

**Inside The Box What Keith Watson Saw Last Night**

Most of us have days when we feel like we're banging our heads against a brick wall when trying to get our ideas across, so you have to feel for tropical ecologist Mike Hands, who's been having that feeling for more than 20 years. He believes he's come up with a viable alternative to the ecological disaster that is slash and burn farming but, as **True Stories: Up In Smoke** (More4) made all too clear, the world won't listen.

To see Hands plugging away at trying to spread the word about how his new method, alley cropping, could save the planet bordered on heart-breaking and sharply illustrated that unless green issues bag the headlines, politicians aren't interested. Slash and burn? Alley cropping? It just doesn't sound sexy enough for the voters.

'All it would take is for one politician to be gripped by it,' sighed Hands, as a shift in political power in Honduras, where he'd been trialling his alternative, put him on the back-burner yet again. Slash and burn, a quick-fix form of farming that razes vast tracts of rainforest to the ground annually, spews a staggering amount of carbon into the

atmosphere every year, more than all forms of air and road travel combined.

But slash and burn has been an economic necessity for rainforest farmers, who have to feed their families. So getting them to take on Hands's method, planting a tree called the Inga that replenishes the rainforest soil, was an uphill task. It can be done and Honduran farmer Aladino was an enthusiastic convert. He was one acorn Hands hoped would turn into a forest of oaks. OK, so you don't have oaks in the rainforest but you get the point.

Despite the impending sense of doom that hung over Adam Wakeling's film, there was something inspiring about Hands. Laidback and philosophical, he's not giving up the fight in his life's mission. You had to envy Hands's sense of purpose and hope that someone high up jumps on his bandwagon.

All of which made the antics of overexcited celebs in **71 Degrees North** (STV) even more absurd than usual. They've been dropping like flies, with Sean Maguire and Martin Kemp both playing the injury card, which handily gets them out of being defeated by a woman – Olympic gold medallist Amy Williams looks a dead cert to win.

Straight off the sub's bench staggered footballer-turned-Teletubby John Barnes and Richard Arnold, of breakfast TV, er, fame. This provided the week's best laugh. 'After five minutes, Richard created a new orifice in his body, he was blowing so hard,' said Rav Wilding of his new team-mate's effort at walking in an orange jumpsuit. Scary thought, eh?



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