

NOTES, NEWS & COMMENTS

Television Trust for the Environment

The first non-profit co-production agency for television and audiovisual programmes—the Television Trust for the Environment—was launched in London in April 1984 by Dr Mostafa K. Tolba, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The co-sponsors—UNEP and Central Independent Television—have set up this new agency (acronym TVE) to take advantage of the recent revolution in electronic communications, the main aim being to promote improved and ever-widening understanding of environmental issues and problems. At the launching Dr Tolba, who is Chairman of TVE's International Advisory Council, said:

'UNEP has a successful record in helping set up media units such as Earthscan—a newspaper service—and Worldwatch (a research and publishing centre). Our support for the Television Trust is in response to the need for a specialized group in the field of electronic communications.'

Richard Creasey, Controller of Central Independent Television's Features Group and a TVE Trustee, said:

'TVE is an alliance between environmentalists and programme makers, drawing most of its resources from television. It's a professional organization producing programmes for the increasingly specialized outlets of cable, satellite, video, television, and cinema.'

The Trust will aim to increase both the quantity and quality of environmental television programmes. It will do this by:

- initiating or seeking out new programme ventures;
- arranging co-productions or partial financing of environmental programmes; and
- promoting world-wide distribution of its message carried by television programmes.

At this stage, the Trust does not intend to make films of its own, but to help international film-makers to launch major projects on environmental issues. The hope is that various countries will set up their own, independent but cooperating, TVE groups.

How the Trust was Established

The intention to set up the Trust has been alive at ATV and then CENTRAL (as Central Independent Television is now styled) for four years. The idea was first proposed by an independent film-maker, Adrian Cowell, whose previous documentaries include 'The Opium Warlords' and 'The Tribe That Hides From Man', and who had been commissioned to make 'The Decade of Destruction' series on deforestation in Amazonia with the Trust in mind. The series was broadcast in the UK in January 1984 to critical acclaim. Meanwhile CENTRAL had involved UNEP (towards the end of 1982), and the next step came with the formal endorsement by UNEP's Governing Body at its annual meeting in May 1983.

Since then the undersigned, who is UNEP's Editorial Advisor, and Ivan Hattingh, who is WWF UK's Director of Development,

have been working closely with Adrian Cowell and CENTRAL on laying the groundwork for the Trust.

Besides Dr Tolba as Chairman, the Advisory Council will include representatives of a cross-section of leading environmental organizations—such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), the Indian Centre for Science and Environment, and the US National Audubon Society. Such organizations will be represented at director level on TVE's Advisory Council.

Current Projects

1) At the end of the 1980s, the Trust aims to launch a major series of documentaries on deforestation in Amazonia. CENTRAL has already contributed its four films in 'The Decade of Destruction' series, and the Trust hopes to induce other television companies to make their own films on other aspects of the deforestation problem. CENTRAL's co-producer, the Catholic University of Goias, has recently received funds to store all film material available on Amazonia, and is now offering Brazil's first course in visual anthropology (i.e. embodying film and other photographic materials). The University has an effective camera team and co-production unit, and the Trust hopes to help it to continue filming throughout the 1980s with co-production and foundation support.

2) UNEP and CENTRAL are co-funding a documentary series on the problems of desertification, while an award-winning director, Charles Stewart, is already filming in Ethiopia, and a further film, by Christopher Menges, is planned for Australia. The Trust hopes to induce other television companies to make their own films for this further series. Slide shows and radio programmes will complement the film series, all being aimed at helping the campaign to combat desertification.*

3) CENTRAL will also be launching, in May 1984, an environmental magazine programme for the British Midlands region. The Trust is keen that other TV companies elsewhere in the world will feel encouraged to launch similar programmes in their own regions, in the hope that this will lead to cooperation and the exchange of material.

4) The Trust is now canvassing environmental groups, film producers, and television companies, for further projects.

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* See Dr Mostafa K. Tolba's Guest Editorial 'A Harvest of Dust' in our last issue and the early contributions in this one, of which 1,100 bound copies of a preprint etc. were delivered to UNEP early in May 1984.—Ed.