censorship and is under pressure from human rights groups. Indeed, there is a choice: staying in a village mired in a poverty trap at home, or attempting to break out of it by taking a risky but more attractive option to earn a far greater income abroad. However, in this situation the 'choices' are extremely limited and most of us here in Australia could never imagine what it would be like to make a decision from a position of desperation of this magnitude - to 'choose' to leave one's family and home behind in favour of immense uncertainty. I remember a lecturer saying in my introductory macroeconomics class that economics is about expanding choices – increasing opportunities – so that 'choice' does not merely consist of deciding between the lesser of two evils.

The point to note here is that economics is arguably an intrinsically normative discipline despite claims to the contrary; presenting (read advocating) 'value-neutral' theories *do* lead to policy outcomes that inevitably have an impact on particular sectors of the population. Some people benefit, some lose – who gets what is a question of values and priorities. Even Pareto efficiency implies a choice about *who* will be made better off, even if no one is made worse off. Labour mobility made possible by relaxed immigration laws is theoretically an extremely positive idea from an economic development perspective. However, in cases such as the migrant labourers in the UAE, the question of whether this contributes to 'progress' and development in the full sense of the word (including as Sen's 'freedom') is uncertain. Taking a position on this issue requires considering both international norms of human rights (and the importance you personally attach to this) and economic advantages. Do the benefits, which are undeniably significant, outweigh the overall costs of true economic openness in this case? Is it, and should it be the role of the economist to also acknowledge these 'real-life' situations and their dilemmas, which may not be related to 'economics' exclusively but are fundamentally impacted by it?



# Mathematics: is not about anything in particular

By Natasha Doherty

*Mathematics is not about anything in particular: it consists, rather, of the systematic construction of complex deductive arguments. Velupillia points to the fact that mathematical economists have persisted in trying to fit the circumstances to the mathematics known to them instead of extracting ideas from circumstances.*

There have been two main uses for mathematics in economics; that of statistical maths used in econometrics; and the mathematics used in theory. Both forms are problematic though statistical maths is used for interpretation of data; it contains value judgments throughout its application. These judgments are not absent in any science, though are minimized in natural sciences by the universally accepted methods of application, which remove part of the problem. Econometrics has some degree of accepted application but it is in no way universal, still in its development stages it will ripen in decades to come.

In contrast to hard science the economist can not isolate themselves from the organism that we study, we are part of it, and therefore change it though the study of it. This holds many problems. Whereas the physicist can study elements that she is weakly connected to, the economist will study with a set of unique values of her own construction, based on past experiences. Some would suggest that it is possible to remove ones self from these restrictions of subjectiveness. More so values are contained in judgment, presented in the form of axioms and promoted as necessary for simplification.

These axioms have been seen as the only form of achieving rigour and avoiding error (Krugman). This rigor is a poor substitute for correct reasoning. Theorists argue that this approach for development of theory is the only one that counts (Chick). Stigum states that *'non-institutionistic maths may be adequate for the development of pure math but is inadequate for developing economic theory'*. Debreu relied strongly on axioms to develop the theory of value. Velupillia outlines that it can be shown that none of the propositions, theorems and claims of a mathematics sort would retain validity without modification of their economic content and implication. *'As economic analysts we are directed by if not prisoners of the mathematical tools we possess'*, (Velupillia).

The use of axioms in theory can be best described as a vicious method starting from false assumptions and leading to fallacious inferences (Ludwig von Mises). This allows the author to lose sight of the complexities and interdependence of the real world in a maze of pretensions and unhelpful symbols. The theory starts with self evident axioms applied deductively using logic and providing the logic is correct arrives at demonstration truths. It should be concerning that the conclusions arrived at with the limits inherent in axiom application should be named truths.

The blind acceptance of assumptions is demonstrated in this statement by Friedman:

*'In so far as theory can be said to have assumptions at all and in so far as their realism can be judged independently of the validity of predictions the relation between the significant of theory the realism of its assumptions is almost the opposite of that suggested by the view under criticism. Truly important and significant hypotheses will be found to have assumptions that are widely inaccurate descriptive representations of reality and in general the more significant the theory the more unrealistic the assumptions'*

The judgment of the theorist may be questioned, through the types of assumptions made, mathematically or within normal discourse.

These assumptions are not limited to mathematical form, it is the written theoretical argument converted into mathematical language that transfer assumptions. It is commonly argued that these

assumptions simplify the theory and are then easily understood and applied. This is a fair argument as the social organism is a complex, detailed system. Von Neumann isolates the dissatisfaction with the mathematical treatment of economic theory as *'that which derives from the fact that one is not offered proofs but mere assertions which are really no better than the same assertions given in literary form'*. This is true, though Von Neumann misses elements of the dissatisfaction, and differences between literary form and mathematical form. It seems that theory in written form has clear logical reasoning that can be understood by the reader who is aware of the applicability, keeping in mind the complex nature of the system of study. Mathematics expresses strict independence between factors where as in ordinary discourse we are aware of the uncertainties. Mathematics assumes all uncertainties vanish (Keynes).

Mathematical theory can be written simply and concisely, though steps with inherent assumptions may be dismissed or excluded, without the uncertainty factor and awareness of limitations. Too large a proportion of mathematical economics are concoctions as imprecise as the initial assumptions they rest on. This allows the author to lose sight of the complexities and interdependence of the real world in a maze of pretensions and unhelpful symbols (Keynes). It is possible in the cover of formalism to make statements that if expressed in plain language the mind would repute (Keynes).

In economics the interactions between humans is an important element of economic description. The uncertainty in individual actions and consequences were noted by Keynes but still the focus on the individual and not the interactions remains (Chick). The validity of truths obtained through narrowing become mutually exclusive in a complex system. With this open system much uncertainty remains about choice, probabilities etc., there is never perfect knowledge therefore there can not be perfect precision.

Von Neumann explains that *'there is no universal system of economic theory reason, and that this is due to the difficulty of constructing a system where there is limited knowledge and imperfect information of the facts'*.

The object of study in economics is significantly different to that studied in hard sciences. The economist has strong connections to the object of study, where as in hard sciences the connections to the object are weak; therefore the economist changes the object under study. The inherent judgments made by the economist can not be avoided, only minimized. This can only occur with the use of a systematic application, containing rules and bases of use of tools such as mathematics. Though the difficulty in applying a systematic approach is that it must be accepted by all and the complexity and detail within economics makes this quite difficult.

Economists have traditionally used axioms to simplify theoretical arguments so as to arrive at questionable truths. The usefulness of these theories, in a real world that contains no state of *'ceteris paribus'* is doubtful. The scientific method is not found in the precision of mathematics, it is in the method by which the object of the study is examined. It is through application of a commonly accepted method or system to study an object that a science is born. If all accept the system then it must contain within it the generally accepted judgments/values, of the time. Nothing is stationary especially in the economy and more so in the development of economic theory. Economics will not become a science through the use of mathematics- that which is simply a tool, mathematics is not about anything in particular, it does not solve methodological problems or develop systematic applications, it only simplifies and specifies.

# DON'T HAVE A COW MAN!

Will Roberts

Livestock these days are wracked by emotional issues that go largely unnoticed by their masters. Their hearts are as tender as the other bits. Modern agricultural techniques and economic practices cause untold distress to our tasty friends.

Ever wondered why beef cattle always look so grumpy? There are no known reports of a cow even smiling. It may be that they are all suffering massive guilt trips. This would explain the constant nausea and plaintive mooing. Bovine should be ashamed by the high prevalence of chronic diseases like heart disease and colon cancer in humanity.

Chickens are obviously more agitated than they used to be. Try looking one in the eye: it won't hold your gaze. Although their lifestyles are even more sedentary than the human office worker, you can tell they are worrying about something. It's nothing to do with Alan Greenspan's refusal to raise interest rates. These fat, cannibalistic creatures feel responsible for the number of effeminate men who grew up eating at KFC.

The realities of the international meat trade are ridiculous. In 1998, Britain imported 61 000 tonnes of Dutch poultry and exported 33 000 tonnes of their own poultry into the Netherlands. Transnational corporations send meat around the

world and back again, searching for the lowest prices. As there is no tax on aviation fuel, cheap frozen chickens from Brazil and Thailand are ready for airlift to any fragile market place in the world.

International trade laws are not fair on third world farmers. European and Japanese livestock chow down on soybean from Brazil, where two thirds of the population live with abject hunger. In Zimbabwe and Tanzania, the WTO allows farmers to plant nothing but maize, a very unreliable crop. These nations may produce massive exports for the mouths of Western cattle or very little at all for even the locals to eat, depending on the season.

The costs of transporting or stockpiling produce keep poor nations from ever becoming self-sufficient. After a large harvest in 2001, Ethiopians found that transport costs would treble the price of their maize in neighbouring Saudi Arabia and, with few storage facilities, most of it went to waste. It was marginally cheaper for the Saudis to buy heavily subsidised maize from the U.S. This year, Ethiopia is on the verge of starvation and the U.S. continues to send the majority of the food aid received.

The Dutch founded the International Vegetarian Union in 1908. Its members have regular congresses all over the world, but lack the aggression needed to



cause a fuss. I hear the food is tasty, though.

According to a recent theory, Jesus was skinny because he was a vegetarian. Buddha couldn't stomach animal flesh either but he still looked pretty healthy. Neither of these guys will be very sympathetic to those who packed lamb sandwiches for the trip through the afterlife, come Judgement Day.

A vegetarian diet is high in vitamins, minerals and fibre and protects against a variety of diseases. Salmonella and e coli are not Pokemon characters, but bacteria that live in the meat we eat. Vegetarian hotdogs taste better than the real thing because they don't have any offal in them. They're made of soy, which doesn't have any feelings at all.



Captain Richard Brown padding up before a memorable innings.



Robert and KK enjoying ambience of an afternoon at the cricket.

