e.s. fellows gets a new BOSS

URING THE RECENT ELECTION CAMPAIGN in New Brunswick, pollution wasn't much of an issue. Neither party seemed much interested. Being against pollution these days is as essential to a political campaign as being for motherhood, federalism and industrial development. In fact since both parties had firmly established their priorities in the area of industrial development, they couldn't come on very strong about the results of that development. Nevertheless most environmentalists figured that we would probably do better under a new government. After all, the Liberals' Natural Resources Minister had found himself able to defend the absurd public statements and clear conflict of interest of the Chairman of the Water Authority, E.S. Fellows. Surely, reasoned environmentalists, any new government would take some notice of increasing public concern when ministers in such areas were appointed.

Then Premier-elect Hatfield announced his cabinet. Environmentalists discovered that the new Minister of of Natural Resources, Wilfred Bishop, was a sawmill owner, and shrugged; the minister most important to them was going to be the Minister of Environmental Affairs Surely here the government would appoint a man with some experience, a man with opinions on the subject, a man with some semblance of qualifications for the complex job of saving our delicate natural environment.

But G.W.N. Cockburn, the new Minister of Fisheries and Environmental Affairs, was an undistinguished lawyer and a lacklustre backbencher from Charlotte Countywhoseprimary qualification seemed to be an unswerving parochialism and membership in a variety of curling clubs. If his name was known to New Brunswickers outside of Charlotte County, it was because eighteen months before he had jumped up in the Legislative Assembly to charge the Justice Department with neglect and shocking ignorance of the fact that marijuana was being grown and harvested all over Charlotte County. "If marijuana is not being grown at Chamcook, then let the authorities say so," he said at a press conference.

The authorities said so.

The next day Cockburn shamefacedly "clarified" his statements in the face of a number of irate residents of Charlotte County who wondered whether he understood the distinction between facts and rumours. He was not heard from again until he popped up as Charlotte County's contribution to the new Tory cabinet.

Environmentalists who hoped that perhaps he was an unpolished diamond had an opportunity to find out what they could expect on January 19, when Cockburn addressed a symposium on Engineering and Environmental Management at the University of New Brunswick.

The methods used by conservation groups, Cockburn

rumbled, "have themselves been guilty of compounding the solution to the problems" [taken seriously, that's the opposite of what he meant to say; but who are we to demand literacy of cabinet ministers?]. We don't need, he went on, "a continuation of critical noise" or "the flooding of the public with unfounded or questionable information" [a subject on which the Minister is clearly an expert], or "the demand for the immediate elimination of all pollutants which if carried to an exaggerated extreme would bring an end of our civilization" or "the creating of an element of fear." Clearly, if we would all just stop complaining of poisons and filth in our lives, and being afraid that it's dangerous, the Minister of Environmental Affairs would have an easier job.

The Minister went on to imply that his department was not likely to indulge in hysteria, referring to "hastily set target dates without regard for economic reality" [translation: the eagerly sought after and loudly heralded pollution clean-up deadline of 31 December 1971 set by the previous Liberal government was clearly out the window] and "national standards without regard for area differences [translation: our environment's for sale cheaper than Ontario's: move your pulp mill here]. He went further, in a manner reminiscent of some of the recent speeches of E.S. Fellows, to warn of the high cost of cleaning up. It's dangerous, he opined, to "finally close the door on a polluting operation when its existence is essential to other considerations."

The decision to present to Mr. Cockburn an appropriate recognition of his behavior is one of the easiest ever made by *The Mysterious East*: we received no less than eleven formal nominations the day after his speech and our phone has been ringing ever since. We therefore present, by acclamation, one Rubber Duck Award to Mr. G.W.N. Cockburn for foolishness, knavery or incompetence far in excess of the call of duty.

