Time to Change *by David Suzuki*, (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1993) pp. xvi + 230, $19.95, ISBN 1-86373-569-0.

David Suzuki is first and foremost a communicator. His talent doesn't lie in his originality of thought or his depth of analysis so much as in his eloquence — his ability to clearly and persuasively put the environmental case.

Suzuki's new book is a collection of short essays organised into chapters; the chapters being grouped into three parts. The first part describes environmental problems and why change is necessary, the second part outlines the institutions that need to be changed — science and technology, politics and politicians, economics and economists — and the third part explains how this change can be achieved. The grouping of the essays into these categories seems to be an afterthought; the essays sometimes do not fit well.

The strongest section of the book is the group of essays that describe the problems and his sense of loss. Suzuki is able to get past the statistics and paint vignettes of environmental degradation that should stir the feelings of all but the most complacent. He also uses graphic metaphors that drive home the sense of urgency he feels. For example he likens the participants at the Earth Summit to the passengers in a car speeding towards a brick wall. "Most of them ignored the danger because they were too busy arguing about where they wanted to sit. Some occupants did notice but were still debating about whether it was a mirage, how far away it was, or when the car would reach it. A few were confident the car was so well built that it would suffer only minor damage when it plowed into the wall..." (p. 5)

However, such writing will only appeal to those readers who share a concern about the environment. Many of Suzuki's opponents will only be irritated by the simplicity of his metaphors and essays. They will argue that it lacks academic rigour — this is not a book with references and tightly argued refutations to mainstream thought. But then Suzuki has not set out to write an academic book. Rather he is appealing to a popular audience that would only be put off by jargon and too many references to other books or articles that they haven't read.

This does not mean Suzuki's views and insights are shallow or inconsequential. There is still plenty of food for thought in what he writes; although much of it may not be new for readers of this journal. For example, he argues that one of the major underlying causes of the environmental crisis arises from profound faith that people have "in the power of science and technology to give us insight and understanding that enable us to control and manipulate our environment." (p. 83) He claims that scientists and others who believe this do not understand the social, economic, religious and political roots of environmental problems and that these aspects cannot be addressed with scientific solutions. In this respect Suzuki sees an experiment such as Biosphere II as merely a stunt that attempts to give the impression that humans can control and recreate a livable environment.

Suzuki is a well-known advocate of limits to economic growth but this controversial view is almost taken for granted in this book (just as proponents of growth do in their writing). To Suzuki, the idea that the economy can grow indefinitely without adversely affecting the environment is so nonsensical it doesn't need to be disproven. His chapter on "Economics and Economists" will not persuade anyone to change their views; however it includes the standard criticisms against measurements of economic growth (GNP) in a simple and revealing way. It is not entirely anti-economist either, including descriptions of three different economists, one of whom (Herman Daly) incorporates a recognition of limits to economic growth in his work.

The book draws many of its examples from Canada, the home of the author, and there could be a tendency for the book to be insular. However, Suzuki uses sufficient examples

from other countries for the book to have an international flavour. Of more concern to environmentalists might be Suzuki's conscious choice of a war analogy to describe the environmental "battle". For those who have purposely adopted a non-violent approach to their campaigns such language might be somewhat unsettling.

Perhaps the most disappointing part of the book was the third part, "Transforming Our Ways: How to Bring About Change". This includes more essays on the nature of the problem and seems to be a roundabout way of setting out solutions. The cause of environmental problems, Suzuki claims, is in our value and belief systems. He criticises television for its role in reinforcing old values and beliefs and for permitting environmental problems to be compartmentalised, trivialised and separated from their context. He criticises science for teaching young passionate scientists to distance themselves from their subject of study and objectify it, thereby reinforcing the separation between people and nature. Suzuki believes that if people were able to get back in touch with nature and were able to see their surroundings in the totality as an interconnected whole then values and beliefs would change and people would rediscover a reverence for nature and a spiritual connection with it.

Suzuki's belief that it is this lack of reverence and humility that enables us to destroy the environment is reflected in the book, with many of the essays being about interconnections and the beauty and value of nature. Clearly an academic book appealing to logic would not achieve the sort of value change Suzuki is setting out to achieve.

Essentially Suzuki believes in the power of the individual and groups of individuals to bring about change. He gives examples of people whom he describes as leaders and role models who will express the new values and can show the rest of us the way. In general the powerless people of the world — the women, the young people, the old people, third world people and native people — will provide the reservoir for these potential leaders according to Suzuki who has already published a book on *The Wisdom of the Elders*. Women, for example, have had the traditional role of nurturing and caring and so have risen to prominence in the environmental movement where such traits are considered important.

Suzuki tells of several individuals, men, women and children whom he believes have provided an inspiration to others through their own actions: Lynn Margulis, a scientist who was long ignored by the scientific establishment and later had her ideas accepted; David Grassby, a 14 year old who highlighted the oil wasted through the use of small throw-away oil cans; Merv Wilkinson, a sustainable forester; and even the Prince of Wales.

Such individual examples seem token indeed and in putting his faith in the ability of the individual to be a catalyst for change Suzuki apparently ignores the role of power in society and the role that business and financial interests play in shaping governmental and private decisions that affect the environment and even in influencing values and beliefs through advertising, educational resources and control of the media. The individuals cited seldom challenge the real power holders in our society who are able to incorporate the displayed values in a very superficial way. Suzuki recognises that corporations are "cloaking themselves in green rhetoric" but that "the ground rules of profit make it hard to be a friend of the environment" (pp. 135-6). Yet he avoids the implications that should follow, that the power of corporations need to be curbed if the environment is to be protected. Perhaps the value changes Suzuki is looking for will provide the conditions for this to happen but none of Suzuki's heroes seem to be oriented this way.

Suzuki is not afraid to include the personal in his writing and this fits his philosophy of observing the connections rather than artificially separating out parts of life. The book includes descriptions of his own childhood and an essay on his father's death. The final word in the book goes to Suzuki's daughter, who through her own efforts (with a little help from

her father) managed to speak to the assembled throng at the Earth Summit in 1992. Her speech is reproduced in full at the end of the book.

In the final analysis this book seeks to motivate those who are already concerned rather than convince opponents. It includes many essays that would be useful as discussion starters for students at both high school and university. It is a good read for the environmentally committed, provides food for thought for the uncommitted and no doubt would even inspire those who don't believe in change to hone their arguments.

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The Nature of Sustainable Development *by Sharon Beder* (Scribe Publications, Newham, Australia, 1993) pp. xv + 304, $32.95, ISBN 0-908-01124-5.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the conservation movement depended, almost blindly, on science for its guiding expertise. Today it often depends, just as blindly, on economics. There are obvious parallels. Both science and economics can carry the banner of 'objectivity', while at times being both value laden and serving specific social ends. Sharon Beder scrutinises environmental economics using techniques of criticism more commonly directed at scientific and technological enterprises to examine the nature of sustainable development.

The book is a welcome contribution in the wake of the Earth Summit, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held at Rio de Janiero in June 1992. Students of environmental studies and activists need to understand the social context and historical development of the jargon of Rio, especially the endlessly flexible and much quoted term 'sustainable development'. As Beder notes (p. xii), the term originated in the IUCN's 1980 World Conservation Strategy, but its popularity has increased noticeably in the 1990s.

Beder strips the term 'sustainable development' of its moral 'motherhood status', and examines the way it can be used to serve particular social goals. Her own tone is that suitable for the author of a text book — reasonable, distant. She notes that 'critics say...', rather than directly revealing her own agenda. But that agenda is revealed in her choice of critics, in the way she privileges the voices of marginality, critics whose writings would be ignored by a genuine proponent of sustainable development. She takes a tough line on environmental ethics, for example, using Robert Goodin's effective parallel between religious indulgences and green taxes: 'Just as the church had no right to sell God's forgiveness, governments have no right to permit people to destroy something that does not belong to them' (p. 120).

The book is divided into five major parts, each of which asks a question, then answers that question over several chapters, the last of which is a case study. The issues Beder tackles are:

— Economy and environment: competitors or partners?

— What is the environment worth?