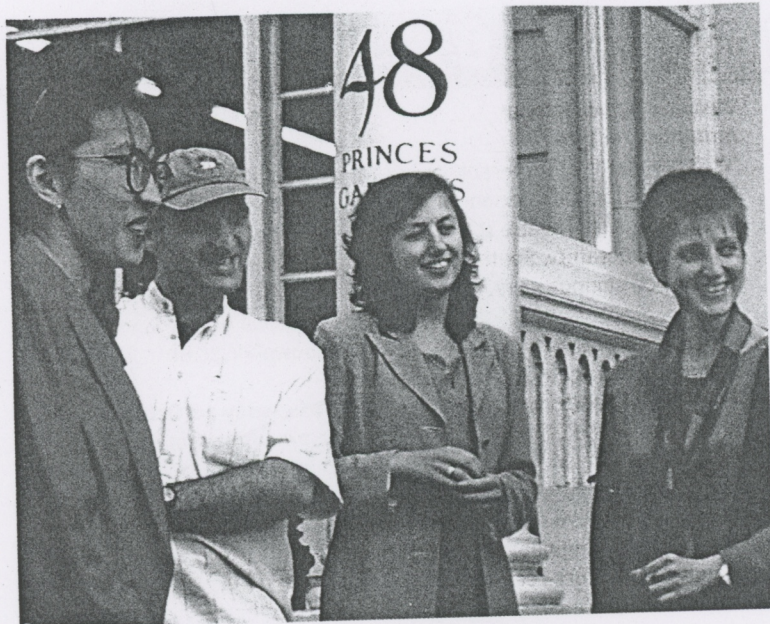




Not a group of students relaxing outside 48 Prince's Gardens in South Kensington but four Eastern European visitors taking part in an intensive three-week Environmental Law and Policy Programme. Totalling 17, the participants included senior governmental and parliamentary officials from eight Eastern European countries, many on their first trip to London, and all here to learn how the UK deals with environmental issues. Asked about her first impressions of London, an official from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection in Belarus only lamented the lack of castles on the journey from Heathrow. The programme was run by the Conservation Foundation and Professor Richard Macrory, Environmental Policy and Management Group at the Centre for Environmental Technology, and was funded by TACIS.

Here is a selection of what some of the 330 speakers had to share with the public at this year's British Association Festival of Science held at Cardiff University in September. In 2000, the BA Festival 'Creating sparks' will be hosted by Imperial and other South Kensington institutions

"Doing a piece to camera on a roller-coaster is actually amazingly easy - it's such a terrifying ride that you only want to have to do one take. On filming the sixth take, when they'd taken the bolted camera off to do the long shots and you could actually see in front of you, that's when it became truly terrifying." - Professor Lord Winston, Paediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynaecology Division, describes his experiences during the filming of the BBC's *The Human Body*.

"Former Tory energy minister David Howell asked his French counterpart how it was that France had managed to build so many nuclear power stations without public outcry. The French minister replied that, 'If you're going to drain the swamp you don't consult the frogs'" - Lord Howe of Aberavon talking about the role of the public inquiry, recounting an anecdote heard during the Sizewell B inquiry.

"Why do doctors grab hold of a man's balls and ask him to cough? Because it's a laugh isn't it?" - Phil Hammond, presenter, trying to explain the idea behind the 'dodgy doctor' slot in his programme *Trust me I'm a doctor*.

Overheard at the BA

all those are pretty good

"I offer a bottle of champagne to everyone who comes up with a new ethical issue raised by the cloning of Dolly. If your suggestion fails you owe me two. No-one has come up with any yet." - Professor Lewis Wolpert, on the subject of 'is science dangerous?'

"Do we have the leaders in medicine who will take action on fraud? My feeling is we do not. And their inaction means that it is concealed and condoned." - Dr Richard Horton, editor of *The Lancet*.

"Is your microphone switched on?" [Member of the audience having trouble hearing.] "I think so - can you not hear me? I talk quietly. I'm used to whispering in corridors." - David Body, nvCJD victims solicitor.

"We have to learn better how to say I don't know - and you have to be better at reporting scientists saying I don't know rather than relying on just the extreme figures they may quote." - Professor Roy Anderson, Oxford University, to press conference reporters.

"Are you frustrated by MAFF's inaction?" - Reporter's question. "Oh I'm frustrated by many things in my life." - Professor John Collinge, Neuroscience and Psychological Medicine Division at Imperial.

"So I went up to her and said 'Madam Secretary, can I ask you what it will take to get my fine art into a national gallery?' And without missing a beat Hazel O'Leary [US energy secretary] said to me: 'An act of Congress'" - James Acord, 'nuclear sculptor' and IC artist in residence.

... well, not quite what I said.

This was a good party
Guests at the annual press reception at Cardiff University hosted jointly by IC, *New Scientist* magazine the Natural History Museum.



DAVID NORTON