

Clinton Turns a Brighter Shade of Green

PRESIDENT Clinton has brought America back into step with the rest of the world on environmental protection. That assessment by Fred Krupp, head of the non-governmental Environmental Defense Fund in Washington, is now widely shared by ecologists in the United States.

Their satisfaction stems mainly from a speech by Clinton on April 21, Earth Day, announcing a sharp reversal of policies espoused by Republican president George Bush. Clinton pledged that the US would sign a treaty protecting endangered species and cut emissions of gases that contribute to the global warming, or greenhouse effect.

Bush refused to take either step at last year's Earth Summit in Brazil. He argued that the treaty to preserve biodiversity would infringe the patent rights — and profits — of US companies producing medicines and other products from plant and animal species.

Committing the US to specific reductions in greenhouse gas emissions over a set period of time would be too costly for many of the nation's industries, Bush maintained. His stance caused the US to be regarded as something of a pariah at the Earth Summit. Many countries in Europe as well as in developing countries criticised Washington for obstructing efforts to foster international cooperation on the environment.

A significant US shift may also be occurring on another point of global contention. The Clinton administration is signalling an open-minded approach to current talks in Geneva on an extension of the 1987 Treaty on Tropical Timber.

Bush balked at suggestions by Malaysia and other Third World timber exporters that the agreement should be expanded to include forests in the temperate and sub-Arctic climate zones. Such an amendment would bind the US and most other industrialised countries to treaty provisions aimed at encouraging forest conservation.

Clinton's representatives at the Geneva talks, due to resume in late June, have not indicated support for Malaysia's position, but they have no reaffirmed Bush's strong opposition.

Despite these developments, some environmentalists are not yet convinced that Clinton will restore the US to a position of global leadership on

A Special Gemini Report
by Kevin J Kelley from Washington

Campaigners for a greener environment may finally have the United States as an ally. A year ago at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, then president George Bush angered environmentalists and governments around the world by refusing concessions on issues like protecting endangered species and reducing gas emissions. Now, President Bill Clinton has announced a sharp policy reversal. But, reports Gemini News Service, he is still a long way from pleasing all.

environmental protection. Like Bush, though to a lesser degree, Clinton is wary of taking any initiative that might be criticised as detrimental to US corporate interests. Many times during his presidency, Bush contradicted his own claim to being an environmentalist by siding with business lobbyists' objections

mentalists to look on the President with some suspicion. In the interest of creating jobs in that comparatively poor southern state, Clinton sometimes took actions that angered Arkansas environmentalists.

It was Albert Gore's vice-presidential candidacy that mainly accounted for the

treacy and on greenhouse gas emissions.

The President said that the US would attach an interpretive statement to its signature on the agreement covering rare and endangered species. This proviso, developed in consultation with business interests, is intended to protect the patent rights of private

duced to their 1990 levels by the end of this decade.

Government officials then sought to allay concerns by suggesting that restrictions on the output of the global-warming gases could not suddenly be rescinded after the turn of the century.

But environmentalists are still waiting to see what Clinton stipulates later this year in a specific plan for combating the greenhouse effect. Before his Earth Day pronouncements, Clinton had distressed many greens by appearing to surrender in his administration's first big confrontation with interests opposed to an environmental initiative.

The President initially said he would incorporate into his budget proposal an increase in the fees charged for private

Environment Key Issue for Sustainable Development

by Fahmida Akter

FOR a country which is already grappling with problems of widespread poverty, increasing population, lack of resources, aid dependence, institutional weakness and many others, there are enough reasons to be worried about the impact of global climate change which is going to show up in the form of global warming and ozone depletion. Global warming will have serious negative impact on Bangladesh e.g. the sea-level rise which will cause not only economic loss but also disruption to social life. A one metre sea-level rise would inundate 15-17 per cent of the total area of Bangladesh, particularly affecting the low-lying floodplain and coastal areas. This would imply loss in agricultural production, industrial output, forest area, fisheries, tourism.

Natural resources in Bangladesh have been used in

Natural resources in Bangladesh have been used in an unsustainable way. Deforestation and encroachment have been quite significant. Actual forest cover in Bangladesh is approximately one million hectare (ha) or only six per cent of the total land area, a reduction of more than 50 per cent over the past 20 years. As a result, Bangladesh has less than 0.02 ha of forest land per person, one of the lowest such ratios in the world.

While sea-level rise is a global issue and therefore, the responsibility has to be shared also by the international community, Bangladesh can not avoid its role in managing and tackling its own environmental problems. Continuing depletion of forests, timber, cropland, discharge of industrial, domestic, agricultural wastes and pollutants into the environment, increased vehicular pollution, unregulated use of pesticides etc. have serious implication for not only the environment but also for the development of the country because the economy cannot be delinked from the environment. Environmentalists talk about sustainable development which emphasizes the integration of environment and economy.

The term sustainable development, though not new, has caught the attention of policymakers, economists and governments only recently, especially after the famous report "Our Common Future". Sustainable development, as defined by the Brundtland Commission, is a development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need. This definition captures the issue of intra-generational and inter-generational equity since it aims for maximizing social welfare through productive activities. The concept of sustainable development is rather

among the richest in the world, inland fisheries of the country have been declining at a steady rate since 1983 due to overfishing, pollution from agricultural chemicals and industrial waste and flood control, irrigation and road construction.

Increased population puts tremendous pressure on the resources. There is less than 0.1 ha of arable land per person. Of 13.8 million rural households, 45 per cent have less than 0.2 ha. According to the 1983-84 census of agricultural and live-stock, about nine per cent of all rural households own no cultivable land and two per cent have no access to a homestead. Poor households in the village are directly dependent on natural resources which results overuse and ultimately depletion of resources.

In order to assure a sustainable development, poverty should be addressed because "Sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations for a better life, ... a world in which poverty is endemic will always be prone to ecological and other catastrophes".

Therefore, the development strategy for Bangladesh should be to control population increase, alleviate poverty and improve natural resources management at a time if the development has to sustain. Government should come up with a policy which would ensure proper management of all resources and would prevent degradation of the environment. People's awareness about the consequences of environmental degradation has to be created through educating them on related issues. Non-governmental organizations can play important role in this respect. Unless we are educated enough to understand the inextricable link between economic development and improved natural resources management we can not implement a sustainable development strategy.

(The writer is a Research Associate at BIDS and at present doing her PhD on Environmental Economics at University College, London.)

One year after the Earth Summit

Just a year ago more than 100 heads of government attended what was grandly dubbed the Earth Summit. Its aim was to produce a global strategy to protect the environment.

It was adjudged a mixed success, but if nothing else it highlighted worldwide the plight facing mankind if individuals as well as governments did not take firm action.

A year later the pundits are asking what has actually happened?



What was achieved	and what was not
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Treaty on climate change to check emissions of greenhouse gases, watered down under pressure from US and OPEC nations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Treaty on forests: dropped because of Third World opposition
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity treaty to preserve flora and fauna, US refused to sign	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> North's aid pledges to preserve South's environment far below expectations
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda 21: action plan to safeguard environment and promote sustainable development. Non-binding	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Earth Charter failed to address many complex environmental issues
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Statement of principles to conserve forests. Non-binding agreement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Implications of North-dominated global economic system for development and environment not discussed

A key industrialised country is the United States. Last year President Bush deeply disappointed the Rio delegates with his negative approach. Now Bill Clinton has aroused new hopes that he is adopting greener policies. KEVIN J. KELLEY reports for Gemini News Service on the Clinton line.

A key developing country is India, where the Narmada Dam project has become a major environmental issue. ATIYA SINGH reports for Gemini News Service that mass protestors threaten in June drastic non-violent action. They will await the rising waters until they are engulfed.

to pollution control measures. Important figures in the Clinton administration, including Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen, exhibit similar pro-business inclinations. And they are clearly able to influence Clinton, who has promised to make US economic growth his highest priority.

Clinton's record during his 12 years as governor of Arkansas also causes environ-

strong support environmentalists gave last year to the Democrats' national campaign. Gore was an early champion of efforts to lessen the greenhouse effect.

He is regarded as much more deeply committed to environmental causes than Clinton. In fact, some greens say Clinton did not go far enough in reversing Bush's policies on the bio-diversity

enterprises. While the interpretive statement does not affect the actual contents of the treaty, it puts signatories on notice that the US may contest requirements that US businesses regard as unfair. That move brought condemnations from groups critical of the biotechnology industry.

Said Andrew Kimbrell, policy director of one such group: "The Clinton industry proposal, which undercuts international attempts to regulate the creation and release of genetically engineered organisms, is dangerously shortsighted and scientifically naive."

Other environmentalists voiced concern over Clinton's failure to commit the US to continued reductions in greenhouse gas emissions beyond the year 2000. In his Earth Day speech, the President said the release of such substances would be re-

mining, timbering an animal-grazing on government-owned lands in the western United States. The aim was to limit activities that damage fragile ecosystems while also raising revenues that might be used for other environmental programmes.

US senators representing western states howled in protest at the proposed fee hikes. And Clinton then dropped the plan because he was fearful of losing key votes in Congress for his overall economic package. The administration says it will still press for the higher fees in separate legislation.

The Clinton administration acknowledged the validity of these concerns by indicating that it may devise new and stricter standards for the incinerators during the 18 months that the moratorium is due to remain in effect.

Moving Britain's Water

by Brian Dumbleton

CANALS, rivers, new pipelines, reservoirs and even desalination plants are receiving active consideration as a means of providing the parched areas and shrinking aquifers in southern England with more water.

As the environment of southern Britain, despite heavy rainfall in July and August, remains desperately short of water, engineers are examining ways of moving the nation's liquid assets from the wet north to the drought-stricken south.

One of these is to use Britain's 3200 km of inland waterways — constructed largely during the industrial revolution to transport materials and manufactured goods where there were few arterial roads — to move water to where it is needed.

Canals in addition to their recreational functions, are already used to convey significant quantities of water around the country, particularly to industrial consumers, and they earn British Waterways £2.75 million per annum (10 per cent of its income). The canal system stretches from Kendal in the Lake District of northwest England and Llangollen in north Wales, through the heart of the industrial English Midlands, eastwards to the Wash and south to London, with links west to the Severn Estuary and

east of the Thames Estuary. Although much of the transfer of water takes place by gravity, there is inevitably some pumping. Even so it would appear to be quite feasible to expand and upgrade the network to move water according to need.

With an open system as opposed to sealed pipelines, losses due to leaking lock gates, seepage into the ground and evaporation are inevitable, but at least the system is in place.

"Our studies show that it would be several times cheaper to improve the channels of our canals than build long-distance pipelines, with running costs seven times cheaper than a £20 000 million national water grid, which would take 20 years to construct," maintains British Waterways chairman David Ingman.

The National Rivers Authority (NRA) would need to be involved as it would have to grant licenses for river extraction prior to its introduction into the canal system. Next year the authority will publish its own plan, described as more realistic.

Meanwhile, the NRA has already embarked on several studies, and a progress report on water storage and transfer

strategy was recently published by the Anglian water region. The strategy includes: demand management, further use of river and ground-water, bulk raw water transfers and additional storage reservoirs for which public consultations will take place in 1993.

Emotive Issue
Five major bulk water transfers of River Trent water are being examined and there are proposals for a new reservoir at Great Bradley, southeast of Cambridge, in eastern England. This will entail the construction of a 30-m-high earth embankment dam in the upper reaches of the River Stour.

Dams, however, are an emotive issue and it is estimated that 54 properties could be affected, including five listed buildings. Also road diversions would be necessary and a full Environmental Statement containing an assessment of the amenity, conservation and recreational potential of the proposal will be published before a decision is made.

Another reservoir study by Thames Water, designed to alleviate some of the water shortages in the Thames Valley, is being conducted southwest of Abingdon, in southern England.

This new reservoir, if constructed, will be of the pump-storage variety, enabling water to be impounded from the river at times of peak flow and released after treatment into local supply or back into the river when the level drops unacceptably low. It too could be linked into the existing canal system.

Unique System
But it is not only the south of England that is carefully examining and managing its water resources. In the north, the Yorkshire Water Grid, a unique system of resources, reservoirs, treatment works and pipelines, supplies 1365 million litres/day.

The Yorkshire Grid is not a new idea, having been initiated in the 1960s to link the supplies of Sheffield, Barnsley, Rotherham and Leeds, with water being drawn from the Derwent river. But it has been progressively expanded and, in drought periods, reduced groundwater abstraction prevents the drying up of rivers as has happened in southern England.

Ultimate Answer
Finally, even desalination is under consideration as a serious option. So bad was the problem this summer that a reverse osmosis (RO) plant was installed in the Isles of Scilly, off the southwest coast of England, in July under the direction of consultants Pell Frischmann Water, and some mainland water companies also investigated installing plants to utilise the sea water surrounding Britain.

South West Water, which supplies Axminster, in east Devon, southwest England, from boreholes depleted by four years of low rainfall, examined the possibility of installing an RO plant to remove the salt.

But the ultimate answer may lie in reducing consumption by the introduction of metering — a sensitive issue — and the reduction of leakages from mains. Both these proposals are expensive, as are some of the transfer schemes, and as the costs would ultimately have to be passed on to the consumer they may not be put into effect in the immediate future.

However, on the Isle of Wight, off the south coast of England, the home of Britain's largest metering experiment, consumption has fallen by up to 20 per cent since meters were introduced. — LPS

Protestor Says: We'll Stay Till We Drown

A Special Gemini Report
by Atiya Singh

ON Thursday, June 10 a small squad of people will take up position at a cottage in Manibell village, ten kilometres upstream from where the controversial Sardar Sarovar Dam is being built across the Narmada River in India, and wait for the waters to rise.

They will be the first of many self-sacrificial teams of the Save Narmada Movement (NBA) taking part in non-violent agitation by letting dam waters drown them when flooding takes place. They may not have long to wait. The dam is now 61 metres high and Manibell is bound to become submerged under 10 metres of water as soon as the monsoons hit the catchment area in mid-June.

The Sardar Sarovar Dam will be one of the world's largest. When it reaches 163 metres above the deepest foundation it will submerge 250 villages, the homes and fields of around 70,000 tribal people and 11,000 hectares of forest.

Thousands of agitators of the movement, led by Mehda Patkar, the 1991 Swedish Right to Livelihood Award winner, seek to stop the dam. Patkar's name has become synonymous

One of the world's great environmental issues could soon come to a climax when teams of people begin a Mahatma Gandhi-style peaceful protest against one of the giant dams of the Narmada Project. They say they will take up position in a village and let the waters drown them. Officials say that in the end "everyone will run away." But the people's resistance to the dam, reports Gemini News Service, is posing great problems.

While the government says the dam will end water shortages in Gujarat's drought-stricken districts, the activists and other critics believe it will prove to be the world's best designed disaster.

When the World Bank bowed out of the project after a report had found it unjust and seriously flawed, the government said it would complete the dam from its own resources.

The main worry now is about the use of force to evict people from the catchment area. Even before the World Bank withdrew its aid, the government had shown little regard for human right. With the World Bank no longer around, activists fear the authorities will adopt an even more cavalier approach to the evictions.

A foretaste of what could happen in June came on April

even raped, the humiliation continued at the police station and was repeated while she was being escorted to the Baroda central jail the next day.

Her crime: The police say she was obstructing the resettlement and rehabilitation work of those evicted to make way for the dam. Sanjay Sangaval, of the NBA, said the incident was the "first brutal attack on the people of the Narmada valley after the termination of the World Bank loan for the project."

The focus of the anti-dam activists has begun shifting from the environment to the violation of human rights. On March 10, the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) unanimously condemned forced evictions, including those for development projects, as a "gross violation of human rights".

According to Shobhana Asthana, joint commissioner for resettlement and rehabilitation, the government expects the submergence of six villages this year. She says: "We've resettled most of the families from the villages, save from Manibell and a handful of families in Vadgam village in Gujarat." She denies forcible evictions and says: "The idea is to convince them about evacuation."

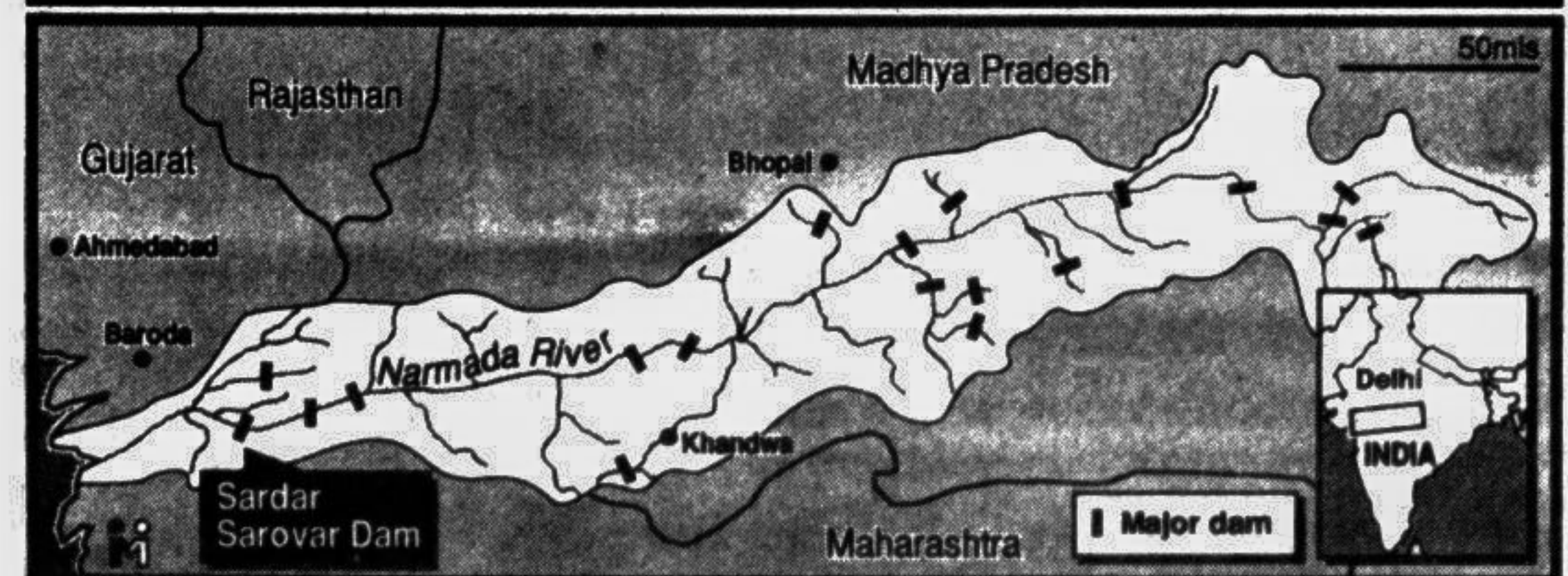
Anti-dam activists say that most people have been resettled and rehabilitated on paper only. In a poll held by the NBA, 22,523 families from 230 of the 248 affected in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, have decided to stay put come what may.

The biggest threat to the dam is financial. Neither the state nor the central government is in a position to allocate large sums. The dam is such a prestige issue, however, that the government may refuse to back down or reconsider any issue, including its economic viability.

If gross human right abuses take place or some people drown themselves when the waters submerge Manibell, the scenario could change drastically.

Meantime, the authorities are playing down the significance of the planned sit-in. Said an official: "Once the water comes everyone will run away."

The Narmada dam project



with the environmental movement in India.

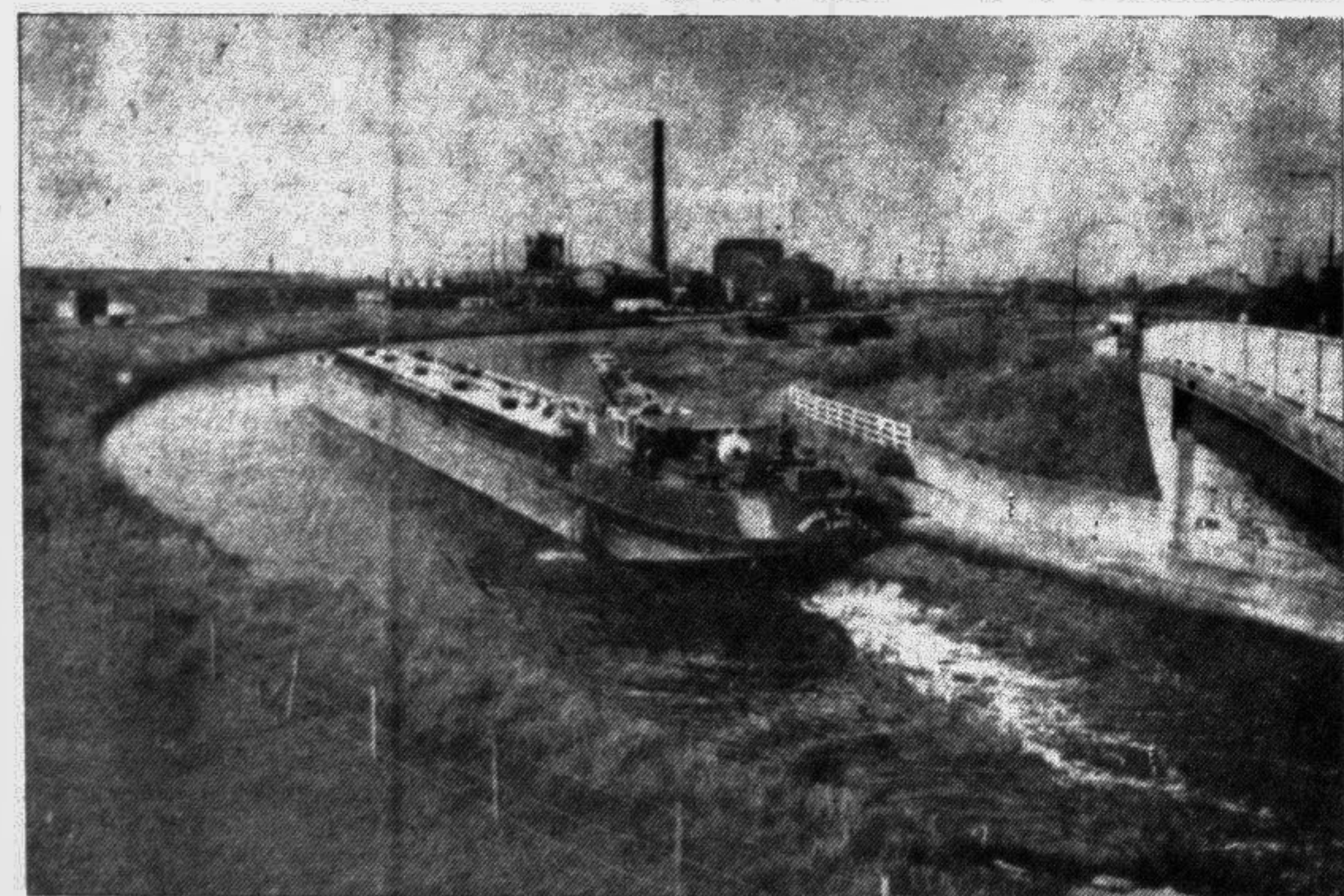
Sardar Sarovar is being built in Gujarat state, which will be the main beneficiary of the irrigation scheme. The land and forest to be flooded by the reservoir would fall in the states of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

On reading the report to the World Bank people began to feel that the dam was being pushed through more by a vested lobby, which stood to gain from the destruction of forests and the vacation of land by tribal peoples and villagers, than for the general good of the needy people.

Neighbour Nilanjan Dutta said: "On the way she was allegedly stripped, beaten up and

4, when Budhiben, a peasant woman, was asleep in Antras village, in Narmada valley. At midnight Gujarat officials and police broke into her hut and dragged her to the police station with other villagers.

Neighbour Nilanjan Dutta said: "On the way she was allegedly stripped, beaten up and



Britain's 3200 km system of canals may be one answer to moving water from the north to the drought-stricken south of England. (Photo courtesy of British Waterways.)