

*Beyond a political construct of nature?*

*The campaign to save the  
Snowy River  
and the future of political  
environmentalism*

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A thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy of  
The Australian National University

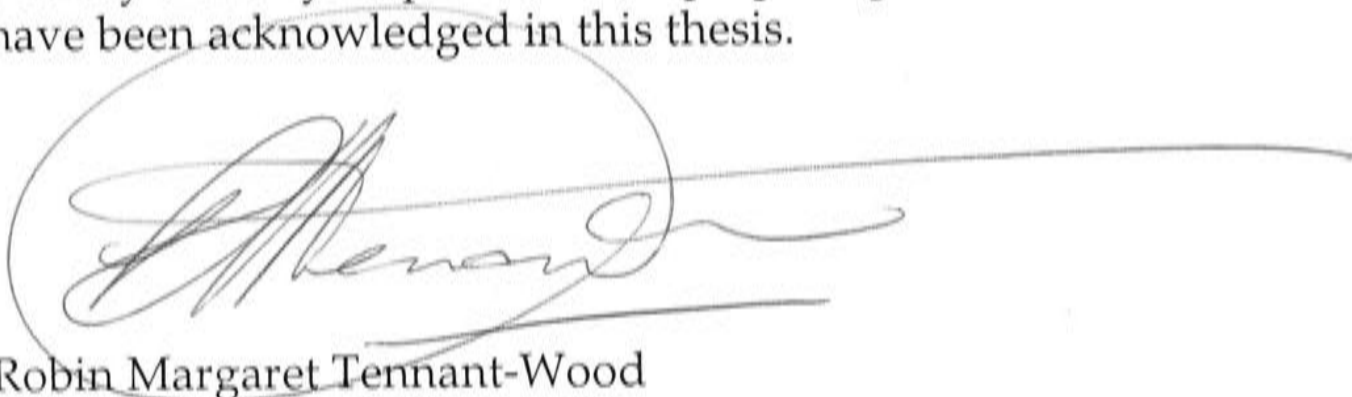
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November 2002

## Declaration

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degrees and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged in this thesis.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, enclosed within a hand-drawn oval. The signature is written in black ink and appears to read 'Robin Margaret Tennant-Wood'. A long horizontal line extends from the right side of the signature across the page.

Robin Margaret Tennant-Wood

## Preface and acknowledgments

In September 1999, six months after beginning my PhD, I was elected to the Snowy River Shire Council. At that time, the campaign to save the Snowy River and the issue of corporatisation of the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Authority were of paramount importance in the Snowy region. A month after the election I was appointed Shire representative to the Dalgety and District Community Association, and began what has been an enjoyable, fruitful and above all, interesting, association with a group of people whose commitment to their community and their local environment has been both inspiring and fundamental to the four-year research journey represented by this thesis.

Although a move from the Snowy River Shire to Canberra in 2001 necessitated my reluctant resignation from Council, I maintain strong personal links with the district and I am indebted to the Snowy River Shire Council, the people of the Snowy River Shire, and in particular, the Dalgety and District Community Association for their willingness to accept a 'university greenie' as their elected representative, and for their generosity of spirit that has provided so much background to this study.

The guidance of my supervisors, Professor Elim Papadakis and Dr Jeremy Shearmur, during the process of research and production of this thesis is greatly appreciated. I am also grateful to Dr Tim Bale, Dr Christine Dann, Dr Rick Kuhn and Dr Libby Robin who generously gave of their time to read, discuss and comment on various parts of the thesis as a work-in-progress.

Thanks are due to the numerous people who spoke to me on issues relating to this research, either in formal interviews or informal discussions, particularly Jeanette Fitzsimons MP (Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand), Rod Donald MP (Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand), Peter Webb MP (National Party,

NSW), and Jo Garland (Dalgety & District Community Association and Snowy Alliance) as well as political party, public service, industry, and local government representatives on both sides of the Tasman and many Landcare, environmental organisation and community members.

Finally, I would not be writing this now but for two important factors. Firstly, the unswerving support of my spousal unit, chief proofreader and fixer of recalcitrant computers, Roger Pye. Secondly, a childhood environment created by my parents that fostered inquisitiveness, learning and conservative values. Fortunately, I have remained mercifully unaffected by the last one.

## Abstract

Environmental politics is a relatively new inclusion in the discipline of political science. It emerged from the 'green movement' in the 1970s and in the three decades since, the 'environment' and 'environmental issues' have featured in the political discourse of all western nations and at global level. In absorbing environmentalism into the mainstream policy agenda, both through traditional parties and the entry of Green parties into legislative chambers, governments have co-opted the environmental agenda and the environment movement has become largely marginalised. Local communities, however, have taken up environmentalism where governments and the environmental movement are failing, leading to a post-political construct of nature. The campaign to save the Snowy River, conducted over the closing decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, is used as an example to illustrate this progression towards post-political ecology.

This thesis places the phenomena of green politics in the broad context of the history of environmentalism, from its emergence as a social movement through the rise of Green parties and the prominence of environmental issues on local, national and global scales. It takes a paradigmatic approach, in keeping with the ecological (scientific) basis of environmental issues, and is thematic rather than chronological.

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*Né o sì tosto mai né i si scrisse,  
com' el s'accese e arse, e cener tutto  
convenne che cascando divenisse;*

*e poi che fu a terra sì distrutto,  
la polver si raccolse per sé stessa  
e 'n quel medesimo ritornò di butto.*

*Così per li gran savi si confessa  
che la fenice more e poi rinasce,  
quando al cinquecentesimo anno appressa;*

*erba né biado in sua vita non pasce,  
ma sol d'incenso lagrime e d'amomo,  
e nardo e mirra son l'ultime fasce.*

Dante Alighieri



## List of abbreviations

ACF	Australian Conservation Foundation
AFS	Australian Forestry Standard
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ASF	<i>Aktion Sühnezeichen/Friedensdienste</i> (Action Reconciliation/Services for Peace)
BLF	Builders Labourers' Federation
BSE	Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy
CDU	<i>Christlich Demokratischen Union</i> (German Christian Democrat Party)
CJD	Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (also nvCJD: new variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease)
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DDCA	Dalgety and District Community Association
DLWC	Department of Land and Water Conservation
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EPA	Environment Protection Authority
ESD	ecologically sustainable development
FPP	First Past the Post electoral system
MMP	Mixed Member Proportional electoral system
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NIMBY	not in my backyard
PASOK	<i>Panellino Socialistiko Kinima</i> (Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement)
SMHEA	Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Authority
SPD	<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i> (German Social Democratic Party)
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCHE	United Nations Conference on the Human Environment
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UTG	United Tasmania Group
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

## Introduction

### The Snowy River in context

#### *One river, one town, one outcome*

The Snowy Water Inquiry, conceived from the 1991 announcement of plans to corporatise the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Authority, represented one of the most hotly contested processes of environmental management in Australia. Its focus was the significantly reduced flow of the Snowy River, caused by impoundment and diversion of water for irrigation and hydro-electricity. The Inquiry sought to develop options for equitable water supply to a wide range of users. This process was highly complex due to the often conflicting views of five separate governments together with the divergent needs of various stakeholders: a complexity which had the potential to derail the process.

The final report (1998) recommended an increase of 15% flow to the degraded Snowy, significantly less than the 28% recommended by ecologists as a minimum environmental flow. The report described outcomes in superlatives such as 'cutting edge' methodologies in stakeholder participation processes<sup>1</sup>. This view, however, was at odds with grassroots perceptions and clearly, the final report was not the compromise solution aimed at by the New South Wales and Victorian governments. What drove the Inquiry beyond this point, and eventually resulted in an agreement to deliver 28% environmental flow down the Snowy below the Jindabyne Dam, was the determined efforts of a community group to take a leading role in influencing legislators. This group, consisting of about 90 members with an average age of 45-55<sup>2</sup>, was motivated by

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<sup>1</sup> *Snowy Water Inquiry: Draft Options for Discussion* (Snowy Water Inquiry, 1998)

<sup>2</sup> Demographic statistics of environmental groups surveyed or interviewed for this thesis are contained in Appendix 1

a core group of local women representing fundamental grassroots concerns: the importance of the river to their community and the need for ecological integrity.

The campaign to save the Snowy has been one of the longest running environmental battles this country has seen. It ranks alongside the Franklin and Lake Pedder in arousing passions from both sides, but unlike the Tasmanian campaigns, the Snowy has been driven wholly from a local perspective. It pitted one of the world's most ambitious engineering projects against one of Australia's most enduring folklores: the Snowy Scheme versus the Man from Snowy River. From the point of view of the community campaign, however, neither progress nor history was as important as the immediate state of the river in the present tense.

On Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> August 2002, the Premiers of New South Wales and Victoria presided over an informal ceremony to turn off the Mowamba aqueduct near Jindabyne, releasing the first 6% of the agreed 28% environmental flow that will be restored to the Snowy in stages over the next ten years. The event was attended by a large group of local residents as well as the heads of 'peak' environmental bodies, representatives from the newly corporatised Snowy-Hydro, local government and Indigenous community representatives and state politicians from New South Wales and Victoria. The national media recorded the moment in prose that, if not exactly purple, certainly verged on deep mauve: "The nation's iconic river has begun flowing again", gushed *News.com*<sup>3</sup>; "After 35 years of silence, the sound of water can again be heard flowing down the famous Snowy River," spouted the *ABC*<sup>4</sup>; and "Snowy's flow a beautiful noise", trilled *The Australian*<sup>5</sup>. Downstream at

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<sup>3</sup> Online news report: "The nation's iconic river has begun flowing again", 28<sup>th</sup> August 2002, <http://www.news.com.au/0,6093,4987612,12,00.html>

<sup>4</sup> Online news report: "Premiers put the Snowy on tap", 28<sup>th</sup> August 2002 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/justin/nat/newsnat-28aug2002-62.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Online news report: "Snowy's flow a beautiful noise", 29<sup>th</sup> August 2002 <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/0,5942,4991901,00.html>

Dalgety, the entire population of the town turned out to a celebration under the bridge, constructed in 1889 at the point where the Buckley brothers first crossed the Snowy River in the 1870s. It had taken the heartbreak of 35 years watching their dying river struggle down the dry silt and weed-choked riverbed and an eleven-year campaign of small gains and large setbacks, but Dalgety, population 70 or so, had taken on the Federal and four state governments, the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Authority (Snowy Hydro) and the farmers' and irrigators' lobby groups and had won. They had their river back.

#### *Parameters of the case study and thesis approach*

This thesis takes the campaign for the Snowy River's rescue as a case study to illustrate the changing role of environmentalism in politics, presented in the context of a history of environmentalism and green politics, and poses two questions:

- What has happened to environmentalism?
- Does politics matter?

The case study will be treated as illustrative of the line of argument taken in the thesis rather than a test of the thesis, as, whilst the argument is that of the failure of the environmental movement to address localised issues in the political arena, the subject matter is still very much a moving target and to use a single example to make a generalised claim would be misrepresentative.

Ecological consciousness arose in Australia in the late 1960s and early 1970s through early campaigns such as that for the Little Desert (Victoria), Lake Pedder (Tasmania) and Kelly's Bush (NSW). This period of early activism, based on values of conservation against development, was followed by the politicisation of the environmental movement in the late 1970s and 80s. The later growth of corporate environmentalism lent a green patina to government and industry alike, but the 'greenwash', while it uses the language of ecologically sustainable development, has not itself proved a solution to long-

term environmental problems. In addressing the question, I have taken the well-trodden path of an ecological-paradigmatic approach<sup>6</sup>, analysing the development of ecological consciousness and the environmental movement as a thematic political construct. Dovetailing with the two central questions are the issues of the socio-cultural significance of nature, the influence of ecological thought on the political process and the political manipulation of ecological thought, environmentalism and conservationism.

The term 'paradigm' can be problematic in this application in that it infers the use of a particular language and set of indicators. For the purposes of terminology and illustration I have borrowed from the language of Dunlap and Van Liere's "The New 'Environmental Paradigm: A Proposed Measuring Instrument and Preliminary Results" (1978) and their later "Measuring Endorsement of the New Ecological Paradigm: A Revised NEP Scale" (2000), and also from Thomas S. Kuhn's 1962 text, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. It is acknowledged that the use of Kuhnian terminology is a convenient device, and the terms thus used in this thesis are done so in a general form and should not be taken to refer directly to Kuhn's philosophy. It is my intention to take an interdisciplinary approach to the study of environmentalism and environmental politics. In so doing, the political construct of nature is viewed as a sequence of paradigms, each with its own corresponding social values and political processes, that dominate the body of thought and which are ultimately challenged and superseded by a new paradigm. For the purposes of this thesis, a 'paradigm' will refer only to the social and political factors dominating the direction of environmentalism and environmental politics at a given time. It is further acknowledged that, while I have focused on a linear paradigmatic progression, looking at a cause-and-effect historical account of the environment

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<sup>6</sup> eg. Hutton (1987); Dunlap and Van Liere (1978) ; Blühdorn (2000)

movement and green politics, that within the movement itself, and its political manifestation, there are numerous overlapping paradigms.

In order to address the historical progression of environmentalism and to incorporate the case study, the thesis is structured thematically, starting with the elevation of ecology in the social conscience and consciousness, through its politicisation as environmentalism and the challenge this paradigm currently faces from a return to an arcadian perception of nature. The themes to be examined are:

- the role of science and key factors in the history of environmental politics;
- the importance of social movements in the rise of the ecological consciousness;
- the problem of political representation of nature;
- political institutionalisation of the environment through the party system;
- social and economic justice as extensions of environmentalism;
- the development of environmental policy and the eco-bureaucracy; and
- risk management and crises as environmental issues.

Chapters 1 - 3 examine the political construct of nature in relation to its historical and socio-cultural origins using the case study as an example.

Chapter 4 departs from the Snowy case study to examine the construct of green politics in relation to social democrat parties as red-green alliances. Chapters 5 - 7 look at the politicisation of environmentalism through mainstream approaches to social justice, policy development and risk management, once again using the case study as example. Chapter 8 looks at the current situation and trends in environmental politics and environmentalism, and suggests a post-political approach which, illustrated by the example of the Snowy campaign, could represent a move away from large scale environmental campaigns based around green NGOs and Green parties, towards a localised issue-specific construct that is neither centred on institutionalised politics nor globally oriented: a post-political ecology.

*Politics: definitional context*

The term 'politics' and its variations require some definition and clarification. The title of this thesis, *Beyond a political construct of nature?*, implies the existence of a construct of nature that is political, and further, questions the applicability of this construct to future directions and issues of environmentalism. Given that the practice and theory of politics underpins all collective decision-making in human society, a construct of any environmental decision-making that is completely removed from politics would not be practical, and indeed, all such decisions ultimately lie in government and the state<sup>7</sup>. Taking this position as axiomatic, 'politics' and the 'political construct' for the purposes of this analysis are taken to refer to the body of institutional and legislative politics or the institutionalisation of environmentalism through organisational means such as social movements<sup>8</sup> rather than the informal, non-hierarchical or decentralised form of politics, or 'politicking', wherein negotiations and campaigns are carried out from a position outside those formal institutions, structures and movements.

Post-political ecology, as described in Chapter 8, is a theory whereby the negotiative process for environmental issues is removed from the realm of the legislative chamber, regulatory bodies and recognised organisations, and handled at a local level, albeit 'politically', and in full acknowledgement that institutional political authority is required if such decisions are to be recognised by and beyond the state.<sup>9</sup> In this construct I suggest that an awareness of ecological issues, as a result of preceding 'paradigms' and knowledge of ecological science, is a presupposed factor in the political processes of

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<sup>7</sup> D.Wells and T.Lynch, *The Political Ecologist* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000)

<sup>8</sup> E.Papadakis, *Politics and the Environment: The Australian Experience* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1993) 10-44

<sup>9</sup> A.Carr *Grassroots and Green Tape* (Sydney: Federation Press, 2002); E.Weber *Bringing Society Back In* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2002)

environmental decision-making and policy. This awareness is evident in such government-driven measures as considering the environment as a stakeholder in water allocation negotiations<sup>10</sup>, government programs to preserve biological diversity in rural areas<sup>11</sup> and greenhouse gas accounting and reduction measures<sup>12</sup>. While these programs and similar political moves towards environmentally-friendly policy may be regarded as cynical means by governments to capture the 'green' vote<sup>13</sup>, the fact that this is seen as politically advantageous only underlines the validity of the point. With the absorption of an ecological consciousness into government, or 'political', decision-making, a localised focus begins to challenge the dominant 'big picture' approach as a means of addressing place- or time-specific environmental issues. The institutionalised 'big picture' approach reflects what Crenson described in 1971 as the rise of the "reform politician", taking a "wholesale" approach to representation as opposed to the individual approach of the "ward politician".<sup>14</sup> A construct of post-political ecology suggests a return to Crenson's 'ward' approach, reacting against the politico-institutional and bureaucratic constraints that have characterised much environmental decision-making in the most recent paradigm of environmentalism: the 'political' construct of nature.

The term 'extra-political' refers to community-driven or grassroots processes of environmental action that exist in the post-political ecological context, and the influences that these have on institutional decision-making processes. The term is used to emphasise the position that environmental campaigns, where they are intended to influence policy or legislative decisions,

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<sup>10</sup> For example, the water allocation arrangements in the Murray-Darling Basin

<sup>11</sup> For example, the NSW Government's \$3m 'Snowy-Monaro Biodiversity Strategy'

<sup>12</sup> For example, the Federal Government's 'Cool Communities' program to promote greater efficiency in energy use

<sup>13</sup> E.Papadakis, *Environmental Politics and Institutional Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 14

<sup>14</sup> M.Crenson, *The Un-Politics of Air Pollution: A Study of Non-Decisionmaking in the Cities* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1971) 16



are implicitly and inherently political even while the proponents wish to appear to be distancing themselves from 'politics'. Such campaigns, and the Snowy River is used here as an example, differ from institutional grassroots or community-based environmental work such as Landcare, which sits within the political framework, or direct action-based campaigns such as that for the Franklin, which protested a political decision that had already been made and directly influenced political processes to overturn that decision. The 'extra-political' approach is neither within the formal process nor directly opposed to it, but seeks a solution that can be accepted by the greatest number of stakeholders possible. The features of extra-political environmentalism to be illustrated through the case study are:

- non-partisanship
- independence from political groups and NGOs
- outcomes-orientation
- inclusiveness of individuals or groups who may not be – or have any desire to be – engaged in institutional politics or the political process
- avoidance of emotional appeals
- reliance on scientific information
- willingness to negotiate.

The methodology underpinning this approach is summed up by the President of the Dalgety and District Community Association and Chair of the Snowy Alliance, Ms Jo Garland, who stated in an interview for this thesis, that from the outset of the Snowy campaign in 1991, the aim was to "make no enemies"<sup>15</sup>. This illustrates the non-partisan approach whereby as broad a range as possible of stakeholders are engaged in such a way so as to avoid the conflict and trade-offs that frequently accompany the formal or institutional political process. In the 'extra-political' context the outcome, not the process, is important. The

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with Jo Garland, Dalgety, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2000. Transcript in possession of author.

process, while it inevitably involves 'politicking', exists only as a means to the end and has no validity outside that context.

'Extra-political' and 'apolitical' are not the same nor are they used interchangeably. I have avoided using the latter term at all except in reference to specific points that are completely removed from political process or thought and to place them in a category for comparison with the political or extra-political areas. It is difficult to conceive of apolitical action within the parameters of a thesis dealing with a political construct of nature, therefore, use of the term is restricted and very selective.

The final term that requires clarification at this stage is that of 'community'. Communities are, essentially, political entities in that they consist of people grouped according to certain common criteria: for example, location ('the Canberra community'); values, social or personal orientation ('the gay community'); religion ('the Muslim community'); type or category of work ('the scientific community'). Some such communities are overtly political, others less so. For the purposes of this thesis, however, the concept of community is taken to be outside political process, that is, it is extra-political and is generally defined geographically or bio-regionally, in that it includes the range of stakeholders immediately affected by and with a direct interest in resolving a specific environmental issue. Where environmental campaigns or issues are said to be 'community-driven', it refers to the group of stakeholders within that locality who are working towards a common environmental goal, even in situations where not all members of the geographically-defined community are wholly sympathetic towards that goal. A 'community-based' campaign is one that is carried out within the defined region of the issue to be addressed<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> E.Weber, 2002 op cit.

### *Ecological and eco-political themes*

The progression of themes is structured according to three identified dominant phases in the development of an environmental politics. These are characterised as:

- *preservationism*: the period from the mid-1800s to the 1960s, covering the establishment of the science of ecology, the romanticism of nature and 'environmental' policy as ad hoc solutions to specific problems relating to human welfare;
- *apocalypticism*: beginning in the early to mid-1960s and coinciding with the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, the period representing the weakening of the preservationist period and marked by the rise of social movements including the modern environment movement;
- *green democratisation and integrationism*: the emergence in the early to mid-1970s, from the period of early social movement activism, of a 'green politics' represented by green parties and a mainstream integrated environmental political agenda.

It must be stated that despite its political associations and in full recognition of its ideological connotations, the term 'ecology' will be used in a context that is neither ideological nor representative of political doctrine, that is, ecology is to be regarded in its scientific context. Specifically, it is the branch of science that examines and explains the economy of animals and plants and the interrelationships between living organisms and their environments. The word itself derives from the Greek roots, *oikos* - house/household, and *logos* - reason or understanding. The science of relationships between organisms within their environment was originally formulated and described in much the same way as the science of life (biology) and the science of the earth (geology), neither of which require or demand political standing. It is unlikely and entirely hypothetical that a Geology Party would be successful in securing many votes

in an election, and yet, the UK Green Party contested elections from 1975 to 1986 under the banner of the Ecology Party (with arguably as much success as the hypothetical Geology Party would have had). While the term 'ecology' is frequently associated with its political extension<sup>17</sup>, I have not used it in this context as my intention is, firstly, to distinguish between it and environmentalism, and secondly, to maintain the constancy and significance of the human-nature interrelationship on an extra-political level, that is, outside the institution of formal political process.

Jonathon Porritt, former leader of the UK Green Party, explains the use of the term 'ecology' in a political context by stating that it is "wholly appropriate ... that the politics of ecology should concern itself with the interactions between members of one particular species (namely, us) and the impact that we have on our environment."<sup>18</sup> While this may well be the case, it nonetheless does not explain the *need* for a politics of ecology any more than it would explain the need for a politics of astrology, biology, physiology, or indeed any field of study that deals with the way in which humans understand nature.

Ecology and environment are together linked inextricably with history but the terms 'ecology' and 'environment', while representing similar bodies of thought, are not interchangeable and are used in this thesis to describe very specific foundational directions within the broad 'green' movement. Dovers points out that "ecology is an uncertain science and comes in many forms, and is crucial to environmental history."<sup>19</sup> Even before the German naturalist and zoologist Ernst Haeckel coined the term ecology, defining it as:

... the body of knowledge concerning the economy of nature – the investigation of the total relations of the animal both to its inorganic

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<sup>17</sup> eg. Dobson (1990 and 1995); Porritt (1984)

<sup>18</sup> J.Porritt, *Seeing Green* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984) 3

<sup>19</sup> S.Dovers, 2000. "Still Settling Australia: Environment, History, and Policy" in Dovers (ed) *Environmental History and Policy; Still Settling Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000) 7

and organic environment ... ecology is the study of all those complex interrelations referred to by Darwin as the conditions of the struggle for existence<sup>20</sup>,

the impact of humankind on the natural environment was already documented. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, philosophers and scientists<sup>21</sup> were analysing the history of the earth through empiricism rather than religion. By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Darwin had inextricably linked human history with that of the natural world through the Theory of Evolution. At the same time, American diplomat and earth science pioneer, George Perkins Marsh, on diplomatic mission in Turkey and Italy, compared the effects of civilisation on the Old World with the relative environmental rawness of North America:

...the very earth had a hoary and ancient aspect, the meadows levelled and the hills rounded, not as with us [Americans] by the action of mere natural forces, but by the assiduous husbandry of hundreds of generations.<sup>22</sup>

The mid-19<sup>th</sup> century represents the emergence of the first ecological paradigm identified for this account: preservationism, bringing together the history of the earth with the history of the human species and interlinking the cultural and social aspects of human civilisation with the physical aspects of the earth. Preservationism forged its direction in the concern for humankind's deleterious effect on nature, evident in degraded soils, eroded pastures and deforestation. It was the observations and conclusions of this body of thought that led to the formation of the first environmental organisations, among them, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, UK, 1889; the Sierra Club, USA, 1892; and the Council for the Protection of Rural England, UK, 1926. These organisations, the forerunners of the ones to follow in the paradigm defined by

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<sup>20</sup> Haeckel quoted in Foster *Marx's Ecology* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000) 195

<sup>21</sup> von Herder; de Buffon; Hutton; Lyell

<sup>22</sup> George Perkins Marsh quoted in Lowenthal, 2001. "Environmental History: From Genesis to Apocalypse" *History Today* Vol.51(4) 37

the social movements of the 1960s and 70s, arose from a perception that a scientific approach alone was insufficient to adequately solve the problem of humankind's impact on nature, and provided a response to the social need to provide such solutions. It is important to note also that the earlier organisations all still exist as active conservation societies and have been frequently subject to criticism from their more contemporary counterparts for their political and social conservatism. While the preservationist period linked the histories of nature and humanity into a common direction, it remained largely as historical empiricism and did not begin to manifest as an ideological component to the body of thought until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

In linguistic derivational terms, there is considerable synergy between the science of ecology and the discipline of politics. The latter, deriving from the Greek *polis*, meaning city, and referring to the government of the city-state, overlays to a considerable extent the concept of household contained within ecology. The ecology-politics relationship is taken for granted in the contemporary lexicon and reflected through such linguistic devices as 'ecopolitics', 'ecologism', 'ecosophy', 'ecosocialism' and 'ecofeminism'. There is also a strong relationship between ecology and economy, given that not only is ecology defined as the science of the economy of animals and plants, but also the common derivation, *oikos*, which, when applied to economy incorporates *nomos* - calculus: economy and ecology are, in effect, two branches of the same science. While economics, however, has been regarded of political necessity as an adjunct to the political and social sciences since the emergence of modern political doctrine, ecology is a relatively new science and its transition across disciplines from the physical sciences to the social and political has been effected only in the past few decades. As such, the hegemony of the dominant paradigms of economic activity within the social and political sciences has worked against any influence from the ecological side of the equation, which in turn is often perceived by economists as irrelevant and running counter to

prescribed economic directions. Political and social directions in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have brought economics and ecology closer together, forcing further alteration within their respective bodies of thought.

In the context of the Snowy River campaign and its significance to this thematic study, the links between ecology and, individually and in combination, environment, history, politics and economy are significant in delineating the different elements of the total Snowy River story. These links will be further drawn through the chapters dealing with the separate themes. The Snowy River campaign is relevant to the central thesis questions and the history of environmentalism in that it represents, firstly, an example of transition from the 'political construct of nature' to an emergent post-political construct, and secondly, a broad view of the elements contained within the concept of 'political ecology'. Temporally and spatially, the Snowy campaign encompasses three levels of government over a period of several electoral terms and changes of government, a community-driven campaign and a counter-campaign, a major corporation, several national icons, issues of cultural and political heritage and national identity and, at the very root of it all, an ecological disaster. While the campaign itself has resulted in the reversal of the degradation and ultimate death of the Snowy, post-political ecology is not necessarily an optimistic outlook at the global environmental scale. The Snowy is a single example of place-specific ecological concern within a much broader environmental picture. Linking all the relevant themes in an historical analysis has provided a foundation, within the scope of political ideology and scientific knowledge, that creates a progression of changing social values as well as empirical constructs. The Snowy River campaign story will be approached thematically within the chapters dealing with the different themes rather than chronologically or on its own.

When I began writing this thesis, the Snowy campaign was entering its final phase: the contest over the outcome of the Snowy Inquiry. The nature of the

subject matter of this body of work is such that changes to the theoretical and physical landscape have been incorporated up until August 2002, when the first of the 28% reallocation was realised. A lot more water flows under the Buckley's Crossing bridge at Dalgety now than did when I began this thesis and it is symbolic on a personal level that the decommissioning of the Mowamba aqueduct and the return of water to the Snowy represented not only the end of an era of environmentalism defined by the campaign, but also the end of this study. More importantly, however, the changes that have occurred at political and institutional level locally, nationally and globally have been incorporated in order to contribute collectively to a theory of eco-politics that takes into consideration as many contemporaneous perspectives as possible while maintaining a thematic approach. Issues of environmental politics tend to be moving targets, but in taking this thematic approach and allowing for new developments, I have attempted to present as complete a picture as possible given the changeable nature of both politics and environmental issues.



## Chapter 1

### **The nature of ecology and the science of ecological politics: a conceptual overview**

*Man is nature which has become conscious of itself* - Elisée Reclus

#### *The Snowy Scheme in ecological history*

The Snowy River rises on the slopes of Mt Kosciuszko<sup>1</sup>, the highest point in the ancient and rugged mountains known cartographically as the Snowy Mountains, but historically and culturally as the High Country. Each spring the Snowy becomes a narrow rocky conduit for snowmelt and spring rains, turning it into a raging mountain torrent that nature dictated would follow the precipitous glacier-carved channels north-east down the mountains and then south through the sub-Alpine grasslands, finally emptying into the Tasman Sea. Other rivers rise in the High Country and are similarly fed by spring snowmelt and rain, but the Murray, Tumut, Tooma, Geehi and Swampy Plain Rivers, unlike the Snowy, flow inland, all joining the Murray to flow west towards its mouth at Lake Alexandrina and the Southern Ocean. The Snowy and its tributary, the Eucumbene, alone of the montane rivers flow towards the eastern seaboard.

The High Country is not a benign environment. It is harsh and exposed, prone to climatic extremes and extraordinary geological features. At the same time it is fragile, with many species of vegetation and insects appearing only for days each year in a delicate balance between changing seasons. Both the harshness and the fragility draw people to the region; some to test themselves against the natural elements while others simply enjoy the aesthetic environment. The Kosciuszko National Park which contains most of the Alpine Region in New South Wales is a region larger than the Netherlands and in

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<sup>1</sup> The spelling 'Kosciuszko' was gazetted in 2000. Prior to 2000 it was 'Kosciusko'. Throughout this thesis, where the spelling Kosciusko is used, it is in a pre-2000 context.

winter has a greater snow-covered area than all of Switzerland. Former General Manager of the Park, now General Manager of the Snowy River Shire Council, Ross McKinney, when asked about the number of people who go missing in the National Park each year, candidly comments that "the Park is littered with human bones."<sup>2</sup> Most are bushwalkers or cross-country skiers who get lost and perish in extreme conditions, their bodies quickly and efficiently disposed of by foxes and wedge-tailed eagles long before their remains can be found.

Prior to European settlement the region around Mt Kosciuszko, known to the original inhabitants, the Ngarigo and Wulgalu aboriginal people, as Tar Gan Gil, was a summer meeting place where the migratory bogong moths could be scraped off the leeward faces of rocks and roasted in campfires. The volcanic rocks made excellent knives and scraping tools to be used during the winter months when the tribes would move back to the lower country of the Monaro Plain, the eastern escarpment of the Great Dividing Range and the coastal strip. Archaeological research indicates a long relationship between humankind and the Snowy Mountains<sup>3</sup> and, though the area is 'wild', the regular seasonal habitations of humans, from the aboriginal summer migrations for the bogong moths to the current winter migrations for the skiing, conclusively refute the popular perception of the region as 'wilderness'.

Partly because of the harsh alpine environment, the Snowy River has come to symbolise a part of the Australian identity. Rugged, uncompromising and free-spirited<sup>4</sup>, the Snowy and the High Country are acclaimed in art, literature and legend as cherished cultural heritage. This cultural heritage, however, has a distinct political element that has become as much a part of the Australian socio-cultural identity as the literary and historical legacy. In the 1940s, the

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<sup>2</sup> Discussion with Ross McKinney, December 2000. Notes in possession of author.

<sup>3</sup> J.Kamminga, "Aboriginal settlement and prehistory of the Snowy Mountains" in *Cultural Heritage of the Australian Alps: Proceedings of the 1991 Symposium* B.Scougall (ed) (Canberra: Australian Alps Liaison Committee, 1992)

<sup>4</sup> L.Wigmore, *Struggle for the Snowy* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1968)

Australian government announced plans to harness the fast-flowing waters of the Snowy to generate hydro-electricity and to divert the water inland through the mountains to 'drought-proof' the fertile but dry farming land to the west of the ranges. The Snowy River became the focal point of the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Scheme. Politically timely, plans for the Snowy Scheme were being negotiated between the state and federal governments just as Australia was requested by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration to assist in post-War European resettlement efforts by accepting 100,000 displaced persons<sup>5</sup>. In 1949 Prime Minister Joseph Benedict (Ben) Chifley and his Minister for Works and Housing, Nelson Lemmon, in a political manoeuvre that relied for its success on post-War national security concerns, assumed total Commonwealth control of the Snowy Scheme under the Defence Act<sup>6</sup> and established the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Authority (SMHEA) as a Federal government statutory body. With Australia already committed to accepting European war refugees, a ready labour force was recruited. The first Commissioner of the SMHEA, William (later Sir William) Hudson, "toured the displaced persons' camps offering work 24,000 kilometres away: 'You won't be Balts or Slavs ... you will be men of the Snowy', he had told them."<sup>7</sup>

Significant in terms of the question to be addressed in this chapter is not the fact of the Snowy Scheme itself, but the reasoning that led to its establishment. The idea was raised as early as 1937 to use the Snowy River to irrigate Australia's 'breadbasket' to the west. The volume of water that crashed through the Snowy Mountains each spring en route to the Tasman was regarded as water wasted. Collis states that:

Before the construction of the Scheme the bulk of the vast Alpine run-off flowed eastwards into the Snowy River, turning it, after the spring thaw, into an unchecked torrent that raged along an erratic

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<sup>5</sup> B.Collis, *Snowy: The Making of Modern Australia* (Rydalme: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990)

<sup>6</sup> Wigmore (1968) op cit. and T.Fullerton, *Watershed* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2001)

<sup>7</sup> Collis (1990) op cit. 40

course to pour into the sea off south-eastern Victoria. In peak flow, the Snowy *wasted* into the Tasman Sea at the rate of two million litres a minute.<sup>8</sup>

At no point during the planning or construction of the Snowy Scheme was the impact of such a development on the natural environment, and in particular, the riparian ecology of the river and the areas it served downstream, ever considered. Councillor Neen Pendergast of the Snowy River Shire had a young family in Jindabyne when the township was relocated prior to the construction of the Jindabyne dam. She recalls that concerns were raised by Jindabyne and Dalgety residents about the effect of the dam on the river downstream, but these were quickly dismissed by the SMHEA. "We were assured that the river would not fall below half of its original flow", she states. "I don't think they really knew what the effect would be and even if they had known, I doubt it would have made any difference."<sup>9</sup>

The Snowy Scheme belonged within the political and ecological body of thought that regarded nature in terms of its utility. Water that was not used was therefore 'wasted', and the more that was allowed to escape down the Snowy, the less could be utilised for irrigation. Although ecology had no social dimension and was not a factor in planning for human development, it was a factor, however, in terms of preserving nature. In the 1950s the Australian Academy of Science, the CSIRO and a group called the Canberra-Kosciusko Committee all prepared separate reports and submissions proposing the preservation of an area known as the 'Kosciusko Tops':

... an area contested by the Snowy Mountains Authority (hydroelectricity), pastoralists with summer grazing rights, and ecological scientists concerned about erosion. The management of Australia's highest alpine areas was investigated by a small sub-

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<sup>8</sup> Collis (1990) op cit. 33 (my emphasis)

<sup>9</sup> Discussions with Neen Pendergast held from September 1999-February 2001, notes in possession of author

committee ... [and their] investigation resulted in the Academy's first official report on a subject of general (and national) scientific interest, the high country of New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria.<sup>10</sup>

The Australian Academy of Science subsequently referred the matter to its national parks steering committee, which recommended approaching the SMHEA with which relations had been strained. It was finally agreed that the SMHEA, through its "active Conservation Section" should be a sponsor of the "Primitive Area proposal" for the Kosciusko Tops<sup>11</sup>:

In the 1950s, scientists could be called upon as unquestioned arbiters of such decisions by political activists and the establishment alike, and this gave the Academy [of Science] considerable power in negotiating a middle course, something which it was careful never to compromise.<sup>12</sup>

The relationship between ecology and politics was, simultaneously and paradoxically, both symbiotic and independent. Scientists did not regard themselves, nor were they regarded, as political agents but could act in a mediating role in areas of contested grounds<sup>13</sup>. Ecologists were not consulted, however, in matters of planning and development, which were strictly the premises of politics. Impartiality set the scientific community apart from the political community and allowed it to act from a position of neutrality in ecological disputes<sup>14</sup>. If the political paradigm was one of utilisation of nature, the ecological paradigm was contained within the belief that nature had value

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<sup>10</sup> L.Robin, 1994. "Nature Conservation as a National Concern: The Role of the Australian Academy of Science", *Historical Records of Australian Science*, Vol.10, No.1, 1-24

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.* 4

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* 4

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*; also T.Bonyhady, 2000. "An Australian Public Trust", in Dovers (ed) *Environmental History and Policy: Still Settling Australia* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000)

<sup>14</sup> L.Robin, pers.comm.

and its preservation was important but that this belief, based on empirical principles, was not politically relevant. It is appropriate, then to examine the causal factors that have led to the development of environmentalism and the ecological politics that has made empirical ecology not just politically relevant, but of significance to political decision-making in areas other than those directly associated with nature or the environment.

### *Eco-political paradigms and causality*

It is accepted that causes are objective insofar as causes occur between events irrespective of human thought and intervention<sup>15</sup>. The relationship between cause and effect remains between and within the objects of that relationship. This is not to say that human action or thought does not act as a cause, but that in the relationship between cause and effect, it becomes the object. The relationship between the evolution of ecology as a science in 1865, through ecology as the basis of a social movement in the 1960s and the subsequent emergence of Green parties and ecologically-based environmental policy, will be examined as a series of paradigms with direct, linear relationship to each other. Paradigmatic shifts represent asymmetrical causality<sup>16</sup> in that they follow a linear progression and are not equally reversible, that is, the progression flows from cause to effect.

The leap from ecology as science to ecology as ideology occurred both as a series of asymmetrical causes and effects, and also as an independent catalyst. These factors ran concurrently with one another; they are interrelated but not dependent. Almost a century elapsed between the coining in 1865 of the term ecology to refer to the science of relationships within the living environment

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<sup>15</sup> D.Hausman, *Causal Asymmetries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* also D.Ehrig, 1982. "Causal Asymmetry", *The Journal of Philosophy* Vol.79 No.12, 761-774 and D.Papineau, 1985. "Causal Asymmetry", *British Journal of the Philosophy of Science* Vol. 36, 273-289

and the shift from that definition to a new meaning: that of humankind's custodial relationship with the natural environment. This major change reflects John Stuart Mill's belief that "great change ... in the fundamental constitution of [humankind's] modes of thought"<sup>17</sup> was the sole catalyst to improvement in humankind's situation and condition. Insofar as the perception of the environment as being under threat and humankind's role as environmental arbiter is an exclusively anthropocentric concept, then any improvement in this situation would also need to be preceded by a major change in the "fundamental constitution of modes of thought". The Reclus quote that appears beneath the heading of this chapter, however, suggests that, at least from an anarchic, and arguable, point of view, nature and humanity may share a closer relationship than the anthropocentric viewpoint might allow. Dario Padovan believes that the words of Reclus "comprises one of the most efficacious descriptions of the moral feelings that link man to his environment."<sup>18</sup> The major change in the fundamental constitution of modes of thought, then, has always been present as a parallel stream of thought.

There is a question of function linked to the use of the term ecology that must be resolved before attempting to resolve the nature of causal relations between successive paradigms of environmentalism and a politics of ecology. To what extent is the use of the term ecology linked to the theory of ecological science and the evolution of a politics of the environment? If Haeckel's term 'ecology' describes the scientific discipline of ecology, it follows that the discipline existed prior to the term. Both the scientific discipline of ecology and its political dimension would exist as interconnected entities even if the term 'ecology' had been something else. There are, however, certain assumptions and values that have come to be associated with the term that are not

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<sup>17</sup> J.S. Mill, *Autobiography* quoted in Papadakis, *Environmental Politics and Institutional Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 5

<sup>18</sup> D. Padovan, 1999. "Social Morals and Ethics of Nature: from Peter Kropotkin to Murray Bookchin", *Democracy and Nature* Vol.5, No.3, 485

necessarily present in either the discipline or the politics. Ecology would exist as a science and, causally, as a basis for political ideology regardless of the term applied, but it is relevant to note that the term itself has been used variously, and become a vehicle for implicit and related values since the emergence of environmentalism and green politics.

*Environmentalism: ecology gets political*

As stated in the introduction, it is fundamental to the determinative relationship between the political discourses of ecology and environmental politics to note that the terms 'ecology' and 'environment' are not synonymous nor are they interchangeable either in the common lexicon or for the purposes of this thesis. While 'ecology' describes the relationships between all living organisms, including the human species, and their surroundings, 'environment' denotes those surroundings. The phenomenon recognised as 'green' politics is usually concerned with the latter, that is, the environment, rather than ecology, which, according to Radcliffe, has arisen as a political discourse in response to the inadequacies in both environmentalism and conservationism<sup>19</sup>. While there is a certain passivity associated with the term conservation, environmentalism has become the overarching generic term applied to any human action associated with the preservation of nature. Radcliffe defines the use of the term ecology asserting that:

... the inclusion of humanity as a part of ecology has led to the development of a radically different approach. However, there was also a more political reason for its increasing adoption, particularly in the United Kingdom. Increasingly, governments have adopted the environment as a part of the mainstream, and consequently those

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<sup>19</sup> J. Radcliffe, *Green Politics: Dictatorship or Democracy?* (Houndsmill: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000) xii



who deem government activity as inadequate to the crisis see ecology as providing a wider ideological foundation.<sup>20</sup>

Dobson uses the term ecologism to refer to the politics of nature, stating that “environmentalism is not a political ideology” and that while it is “sufficiently non-specific for it to be hybridized with most ideologies, it is at its most uncomfortable with ecologism.”<sup>21</sup>

Environmentalism, rather than being an ideology, can be grafted on to existing ideologies, which leads inevitably to a dilution of its intent. It encompasses a broad range of both politically and extra-politically motivated actions that purport to be in the best interests of the environment. Any nature-conservation activity, from gardening clubs to tree-spiking can be, and generally is, labelled environmentalism. Governments and political parties routinely court the ‘green vote’ and highlight their sound environmental records and policies in attempts to capture the perceived growing ‘green’ demographic. No modern development project proceeds without an environmental impact assessment being carried out for the informed benefit of the consent authority and the public. Corporate giants and multinationals from mining companies to fast food chains establish and maintain an image of good corporate citizenship through sponsorship of environmental campaigns and by highlighting their own commitment to the environment. Increasingly, even the most banal household products on supermarket shelves feature labelling with the words ‘environment’ or ‘green’, in order to make them more attractive to consumers. Even while mass-consumerism is regarded as a major contributor to global environmental problems, environmentalism is being used by corporate public relations to encourage greater consumption of resources by tapping into a social consciousness of environmental responsibility<sup>22</sup>. Environmentalism has no set

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.* xii

<sup>21</sup> A. Dobson, *Green Political Thought* Second Edition (London: Routledge, 1995) 14

<sup>22</sup> S. Beder, *Global Spin: The corporate assault on environmentalism* (Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 1997) 108

criteria and anyone can belong. It is at once saleable commodity, corporate ideal, political football, government policy and personal ethic.

The basis of environmentalism is social. The word itself is of social rather than scientific derivation, denoting surroundings and the conditions and influences which affect and determine the development of those surroundings. The current usage of the term, that is, to refer to the natural environment and ecology, is a relatively recent development stemming from an awareness of the limitations of nature against the seemingly unlimited capacity for human development and expansion. The ethic unpinning environmentalism is the reconciliation of human society with nature. Meyer states that this is interpreted as an "issue area"<sup>23</sup>, that is, dealing with specific issues as they relate to human society and the ability of human society to develop. The public environmental agenda is not necessarily reflective of actual environmental developments. While saving old-growth forests from logging and large marine mammals from extinction are, without doubt, environmentally worthwhile activities, the publicity and income subsequently generated are far more valuable for the environment movement than a less popular, public or well-funded, but potentially more ecologically valuable campaign to investigate the effect of leachate from landfill on the microbial organisms of a water catchment area. 'Big ticket' campaigns allow the movement to be self-perpetuating in order to maintain a public credibility, which, in turn, allows it to run big ticket campaigns and so forth. The public campaigns draw the funding and publicity but are less likely to use the science of ecology as a basis for their claims, predictions and prognoses. James Lovelock pointed this out in 1979:

Biological arguments which appear to have a sound scientific basis carry very little weight with scientists. ... The result is an

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<sup>23</sup> J.M.Meyer, 1999. "Interpreting Nature and Politics in the History of Western Thought: The Environmentalist Challenge", *Environmental Politics*, Vol.8, No.2, 2

environmental movement which is thwarted, bewildered and angry.<sup>24</sup>

The basis of ecology, on the other hand, is scientific. Proponents of ecologism as the politics of ecology believe, with reason, that a sound knowledge basis for policy and decision making is more politically credible than unsubstantiated claims made on the basis of opinion. It remains, however, that a considerable amount of liberal-capitalist policy in modern western democracies is designed on the basis of opinion polls and media coverage of specific issues and is intended for mass consumption without question. At least on a superficial electoral level, knowledge does not necessarily translate to political success; indeed, recent electoral history in the USA may well suggest the opposite to be true. While environmentalism could be regarded as the populist end of the green political yardstick, drawing wide-ranging support on the basis of well-publicised issues and campaigns, ecologism formulates ideology on the basis of sound empirical evidence, political theory and associated values.

It becomes necessary, therefore, to identify whether ecology and environmentalism separated from a single cell into two distinct entities, or whether they began as two separate and completely unrelated cells and have merged as a result of popular culture and consciousness. There is a certain nebulous quality to environmentalism which allows it, as in Dobson's view, to attach to any host organism, but there the parasitic analogy ends. The word 'environment' only entered the lexicon in its current usage after the publication of *Silent Spring* and the subsequent raising of ecological issues, specifically the use of agricultural chemicals, as opposed to the conservation issues of the previous era, in the public consciousness. The subject matter of *Silent Spring*, however, itself arose from a crisis of the environment. Lord Shackleton, in his introduction to Carson's book, notes that:

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<sup>24</sup> J. Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) 137

*Silent Spring* is not merely about poisons; it is about ecology or the relation of plants and animals to their environment and to one another. Ecologists are more and more coming to recognize that for this purpose man is an animal and indeed the most important of all animals and that however artificial his dwelling, he cannot with impunity allow the natural environment of living things from which he has so recently emerged to be destroyed.<sup>25</sup>

### *Ecological evolution in the social consciousness*

The catalyst that caused the development of the modern environmental, or green, movement was a perceived failure of government to adequately address what was seen, certainly by Carson, Shackleton and a number of other prominent writers of the same period, as the inevitable destruction of nature by human development. In the shift to environmentalism as a social movement, scientific ecology remained a dominant influence, both as a scientific discipline, and as the foundation of the later ideology of ecologism. In becoming instrumental in politics, however, ecology lost the impartiality that had defined its role in preservationism. Environmentalism, on the other hand, separated from the ecological paradigm relying instead on social factors to determine its progress. Where science was found to be lacking in not providing solutions to the seemingly inevitable crises of *Silent Spring*, *Tragedy of the Commons* and *Population Bomb*, human society provided both the problems and the solutions.

The influence of earlier paradigms on ensuing social revolutions must be viewed within a broader socio-cultural context. For example, where Vernon suggested that the tendency of the Maoist and Soviet Russian paradigms to repeat certain practices of the Confucian system and Czarist era respectively<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> R. Carson, *Silent Spring* (London: Penguin, 1962) 11

<sup>26</sup> R. Vernon, "Politics as Metaphor", in Gutting (ed), *Paradigms and Revolutions* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980) 259

indicated that those paradigms were not 'revolutionary', it must be realised that the practices adopted by the revolutionaries from their imperial antecedents arose more from embedded cultural factors than political influence. Within the scientific, social and political paradigms of ecology and environmentalism, too, there are cultural factors that must be considered in relation to the influences of one upon the other, and of earlier paradigms upon later. There is a strong environmental literary, scholarly and philosophical tradition, dating from Whitman, Emerson and Thoreau in the 19<sup>th</sup> century through to Leopold and Carson in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century to the contemporary scholars, theorists and writers who lend increasing academic weight to the discipline of environmental politics. Many of the ecological themes of the earlier writers are reflected in the context of western culture in the most recent writings on the subject. Both environmentalism and ecology have been, and, up to a point, continue to be, influenced by both western and eastern religious traditions which also remain as a source of polemic and dialectic within the paradigms. These traditions have provided the cultural contexts in which ecology and environmentalism have not only been allowed to function as socio-political paradigms, but also provided a foundation stone for several millennia of human social development. Cultural habits cannot easily be shed when a certain body of thought ceases to adequately provide solutions to immediate issues.

In this socio-cultural context, paradigmatic shifts will invariably maintain some continuity through the progression, most notably in the form of language, but in other embedded forms of sociological and technical apparatus as well. Whether the revolution has been political (the French Revolution did not change the language and cultural habits of the former regime), cultural (the early Italian Renaissance introduced the concept of perspective but retained pre-Renaissance composition and technique) or scientific (Copernicus changed the way in which the solar system was perceived but did not change the Ptolemaic calculus) where an established paradigm no longer adequately addresses questions or issues, a new model is developed. In the socio-cultural context of the 1960s, the

political establishment that encompassed conservation as its sole ecological instrument could not address the questions being posed by such writers as Carson, Hardin and Ehrlich. Against the global political backdrop of the Cold War and its associated social mores, the state of the natural environment in the light of post-World War II industrialisation and economic expansion was perceived as dire. While the ensuing environmental 'revolution' sought to provide answers to the environmental crisis, it sought to do so on the foundation already established by ecology.

From the convergence of ecology and politics, based on Thoreau's romanticisation of nature, George Perkins Marsh's lament of its imminent demise and Charles Darwin's establishment of the human connection with it, a body of thought was formed based on the premise that humankind had responsibility for the stewardship of the earth and all its resources: a post-industrial revolution awareness of humanity's place in the natural world, and belief that environmental damage and degradation could be arrested through management and preservation. A body of thought that recognised the complexity of the interrelationship of the human species with nature, the common histories of the human species and nature and the need for a greater cognisance of both the effective and affective domains of the human-nature interrelationship. This human-ecological approach established the direction that has become the link between subsequent shifts in the dominant body of thought: that is, that nature and humanity share a common history and that while humanity, being of nature, cannot survive without it, human linear social evolution has impacted negatively on the cyclical nature of ecology.

The drawing together of ecology and society in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century occurred at the intersection of two linear developments – those of thought (science) and action (society), and the cycle of ecological development. The result provided a basis for understanding by, firstly, bringing thought and action into line with one another through the creation of 'ecology', and secondly, establishing the precedent by which all subsequent ecological crises

would be approached. A cultural context was also established in the body of work to ensure that certain norms of behaviour have remained as constants throughout the subsequent evolution of eco-political thought and action.

### *Preservationism and the discourse of conservation*

In response to the impact of industrialisation on the environment an essentially ecocentric approach arose aimed at preserving areas of untouched wilderness for the sake of nature: Thoreau wrote in 1862, "In wilderness is the preservation of the world."<sup>27</sup> While the intrinsic value of nature was fundamental, however, it was couched in the cultural anthropocentrism of viewing the natural environment as a place for human spiritual and aesthetic nourishment, for example, the concept of nature as "cathedral" and "art gallery"<sup>28</sup>. Preservationism was also a reaction against a burgeoning materialism and consumption ethic fostered by industrialisation. This reaction manifested in a strong tendency by preservationists such as Thoreau and Scottish-born American mountaineer and founder of the Sierra Club, John Muir, to romanticise nature:

Preservation celebrated the sublime and the primitive in nature. Describing the Yosemite Valley in California, Muir rhapsodized that it was "so beautiful that one is beguiled at every step, and the great golden days and weeks and months go by uncounted ... [with] five hundred miles of waterfalls chanting together. What a psalm was that!"<sup>29</sup>

The methodology of preservationists lay in the belief that the most effective and powerful arbiter was government, and thus they appealed to the (US) federal government to create areas where nature may be protected "from the

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<sup>27</sup> R.Brulle, *Agency, Democracy and Nature* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2000) 161

<sup>28</sup> W.Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology* (Boston: Shambhala, 1990) 160

<sup>29</sup> W.Shutkin, *The Land that Could Be* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2000) 92

harmful effects of human settlement and consumption".<sup>30</sup> In 1872 the US government proclaimed the nation's first National Park, Yellowstone, and in 1890, Yosemite. Preservationism was neither anti-establishment nor politically reactionary; it believed in a value of nature in terms of non-material human values and sought to preserve those human values in their natural extension from the artificial and contrived ugliness of industry and progress. In so doing, the advocates of preservationism utilised the structural frameworks of existing institutions, such as government, to both support their ethic and as a model for the organisations founded specifically to foster preservationism.

Within the parameters of the preservationist approach was the discourse of conservation<sup>31</sup>. This discourse challenged the problem-solving ability of the body of thought and also become the source of anomaly within the body of thought, ultimately leading to paradigmatic shift. The conservation discourse, led by American Gifford Pinchot, sought not to preserve wilderness, but to manage it as a resource<sup>32</sup>. The concept of resource management has remained a constant discourse throughout the evolution of the ecological ideology and environmentalism, but has neither provided an ideological basis for environmental action, nor sought to solve the ecological crisis. Rather, it has sought to solve the purely human-industrial crisis of dwindling natural resources for human-industrial consumption. The conservation discourse is an instrumental application of ecology, rejecting the intrinsic value of nature. Preservationism established the links between human and natural history, and believed that only deliberate action by humankind in retaining areas of wilderness could prevent the inevitable destruction of nature. Conservationism, used the science of ecology to challenge the central notion of a crisis, stating instead that nature should be subject to human intervention in the form of

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* 92

<sup>31</sup> Brulle (2000) *op cit* 25-26

<sup>32</sup> R.Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory* (London: UCL Press, 1992); M.Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) 35



management and that all natural resources could, and should, be used sustainably in the interests of economic growth.

The publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962 is now widely regarded as the catalyst<sup>33</sup> that finally undermined the preservationist approach to the environment, precipitating the emergence of the social movement era characterised by an apocalyptic view of the future. While preservationists were lobbying governments to create national parks and protect areas of natural significance from industrial growth, agriculture and industry, responding to unprecedented economic growth and the need to support a burgeoning world population, were pouring chemicals into the air, earth and water. Carson wrote:

The most alarming of all man's assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials: This pollution is for the most part irrecoverable; the chain of evil it initiates not only in the world that must support life, but in living tissues is for the most part irreversible. In this now universal contamination of the environment, chemicals are the sinister and little-recognized partners of radiation in changing the very nature of the world – the very nature of its life.<sup>34</sup>

This was a crisis both within the human-ecology relationship and the preservationist approach that had for almost a century provided the parameters for action and thought concerning that relationship. The result was the rise of a social movement which challenged existing methodology and thought and shifted the focus from decision-making led and implemented through formal, legislative political processes, to socially-based and largely reactionary politics on issues where existing policy was perceived to have failed.

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<sup>33</sup> P.Hay, *Main Currents in Western Environmental Thought* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002) 16

<sup>34</sup> Carson (1962) *op cit.*, 23

### *Social revolution and the birth of the green movement*

The 1960s saw the convergence of a number of political, social, technological and cultural factors that manifested in a rejection of traditional institutions in favour of radical social movements. The first of the post-war baby boomers entered the universities; the Vietnam War sparked a furious anti-war movement in the US and its allies; the invention of the contraceptive pill was credited with the start of the sexual revolution and the liberation of women; the Cold War, symbolised by the erection of the Berlin Wall and the ever-present threat of nuclear warfare, became suddenly hot with the Cuban missile crisis; and the civil rights movement in the US all heralded social upheaval and change. The so-called 'space race' put humankind beyond the earth's atmosphere and provided, for the first time, a view of the earth from a new perspective: the view of earth from space proved to be one of the defining factors in the birth of the environment movement. Culturally, rock music and pop art led a hebecentric revolution celebrating conspicuous consumption in rejection of the conservative ethic of the previous generation. In this cauldron of social upheaval, Carson's work, along with later works by Paul Ehrlich and Garrett Hardin, provided the seedbed for revolution and the emergence of an apocalyptic view of the environment and the human-nature relationship.

'Apocalypticism' was a revolution against the conservative approaches to economic and natural resource management and the ethic of development that marked the socio-political era that contained preservationism. The ecological crisis described by Carson turned the spotlight not just on the loss of wilderness and nature due to industrial expansion, although that was a related fact, but on loss of life on a far greater scale than George Perkins Marsh or John Muir could have imagined. It was this that led scientists to respond differently to the natural environment and challenged the social, political and cultural order.

Within apocalypticism, the pro-nature ethic, represented by separate nature preservation organisations, transformed into a social movement distinct from,

but sharing many of the values of other social movements of the same period, in particular, the peace and anti-nuclear movements, which have remained closely allied to the environment movement. This common system of values is the hallmark of social movements. A values-system, distinct from the more instrumental application of ideology<sup>35</sup>, is represented through strong commitment to "general social values and moral principles considered by their members as universally valid."<sup>36</sup> It follows that the radical and anti-establishment movements of the 1960s shared a foundation of values and moral principles shaped by the events and rapid social and technological change of the fifteen years following the Second World War.

Essentially, apocalypticism was characterised by an overarching belief that the earth was in peril from the destructive activities of human civilisation and that if nothing were done to alter the situation, the crisis would worsen exponentially to the eventual extinction of all life. Within this body of social thought were the conflicting discourses of deep ecology and environmentalism, which provided the poles between which the green movement has operated ever since. The emergence of environmentalism was the fundamental factor in the eventual politicisation of ecology, in the same way as the emergence of other social movements forged the way for the politicisation of human rights and equality.

As a fundamentally social discourse, environmentalism provided both counterpoint and turning point within apocalypticism. Where the dominant body of thought was based on the findings and interpretations of physical science and was, to a large extent, concerned more with the earth holistically rather than with the earth as human instrument, environmentalism rested on a system of entirely human and subjective values. In 1968 Garrett Hardin, warning against the effects of continued population growth on the earth,

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<sup>35</sup> Defined in Pakulski, *Social Movements* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1991) and Dalton & Kuechler, *Challenging the Political Order* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990)

<sup>36</sup> Pakulski (1990) op cit., 34

pointed out that: "No technical solution can rescue us from the misery of overpopulation."<sup>37</sup> Although "The Tragedy of the Commons" has been interpreted almost to the point of exhaustion as a metaphor for social and political theory, in that one statement Hardin articulated what had been missing in the scientific approach to ecology for over a century: that while the problem can be quantified and described scientifically, the cause is social. Population growth, industrial development and progress are all factors of society, not science, and the solution, therefore, is social. Ecology, to provide the answers to the crisis it described, had to develop a social dimension – a politics of the environment.

Environmentalism opened the ecological crisis to a broader community of both protagonists and antagonists than preservationism, which remained the preserve of a small minority. The result was an ideology based on an underlying belief that without urgent action, the earth and all life would have a limited future. The factors that influenced the emergence of the ecological ideology:

... required a system of thought-action bases to both reflect perceptions and understandings of the particular political environment and to provide direction<sup>38</sup>.

Ultimately, conflicting discourses within the social revolution of apocalypticism yielded to the emergence of a direction and methodology more in line with the process of institutional politics. This occurred in the mid-1970s when the environment movement began to enter the political mainstream through political parties based on what became known as a 'green' ideology<sup>39</sup>. This heralded an optimism that lay at odds with the doomsaying of the

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<sup>37</sup> G.Hardin, 1968. "The Tragedy of the Commons" *Science* Vol.162, No.3858, 1248

<sup>38</sup> M.Freeden, 1995. "Green Ideology: Concepts and Structures", OCEES Research papers, Oxford University, 2

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, also: J.Porrirt *Seeing Green* (Oxford: Basil Blackwood, 1984); D.Hutton (ed) *Green Politics in Australia* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1987); A.Dobson *Green Political Thought* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Routledge 1995); P.Hay 2002, *op cit.*

revolutionary period. The environmental answers provided by the direction taken by green democratisation and integrationism, were, in effect, the institutionalisation of those that grew from the social movements of apocalypticism: nature and ecology became social and political actors.

*The political reaction: green democratisation*

The political direction represented by Green political parties moved beyond an ethic based on visions of an environmental apocalypse, which required action to address the ecological crisis, to a broad-based ideology which recognised the role and value of society within an environmental context. The merging of ecology with society into common ideology was an inevitable result of the shared values of the social movements: equality, including intergenerational equity; peaceful conflict resolution; social and economic justice; participatory democracy; the upholding of rights, including the rights of non-human animals. Given that ideologies are attempts to:

... confer cultural and conventional legitimacy on particular, narrow understandings of each of the political concepts they employ [in order to] translate the indeterminacy of political options into the certainty necessary for a political decision to take place ...<sup>40</sup>

the green political parties that exemplified the green democratisation approach embodied the environment movement in terms of cultural context, political concepts and alternatives for political decision-making. While a solid environmental ethic remained fundamental to all green parties, the concept of the environment and the ethic underpinning its governance assumed a more socio-political role.

Green political parties emerged as a more conservative counterpoint to the sometimes radical environmental organisations formed during the same period.

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<sup>40</sup> Freedon 1995, op cit 1

Organisations such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, both of which were formed in 1969 by “renegades from the staid Sierra Club”<sup>41</sup>, typified the shift from preservationism to apocalypticism, but their appeal was too narrow for the broad-based shift to green democratisation. The world’s first ‘green’ party, the United Tasmania Group (UTG), formed in March 1972 in response to the proposed flooding of Lake Pedder by the Tasmanian Hydro-Electric Commission and the state government. While holding to the values of the environmental organisations, the UTG proclaimed itself according to a raft of environmental as well as social and economic policies, including the rejection of:

... the wholesale extraction of non-replenishable resources; the alienation of people in their social and work roles; and the acquisition and display of individual wealth as an expression of greed for status or power.<sup>42</sup>

The UTG was followed quickly by the New Zealand Values Party in May 1972, and the People party in the UK (later the Ecology Party and later again, the UK Green Party) in 1973, based on a similar platform of environmental and social policies. While UTG and Values were the first ‘green’ parties, the first party to use the name ‘Green’ was the German Greens, *Die Grünen*, formed in 1979.

These parties were largely the pragmatic offspring of earlier social movements: more conservative in their approach than the anti-establishment organisations while at the same time recognising the weaknesses and failures inherent in the environment movement. The resulting ‘ecologism’, as Dobson describes the politicisation of ecology<sup>43</sup>, held to the same values and much of the same methodology learned from its parents. For a decade the green political movement operated outside the parameters defined by established political parties and processes, using elections as platforms for raising public awareness to environmental issues and working actively against the political

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<sup>41</sup> F.Pearce, *Green Warriors* (London: The Bodley Head Ltd., 1991) 17

<sup>42</sup> B.Brown and P.Singer, *The Greens* (Melbourne: The Text Publishing Co., 1996) 69

<sup>43</sup> Dobson (1995) op cit.

establishment. Green politics, in this era, was peripheral and radical. Green parties existed as political pressure groups and acted to influence politics and policy from the outside. By the late 1970s, however, they had grown in strength and voice due to the heightened awareness of issues such as the nuclear power industry in Europe, and the logging of old-growth forests and hydro-industrialisation in Australia. As a result of this awareness and the ideology driving it, Green political candidates started to become regarded as viable electoral alternatives, albeit by a minority of voters, and began to take their seats in parliaments in Germany and Switzerland, and then, in 1983, Tasmania.

The optimism accompanying green democratisation originated and developed mainly from a belief that political parties, founded on a solid ethical platform and working in accordance with the social values of a liberal society, would succeed in influencing environmental policy development in order to address the ecological crisis. The issue of the crisis itself was not in question: scientific evidence documenting the environmental effects of pollution, unsustainable agricultural practices, species loss, population growth, development and urbanisation formed the empirical basis for an ideology which also considered the social and economic effects of the ecological crisis. Thus, while the central empirical tenet of the ecological crisis remained essentially one of apocalyptic doom, salvation was at hand through the socio-political interrelationship of the human and non-human environments. Green parties provided a vehicle for action across a wide social and environmental front.

The concepts of 'development' and 'the environment' are inevitably linked by human association. Given this, the socio-political framework must be taken into consideration in terms of the perspectives of both the dominant liberal-capitalist political doctrine which forms the framework of human progress, as well as that of the environmental movement. If it is inevitable that the environment is subject to human intervention, it must follow that such intervention will, ultimately, be political in nature and execution, for even while

the environment movement challenged the liberal-capitalist structure during the revolutionary period between preservationism and green democratisation, the formation of a social movement is itself based on power relations. The green movement arose in opposition to the liberal-capitalist "material foundation of our society and our basic attitudes", and claimed:

... to contest the current power relations on behalf of us all, in the interests of the survival of the human and other species. The theme that emerges ... is the struggle of people to achieve influence over decisions that affect their very lives; to limit the power of those social forces perceived to be dangerous to the planet and its inhabitants. They are concerned with preventing the destruction of the world we live in...<sup>44</sup>

The green movement gave rise to a political movement represented globally by political parties and elected representatives who promote themselves as being different from the established political order. Those within the environment movement saw political action as the most effective way of raising environmental issues in the public domain and influencing the political direction to ensure long-term environmental sustainability. In order to politicise the environment, enabling action by humans on behalf of nature, the green movement first had to define the environment in a socio-political context.

#### *The mainstream green agenda: integrationism*

The conservationist discourse of land and resource management which emerged to challenge green democratisation took the viewpoint that Dobson describes as "weak anthropocentrism"<sup>45</sup> or "human-centred"<sup>46</sup>, including the socio-environmental ethics of intergenerational justice, the precautionary

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<sup>44</sup> V.Burgmann, *Power and Protest: movements for change in Australian society* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993) 187

<sup>45</sup> Dobson (1995) op cit., 61

<sup>46</sup> term used by Warwick Fox and quoted in Dobson (1995) op cit., 61



principle and 'triple bottom line' environmental accounting. This discourse differs somewhat from the conservationism that emerged as an opposing discourse to preservationism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which was "human-instrumental"<sup>47</sup> and regarded the earth as existing purely for human ends. The weak version of anthropocentrism, implemented on a non-ideological basis as a practical discipline, is responsible for much of our current environmental practice and policy. Many of the practices undertaken according to this discourse during the period of green democratisation have been positive; many failed. Dovers documents the passing of many participatory natural resource management institutions<sup>48</sup> from which lessons, good and bad, may have been learned by contemporary practitioners. A weakness in the resource management discourse is its ad hoc approach to decision-making and a general lack of will to learn from environmental history<sup>49</sup>. Against the discourse of land stewardship, the ecological ideology of green politics recognised its evolutionary development and drew on history as a model for environmental action<sup>50</sup>.

In the early to mid-1980s, however, with the electoral success of the Tasmanian Greens and *Die Grünen*, as well as major environmental campaign victories which successfully influenced government decision-making, such as the Franklin River campaign, green parties crossed the threshold to the inner sanctum of political process. Their aim, to enter the formal structure of the legislature as a truly representative body, if not fully realised in all areas, then within reach, the green political machine based on working from the outside underwent a progression from green democratisation to integrationism without a change in the body of thought. This progression took the ecological ideology

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<sup>47</sup> Dobson (1995) op cit., 61

<sup>48</sup> S.Dovers, 2000. "Still Settling Australia: environment, history and policy" in Dovers (ed) *Environmental History and Policy* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000), 5

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Brown & Singer (1996) op cit., Ian Cohen, *Green Fire* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 1996)

from the exclusive domain of enviro-political ginger groups to the polity. Integrationism was characterised by the mainstreaming of environmentalism through the adoption of 'green' political agendas by established parties, and, to an extent, the reining-in of environmental activists<sup>51</sup>, who, in the formal confines of legislative chambers and governmental negotiations, often lost the advantage they were able to employ as radical environmental campaigners. As will be argued later in this thesis, electoral success did not translate to a resolution of the ecological crisis; rather, it has forced a somewhat diluted environmental agenda into mainstream politics but has not adopted the green ideology necessary to effect widespread change.

In 1987 the World Commission on Environment and Development, chaired by then Norwegian Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, published the landmark *Our Common Future* and gave the world the term 'ecologically sustainable development', defined as: "the ability to meet the needs of the present without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet theirs"<sup>52</sup>. Ecologically sustainable development (ESD) became the major discourse within green democratisation and integrationism creating the direction for decision-making and policy bodies. Ecological modernisation, particularly in Europe, became the methodology for implementing the discourse of sustainability in a functional context. The path once open, however, the bandwagon quickly followed, to the point where the term sustainability is now used to justify environmental action from the perspectives of both 'weak' and 'strong' anthropocentrism. Perhaps there is no more evident a contrast between the ecological ideology formed from the apocalyptic social movement revolution and green democratisation-integrationism than the two international summits

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<sup>51</sup> Joschka Fischer (*Die Grünen*) and Ian Cohen (Greens NSW) are two examples of formerly high-profile radical activists now conforming to the comparatively conservative modes of behaviour expected of elected representatives.

<sup>52</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) 43

held twenty years apart. The UN Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) held in Stockholm in 1972:

... included calls for a "loyalty to the Earth" that recognized planetary interdependence of all life, the adoption of global (as opposed to national) responses to environmental problems, and massive changes in over-consumptive lifestyles of the wealthy.<sup>53</sup>

By comparison, the 1992 Earth Summit (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro:

... institutionalized ideas associated with this new conception of environmental governance. Some called it a "paradigm shift" to a new international law of sustainable development from previous formulations of both an international law of the environment and of development. Others argue that the Earth Summit "succeeded in formulating an umbrella regime in the field of sustainable development" that will continue to shape specific responses to environmental problems well into the future.<sup>54</sup>

The institutionalisation of the environmental agenda has had two major effects on political ecology: firstly, it has pushed green parties into the position of forming the sort of political alliances they once sought to avoid in order to ensure institutional and legislative support on environmental issues; and secondly, it has raised the question, in many public and political fora, of whether, in the light of ecological modernisation, there is, in fact, a need for a politics of ecology.

*Meanwhile, back at the station ...*

As a case study, the Snowy River campaign represents a weakening in the integrationist approach, which, while evident as early as the 1980s in Europe, had not emerged as a threat to the dominant political approach in Australasia.

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<sup>53</sup> S. Bernstein, *The Compromise of Liberal Environmentalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001) 2

<sup>54</sup> *ibid*

In 1991 a single window of opportunity to save the degraded Snowy River opened when the Federal government announced plans to corporatise the SMHEA. Were the authority to remain under government control there would have been no avenue to pursue a campaign of change. For this reason, the National Party, representing the irrigators who directly benefit from the Snowy Scheme, opposed corporatisation, fearing that a change in ownership would result in a loss of commitment to the irrigators<sup>55</sup>. Once corporatisation was effected the opportunity to change policy on the Snowy River would be lost. It was clear that any changes in policy regarding future water use would need to be embedded in the legislation that would determine and define the terms of corporatisation.

The Dalgety and District Community Association (DDCA), which was established early in 1991 to oppose the shire council's plans to close down the caravan park in town, took up the challenge of pressuring the authorities on the issue of the Snowy. The governments involved at the time were the Hawke Federal Labor government, the Kennett Liberal government in Victoria and the Greiner Liberal government in New South Wales. During the eleven years of the campaign, all those governments would change, but it was the 1999 narrow election of the Bracks Labor government in Victoria, supported by the Independent MP for East Gippsland, Craig Ingram that proved the most significant in finally achieving the goal. The corporatisation process itself stalled and was postponed a number of times during the course of negotiations and the Snowy Water Inquiry. In the meantime, the Snowy Alliance, an alliance of a number of smaller groups including the DDCA, had formed to spearhead the campaign.

Grassroots environmental campaigns are not novel, but where this campaign differed from other similar grassroots campaigns was in the nature of the issue. The construction of the Snowy Scheme in 1949 was never opposed. If

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<sup>55</sup> Fullerton (2001) op cit. 183

doubts arose during its construction regarding its impact on the natural environment, such as those raised by the CSIRO and the Australian Academy of Science regarding the area known as Kosciusko Tops, they concerned very specific areas and were addressed accordingly. Bergmann points out that:

While politically little concern was given to the natural environment, either in the immediate surrounding area or downstream, those working directly on the Scheme did in fact take environmental considerations into account. The first major project on the Snowy-Tumut side of the development, the Tumut 1 project, elicited much examination by the engineers and scientists of the Scheme relating to issues such as water runoff, erosion and soil conservation. ...

During construction of Tumut 2, further precautions were taken concerning soil conservation ...<sup>56</sup>

Bergmann indicates, however, that there were other factors of consideration for the engineers and scientists of the Scheme than the conservation of soil. The focus of environmental concerns was those areas "which could directly affect the viability of the Scheme"<sup>57</sup>. The campaign to save the Snowy, then, was one against a long-established fact, not against a proposed development such as the campaigns for Lake Pedder and the Franklin. Opposing government policy retrospectively with the benefit of modern science but against the weight of industry and agriculture was never going to be easy, but, as many Dalgety community members have stated, they had nothing further to lose.

The Snowy campaign was based on information, not rhetoric. From the outset the campaigners knew they needed sound, scientific information about environmental flows, riparian ecology and timeframes. Scientists from the NSW Department of Conservation and Land Management (now Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, DIPNR), the CSIRO, and

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<sup>56</sup> M.Bergmann, 1999. "The Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme: How did it Manage without an EIA?" Discussion Paper No.60, Canberra: Australian National University, unpaginated

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

independent researchers such as Dr Kurt Cremer, an expert in willows and forestry, were asked for advice. The findings were consistent and not optimistic, although not all the scientists agreed on a course of action. Cremer's submission to the Snowy Water Inquiry, while acknowledging the degradation of the Snowy, questioned the wisdom of increasing the flow to the Snowy at the expense of water for the red gum forests along the Murray, while Dr Martin Kent of the Gippsland and Southern Rural Water Authority recommended an immediate release of water to alleviate the creeping salinity problem at Orbost<sup>58</sup>.

It was already agreed by the early 1990s, however, that the minimum environmental flow required to restore and maintain ecological health to the Snowy was 28% of its original flow. Since 1967, the year the Jindabyne Dam and the Mowamba aqueduct were completed, the flow had dwindled to less than 1% of original. The target of 28% thus established, the campaigners began to read policy documents, lobby government ministers at both state and federal levels, write letters and build a foundation of public support. The integrationist approach was not likely to succeed for the Snowy River issue for several reasons, the main one being the demarcation of environmental responsibility between state and federal governments. While the Federal government controlled the SMHEA, the state governments, with responsibility for river catchments, could not act independently. This was further compounded by the counter-campaign from the irrigators who claimed that under the *Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Power Act 1949*, they had a right to the water from the Scheme and that, as primary producers, their requirements for water should have priority. Given that the Murray-Darling catchment covers approximately one-third of Australia and involves four separate states and the ACT, governmental negotiations were precarious at best. Taking an extra-political,

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<sup>58</sup> Submissions to the Snowy Water Inquiry, 1998.  
<http://www.snowywaterinquiry.org.au/submissions.htm>

information-based path would ensure the campaigners continuity through changes of government and pressure from industry.

This was not an environmental campaign: it was an ecological campaign driven by the community. The following chapters will examine the themes of social movements, party-political alliances, environmental policy, social and economic justice and risk management along the lines of the broad historical structure of environmentalism outlined in this chapter, underpinned by the issue of the Snowy. While the thesis contends that environmentalism, as constructed in the 1960s and 70s, is losing ground as an effective political actor, ecology is of growing concern.

## Chapter 2

### Social movements to politics:

from 'greenie' to 'Green'; 'no nukes' to 'Nuclear Disarmament'  
'women's lib' to 'Feminist'

*The world that we have made as a result of the level of thinking  
we have done thus far, creates problems that we cannot solve at the same  
level as they were created - Albert Einstein*

#### *Harbingers of change: the pre-revolutionary period*

In his 1967 allegorical anti-war ballad, *Alice's Restaurant*, folk singer Arlo Guthrie described his theory for conscription avoidance:

...just walk in say "Shrink, You can get anything you want, at Alice's restaurant." And walk out. You know, if one person, just one person does it they may think he's really sick and they won't take him. And if two people, two people do it, in harmony, they may think they're both faggots and they won't take either of them. And if three people do it, three, can you imagine, three people walking in singin' a bar of Alice's Restaurant and walking out. They may think it's an organization. And can you, can you imagine fifty people a day, I said fifty people a day walking in singin' a bar of Alice's Restaurant and walking out. And friends, they may think it's a movement.<sup>1</sup>

The birth of a social movement was hardly a new phenomenon when Guthrie 'dodged the draft' and penned *Alice's Restaurant*. *Alice's Restaurant* did, however, encapsulate the radical, establishment-defying, social movement ethos of the 1960s. During that time a major confluence of social and political factors was taking place, producing social upheaval which challenged and ultimately changed the political and social order. In terms of singular events, the Vietnam

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<sup>1</sup> Arlo Guthrie, 1967. *Alice's Restaurant*, Polydor, lyrics from <http://www.arlo.net/lyrics/alices.shtml>



War; the Berlin Wall; Prague Spring; Mao's Cultural Revolution; the Cuban missile crisis; the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Senator Robert Kennedy, Dr Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X; a series of milestones in space exploration; and the Six Day War all shaped the world political and social climate. The period was fertile for divergent thinking, liberation of the oppressed, and the expression of outrage. This chapter will explore the factors that led to the emergence of social movements in the 1960s, and the commonalities in values between separate movements that led to the formation of the Greens as a global political movement incorporating those values that shaped late 20<sup>th</sup> century ecological thought.

The economic boom that followed the Second World War, the so-called 'Long Boom', based on Keynesian economic theory, ensured that by the 1960s an economic contentment had taken hold in Western society. In Australia, Canada and the USA in the 1950s, displaced persons from war-ravaged Europe had found, if not exactly streets running with milk and honey, at least a level of prosperity that afforded opportunity and material well-being. The Baby Boom produced a 'bubble' in the population demographic which has been the focus of analysis by demographers ever since as those born between the years of 1945 and 1965 have progressed through school, university, into the workforce and now, retirement. Government spending on large-scale civil projects, such as the Snowy Mountains Scheme and soldier resettlement schemes in Australia and the South Saskatchewan River Project in Canada, produced unprecedented economic and administrative confidence. In the US, President Dwight David Eisenhower (Republican) promised, "There must be no second class citizens in this country"<sup>2</sup>; in Australia, Prime Minister Robert Gordon Menzies (Liberal) embraced industrial and economic development, declaring, "We must go out and develop Australia's resources and increase the national wealth", and, "Let

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<sup>2</sup> Eisenhower, quoted on *Lists of US Presidents*  
<http://www.fujisan.demon.co.uk/USPresidents/preslist.htm>

us produce our way to prosperity"<sup>3</sup>; Canadian Prime Minister, John George Diefenbaker (Progressive Conservative) also looked to growth, exhorting, "Canada must populate or perish - that is the answer. With such great resources as we possess, and such extensive territory, we can't survive with a small population"<sup>4</sup>; while in the UK, Prime Minister Sir Anthony Eden (Conservative), invoked global peace and security with a 1955 election slogan, "Working for Peace" and courted the perception that the world in 1955 was "a safer place than it had been in 1951".<sup>5</sup>

The basic tenet of Keynesian economics, saving during the 'boom' cycles to allow for continued spending during the 'bust' cycles, was the same ethic espoused, in an ecological context, by the preservationists: that is, to save areas of wilderness while it exists in preparation for future scarcity of nature, both for the intrinsic value of nature and its value as environmental amenity. This same maxim was the dominant social paradigm of the pre-1960s era: fiscal responsibility, conservative values, confidence in progress and development, traditional social norms. The socio-political principles, corresponding to the preservationist body of ecological thought, reflected conservative, prudent and unflinchingly anthropocentric values. There was an overriding, if naïve by modern standards, faith in government to act responsibly and in the best interests of the citizenry. The strong ethic of progress and prosperity, however, evident in the major construction projects and technological development of the era, further emphasised that the preservationist ethic of prudent natural resource management was not embedded in the general socio-political direction which concentrated on growth and development. While conservative principles

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<sup>3</sup> Sir Percy Joske *Sir Robert Menzies: 1894-1978 A new, informal memoir* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1978) 316

<sup>4</sup> Diefenbaker quoted on *Diefenbaker: links and information on Canada's 13<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister* <http://www.ggower.com/dief/main.shtml>

<sup>5</sup> Victor Rothwell *Anthony Eden: A political biography 1931-57* (Manchester, Manchester University Press: 1992) 167

were the social norm in both political and ecological thought, the two remained separate.

It was this optimistic view of technology and the ability of government to further Australia's economic growth and social stability, that provided the socio-political conditions for the Snowy Scheme, the long-term social and environmental impact of which, fifty years later, could not have been imagined. On the basis of necessity being the mother of invention, Coombs points out that new technologies arise in response to population pressures on existing resources:

At certain critical stages in human history, technological developments have occurred, perhaps stimulated by the need to deal with population pressures or to respond to major environmental changes, which made necessary a revolution in the whole lifestyle of the peoples affected.<sup>6</sup>

The Australian population at the end of World War II was 7 million. The government's development strategy, coupled with the resettlement of war refugees saw an influx of 1.6 million immigrants between October 1945 and June 1960<sup>7</sup>. The 'populate or perish' proclamation of the era meant also that natural population increase was significant, with the total Australian population in 1960 reaching just over 10 million<sup>8</sup>. The projected increased pressure on Australian agriculture to feed a rapidly increasing population was deemed sufficient justification, if any were required, for the Snowy Scheme to proceed.

By the time the environment movement emerged in response to the social and political conditions of the 1960s and the growing awareness of the detrimental impact of human development on the natural environment, the Snowy River was dammed and its flow below Lake Jindabyne reduced to less

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<sup>6</sup> H.C. Coombs, *The Return of Scarcity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 64

<sup>7</sup> Australian Department of Immigration <http://www.immi.gov.au/facts/02key.htm#1>

<sup>8</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/94713ad445ff1425ca25682000192af2/0db74c39eee3a02fca256b350010b402!OpenDocument>

than 1% of original. At the same time as the Snowy was rapidly dwindling to a trickle, the campaign, led by the late Milo Dunphy, to save the Colong Caves in the Blue Mountains from quarrying by a cement company, and the campaign led by urban environmentalists, mainly in Dandenong, to save the Little Desert in western Victoria from development were gaining ground and publicity.

Why, then, given the apparent burgeoning environmental consciousness at the time, was there no outcry to save the Snowy when it became apparent that 99% of the river was being diverted and that below the Jindabyne Dam the river would become degraded? The answer to this is political, socio-cultural and ecological. Firstly, the *Snowy Mountains Hydro Electricity Act 1949* provided for utilisation of the Snowy River for irrigation and hydro-electricity. Water users downstream from Jindabyne were not considered in the drafting of the legislation and, while they were misled in the belief that the river would not be as severely altered as it was, under the legislation it was the irrigators who had the rights to water despite the fact that the natural course of the river was eastwards from the mountains. Secondly, the environmental campaigns for the Little Desert and Colong Caves, and later, Lake Pedder, Fraser Island, Terania and the Franklin, all sought to protect areas of wilderness from development. By the time the Snowy was dammed at Jindabyne, the region was already developed, the Snowy was no longer a 'wild' river and the Jindabyne Dam was simply a further step in the process to provide economic and material benefits to both the region and Australia. The development ethic of the 1940s sealed the fate of the Snowy well before the rise of an ecological consciousness in the 1960s. Further, the Australian environmental movement has concentrated largely on wilderness protection rather than restoration of lands already damaged. Finally, there was no indication when the river was dammed at Jindabyne of the full extent of long-term ecological damage. The extent of degradation, including streambank erosion, salinity backwash, algal bloom, eutrofication and noxious plant infestation, only became evident after the fact.

*Revolutionary change and institutional breakdown*

The convergent social factors which created the acceleration in radicalism and rise of social movements in the 1960s have been the subject of much social analysis<sup>9</sup>, and while it is not my purpose to dwell on this, I will extrapolate from existing analysis the factors that created the conditions for the emergence of the social movement era. In January 1961, John Fitzgerald Kennedy was inaugurated as the 35<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. Almost immediately upon assuming office, Kennedy was politically obliged to honour a commitment made seven years earlier by his predecessor, President Eisenhower, to assist South Vietnam to resist "any aggression or subversion threatening the political independence of the Republic of Vietnam."<sup>10</sup> When Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963, the American commitment to the war in Vietnam included a total of 15,500 military personnel plus financial support to the South Vietnamese forces<sup>11</sup>. In August 1961 the Berlin Wall, one of the most evocative and controversial symbols of the Cold War, was built around West Berlin by the East German government, closing the border between the Eastern and Western blocs. The American entry into the Vietnam War, and the Berlin Wall cemented, quite literally in the latter case, the geopolitical divide that defined world politics for the next three decades. These two events, closely following the unsuccessful and ill-conceived US invasion of Cuba in 1959, heightened an awareness of *réalpolitik*: an awareness sharpened further in 1962 when the US and the USSR went to the brink over the Cuban missile crisis. Socially, questions were being raised over all these issues, and it was becoming clear that the pro-development

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<sup>9</sup> For example, Habermas *Legitimation Crisis* (London : Heinemann Educational, 1976); Pakulski, *Social Movements* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1991); Tarrow *Power in Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Burgmann *Power and Protest* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993)

<sup>10</sup> Eisenhower administration statement quoted in Sorensen *Kennedy* (New York: Smithmark Ltd., 1965) 651

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

economic and political attitude and conservative values of the pre-1960s socio-political institutions would not provide answers to the constant threat of nuclear war, a divided Europe and western involvement in what was essentially a civil war in Indo-China.

When Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* was published in 1962, a certain degree of civil unrest was already starting to question the conservative and optimistic doctrines that defined western politics and social thought in the post-World War II era. Carson pointed to the ecological effects of the industrial and agricultural practices encouraged and increased over the past fifteen years and prophesied a bleak future if such practices continued unchecked: a silent spring. A scientist, Carson drew on an ecological foundation to hypothesise a future devoid of nature. Against the global backdrop of escalating military conflict in Vietnam, increasing tension between the USA and the USSR and a growing nuclear industry, the spectre of the demise of nature through human agency appeared an undeniable and entirely plausible prospect. This ecological understanding became the basis for a social movement that promoted a new way of thinking about the human-nature interrelationship. The preservationist value of prudence in laying aside areas of wilderness for the appreciation and preservation of nature, would not resolve issues of chemical and poison overuse, toxic runoff into waterways, air pollution and the eventual death of whole ecosystems. *Silent Spring* prompted an immediacy that had not been a factor in preservationism. The issue, according to Carson, was clear: unless action was taken as a matter of urgency to amend industrial and agricultural practices, an environmental apocalypse was inevitable.

The sense of urgency invoked by Carson underscored the rapidity of social change and contributed, perhaps ironically, to a social image of living only for the present. This was reflected in much of the popular culture of the time, which celebrated the ephemeral rather than the timeless. Former Harvard

psychology professor<sup>12</sup>, Timothy Leary, promoted the use of the so-called 'psychedelic' drugs, and coined the phrase, "Turn on, tune in and drop out". Songs with lines such as, "I hope I die before I get old" (1966)<sup>13</sup>, and "There's no time to lose/ I heard her say/ Catch your dreams before they slip away" (1967)<sup>14</sup> and the apocalyptic, anti-nuclear warning of Bob Dylan's "Hard Rain" (1963) became the anthems of a generation that both resented the apparent short-term future they had inherited as the result of previous generations' lack of foresight, but also wanted to address the situation before there was no situation left to address. While Carson's treatise was a major step in the development of a public ecological awareness, it did not reach the social consciousness through popular music or mass-consumption media in the way the Vietnam War and the start of what became the nuclear arms race were absorbed. The immediacy of these issues, highly visible through the media and popular culture, precipitated an anti-war movement that extended its base to include the wider issues of peace including the use of nuclear power and weaponry.

Peace became politicised as a social movement in Europe much earlier than the peace movement started in North America. The geopolitical division in Europe was a far more physical and tangible entity than in the USA, where it remained largely a matter of conflicting Cold War ideologies and rhetoric. Furthermore, the realities of the second World War were still very much part of the European social and political landscape in the late 1950s and into the 1960s: with the exception of the attack on Pearl Harbour, the USA had not been a battlefield and had sustained no military attacks on its mainland during the 1939-45 conflict. In 1958 *Aktion Sühnezeichen/Friedensdienste* (Action Reconciliation/Services for Peace) (ASF) was formed in West Germany to allow

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<sup>12</sup> Leary was dismissed from Harvard in 1963 for his radical outspokenness

<sup>13</sup> *My Generation* (Townshend) The Who, 1966

<sup>14</sup> *Ruby Tuesday* (Richards/Jagger) The Rolling Stones, 1967

West Germans to travel in Western Europe, Poland, Israel and the US to "work for 'peace and reconciliation' with nationalities that had faced the terror of the Nazi regime."<sup>15</sup> The peace movement in Europe aimed mainly at maintaining peace and strengthening peaceful relations between nation states that had recently been at war with one another.

The peace movement in the US, and later Australia and New Zealand, was a people's reaction against the social injustices of a hegemonic 'superpower' dominating and controlling a conflict in which it was perceived to have no real part, either politically or culturally. The involvement of Australia and New Zealand as allies of the US was vehemently, and often violently, opposed by the peace movement in those countries as both governments moved to strengthen military and strategic relations with the 'superpower'. Australian Prime Minister, Harold Holt, famously declared Australia's increased involvement in the Vietnam War in 1966 by stating that Australia would go "all the way with LBJ"; and during the controversial 1968 presidential visit to Australia, when anti-war demonstrators lay on the road in front US President Lyndon B. Johnson's motorcade through Sydney, NSW Premier Robin (later Sir Robert) Askin, reputedly told the driver, "Drive over the bastards." The issue of peace during the 1960s transformed from an institutionalised grassroots movement to maintain security and peaceful relations in Europe, to a mass movement against the apparent course of Western liberal democracy.

#### *Participation and emancipation: the women's and civil rights movements*

In order for the emerging social movements to provide the foundations for a reconstruction of society, it required not only politicisation of the issues, but participation and empowerment of the citizenry. Participation and empowerment necessitated the removal of the discriminations and prejudices

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<sup>15</sup> E.Papadakis *The Green Movement in West Germany* (Beckenham: Croom Helm Ltd., 1984) 135



that had been embedded in the previous social paradigm. Thus, within the cultural and social framework of the 1960s, the removal of discriminations included the liberation of women and African-Americans from social oppression and inequity. These emancipatory movements, which also began the polarisation towards the New Left<sup>16</sup>, formed the backbone of social change and provided a socio-political context for the environmental movement. The conservative values of the post-war androcentric paradigm allowed for a limited and exclusive dominant social aspect. Black and white America were officially segregated until the congressional passage of the *Civil Rights Act 1964*, the first of a number of federal laws that overrode racially discriminatory state legislations, especially in the southern states. Aboriginal Australians were denied suffrage until 1962 and excluded from census figures until 1967 and the practice of removing mixed-race aboriginal children from their families continued throughout the 1960s. In the post-World War II years as men returned from military service and resumed civilian employment, women who had entered the workforce during the war returned to the home: the population boom, generally large families and the social emphasis on conservative tradition kept them there during the 1950s. The mould, however, was cracked. As the political pendulum swung towards the left, groups that had been denied political or social empowerment began to seize the opportunity for liberation.

By the early to mid-1960s the first of the post-war 'baby boomers' were entering the workforce; the long economic boom ensured that employment was plentiful, the 'populate or perish' proclamation of the 1950s was no longer an issue in terms of reproductive expectations (that is, child-bearing was no longer regarded as equivalent to patriotic duty), and girls, as well as boys, began to look to higher education and careers outside the home. As women's involvement in the anti-war and other movements increased, so too did their

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<sup>16</sup> Tarrow (1998), op cit.

awareness of social inequity and double standards, even within the movements themselves<sup>17</sup>. Sexually, specifically in regard to childbirth, contraception and abortion, the early women's movement exposed inequalities in terms of a patriarchal dominance over women's bodies and expressed these politically:

Our lack of control over our own bodies matches the workers's (sic) lack of control over production.<sup>18</sup>

The left's empowerment of the workers paralleled the empowerment of women, allowing the left and the women's movement to become interlinked during the period of rapid social change.

Likewise, the oppression of black Americans as a product of slavery from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> centuries produced a movement whose objective was to end the dominance of the downtrodden by the ruling class. The civil rights movement differed from the women's movement in the violence and militancy that accompanied it, despite the advocacy of non-violence by its most recognised leader, Dr Martin Luther King Jnr. King's 1963 Washington oration, "I have a Dream", became the mission statement of the civil rights movement, which, like the women's movement, broadened its focus as it progressed. The fact that King delivered this speech at the culmination of the 'March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom', symbolised the opening up of the movement to the rights of the oppressed, unemployed and disenfranchised<sup>19</sup> and not simply a restriction to equal rights for black Americans. The issue of civil rights was taken up on the university campuses where it became part of the mass social movement "against the goals of Western society and the functioning of the democratic political process."<sup>20</sup>

While the labour movement was not a major force as a social movement

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<sup>17</sup> A. Sebestyen (ed) '68, '78 '88: *From Women's Liberation to Feminism* (Bridport: Prism Press, 1988)

<sup>18</sup> S. Rowbotham *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973) 37

<sup>19</sup> P. Bailey *Bringing Human Rights to Life* (Sydney: The Federation Press, 1993)

<sup>20</sup> Dalton, Kuechler & Bürklin "The Challenge of New Movements" in Dalton & Kuechler (eds) *Challenging the Political Order* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990) 3

during the 1960s, its part in shaping and influencing the directions of the other social movements is acknowledged, as well as the influence it has had on political directions both during that time and subsequently. There is considerable commonality between the core values of the labour movement and those of all the social movements: the women's and civil rights movements embraced labour values in terms of equality in the workforce and trade unions campaigned against the Vietnam War and protested nuclear testing. It is with the environment movement that the labour movement had, and still has, its most contentious and vexed relationship.

*'Green bans' and the birth of the green movement in Australia*

During the early 1970s, the Builders Labourers' Federation (BLF), led by Jack Munday, instigated a series of 'green bans' across Sydney to halt urban development of areas of natural or historical significance, beginning with the now celebrated campaign to save Kelly's Bush in 1971<sup>21</sup>. Rather than the traditional view of nature as labour-utility from the standpoint of the left, Munday believed that socially useful employment and a sustainable environment were concomitant values central to the labour movement<sup>22</sup>. When a group of middle-aged, middle-class women from Hunters Hill approached the State Executive of the BLF and requested the union's assistance in saving the tract of bushland on the Parramatta River known as Kelly's Bush, some members of the executive resisted on grounds of class differences:

'Why should we the working class be fighting to save open space for these well-heeled upper-class people from the fashionable suburb of Hunters Hill? There is nothing in it for our members.'<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> M.Burgmann & V.Burgmann *Green Bans Red Union* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1998)

<sup>22</sup> V.Burgmann, *Power and Protest* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993) 192

<sup>23</sup> J.Munday "From Red to Green: Citizen-Worker Alliance" in Hutton (ed) *Green Politics in Australia* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1987) 107

Mundey and several of his colleagues, however, regarded the issue as beyond the question of class, believing that the social issues associated with trade unionism and the environment were, in fact, closely aligned:

In a modern society, trade unions must broaden their vision and horizons and become involved in wide-range social, political and environmental activities. The struggle for improvement in wages and conditions must continue, but the broader issues should be addressed. Not only has the trade union movement the right to intervene, it has the responsibility to do so.<sup>24</sup>

This view, while strongly held and practiced during the early 1970s in the context of the 'green bans', lost both momentum and relevance as the period of the social revolutions merged with a greening of social institutions: green democratisation. During the period of change, values and social values systems were forming the basis of a new socio-political paradigm. In intervening to protect areas of bushland and historic sites, Mundey and the BLF were not assuming new values; they were acting upon the values inherent in the movements themselves. The environment movement's belief in assigning moral standing to non-human species and the importance of the environment mirrored the left's belief in social equality and the ownership of the means of production. The BLF recognised and took an ideological stand, perhaps for the first and last time, on the interrelationship between the human species and its environment.

There is a further factor to consider regarding the labour movement's involvement in the social movements of the apocalyptic era: it was a period during which the dominance of conservative politics was generally in decline. The labour movement was part of a larger global movement of citizen-driven protest against the entrenched values system of establishment conservatism. The values espoused by the women's, peace, anti-war and environment

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid* 107

movements were those of the traditional left, altered, perhaps, to suit the specific issues being addressed. The labour movement's support for the environment movement was an extension of the workers' struggle against a class-dominated capitalist social and political structure. As green democratisation emerged to address environmental issues in the political forum, the new values system was influencing the socio-political process and the labour and environment movements consolidated separately in the context of the new process and the values and directions it represented. Munday, now regarded as a major figure in the Australian green movement, believes that environmentalism has become largely class-based, with environmentalists "generally the more enlightened of the middle-upper classes", while trade unions "all too often confine themselves to mere economism"<sup>25</sup> and he is critical of both groups for not concerning themselves with the issues of each other. Munday's criticisms are true in terms of the broader values systems of social movements, but it remains that in later political contexts, the trade union movement has come to regard the green movement as anathema to the working classes and a threat to employment and labour – a view encouraged by governments and corporations keen to ensure the two groups do not join forces again.

To recapitulate briefly to Arlo Guthrie's *Alice's Restaurant*, if a large number of people profess a certain opinion or belief contrary to that of the socio-political establishment, that belief may be called a 'movement' ("fifty people a day" in the song). If a considerably smaller number of people ("three people" according to Guthrie) profess that belief, it would be an 'organisation'. In the same way as preservationism gave rise in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the Sierra Club and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, during the 1960s and early 70s organisations formed within the broad churches of the social movements to

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<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* 106

represent factions or to take direct action on specific concerns and issues arising as a result of social mobilisation and change. Decisions on courses of action to be taken to address certain issues were no longer solely the premise of government or institutions. Organisations which had at their disposal not only the unswerving belief of their membership in the value of the issue, but also expertise, filled the vacuum created as institutionalised decision-making weakened against public opposition to an increasingly unpopular war, and the mobilisation of emancipatory movements. While some sub-movement organisations were small with a narrow focus and limited social appeal, others almost became movements in themselves and, like the ecological organisations of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, many have endured as institutions dedicated to particular causes. Within the women's movement, for example, the National Organization for Women (USA) and the Women's Electoral Lobby (Australia), representing the moderate end of the movement, both formed in 1972 specifically to raise awareness of women's issues within the political process<sup>26</sup>. The civil rights movement provided the ideological umbrella for organisations representing the rights of specific minority groups, such as homosexuals, indigenous people and religious or ethnic minorities. Far from weakening the structure of the movements, sub-movement organisations have meant that the ideology can be more inclusive and more focused in its aims. Many within the movements, in particular the women's and, to a degree, the peace movements have deliberately rejected the notion of any single, centralised body to represent the movement as an institution, arguing instead in favour of local action and specific-function groups and organisations<sup>27</sup>.

The environment movement, which emerged in protest against the destruction of the environment and the overuse of chemicals and pesticides,

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<sup>26</sup> V.Burgmann (1993) *op cit.* 83

<sup>27</sup> R.Dalton *The Green Rainbow* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994)

broke into "at least seven distinct 'streams'"<sup>28</sup> of protest and action. While each of these streams represented a specific environmental concern and produced various organisations to act on those concerns, they also represented points on the ideological spectrum from the moderate to the radical extremes of the environmental movement. In terms of the growing green movement, the early campaigns such as Little Desert and Colong Caves, provided a raising of ecological awareness and a consciousness of the environment, particularly among urban dwellers, which served as the foundation for action in the later movement. The green bans, while initiated at a localised level, through the involvement of the BLF expanded to unite people across a much broader front, thereby drawing upon issues, not only of ecological integrity, but of social and economic justice. In addition, there was recognition of diversity within the movement as well as the greater recognition of a common goal, a fact which became evident in the campaigns for Terania and Lake Pedder which were orchestrated not by local communities, but across a broad spectrum. As the green bans extended from the Kelly's Bush campaign to other successful campaigns in the Royal National Park and the historic Rocks area of inner Sydney the green movement grew broader and stronger, with local campaigns and organisations forming and drawing upon the movement ideology.

Two of the early organisations to emerge internationally from the green movement were Earth First! and Greenpeace, the former occupying the radical end of the spectrum and the latter, as indicated by the name, taking a more holistic and slightly less radical view of campaigning on environmental and peace issues, defined in combination by Pakulski as "ecopax"<sup>29</sup>. Organisations within movements, however, do not necessarily represent those movements other than from the standpoint of basic values. Furthermore, while the

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<sup>28</sup> J.Pakulski *Social Movements: The Politics of Moral Protest* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1991) 159

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* 158

women's movement resisted institutionalisation of the movement, choosing to work through smaller organisations with differing ideological positions but similar values, the ecopax movement, from the early 1970s, moved, perhaps unconsciously, towards a centralised ideological structure. This structure ultimately emerged in the form of the Greens political party, which, while criticised by the more radical end of the movement for its moderation, has become synonymous with the values inherent in its social movement origins.

### *The political appropriation of social movement values*

In order to establish a definite politico-ideological connection between separate social movements and organisations, it is useful to examine the normative values common across all the social movements and which ultimately formed the ideological foundation for a 'green' politics. For the purposes of this thesis, the 'values' in question are not regarded as having been created by the social movements, but are defined after Midgley<sup>30</sup> as being already embedded in the specific cultures to which they belong:

No human being ... can possibly find himself going out to shop for values for the first time, without any idea what he is after. He cannot be a Creator who, before creating, would have to decide what wants to create in himself. (The notion of 'creating values' is a piece of nonsense - all that anyone can do is to adjust, develop, and extend them.)<sup>31</sup>

Given that according to this definition, values exist socially *a priori*, it follows that the questions that arise are not whether or not to have a certain value, but whether to ascribe a higher priority to one value over another. In an evolving

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<sup>30</sup> Mary Midgley *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature* (Hassocks: The Harvester Press Ltd., 1978)

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* 183



postmaterialist values-based society<sup>32</sup>, certain values occur as common bases of understanding across movements that may have different stated aims. The aims are not the same as values. Aims exist as the cognitive functions of an underlying system of enduring values<sup>33</sup>. Thus, while a phase-out of nuclear power exists as an aim of the anti-nuclear movement, it is based on the value ascribed by that movement to safety and security. The phase-out of nuclear power plants has, in itself, no value.

A compilation of core social movement values from a review of the literature<sup>34</sup> found the following values common to all, although not in the same order of priority (and presented in no specific order here):

- Social justice (including issues of equity)
- Peace
- Participatory democracy
- Nature – care for the earth and considerability of life systems
- Post-materialism

The picture that emerges is firstly, a socio-political position closely aligned with the left; and secondly, very close to the values which the Greens state as the foundation stones of green politics: ecological democracy, peace, social and economic justice, and grassroots (participatory) democracy. As the era of protests and social movement demonstrations began to wane in the early to mid-70s, a new battery of issues arose that could not be solved by taking them to the streets. Apocalypticism had created a heightened awareness of the earth's mortality and the futility of unchecked industrial progress and militarism, but it offered no solutions of its own. Conditions were created for the emergence of a new socio-political institutional paradigm for decision-

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<sup>32</sup> Paul Abramson and Ronald Inglehart, *Value Change in Global Perspective* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1995); Ronald Inglehart "Globalization and Post-Modern Values", *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 2000

<sup>33</sup> Ronald Inglehart "Values, Ideology, and Cognitive Mobilization in new Social Movements" in Dalton & Kuechler (1990), op cit, 43

<sup>34</sup> A.Naess (1973); E.Papadakis (1984); R.Inglehart (1990 & 2000); H.Kitschelt (1990); J.Pakulski (1991); V.Burgmann (1993); R.Dalton (1994); P.Abramson & R.Inglehart (1995); S.Tarrow (1998); T.Tenbensen (1998)

making. While the social movements generally rejected the established political order, their ultimate institutionalisation was required in order to politically advance the values they promoted. While the political pendulum swung from the conservative preservationist era to the more radical apocalypticist era, the question that emerged from the social movements was whether politics in any established form could resolve the issues of greatest concern: an ecological crisis, human rights, global security, the threat of nuclear war. All of which concerns were, by the early 1970s, moving closer together under one, left-aligned, eco-political umbrella.

What, then, influenced the progression of environmentalism from social movement to political actor? The key is the institutional framework. The undermining of the established political order, such as which occurred during the social revolution of the 1960s and 70s, can provide the space for society to reinvent its political institution according to the new set of socio-political circumstances. Papadakis<sup>35</sup> indicates the centrality of political institutions in influencing the directions of social change and Putnam<sup>36</sup> argues the causal role of history in shaping political institutions and associated social change. A particular event, however, can be causally connected to a particular effect without it being a cause of that effect<sup>37</sup> and therefore, while tradition is influential in social change, it cannot be held to have caused specific changes. In the case of the social and political traditions of which preservationism was part, their temporal relationship to the rise of the social movements and the subsequent socio-political revolutions of the 1960s influenced but did not cause the social and institutional changes that occurred subsequently.

As discussed in the previous chapter, culturally, certain elements of preceding paradigms are maintained independently of the changes which are

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<sup>35</sup> Papadakis, *Environmental Politics and Institutional Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

<sup>36</sup> Putnam (1993) cited in *ibid.* 27

<sup>37</sup> Hausman, 1984. "Causal Priority", *Nous* Vol.18 No.2, pp.261-279

embedded in emerging paradigms. This is the case with the social revolution that succeeded preservationism and preceded the emergence of green democratisation. While certain cultural traditions were challenged and overturned in the social revolution that followed, for example, the androcentrism and racial segregation that were embedded social norms in pre-1960s Western society, others, such as nationalism, the hegemony of the nation state, and the value of organisations as channels of public opinion, were retained. Social revolutions can lead change insofar as they give rise to the organisations and restructured institutions that effect long-term decision-making. In the case of the environmental movement, the formation of Greenpeace and Earth First!, among other organisations, was a function of the social revolution. The organisations began to fill the void left by the weakened state of the established institutional framework in the face of social dissent.

The catchcry of the social revolutionary movements, "power to the people", was more than a rallying cry. Absolute power of the state does not exist in Western liberal democracies, and therefore, it follows that there are significant power relations and transfers of power within the institutionalised structure of the state. The notion of the transfer of power from the state to the citizenry has been explored by social theorists including Weber, who believed that the absence of institutional constraints favoured the power of society over the power of the state. The concept of authority, on the other hand, was essentially institutionalised power vested in a specific individual or group<sup>38</sup>. Given this definition, the weakening of a dominant socio-political system provides the opportunity for the people to seize power, but there is an absence of authority until the restructuring of the central institutions. The post-preservationist events of the 1960s and their effects support this theory. Undeniably, there was considerable power in the social movements that swung the political pendulum

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<sup>38</sup> Max Weber *Basic Concepts in Sociology*, trans. H.P. Secher (London: Peter Owen, 1962)

to the new left, rallied against the Vietnam War, fought for the emancipation of black Americans and the liberation of women and protested nuclear power and weaponry. There was, however, no authority in these movements.

Social change cannot occur in an authority vacuum and requires the centrality of the socio-political institution. With the undermining of state authority in the mid-1960s to early-1970s, sub-movement organisations emerged to legitimise, and thus centralise, the power of the social movements. Organisations became their own institutions, with covenants and guiding principles and, ultimately, a hierarchy of decision-making power within the structure. It is worth noting here that one of the founders of Greenpeace, Paul Watson, left that organisation and founded Sea Shepherds in 1977 when the former began to appear more as a green bureaucracy than a radical environmental organisation<sup>39</sup>. As the social movements grew in strength, the need for a single centralised institution to advance their values to the level of social change arose. As noted earlier in this chapter, certain social movements resisted this move towards centralisation, preferring to concentrate power in smaller organisations. Environmentalism, having largely distanced itself from its purely ecological origins and reformed as a social movement, absorbed the values of the other major movements and, by 1972, was beginning to structure itself as a political force. The formation of the United Tasmania Group and the New Zealand Values Party during that year followed as a logical consequence and a direct effect of the refining of the values system that defined the movement and its representation.

It is appropriate to briefly delineate the differences between social movements as precursors of social change, and the concept of civil disobedience. Henry David Thoreau wrote the acclaimed eponymous essay in 1849, four years after the publication of *Walden*, his ecocentric treatise on living

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<sup>39</sup> F.Pearce, *Green Warriors* (London: The Bodley Head Ltd, 1991) 30

in harmony with nature. These two works, probably his most famous, indicate that he is not so much political radical, revolutionary or anarchist as he is a utopian<sup>40</sup>. In the opening statement of *Civil Disobedience*:

I heartily accept the motto – ‘That government is best which governs least’; and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe – ‘That government is best which governs not at all’; and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have ...<sup>41</sup>

Thoreau sets out not an ideological struggle against the state, but a reflective and largely dispassionate critique of the effectiveness of institutional government as a general notion. In the context of the breakdown of preservationism, of which Thoreau himself was a member, and the social movements that occurred over a century after his essay was published, the concept of civil disobedience is, quite literally, ‘old paradigm’. It does not seek to do without laws or government, but to transfer the centrality of those laws and government from the state to the people. There is no political ideology present in Thoreau’s essay. It is apolitical and non-ideological. A social revolution, such as the uprising of the students in Paris in 1968, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, and the Aboriginal Tent Embassy established in Australia in 1972, represent not an apolitical critique of government generally, but a protest against government failure to resolve certain social issues. Failure of government, perceived by society, is commensurate with actual failure since government acting as representative of the people must be perceived by those it purports to represent as fulfilling its defined role. Where a society perceives failure in a government, that government is deemed to have failed in actuality. A social movement is not civil disobedience; it is power exercised in the failure, absence, or much

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<sup>40</sup> Bedau (ed) Introduction *Civil Disobedience* (New York: Pegasus, 1969)

<sup>41</sup> Thoreau, 1849. “Civil Disobedience” in *ibid.* 27

weakened state, of central authority. Furthermore, just as the concept of civil disobedience describes a shift in the legitimacy of government from state to citizenry, social movements demand the restructuring of government according to the values system that the social movements adopt. The aim of civil disobedience is not social change.

### *The personal is political*

The final aspect to be examined in the context of social movements leading political change is that of the 'personal as political', or the conscience as factor for change. Values held as central to a certain social paradigm consist of theory as well as the perceptual experiences of its constituents: perceptual experience, by definition, is personal. During periods of change, challenges to those core values force changes within the theoretical bastion, which in turn, affect related experiential factors. Commonly held perceptions among groups of individuals create a certain reality that then exemplifies that group as a whole. In science this may be based on the epistemological foundations of the discipline, for example, the perceptual experiences of the scientific community during the dominance of Ptolemaic astronomy were that (a) the sun appeared to move across the sky on a diurnal basis and (b) that this observation was supported by the astronomical calculus of Ptolemy<sup>42</sup>. In a socio-political context, collective perceptual experiences are based on social trends, economic factors, political ideology and leadership, and values systems. It is this experiential element of social and political change that gave rise to the phrase, coined during the rise of the women's movement in the 1960s and largely applicable to the values system that emerged from the apocalyptic era: 'the personal is political'.

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<sup>42</sup> The example of Ptolemaic astronomy was used by T.S.Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996)

The women's movement was based on the collective perceptual experience of women as actors in the 'private' or 'personal' domain largely excluded from the 'public' or 'external' domain of politics as defined by male constructs of their own collective perceptual experience<sup>43</sup>. The traditional roles of women as nurturers and homemakers were essentially carried out in the private domain of the home, while male roles were carried out in the public domain. Socially 'meaningful' work was that which was carried out in the public domain; political decision-making was based on the needs and requirements of society as viewed in the public domain. At a social level, women operated within the unseen and therefore unconsidered private domain while political decisions were designed with the public, and therefore male-dominated, domains as the benchmark. The women's movement sought to liberate women from the invisibility of the private domain and claim equal 'public' standing with men:

The rediscovery of our early perception of ourselves and our own sexuality entered politics – not as a theoretical question but as a passionate and practical demand ... This helped us to connect a sense of femaleness to our sense of ourselves as political animals.<sup>44</sup>

The concept of the personal as political, however, had, and has, far wider ramifications in terms of the broad range of social movements as agents of social change than just the liberation of women from the private domain of political disenfranchisement.

Given that a social movement comprises a large number of individuals acting together for a common purpose, that is, sharing common perceptual experience, it follows that the personal experiences of the members of a movement become factors in social and political change. The common personal perceptual experiences of women led to a political movement that manifested in public and politically-motivated acts such as women chaining themselves to

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<sup>43</sup> Rowbotham (1973), *op cit.*; also Plumwood *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993)

<sup>44</sup> Rowbotham (1973), *op cit.* 23

public bars<sup>45</sup> and bra-burning. Where the women's movement brought personal perceptual experience into the public domain, it also became central to other social movements and there was considerable correlation between the experiential perceptions driving social mobilisation across a number of issues. Papadakis notes the proportionately high involvement of women in the peace and anti-nuclear movements and suggests the plausibility that the "commitment of women in the peace movement is related to the burden of bringing a child into a world whose future existence depends on the success or failure of the threat of nuclear war."<sup>46</sup> The continuing commitment of women, disproportionately to men, to environmental issues is indicated in the demographic statistics of groups surveyed for this thesis and presented in Appendix 1. In the context of the case study for this thesis, the Snowy campaign was also largely driven by women.

Burgmann observes that the involvement of women in campaigns against war has historical roots and cites the Women's Peace Army and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom during World War I<sup>47</sup>. In terms of social movements and the values they represent, the affinity between the women's movement and the peace and anti-nuclear movements extends to a protest of all forms of violence.

Feminist analyses also suggest that patriarchy and masculinity are not only responsible for the everyday violence endured by women but also for militarism in general. This sentiment is expressed in feminist anti-militarist slogans that question the aggressive behaviour of nation-states and their leaders, such as 'Take the Toys

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<sup>45</sup> Merle Thornton and Elaine Dignan famously chained themselves to the public bar of the Regatta Hotel in Brisbane in 1965 to protest the law preventing women from drinking in public. Dr Kay Saunders (1999) described this as "the first really important social act of defiance of women" (<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/relig/enc/stories/s68263.htm>)

<sup>46</sup> Papadakis (1984) op cit. 135

<sup>47</sup> Burgmann (1993) op cit.



from the Boys', and in Senator Janet Powell's recent comment that the Gulf War was 'testosterone-driven'.<sup>48</sup>

Peterson and Runyan further noted that, "perhaps the newest form of women's political action is in the area of saving the environment."<sup>49</sup> When it is considered that the environment and environmental health are closely related to human health, and that this is a basic and primary security concern for women globally<sup>50</sup>, it is hardly surprising that women are in the vanguard of environmental campaigns. In the case of dammed rivers, such as the Snowy, there are added spatial and temporal elements of loss and the traditional role of women as carers.

The personal fear of many people of nuclear war and their opposition to the war in Vietnam, stemming, in many cases, from graphic images in televised news broadcasts, was collectively brought into the public and political domains as a social reaction to the personal fear and repugnance of war, both actual and potential. Conscientious objection to war is a matter of personal choice and ethics: a person's choice to refuse a state directive to participate in military service is a private choice and dependent upon that person's beliefs, moral sense, opinions and other affective indicators. Religious beliefs may be a factor, but equally could fear of death or injury. In many anecdotal cases, particularly with regard to the two world wars, conscientious objectors were accused of cowardice, but the choice and the right to make that choice, nevertheless, remained personal, a matter of conscience and unquestioned in the public domain. During the period of the social movement uprising conscientious objection moved from the personal domain to the public as 'draft dodgers' publicly burnt their draft cards, thus making a political statement of a personal decision and a collective statement of perceptual experience.

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid* 231

<sup>49</sup> V. Peterson and A. Runyan, *Global Gender Issues* (Westview: Boulder, 1993) 142

<sup>50</sup> B. Reardon, *Women and Peace: Feminist Visions of Global Security* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993)

*Nature, environmentalism and political evolution*

If the notion of conscience driving moral decisions at a personal level, and perceptual experience linking conscience with social change is evident at the fundamental level of social values such as peace and social security, it is more complex when applied to the nature of ecology. The preservationist values established in the era of ecological thought characterised by the writings of Thoreau and Leopold held nature to be of intrinsic value and therefore worth preserving for that reason alone, and also of value to the human 'soul' as a place of reflection, relaxation and retreat. There was a consciousness of the interrelationship between humankind and nature and, on a personal level, individuals such as those writers who defined the preservationist body of thought, believed the preservation of wilderness to be right. This does not necessarily accord to the belief that nature itself is morally considerable, but that it is moral to consider the worth of nature. There was not only a consciousness about nature, but a conscience in the most literal sense of the word: where the prefix 'con' is understood to mean, definitionally, combination or union, the human conscience represents a union between human subject and scientific or rational object. In the environmental context, the science of ecology drawn in combination with the moral sense of humankind.

The publication of *Silent Spring* changed the nature of the consciousness from a belief in the worth of nature to an awareness of its fragility and limitations. This awareness also sharpened the focus of the human conscience with regard to the moral standing of nature and the morality of human activities within the broader concept of the environment. Apocalypticism underlined ecological consciousness with an admonition and a caution: the collective human conscience had every reason to feel guilty about the condition of the natural environment. For every poisoned river and chemical dump there was a direct human cause. The degradation of nature was seen as a direct reflection of the degradation of the human conscience. The preservationist view of nature,

had been positive and self-affirming but asymmetrical, that is, nature existed as areas of wilderness and pristine bushland entirely separate from human activities: humans related to nature on human terms; nature, being non-human, could not relate to the human sphere. Nature was not perceived as being the river into which chemicals from a paint factory were dumped, or the peri-urban countryside marked for development as a housing estate. Development, industry and economic activity belonged in the public domain, while nature, essentially, was private.

The ecological consciousness that arose with the social movement period altered the collective perceptual experience of nature dramatically and irrevocably. Human consciousness of nature changed from that of a place – real or imagined – apart from human civilisation, to the place wherein all civilisation exists. Ecology, at this point, ceased to be simply the science of the interrelationships between living things and became fully understood as the total sphere of human existence: The Environment. Whereas as individuals, all humans held a consciousness of nature as a personal perceptual experience, as a society, there was no collective conscience that held certain activities of human civilisation to be morally right or wrong in regard to the interrelationship between humankind and the environment. The environment simply existed as a resource to be harnessed or tamed, admired or developed according to requirements, while nature, or wilderness, was perceived as having both intrinsic and extrinsic value and therefore worth preserving. Nature as the private domain of personal consciousness, in order to be saved from inevitable doom, of necessity had to become the domain of the public (guilty) conscience. Environmentalism as a social, and therefore public, ideal, replaced ecology as the understanding between humankind and nature.

Environmentalism, as collective conscience, was the green manifestation of the personal becoming political through a social movement. Preservationist socio-political doctrine and practice failed to adequately answer the questions that arose as a result of *Silent Spring* because the environment had been

perceived only in the private and essentially non-political domain as nature. Theodore Roszak argues that an unchecked individually-based ideology has itself allowed for the excesses of Marxism:

It is the excesses of the individual which have at last generated the vindictive excesses of the collectivist ideologies. The bourgeois tradition of individualism has taught us to regard all concern for the self as ... "selfish". Whether we regard selfishness as a vice or a precious right, it has for generations been the whole moral content of self-awareness. There has seemed no way to be interested in the self that is not an expression of "self-interest" in the crudest, Social Darwinian sense. Individualism has laid a dark and stubborn curse upon all forms of self-discovery, making them seem feeble apologies for social injustice, political elitism.<sup>51</sup>

While Roszak argues in favour of a communitarian model in the monastic tradition, the modern social movements moved towards politicisation of the issues in the public domain where institutional governance was weak, rather than cooperative and community-based problem solving.

The environment movement, in socialising, politicising and publicising the personal domain of nature, was the collective response to the apocalyptic predictions of Carson, Hardin, Ehrlich and others. The collective response, however, was not itself rooted in science or rationality. Social movements are essentially a collectively voiced public response to the inability of the central governing authority to address a certain crisis within the socio-political paradigm and are not necessarily rational in the objective, scientific sense. The green bans of the New South Wales BLF were political, not scientific. This is the underlying reason they appear as an aberration within the left-wing ideology of the trade union movement. While the aim of the green bans was without doubt the conservation of natural and historical areas, the values on which the methodology was based were the left-wing ideals of the ownership of the means

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<sup>51</sup> Theodore Roszak *Person/Planet* (New York: Anchor Books, 1979) 105

of production. Whilst this was achieved in the context of the environment movement during a period of social change and institutional weakness, it was not sustainable as a left-wing ideal during the later period of green democratisation and integration. Ecology, as the science of the interrelationships between living things, did not exist as part of the environment movement except as the catalyst for broad social awakening.

### *Environmentalism and political process*

By the mid-1970s, the values of the social movements were influencing political decision-making and the political bureaucracy was beginning to reflect the changing needs and demands of society. The election of the Whitlam government in Australia in 1972 became the catalyst for change, with the immediate withdrawal of Australian military personnel from Vietnam, establishment of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China and the establishment of a Women's Affairs section in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and subsequent appointment of a Prime Minister's Assistant on Women's Issues. The formation of green political parties from 1972 saw the beginning of the transition from the disorder of mass social movements to a new order of green democratisation; a transition signified by the election of the first Green parliamentarians in West Germany in 1979. The acceptance into social and political institutions of values such as gender and racial equity, rejection of war, and the moral consideration of the environment, represented a strengthening of the central institution necessary for governance and legislative decision making. Where the values represent a socially-driven solution to previous social instability, their influence on governmental structure indicates a lessening of direct public political participation and a return to centralised authority.

The shift from apocalypticism to green democratisation and integrationism was complete in Australia in March 1983, with the election of the Hawke Labor

government in Australia on a promise to override the Tasmanian Government under external affairs legislation to prevent the damming of the Franklin River in the state's wild south-west region. Ironically, these were the same powers invoked by Chifley in 1949 to place the Snowy Mountains Scheme under Commonwealth control in order to facilitate the damming of a river. The environmental campaign to save the Franklin from the pro-development nexus of the conservative state government led by Premier Robin Gray and the powerful Tasmanian Hydro-Electric Commission became the most famous environmental campaign in Australia. At its height in the early 1980s the campaign became international news and environmental activists from all over the world joined the blockades. In 1982 there were over 1200 arrests, including Bob Brown and Christine Milne, both later elected to the Tasmanian Parliament as Green Independents (later the Tasmanian Greens), and the campaign generated such unprecedented public support that Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser was forced to declare the area a World Heritage site as an interim measure<sup>52</sup>. The 1983 High Court ruling that the Federal government's external affairs powers "allowed Federal legislation giving domestic effect to international treaties, such as the World Heritage Convention, to prevail<sup>53</sup>" was a highly significant environmental victory. It raised the Franklin River to iconic status, and also drew to a close, for almost 20 years, the era of major protests and social movement mobilisation in western liberal democratic states<sup>54</sup>.

The influence that social movement values had on liberal democratic ideology virtually extinguished the fire of apocalyptic discontent. The crises of ecological degradation, overpopulation, inequality and insecurity appeared to be addressed through measures such as ecologically sustainable development, ecological modernisation, the end of the Cold War, and anti-discrimination

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<sup>52</sup> T.Doyle *Green Power* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000) 129

<sup>53</sup> Tighe, quoted in *ibid.* 130

<sup>54</sup> The pro-democracy protest movement was active in Eastern Europe until the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 90s, and remains active in China despite (or perhaps because of) the government-military crackdown in Tiannanmen Square in 1989

legislative mechanisms ensuring equal opportunities for women and minority groups.

Recent history in Australia with the emergence of the second wave of feminism, the Women's Electoral Lobby and the Women's Party, the environment movement, the Australian Green Party, the peace movement, the indigenous people's campaign for reconciliation, gay and lesbian rights, all demonstrate that these progressive movements are within the new definition of politics – local, specific, less visible but new forms, instituting ways of doing politics differently.<sup>55</sup>

It is within this 'new definition of politics', represented by the Green political parties, that green democratisation and integrationism have assumed many of the values inherent in the social movements and become the means by which these are consolidated in political practice through policy. From the early 1980s then, Green politics has presented institutionalised solutions to the crises of environmental degradation, security and human rights. By the very nature of institutionalised solutions, these represent compromise between public concern and political process.

It is necessary, however, in order for social and political progress to be effected, that the parameters of the dominant paradigm are not held to be the panacea for all questions that arise. As was the case with preservationism in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, green democratisation and integrationism have not adequately addressed the range of crises that have arisen from the social and environmental circumstances at the turn of the century. Where institutionalisation saw the bureaucratisation of environmentalists and the new conservatism of the women's movement, that institutionalisation itself has created a new set of problems in areas of environmental health and social and economic justice that integrationism cannot address. Tarrow argues that

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<sup>55</sup> Christine Milne MHA, 1997. "Making the difference for the new millenium", The Pamela Denoon Lecture, Canberra 6<sup>th</sup> March 1997  
<http://www.wel.org.au/announce/denoon/97milne.htm>

revolutions occur in cycles when a successful challenge to the dominant political structure by a:

... previously disadvantaged actor simultaneously (1) advertises the vulnerability of authorities, (2) provides a model for effective claim making, (3) identifies possible allies for other challengers, (4) alters the existing relations of challengers and power holders to each other, and (5) thereby threatens the interests of yet other political actors who have stakes in the status quo, thus activating them as well.<sup>56</sup>

The strength of integrationism has become its greatest weakness: the drawing of an environmental agenda into policy, under the broad umbrellas of ecological modernisation and ecologically sustainable development, has created a new set of problems directly related to the functions of the political economic system. The so-called 'greening' of democracy that provided such policy mechanisms as the 'precautionary principle' and 'polluter pays' has also turned the environment into a marketable commodity. This is the crisis on which the environment movement, in a much weakened position through conformation to institutional principles, is now seeking resolution. Socio-politically, in many respects, the global situation now is similar to that of the apocalypticist era: the USA is engaged in an increasingly unpopular military action; nuclear weapons continue to proliferate in such nations as India and Pakistan, and, more recently, through additional weapons spending in the USA; there is increased concern for human rights issues; right wing political conservatism and populism are resurgent; and the earth is perceived as under imminent threat from global warming and overpopulation.

While this new era has elements of apocalypticism, the scepticism that arose in response to the environmental doomsaying of the 1960s has resulted in more conservative and empirically-based predictions. Nonetheless, politically

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<sup>56</sup> Tarrow (1998), *op cit*, 157



integrated environmentalism, while it provided short term success in addressing the problems of pollution and land degradation in such places as the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Germany and Japan<sup>57</sup>, has not stopped unsustainable industrialisation in China, unchecked oil consumption in the developed world, or provided a consensual global approach to greenhouse emissions. In the same way as the social movements began as separate entities and merged according to the global agenda, the current perceived crises of overpopulation, nuclear arms, global warming, genetic modification and human rights abuse are manifesting as separate movements against integrationism as a dominant system of green politics.

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<sup>57</sup> John Dryzek *The Politics of the Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

## Chapter 3

### The environment as political actor and the problem of representation

*Man is by nature a political animal - Aristotle*

*The preservationist context: nature without representation*

The rise of left-wing politics in the 1960s from the right-wing dominance of the post-war era provided a springboard for the entry of a 'new' politics based on the fundamental ideology of the left. Proletarian ownership of the means of production has its contemporary manifestation in the righting of social and economic injustices and the redistribution of wealth from the top to the bottom of the social hierarchy. Peter Singer, taking his cue from the late animal rights activist and socialist, Henry Spira, takes a broad view, believing that the left is:

... on the side of the weak, not the powerful; of the oppressed, not the oppressor; of the ridden, not the rider ... That, I think, is what the left is all about.<sup>1</sup>

The left does not accept that social inequalities are a natural phenomenon and that, no matter how wrong it may be, there is nothing that can be done. The left sees that situation as wrong and strives to redress it. Singer concedes, however, that the removal of a social hierarchy would be very difficult given that "hierarchical organisation of society is a common characteristic of the human species."<sup>2</sup>

Rousseau believed that the concept of inequality began when mankind moved from a hunter-gatherer society to an agrarian-industrial one. The acquisition and ownership of property led to the establishment of a workforce, which divided society into the owners of the means of production and those who provide the labour:

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<sup>1</sup> P.Singer, *A Darwinian Left: Politics, Evolution and Cooperation* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1999) 8

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* 39

But from the moment one man began to stand in need of the help of another; from the moment it appeared advantageous to any one man to have enough provisions for two, equality disappeared, property was introduced, work became indispensable, and vast forests became smiling fields, which man had to water with the sweat of his brow, and where slavery and misery were soon seen to germinate and grow up with the crops.<sup>3</sup>

While Rousseau accepts the inevitability of social inequities as evolutionary, he veers close to the reason the environmental movement has become aligned with the left, which, when considered in conjunction with Singer's broad view, sees nature as subject to the same inequalities with which human society organises itself. The difference is that while human society can choose to either accept or seek to redress injustice, nature has no choice. Rousseau's 'vast forests' became 'smiling fields' without any arboreal consultation, and if mankind had to water the resultant fields 'with the sweat of his brow', that was his choice. In much the same way as socialism speaks for the downtrodden and exploited masses of humanity, seeking to break the capitalist bonds, environmentalism speaks for that aspect of a holistic community that is not able to speak for itself: nature.

This chapter will examine the problem of the political representation of nature focusing on the emergence of the modern environment movement as a values-based social movement, the political ideology of ecologism, left-wing ideology, and the 'greening of democracy'. To this end, it will be necessary to draw a clear distinction between ecology and environmentalism in terms of political aims, capacity for realising political objectives, institutional framework and ideology. The developments that have occurred within the green movement itself and how these directly relate to and influence the socio-

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<sup>3</sup> Jean Jaques Rousseau, "A Dissertation on the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality of Mankind", *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. G.D.H.Cole (London: J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd., 1973) 83

political revolutions that have shaped contemporary environmental thought will also be examined.

The question of the political representation of nature is a political and ethical conundrum that will be addressed from the premise that the decision to afford political standing to the environment is (a) essentially anthropocentric, and (b) permanent and immutable. We cannot now hypothesise a contemporary theory of politics that does not involve some relativity to the environment if only for the simple reason that the environment, as argued by Jonathon Porritt, "provides the context within which *all* politicians operate."<sup>4</sup> The environment has been inextricably bound to politics since the 19<sup>th</sup> century when preservationist era protagonists appealed to the American government to set aside areas of wilderness for either its own sake or for the recreational benefit of humans, and "preunification German *länder* and private business associations regulated water and air pollution."<sup>5</sup> The constitution and rationale of ecological and environmental representation in political fora, however, have changed according to the rise of environmental crises, precipitating shifts in the dominant systems of thought and practice.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the predominant epistemological approach to nature during the preservationist period was through the study of ecology. The parameters that were set provided terms of reference whereby nature was deemed valuable for both its own sake, clearly evident in the writings of Muir and Thoreau, and also for the benefit of humans as both problematic and panacea to industrialisation and urbanisation. Ecology was the interface between the two modes of thought. It gave scientific weight to the often transcendental and insightful writings of the forerunners of deep ecology<sup>6</sup> and allowed anthropocentric environmental protagonists empirical evidence of the

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<sup>4</sup> J. Porritt *Seeing Green* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984) (original italics)

<sup>5</sup> T. Shull *Redefining Red and Green* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999) 12

<sup>6</sup> M. Oelschlaeger *The Idea of Wilderness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991)

importance of retaining areas of wilderness for the benefits of humankind. The preservationists, however, did not presume to speak for nature. They spoke for themselves according to their perceptions of nature. The long-running ideological feud between Muir and Pinchot<sup>7</sup>, taking diametrically opposed positions in the argument of what was best for nature and what was naturally best for humanity, reflected in the later Foreman-Bookchin<sup>8</sup> debate, was an extension of these perceptions. In accordance with the preservationist dictum, both Muir and Pinchot saw the government as best equipped and most able to develop and enact laws to 'preserve' (in Muir's case) and 'manage' (in Pinchot's) the natural environment. Preservationist values allowed for both these views as ecology was, after all, a science: the way in which humankind understood and related to the natural environment.

It was according to these principles that the Snowy Mountains Scheme was conceived as a means of best managing a valuable resource that would otherwise be wasted. As discussed in Chapter 1, the dualistic nature of the preservationist ethic is evident in the 1958 approach from the Australian Academy of Science to the SMHEA to set aside the area known as Kosciusko Tops as a 'primitive area' that would be preserved in its undeveloped natural state while full-scale alteration of the natural environment occurred around it. It is also significant that, given the long-term use of the Kosciuszko region by Indigenous people, and later for goldmining, sawmilling and summer grazing<sup>9</sup>, the romantic concept of 'undeveloped natural state' may be arbitrarily based on

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<sup>7</sup> Discussed in Hay, *Main Currents in Western Environmental Thought* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002) and Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory* (London: UCL Press, 1992)

<sup>8</sup> M.Bookchin and D.Foreman, 1991. "Searching for Agreement: A Dialogue Between Murray Bookchin and Dave Foreman" in VanDeVeer & Pierce (eds) *The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1994) 238-246

<sup>9</sup> Most of the goldmining in the region was finished by the late 1800s; sawmilling continued through the 1950s (Sawmill Creek, in the National Park near Perisher Valley so named for the industry); summer grazing of sheep ceased in 1949 after scientists raised concerns about soil conservation; and summer cattle grazing ceased in 1958 as an indirect result of the Kosciusko Tops 'primitive area' proposal.

specific ecological issues, such as soil conservation<sup>10</sup> rather than the environment as total ecosystem. According to Mulvaney, a large part of the human attraction to the High Country is its cultural associations rather than purely its ecological attributes<sup>11</sup>. It is speculative to surmise, however, that part of the Academy's motivation in preserving the Kosciusko Tops was for cultural reasons, given the sound scientific reasoning behind the proposal.

### *The need for representation*

The rise of social movements and the apocalypticist era of environmentalism created a social dimension to ecology. This dimension, represented by the modern environment, or 'green' movement, acknowledged the damage that had been done by human society to nature and sought to prevent further damage. This diverged from preservationism in that the early era sought only to preserve that wilderness that remained untouched and did not recognise anthropic damage already caused to both natural and human environments as a threat to ecosystemic health. The green movement essentially recognised the human element in ecology: environmental problems are problems of society. Furthermore, whereas the preservationists saw government as a powerful ally to be influenced, the apocalypticists saw government as a weakened enemy to be imputed. In the same way as the civil rights and women's movements opposed the inequities that had held those groups in oppression under government policy, the environment movement took the same approach to the political attitude towards nature. Nature as oppressed political actor thus became part of the social dimension of ecology: the broadly termed and socially inclusive 'environment'.

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<sup>10</sup> L.Robin, *Defending the Little Desert* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1998)

<sup>11</sup> J.Mulvaney, 1992. "The Alpine Cultural Heritage in Perspective", in Scougall (ed) *Cultural Heritage of the Australian Alps* (Canberra: Alpine Alps Liaison Committee, 1992) 9

Under the umbrella of a social movement the environment was accorded a position that ecology could not be accorded. It could be placed within a politico-institutional framework and imbued with legal status through proxy representation. The environment became an independent entity worthy of discussion on its own merits rather than in connection with something else. 'Ecology' could not be easily imagined as a unit of being; 'the environment' could. A broad, complex unit of being, certainly, encompassing such diverse subjects as whales, rainforests, polar icecaps, native grasses, uranium mines and urban parks, but a single unit of being for the purposes of political and legal status nonetheless. Within the broad parameters of such a conception, the environment movement changed the constructs of 'ecology' to virtual personification, evident in such terms, popularised during the apocalyptic era, as 'Mother Earth', 'Spaceship Earth' and 'Gaia'. In assuming this terminology, and the fact that Gaia was in danger of apparent total destruction, there existed a need for representation of that which could not speak for itself.

In taking the role of environmental arbiter the environment movement and its political alliances, take the general position that nature and humans, in sharing the one community, are also subject to the same laws and justice and that, insofar as nature is not able to defend itself in the world of human justice, it requires the intermediary assistance of a social movement. An ecocentric analysis would place human society in the position of conforming to nature rather than nature requiring legal assistance in the human world. Leopold alluded to this predication in "The Land Ethic" when he described an ecological ethic as "a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence."<sup>12</sup> Natural order is not subject to human control, nor is it sensitive to human requirements. Pre-scientific man, when confronted by forces beyond his control, might have attributed flood, fire, famine, drought and other destructive

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<sup>12</sup> Aldo Leopold *A Sand County Almanac* Special Commemorative Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 202

natural phenomena to the wrath of any one or number of deities who would need to be appeased before conditions became benign. Modern rational man simply tries to alter the natural situation to make it more suitable for human activity. Hence, the courses of rivers are altered to provide water where it is 'needed'; snow is artificially made when nature 'fails' to provide sufficient for winter sports; and vegetation 'control' by burning occurs in Autumn to promote growth of the 'right' species in Spring and to reduce the 'hazards' of bushfires and snakes in Summer. Droughts and floods are not regarded as natural cyclic occurrences, but risks to be 'managed'. Nature's perceived shortcomings are addressed with maximum application of human technology. Thus, when the rain falls in September instead of November and the Australian wheat harvest is ruined, or an unseasonal frost wipes out the Brazilian coffee crop, or millions of cattle on the US Western plains are lost to drought, then 'fault' can be attributed to nature, not humankind, who has done everything humanly possible to avert such disasters. In human experience and understanding, nature is anarchic and arbitrary. There is no concept of fairness or retribution; good is not rewarded nor bad punished. If it is unrealistic to expect nature to conform to human laws, it is likely just as unrealistic to expect this natural order to apply in modern human society.

With the weakening of the preservationist ideology and its political practice, the emergence of the environment movement created a new entity, 'the environment', the representation of which required a new approach, perception, set of laws and lines of demarcation. Within sectors of the environment movement there is a definite demarcation between what is 'nature' and what is 'human' and a strong perception of the mutual exclusivity and incompatibility of the two. The broad social framework of the newly emergent environment movement in the wake of *Silent Spring* allowed for the demarcation between the 'natural' and 'human' realms to be represented by the contesting green



dialogues of deep ecology and shallow environmentalism<sup>13</sup>. Ideologically, almost spiritually, based, the deep ecological perspective has remained largely outside the socially-based movement which has recognised the need for change in the way humankind interacts with nature. These changes, it was apparent from the outset, were social and required a revolution in order to recreate a central institutional strength that would address the need for change and effect such changes through legislation.

*Green movement discourses: deep and light green*

Deep ecology sought to remove the human-nature separation and place humankind, environmentally, on an equal footing with all other living creatures. Although essentially an anthropocentric concept rather than indicative of a natural evolutionary process, deep ecology represents a deliberate and philosophical move towards accepting nature as the central arbiter of all life rather than a world dominated by human technology. So while accepting the fundamental differences between human and biotic communities, the deep ecological philosophy respects the forces at work within non-human communities and seeks not to alter their natural course but to cooperate with them as a neighbour within the environmental community as a whole. Further to the constitution of communities, the concept of choice is instrumental in the way in which humans view their relative position in the environment. A human agent has a moral and political choice of how and where they conduct their lives. A deep ecologist chooses to take a specific moral position in regard to non-human species, while kookaburras, tapeworms and polar bears do not have the capacity, either environmentally or biologically, to alter their lives according to ethical or political considerations. Equality of position is a human

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<sup>13</sup> Sessions and Devall, 1985, "Deep Ecology" in VanDeVeer & Pierce, (1994) op cit.; also Bookchin, 1988, "Social Ecology Versus Deep Ecology" in VanDeVeer and Pierce (1994) op cit.

invention, not an evolutionary or natural axiom. Accordingly, Arne Naess's maxim of deep ecology, the "equal right to live and blossom"<sup>14</sup>, could easily be translated into the elusive 'level playing field' of modern political jargon. Deep ecology gives each living species only the right to an equal chance at survival, not the guarantee that this will translate into a long and fruitful life. The hypothetical level playing field, likewise, gives only theoretical equal opportunity for political agents to survive in the socio-political jungle, with no guarantee of success.

In political terms, then, it could thus be argued that the opposing views of the deep ecologists and the social environmental movement represent a variance that occurred within the green movement itself. Deep ecology eschewed a political position, leaning instead towards the natural flow of evolution and survival wherein humankind's position is of no greater consequence than that of other species or ecosystems, allowing nature to strike its own balance. The green movement, however, saw a political position as the only way of liberating nature from oppression in the same way as other unrepresented groups required liberation, thus acknowledging the lack of balance between nature and humankind but allowing moral considerability to nature. The positioning of the environment in the social democratic political paradigm is a means of achieving an economy to serve the best interests of all humankind equally and not according to wealth or class, giving rise to such terms as, 'green economy', 'green development', 'green employment' and, more vaguely, 'greening politics'. However, while these may well comprise the foundation and platform of Green politics, they are not an ecocentric ideology.

The separate green discourses of deep ecology and social environmentalism broadly define a number of other variances within the modern environment

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<sup>14</sup> Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary", in *Debating the Earth: The Environmental Politics Reader*, Dryzek and Schlosberg, eds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 353

movement that have both advanced its standing in the political arena, and hindered its progress in achieving aims. In much the same way as the fable of the blind Indians who, when asked to describe an elephant, all described the part of the animal they were able to conceptualise through touch, the green movement also has a number of different aspects according to those immediately affected. 'Saving the environment' is a very broad mission statement, but attempts to narrow it down or concentrate on simpler and more tangible aims are frequently met with opposition. Such political manifestations of environmentalism as eco-feminism, eco-socialism, eco-anarchism, eco-fascism, free market environmentalism and ecologically sustainable development<sup>15</sup> coexist as conflicting discourses under a wide, green umbrella. These sub-categories of environmentalism reflect the eclectic nature of the movement. Conflicting discourses, far from weakening the structure of a movement, provide it with a broad theoretical base from which to proceed towards social change. Within the early environmental movement, then, the reaction to the predicted imminent ecological apocalypse was multifarious and universal, adhering to the single principle of reversing the ecological apocalypse but beyond that, creating a broad environmental philosophy on which to build an eco-political structure.

#### *Tradition and value in the creation of a political ecology*

The basis of the green movement is values. As discussed in the previous chapter, in establishing a political basis, the social movements assumed a left-wing political position. Apocalypticism itself was characterised by the weakening of the previous institutional model built on the values of a conservative political position and the emergence of social movements were accompanied by a resurgent left in response to the weakened right. While the

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<sup>15</sup> T.Doyle *Green Power* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000)

ideology of the left was appropriate to the rise of movements supporting equality and liberation, it was also a convergence of a number of social and political factors that created the opportune set of circumstances for a melding of left-wing political values and the need for social change. While the ethical position of the environment movement opposes humankind's domination of the environment at the expense of other species<sup>16</sup>, the traditional position of the left seeks to prevent capitalism from dominating and exploiting the proletariat. In both positions the basic measure is the constancy of resources to sustain all users equally: the ideal State of Nature. Far from the idyllic Eden visualised by the faithful, however, life in the State of Nature, be it the environmental or political State of Nature is indeed, as Hobbes postulated, 'nasty, brutish and short'. Politically, Darwinistic thought has given capitalism its basis for justification of economic and political hegemony. This, according, to Peter Singer, has been "fatally incompatible" with the left: Darwin's theory of evolution "dashed the left's Great Dream (of) The Perfectibility of Man."<sup>17</sup> Environmentally, it is the theory of evolution that has allowed the human species to ascend the food chain to its position of dominance. Every species began on the level playing field at the dawning of Life on Earth, but the most adaptable species inevitably evolved in such a way as to dominate and tip the balance of life in its favour. Ironically, it is natural selection and evolution that have put humankind at the top of the evolutionary pecking order along with our nuclear weapons, carbon emissions and global free trade. A return to a natural order, whereby humans become no more worthy or important than any other species, is, in fact, a contradiction in evolutionary terms.

This is not to say, of course, that the human species cannot, or should not, look to values inherent in nature in order to address problems of their own making. Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with several hundred centuries of

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<sup>16</sup> J.Porrirt (1984) op cit; also Brown and Singer, *The Greens* (Melbourne: The Text Press, 1996)

<sup>17</sup> Singer (1999), op cit., 24

societal and technical development behind us, human predictions were that life within the biosphere would be unsustainable into the future unless we changed or altered the course of technical and industrial advancement. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) was established in 1972 to address the growing body of scientific evidence that the future of human development was not ecologically sustainable. Industrialism, rather than a yardstick of human achievement, began to be regarded as having grown beyond the earth's capacity to maintain its expansion.

Who, then, if anyone, is best qualified to speak for nature? While it is beyond question that the human species has a duty of care to the planet that supports us, what is not clear is how this duty should be executed or expressed. The green movement has generally assumed the task of representing nature, but the movement itself is a highly complex system and no single view within that system can be taken as representative of the movement as a whole. The very concept of representation of nature, also, is constantly haunted by the spectre of anthropocentrism, with humanity acting according to what is best for humans rather than nature or taking a patriarchal approach in presuming what is best for nature. With the weakening of the preservationist approach and the social revolution that followed, social movements sought to speak for, and liberate, oppressed groups of humans. It is a relatively simple theoretical task to recognise the suffering of other humans and act on their behalf to end that suffering or inequity, it is a quantum leap to recognise suffering and inequality in an unquantifiable concept and presume to speak on its behalf. Western (and many Eastern) religious traditions unashamedly take an anthropocentric view and assumes that what is good for humanity is good for nature, but in so doing, it draws a clear distinction between what is human and what is nature. Given that much of human culture is based on religion, it is relevant to examine the influence of religious values on environmentalism in terms of representation.

*The influence and role of religious tradition*

There is a strong and vexatious connection between religion and environmentalism which has been instrumental in the alienation of nature from the realm of mankind. The Judaeo-Christian belief, enunciated in the Book of Genesis, that mankind has dominion over the natural environment is held by many to be fundamental to the view of the environment as a collection of resources for human use:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

And God blessed them, and God said to them,

'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'<sup>18</sup>

Passmore, drawing upon a dialogue between Socrates and Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic*, points out that while the Old Testament dictate has been interpreted as giving mankind absolute rights to the non-human environment and precludes the rights of non-human animals, an increasingly popular interpretation is that of the analogy of the shepherd, who tends his flock with only the well-being of his charges in mind<sup>19</sup>. Under this interpretation, mankind is given stewardship of the environment which he must nurture for the ultimate beneficence and judgment of God. Singer refutes this point, referring back to Genesis, where the dictate of dominion is repeated to Noah after the deluge wherein "the rest of creation was nearly wiped out to punish man for his wickedness"<sup>20</sup>:

And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.

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<sup>18</sup> Genesis 1:26

<sup>19</sup> J. Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature* (London: Duckworth & Co, 1974) 9

<sup>20</sup> P.Singer, *Animal Liberation* (London: Pimlico, 1995) 187

And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hands are they delivered.

Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.<sup>21</sup>

Instilling the fear and dread of mankind into every non-human species on earth does not appear to be entirely in the spirit of a good shepherd tending his flock for the animals' well-being. Despite arguments that a love of all species is central to Christianity<sup>22</sup>, it remains that with the sole exception of St Francis of Assisi, there is no evidence in the Judaeo-Christian tradition that mankind has ever regarded, or been required to regard, nature as anything other than a storehouse of resources to be used exclusively for human ends and to which storehouse humans alone have been handed the key.

Humankind, not ecology, is the foundation stone of Christianity, if not the broader Christian ethic as espoused by such writers as Linzey and Passmore. The connection between Christianity, the Christian-based Western tradition in regard to the standing of nature and its political position is philosophically extrapolated by Kant, who wrote of mankind that:

... [a]s the single being upon earth that possesses understanding, he is certainly titular lord of nature and, supposing we regard nature as a teleological system, he is born to be its ultimate end.<sup>23</sup>

This accords with post-industrial and capitalist humankind's view of the purpose of the environment being purely for the benefit of the human species. Suppose, however, that we do not regard nature as a teleological system, but rather as one based on deontic logic? This would infer that humans have an

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<sup>21</sup> Genesis 9:1, quoted in *ibid*.

<sup>22</sup> Rev. Dr A. Linzey, 1990. "For God So Loved the World", *Between the Species*, Vol.6 No.1, reprinted in VanDeVeer & Pierce (eds) (1994) *op cit*.

<sup>23</sup> Kant, *Critique of Teleological Judgment*, quoted in Passmore (1974) *op cit*. 15

inherent duty towards the environment, and that, furthermore, actions involving nature would be based upon the constitution of 'right' as opposed to what would produce the best outcome. Deep ecologists might regard the environment thus, as acting in the interests of goals or outcomes would impose a long-term value judgment on what constitutes 'good' in the context of nature which, as an entity, has no provision or ability itself for acting on the grounds of foresight or of morally judging a set of potential outcomes of that action.

Eckersley points out that:

... it is problematic to invoke a presumed telos in nature as a justification for social ecology or indeed any political theory, since even if we assume that such a telos accorded with the picture of modern science ... this does not in itself tell us why we *ought* to follow it.<sup>24</sup>

Acting from an ethical obligation or duty, on the other hand, would remove the need and relevance of anthropocentric goals-oriented value judgments and place ethical action in the same temporal and spatial planes as the environment itself: that is, the present.

The green political movement of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries has not fully addressed the original concerns of the environment movement insofar as presenting an 'alternative' politics was the aim of the early movement<sup>25</sup>, and has, instead, focused its attention on forming strategic alliances with the aim of electoral success<sup>26</sup>. While the participants and followers of green politics may regard this as a logical step in the long road to political representation of the environment, it has not introduced anything original into political theory, but "merely presented the old project of modernity in a new guise."<sup>27</sup> Beyond the

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<sup>24</sup> R.Eckersley (1992), *op cit.* 155

<sup>25</sup> D.Hutton, "What is Green Politics?", in Hutton (ed) *Green Politics in Australia* (North Ryde: Angus & Robertson, 1987) 3

<sup>26</sup> I.Blühdorn, 1997. "A Theory of Post-Ecologist Politics", *Environmental Politics* Vol.6 No.3, pp.125-147

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.* 128



rhetoric, there is little of substance to justify any claim that the Greens have transcended the traditional left-right political spectrum but rather that they do, in fact, rely on alliances. Much as these alliances may be based on ethics of justice and environmentalism, while they remain rooted to the liberal capitalist political system, they are irremovable from either left or right. Only the position on the spectrum can be altered.

### *Values and alliances in the Snowy case study*

The focus on values – the value of the river as a riparian ecosystem, a place of beauty, a focal point for a number of towns, a physical presence – as opposed to value – the economic value of the river in generating hydro power or providing irrigation, and a strong sense of the present, were keys to the Snowy River campaign. George Seddon believes that the chronicling of the Snowy River is made difficult because, “(the river) has no historical, social or political reality; *parts* of it have mattered a great deal in various ways at various times, but only as a part of a different fabric.”<sup>28</sup> This division of the river into parts, however, denies any constancy in human relationship with the Snowy, facilitating the rational, development-oriented approach towards it as an economic resource. Seddon sees the river as neatly compartmentalised into sections that have meaning for specific purposes rather than the flowing, living whole, which, from source to mouth has been of immense significance for a wide and diverse region. How can a dam have historical, social or political meaning for only a section of a river? While the people of old Adaminaby and Jindabyne lost their towns and connection with the land and the physical presence of the river as the lakes were flooded, downstream from the Jindabyne Dam the river was also lost as it dwindled to less than 1% of its original flow.

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<sup>28</sup> G.Seddon, 1997, *Landprints: Reflections on Land and Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 51

The loss of the river at Dalgety and further downstream was felt every bit as acutely as it was in the towns that were relocated during the construction of the Snowy Scheme.

In seeking change to the situation brought about by the harnessing of the river, the Dalgety community drew on the values that they, as a community, saw in the river. These were not influenced by political or green movement ideology, but by a temporal and spatial relationship that was immediate. It was important that the river was restored for its ecological health, but also for the benefit of the communities from Jindabyne to the Tasman that had lost their relationship with the river when the dam was built. In discussions and interviews with the women who ran the campaign, issues such as intergenerational justice, environmental health and the importance of the river's presence to the community surfaced as key values. A further key that emerged was the fact that, as women with family commitments, they were simply unable to drop everything and focus entirely on lobbying and campaigning. Chair of the DDCA, Jo Garland, commented almost apologetically that she was unable to go to Sydney to lobby or attend meetings as her husband works full time and therefore couldn't be expected to care for their young children during her absence.<sup>29</sup> Of necessity, this focus on home, family and community kept the campaign in a spatial and temporal relationship with its subject. Campaigns that are played out in courts, boardrooms or legislative chambers are less likely to have the full support of the community they affect.

Much of the success of the Snowy campaign rests in its extra-political approach wherein a local issue, albeit of national significance, and local values, albeit with universal application, were maintained as the *only* driving forces. Institutional politics, represented by the governments involved in the Snowy negotiations, was the authority to which the campaign appealed for legislation that would save the river, but the ideology that drives politics – left, right or

green – was never a driving factor in the campaign itself. Alliances were made with all stakeholders at various points of the campaign. These alliances were, in essence, ‘political’ in that they were formed as a means to an end, but unlike the green movement or green politics, the extra-political approach of the campaign allowed the alliances to operate beyond the left-right basis of the political establishment.

### *Left-right-green: finding a balance*

Whilst it has been my contention that environmentalism is not an ideology *per se*, and can therefore be grafted onto existing ideologies, it is important to note the arguments of Dobson<sup>30</sup> and Vincent<sup>31</sup> that ecology has transcended the limitations of science to become an ideology itself. In terms of the equivocal nature of the question of environmental representation, the implication of an ecological ideology removes the necessity for political representation. Ecologism, thus defined, represents itself. There are two major perceived weaknesses with this view with regard to both the environment movement and with the period of green politics that emerged as a result of the movement. In the first instance, an ecological ideology which formed to represent the environment would still require humans to speak on its behalf. The concept of ‘ecological thinking’<sup>32</sup>, that is, an ecocentrally-based social theory of total-environment stewardship, may approximate the social aspects of ecologism to form the basis of a post-political ecology (to be discussed further in Chapter 8), however, its ideological basis is questionable insofar as it does not proffer specific normative political and social ideals and methodology.

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with Jo Garland, April 2002. Transcript in possession of author.

<sup>30</sup> A.Dobson *Green Political Thought* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Routledge, 1995)

<sup>31</sup> A.Vincent, 1993. “The Character of Ecology” *Environmental Politics* Vol.2, No.2, pp 248-276

<sup>32</sup> M.Mulligan and S.Hill *Ecological Pioneers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and D.Russell, 1990, “Social Ecology and the Greening of the Australian Mind”, A keynote paper presented at the Inaugural Green Seminars, Sydney, February 1990

The importance of nature, and the crux of the ecocentric view is, according to Dobson, "the recognition ... that there are natural limits to human aspirations" and the "strong sense in which the natural world is taken as a model for the human world"<sup>33</sup>. The interdependence and interrelationships between species within ecosystems, and between ecosystems is the model used largely by the green movement for human social and political arrangements. Political environmentalism, or 'ecologism' in Dobson's terminology, sees the ideal organisation of the human world as a democratic and equal society based on tolerance and tradition.<sup>34</sup> Nature, according to this view, far from being competitive and hierarchical, is "pacific, tranquil, lush - and green."<sup>35</sup> This is a long way from the Hobbesian view of life in the 'state of nature'. Both views, however, are simply 'views' of how nature might be. Neither are experiences of how nature is, and it is here that the supposedly ecocentric ideals of the green movement blur considerably with anthropocentric visions of utopia. Through recognition of environmental holism and the value of each species within that whole including themselves, and as the only species that has a sense of the future, mankind can assume the role of moral agents for the Earth. Given this, I would contend that the ideology of green politics is based largely on power relations and competitiveness, rather than holism, and is therefore not necessarily ecocentric in its approach to politics. Indeed, it owes much of its underlying politicisation to the existing power relationship between the left and the right and the dominant liberal-capitalist system.

The second perceived weakness in the theory of ecological ideology is in the context of the socio-political system under which it operates. It remains that, within the liberal-capitalist political system, the green movement has been most successful in achieving its ends when it has worked within the parameters of

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<sup>33</sup> A. Dobson *Green Political Thought*, second edition (Routledge, London, 1995) 24

<sup>34</sup> *ibid* 24

<sup>35</sup> *ibid* 24

the dominant political system. As a social movement, environmentalism co-opted the scientific discipline of ecology, and simplified a range of issues to one overarching premise: the health of the planet and its long-term ability to sustain life depends on human action. In order to achieve a positive environmental outcome, the green movement has worked first against, during the revolutionary period, and secondly within, the liberal-capitalist structure. Any ideology has remained thus far peripheral to the issue-action-outcome mechanics of the movement that has driven environmental policy and thought for the past four decades: "Ecology is seen to transcend ideology altogether and with it the traditional terms of political debate."<sup>36</sup> By adhering to a specific ideology which, as Vincent points out, transcends political debate, the green movement would risk completely disengaging from the political decision-making process.

Despite this, however, the left-right political spectrum, which defined the parameters of global politics over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, initially presented the emerging environment movement in the 1960s and its successors, the green parties, with an ideological conundrum. Even while the Greens drew a sizeable proportion of their supporters from the left through the radical protest movements<sup>37</sup>, to fully embrace the ideology of the left would, on the one hand, mean compromising many of their own ideals, and on the other hand, risk alienating any supporters who drifted in from the right. The green movement has, since its political debut in the 1970s, promoted and highlighted its differences from the mainstream political parties and ideologies. Through the use of such terms as "new politics"<sup>38</sup> and "anti-party party"<sup>39</sup> the Greens have

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<sup>36</sup> Vincent, op cit 249

<sup>37</sup> Lynn G.Bennie et al, 1995, "Green Dimensions: The Ideology of the British Greens", *Green Politics*, No.3, pp 217-239

<sup>38</sup> Brown and Singer (1996) op cit., 92

<sup>39</sup> P.Kelly, "Towards a Green Europe, Towards a Green World", *Nonviolence Speaks to Power* (Honolulu: Center for Global Nonviolence Planning Project, 1992) published electronically: <http://www2.hawaii.edu/uhip/green.txt>

pursued an identity away from the political establishment. Environmental activist and founder of the German Greens (*Die Grünen*), the late Petra Kelly, coined the slogan, "neither left nor right but ahead"<sup>40</sup>, to encapsulate the differences of the green ideology, which, while political in nature sought to position itself apart from the hierarchy and system. The practice of politics by slogans, adopted enthusiastically by the Greens, may aid in the recruitment of new members and appeal to a media hungry for the 5-second sound-bite, but it does not necessarily stand up to scrutiny of its substance. "Neither left nor right but ahead", at one level places political representation of the environment apart from human politics, yet at the same time seeks to redefine the concept of politics while keeping an adversarial difference between conflicting ideologies. Instead of a linear left-right political spectrum the Greens have imagined a triangular structure with themselves at the apex.

The left-right index is itself an indicator of political ideology. Singer believes the gradual departure of social democracy from the traditional ideals of the left has resulted in the substantial weakening of the left's position. This, he believes, can be used to propagate a new politics, the focus being "not so much with the left as a politically organised force, as with the left as a broad body of thought, a spectrum of ideas about achieving a better society."<sup>41</sup> Based on the general notion that the theory of evolution is not so much 'survival of the fittest', as survival of those most able to adapt, and coupled with the left's belief in the malleability of human nature "because it has provided grounds for hoping that a very different kind of human society is possible"<sup>42</sup>, Singer proposes a red-green politics in which "we could seek to encourage a broader sense of our interests, in which we seek to build on the social and cooperative side of our nature, in addition to the individualistic and competitive side."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Singer (1999) *op cit.* 6

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, 24

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, 43

Despite Singer's view, however, and the fact that the environmental movement, like the peace and women's movements, grew from the radical left, the social democratic view of nature has been more one of conservation and preservation of resources for the sake of, firstly, a social democratic economy and secondly, future generations of humans. In Australia, the preservation of areas of wilderness for the sake of non-human ecosystems was a priority for social democratic governments in the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most notably the 1983 election promise, later honoured, of the Hawke Labor government to save the Franklin River. In many cases, however, it has been tempting to take the cynical point of view and argue that declarations of wilderness protection are not so much for the sake of non-human ecosystems as for the sake of political survival of the party most able to adapt to public opinion in favour of the environment.

From the 1980s, attempts to enjoin the political establishment and the environment movement have been made through alliances or coalitions between social democratic and green parties. From the position of the Greens, alignment with social democrats affords 'mainstream' electoral credibility among voters who may otherwise regard environmental politics as too radical or marginal as well as a broader social and economic platform, while for the social democrats it provides a strong environmental platform. Theoretically, at least, such coalitions should be successful at both electoral and policy levels. However, in instances of red-green alliances, the expectations of green party membership on their elected members, and lack of ideological compatibility in decision-making have affected the flexibility of both parties and thus of government as a whole. This has also resulted in internal problems, particularly within the Greens, and the creation of procedural and semantic obstacles that have at times overshadowed more pressing issues. The next chapter will examine in detail red-green alliances, specifically the Tasmanian Labor-Green Accord of 1989-91, the SPD-*Die Grünen* coalition in the German *Bundestag* in the

1990s to the current time, and the recent Labour-Green alliance in the New Zealand parliament. Where the Greens are the moral agents acting in the interests of nature, social democrats act in the interests of nature when it, in turn, suits the interests of the human population. This has meant that both parties have had to compromise their positions, and while the concept of political compromise may sit comfortably with a more traditional party, a significant proportion of the Greens' membership takes an uncompromising ecocentric view<sup>44</sup> and regards anything less as 'selling out' for political expedience. This brings into focus the question of the fundamental suitability of an ecocentric ideology for political purposes.

The term, 'political purposes', is essentially outcomes-based, and refers to the results obtained from political process. Given that practical politics seeks to optimise conditions and promote behaviours to reflect the ideological basis of the group, party or individual that holds power at any given time, it follows that 'political purposes' will be those optimised conditions and resultant behaviours. There are two problematics in this with regard to ecocentrism. Firstly, the basis of ecocentrism consists in equity and diversity among species; secondly, ecocentrism does not afford manipulation of conditions for a specific outcome. This is not to say that an ecocentric ideology should not be a consideration in political practice, but in terms of political purposes, the socially-based anthropocentric environmentalism, is far more acceptable and easily moulded to suit existing ideologies. In terms of the question of political representation of the environment according to existing ideologies, it remains that the green movement is consistently perceived, both from within the movement itself and by its opponents, as politically left-wing. While the political purposes of the green movement may be best served by left-wing ideology, it is relevant to question what left-wing political purpose is served by such an alliance.

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<sup>44</sup>Bennie et al (1995) op cit.



It would be wrong to assume that the ideological and political alliance between red and green is a natural phenomenon or that it represents all aspects of both. In consideration of achieving political purposes, there is greater strength in unity. The green movement and left-wing political parties have, through campaigning together on specific issues, achieved mutually acceptable outcomes. Increasing public awareness and concern for environmental issues has raised the political profile of the environment as a legitimate political actor, and the 'green vote' is a strong electoral incentive to political parties seeking to win or maintain power. It is important to note, however, that chasing the 'green vote' is not purely the prerogative of left-wing parties, and that parties of the right have frequently adopted environmental positions and implemented policies designed to enhance their electoral chances, and while many red-green alliances have foundered on compromised ideals and ideological incompatibility, the notion has arisen of alignments between the green movement and the parties of the conservative right.

Politics, perhaps surprisingly, has provided considerable common ground between greens and conservatives. In 1999, German Green Environment Minister, Jürgen Trittin, stated in an interview that, "on the basis of his experience, there was no longer much to choose between the SPD and the CDU (Christian Democrat Union)"<sup>45</sup>, and that as a result, "the Greens should no longer be in thrall to the Social Democrats but should be prepared to consider the Christian Democrats as potential coalition partners."<sup>46</sup> With the broadening politicisation of the green manifesto to encompass a social agenda, and the traditional concern of the left with labour, industry and big government, the connection between democratic socialism and environmentalism, however traditional it may be, is not necessarily a natural one. The weakened position of the left, and the subsequent blurring of the distinction between social democrats

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<sup>45</sup> C. Lees, 1999, "The Red-Green Coalition", *German Politics*, Vol.8 No.2, 174

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

and conservatives has opened the door for green-conservative alliances along such policy lines as decentralisation and targeting specific issues of environmental concern, rather than the 'big picture' favoured by social democratic governments. There is also a startling similarity between the Greens and the New Right in their tendency to take the high moral ground and insist on certain standards of behaviour from communities. Combined with a 'greener than thou' approach is the rampant populism and attention-getting outbursts which, at the German *länd* level, has been a confusing oscillation between SPD alignment and conservative SPD opposition. Kolinsky suggests that the conservative reaction of the Greens against the SPD, even while the latter has been in government, was, in the early days of Green representation in government, an attempt at establishing a party identity separate from the democratic socialists<sup>47</sup>. This manifested, for example, in Bremen, as support for private schools, and in Baden-Württemberg as opposition to regional schools in favour of village schools "to provide a more balanced environment" – a suggestion previously made in the 1950s by the CDU.<sup>48</sup>

Eckersley disputes the link between environmentalism and the conservative position on ecocentric grounds. Whilst admitting certain superficial commonality between the Greens and conservatives in such areas as caution in embracing new technology, conserving things of value as a link with the past, and also the possibility of tracing some green political thought back to conservative roots, she rejects the idea that these form a common pool of political ideology.<sup>49</sup> German (CDU) Chancellor Kohl, and British (Conservative) Prime Minister Thatcher both contributed to the development of their nations' environmental policy through creation and strengthening of environmental ministries, but, from an ecocentric perspective, there still exists a gaping canyon

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<sup>47</sup> E.Kolinsky, *Parties, Opposition and Society in West Germany* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1984) 322

<sup>48</sup> *ibid* 323

<sup>49</sup> R.Eckersley (1992) *op cit.* 21

between such political actions as these, and the ideology that gives environmentalism its "distinctly radical political edge"<sup>50</sup>, especially when viewed against the Thatcher government's economic rationalist, pro-nuclear, militaristic and pro-development policies. Critiques of social democratic-green alliances, and the validity of claims that conservative-green alliances are environmentally and politically viable will be examined in Chapter 4, however, this recalls the distinction between political purposes and the ideologies underpinning political discourse. In implementing environmental policy, a government is not representing the environment in the first instance. It is representing its own interests and the interests of its constituents. If there were more votes to be gained in taking an anti- or neutral-environment stance, many - it is speculative to suggest all - governments would take that direction rather than try to convince the electorate of the benefits of environmentalism. Where conservative parties have led social democrat parties in environmental policy, the outcome has been based on conservative ideology, not ecological ideology.

The comparison between the approaches taken towards the environment and resource management by social democrat governments across the political paradigms before and after the rise of the green movement is evident in the differences between the Chifley and Hawke governments' managerial approaches to efficient use of water resources in the SMHEA. In the former case optimal efficiency was measured in services and agricultural productivity; in the latter, the coefficient was economic. In neither case was the environment considered as an agent of significance.

### *The new representation*

In 1991 the Hawke Labor Government announced plans to corporatise the SMHEA as a result of a review of the Authority's managerial and institutional

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<sup>50</sup> *ibid* 22

efficiency. At the time of the announcement, the concern of the three governments involved, those of the Commonwealth, New South Wales and Victoria, was the Authority's ability to compete in the National Electricity Market, established under the National Competition Policy<sup>51</sup>. The first parliamentary mention of the review was in May 1991, when the Member for Fraser (ACT), Mr John Langmore, put a question to the Minister for Resources, Mr Alan Griffiths, asking if the ACT was to be included in the review of the Authority and if, as a result of changes to the institutional structure the cost of electricity to ACT consumers would rise<sup>52</sup>. There was no indication at that point of environmental concerns. The Snowy Mountains Scheme was completed in 1974. The presence of the SMHEA in the Shires of Cooma-Monaro and Snowy River was, and is, regarded positively in terms of employment, local economy and tourism. The lakes of Eucumbene and Jindabyne have provided a summer tourist attraction for the region to complement the popularity of winter sports in the mountains and the environmental impact on the national park is apparent only along the pipelines, situated away from the main roads to the ski resorts. In addition, the Authority maintained all the access roads around the lakes, as well as many within the Kosciusko National Park in cooperation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. On May 14<sup>th</sup> 1991, in response to Langmore's question, the Minister for Resources concluded:

... I think everyone in the House would agree that an important scheme such as the Snowy, with the massive investment that the Australian people have placed in it, does require a commitment by everyone to ensure that over time the necessary refurbishment takes place to ensure that the Snowy goes into the next century as an important entity in its own right, and, perhaps even more

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<sup>51</sup> *Snowy Water Inquiry Issues Paper* (Sydney: Snowy Water Inquiry, 1998)

<sup>52</sup> Langmore, recorded in Hansard, House of Representatives, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1991, p.3627

importantly, as possibly a central component of the emerging developments in terms of the national electricity grid.<sup>53</sup>

The Hawke government was Australia's first (and last) environmentally conscious Federal government in terms of proactive environmental decisions and actively courting the green vote. In 1991, however, the issue surrounding the corporatisation of the SMHEA was not environmental except in terms of continued supply of hydro-electricity in a competitive market. Any ecological damage that had occurred as a result of the scheme was unavoidable and the result of a less environmentally-enlightened age. Green politics was making optimistic progress in 1991, with Western Australian Greens Senators Dee Margetts and Christobel Chamarette holding the balance of power in the Upper House. Five Green Independent MPs in the Tasmanian parliament, led by Dr Bob Brown, a key figure from the Franklin campaign and Tasmanian MP since 1983, had formally supported the state Labor government in an alliance since 1989. In 1990 the 'green' vote had handed Prime Minister Hawke his fourth term of office and the outlook for environmentalism in Australia was positive. With such heightened environmental consciousness, how was it possible for the announcement of corporatisation of the Snowy to pass by the environmental organisations, Green parties and environmental activists without anyone mentioning the state of the Snowy River and the opportunity to redress the ecological damage that had been done?

By the time the *Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Bill 1997* passed the Lower House of the Federal Parliament, the environmental issues of the Snowy River were enshrined in the legislative debate. It was not due to the environment movement, however, that the *Australian Government Bills Digest 70* notes concerns regarding:

- the timing of the legislation (ie. prior to the environmental study);

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<sup>53</sup> Griffiths, recorded in *ibid.*

- the handing over of control to a corporate entity for 75 years with a 50 year renewal option;
- the flow rate of the Snowy River;
- the likelihood that if any changes are made to increase the water flow rate, compensation must be paid to the corporate entity/private company; and
- the effect on the native fish population.<sup>54</sup>

The campaign to save the Snowy River that started in 1991 at the time of announcement of intent to corporatise the Snowy was initiated and implemented at local community level. In this it was similar to the early environmental campaigns, but unlike those for the Little Desert or Colong Caves, this was a campaign to restore a damaged ecological system, not protect an undamaged one from development. The political representation of nature had, in this case, failed to recognise that a problem existed, and in its place was a social representation: a post-political construct of nature.

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<sup>54</sup> Australian Parliamentary Library, 1997-98 Bills Digest 70

## Chapter 4

### Red-green alliances: green democratisation and integrationism

*If we don't do the impossible, we shall be faced with the unthinkable* – Petra Kelly

#### *The mainstreaming of nature: contextual background*

The key to the allegiance between environmentalism and left-wing politics has been a consistent overlap in ideological approach to the interface between the human-nature dualism. Hay argues that it is democratic socialism which, in fact, is the least suited to an eco-political approach<sup>1</sup>. However, the overlapping green-red ideologies in respect of the equal right of all people to work of a “socially useful and ecologically benign nature”<sup>2</sup> have provided the platform for advancement of environmental issues under the general auspice of post-Marxist politics. Formal and informal red-green alliances have been a function of politics in Western Europe and Australasia for over a decade: Hay’s observation concerning the incompatibility of the two has been balanced in practice by Petra Kelly’s observation about achieving the impossible.

This chapter will explore these red-green alliances, the improbabilities surrounding their very existence, and the ecological and political philosophies underpinning them. Additionally, it is intended to propose a case for the alliance of environmental politics with the left-wing against the scenario of an alliance with the right-wing. Specifically, I will examine red-green alliances and coalitions that have existed in Germany, Tasmania and New Zealand, against the Tasmanian Green-Liberal alliance. A comparative analysis is not believed to be relevant due to the different natures of the alliances: the German alliance (1998-2002 and reelected 2002) is a formal coalition national government in a

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<sup>1</sup> P.Hay, *Main Currents in Western Environmental Thought* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002) 255-259

<sup>2</sup> J.Munday, “From Red to Green”, in Hutton (ed) *Green Politics in Australia* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1987) 119

Federal state, Tasmania's (1989-1991) was a formalised written alliance at state level, while New Zealand's (1999-2002) was an informal alliance at national level in a non-federal state. While there are certainly grounds for some comparison, and these will be explored, the analysis will largely concentrate on each according to its strengths, weaknesses and future potential.

The influence of the ecological concerns raised in the 1960s and 70s on the general political agenda of the 1980s and 90s signalled the mainstreaming of environmentalism: the democratisation and integration of the green movement. While it is important to note that this was not the sole prerogative of social democrat parties or of the political left, the centrality of the liberal-capitalist economy to right-wing political ideology has ensured commodification of the environment, rather than integration or democratisation as an issue of independent standing. The independence, perceived and actual, of environmentalism as both political issue and political actor is the crux of this chapter.

### *Social democrats and greens: antagonists or allies?*

The ambiguity of an issue that is at once mainstream and radical is illustrated in the relationship between the US Democrat Party and the US Greens and its effect on the outcome of the 2000 US Presidential election. On Thursday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, three days after the ballot, the *Sydney Morning Herald* published an article entitled, "For the Democrats, the Nader candidacy was unsafe at any speed"<sup>3</sup>. Written by a Washington correspondent, the article laid the blame for the close result and likely victory for Bush squarely at the feet of the Green Party candidate:

Nader's role was most decisive in Florida, the election-winning State where, had Mr Nader not been a candidate, a substantial proportion

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<sup>3</sup> Y. Abraham, 2000, "For the Democrats, the Nader candidacy was unsafe at any speed", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2000, p.9



of his 94,000 votes would have gone to Mr Gore, making him the clear winner in the State – and the country.

Mr Nader's votes in Oregon would also have been enough to award that State to Mr Gore.

Mr Gore would also have won a clear majority of the popular vote nationwide had Mr Nader not been there.<sup>4</sup>

According to this line of argument, the Greens, using a loose combination of social democrat ideology and populist campaign tactics essentially delivered victory by default to the candidate least likely to listen to or act on any of their concerns and, incredibly, seemed quite proud to have done so. Australian Greens Senator Bob Brown endorsed the approach taken by the US Greens in a media release two days after the US election, stating that:

... it was inspiring that US consumer advocate Ralph Nader had stood up to the two big parties. He had resisted calls to stand down so that he did not harm the chances of Democrat candidate Al Gore, regarded as the lesser of two environmental evils compared to Republican George W. Bush.<sup>5</sup>

Given that Nader's policies included economic and social reforms to address the problem of poverty and homelessness, universal health care and higher wages as well as greater emphasis on environmental issues<sup>6</sup>, all issues closely aligned to social democrat policy, his equally adversarial approach towards both Bush and Gore seems somewhat self-defeating. One of Nader's most frequently quoted campaign lines was, "If you vote for the lesser of two evils you end up with the evil of two lessers"<sup>7</sup>. Unacknowledged in this statement is the logic that the lesser of two evils is nevertheless better than the greater, and may be more likely to be open to negotiation on matters of Green policy.

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> AAP, 2000, "ALP should heed Nader lesson: Brown", *The Australian*, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2000

<sup>6</sup> Ralph Nader's 2000 campaign website has a detailed account of policies and issues <http://www.votenader.com/issues.html>

<sup>7</sup> Abraham, 2000, *op cit.*

This brings into question the Greens' perception of themselves as a political party and their standing in relation to the social democrats and conservative parties. On July 24<sup>th</sup> 2000, the Sierra Club, the environmental organisation founded by 19<sup>th</sup> century American preservationist, John Muir, formally endorsed Democrat candidate Al Gore as its preferred candidate in the presidential election. In 1998, the Australian Conservation Foundation had similarly backed the ALP in the Australian Federal election. Why would national, non-government environment organisations endorse social democrat candidates and parties instead of the Green parties and candidates that purport to best serve the environment? Both Nader and Brown have been scathing in their criticism of the social democrats, placing them in the same political category as the conservative parties. In a media release on November 9<sup>th</sup> 2000, Brown's office highlighted aspects of the Nader presidential campaign, drawing a comparison with Australia:

Ralph Nader has made a feature of:

- political integrity, including ending corporate largesse to political parties;
- voter choice, instead of big party indifference, on issues like consumer protection, workers' rights, electoral reform and closing the gap between rich and poor;
- giving the environment the importance Mr Gore once attributed it.

In Australia the Labor and Coalition parties want to bury the same issues. The Greens' role is to get them on the agenda for the next election.<sup>8</sup>

Overlooked in this statement is any thought as to the most effective means for achieving this aim, as well as the fact that getting such issues 'on the agenda' for an election is considerably different from the more complex and long-term

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<sup>8</sup> Ben Oquist, Media Officer for Bob Brown, <http://news.greens.org.au/fulldoc.php3?title=Nader%27s+Message+to+Australia&author=Ben+Oquist&date=973688400>

task of actually achieving reform. The non-government environmental organisations, in their support of social democrat candidates, have taken the line of least resistance, that is, aligned with the liberal, social democrat ideology with the intention of using the weight of the green social movement to influence government policy. Logically, the Sierra Club saw that asking Mr Bush to give to the environment "the importance Mr Gore once attributed it", would undoubtedly be a far more difficult task than asking Mr Gore to do the same thing. The Green Party, on the other hand, viewed both Bush and Gore as equally undesirable and their own candidate, Nader, as the only one who could deliver the 'green' agenda. It would not be unreasonable to assume that many environmentalists and environmental organisations in the US regard the Green Party as unrealistic and out of touch in their political approach.

If the Greens do not wish to align themselves electorally with the social democrats, what is their ideological position and how does this affect formal and informal red-green alliances? Nader's 'defiance' in rejecting calls for him to stand aside to maximise Gore's chances, and Brown's statement that the Australian Greens are not 'in the business of aiding Labor to get to the next election', certainly appear, on the one hand, to reject any notion of common ground, much less a formal alliance between the Greens and social democrat parties. On the other hand, however, Brown was the leader of the Tasmanian Greens during the term of the Labor-Green Accord in Tasmania from 1989-91.

Dalton relates the notion of ideology in social movements to identity, pointing out that the identity created by a specific social movement organisation subsequently influences such factors as its mobilisation of members, selection and solution of issues, options in forming alliances and political tactics<sup>9</sup>. This directly correlates social movements with politics; a theory supported and evidenced by the political performance of the women's and peace movements over the past three decades. The environment movement, however, appears

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<sup>9</sup> R.Dalton, *The Green Rainbow* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) 13

with a multifaceted identity that has proved to be highly problematic in the transposition from social movement to political arena. Rejecting both conservative and social democrat allegiances while drawing membership more from the left than the right<sup>10</sup> and at the same time stating that their aim is nothing short of government<sup>11</sup> has been an obstacle to the furthering of the green political cause. This approach also obscures the reality within the political system whereby, finding themselves equally rejected by this minority party, conservative and social democrat parties will act together to marginalise the Greens<sup>12</sup>, thus excluding them from the decision-making process at all levels of government. In these instances, by working against the established political parties, the Greens effectively negate their own political standing.

Dalton further points out that "a group's ideology also provides the focus for political action."<sup>13</sup> Can a group without a tradition of ideological standing be an effective political actor? The Greens' oft-asserted claim of 'doing politics differently' has no basis in practical application because, firstly, the statement does not indicate what action will substitute for politics in the political arena, and secondly, it rejects the established premises on which political action is based without offering a sound alternative. The statement has as much practical credence as would a football team that claimed to play football differently – they would soon find they had no one to play against. The environment movement in its role as a social movement as opposed to a political party, on the other hand, has aligned with the social democrat ideology, as evidenced by the Sierra Club and the ACF, without fear of the environmental ideology being subsumed by political factors. As social movement organisations aligned with political parties, these environmental groups are far more effective in practical

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<sup>10</sup> Bennie, Franklin and Rüdiger, 1995, "Green Dimensions: The Ideology of the British Greens", *Green Politics* (ed. W.Rüdiger) Vol.3, pp.217-239

<sup>11</sup> B.Brown, quoted in AAP (2000) op cit.

<sup>12</sup> For example, the brief ALP-Liberal alliance after the failure of the Tasmanian Labor-Green Accord and the ALP-Liberal 1998 electoral 'reform' in Tasmania, both designed to marginalise the Greens.

<sup>13</sup> R.Dalton, op cit. 13

and political terms than the Green Party, which operates within the political system but, unless directly aligned with another party, without the basis of the social democrat ideology that has become the political strength of such groups as the ACF and the Sierra Club. In the European parliament, the Green groups hold 47 seats and occupy the wedge of seats to the right, physically and symbolically, of the socialists in the chamber<sup>14</sup>. This symbolism is what Belgian government Green MP, Mrs Isabelle Durant, calls "the banalisation of green politics."<sup>15</sup> By moving into the political system, the green movement has had to put aside the political weaponry that makes it a potent force outside that system: "confrontation and the rule of no compromise."<sup>16</sup>

For their part, social democratic governments in Australia, the UK and Germany have claimed success in bringing environmental groups and developers to the negotiating table to acknowledge and resolve environmental problems, fostering a perception that the traditional party of social justice is also the natural party of ecological consciousness. With the appearance of environmental issues on the agendas of most governments and the mainstreaming of green politics, social democrat parties are painting themselves an increasingly noticeable shade of green. The perception of the social democrats as green is itself interesting when considered against environmental gains made by, for example, Pieter Winsemius of the right wing Netherlands government during the 1980s, David Pearce for the Thatcher government, Chancellor Helmut Kohl's formation of the German environment ministry, and in Australia the Howard government's National Heritage Trust funding for environmental projects. It is questionable, however, whether the designation of specific policy instruments used as 'trade-offs' or electoral levers represents the integration of the environment into mainstream politics, which involves a more directional paradigmatic shift such as the 'greening' of the ALP in Australia and

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<sup>14</sup> "Greens grow up", *The Economist*, August 7<sup>th</sup> 1999, Vol.352, Issue 8131, p.37

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

the German Social Democrat Party (SPD) and the Greek Socialists (PASOK) in the early to mid-1980s.

Green democratisation and integrationism, in terms of environmental representation in the political sphere, have been most commensurate with the aims of the green movement when designed and implemented by left wing parties traditionally more concerned with labour and economics than the environment. Over time the aspects of their policies most approved by the environmental movement have become linked with issues of social justice and internalised in the party platform. In 1989, Norwegian voters rated the environment as their second most important issue: at that election the green party polled only 0.4% of the vote while the Socialist Left "increased its number of seats in the parliament from six to 17".<sup>17</sup> In the light of these, the question that arises is whether the Greens have become superfluous to the cause of environmentalism in the political context. The concept of ecological modernisation and the absorption of environmental instruments into government policy may, in fact, be taking green politics out of the hands of green parties.

#### *Alliances 1: The Tasmanian Labor-Green Accord, 1989-91*

The Tasmanian Greens, formed in 1972 as the United Tasmania Group (UTG), claims the distinction of being the world's first green party<sup>18</sup>. It developed from the environmental protest movement in direct response to the proposed flooding of Lake Pedder in Tasmania's central south-west as part of the Tasmanian government's hydro-industrialisation development strategy. Significantly, for the purposes of examining red-green alliances, the UTG Lake

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<sup>17</sup> A-I Jansen and P.K. Mydske, "Norway: Balancing environmental quality and interest in oil", *Governance and Environment in Western Europe*, K. Hanf & A-I Jansen, eds (Harlow: Longman, 1998) 186

<sup>18</sup> Brown and Singer *The Greens* (Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company, 1996) (original italics)

Pedder campaign was preceded in 1971 by the first of the New South Wales BLF 'green bans'<sup>19</sup>. The link between Marxist political ideology and environmental awareness and stewardship was already established in practice through the Communist-led BLF when the environmental movement took its first steps in formal politicisation through a party based on a 'New Ethic':

We, citizens of Tasmania and members of the United Tasmania Group,

*United* in a global movement for survival ...

*Undertake* to husband and cherish Tasmania's living resources so that we do minimum damage to the web of life of which we are part while preventing the extinction or serious depletion of any form of life by our individual, group, or communal actions;

*And we shall* ... change our society and our culture to prevent a tyranny of rationality, at the expense of values, by which we may lose the unique adaptability of our species for meeting cultural and environmental change.<sup>20</sup>

The 'New Ethic' of the United Tasmania Group was based on a combination of broad social movement values and the specific beliefs of the newly-emergent environmental movement, drawn from such sources as the writings of Carson, Commoner, Hardin and the Club of Rome's *The Limits to Growth*, that the natural environment was in danger of collapse as a direct result of humankind's depredations. Pamela Walker states that the New Ethic was essentially "a philosophy and values identical to what would soon be known as environmentalism."<sup>21</sup> Basing a political party on a system of ethics and values was seen as a radical departure from the incumbent politico-economic institution, which was perceived to have sacrificed social values, for example, those of the labour movement, for those of a more fiscal and electoral nature.

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<sup>19</sup> Burgmann and Burgmann, *Green Bans, Red Union* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1998)

<sup>20</sup> Brown and Singer, (1996) op cit. 69 (original italics)

<sup>21</sup> P.Walker, "The United Tasmania Group: An analysis of the world's first Green party", in Hay, Eckersley & Holloway (eds) *Environmental Politics in Australia and New Zealand* (Hobart: Board of Environmental Studies University of Tasmania, 1989) 165

By using the words 'ethics' and 'values' in their titles and charters (the establishment of the UTG was followed within months by the New Zealand Values Party, reformed as the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand) the early Green parties immediately sought to distance themselves from the monolith of normative politics. In politicising the issue of the environment, the UTG made the first step towards the integration of the environment into policy and while the party itself was relatively short-lived, it formed the initial framework for a political construct of nature.

In 1980, as the campaign by the environmental movement to prevent the damming, for hydro-electricity, of the Franklin River in the south-west Tasmanian wilderness was accelerating, Dr Norm Sanders was elected to the Tasmanian parliament. Sanders, elected as a member of the Australian Democrats, was a prominent activist in The Wilderness Society, the group leading the Franklin campaign, and his election, based solely on the Franklin issue<sup>22</sup>, gave the environmental campaign its first voice within the political system. He was also the first politician to take and promote as a political alternative the equally adversarial approach towards both conservative and social democrat parties, tagging the "Labor and Liberal parties together under the label 'Laborials'"<sup>23</sup>. In 1983 Sanders resigned from parliament in disgust at the treatment of protesters at the Franklin blockade: he was replaced by Dr Bob Brown, director of The Wilderness Society and the man widely credited with starting and leading the ultimately successful Franklin campaign<sup>24</sup>, as a Green Independent. Brown's election, coming soon after the entry of Green Party

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<sup>22</sup> J. McQueen, *The Franklin: Not Just a River* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1983)

<sup>23</sup> P. Hay "Green politics 'in the system': assessing the obstacles to Labor/Green power sharing", in Pakulski and Crook (eds) *Ebbing of the Green Tide? Environmentalism, Public Opinion and the Media in Australia* (Hobart: School of Sociology and Social Work, University of Tasmania, 1998) 109

<sup>24</sup> McQueen (1983) op cit.; Bonyhady *Places Worth Keeping* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993); Fullerton *Watershed* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2001)



representatives into parliaments in Switzerland, Belgium<sup>25</sup> and the German *länder* of Bremen, represented the Australasian formalisation of the green political movement: green democratisation.

There are two major points of reference regarding the passage of the Tasmanian Greens from a single independent representative in 1983 to a formal governing alliance in 1989: firstly, the widening of the Green political agenda to include issues of social and economic justice as well the environment; and secondly, their acceptance, at least in principle, of the social democrat ideology embodied in the ALP. This is notwithstanding the comments made by Brown quoted earlier in this chapter that strongly reflect the approach taken by Sanders in 1980 towards both major political parties and which will be referred to again later in respect of the future of green parties and the politics of the environment.

The aim of the apocalypticist environmental movement was to change the direction of human development away from ecologically destructive practices towards a more holistic concept of human-nature interaction. As discussed in the previous chapter, the early environmentalists of this period were frequently unrealistic and simplistic in their approach, ignoring issues of social class and producing "extremely illiberal political prescriptions".<sup>26</sup> The formation of the UTG indicated a significant widening of the focus of the environment movement in its establishment of party principles based on issues, not only of concern for the natural environment, but also of social equity and justice:

The 'New Ethic' finished with an affirmation of democracy and the power of the law, 'as long as that power is not used unfairly to advantage or disadvantage any individual or group in the community'.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The world's first Green parliamentarian was Daniel Brelaz, who was elected to the Swiss parliament in October 1979. He was followed by 9 Belgian Greens elected to national parliament in 1981 and 28 German Greens to the *Bundestag* in 1982.

<sup>26</sup> P.Hay (2002) op cit. 261

<sup>27</sup> Brown and Singer (1996) op cit. 69

The dual streams of thought resulted in a political confluence that combined, ideologically, both the environmental concerns and ecological background of the green movement with the political experience and social history of the left.

In practice, however, the combination was not necessarily a smooth amalgamation. During the Franklin campaign in 1983, four Tasmanian Hydro Electric Commission workers, acting on the industry-based fear that a win for the protesters would result in the loss of their jobs, attacked the newly elected Member for Denison and Australian of the Year, Bob Brown, who "escaped serious injury only by seizing a wheel brace wielded by one of his assailants".<sup>28</sup> This type of confrontation has become a feature of many hotly contested environmental campaigns, particularly in forests where threatened and actual violence between forestry industry employees and environmental campaigners is not uncommon. The spectre of unemployment in industries where job security is already tenuous is a powerful motivating force. Pro-industry campaigns deliberately obscure the line between the environmental movement and the political Green agenda, arguing simplistically that the environmental agenda is anti-employment<sup>29</sup>, even while elected Green members are arguing in parliaments for social equity and state regulation of industry to protect jobs.<sup>30</sup>

Workers, the traditional supporters of the left, have been used consistently by the corporate sector to oppose the integration of the environment into mainstream politics, maintaining an ideological wedge between the Greens and the working class by insisting that the Greens are concerned only with the environment. The Greens have also challenged the traditional left-wing foundation of class-based politics, by campaigning on issues that transcend the socio-economic divide between socialism and capitalism: "Ecological

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<sup>28</sup> Bonyhady (1993) op cit. 52

<sup>29</sup> J.Huxley, "Timberrr! Axe falls as the old mill finally logs off after 52 years", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17.6.98, p.5; J.Raison, "Why some critics can't see the wood waste for the trees", *Sydney Morning Herald* 25.9.01, p.14; D.Kitney, "CSR, Boral form vehicle for sawmill operations", *Australian Financial Review* 17.2.00

<sup>30</sup> Brown and Singer (1996) op cit.

exterminism is in the interest of no class or *genera*.”<sup>31</sup> This wedge has been well driven by right-wing politics through exploitation of the working class. In light of this, the wedge is not one of conflicting green-left political ideology, but rather between the left and the right where capitalism has used workers and the threat of unemployment to push the corporate agenda. This was recognised by such early campaigners as Jack Munday and will be examined in more detail later in this chapter in relation to an alliance of Greens with the right-wing as opposed to the left-wing.

The Tasmanian Labor-Green Accord of 1989 was predicated on the principles inherent in green democratisation and integrationism, in which environmental issues became absorbed into the policy platforms of the established political parties and governments. The environmental battlefield of the Franklin in 1983 delivered victory to both the green movement and the Hawke Labor government, made Bob Brown the country’s best-known environmentalist and gave the future Tasmanian Greens a politico-institutional foothold. After the 1986 state election Brown was joined in the Parliament by fellow Green Independent, Dr Gerry Bates, and in 1989 the election of Christine Milne, Dianne Hollister and Lance Armstrong, along with the re-election of Brown and Bates, gave the Green Independents one seat in each of the five electorates, denying outright government to either major party. Although both the ALP and the Liberal party “had said they would not deal with the Greens after the election”<sup>32</sup>, neither party held sufficient seats in the 35 seat Lower House to form a majority government. The Greens entered into discussions with the leaders of both major parties, finally agreeing to a “formalised arrangement known as the ‘Labor-Green Accord’”<sup>33</sup>, giving Labor leader Michael Field the 18 seats necessary to form minority government.

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<sup>31</sup> J.Warden, “Greens, New Politics and Parliament”, in Haward and Larmour (eds), *The Tasmanian Parliamentary Accord: Public Policy 1989-92* (Canberra: Federalism Research Centre, 1993) 15

<sup>32</sup> Brown and Singer (1996) *op cit.* 74

<sup>33</sup> P.Hay (1998) *op cit.*, 103

Other than reference to "a raft of social, democratic and environmental reforms in return for the guarantee of office"<sup>34</sup> agreed to by Field, Brown and Singer do not specify functional details of the red-green alliance. Implicit in their explanation is the fact that it was the former Liberal government led by Robin Gray that had been responsible for the anti-environment developmental and hydro-industrialisation policy agenda of the 1980s, after coming to power in 1982 at the height of the Franklin campaign. Also implicit are suggestions of institutional corruption within the Liberal-corporate nexus. Walker, however, states that the 'hydro-industrialisation' of Tasmania in the 1970s was entrenched in both the major political parties<sup>35</sup> and that the UTG's enduring legacy remains that of "providing the initial political socialisation, education and mobilisation of Tasmania's environment movement ... [and the challenge to] the orthodoxy that characterised the policies of both Tasmanian political parties."<sup>36</sup> This being the case, the 1989 Accord represents a significant shift in both the political and environmental paradigms. This shift, which resulted in the convergence of the green movement and Labor politics, reflected a general global movement towards the politico-institutionalisation of the green movement and the greening of institutional politics. In the Tasmanian example, Burton reduces this convergence to four stages:

- (1) 1967-76, a period of institutional resistance, as environmental issues emerged onto the agenda;
- (2) 1976-81, a period of tokenism following the departure of 'development-at-any-cost' Premier, Eric Reece;
- (3) 1982-84, a period of polarisation and backlash against the environment movement following the defeat of the Franklin Dam proposal;
- and (4) 1984-87, a period of co-option and adoption of some conservation movement proposals.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Brown and Singer (1996) *op cit.* 74

<sup>35</sup> P.Walker (1989) *op cit.*, 171

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.* 172

<sup>37</sup> B.Burton quoted in K.Crowley (1987), "Accommodating industry in Tasmania: Eco-political factors behind the electrona silica smelter dispute", in Hay, Eckersley & Holloway (eds) (1989) *op cit.*, 45

The absorption of some proposals of the environmental movement, the hallmark of the integrationist approach, however, represents far less political risk for parties of either left or right ideology, than entering into a formal agreement with a minor party regarded as anathema to many within the major parties. That this was the case in 1989 in Tasmania provides a significant point of analysis in terms of the wider green political agenda of social and economic justice.

The Australian Labor Party has long been regarded as the natural government of Tasmania, whose labour-intensive economy based on natural resource exploitation has relied on a government with a strong economic and labour policy platform<sup>38</sup>. Significant also in terms of the composition of the parliament are the use of the Hare-Clark system of proportional representation and the small size of the Tasmanian political system: the former favouring minor parties and independents, and the latter often resulting in minority governments. The 1989 election of five Green Independents, one from each of Tasmania's five multi-member electorates under the Hare-Clark system, and the return of Labor's worst result (in Tasmania) since the 1930s of 34.7% represented a change in direction on a number of levels. Former Premier Michael Field attributes the slump in ALP support to two main factors:

Fairness voters left because the Labor Party didn't seem to be sufficiently committed to jobs, and the quality of life voters left because Labor didn't seem to have sufficient commitment to environmental issues. The lack of self-definition and conflict over the environment meant that Labor was divided and lacking in direction.<sup>39</sup>

Field's assessment, based on the election of 17 Liberal MPs after seven years of pro-industry policy by the previous Liberal government, and only 13 Labor

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<sup>38</sup> K.Crowley, 2000, "Disenfranchising the Greens: Labor's Electoral Reform Strategy in Tasmania", paper presented to APSA Conference, Australian National University, October 2000

<sup>39</sup> M.Field, 1997, "Progressive government in minority: a contradiction in terms?", *Legislative Studies*, Vol.11 No.2, 64

members would appear justified. The election of the five Greens also supports his assumption that Labor – and Liberal – had not demonstrated sufficient concern for environmental issues. Post-materialist values, first represented politically by the UTG in the 1970s, were, and continue to be, problematic for traditional labour/capital-based parties.

The formation of a Labor minority government based on their lowest ever vote and supported by an emerging party riding a wave of electoral endorsement was more a matter of government by default than government by approval. While the Liberal Party won more seats than either the ALP or the Greens, more voters (51.8%) did not want a Liberal government than did. Equally true, however, is that fact that 64% of voters preferred not to have a Labor government. That the Greens supported Field in government rather than Gray, despite the plunge in Labor support, is due to a number of factors, notwithstanding Gray's withdrawal from negotiations in the face of a "backbench revolt"<sup>40</sup>, but it is also an indication of a political similitude between left-wing labour values and post-materialist 'green' values. Hay believes that for the Greens, the only "realistic option ...[is] some form of alliance with the traditional party of labour."<sup>41</sup> The informal alliance between the Tasmanian Greens and the Liberal Party after the 1996 election, which allowed the Liberals under Tony Rundle to form minority government, can be seen as a political anomaly and will be discussed later in this chapter. However, anomalous or not, it nonetheless points to the totality of the integration of green political ideals into the political system in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The minority Labor government that formed under the Labor-Green Accord was not a coalition. Despite the Liberal Party's assertions during the 1992 election campaign that the state economy had stalled largely as a result of the Greens in government, this was not the case<sup>42</sup>. The Accord delivered

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<sup>40</sup> Haward and Smith, 1990, "The 1989 Tasmanian Election: The Green Independents Consolidate", *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol.25, pp.196-217

<sup>41</sup> P.Hay, (1998) op cit., 103

<sup>42</sup> Hay and Eckersley (1993) op cit.

government to the ALP in return for a written agreement, as part of the terms of the Accord, on specific reforms and policy, and an unwritten expectation that the Greens would be consulted on matters of policy development and implementation. The ink had barely dried on the Accord, however, before the ALP, believing itself to be "under no obligation to take up any part of the Green agenda that was not specifically written into the Accord document"<sup>43</sup>, proceeded to govern as though they held the majority in their own right.

The Accord in practice is widely regarded to have been a failure, and certainly the political fallout from the experiment appears to support that view. It ended after two and a half years of acrimony between Premier Field and Greens Leader Bob Brown, a no confidence motion in the Education Minister by the Greens (upheld by the Liberal opposition), a hostile Upper House, anti-Green dissent on the streets, instability in government and further alienation of Labor's core support<sup>44</sup>. It did, however, deliver on several of the Greens' key issues, with the doubling in size of the Western Tasmania World Heritage Wilderness and consumer protection laws, both enacted within the first twelve months of the government's term. Although the strongly conservative, anti-Green Upper House blocked reform in gay laws, Aboriginal land rights and 'death with dignity'<sup>45</sup> (euthanasia by omission rather than commission), and the ALP reneged on several of their agreements, the Accord placed the Greens' progressive reforms firmly on the political and governmental agenda. At the ensuing 1992 election, the ALP vote plummeted to an all-time low of 28.9% and the Greens vote dropped to 13.4%, still sufficient to enable them to hold all five seats. The Liberal Party, under the leadership of Ray Groom, formed majority government and immediately announced that the economy was the major priority, thus relegating environmental issues to the political backburner.

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<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*91

<sup>44</sup> Crowley (2000) *op cit.*

<sup>45</sup> Brown and Singer (1996) *op cit.*

The question, is not whether the Accord was a success or a failure, but whether it was a necessary or useful mechanism of green democratisation and integrationism. In order to address this, it is necessary to take into account the specificities of the Tasmanian political situation and the temporal and spatial placement of the red-green convergence, both locally (Tasmania) and globally in relation to political and parliamentary process. The move from environmental activism towards green democratisation began, on a local scale as well as national and insofar as the formation of the UTG preceded that of the New Zealand Values Party by two months, global, in Tasmania in 1972. It was a further ten years before the election of Australia's first Green parliamentarian and another seven before the Greens gained a position of politico-institutional power in Australia through the Labor-Green Accord. The Tasmanian economy, heavily reliant on resource extraction, has always been the central issue for successive state governments, and provision of employment is a function of that centrality. In a political and economic climate dominated by traditional labour and capital based parties, the emergence of environmentalism and a party based on post-materialist values was perceived as a threat, not only to the political institutions, but to the state economy and the livelihoods of the working population. "The environmental movement in Tasmania has generally focused on 'extra parliamentary' processes"<sup>46</sup>, and in the seventeen years between the inception of the UTG and the execution of the Accord, it was these processes that delivered success on the Franklin campaign and the Wesley Vale Pulp Mill, and were instrumental in Labor's reinvention of itself, after its 1982 defeat, in a slightly greener light. The green light went out shortly after the signing of the Accord, but by then environmental policy was already entrenched.

Green democratisation and integrationism, represented by ecological modernisation and the 'greening up' of traditional capital and labour based politics, is less defined in Tasmania, with its long economic reliance on resource

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<sup>46</sup> Haward and Smith (1990), *op cit.*, 197



extraction, than in jurisdictions where 'quality of life' and post-materialist values have emerged as political issues. The principles of this green political approach are evident, however, not just in the presence of the Greens in the state legislature, but prior to that in such organisations as The Wilderness Society, formed specifically to oppose the hydro-industrialisation of the southwest wilderness after the flooding of Lake Pedder, and every bit as political as the Greens. It was the strength of the organised campaign and the extra-parliamentary processes that bridged not only Bass Strait, but social and political divisions, resulting in Federal ALP's pre-election promise to override state government legislation. The presence of first Dr Sanders and then Dr Brown in the Tasmanian Lower House provided a local focus for the campaign and tangible evidence that environmental issues were electorally viable.

To date it would appear that the convergence of the ecological and socialist ideologies ensures that it is the social democratic parties towards which the Greens are more likely to lean. Political history of the past three decades in Australia certainly indicates that the ALP has been more inclined towards environmental policy integration than the Liberal Party, and the 'grassroots' democracy style of administration advocated by the Greens sits more easily with the ALP view of rank and file membership than with the Liberal style of executive leadership. Distribution of Greens preferences also strongly indicates that the vast majority of Greens voters favour the social democrats<sup>47</sup>, a fact which, evidenced by the Accord, leads to the ALP and the Greens competing for the same electoral turf and as a result trying to discredit one another on points of departure. This fact alone indicates a considerable political and ideological overlap in terms of the green-left convergence and integrationism. Former Tasmanian Premier Michael Field acknowledges that the Greens and Labor share much the same constituency, pointing out, in terms of the Accord, that:

The Greens couldn't really have the Labor Party appear to be

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<sup>47</sup> Haward and Smith (1990) *op cit.*, 208

performing too well without risking sections of their vote moving to the Labor Party. In middle class areas of the State the vote was progressive but split between Labor and Green<sup>48</sup>.

Crowley concurs, pointing out after the 1998 Tasmanian election that "the Labor Party ... has always been struggling with how to overcome the desertion of the Green intelligentsia as its constituency."<sup>49</sup> The most effective answer has been to accede to the Greens, including the 'extra-parliamentary' green organisations, in matters of environmental policy and the wider 'green' agenda of social and economic justice.

The Accord failed to produce this overlap, instead accentuating and exacerbating the ideological differences between the two parties and the personal differences between Field and Brown. While the presence of elected representatives of the environmental movement, in the form of the Greens, in conjunction with the extra-parliamentary processes of the green movement, have been able to guide, cajole and in some cases, inculcate, government towards integration of the green agenda within their policy frameworks, the Tasmanian Parliamentary Accord did little in terms of facilitating this process. The process of integration itself was already entrenched prior to the 1989 election through the policy platform of the ALP<sup>50</sup>, and the dissolution of the Accord, functionally in 1990 and absolutely in 1992, saw the reintroduction of executive-style government with an emphasis on industry and development as a means of kick-starting the ailing state economy. The Greens were made the economic scapegoat by both major parties and the political integration of the environment proceeded in the form of the more bureaucratic and institutional processes of environmental impact assessments and policy development.

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<sup>48</sup> Field (1997) op cit. 65

<sup>49</sup> K.Crowley, 1998, "Greens Decimated in Tasmanian Election", *Earthbeat*, ABC Radio National interview, 5<sup>th</sup> September 1998, transcript

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/science/earth/stories/s12241.htm>

<sup>50</sup> P.Hay (1998) op cit

*Alliances 2: The Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand, 1999 – 2002*

The New Zealand Values Party formed in 1972, two months after the United Tasmania Group. It is tempting to immediately draw comparisons between the two parties and the circumstances of their formation, and this will be done, but only in the limited context relevant to this thesis. With this in mind, the Values Party (later the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand) and its relationship with the NZ Labour Party provides a much clearer example of green democratisation and integrationism than the UTG (reincarnated as the Tasmanian Greens), whose strained relationship with the ALP was compounded by unique economic factors. The proposed flooding of Lake Manapouri in the South Island of New Zealand for hydro-electricity in the 1960s was the first major campaign to galvanise the emergent NZ environmental movement. Opposition to wilderness destruction through hydro-industrialisation, however, is much where similarities between Values and UTG stop with regard to the emergence and early rise of the respective parties. The Values Party did not form as a direct result of the ultimately successful Save Manapouri campaign, rather growing, some years later, from a groundswell of discontent among the young, largely university educated, post-materialist generation<sup>51</sup>:

New Zealand is in the grip of a new depression.

It is a depression which arises not from a lack of affluence but almost from too much of it.

It is a depression in human values, a downturn not in the national economy but in the national spirit.<sup>52</sup>

Environmental issues had been part of the New Zealand political agenda since the 19<sup>th</sup> century when a concern about clear-felling of forests “and the

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<sup>51</sup> S.Rainbow, 1989, “New Zealand’s Values Party: The Rise and Fall of the First National Green Party”, in Hay, Eckersley and Holloway (eds), (1989) op cit.

<sup>52</sup> Introduction to the Values Party 1972 manifesto, quoted in R.Wilson, *From Manapouri to Anamoana: the battle for New Zealand’s environment* (Auckland: Earthworks Press, 1982) 186

prospect of timber famine"<sup>53</sup> precipitated the *Forest Act 1874, 1885, 1921-22*. Up until the 1970s however, environmental legislation had been piecemeal, dealing with discrete and isolated concerns as they arose as problems and therefore addressing each issue after the fact and with no apparent thought to the ecological relationships between them. The interrelationships between humankind and nature were still the premise of ecology and not part of the socio-political mechanisms of government, although Bührs points out that it was during the 1960s that "the term *environmental* policy was coined to express the need for a comprehensive and integrated government response to environmental problems, given their interdependence."<sup>54</sup> The rise of the Values Party, as indicated by their name, was recognition of the nature-society relationship not as a dichotomy but an ecosystem incorporating a system of values transcending the traditional economic and administrative preoccupation of government. The environment movement, along with the women's, peace and anti-nuclear movements were included in Values as part of a broad-based inclusive and participatory politics<sup>55</sup>. Unlike UTG there was no single catalytic event to provide the springboard for a new politics, although the compounded effect of environmental degradation, from air pollution in Christchurch and hydro-industrialisation in the Otago region to logging on the west coast and water pollution in Auckland Harbour, were instrumental factors in New Zealand's green democratisation and the values enshrined in the new party.

The 1980s were politically characterised in both Australia and New Zealand by centre-left Labour governments with strong economic growth agendas. The governments of Bob Hawke and David Lange respectively oversaw financial deregulation, increased emphasis on establishing an antipodean presence in the

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<sup>53</sup> Dixon et al., 1989, "Changing Environmental Administration in New Zealand: Advance or Retreat?" in Hay, Eckersley and Holloway (eds) (1989) op cit., 145

<sup>54</sup> T.Bührs, "Environmental Policy", in Miller (ed) *New Zealand Politics in Transition* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1997) 287 (original italics)

<sup>55</sup> D.Downes, 2000, "The New Zealand Environmental Movement and the Politics of Inclusion", *Australian Journal of Political Science* Vol 35, No.3, pp. 471-491 and R.Wilson (1982) op cit.

global economy, although this was more the case in Australia than in New Zealand, and a growth in domestic employment. Both governments blamed their conservative predecessors for excesses in spending and protectionist policies that saw domestic employment markets shrink and, in New Zealand particularly, the domestic economy stall to crisis point. This was also the consolidation period of integrationism, with environmental issues gaining higher priority on government agendas indicating a progressive mainstreaming of the green agenda, and green democratisation with, for the first time federally in Australia, candidates elected to the Senate on specific green issues<sup>56</sup>. As discussed previously, one of the first acts of the incoming Hawke government in 1983 was to deliver on its pre-election promise to overturn Tasmanian government legislation on the damming of the Franklin. Similarly, Prime Minister Lange reversed the economically crippling so-called "think big" course of former Prime Minister Muldoon<sup>57</sup>, delivering on a pre-election promise in establishing a new Ministry of the Environment following from an Environmental Forum in 1985 and over the next few years enacting legislation on the wider 'green' social justice agenda in such areas as anti-nuclear policy and homosexual law reform. In a political climate dominated by economic growth, however, the Values Party all but disintegrated. Its electoral successes of the mid-1970s, when it won a creditable 5.3% of the vote in the 1975 election, which, under the first-past-the-post (FPP) electoral system did not result in any seats, dwindled to 2% in 1978<sup>58</sup> and .19% in 1981<sup>59</sup>. During the 1980s Values remained on the political fringe, visible at local level with some successes in

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<sup>56</sup> Jo Vallentine (Nuclear Disarmament Party) 1984 and 1987; Dr Norm Sanders (Australian Democrats) 1985; Robert Wood (NDP) 1987 (subsequently disqualified under the provisions of the *Electoral Act 1918*); Irina Dunn (NDP) 1988

<sup>57</sup> S.Rainbow (1989) op cit.

<sup>58</sup> The 1978 NZ election saw a massive backlash against the conservative Muldoon government. Under the FPP electoral system, a vote for a minor party is, essentially, a 'wasted' vote, and many former and potential green voters abandoned Values at that election in an attempt, unsuccessful, to remove Muldoon. This occurred again, with the same result, in 1981.

<sup>59</sup> Wilson (1982) op cit., and C.Dann, "Greens in Time and Space: The History of the Green Party" on the Greens NZ website, 2002, <http://www.greens.org.nz/about/history.htm>

local government elections, but only nominally still in existence at national level. In 1990, under the new name of the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand which acknowledged the merger of Values with a number of non-party aligned green groups, the party re-emerged to contest the 1990 general election, "winning 7% of the total vote"<sup>60</sup>.

The left-green political convergence that occurred in New Zealand was far more pronounced than in Tasmania, where environmental, rather than political, issues dominated the rise of the UTG. Early membership of the Values Party was dominated by left wing supporters, many of whom were politically experienced, who had become disillusioned with the flagging left-wing values of the Labour Party<sup>61</sup>. While the socialist core of the party was concentrated in Christchurch, their views on a class-based politics, according to Rainbow, were not necessarily shared by the broader membership:

John Stewart, the Party's main strategist and national organiser (1976-78), tried to tie the socialist analysis that was predominant in Christchurch together with the environmental emphasis of the majority of the Party but without success. The tactics and traditional leftist rhetoric of the 'Christchurch Cabal' simply served to alienate many of their fellow Party members.<sup>62</sup>

The early attempt at ecosocialism was a failure, not because it lacked substance or ideology, but rather due to lack of tradition. As Dann notes, "it was very difficult having to invent Green politics before the term 'Green' was even coined"<sup>63</sup>. At the same time, however, the Labour Party was also undergoing change, incorporating many of the changes that have come to characterise the Green Party: a more participatory style of party structure and a policy platform reflecting many of the post-materialist values that had attracted the young, educated and professional sector to the Values Party resulted in Labour

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<sup>60</sup> Dann (2002) op cit.

<sup>61</sup> Rainbow (1989) op cit.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.* 177

<sup>63</sup> Dann (2002) op cit.

membership increasing during the 1970s, coinciding with the decline of Values after its early peak in 1975<sup>64</sup>. The left-wing ideology of the Values Party, however, has provided a firm political standing for the modern Green Party, with current co-leader, Jeanette Fitzsimons, saying that even though the basis of green politics is the slogan 'neither left nor right but ahead', she regards herself and the Party as occupying a political position considerably to the left of the current Labour Party<sup>65</sup>.

The red-green alliance in New Zealand was the result of a number of factors, both structural and ideological. In 1991 five centre-left minor parties (Liberal, Democrat, Mana Motuhake, New Labour and Green) formed the Alliance. Rainbow writes that the Greens' decision to join the Alliance was based on the common 'worldview' of the involved parties:

The Alliance unites people who are vehement in their opposition to the free-market economic policies that have dominated New Zealand public policy since the election of the Fourth Labour Government in 1984. The Alliance parties are united by their estrangement from the dominant spirit of the age as well as from established channels of influence and power.<sup>66</sup>

An alternative view of the motivation for the Greens to join the Alliance is that the Greens were not sufficiently confident in electoral system changes to resist the attempt by New Labour to neutralise what was clearly its main competitor for the centre-left electorate, and while there was some reluctance within the party to the concept of the Alliance, there was nonetheless sufficient willingness to go ahead<sup>67</sup>. In 1993 the New Zealand electorate decided by referendum to end the FPP electoral system in favour of mixed member proportional system (MMP), which allocates seats on the basis of a single-member electorate and a

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<sup>64</sup> Rainbow (1989) op cit

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Jeanette Fitzsimons and Rod Donald, Ashburton NZ, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2001, transcript in possession of author

<sup>66</sup> S.Rainbow, 1995, "Greens within an Alliance: The New Zealand Experience", *Environmental Politics*, Vol.4, No.3, pp 475-480

<sup>67</sup> T.Bale and C.Dann, 2002, "Is the Grass Really Greener?", *Party Politics* Vol.8 No.3

compensatory party quota. The first election was held under the new system was in 1996, resulting in a centre-right coalition government of the conservative National Party and the populist New Zealand First Party; two Greens were elected under the Alliance banner.

The Greens membership of the Alliance lasted until 1997 when they withdrew in order to field their own list for the 1999 election, a move which saw Green co-leader Jeanette Fitzsimons narrowly win her electorate of Coromandel and the Green Party overall narrowly exceed the 5% threshold required for representation under the MMP system, resulting in seven members of the Green list taking their seats in the New Zealand Parliament. Prior to the election, Labour and the Alliance had come to an agreement to form a coalition government. In the event, the Labour-Alliance coalition fell two seats short of majority government and governed with a guarantee of support on confidence and supply from the left-wing Green Party. This guarantee resulted in some concrete gains for the party, but the relationship was not without its stresses and strains<sup>68</sup>. These became obvious during the election campaign of 2002, especially over the issue of genetic engineering, and were crucial in the reelection of the Labour-led minority government, which then negotiated a similar agreement, not with the Greens, but with a centre party.

As was the case in Tasmania during the Accord, the NZ Green Party between 1999 and 2002 was not part of a coalition and was not in government. Unlike the Tasmanian Green Independents, however, there was no formalised agreement with the governing coalition. It is important to note, however, that the Greens and Labour negotiated a 'cooperation agreement'. This falls short of a guarantee on confidence and supply, but is nonetheless significant<sup>69</sup>. Dann

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<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*



points out that the world's first two green parties grew out of a common distrust of the Labo(u)r Parties:

In the origins and development of these two parties we can see the key themes of the new Green politics developing. These include:

- (1) the reaction against labour parties and politics for being (initially) pro-growth and (latterly) pro-globalist;
- (2) a continuation of the 'new politics' of the new social movements (including both policies and styles of activism);
- (3) the critique of industrialism and consumerism;
- (4) developing global awareness and connections, and participation in global networks.<sup>70</sup>

This, of course, raises the inevitable question of why the Greens tend to align with Labo(u)r? There are obvious parallels between conservatism and conservationism, which will be analysed more fully later in this chapter, and, as summarised by Dann above, obvious contradictions between a politics of environmentalism and the left-wing. The cooperative association between the NZ Green Party and the Labour-Alliance coalition is based on a synthesis of 'new politics' values and 'old left' ideology. It is significant that the move towards a values-based post-materialist politics to challenge the Labo(u)r parties occurred at the same time as the 'old left' parties were remodelling themselves within a capitalist framework. Additionally, while the social and economic justice agenda has paved common ground between green and red alliances, much of the common ground between Labour and the Greens was essentially environmental. In the lead-up to the 1999 election Labour announced policy to end native logging on the west coast of the South Island, representing a major gain for the Greens, as was Labour's promise of a Royal Commission on GE/GM. The main divergence between the parties, prior to Labour's announcement that the GE moratorium will be lifted in October 2003,

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<sup>70</sup> C.Dann, (2000) "From Earth's Last Islands: The Global Origins of Green Politics", unpublished thesis, (Christchurch: Lincoln University) 240

occurred over changes to the Employment Relations legislation where the Greens pushed for a more pro-union portion. Clearly, while Labour is willing to come to the negotiating table on environmental issues, they are less willing to allow Green input in their traditional area of labour economics<sup>71</sup>.

Based on the premise that the 'political community' consists in human society as well as the institutions of government, then green democratisation (where the environment gained institutional representation within the liberal democratic structure) and integrationism (where environmental issues are integrated within government policy and its supporting bureaucracy), developed from a view that the existing political approach had ceased to adequately meet social needs in respect of the environment. These needs, as evidenced during the period of revolution that preceded green democratisation and integrationism, included a more broad-based approach to policy that recognised the complexity of the human-nature interrelationship as well as more equitable government provision of social services in terms of health, education and social welfare. The rise of Values and the UTG in New Zealand and Tasmania during the early 1970s signalled the emergence of this new 'green' political direction. Neither party survived in its original form past the 1970s, although Values remained active at local level, but green democratisation and integrationism proceeded where the actual parties left off, having by that time provided the bridge between institutional politics on the one side, and the politics of social movements on the other.

The Tasmanian Parliamentary Accord was, in these terms, a failure. It delivered some tangible results, but the antagonism generated between the ALP and the Greens during this time was a factor in the 1998 'reform' of the Tasmanian Lower House from 35 to 25 members and a raising of the quota necessary for election: effectively a bi-partisan move to eliminate the Greens from the Tasmanian Parliament. Green democratisation and integrationism,

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<sup>71</sup> It is relevant that while the Greens view the GE issue as primarily environmental, Labour view it as economic in terms of employment and trade.

while less accepted in the resource-dependant Tasmanian economy, were progressing due to electoral necessity while the written terms of Accord were inflexible and did not allow for the natural integration of environmental policy means, rather, presuming to force environmental measures on a government disinclined to be either sympathetic or manipulated. Hay argues further that the Accord in practice showed the Greens to be every bit as 'old politics' as the ALP in their approach to dealing and negotiating<sup>72</sup> despite the 'new politics' rhetoric. The 1999-2002 agreement of support on confidence and supply between the NZ Greens and the Labour-Alliance coalition was relatively and comparatively successful possibly because it was not a formal written agreement, therefore allowing for flexibility in execution. In this situation, the Greens are afforded access to government but remain autonomous and unbound in terms of negotiation. Integrationism, under this arrangement, occurs more through consensus and instrumentality on both sides rather than coercion.

### *Alliances 3: Die Grünen-SPD Coalition, Germany, 1998-2002*

The German Green Party (*Die Grünen*) formed in January 1980 as a "heterogeneous alliance of activists from diverse political backgrounds, but who shared a deep discontent with the 'party cartel'"<sup>73</sup>, and the first party to use the term 'green'. The German green movement differed from its Australasian counterparts in two major respects: (1) it was largely the product of the anti-nuclear and peace movements of the 1960s; and (2) the green movement itself was more organised as a cohesive political force. Frankland and Schoonmaker state that the Greens "represent an organizational experiment" in combining grassroots activism with electoral politics<sup>74</sup>. After an initial electoral failure in

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<sup>72</sup> Hay (1998) op cit. 108-109

<sup>73</sup> E.G.Frankland and D.Schoonmaker, *Between Protest and Power: The Green Party in Germany* (Boulder: Westview, 1992) 1

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.* 2

the 1980 federal election, despite successes during the same period at state (*länder*) level, the party regrouped and consolidated, taking 28 seats in the 1983 federal election with 5.2% of the vote under proportional representation. The emergence of the Greens was not sudden, having campaigned actively at local and *länder* level as a fractured alliance of separate branches since the mid-1970s and, as a loosely-bound alliance of green groups they contested the 1979 Euro elections, winning a creditable 3.2% of the vote. The appearance at federal level, however, of a party whose members were street activists and protestors, ignored the customary codes of dress in the parliamentary chamber<sup>75</sup>, and whose politics were overtly anti-establishment, raised some consternation. The Greens were variously suspected of being proto-nazi and subversively communist<sup>76</sup>. After some early ideological conflict between the 'new left' and the conservative wings of the party, the Greens established themselves as a left-wing post-materialist alternative to the established political institution.

It is the nature of political parties, as opposed to social movements or pressure groups, to aspire to power through winning political office. Consequently, it is the goal of winning political office that is the predominant motive behind the formation of coalitions<sup>77</sup>. Where one party can win sufficient seats in a parliament to allow it to assume government in its own right, it is highly unlikely that a coalition would form or be maintained<sup>78</sup>. Political power, within the liberal democratic framework, is vested in institutional party

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<sup>75</sup> Joschka Fischer, current leader of *Die Grünen*, drew attention on entering the *Bundestag* as an elected member in 1983 when he turned up in running shoes and a sports jacket. The nature of the Greens' image as different from the political establishment is perhaps best represented currently by NZ Green MP, Nandor Tanczos, a Rastafarian who wears dreadlocks and a hemp suit in parliament.

<sup>76</sup> Frankland and Schoonmaker (1992) op cit.

<sup>77</sup> C. Lees, *The Red-Green coalition in Germany: Politics, personalities and power* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000)

<sup>78</sup> The exception is the federal Liberal-National coalition in Australia, where the Liberal Party held sufficient seats to govern in its own right from 1996-98. Maintaining the formal coalition, however, ensured continued National Party support when the Liberal majority was eroded in 1998.

structures as rational actors that behave according to conventions. Given this, such early assertions of *Die Grünen* as being the "anti-party party"<sup>79</sup> appear somewhat incongruent with the entry of the party into coalition government at federal level with the SPD in 1998; an incongruity that goes right to the core of green political philosophy. The status of Germany as one of the world's more advanced 'green' nations in environmental policy and a leader in ecological modernisation<sup>80</sup> also raises the question of the need, in terms of the green agenda, for the Greens to enter into a coalition government which has, in the four years of its existence, threatened on several occasions to destroy the Greens and the government. The conundrum of the Greens, to pursue power and risk compromising principles, or to eschew power and risk compromising their political agenda, is fundamentally interwoven with green democratisation and integrationism. The electoral fortunes of *Die Grünen* during the 1980s and early 90s were a direct reflection of the mainstream political integration of environmental policy. At the 1990 federal election the Greens failed to reach to 5% quota and lost their parliamentary representation. Papadakis points out that this result did not indicate a "fundamental decline in environmental interest ... a key determinant in the poor performance by the Green Party was the ability of established parties to adapt to and co-opt the green agenda."<sup>81</sup>

The rise of the Green Party in Germany, as in other countries, has been very closely associated with a rise in post-materialist values. These values, represented by the social movements of the apocalypticist period, were 'owned' to an extent, by the generation born after the Second World War, the 'baby boomer' generation. It was this generation that was entering adulthood at the time of the social revolutions, and, in many respects formed the vanguard of

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<sup>79</sup> P.Kelly, "Towards a Green Europe, Towards a Green World", *Nonviolence Speaks to Power* (Center for Global Nonviolence Planning Project, Honolulu, 1992) published electronically: <http://www2.hawaii.edu/uhip/green.txt>

<sup>80</sup> J.Dryzek *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

<sup>81</sup> E.Papadakis, *Environmental Politics and Institutional Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 66

sweeping social change. The emergence of the Green Party as the political manifestation of these values is significant in the wider context of post-materialism. The appearance of *Die Grünen* in the *Bundestag* in 1983 not only raised concerns about their inherent political proclivities, but also a certain amount of scepticism about their future as a long-term political party. The demise of the UTG after their 1975 electoral failure, and the decline of the Values Party after their drubbing in 1978 may have indicated to German sceptics that *Die Grünen* was not a serious contender for political credibility. History, however, has proved otherwise. The political manifestation of post-materialism represented (and represents), for many voters who were members of social movements, activists or protestors during the period of social revolution, a political symbolism of their beliefs. Inglehart's work on the impact of values on political orientation indicates that, while post-materialist values are more typical of younger people, there is evidence of a trend towards a gradual generational movement towards post-materialism:

We find stable intergenerational value differences. This implies that, other things being equal, we will witness a long-term trend toward postmaterialist values as one generation replaces another. A good deal of intergenerational population replacement has already taken place from 1970 to 1986. During these years, most of the 1886-1905 birth cohort died off. They were replaced by a much more numerous cohort born after 1955. In 1970, the postwar generation comprised only 20% of our sampling universe, those citizens over 15 years of age; in 1986, it constituted about one half.<sup>82</sup>

This being the case, and also noting that the leaders of all three Green parties examined in this chapter were born in the immediate post-war ('baby boomer') era, the long-term future of the Greens as a values-oriented political party seems beyond question.

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<sup>82</sup> R.Inglehart, "Political Value Orientation" in Jennings and van Deth (eds) *Continuities in Political Action* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1989) 79

Prior to the 1998 German Federal election which saw the Greens enter into coalition with the SPD, they had been coalition partners in several *länder* governments, the first being the red-green coalition in Hesse (1985-87), where Joschka Fischer held the post of environment minister. There was, however, within the party structure, a fundamental opposition to the 'parliamentarisation' of the Greens, with many members believing that the integration of the Greens into the institutional process, and especially to "share overall governmental responsibility with other parties" was a compromise of basic principles<sup>83</sup>. This feeling ultimately became the polarising factor that divided, and still divides, the German Greens into the two factions of *realos* and *fundis*, with the former believing that the best way to change the system is to do so from a position of influence within, and the latter taking the activist approach of no compromise and no deals. By the mid-1980s, the *realos* "were eager to experiment with modes of cooperating with the SPD, including formal coalitions"<sup>84</sup>, but in so doing, risked alienating the *fundis* who saw this move as tantamount to destroying the basic premise of the 'new politics' and post-materialist values.

Appraisal of the German red-green coalition in the light of the growth of post-materialist politics and in a climate of green democratisation and integrationism poses yet another question: that of the nature of political power and whether its acquisition in the form of the traditional institutional framework is a necessary factor in effecting political and institutional change. If, as already implied, the *raison d'être* of political parties is the pursuit of elected office; and if, as also noted, the catalyst for the rise of 'new politics' in the form of green parties was discontent and disillusion with the traditional parties of the left, it follows that green parties reinvent the concept of political power according to the anti-establishment principles embodied in their policy and

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<sup>83</sup> Frankland and Schoonmaker (1992) op cit. 153

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.* 153

procedural platform<sup>85</sup>. This, to a greater or lesser extent, has been the case with the New Zealand Greens, who are applying their values to decision-making within the fixed liberal democratic framework. It would also be the case with Green parties in countries or regions where FPP electoral systems make it virtually impossible for minor parties to win office. In the case of the UK Green Party, for example, a definition of the concept of 'power' to include, for example, exertion of influence on policy-making, or promotion of environmental issues through politico-institutional processes must be acknowledged as valid reasons for a minor party to contest an election. The application of post-materialist values to the formation of coalitions must therefore also be valid. Lees, while stating that the assumption of political office is the dominant motive behind the formation and durability of coalitions, questions whether this is the sole reason and argues that:

...within the context-rich environment found in European party systems, it is essential to include a 'policy dimension' and, in the case of Red-Green coalitions, environmental policy can be assumed to play an important role. It is the policy area most closely identified with the Greens and is at the core of their own self-identity and of external perceptions of them.<sup>86</sup>

The formation of alliances between Greens and social democrat parties, then, rather than being founded on political ideology, exists instead in the context of post-materialist politics and as a direct extension of green democratisation and integrationism. The fact that to date, however, formal red-green alliances have been fraught with trouble would indicate that commonalities in policy direction are not a sufficiently solid foundation for a durable governing relationship.

The issues of nuclear power and the military involvement of NATO in the Balkans illustrate the difficulties and moral ambiguities faced by Green parties attempting to drive a liberal-capitalist government policy agenda while holding

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<sup>85</sup> M.Blakers (ed) *The Global Greens* (Canberra: The Australian Greens and the Greens Institute, 2001)

<sup>86</sup> Lees (2000) op cit., 8



to post-materialist principles. Nuclear disarmament and peace are cornerstones of the European green movement. They are the issues that galvanised the movement in the 1960s and led to the formation of the European Green parties in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They are also the issues that have created the most internal conflict within *Die Grünen* since their entry into coalition government in 1998. After the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986, the issue of phasing out nuclear power in Germany was elevated to the top of the Green agenda, with Red-Green coalitions and SPD governments at the *länder* level adopting strong stances with “‘phasing out-oriented’ implementation of nuclear regulation.”<sup>87</sup> The Greens’ 1998 party-endorsed election campaign document:

... set out a very strict commitment to phasing out nuclear energy in Germany. The Greens expressed their commitment to an immediate ‘exit’ (*Ausstieg*) from nuclear energy, and promised to use all available administrative, economic and legislative means to implement such a policy.<sup>88</sup>

The Greens’ series of compromises on this commitment, resulting in a policy that will see nuclear power stations phased out over the next 32 years<sup>89</sup>, is partly the result of their position as ‘junior’ partners in the coalition government and partly that of the reality of political institutionalisation. Their perceived capitulation on this issue both alienated the party membership and environmental and anti-nuclear groups, and weakened their credibility as a party of strong principles.

Likewise, the 1998 vote in support of the US-led NATO bombing of Kosovo also threatened both coalition stability and the internal policy of *Die Grünen*. The civil war in the Balkans and Chancellor Schröder’s commitment to US President Clinton that it would support NATO strikes against Milosevic’s Yugoslavian army placed *Die Grünen* leader and German Foreign Minister,

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<sup>87</sup> W.Rüdiger, 2000, “Phasing Out Nuclear Energy in Germany”, *German Politics*, Vol.9 No.3, pp.43-80

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.* 54

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*

Joschka Fischer, in the extremely difficult position of both handling responsibility for "maintaining the Federal Republic's 'Atlanticist' stance, which had been the cornerstone of German foreign polity in the post-war era" and being "the senior politician in a party with serious misgivings about the planned NATO action."<sup>90</sup> Fischer's support for Schröder was vehemently opposed by Environment Minister, Jürgen Trittin (*Die Grünen*), and "Fischer had reason to fear that the Kosovo crisis would provide his opponents within the party with the opportunity to split with the SPD and retreat back into the comfortable certainties of opposition."<sup>91</sup> While both the nuclear power and Kosovo issues were resolved within the government through sound liberal-democratic political process, both were viewed by Greens party members and green groups as direct compromises of principles by a party that was, in fact, an "institutionalised social movement"<sup>92</sup>. It is significant to note, however, that Fischer succeeded in arguing persuasively in the uniquely German context that in taking a pro-NATO stance the Greens and the coalition were also taking an anti-fascist position.

These examples point to an inherent structural weakness in both the ideological and policy components of the coalition framework in relation to the nature of the Greens as the 'anti-party party', which brings us back to the concept of power and the question of whether the acquisition of power in its traditional political context is a necessary function of green politics. The German red-green coalition has placed the Greens in a position whereby it is politically obliged to govern not for its grassroots membership base, but for the mainstream German community. This, of course, is the fundamental tenet of parliamentary democracy and while the *fundis* will argue that green principles are in the best interests of the German population both now and in the long-

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<sup>90</sup> Lees (2000) op cit. 128

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.* 129

<sup>92</sup> Rüdiger (2000), op cit.46

term, it is the short-term decisions that prove the party's political and electoral credibility. It is therefore not just the concept of power that the Greens need to redefine according to their party principles, but the nature of democracy itself. This question is hardly novel. The perceived inability of traditional democratic institutions to deal with a looming ecological crisis, leading, ultimately, to the undermining of political stability<sup>93</sup> was central to the view of the apocalypticist social revolutions that gave rise to the green movement and has challenged political scientists and green political theorists for at least two decades. The greening of democracy, in the form of Green parties, 'new politics' and the election of Green members, leading to the integration of environmental issues into the liberal democratic policy agenda, represents paradigmatic shift. In Germany this was evident in the entry of *Die Grünen* to the *länder* parliaments and the *Bundestag* in the 1980s, and the subsequent move of the German government towards such environmental measures as the precautionary principle and ecological modernisation. The shift of the Green parties from 'minor party' status to coalition partners and government represents the integration of the political product of the green movement itself.

*The Green-right scenario: Liberal Party and Tasmanian Greens, 1996-1999*

After the irreconcilable dissolution of the Tasmanian Parliamentary Accord in late 1991, the Liberal opposition guaranteed Field's minority government support on confidence until an election could be held. Premier Field returned early from his summer holiday and immediately advised the Governor to call an election for February. The Labor Party, facing certain defeat, promised there would be no more deals with the Greens, and that they would prefer to sit in opposition than enter into a minority arrangement<sup>94</sup>. In the event, this declaration proved to be unnecessary, as the conservative Liberal Party, under

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<sup>93</sup> B.Doherty and M.de Geus, Introduction in Doherty and de Gues (eds), *Democracy and Green Political Thought* (London: Routledge, 1996) 11

<sup>94</sup> Field (1997) op cit.

the leadership of Ray Groom, won a majority of seats in a Labor rout. The Greens held all five seats, although their vote dropped to 13.4%, and the media portrayed them as the “big losers” of the election<sup>95</sup>. During the next election, in 1996, both Labor and Liberal ran anti-Green scare campaigns designed to attract voters to the major parties and away from the spectre of minority government with the Greens. Both parties promised not to deal with the Greens, with Labor candidates signing a pledge to that effect<sup>96</sup>. The result was Liberal 16 seats; Labor, 14 seats; Greens, 4 seats; and 1 Independent. The Liberal Party, under new leader, Tony Rundle, immediately began talks with the Greens leader, Christine Milne to establish a “multi-party forum to explore more innovative, consensus-based mechanisms for government.”<sup>97</sup>

A former Convenor and campaign manager for the NZ Green Party, in an email discussion about the left-right political allegiances of the Greens, agreed that the New Zealand and German parties would certainly identify as left: “but”, she added, “Tassie is a law unto itself.”<sup>98</sup> This observation is significant not only in the analysis of the Tasmanian government in the closing few years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also in relation to the questions raised about the concept of political power to a party that believes its source of political legitimacy to be grassroots democracy. Crowley points out that it “is little known that the greens in Tasmania are not only well aware of the electoral advantages of the state’s Hare-Clark system of proportional representation, but have long sought the balance of parliamentary power.”<sup>99</sup> They have twice been successful in this aim. Former Premier Field, in a somewhat scathing critique of the 1996-99 Liberal-Green minority government, paints the Greens as conservative apologists and political opportunists:

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<sup>95</sup> Hay and Eckersley (1993) op cit.

<sup>96</sup> Crowley, 1996, “The Tasmanian State Election 1996: Green Power and Hung Parliaments”, *Environmental Politics* Vol.5, No.3, pp 530-535

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.* 535

<sup>98</sup> C.Dann, pers. comm., quoted with permission

<sup>99</sup> Crowley (1996) op cit. 532

In 1996, the Greens supported the Government's right-wing Budget which was to see another 1,000 public servants removed from their jobs; they supported the expenditure of \$1.2 million on a road over which they spent last summer in the trenches and were in fact arrested; they supported another \$150,000 in policing the same road which was one of the last symbols of the environmental cause in Tasmania; and they withdrew an amendment to a Government bill, giving the go-ahead to environmental exemptions for a mining development.<sup>100</sup>

Speaker of the House of Assembly during the time of the Liberal minority government, Frank Madill, however, quotes statistics that tell a vastly different picture to the Green-sanctioned bulldozing of the Tasmanian environment that Field describes:

From the beginning to late in October 1996 there were 45 divisions. The Liberals and the Greens voted together on 18 occasions; the Greens and the Opposition voted together on 21 occasions; and the Liberal Government and the Opposition voted together on four; and on two occasions there were conscience votes. So in fact, on the strength of divisions, at a quick glance one would say that the third party is certainly more supportive of the Opposition than it is of the Government.<sup>101</sup>

While it must be noted that neither of these writers is entirely neutral in his assessment of the Greens in the Tasmanian Parliament, the point remains that the Greens, in nominally supporting a conservative government, assumed a position of power from whence they exercised a considered approach to decision-making on an issue-by-issue basis. Madill further points out that in terms of parliamentary process, the informal alliance of the Liberal government of Rundle supported by the four Greens provided "good Parliament":

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<sup>100</sup> Field (1997) op cit. 63

<sup>101</sup> F.Madill, 1997, "Love and hate under the Hare Clark", *Legislative Studies*, Vol.11, No.2, pp 68-74

There is very little time-wasting in the Tasmanian Parliament at the moment, compared with the 10 years that I was there. There is no filibustering; there are no repeated quorum calls; there are no late night sittings ... There is a lot less aggravation; there is no name-calling ... There is no use of the gag. There has been no curtailment of debate at all, except by mutual agreement. There has been no real disruption of Parliament ...<sup>102</sup>

The absence of the personality clash between Field and Brown that dominated during the period of the Accord must go some way towards explaining the more efficient and genial parliamentary process and should not be discounted. However, the more flexible terms of the minority government compared with the wholly inflexible Accord also allowed the Greens to exercise their values within the existing political structure in the same way as the NZ Greens in their alliance with the Labour government.

Crucial to this analysis is the fact that in Tasmania both major parties have pursued similar policies of development and have consistently placed issues of economy above all else. The sight of Liberal and Labor competing for a relatively small constituency in a state with perpetual problems of unemployment and battling the green movement over the environment has been a feature of Tasmanian politics since the early 1970s. The small size of the Tasmanian Parliament, the electoral system and the policy agenda of the major parties has meant, for the Greens, that their mere presence in the Parliament is not sufficient to ensure green policy: they must be in a position to exert power. It is this, not a hidden conservative agenda, that led to the Liberal-Green alliance of the late 1990s, and it is this same factor that led to the Liberal-Labor electoral reform of 1998 aimed at eliminating the Greens from political representation<sup>103</sup>. The reduction in the size of the House of Assembly, from 35 to 25 members created a subsequent increase in the quota required for members to

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<sup>102</sup> *ibid.* 69

<sup>103</sup> Crowley (2000) *op cit*

be elected. The move, which necessitated changes to the Tasmanian Constitution Act, was widely criticised by political scientists but supported by the business community<sup>104</sup>. An election was called immediately following the passage of the legislation and, as predicted, the Greens lost all but one seat with Labor winning sufficient seats to govern in their own right.

The willingness of both major parties to act to disenfranchise the party which had allowed both to govern at different times is indicative of the perceived threat posed by environmentalism to the traditional resource-based Tasmanian economy. In the 2002 election campaign both major parties focused once again on the issue of employment:

Job creation has held the focus at the start of week three of Tasmania's election campaign.

And the pressure is building on the Liberals to show in detail how much their policies will cost.

Labor and the Liberals agree that 12,000 jobs can be created in the next term of government but the two major parties differ on how it will be done.

The Liberals say a stimulated small business sector is the key, while Labor is looking to big picture items including natural gas, Basslink and the new Bass Strait ferries.<sup>105</sup>

Given the parallel policy dimensions of the conservative and social democrat parties in Tasmania, the question of convergent political ideology with the Greens is an entirely hypothetical case. The Tasmanian Parliamentary Accord and the 1996-98 alliance with the Liberal Party could both be regarded equally as politically aberrant and opportunistic by both the major parties. Green democratisation and integrationism is evident in the environment policies of both parties, but the 1998 electoral 'reform' designed to exclude the Greens from

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<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> "Jobs hot topic during third week of campaign" ABC news, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2002, <http://abc.net.au/news/newsitems/s602113.htm>

the political process indicates that environmental policies exist only insofar as they are necessary to maintain electoral credibility and not as a means of effecting long-term change to resource-extractive economic development.

Ideological similarities between the Green parties and left-wing parties have enabled red-green coalitions and alliances to function despite points of departure on issues of political methodology. Green democratisation and integrationism, evolved from the social revolutions of the 1960s and 70s, has provided a policy direction commensurate with both sides. Neither ideology nor policy alone has proved a sufficiently solid basis for cooperative and productive execution of government. Further, it is the wider green agenda in issues of social and economic justice that has afforded the Greens the political strength needed to form alliances with left-wing parties and define their distinction from right-wing parties. Integration of environmental policy across the political spectrum in the past two decades has blurred those distinctions. That the Greens formed out of discontent with the left-wing and centre-left parties they have since joined in government indicates a politics that has allowed the traditional parties of labour to reinvent themselves, if only superficially in some cases, along the ideological lines of the green movement.



## Chapter 5

### Issues of social and economic justice:

#### the correlative integration of social welfare and ecology

*The grass is always greener over the septic tank – Erma Bombeck*

#### *Social issues, environmental campaign: the Snowy in social justice*

Insofar as appearances are valid indicators of such things, Dalgety does not give the impression of a hotbed of radical discontent. A tiny township with a population of less than 100, it is situated well away from the major roads that carry the tourists to the Snowy Mountains for the skiing in winter and watersports and bushwalking in summer. The post office closed over a decade ago along with the service station. The general store now acts as a postal agency, there is one hotel and a caravan park, the latter belonging to the Snowy River Shire Council and managed by a lessee. The road between Dalgety and the nearest town, Berridale, was sealed in 1999, and the sealing of the road to Jindabyne, about 45 kilometres away, was completed in 2000. There is only one sealed road within the town precinct, the others pitted with potholes and erosion gullies. The local school has two teachers and about 30 students, most coming from properties in the Dalgety-Numbla Vale region. It is not an affluent region; the land is marginal at best and the local economy highly vulnerable to seasonal fluctuations. Average annual rainfall is around 350 millimetres, compared to Jindabyne which receives around 700 millimetres. The biggest non-farm related business in the Dalgety area, the Snowy River Winery, about 15 kilometres from town, is relocating its cellars and restaurant to Berridale in order to attract more passing trade. Where Jindabyne and Adaminaby are known as the towns that were relocated to make way for the Snowy Scheme, Dalgety is known only obscurely as having once been considered as a possible site for the national capital. To anyone passing through Dalgety – and these are

rare – the town would appear as an example of rural poverty: the dying country town.

Councillor Richard Wallace, current Mayor of Snowy River Shire, is a fifth generation grazier from a property at Numbla Vale, a locality to the south-west of Dalgety township. In order to bring the council's attention to the appalling state of the Dalgety town water supply, drawn from the Snowy River, in 1999 he took a sample of the water to a council meeting. The water was brown and opaque. This had been the situation for over a year. With the water supply unsuitable for domestic use, most town residents simply installed rainwater tanks and bought water during the dry periods. While the water supplies in Jindabyne and Berridale were considered very good, and the council already had plans for major structural upgradings to the water supply at Adaminaby, Dalgety had been consistently overlooked. Councillor Neen Pendergast describes the Dalgety community as "fair dinkum people – they very seldom come to council with any complaint, and when they do, you can be sure it's something pretty serious. They look after themselves."<sup>1</sup>

The Dalgety and District Community Association (DDCA) formed in 1991 as a vehicle for the local community's self-reliance. In the wake of the post office closure, the Snowy River Shire Council had announced plans to close down the caravan park, situated on the bank of the Snowy River, and local residents, angered at the decision to close a viable business in a town that desperately needed all the business it could get, refused to accept the decision. Jo Garland, current president of the Association, remembers the day the "entire town stormed the council chambers in Berridale"<sup>2</sup>, presented the then Mayor, Councillor Keven Burke, with a petition, and demanded that the council reconsider its decision. Council did reverse the decision and appointed a new manager of the caravan park, Paul Leete, who subsequently became President of the DDCA and later the Snowy Alliance. While the DDCA originally formed as

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<sup>1</sup> Discussions with Neen Pendergast between July 1999 and January 2001

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Jo Garland, April 4<sup>th</sup> 2002, transcript in possession of author

a local progress association, Garland recalls that the Snowy loomed as the dominant issue from the start<sup>3</sup>. The federal government had announced its plans to corporatise the SMHEA, and it was recognised locally that this would be the only opportunity to save the river, and that no progress would be possible in business or other areas until and unless there could be progress in restoring the river. Against the government, the SMHEA, the National Farmers' Federation, the National Party, the irrigators' lobby and, initially, the Jindabyne community<sup>4</sup>, the DDCA galvanised and emerged as the driving force behind a campaign that was essentially environmental, but implicit throughout the campaign are issues of social justice.

This chapter will examine the interrelationship of social and economic issues with the environment in the context of green political history using the Snowy River campaign as an example, and will also consider the interrelationship from ecosocialist and ecological perspectives. Environmental justice, broadly defined here as the ideal of a "democratic and egalitarian society composed of livable communities"<sup>5</sup>, is essentially the values-based interface between ecology and society. It will be used as an umbrella term to refer to the juxtaposing of nature and society covering such issues as the redistribution of resources currently inequitably distributed. Of necessity, environmental justice is linked with issues of social and economic justice, as the equitable distribution of resources is essentially "the politics of the 'commons'", and would thus "be the aim of a 'green' government".<sup>6</sup>

The level of awareness of environmental issues in contemporary society and the social normality attached to such activities as recycling, water and energy

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Many Jindabyne residents, including the locally influential Chamber of Commerce, initially opposed increased flows in the Snowy River fearing that it would affect the water levels in Lake Jindabyne. SMHEA engineers later assured them that this would not be the case and the Jindabyne community supported the campaign in the final years.

<sup>5</sup> C.Foreman, *The Promise and Peril of Environmental Justice* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1998) 4

<sup>6</sup> D.Wells and T.Lynch, *The Political Ecologist* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000) 124

consciousness and reduction of greenhouse emissions, makes it relatively easy to pinpoint when they were introduced as recommended practice and became generally accepted as routine actions. Provision of infrastructure such as recycling bins, as well as education programs aimed at promoting reductions in the consumption of water and energy are now commonplace across urban Australia. While community action on, and support for, environmental initiatives has become regarded as socially and ecologically responsible over the past three decades, opposition to measures that may impact negatively on the corporate machine remains strong in much of the business and industry sector. Integration of environmental policy into the political agenda has required governments to balance the demands of the electorate against the profit-imperative of the liberal capitalist economy and the economic backing and benefits of multi- and transnational corporations. It is necessary, then, that this examination of issues of social and economic justice also considers the integration of green policy in relation to the global economy and the green movement's approach to the concept of globalisation, balanced against the introduction of a globalised green politics<sup>7</sup> and social 'grassroots' acceptance of environmental measures.

To reprise Porritt, "The state of the planet provides the context within which all politicians operate".<sup>8</sup> Drawing a line from this statement, the state of the planet provides the context for politics generally, and must be reflected in the instruments of politics and justice if the challenge of the environmental movement is to be effectively met. Moreover, politics and the institutions of government provide the only decision-making authority for environmental issues and as issues become more complex, that authority must expand to accommodate them<sup>9</sup>. Political decision-making is most comfortable in the traditional areas of social and economic policy. Environmental legislation, in its

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<sup>7</sup> M.Blakers (ed), *The Global Greens* (Canberra: The Australian Greens and The Green Institute, 2001)

<sup>8</sup> J.Porritt, *Seeing Green* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1984) 25 (original emphasis removed)

<sup>9</sup> D.Wells and T.Lynch, 2000 op cit., 111

earliest stages, was piecemeal and concerned primarily with human well-being within these traditional legislative areas. Regulatory acts on pollution and land-clearing and the creation of national parks<sup>10</sup> were aimed at maintaining environmental amenity for society. At this point the state of the environment was not considered in terms of its intrinsic value, long-term health or the complexity of its interrelationship with its human tenants except as a means of sustaining human life and livelihoods. Thus, problems were dealt with as they arose on an ad hoc basis with little or no attention to the cause-and-effect chain of long-term environmental modification. Technological advancements had provided human society with means by which nature's shortcomings could be addressed and the state of the planet was viewed not in the context of the total environment, but in terms of where it could be more productively utilised.

It was under the auspices of the preservationist ethic that on October 17 1949, the Governor General, William (later Sir William) McKell, announced that the Snowy Mountains Scheme was "the great conservation scheme for Australia."<sup>11</sup> The constitutional sleight of hand used by Prime Minister Chifley and his Minister for Works, Nelson Lemmon, to assume Commonwealth control of the Scheme in 1949 was vigorously opposed by Opposition Leader Menzies<sup>12</sup>, who accused the government of:

... brushing aside the states and for assuming a power which ... it did not possess: and for enacting legislation therefore tainted with serious constitutional illegalities.<sup>13</sup>

The constitutional issues pertain specifically to Section 100 of the Australian Constitution, which states that:

The Commonwealth shall not, by any law or regulation of trade or commerce, abridge the right of a State or of the residents therein to

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<sup>10</sup> For example, the London Clean Air Act 1956 (UK); Scenic Preservation Act 1903 (NZ); Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act 1941 (NZ); Yellowstone Park Act 1872 (USA)

<sup>11</sup> L.Wigmore, *Struggle for the Snowy* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1968) 124

<sup>12</sup> It is to be noted that Menzies, as Prime Minister, supported the Scheme

<sup>13</sup> Collis, *Snowy: the Making of Modern Australia* (Sydney: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990) 38

the reasonable use of the waters of rivers for conservation or irrigation.<sup>14</sup>

The background material prepared for the *Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Bill 1997* cites the Franklin Dam Case as the most recent High Court challenge to s100, suggesting that:

... the primary purpose of s100 was to safeguard the rights of a State and its residents to the use of waters in rivers used for interstate trade and commerce including navigation and shipping.<sup>15</sup>

Given that the provision of water for hydro electricity could be regarded as a "trading activity", it could follow that the building of a dam is "a preparatory act of trade and therefore, presumably, the law enabling the Snowy Mountains Scheme to proceed was a law with respect to 'trade or commerce'."<sup>16</sup> The same constitutional interpretation would be held to give the irrigators a constitutional right to the waters of the Snowy under the *Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Power Act 1949*.

The equitable distribution of a resource being a fundamental tenet of environmental justice, the campaign to save the Snowy was founded on principles of social justice as much as it was on ecological integrity. This was expressed clearly in the Snowy Alliance's submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee, and noted in the committee's report (October 1997) on the provisions of the *Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Bill 1997*:

We are concerned that control of a large slab of south eastern Australia's water will be placed in the hands of a company ... that will fight vigorously to maximise the profits, resource availability and use at the expense of the environment and community values.

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<sup>14</sup> Australian Constitution (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, updated to January 1998)

<sup>15</sup> "The Commonwealth of Australia V. Tasmania: The Tasmanian Dam Case (1983)", quoted in *Bills Digest No.70: Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Bill 1997* (Canberra: Australian Parliamentary Library, 1997-98)

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

The people along the Snowy River are fearful that corporatisation legislation will set up a priority for profit on power generation ahead of other more valued users. These fears are exacerbated by the proposal in the New South Wales legislation to grant an unprecedented 75 year water licence to the corporatised body, with a 50 year option to renew.<sup>17</sup>

The concerns of equitable resource distribution are reflected in the Issues Paper for the Snowy Water Inquiry (1998), which states:

All the rivers under consideration by the Inquiry, including eastward and westward flowing rivers, are important to the communities established on them. Any change in flows will add to or reduce social values including heritage, cultural and localised community issues, depending on the river. For example, within the eastern part of the Snowy Mountains and in the Snowy River catchment, environmental flows may enhance social values.<sup>18</sup>

While the DDCA strongly maintains that its focus for the past 11 years has been on the ecology of the river, underpinning that focus has been more complex issues of social justice, based on the inequitable use of the Snowy's flow for irrigation to the west of the mountains at the expense of the communities to the east: a concern first raised in the 1940s when "many from the long lamented "Cinderella of the Commonwealth" as Councillor Leo Barry dubbed the region, ... felt as if they might be left out as they began to fear the loss of the upper Snowy flows to the west of the range."<sup>19</sup>

#### *Justice and law: anthropocentric and ecocentric approaches*

The 1960s heightened social awareness that the Earth's resources are not infinite and that those that are renewable may not be renewable in the average

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Snowy Water Inquiry: Issues Paper* (Sydney: Snowy Water Inquiry, 1998) 20

<sup>19</sup> G.Byrne, 2001, "The Cinderella of the Commonwealth: A Short History of the Snowy River Region's Loss of the Upper Snowy Region", (Snowy Alliance website: <http://www.snowyriveralliance.com.au/reports.htm>) unpaginated

human lifespan, or even in the lifespan of the human species was not welcome news during a period of economic boom and population growth. Which, of course, was the whole problem. The post-war population boom and rapid industrialisation had resulted in unprecedented consumption of resources and production of waste products and by-products. In a social climate where there was a perception that the political process had ceased to address the concerns of society and new answers were being sought, the realisation of an impending ecological crisis came as further evidence to the rising social movements of the inability of existing political institutions to provide for rapid and wide-ranging social change.

The catalyst that gave rise to the modern environmental movement also challenged the political hegemony and social credibility of the government-corporate nexus. Defined by a zero-sum game, the industry-environment dichotomy creates a tension between corporate governance and the green movement. The negotiations and compromises required for environmental policy are a function of this tension. Further, issues of social and environmental justice are not confined within the specificities of domestic policy, nor restricted to a specific timeframe or to the current generation. Intergenerational justice and cross-national and international approaches to fair and equitable distribution of wealth are central to social and economic justice<sup>20</sup>; so too is the question of the rights of humankind to a managerial approach towards the environment, the recognition of the intrinsic value of nature and the role played by governments in ensuring its protection. Environmental justice is not simply a matter of conserving natural resources: it is a complex and open-ended process that challenges such concepts of sovereignty, capitalism, power, economic growth, and democracy itself.

A working definition of the concept of justice is necessary in order to delineate between social and economic justice and the legal and political

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<sup>20</sup> Foreman (1998) *op cit.*



instruments of maintaining law. Of importance here is distributive rather than retributive justice, the former concerned with equity and fairness while the latter with punishment or corrective actions. Importantly, any definition of justice is also inextricably linked to ethics, and these can be dependent upon any number of social and cultural factors. John Rawls states that "justice is the first virtue of social institutions"<sup>21</sup>, while Low and Gleeson point out that "in justice, [how] we *ought* to behave socially is connected with how we perceive that society actually *is* structured."<sup>22</sup> For the purposes of a definition for social and economic justice in the context of political ideology, I will presuppose the structure of the liberal-democratic society and its attendant institutions as the definitional political framework, as it is within this ideological and institutional structure that the evolution of environmental politics, including its associated ethics in relation to both the environment and society, has occurred.

Taking this as the starting point, the example illustrated by the late H.C.Coombs describes the difference between law and justice thus:

The process [of aboriginal displacement] begun in 1788 continues inexorably in our times. It is those lands, previously thought useless to white people, which are now being meticulously prospected and within which mining developments are occurring and are proposed. We have now decided that the reservation of land 'for Aboriginal use and benefit' and even the recognition of Aboriginal title are to be interpreted as subject to the proviso that they must be available to white-controlled enterprises for such purposes as we consider in the 'national interest'. The processes by which this phase of the occupation of Aboriginal land is being completed are justified by Acts of Parliament...<sup>23</sup>

Even while it is recognised that the colonisation, occupation and exploitation of

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<sup>21</sup> J.Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* Revised Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 3

<sup>22</sup> N.Low and B.Gleeson, *Justice, Society and Nature* (London: Routledge, 1998) 29 (original italics)

<sup>23</sup> H.C.Coombs, *The Return of Scarcity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 137

aboriginal land without the permission or agency of the original owners is unjust, it is facilitated by Acts of Parliament which enshrine these actions and their motives as legally permissible. The use of terms such as 'national interest' imply that the extraction of natural resources by whatever means and from whatever lands, regardless of cultural significance or Indigenous sovereignty, is justified by the social and economic dominance of the colonisers over both land and original owners. The law is enacted by the few for the intended (and indirect) good of the many under the aegis of the liberal capitalist profit-motive, while justice remains unrealised and, in the case of Native Title, highly contentious. This example is also indicative of the systemic separation of the lower social strata from the natural environment under liberal democratic law. This point will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter, but it is of value to point out at this stage that the concept of justice is an aspect of the human-nature interrelationship and it is this point that is at the heart of this chapter on social and economic justice.

The legal structure of the liberal democratic system is based on the state control of the instruments of legitimate coercion<sup>24</sup>. Laws are justified in their universal applicability as being in the best interests of the society they serve:

Law is a set of universal rules which applies equally to all, and represents rational-legal authority in society, as formulated by its duly chosen political elites.<sup>25</sup>

No one is considered to be above the law, and those who are outside it are 'brought to justice' for the good of society. Following Locke, the state is given the role of "protection of property, along with other private rights such as the right to personal security."<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, there are laws against the taking of life and liberty, property theft, intimidation and assault and a range of other

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<sup>24</sup> P.Dunleavy and B.O'Leary, *Theories of the State: The Politics of Liberal Democracy* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1987) 180

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* 180

<sup>26</sup> M.Fisk, *The State and Justice: An essay in political theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 80

actions against the individual. Similarly, following Hobbes, there is an assumption that the state is "free to distribute wealth and organize trade as it will, provided only that it does not lose legitimacy in the process."<sup>27</sup> There are, thus, laws against certain anti-social behaviours and crimes against the state. Laws, however, while based on the precepts of justice, are not necessarily of themselves just, or readily accord with the concept of ethical standards expected within a liberal society insofar as that refers to the rational foundation for moral judgment<sup>28</sup>. While relatively recent laws preventing discrimination or vilification on grounds of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation protect and uphold the rights of certain groups, other groups and individuals are rendered effectively legally invisible or remain unprotected. For example, the International Council of Jurists recently condemned Australia's laws in relation to the mandatory detention of child refugees as being in violation of the United Nations covenant protecting the rights of children. Despite this breach of international justice, Australian law, enacted by a government seeking reelection at a time of heightened concerns about national security, required that all refugees and asylum-seekers be detained regardless of their age. In a further example, the 'stolen generation' will forever stain Australia's history in terms of injustices perpetrated by law. Laws enacted for political gain, either for a government or an individual, are seldom just, in the Rawlsian sense of determining social arrangements that best facilitate equality in distribution of justice.<sup>29</sup>

How, then, does justice accord to nature? According to Lu,

Justice is the hallmark of human society, for outside of it lies only a vast morally incoherent world where justice has no meaning. Thus justice, like all virtues and vices, is particular to humanity, and while we may metaphorically use the language of justice to define acts of

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<sup>27</sup> *ibid.* 80

<sup>28</sup> J.Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980)

<sup>29</sup> Rawls (1999) *op cit.*

the gods or fate or nature, in the end it is only human beings who can be just or unjust.<sup>30</sup>

In relation to the environment, humans and human society can deliver justice on two levels: firstly, and on the basis of the environment encompassing and defining all human activity, justice refers to the equal and equally conditional rights of all peoples with respect to nature and natural resources; and secondly, in our duty towards nature as having moral considerability and intrinsic value. The concept of 'rights' is central to our notion of justice. Midgley points out that rights are not enshrined in law, and indeed, the reason for invoking them is frequently to "change laws so as to embody them."<sup>31</sup> Further, while the concept and application of universal human rights is highly complex, the concept of rights for non-human nature remains abstracted by the limitations of human understanding. Rawls regards the subject as standing outside the parameters of a theory of justice<sup>32</sup>; Passmore argues that while there is a 'right' way for humans to treat animals, animals of themselves have no rights<sup>33</sup>; and Singer believes that it is "ethically indefensible" to discriminate against members of non-human species simply on the basis of their non-humanness<sup>34</sup>. Distributive justice, as a universal concept, must have universal applications, and insofar as the natural environment and non-human species are, in ecological and ethical considerations, interrelated with human life, it follows that there should be universal obligations in respect of nature as having moral considerability.

Social and economic justice are functions of a society wherein all citizens have equal rights and access to the basic services expected within that society.

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<sup>30</sup> C.Lu, 1998, "Images of Justice: Justice as a Bond, a Boundary and a Balance", *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol.6, No.1, pp 1-26

<sup>31</sup> M.Midgley, "Duties Concerning Islands", in Elliot and Gare (eds) *Environmental Philosophy* (St.Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1983) 171

<sup>32</sup> Rawls (1999) op cit, 441

<sup>33</sup> J.Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature* (London: Duckworth, 1974) 117

<sup>34</sup> P.Singer, "Ethics across the species boundary", in Low (ed), *Global Ethics and Environment* (London: Routledge, 1999) 146

Athanasίου cites environmental historian, Robert Gottlieb<sup>35</sup>, who describes the early movement for environmental justice as comprising:

... the female-led municipal housekeeping movement, which focused on issues like sanitation, public health, and food and nutrition; the muckraker-inspired urban reform organizations and settlement houses, which led the push for better housing, for new regulatory agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration, and for improving the harsh conditions of industrial labor; and the "sewer" socialists, who helped revolutionize municipal governance over the urban environment.<sup>36</sup>

The equitable and sustainable use of both natural and human environments underpins environmental justice on local and global scales. Bullard writes that:

Hazardous wastes and 'dirty' industries have followed the path of least resistance. Transnational corporations and governments (including the military) have often exploited the economic vulnerability of poor communities, poor states, poor nations and poor regions for environmentally unsound, unhealthy and 'risky' and unsustainable operations.<sup>37</sup>

Within the liberal democratic political system, the parties on the centre and left have claimed social and economic justice platforms as their own, with the ALP long having dropped socialism from its discourse and replacing it with social justice<sup>38</sup>. The adoption of the political rhetoric of social and economic justice is associated with the principles of participatory democracy and ecological sustainability, and while the election of social democratic governments in no way assures the application of universal human rights in respect of such

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<sup>35</sup> R.Gottlieb, "An Odd Assortment of Allies: American Environmentalism in the 1990s", in LaMay and Dennis (eds), *Media and the Environment* (Covelo Ca.: Island Press, 1993)

<sup>36</sup> R.Gottlieb, quoted in T.Athansiou, *Divided Planet: The Ecology of Rich and Poor* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1998) 21

<sup>37</sup> R.Bullard, "Environmental justice challenges at home and abroad", in Low (ed) (1999) op cit. 33

<sup>38</sup> D.Adams, "Social Justice" in Haward and Larmour (eds) *The Tasmanian Parliamentary Accord: Public Policy 1989-92* (Canberra: Federalism Research Centre, Australian National University, 1992) pp. 87-97

principles, it has served as a useful ideological tool for left-wing and 'new left' political parties.

*Nature and the political economy: the ecosocialist challenge*

In 1842 Karl Marx became the editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung*, a major Rhineland newspaper "which represented the rising middle class of Cologne"<sup>39</sup>. At that time, the issue of the theft of wood from forests was particularly predominant in the public domain and came to represent to Marx the inequities within the capitalist system:

In taking up the issue of the theft of wood Marx was not addressing a minor issue. Five-sixths of all prosecutions in Prussia during this period had to do with wood ... What was at issue was the dissolution of the final rights of the peasants in relation to what had been the common land – rights that had existed from time immemorial but which were being eliminated by the growth of industrialisation and the system of private property. Traditionally the people had had the right to collect dead wood ... which enabled them to heat their homes and cook their food. Landowners, however, increasingly denied the ordinary people the right to dead wood along with everything else in the forest. ...

The poor were thus denied any relation to nature – even for their survival – unmediated by the institutions of private property.<sup>40</sup>

The relationship of humankind to nature is at the core of environmental justice, and ownership of, or personal access to, nature is a key determinant of personal wealth and social status. In Britain the Royal Family owns a vast personal estate of some 19,000 hectares of park or woodland, some of which is accessible to the public but 'managed' by royal staff. Additionally, the Monarch is granted ownership of the 120,000 hectares of the Crown Estate, much of which is

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<sup>39</sup> J.Foster, *Marx's Ecology* (New York: Monthly Review press, 2000) 66

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.* 66

agricultural land plus the seabed around the UK. In Japan, a nation with a very high population density and heavily reliant on trade imports of food due to insufficiency of agricultural land, the affluent and social elite can belong to golf and country clubs at membership fees in the millions of yen. In Hawaii the rich can own private beaches and in Australia ownership of off-road recreational vehicles that facilitate greater access to nature rivals that of sports or traditional luxury cars as symbols of wealth or status. At the other end of the scale, the denial of access to nature is an indication of very low social status.

The exclusion of the German peasantry from the Prussian forests to which they previously had unrestricted access, and the redefinition of their collection of dead wood as 'theft' was held by Marx to be not a matter to be resolved in law, but through examination and reform of the political economy<sup>41</sup>. Over a century later, the modern environment movement grew from the belief that the impending ecological crisis was also due to the nature of the political economy, which had systematically removed human society from the environment. Central to the ecological critique of the political economy is the reliance on technology for economic growth and expansion<sup>42</sup>. Technology, in turn, is reliant on natural resources for its growth and expansion. In order for the political economy to continue to create wealth, it is necessary for the consumption of natural resources to not just be maintained at a certain level, but to increase. Simultaneous to the consumption of natural resources is the production of waste as a by-product of technology. The Aral and Mediterranean Seas, the Rhine, Danube, Mississippi and Murray Rivers, New York's Staten Island, the Philippines' 'Smokey Mountain', the air over Mexico City, Los Angeles, Hong Kong and London, even the vast reaches of outer space all bear testimony to the volume of waste produced by technology as a by-product of economic growth<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> *ibid.* 67

<sup>42</sup> B.Commoner, *The Closing Circle* (New York: A.A.Knopf, 1971); R.Grundmann, *Marxism and Ecology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); L.Brown, *Eco-Economy* (New York: Norton & Co.Inc., 2001)

<sup>43</sup> C.Ponting, *A Green History of the World* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991)

The systematic detachment of human society from the environment, however, ensured that from the industrial revolution to the apocalypticist revolution, most waste produced remained largely invisible. The invisibility of waste, including 'social waste' such as the so-called social underclass, refugees and, in some cases, the elderly or disabled, lies at the very crux of social and economic justice<sup>44</sup>. Economic growth, technology, human-nature separation and ecological depredation developed concurrently and exponentially.

The Marxist criticisms of the emergent environment movement in the 1960s and 70s were based along class lines. Contemporary Marxists accused the social movement of only recognising the environmental depredations of capitalism when it directly threatened the lives and livelihoods of the bourgeoisie, and that the proletariat had been suffering under the yoke of economic growth and its attendant environmental effects since the industrial revolution. From the time of the wood 'thefts' in the Prussian forests, the poor had borne the brunt of the liberal capitalist economy as it removed them farther and farther from nature and made them increasingly reliant on technology to which they had only limited, if any, access. Grundmann describes two reactions of contemporary Marxists to the environmental problematic:

The first is the orthodox reaction which claims that ecological problems are the result of the workings of the profit principle and of the institutions of private property. The second reaction claims that Marxism has concentrated too much on the exploitation of man and the domination over man, thereby neglecting the aspect of exploiting and dominating nature.<sup>45</sup>

Eco-Marxists believed that the solution to the social inequities inherent in capitalism and evident in the ecological crisis lay in the:

... transformation of the *relations* of production combined with the development of a better theoretical understanding of nature and

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<sup>44</sup> R.Tennant-Wood, 2001, "Taking out the garbage: the sociology of waste", paper presented to Wastebusters and Organics 2001 Conferences, Ashburton NZ, May 2001

<sup>45</sup> R.Grundmann, op cit. 48



further advances in technology so that a complete social mastery of nature can be attained for the benefits of all, rather than just the privileged capitalist class.<sup>46</sup>

While this view retained the fundamental elements of classical Marxist doctrine, it extended the definition of the oppression of the working class to include oppression and exploitation of nature. Thus, only a political and economic revolution could redistribute environmental amenity equitably. Nowhere, in the eco-Marxist doctrine, is the concept of the intrinsic value of nature afforded credence<sup>47</sup>. It concentrates on the reunification of humankind with nature to better and more equitably utilise natural resources.

The concept of economic justice from the point of view of the environmental movement, however, was far more complex and interwoven with a broader social perspective. The decline of the conservative political and social paradigm of which preservationism was a part resulted in a period of social revolution, but from the outset, the environment movement was connected to and with other social movements which regarded Marxism as part of the problem rather than the solution. The anti-nuclear and peace movements, for example, were equally as critical of both sides of the Cold War<sup>48</sup> for the proliferation of arms and support for the war in Vietnam, and the later nuclear disaster at Chernobyl in 1986 heightened the suspicion with which industrialisation behind the iron curtain was regarded. Marxism, even in the context of environmental justice, still focused on the instrumental value of nature to human society and ignored the basic premise of the green movement, which is that the ecological crisis is global and not related to any one political ideology. While a revolution in

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<sup>46</sup> R.Eckersley, *Environmentalism and political theory: Towards an ecocentric approach* (London: UCL Press, 1992) 82

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.* 82

<sup>48</sup> It can be (and frequently is) argued that the former Soviet Union was not Marxism, *per se*, but 'state capitalism'. For the purposes of this thesis, however, the line drawn between the liberal capitalist economy and the state-controlled capitalist economy is polemical and not relevant in terms of the green critique that both are equally responsible for the environmental depredations of industrialism.

labour relations would redistribute the flow of global capital, it would not address the means whereby capital is produced.

In order to address this conundrum the ecosocialist critique regarded the capitalist economy, based on a single profit-making premise, as not only promulgating the ecological crisis associated with industry, technology and profit-motive, but also as having usurped the very movement that once challenged its hegemony. The green movement's apparent incognizance of the role of power relations in achieving socio-political change was, according to the ecosocialist view, the key weakness in the movement's approach to environmental justice. The promise of ecosocialism, then, was to deliver environmentalism back to the movement and into the control of the working class, the radical left and the social(ist) revolution through a decentralised, ecologically benign, reform economy.

Ecological modernisation, from the ecosocialist perspective, is simply capitalism writ green: the integration of environmentalism into liberal-capitalist politics as a means, not of ensuring resource conservation, intergenerational justice or ecological sustainability, but of maintaining the socio-political status quo in perpetuity. Ecosocialism raises the question as to whether these political parameters are equipped to deal with the wider social concerns posed by the potential collapse, not of society, but of the environment upon which society depends. In the context of the ecosocialist critique of green democratisation and integrationism, the flaws in the capitalist approach to the green movement's agenda are that it has failed to address the core concern of the left: social and economic justice. The distribution of the world's wealth, derived from resources that have been progressively and systemically denied to the poor and divided among the rich, is such that the divisions of class retain their relevance in terms of the ownership and access to nature of the rich as when Marx wrote about the separation from nature of the rural poor in 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany as being indicative of the social injustice of capitalism.

*Faith in science and faith in the market: the paradox of integrationism*

Social and economic justice are inseparable from ecology in terms of their interconnectedness with the holistic view of human society as an ecosystem within, and dependent upon, the natural environment. While this view is a socially and empirically reasonable assumption to make now, forty years after the spectre of an impending ecological crisis was raised as an issue of social importance, at the time the concept of challenging humankind's dominance of nature was somewhat threatening. The publication of Carson's *Silent Spring* marked a watershed, not only in the development of environmental thought, but also in the understanding and role of science, which, in the development of environmental politics over the past four decades, has been both complex and paradoxical. The faith of society in science to deliver answers and solutions to the ecological crisis being wrought by industrialisation is balanced against the faith of industry in science to develop new technologies to market in response to consumer demands for environmentally friendly industry to counter the effects of the mass-consumer market, and so forth. Further to this, the potential social and economic ramifications Carson's work were quite obvious to the chemical industries, which collectively attempted to discredit Carson and prevent the book from reaching the market<sup>49</sup>. The fact that Carson was a scientist lent weight to her findings and marked the beginning of an age where science could be used both to prove and disprove environmental claims.

Where the science of ecology had entailed, since its development as a field of scientific study in the 1860s, the understanding of the interrelatedness of the natural environment and all species, it was not until the 1960s that this was really extended to include the human species. The end of the preservationist era and the subsequent social revolution lay open to question all measure of previously unquestioned phenomena and unresolved questions. Around the

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<sup>49</sup> J.Stauber and S.Rampton, *Toxic Sludge is Good for You!* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1995); and T.Athanasiou, (1998) op cit.

time Carson published her text, the results of scientific developments such as space exploration, oral contraception and television were contributing to the emerging social definition of the 1960s. The fact that many scientific developments would have undesirable long-term consequences was not investigated at the time. Science and technology existed as instruments to advance society and further remove it from nature, not to reveal that nature was being systematically destroyed by the very advancements being made. The instrumental view of science was itself largely a development of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Coombs wrote that while Bacon predicted in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that the “study of nature would transform our mastery over it”<sup>50</sup>, until the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

... scientists were concerned to observe, to describe and to understand what mankind encounters when confronting nature, rather than to answer the question, ‘What must I do to achieve a desired result?’<sup>51</sup>

The challenge of the environment movement to science and technology was not the question of what must be done to achieve a certain result, but of what must be done to ensure that those results are in the best interests, not just of society, but also of nature itself and, crucially, the long-term future of a society reliant on nature.

It is ecology and the role of science in modern politics and society that is the crucible of the Greens’ view of a new political model. The political model envisaged by the Greens, whereby an ecological politics can be posited apart from (or ahead of) the left-right linear spectrum, presupposes a basis of acceptance of ecological issues, including that of the role of nature, in the political sphere. Social and economic justice, as extensions of an ecological politics, must be recognised in relation to the overarching aims and applications of ecology in its contemporary form. In order to draw this connection, I will return to the development of socialism and the thesis of Marx, developed from,

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<sup>50</sup> H.C.Coombs, (1990) op cit. 61

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.* 61

among other observations and beliefs, the alienation of the poor from nature. In 1844 Marx wrote: "Natural science will in time incorporate into itself the science of man, just as the science of man will incorporate into itself natural science: there will be *one* science."<sup>52</sup> Whereas, however, Marx's concept of science and humankind was somewhat Darwinian in outlook, the reality, observed by Marx in later writings<sup>53</sup>, was that science became the agent of production, and therefore, of capitalism. The paradox of science, in relation to society and politics, has always been its relationship with industry and production. Until the 1960s, the position of science in the role of industrialism was unchallenged: science enabled technological progress. The publication, in the 1960s and 70s of a number of texts by scientists warning of the environmental degradation wrought by scientifically-endorsed industry posed a threat, not only to the standing of science and its practitioners in relation to technological integrity, but to the dominant industry-politics nexus.

Since the emergence of the environmental movement, spearheaded, as it was, by empirical, knowledge-based scientific findings, science has frequently been thrust into a role for which it was completely unprepared: that of political agent. While industry is reliant on its scientists to maintain progress in technological advancement, society is also reliant on them to keep the non-scientific community informed of the environmental risks associated with industry. Many governments, furthermore, in accordance with the demands of the green movement, green politicians and social concerns, have adopted the 'precautionary principle', which preempts science on the basis that lack of scientific evidence in a given area of industry or development does not abrogate political responsibility in the event that future findings prove there to be an inherent social and environmental risk. Industry, governments, and environment and community groups call for 'independent' scientific studies to

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<sup>52</sup> Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts", quoted in H.Rose and S.Rose (eds), *The Political Economy of Science* (London: Macmillan Press, 1976) 4

<sup>53</sup> Specifically, *The Grundrisse (A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy)* (1859) and *Capital* (1867)

be carried out on contentious developments, while the independence of these reports remains questionable depending upon the commission of the particular study. The adage, 'who pays the piper calls the tune' is frequently cited in relation to such studies as environmental impact assessments and reports into government developments.

The scientific community, however, has become constrained by the limitations of its own paradigm, the purpose of which, for the period of green democratisation and integrationism, has been to provide technological solutions for the problems of technology. In terms of green politics and in relation to social and economic justice, Rose and Rose state that:

Knowledge of the social separated from the natural becomes idealism, knowledge of the natural separated from the social becomes mechanical materialism – itself a form of idealism.<sup>54</sup>

In order for science to correlate and communicate with the changing social and economic view of the ecological crisis, the challenge is not how best to address problems such as climate change, soil erosion and degradation, dryland salinity or the HIV/AIDS pandemic, but how to resolve the cause and prevent their recurrence. Rather, however, science has become locked into a cycle of economic dependency on government and industry. Thus, integrationism has not simply integrated environmental policy into the mainstream policy agenda, but has also integrated science into economic development, whereby scientific research is used to justify government policy, verify the approach to be taken on certain issues, or determine which government priorities. In much the way that Renaissance artists relied on the patronage of the church or wealthy families, providing, in return, commemorative (and frequently flattering) works of art for their patrons, the contemporary scientific community is often at the behest of the state or major corporations, providing, in return, sound, empirical (and frequently flattering) data to support government or corporate policy direction.

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<sup>54</sup> Rose and Rose (1976), *op cit.* 7

Paradoxically, while providing the basis for technological and industrial development, science is also providing the environmental warnings on which the green movement predicated its priorities and political activities. Far from the grim predictions of the apocalypticist era, however, integrationism and the application of the precautionary principle have ensured that not only has much of the 'green' agenda been addressed, but many of the risks and consequences of industrialism have also been integrated into the social mainstream. Rampton and Stauber argue that in the USA the precautionary principle itself is a mechanism whereby industry uses science and the scientific paradox to maintain the liberal capitalist economic and political status quo:

Most people probably think that the precautionary principle is already part of the process of evaluating and approving risky or unfamiliar chemicals, products, and industrial practices. To a casual observer, there might not seem to be a lot of difference between an industry lobbyist who talks of 'assessing risks with sound science' versus an environmentalist who talks of 'acting to mitigate potential risks before they appear'. In the real world, however, the differences are much greater than mere linguistics. Today's regulatory system essentially allows anything to be released into nature unless it is proven unsafe by scientific data, which is defined to mean measurable harm. In practice, this means that preventative action is not taken until damage has already been done.<sup>55</sup>

This situation is different in Europe, particularly Germany, where preventative action on environmental issues is entrenched in law, but the point is still made that damage must already be evident in order for there to be a recognised risk of further damage. The perception and management of risks will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 7, but it is necessary to define the changing role of science within the history of environmentalism.

The use of science by industry and government in applying the 'greenwash'

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<sup>55</sup> S.Rampton and J.Stauber, *Trust Us, We're Experts!* (New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 2001)126

is twofold and designed, in both cases, to perpetuate the world dominance of liberal capitalist ideology. It must be stated here that the integrity of individual scientists is not at question, nor is 'science', *per se*. At issue is the industrial class-based system that uses elite professionals as a means of obscuring the nature of industry and technology by presenting only those findings that support its activities. Science, in this case, has become the religion of politically integrated environmentalism. The dual role of science in this case is, firstly, to answer only those questions asked of it by industry: "of *not* raising issues to which the [liberal capitalist] system has no solutions,"<sup>56</sup> and secondly, by serving capitalist interests in retaining the hierarchical social organisation through the segregation of the lower social strata from the elite experts who represent the knowledge required to advance the technological society. By incorporating the practitioners of science into the liberal capitalist system, it is able to determine precisely what society will regard as expert knowledge, and therefore to be relied upon, and what is common knowledge, folklore or extremist (and therefore unreliable) views. Gorz cites the example of medicine in Western nations, which relies heavily on synthetic drugs and is therefore regarded as scientific, as opposed to homeopathy and other traditional plant-based medicine which are considered 'unscientific' and are therefore condemned by the elite medical profession<sup>57</sup>. The narrow definition and application of science by industry has allowed it to manipulate governments (and nations) through selective and controlled information.

The reference to science in terms of 'faith' and 'religion' requires further explanation at this point. Prior to the Enlightenment, solutions to society's most pressing questions were sought through recourse to the Church, which was also the locus of knowledge and education. Unexplained natural phenomena were regarded as 'acts of God' and bounteous seasons as God's gifts. Leaders

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<sup>56</sup> A.Gorz, "On the Class Character of Science and Scientists", in Rose and Rose (eds) (1976), op cit. 64 (original italics)

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.* 66



deferred to their spiritual advisors before making political decisions and religious ideology was indivisible from that of the state. The Enlightenment began to tilt the balance towards secularity, a process continued through the Industrial Revolution and the growth of a knowledge-based economy. While the Christian Church remains, in Western liberal democracies, a very powerful lobby, religion itself has lost much of its direct influence over political decision making and the development of policy. State endorsed scientific research and practice in such areas as cloning, reproductive technology, stem cell research and genetic engineering, as well as the controversial issues of euthanasia, same-sex partnerships and abortion, are deliberated on rational-legal grounds with religious considerations comprising only a part of the contribution to the public debate. The mystery of the church, with regard to its position in society, has given way to the mystery of science to the point where governments will defer to scientific advisors before making many decisions, particularly those that relate to the environment, and science is the authority to which society turns for its answers. This is not to say that science is infallible, any more than is the church, but the manipulation of science by parties with something to gain or lose means that the information disseminated to society may be as selective as that which was disseminated by the church in the pre-Enlightenment – and for much the same reason: the perpetuation of a dominant paradigm for means of control by a ruling elite.

The real faith, then, is not just in science but in the liberal capitalist economy. In large part, the integrationist adoption of scientific authority by industry-reliant liberal capitalist governments is based on the reliance of the environment movement on science and the scope of the environment movement's science-based claims. Deference to science as a basis of authority removes the emotive and moral content of controversial issues. Thus, 'ownership' of science gives the possessor of that knowledge a foundation of fact on which to base an argument, rather than relying on the moving target of morality, tied as it is, with religious implications. When empiricism, either

scientific or legal-rational, does not accord with the preferences of liberal capitalist government, political leaders are more likely to invoke religion or values as the ultimate source of their power. For example, the US Government and President Bush immediately and indignantly invoked God as the source of American rights when the Pledge of Allegiance was decreed unconstitutional by a Californian court on grounds of the state-sanctioning of a specific religion. Similarly, the environment movement, when lacking hard scientific evidence on which to base claims, will resort to appealing to the morality or emotional content of certain actions.

Green democratisation took ecology into the political arena and integrationism moved it into the legislative sphere in order to support policy based on ideological grounds. Thus, Conservative British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, in the 1980s called for "scientific studies of the greenhouse effect" and "insisted that environmental policies be based on sound science"<sup>58</sup>. The major flaw of this approach, according to Yearley, is that it relies on a focus upon one fact or set of findings at a time. Science, however, is seldom a matter of isolated facts:

... science is held up for admiration as a body of factual knowledge. Most often, though, it is theoretical knowledge which is regarded as the principal achievement of science. The expectation that the earth's temperature will rise because of the greenhouse effect is a prediction based on scientific theory.<sup>59</sup>

The interpretation of theory into a body of inarguable facts, and the faith of society in the impartiality of science in arriving at these facts, become part of the mechanism by which liberal capitalism maintains its global economic hegemony. This is compounded by the fact that most scientific research is carried out in or by the developed nations.

The domination and economic control of science by the developed nations

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<sup>58</sup> S. Yearley, *The Green Case* (London: Harper Collins Academic, 1991) 113

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.* 121

has provided liberal capitalist governments with justification for economic 'rationalisation' in environmental policies, removing any consideration for principles of social and economic justice in the name of modernisation and technology. That the technological market is based in liberal capitalism is no accident. The unswerving faith in market-based environmental policy was illustrated by William Reilly, Administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency during the Bush (Snr) administration, who stated that:

The forces of the marketplace are powerful tools for changing individual and institutional behavior. If set up correctly, they can achieve or surpass environmental approaches.<sup>60</sup>

Emerging as a political force in the 1970s and 80s, environmentalism formed a political link between the traditional political issues pertaining to social welfare and economic growth, and those of the environment. Social and economic justice, then, as part of an eco-political approach have been instrumental in the overlap between the left-wing and green political platforms.

*Corporatisation and environmental justice: mutually exclusive or mutually dependent?*

In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls defines justice in the context of the political economy thus:

A doctrine of political economy must include an interpretation of the public good which is based on a conception of justice. It is to guide the reflections of the citizen when he considers questions of economic and social policy. He is to take up the perspective of the constitutional convention or the legislative stage and ascertain how the principles of justice apply. A political opinion concerns what advances the good of the body politic as a whole and invokes some criterion for the just division of social advantages.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Reilly, quoted in J. Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 103

<sup>61</sup> Rawls (1999) op cit. 229

The division of natural resources and environmental access underpins the doctrine of a political economy based on the principles of distributive justice. Preservationism was unable to address these issues through the restrictive nature of a conception of nature as social amenity. While environmental policy was enacted on an ad hoc basis as problems arose, there remained no allowance for the holistic view that would take into consideration the social and economic extensions of the environment. Green democratisation and integrationism, whilst mainstreaming environmental issues into the policy framework of the liberal democratic structure, are restricted in turn by the constraints of the global capitalist economy and its reliance on corporate competitiveness. Sustainable development, which I have not addressed in this chapter, is a major component of the integrationist approach to environmental problems. However, the realisation of sustainability in developed nations, to now, has relied on the continuing exploitation of the developing nations<sup>62</sup>, despite the fact that the Brundtland definition of sustainability specifically allows for inclusion of all nations<sup>63</sup>. Corporatisation of the environment has shifted the emphasis from sustainable resource use to sustainable economic growth and while the politico-economic view of natural resources has always been that of market commodities, the move from government regulation and control to increasing market competition has seen a corresponding decrease in equitable resource distribution. Where a resource is necessary for the maintenance of an ecosystem, such as water to river health, corporatisation effectively places the abstract concept of ecological integrity in competition with the very real concept of profit.

This was the case at the outset of the campaign to save the Snowy. From the beginning environmental groups, and later the Greens, opposed corporatisation on the grounds that the SMHEA, as a government authority, was a publicly-

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<sup>62</sup> Prugh et al, *The Local Politics of Global Sustainability* (Washington DC: Island Press, 2000); and Athanasiou (1998) op cit

<sup>63</sup> WCED (Chair, Gro Harlem Brundtland), *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)

owned asset and that as a corporation competing in the market it would place profit-making ahead of environmental considerations. At the same time the National Party opposed corporatisation on the grounds that the corporation would not be under any obligation to honour the government's commitment to the irrigators<sup>64</sup>. As mentioned previously, the first parliamentary mention of the issue, in 1991, concerned the process of the review and the likelihood of cost increases to electricity consumers. On October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1997, opening the debate for the *Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Bill 1997*, the ALP Member for Perth, Mr Stephen Smith, stressed that while the Federal Opposition supported the corporatisation process, which the ALP had started during its penultimate term of government, "the question of water distribution between electricity, environment, irrigation, aspects or needs had not been resolved by the time [the ALP] left office."<sup>65</sup> Smith proposed crucial amendments to the Bill, which were subsequently adopted, to the effect that the Commonwealth not relinquish its controlling interest in the Snowy Hydro before being satisfied that the findings of the proposed Snowy Water Inquiry, to be funded jointly by the New South Wales and Victorian governments, were fully implemented. The amendments received strong bipartisan support in the House of Representatives, indicating a concern among members that the passage of the *Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Bill 1997* would limit the Commonwealth's input into the Snowy Water Inquiry with the likely result that either one or a number of stakeholder groups may be seriously disadvantaged. In the six years between the Hawke Labor government's announcement of corporatisation plans and the federal Parliamentary debate on the corporatisation bill, the emphasis had changed from one of sound economic rationale to concern for the equitable distribution to all stakeholders.

The shift in political emphasis represents a number of significant developments in the perception of both environmentalism and the concept of

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<sup>64</sup> T.Fullerton, *Watershed* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2001)

<sup>65</sup> S.Smith, from *Hansard*, Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1997, House of Representatives, p.9639

environmental justice, stemming largely from the strength of the Snowy River campaign. Crucial to the Dalgety campaign was that their convictions were supported by the findings of a number of scientific reports, recommending a minimum of 25% and an optimal 28% environmental flow<sup>66</sup>. While the ecological state of the Murray-Darling Basin was also recognised as seriously degraded, political opinion started to fall towards the Snowy when it became evident that water savings could be made in the Murray and Murrumbidgee through transferable water rights and more efficient irrigation systems, where the only means of survival for the Snowy was the release of more water from the Jindabyne Dam and the Mowamba aqueduct. The New South Wales government announced that no irrigator would be disadvantaged and that the water 'returned' to the Snowy would be 'found' through a complex system of water trading and licences. The technicalities of interstate water trading and the conversion of gigawatt hours of electricity into gigalitre per annum release of water into the Upper Snowy and Upper Murrumbidgee underscore the scope of the negotiations.

At a meeting with local residents on the bank of Snowy at Dalgety in late 1999, NSW Special Minister of State, Ian McDonald MLC, expressed confidence that a "win-win outcome" could be attained<sup>67</sup>, meaning that all stakeholders could be accommodated in a final agreement on environmental flows. Twelve months later the NSW and Victorian governments announced a commitment to 28% environmental flow to the Snowy, to be achieved through the decommissioning of the Mowamba aqueduct, structural changes to the Jindabyne dam and water efficiency savings in the west. At that stage, no financial commitment or timeframe for delivery was announced. The Heads of Agreement document, being the agreed outcome of the three governments from

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<sup>66</sup> Dalgety and District Community Association, 2000, "How much water does the Snowy River need?", <http://www.ddca.asn.au/ddcapage3.htm>; also

<sup>67</sup> Personal notes of meeting, November 9<sup>th</sup> 1999

the Snowy Water Inquiry, was tabled in the NSW Upper House on December 6<sup>th</sup> 2000. It guaranteed a 21% environmental flow with a further 7% written into the agreement as a future target<sup>68</sup>. Enshrined in the agreement is that:

The environmental objectives for the Snowy River and the Snowy upper montane rivers are to improve the habitat for a diverse range of plant and animal species ... [and that] These objectives are complemented by an objective to maintain and improve environmental flows for the River Murray.<sup>69</sup>

Significant in terms of the initial opposition to corporatisation is that, under the agreements made between the three shareholding governments, not a single drop of water could be released until corporatisation had been effected. By the time the *Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Bill 1997* was debated in the federal parliament, the principles of environmental justice were already being implemented. Where was the green movement while all this was taking place? Certainly the DDCA does not regard itself as a 'green' group, indeed, many individual members are openly hostile to the suggestion. Environmental justice simply meant that the Snowy River would be restored to ecological health so that the local residents and those downstream would enjoy the economic and environmental benefits of a healthy river. Corporatisation of the Snowy has provided this where the Commonwealth could not.

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<sup>68</sup> *Hansard*, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2000, NSW Legislative Council

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*

## Chapter 6

### The ecocracy and the development of environmental policy

*If voting could change the system, it would be illegal* – Theodor Adorno

#### *The institutionalisation of the environment*

The decision to corporatise the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Authority was announced at a time when the national economy was slowing down. The government privatised the Commonwealth Bank and Qantas during the 1980s, Treasurer Keating's 'recession we had to have' was imminent and market principles were being applied to production and sale of electricity. The Minister responsible for the review of the SMHEA, Mr Alan Griffiths, in responding to a question in the House of Representatives after the announcement of the review as a precursor to corporatisation, stated that:

... it has become increasingly evident that existing arrangements have major deficiencies; consequently, the aim of the review is to put in place new arrangements which will improve the efficiency of the scheme, simplify and modernise management and institutional structures and provide for a proper rate of return on the scheme's assets.<sup>1</sup>

There was, at the time, no consideration of the environmental aspects or implications of corporatisation, despite the fact that environmentalism had been integral to the mainstream political process for at least a decade through the politico-institutional structure, and in particular to the federal Labor government since 1983. The issue of increasing the flow of the Snowy River was not mentioned and it was fully expected that the corporatisation process, in which the Authority would become an autonomous corporation jointly owned by the New South Wales (58%), Victorian (29%) and Commonwealth (13%) governments would maintain its operations in much the same way as it had as a

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<sup>1</sup> A.G.Griffiths, from *Hansard* 14<sup>th</sup> May 1991, p.3627



government authority. The profit-imperative, in this case, was the driving factor, while specific environmental issues that were not raised – and therefore not addressed<sup>2</sup> – during the construction of the scheme were not considered of concern.

The Snowy Scheme occupies a unique position not only in Australian social history, but also in terms of its institutional structure. During corporatisation discussions and negotiations, an underlying question was always present as to how a change of structure might alter the perception of the Snowy Scheme. Seddon points out that the Snowy Scheme “was so successful in promoting itself that it created its own myth, and in doing so, it has dominated the sources of information about its activities.”<sup>3</sup> As a government authority, the SMHEA was highly centralised and, partly due to the centralised structure and partly because of the ‘myth’ surrounding the Scheme, its operations remained unquestioned through half a century of changes in government and changes in social thinking. The enactment of the *Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Power Act 1949* under the Defence Act, and its role in ‘drought-proofing’ the inland, also served to remove the scheme from other bureaucratic changes, for example, the establishment, in 1972, of a ministerial portfolio and department to deal with environmental issues and the increasing role environmental decision-making has played in the political and bureaucratic process. The fact that the Snowy Mountains Scheme remained unchallenged as an example of preservationist thinking in relation to the environment, that is, that the natural environment was held to be separate from development, until the closing decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is largely due to the ‘myth’ of the Snowy, its cultural legacy of multiculturalism in what was, at the time, an almost exclusively anglophile nation and its role in supporting the agricultural industry.

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<sup>2</sup> While environmental flows were not an issue during the construction, soil erosion and soil conservation were particularly relevant in terms of dam construction.

<sup>3</sup> G.Seddon, *Searching for the Snowy* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1994) 25

In response to the rapid and wide-ranging social change during the 1960s and 70s on issues not traditionally addressed directly within the institutional structure of politics, later integrationist governments began to establish departments to deal with the issues of 'new politics'. Coinciding with the rise of the green movement and the formation of green political parties, the 1970s saw the establishment of national environment departments and ministries to legislate on environmental issues. At supranational level, the first United Nations international summit on the environment, the UN Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE), was held in Stockholm in 1972. Australia's first environment department was established by the Whitlam government in 1972, with Moss Cass assigned the portfolio of Minister for Environment and Conservation from 1972 to mid-1975. The Fraser government dropped the word 'Conservation' from the Ministry title and the Environment Ministry, currently the Ministry for Environment and Heritage, has remained a cabinet position ever since. In Europe, the German Federal Government passed its first national environment program in 1971 while in Britain the same period represented major structural advancements in environmental protection<sup>4</sup>. By the 1980s environmental issues, due largely to the electoral impact and lobbying strength of green parties and the environment movement, had become instrumental in election campaigns and ultimately, outcomes.

The development and implementation of environmental policy is not a new political innovation. Environmental issues, although only relatively recently known as such, have been of concern to governments for at least a century. The problems and issues facing current governments are an evolutionary result of these previous issues. Political systems, regardless of their fundamental ideological foundation, rely on the state bureaucracy for policy development

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<sup>4</sup> N.Carter and P.Lowe, "Britain: Coming to terms with sustainable development?" in Hanf and Jansen (eds), *Governance and Environment in Western Europe* (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd, 1998)

and implementation. This chapter will examine the development of bureaucratic environmentalism leading to the establishment of the 'ecocracy'. There are three main angles from which this will be approached: firstly, the evolution of the environmental bureaucracy as a government department; secondly, the limitations and restrictions imposed on the bureaucracy by the institutional structures of the political system; and finally, in the context of sustainability, the grassroots movement for change and its influence on decision-making, issue awareness, policy and action.

In Chapter 3 I examined the problem of the political representation of nature. In this chapter the problem becomes one of institutionalising and formalising nature for the dual purpose of political legitimacy and environmental integrity. The issue of sustainability and its social, political and environmental implications will be analysed in the context of integrated environmental policy and of the ultimate sustainability of sustainability itself given its economic and political applications. I will use the example of the national Landcare program in Australia and specifically with reference to the Upper Snowy region as a measure of sustainability programs to indicate differences in perceptions, foci and directions being taken on the issue of sustainability from governmental and community sectors. This will then form the basis on which to draw some general conclusion regarding the future viability of the post-political construct of sustainable development to be taken up in more detail in Chapter 8.

The concept of sustainability, or ecologically sustainable development (ESD), has undergone some key definitional and perceptual changes since the Brundtland Report coined the term and defined it as the ability "to meet the needs of the present without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet theirs"<sup>5</sup>. The fifteen years since the WCED, including the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (UNCED) and the 2002 Rio+10 in Johannesburg (WSSD), have

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<sup>5</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development (Chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland) *Our common future*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1987) 43

seen ESD adopted as a planning and policy instrument at all levels of government. It has entered the lexicon of environmentalism and politics alike, and has become a somewhat fluid benchmark for industry standards, government policy and community actions. It has given rise to new industry-bureaucracy rhetoric, including terms such as 'triple bottom line', 'resource management' and 'natural capital'. In execution, however, ESD remains a widely disparate and largely unfathomed concept. Underpinning the rhetoric and the terminology is the fundamental question of how best to represent the interests of the environment in the political domain.

There is a vast difference between resource conservation and land management, and the concept of assigning moral considerability to nature. Those two positions form the opposite ends of an environmental range – a green scale, as it were – that includes human welfare ecology, preservationism and animal liberationism<sup>6</sup>, marking points along the scale from which a green political practice can be formulated. Political parties take positions on the green spectrum according to their ideology: green parties tend to occupy the deeper green end, while capital-based parties move towards the light green. Environmental policy, at all points on the scale, is developed according to political requirements. At its lightest, green governance aims at conserving resources for long-term exploitation and regulating industry only insofar as it is necessary to comply with international protocols or minimum environmental standards. Social democrat governments are more inclined towards the human welfare ecology position on the range in order to satisfy the material needs of the greatest number of people as well as ensure the long-term viability of resource-dependent industries.

Milbrath et al argue that, moving from the light to the deep end of the green scale, the emphasis on transforming society becomes greater:

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<sup>6</sup> Milbrath et al, 1994, "Sustainable Living: Framework of an Ecosystemically Grounded Political Theory", *Environmental Politics*, Vol.3 No.3 pp 421-444; also R.Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Towards an Ecocentric Approach* (London: UCL Press, 1992)

Among environmentalists, conservationists are least likely to push for societal transformation while ecocentrists, especially, call for a thoroughly transformed society.<sup>7</sup>

In maintaining their position of resistance to social change, conservative, pro-development and social democrat governments highlight the uncertainty associated with change as a reason for not taking a position more towards the deep green end of the scale. Towards the end of the 2002 New Zealand election campaign, in seeking voter support for a second term, Labour Prime Minister Helen Clark pointed to the Greens' policies of sustainability and stated that the Greens want a society based on subsistence, while "most Kiwis I know want a First World existence"<sup>8</sup>. The clear implication of this comment is of a regressive extremism associated with the Greens, and that deeper green policies would compromise material standards achieved through social democrat policies of resource management. The transformation of society to a more ecologically sustainable one based on policies aiming to decelerate economic growth contradicts liberal capitalist ideology and therefore, in the reality of modern electoral politics, it is deemed politically and economically unviable. The transition from the period of ad hoc environmental policy of the preservationist era, through the period of establishment and influence of social movements, to green democratisation and the integration of environmental policy into the mainstream political agenda, has, in fact, been a steady social transformation. It has occurred, however, against the growing dominance of capitalism as the driving force behind government policy directions: the very ideology the post-materialist movements opposed in the 1960s and 70s.

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<sup>7</sup> Milbrath et al (1994), op cit. 422

<sup>8</sup> L. Williams, "Clark may find it tough swimming against the tide", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 27-28 July 2002, 15

*Preservationist environmental policy*

While Carson's *Silent Spring* is widely regarded as the catalyst for the modern environmental movement, Callicott regards Aldo Leopold's posthumously published *A Sand County Almanac* to be equally as influential in terms of "powerfully advocating, for the first time in Western intellectual history, broad human ethical responsibility to the non-human natural world."<sup>9</sup> In extending the ethics that humankind naturally assigns to fellow human members of the community to include the land, defined by Leopold as including all elements of the biosphere<sup>10</sup>, humans are able to more completely appreciate the complexity and diversity of the natural environment:

In short, a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such.<sup>11</sup>

Leopold is quite clear, however, that while the land ethic would allow humankind to live in harmony with the environment as a fellow-citizen with the non-human world:

A land ethic of course cannot prevent the alteration, management, and use of these 'resources', but it does affirm their right to continued existence in a natural state.<sup>12</sup>

Appreciation of the intrinsic worth of nature, along with the pragmatism of post-World War II industrialisation were not seen as mutually exclusive, or even incompatible: they were, in fact, two sides of the same environmental coin. Two decades later the extension of ethical consideration to nature would become deep ecology, but in the 1940s and 50s it was couched more in terms of an holistic approach to environmental management and preservation.

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<sup>9</sup> J.B. Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989) 223

<sup>10</sup> A. Leopold, (1989) *A Sand County Almanac* Special Commemorative Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989)

<sup>11</sup> Leopold (1989) "The Land Ethic", *ibid.* 204

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* 204

The translation of an ethical approach to resource and land management into practical, and, more importantly, acceptable, public policy must be based on simple premises. Goodin argues that ethical principles must be reducible to “rules of thumb, which can be stated simply yet widely applied.”<sup>13</sup> Leopold’s land ethic, at its most fundamental, delineated the basis of a sustainable approach to environmental policy, that is, ensuring minimal human impact on the environment in its natural state. It also, however, proposed a further dimension to ethical behaviour in affirming the ‘right’ of nature to its continued existence in that natural state. The ascribing of ‘rights’, an essentially human concept, to a non-human entity poses a problem in practical terms. While it is widely recognised that humans have rights and that these rights are universal, it is equally recognised that human rights, in practice, are not universally applied, nor are they equal<sup>14</sup>. If, then, humankind is unable to practice equality in its approach to the rights of its own species, how is it to translate those rights to the non-human world and in what form? There is an implicit paradox in Leopold’s concession of human use, management and alteration of nature at the same time as affirming its right to self-determination. Midgley argues that human concern for the environment is not furthered by the bestowal of honorary citizenship upon non-human entities:

If we claim (for instance) that a wilderness such as the Antarctic has intrinsic value because it has independent moral status, meaning by this that we have decided to grant it the privilege of treating it like an extra fellow citizen, we shall sound rather inadequate. These larger wholes are independent of us in a quite different sense from that in which extra humans – or even animals – who were candidates

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<sup>13</sup> R.Goodin, “Ethical Principles for Environmental Protection”, in Elliot and Gare (eds) *Environmental Philosophy* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1983) 3

<sup>14</sup> P.Bailey, *Bringing Human Rights to Life* (Sydney: Federation Press, 1993); also T.Athanasiou, *Divided Planet* (Athens Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1998); also J.Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* Revised Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

for citizenship might be so. Our relation to them is of a totally different kind from the one which links us to our fellow citizens.<sup>15</sup>

Leopold, as an exponent of environmental ethics, believed that humankind had a responsibility towards nature and that responsibility should be exercised in the form of recognising intrinsic value in the environment. In practice, this could only be effected by leaving areas of wilderness in an untouched state so as to facilitate nature's self-determination. The gazettal of national parks and wilderness areas proscribing human activity served to reinforce the implicit dualism of Leopold's ethic; and it was this dualism that both defined, and was defined by, preservationist environmental policy. The translation of the ethical principles evident in affording nature its rights to self-determination, into a policy that afforded human society its rights to use natural resources to pursue economic and material ends, inevitably resulted in this dualistic approach, represented in the 1960s and 70s by the deep ecology/environmentalism dichotomy. In explicitly defining the responsibility of humankind towards nature, that is, the appreciation of its right to existence independent of human intervention, Leopold presented an essentially anthropocentric ideal, later challenged by the radical deep ecologists and ecofeminists<sup>16</sup>, but nonetheless influential in terms of the evolution of environmental policy development.

Leopold's most significant contribution to the development of environmental policy and the wider green movement, was as a 'wilderness ecologist' and wildlife researcher, taking a position of prescribing action rather than describing situation<sup>17</sup>. Like Muir before him, he also founded a major environmental organisation:

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<sup>15</sup> M. Midgley, *Science and Poetry* (London: Routledge, 2001) 187

<sup>16</sup> Leopold's ethic was criticised by later deep ecologists for its implications of bestowal of rights on nature, whereas, according to the more radical deep ecology proponents such as Earth First!, humans exist at the behest of nature, not the other way around. Ecofeminists were critical of the approach because of its inherently patriarchal implications.

<sup>17</sup> M. Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) 205



... the Wilderness Society remains a potent legacy, forming with Muir's Sierra Club an effective advocacy for wildlife protection.<sup>18</sup>

As discussed in the previous chapter, since the apocalypticist era, science has assumed a front-line advisory role in the development and implementation of environmental policy. Leopold's land ethic marks the watershed in this regard, represented by the "notion of ecology as a normative science."<sup>19</sup> Along with Carson, whose recognition and exposure of the physical elements of degradation in the environment was a warning of the ecological effects of human intervention and development, Leopold's treatise was a social and cultural warning. That society, in particular in the USA, displayed:

... an apparent overemphasis on economic criteria of judgment that seemed to lead to the destruction of not only things natural but things cultural – a harvest that included everything from freedom and privacy to art and philosophy.<sup>20</sup>

While the land ethic was an ideal rather than a benchmark and even by Leopold's concession was unlikely to transpose to practical terms, it set a new standard for the use of science and scientific rationality in environmental politics.

Environmental policy<sup>21</sup> as defined by the parameters established by the preservationist proponents was developed and implemented through policy instruments contained within a range of departments responsible for such areas as agriculture, industry and health. It dealt essentially with problems as they arose and according to how they affected human society or economic development. While there was no specific methodology attached to the land ethic as a basis for policy, there was equally no holistic ecological attachment to

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid.* 205

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.* 206

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.* 207

<sup>21</sup> The term 'environment' was not used in its current context until the 1960s. I use the term 'environmental policy' in terms of pre-1960s policy to mean any policy instruments that would now come under the broad umbrella of 'environmental', that is, concerning the natural environment, natural resources and the use, conservation and management thereof.

discrete and separate regulatory instruments developed to address discrete and separate issues. Economic growth proceeded unhampered by the concerns of ecologists such as Leopold, whose ethical considerations were dealt with in much the same way as other issues: that is, by assigning them to the specific government department most able to produce a policy document to address the need to leave areas of nature in an untouched state. The paradox of preservationist environmental policy remained unresolved due to, firstly, the fact that there was no official acknowledgement, nor sufficient margin to allow for it, of 'the environment' in its holistic sense incorporating human society as well as the non-human world; and secondly, ecological prescriptions such as the land ethic were considered as romantic rather than rational<sup>22</sup>, and therefore not appropriate bases for rational (economic) political action.

The convergence of the romantic and the rational that finally caused the dominance of preservationism to wane, was aided by the unexpected in the form of men of science. In the late 1950s and early 60s Soviet Russia and the USA began what became known as the 'space race', and for the first time the human species gained photographic and first-hand verbal reports of how the planet appeared from space. Accounts by astronauts, however, celebrated not the technological expertise and politico-economic might that put them in space, but the unexpected sight of the planet Earth from an immense distance.

*The Earth reminded us of a Christmas tree ornament hanging in the blackness of space. As we got farther and farther away it diminished in size. Finally it shrank to the size of a marble, the most beautiful marble you can imagine.*

*That beautiful, warm, living object looked so fragile, so delicate, that if you touched it with a finger it would crumble and fall apart.*

James Irwin, Astronaut, USA

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<sup>22</sup> J.Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 156

*Suddenly, from behind the rim of the moon, in a long, slow-motion moment of immense majesty, there emerges a sparkling blue and white jewel, a light delicate sky-blue sphere laced with slowly swirling veils of white, rising gradually like a small pearl in a thick sea of black mystery. It takes more than a minute to fully realize this is Earth ... home.*

Edgar Mitchell, Astronaut, USA

*For the first time in my life I saw the horizon as a curved line. It was accentuated by a thin seam of dark blue light – our atmosphere. Obviously this was not the ocean of air I had been told it was so many times in my life. I was terrified by its fragile appearance.*

Ulf Merbold, Astronaut, Federal Republic of Germany

*The Earth was small, light blue, and so touchingly alone, our home that must be defended like a holy relic. The Earth was absolutely round. I believe I never knew what the word round meant until I saw Earth from space.*

Aleksei Leonov, Astronaut, USSR<sup>23</sup>

Accounts such as these heightened social awareness of the environment as a single living entity: a concept not circumscribed by the ad hoc environmental policy instruments of preservationism. The provision of wilderness areas, while recognising the intrinsic value of nature, did not address the more pressing problems of pollution and unsustainable resource use. The inherent dualism, therefore, had to be resolved in order for environmental integrity and ecological sustainability to be addressed together at the vital policy level.

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<sup>23</sup> Astronaut quotes from Hamilton, "Earth from Space", <http://www.solarviews.com/eng/earthsp.htm>

There is considerable overlap between the land ethic of Leopold's text and the New Ethic that marked the establishment of the United Tasmania Group and the entry of environmentalism into politics. The convergence of the environment and the political domain, with the progression of the environmental movement, created a new direction in liberal politics. The approach which had allowed for environmental integrity through wilderness declarations and national parks, but also for industry to continue unchecked until environmental damage threatened economic development or human health, was an inadequate basis on which to address the issues being debated in public fora, within the green movement itself, and at the inter- and supranational levels. The conundrum of how to integrate the social demands of environmentalists and the environmental concerns of ecologists into the liberal democratic framework, became the underlying goal of the new political approach. If environmental ethics and ecological sustainability were the ends, the establishment of an environmental bureaucracy provided the means of implementation.

Government approaches to issues are, by and large, defined by their bureaucracies. These front lines of governmental procedure are 'big' or 'small', according to the ideological foundation of the government. Policy is developed according to government priority and departments are resourced similarly. In environmental policy, the aim, generally speaking, has been to steer the middle course between ecocentrism and rampant development: a process linking Leopold's land ethic and its descendant in deep ecology, with the socially-oriented concerns inherent in the environment movement. The organisational approach advocated by Uekoetter focuses on "how to transform environmental awareness into viable alternatives and how to represent these concerns in the

cold and dirty world of politics.”<sup>24</sup> This approach enables continuity between the approaches of the past, and the “current endeavour of organising responses to the meta-challenge of sustainability, which is, above all, an institutional question.”<sup>25</sup> Where the goal of the social movements, then, was to transform society, the task of the bureaucracy is to measure and facilitate that change within the constraints of political ideology and economic growth.

Green democratisation and integrationist policy has been forced to address two fundamental questions that have linked environmental consciousness to political process. In the first instance, the emergence of the environment as a political actor placed government in the position of creating policy in the interests of an entity that can play no active role in liberal democratic politics. ‘Trees don’t vote’ has become a cynical adage on the subject of ecologically ethical decision-making. The question of who directly benefits from ecologically oriented policy and who will be guarantor in terms of political outcome underlies much Western environmental policy development and prioritisation of issues. In the second instance, and directly related to the first, the question of the role of the state in taking action on environmental issues remains largely contentious in liberal democracies. Brown and Singer argue that the strength of democracy – its accountability to the community through the electoral process – is also its weakness in respect of environmental policy<sup>26</sup>. Effective long-term environmental policy must look not only to the next parliamentary term but to the next generation and beyond. Within the liberal democratic structure, however, there is little or no provision for policy development that looks beyond the end of the current governmental term, except where this is politically convenient or in cases where significant political pressure is brought to bear. The institutionalisation of the environment,

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<sup>24</sup> F.Uekoetter quoted in Dovers, “Still settling Australia: environment, history and policy”, in Dovers (ed) *Environmental History and Policy: Still Settling Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000) 15

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* 15

<sup>26</sup> B.Brown and P.Singer, *The Greens* (Melbourne: The Text Publishing Co., 1995) 92

through the instrument of the bureaucracy, must both address the long-term nature of environmental problems as well as the short-term electoral considerations of the government. Dryzek points out that the role of the state in contemporary politics, is:

First, and arguably foremost, [to] secure economic stability and growth. If they fail in this task, then they are 'punished' by both falling tax revenues for any projects that state officials might want to pursue, and by unpopularity in the eyes of their populations. ...

The second maintaining function that states must perform is the keeping of order in societies. In large part this task involves legitimating the prevailing political-economic system in the eyes of the population ...

The third maintaining function facing all states involves staying afloat in a hostile world, constituted by other states and by the international political economy.<sup>27</sup>

These compounded roles, frequently, are not compatible with the long-term interests of the environment except insofar as environmental policy instruments can be seen as functional elements in (a) securing economic growth; (b) keeping order; and (c) ensuring national security. These prerequisites then, form the parameters within which the environmental bureaucracy – the ecocracy – must operate.

The emergence of ecological modernisation as policy, particularly in Europe, in the 1980s and 90s was a direct response to the requirements of the liberal democratic political structure overlaid with scientific evidence of ecological degradation and the social and environmental justice demands of the green movement and green political parties. The paradox of liberalism in respect of environmental policy is that, in acting rationally, individuals are unlikely to take a voluntary initiative in preventing ecological damage "unless

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<sup>27</sup> J.Dryzek, "Democracy and Environmental Policy Instruments" in Eckersley (ed) *Markets, The State and The Environment: Towards Integration* (South Melbourne: Macmillan Education Australia, 1995) 295

the gains for individuals supersede the costs.”<sup>28</sup> While environmentalists, particularly in Australia where many state-based environmental initiatives have been strongly supported by the green movement<sup>29</sup>, prefer a greater state role in ensuring regulation, liberal capitalist market economics move towards less state intervention, ‘light-handed regulation’<sup>30</sup> and the promotion of natural capitalism<sup>31</sup>. The issue of the Snowy River and the corporatisation of the SMHEA presents a case of the paradox inherent in the green approach and forms the basis of the reason why, as posited in this thesis and detailed in the final chapter, localised environmental campaigns have replaced the ‘environment movement’ as the social drivers of environmental policy. As a government authority, the SMHEA was impervious to the issue of environmental flows in the Snowy as its purpose, under legislation, was to impound and divert the waters of the Snowy and Eucumbene rivers. As a corporate body, however, the focus would be wider and more attuned to the needs of a greater number of stakeholders. It is Green political parties, not the green movement, that, while demanding state regulation on such issues as greenhouse emissions, air and water pollution, and resource extraction industries, also advocate community-based collective action on local issues towards a communitarian system of sustainability rather than centralised government policy. The challenge for liberal democratic governments has been to make environmentally sound action in the best economic interests of individual corporations, whilst establishing environmental standards for industry and local government to be centrally regulated.

The past two decades have seen the rise of a new terminology to describe the processes of green democratisation and integrationism. Terms such as

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<sup>28</sup> M.de Geus, “Ecological Restructuring of the State”, in Doherty and de Geus (eds) *Democracy and Green Political Thought* (London: Routledge, 1996) 190

<sup>29</sup> E.Papadakis, 2001, “The Politics of Light-handed Regulation: New Environmental Policy Instruments in Australia”, paper presented at the Joint Sessions, ECPR, Grenoble, April 2001

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Hawken et al, *Natural Capitalism* (London: Earthscan, 1999)

'triple bottom line', 'natural capitalism', 'environmental impact assessment', 'environmental audit', 'ecological footprint' and 'resource economics' have joined ecologically sustainable development as benchmarks against which government and industry can measure their progress. The ecological crisis predicted by the founders of the modern environmental movement has been transformed into state and corporate economic process while state agencies such as the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) exist largely to facilitate this process and form the official green interface between government and society. Models for measuring and changing certain behaviours, either in industry or community, are formulated according to the prescriptions of liberal capitalism: that is, the premise that in so acting, an individual will gain sufficient reward so as to make such action rational choice<sup>32</sup>. The development and use of the jargon and terminology has served to give legitimacy to the ecocracy, as well as create a bureaucratic niche that it can occupy in perpetuity.

Institutional change to accommodate the rising profile of environmentalism as a political issue has been integrated vertically through the political system as well as horizontally across all sectors of society. Changes have occurred both incrementally and, occasionally, as avalanches, according to the issue in contention and the projected political outcome. This, of course, raises the question of whether changes in government attitude towards environmentalism have occurred out of genuine concern for the environment, or out of electoral necessity – what Papadakis refers to as “cynical politics”<sup>33</sup>. Since the early 1980s specific environmental issues have been blatantly used to lure voters at both state and federal levels, often through gaining the support of leading

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> E.Papadakis, *Environmental Politics and Institutional Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 13



environmental organisations<sup>34</sup>. Similarly, environmental policy that is perceived by voters to be not in their best interests can become a political liability. Institutional changes and the incremental transformation of the political establishment have occurred as responses to problems as they occur. Notwithstanding the precautionary principle (*vorsorgeprinzip*), adopted as policy by the German government during the 1980s<sup>35</sup>, solutions to the ecological crisis are developed within the institutional framework as economic needs dictate. Political and institutional change occurs as a response to, rather than in anticipation of, problems within the socio-environmental exemplar and which are facilitated through social agencies such as the popular media<sup>36</sup>.

#### *Limitations and restrictions of integrationist policy*

The integrationist ecocracy serves the function of legitimating the state in matters of environmental decision-making. There are, however, serious limitations to this function. It has already been mentioned that the weakness of modern liberal democratic politics manifests in policy that seldom looks beyond the end of the current term of government, but the nature of problems to be dealt with at policy level are such that the results of actions and decisions made today will, quite conceivably, still impact on human society in two or three generations time<sup>37</sup>. This places considerable strain on a political system not adapted for detailed planning beyond the immediate term of government:

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<sup>34</sup> Environmental issues played a large role in the 1990 election campaign, but have been less determinative at Federal level since then, although the ALP gained the support of the ACF and The Wilderness Society in the 1996 Federal election. In the 1995 Queensland State election, conservation groups and the Greens campaigned against the Labor government in several key (marginal) south-east Queensland electorates in protest at the government's proposed highway development through bushland recognised as a major koala habitat. The government lost the election narrowly and the incoming National Party government abandoned the ALP's proposed highway, while pressing ahead with development in the Daintree rainforest.

<sup>35</sup> Dryzek (1997) *op cit.* 139

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> P.Christoff, "Ecological Citizens and Democracy", in Doherty and de Geus (eds) (1996), *op cit.*

Decisions must be informed by evolving scientific understandings of the intricate behaviour of fragile ecosystems, and of the environmental implications of human activity. These informational demands exacerbate tensions relating to the limited capacity of representative democracy adequately to reflect informed environmental choice.<sup>38</sup>

Politically myopic planning is further compounded by the fact that in order for practical policy to be developed, it must first recognise a problem. The transformation of the institutional structure from ecologically reactive to proactive is essentially a process requiring, in the first instance, problem recognition, and in the second instance, problem anticipation. Once again, notwithstanding the precautionary principle, which Rampton and Stauber point out is, in fact, a form of problem recognition rather than anticipation<sup>39</sup>, modern liberal democracies remain largely promethean<sup>40</sup> in their faith that tomorrow's technology will solve today's problems and that long-term problem solving is not necessarily in the best interests of either the ecocracy itself or the government it serves.

The temporal aspects of ecocratic limitation are equalled spatially by a lack of ability, within the structure, to adequately deal at state level with problems that reach beyond state borders. Multi-state blocs and supranational organisations have moved in part to address this, but such organisations are only as strong as the weakest member. There has been considerable difficulty in Europe in centralising European Union (EU) environmental policy due in part to lack of adequate implementation at state level<sup>41</sup> and exhaustive attempts at UN level for uniform global regulation on greenhouse emissions have stalled with the USA, the world's biggest polluter and consumer of fossil fuels, refusing

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<sup>38</sup> *ibid.* 158

<sup>39</sup> Rampton and Stauber, *Trust Us, We're Experts!* (New York: Jeremy P.Tarcher/Putnam, 2001) 123-125

<sup>40</sup> Dryzek (1997) *op cit.*

<sup>41</sup> P.Barnes and I.Barnes, *Environmental Policy in the European Union* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, 1999) 98

to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. Bi- and multilateral agreements on specific issues have been more successful than the supranational organisations, but are often in the form of economic or trade agreements. Dovers and Handmer identify three levels of environmental issues to be dealt with according to their temporal and spatial specificities:

*Micro-problems:* spatially and temporally discrete ... addressable within on political boundary using existing technologies and institutional structures.

*Meso-problems:* significant issues, but not posing systemic threats to the present pattern of production and consumption, or an overwhelming challenge to extant policy processes.

*Macro-problems:* the big, global issues of sustainability – multifaceted, fraught with uncertainty, with major implications for both natural and human systems, spatially and temporally diffuse and highly connected to other issues.<sup>42</sup>

It is the last of these categories where the limitations of state-centric policy are the most apparent; and at this level also where the ecological crisis is most apparent and the need for strong, empirically-based policy development most urgent. Where the promethean view once prevailed:

[t]his hope has been destroyed by the scale of human-induced environmental change and the spatial and temporal complexity of natural systems. ... crucial policy decisions are demanded now, well before any semblance of certainty.<sup>43</sup>

The concept of developing and implementing policy against a risk of which there is no certainty of occurrence has proven to be socially (electorally) sound, environmentally prudent and politically complex. Implementation of preventative environmental measures as policy instruments have been, of political necessity, carried out with an immediate political benefit in the form of

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<sup>42</sup> S.Dovers and J.Handmer, 1995, "Ignorance, the Precautionary Principle, and Sustainability", *Ambio*, Vol.24, No.2, 92

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.* 92

increased employment, corporate investment, national security or economic growth. Where no immediate benefit is apparent, no preventative measure will be taken. In reality, the long-term costs of not implementing preventative environmental policy do not figure in the balance. The point is made by Hamilton in the example of taking government action against lead pollution from petrol, where the decision by the Australian government in 1993 not to impose the burden of extra fuel costs on low-income families by enacting legislation to ban leaded petrol, will impact on the same socio-economic group in the future in the form of "poorer health and reduced life opportunities."<sup>44</sup> Of all the limitations placed on the functions of the ecocracy, those imposed by the politico-economic structure are perhaps the most restrictive in terms of inflexibility and predictive requirements. These requirements become more inflexible as the scope of the issues broaden, with the result that the large-scale global environmental issues, such as climate change, are the most problematic as state-centric legislation must, within the constraints of the liberal capitalist framework, afford the 'national interest' in the global economy.

Economically, and in respect of the national interest, integrationist environmental policy development is also restricted by the specific interests of business and industry, leading to a power vacuum at the governmental level:

... close coalitions between civil servants and industrialists in areas of state activity are especially apt to limit the independence of political decision-makers. An important element in the power of the industrial system is the specialization of industrial interest complexes, whereby particular growth interests can be brought to bear which do not coincide with the general interest in growth... [particularly] those specialised industries which depend to a greater or lesser extent on government orders.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> C.Hamilton, 1996, "Generational Justice: The Marriage of Sustainability and Social Equity", *Australian Journal of Environmental Management*, Vol.3, No.3 169

<sup>45</sup> M.Jänicke, *State Failure* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990) 14

The centralisation of the integrationist bureaucracy and its inherent liberal-capitalist links with industry at the economic level controvert any notion of green social transformation by strengthening the existing structure. According to Bookchin, decentralisation is the key to achieving sustainability by scaling the democratic structure to "human dimensions"<sup>46</sup>.

Capitalism, the domain of competition *par excellence*, has its fair share of violence, plunder, piracy, and enslavement; but in the normal course of events its mode of self-preservation is a quiet process of economic cannibalization – the devouring of one capitalist by another and the ever-greater centralization of capital in fewer hands.<sup>47</sup>

Eckersley and de Geus, however, believe that on the socio-political level the provincialism inherent in small, decentralised communities would make implementation of social and environmental reform more difficult<sup>48</sup>. While historically this has been the case as indicated by Eckersley, and Bookchin's neo-medieval communities are utopian at best, it remains that centralisation places environmental policy planning in the hands of an agency whose only power is drawn from the economic conditions imposed by government and industry.

A centralised eco-bureaucracy strives to create for government:

- i. a constancy of approach to environmental policy;
- ii. economic control over environmental programs through the devolution of financial resources;
- iii. decision-making over what environmental issues and problems to target and what policy instruments<sup>49</sup> to use for the greatest political benefit;
- iv. security of the 'national interest' in respect of global environmental issues.

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<sup>46</sup> M.Bookchin *Toward an Ecological Society* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980) 144

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.* 145

<sup>48</sup> de Geus, (1996) *op cit.* 195

<sup>49</sup> For example: direct funding such as drought relief; indirect funding through related programs such as Landcare; research and development.

The ecocracy is thus constrained in developing and implementing policy for issues that:

- i. are not regarded as politically viable or urgent<sup>50</sup>;
- ii. do not receive adequate government funding;
- iii. may contravene or pose a risk to government economic or foreign investment policy;
- iv. may represent a major transformation of the socio-political structure away from the established institutional structure.

While the bureaucracy remains a powerful institution, it does so only by remaining central. Jänicke points out that each bureaucracy "is surrounded by favoured clients", and that in most cases these "are companies and trading organizations."<sup>51</sup> This represents the bureaucracy-industry nexus, which, in the case of environmental policy, invests considerable institutional control in companies and individuals whose interest in the environment is its continued exploitation rather than its protection.

The implications here for the construction of bureaucratic control of environmental policy is that the social perception of environmental problems, apparent in symptoms such as degradation of agricultural lands, polluted waterways, loss of biodiversity and changes in weather patterns, is not being met with policy aimed at addressing the sources of the problems, but with programs placing the onus for responsibility back on communities. The democratic implications of this are positive, however, it remains that without structured and adequately funded programs problems are more likely to recur. As a consequence, guilt-driven programs such as the highly publicised "Clean Up Australia" campaign rely on an army of volunteers to pick up tonnes of waste from the nation's public spaces without questioning, in any way, the source of the waste or where this might be better controlled. Ironically, the campaign is sponsored by McDonalds, which could encourage speculation

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<sup>50</sup> I have used the word 'urgent', but in many cases this could be substituted with 'expedient'.

<sup>51</sup> Jänicke (1990) op cit, 13

about the frequency with which the sponsor's logo appears on the aggregate end product<sup>52</sup>. Similarly, a recent innovation from the Australian Greenhouse Office, the Cool Communities Program<sup>53</sup>, offers community groups a grant to encourage householders to reduce their energy consumption by installing energy efficient light bulbs and showerheads. The reality, that is the symptomatic evidence of pollution and greenhouse emissions, in these cases, cannot be used to explain the existence of the campaigns, as it is only after the campaigns or programs are implemented that their environmental effect can be measured.

Legal instruments are similarly constrained in their scope and capacity to ensure standardised policy measures for environmental protection and sustainability. Private property rights, the privatisation of utilities and the influence of global economic factors in the form of foreign investment may affect the implementation or maintenance of standardised national environmental law. Dovers points out that while "nearly 2000 state and Commonwealth laws [are] being interrogated for 'anti-competitive' element"<sup>54</sup>, no such process is taking place, or planned, for laws in respect of 'unsustainable' elements. To compound the difficulties for the law, in Australia the devolution of much environmental policy to the states creates circumstances where strong environmental laws in one state may be completely counteracted by weaker ones in an adjacent state.

The assessment of environmental risks has become the common and accepted form of legal mechanism for establishing policy process and outcomes. While environmental impact assessments (EIA) are viewed as technical and scientific processes carried out towards the goal of ensuring human

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<sup>52</sup> R.Tennant-Wood, 2001, "Taking out the garbage: the sociology of waste", paper presented to Wastebusters and Organics 2001 Conferences, Ashburton NZ, May 2001

<sup>53</sup> Australian Greenhouse Office, (2002)

<http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/coolcommunities/index.html>

<sup>54</sup> S.Dovers, 1999, "Adaptive Policy, Institutions and Management: Challenges for Lawyers and Others", *Griffith Law Review*, Vol.8, No.2 384

development impacts minimally on certain environments, Thomas argues that it is, in fact, an inherently political process<sup>55</sup>. The EIA process frequently highlights the:

... inadequacy of the information upon which government and society propose to act. In this situation EIA may be seen as a threat to those who avoid change ... [and] the politics surrounding EIA are not confined to the politics of parties and elections, but must include the politics of personal and organisational survival.<sup>56</sup>

Rather than providing the opportunities for independent, flexible and accountable environmental decision-making, political instruments and processes in fact demarcate the parameters within which environmental policy must be developed and implemented.

#### *Sustainability: holy grail or political football?*

What, then, precisely, is sustainability and can it be achieved through bureaucratic procedure? While the Brundtland definition of ecologically sustainable development has provided legislators, environmentalists and industrialists with a conceptual rule-of-thumb, the past fifteen years have seen Brundtland's very broad articulation of intergenerational equity and developmental restraint evolve into a process-oriented bureaucracy wherein the crucial challenge has become not whether policy outcome is sustainable, but whether the policy process itself is sustainable? Eco-bureaucracies are typically hierarchically organised and departmentally fragmented. Environment Australia (Department of Environment and Heritage), for example, has 11 divisional groupings not including portfolio statutory authorities and executive agencies, and a triangular, top-down organisational structure where power

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<sup>55</sup> I. Thomas, *Environmental Impact Assessment in Australia: theory and practice* (Annandale: Federation Press, 2001)

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.* 26



devolves directly from the Minister, through the Parliamentary and Public Service Secretaries to the divisional directors<sup>57</sup>. Given this situation, where the Minister represents the government's interests and the senior bureaucrats may be primarily interested in advancing their careers, it is unlikely that policy development is motivated chiefly by ecocentric concerns or an innate sense of environmental justice. Rather, environmental policy fulfills the dual ecocratic objectives of addressing a specific environmental concern, and ensuring the sustainable future of the department itself in the form of monitoring and evaluation, research and ongoing policy development. The issue of sustainable bureaucracies reflects the views of Jänicke<sup>58</sup> and Papadakis<sup>59</sup> that the centrality of these institutions creates a locus of power. In the case of the ecocracy, the maintenance of this position means that a concern for future generations and the intrinsic value of nature are not necessarily the primary motives behind politico-institutional administration of the environment.

The literature concerning sustainability and ecologically sustainable development invariably contains references to a transformation of society or the socio-political order<sup>60</sup>. Where social movements sought to transform society through a heightened awareness of the need to address social inequity, the ecological crisis and the dangers of concentrated nuclear weaponry, these basic premises when integrated into mainstream liberal democratic policy became affirmative action, anti-discrimination, nuclear arms treaties and ecological sustainability. While most of these represented broad, positive and irreversible changes in social thought, the integration and institutionalisation of ecological

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<sup>57</sup> Environment Australia, 2002, "Organisational Structure", <http://www.ea.gov.au/about/structure.html>

<sup>58</sup> Jänicke (1990) op cit.

<sup>59</sup> Papadakis (1996) op cit.

<sup>60</sup> For example: WCED, *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Dovers, (1990) "Sustainability in Context: An Australian Perspective", *Environmental Management*, Vol.14, No.3, pp.297-305; Dovers, *Institutions for Sustainability*, Issue 7, (ACF, Environment Institute of Australian and Land and Water Australia, 2001); Meadows et al, *Beyond the Limits* (London: Earthscan, 1992); Prugh et al, *The Local Politics of Global Sustainability* (Washington DC: Island Press, 2000); Bookchin *Toward an Ecological Society* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980); Sagoff *The Economy of the Earth* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1988)

sustainability has, over the past two decades, been accompanied by a simultaneous – and paradoxical – growth in industrialisation and consequential environmental alteration. The inherent tension between the two sectors has created a credibility gap between the theory of sustainability and its practical implications in the face of global capitalism and industrialisation. While society and community attitudes and behaviours have changed through awareness and response to environmental interrelationships, the politico-economic order has transformed to a far less degree: it has, rather, taken a systemic approach to integration and adapted sustainable principles to itself and its own functions.

Ecological sustainability is concerned primarily with two areas: the reduction, through human use, of the earth's natural resources (including biodiversity) at a rate faster than they can be replaced; and the subsequent and consequent creation and accumulation of human byproducts such as wastes and undesirable societal situations<sup>61</sup>. On the first point, the Brundtland Report was quite clear that the global economy had a role to play in ensuring the long-term sustainability of natural resources:

Two conditions must be satisfied before international economic exchanges can become beneficial for all involved. The sustainability of ecosystems on which the global economy depends must be guaranteed. And the economic partners must be satisfied that the basis of exchange is equitable; relationships that are unequal and based on dominance of one kind or another are not a sound and durable basis for interdependence.<sup>62</sup>

The credibility gap between this prescription and the reality of the global economy, however, has created a playing field which, far from being level, is heavily weighted with a growing commodity demand: sustainability in the form of environmentally-friendly consumer goods for the capitalist market.

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<sup>61</sup> S.Dovers, (1990) "Sustainability in Context: An Australian Perspective", *Environmental Management* Vol.14, No.3 pp.297-305

<sup>62</sup> WCED (1987) op cit. 67

This, in turn, exacerbates the problem of the second concern of sustainability, that of waste byproducts and the societal 'waste' that occurs as a result of inequitable economic relationships.

The institutionalisation of the environment in the form of the ecocracy approaches the socio-economic imbalance inherent in this situation through policy programs that (a) address resource management at all levels of development; (b) repair existing environmental damage; but (c) do not impede liberal-capitalist economic growth. It is recognised that, from ecocentric or ecological standpoints and in the context of the Brundtland Report, this is not an ideal approach. However, it is entirely logical that this should be the result of the democratisation and integration of the environment. The concept of sustainability has moved beyond the parameters set by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 and endorsed by the Earth Summit in 1992. Integrationism has ensured that corporate environmentalism – or 'natural capitalism' – is a central force in driving the issue of sustainability forward<sup>63</sup>. It is at this level that economic transformation has occurred, but only insofar as the environmental revolution provided a new and untapped market.

Today many companies have accepted their responsibility to do no harm to the environment. Products and production processes are becoming cleaner; and where such change is under way, the environment is on the mend. In the industrialized nations, more and more companies are 'going green' as they realize that they can reduce pollution and increase profits simultaneously. We have come a long way.<sup>64</sup>

Liberal capitalist environmentalism, despite the rhetoric, has not turned corporate warriors into born-again greenies. The fundamental weakness in the liberal capitalist approach is the profit imperative: unless the business and

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<sup>63</sup> S.Bernstein, *The Compromise of Liberal Environmentalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001)

<sup>64</sup> S.L.Hart, "Beyond Greening: Strategies for a Sustainable World", in *Harvard Business Review on Business and the Environment* (Harvard Business School Press, 2000) 106

industry sector can achieve a profit margin in environmentally sustainable practices, they have, under the system of global capitalism, the option to abandon those practices altogether by relocating their operations to developing nations where legislative (or ethical) restrictions may not apply. This is the crux of the corporate-bureaucratic nexus. Environmental policy developed within the institutional structure of the ecocracy must incorporate the interests of economic stakeholders motivated by the fundamental requirements of neo-classical economics. Economically sustainable policy, therefore, becomes the priority, based on sound economic returns. In 2000 market research showed that in the previous twelve months between 75 and 82 percent of Australian consumers purchased products solely on the basis of environmental or social issues<sup>65</sup>. Reinhardt makes quite clear the priorities of business when addressing environmental considerations:

...managers should look at environmental problems as business issues, They should make environmental investments for the same reasons they make other investments: because they expect them to deliver positive returns or to reduce risks. Managers need to go beyond the question 'Does it pay to be green?' and ask instead 'Under what circumstances do particular kinds of environmental investments deliver benefits to shareholders?'<sup>66</sup>

While the challenge to business is clear, the message in terms of environmental sustainability is less confident.

The integrationist ecocracy, as the first bureaucracy in history established for the purpose of establishing specific policy and planning instruments for the environment, can generally remain professionally blinkered regarding specific environmental issues that may not be in the economic interests of its

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<sup>65</sup> KPMG Consulting: *Social Responsible Investment Research* (August 2000), in Krockenberger et al, *Natural Advantage: A Blueprint for a Sustainable Australia* (Australian Conservation Foundation, 2000) 4

<sup>66</sup> F.L.Reinhardt, "Bringing the Environment Down to Earth", *Harvard Business Review*, (2000) op cit. 37

stakeholders. Insofar as sustainability remains an eco-political goal, its development and implementation have largely been diffused across a range of institutions to facilitate maximum socio-political uptake. Programs for sustainability in energy, waste, resource extraction, agriculture and risk management are therefore concentrated where expertise in those areas is most available. Resources for policy development can be devolved according to the judgment of professional bureaucrats, while the experts in the fields retain, in turn, their independence and a great deal of flexibility in their approach.

The placement of sustainability within a political framework presents another set of obstacles. The challenge presented by the fact that ecological and social processes "rarely match historically defined political boundaries"<sup>67</sup> is not confined within green democratisation and integrationist borders. Reconciling the human and natural scales was one of the primary motives of John Muir and his ecological antithesis, Gifford Pinchot<sup>68</sup>. The polarisation represented by the opposing positions of these two proponents, both of whom professed the best interests of nature, is reflected in the modern eco-bureaucracy as a function of representative democracy. Given the short-term planning inherent in electoral politics, it is in the best interests of government that any transformation in the socio-political order that is to occur does so gradually, predictably and with the sound backing of government institutions. Sustainability, as an environmental imperative and universally accepted as such, has had to be integrated into the political structure as a natural extension of governmental functions.

It is probably beyond question that, given the level of social awareness of environmental problems, a liberal democratic government that actively opposed the concept of ecological sustainability would be committing electoral suicide. The adaptation of the liberal democratic structure to the concept of ecological sustainability has been influenced by a number of key factors:

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<sup>67</sup> Dovers (2001) op cit. 14

<sup>68</sup> Oelschlaeger, (1991) op cit. 282

- i. electoral viability, gauged through community and social responses to specific issues;
- ii. economic benefits, gauged through economic and financial institutions both global and domestic;
- iii. the existence of green political parties (green democratisation);
- iv. environmental pressure groups and NGOs

There is, however, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, a certain level of cynicism that suggests political and governmental annexation of sustainability, almost as a freestanding institution itself, is simply a matter of electoral convenience. It is at this point that the term 'sustainability' loses its environmental context and becomes simply political jargon to cover the widest possible range of meanings.

*Grassroots meets Leviathan: the case of Landcare in Australia*

While the integration of environmental concerns into liberal capitalist politics has resulted in new market formulae for business and industry to maximise 'green' profits, the practical effect of this has been the transference of responsibility for action from industry to local communities through guilt-driven campaigns aimed at ensuring that consumers, in taking action on environmental issues, are also supporting the corporate machine. Environmentalism is a niche market and consumers are encouraged to support it. Expensive advertising campaigns assert that certain companies or products are addressing environmental issues, and consumers are being environmentally irresponsible if they do not, in turn, support those companies and their products. While local action has always been central to the environmental movement, coercion through guilt does not constitute this. It presumes, from the outset, the Hobbesian premise that everyone acting in their own self-interest will result in a state of anarchy, or in the more recent terms of Hardin:

“freedom [in the commons] will bring ruin to all.”<sup>69</sup> This situation has resulted in a liberal-capitalist Leviathan, by definition almost an oxymoron but in reality manifesting in the form of business and industry, assuming the role of protector of, in this case, the environment, from the purely self-motivated actions of individuals. The corporate Leviathan, however, despite its power nexus with the ecocracy and unfettered access to global economic resources, cannot force the issue of sustainable practice from its own perspective on individuals or local communities:

... sustainability covers too wide a scope for supra- or transnational action to be effective at the grassroots level: carbon credit trading means little to communities disenfranchised or displaced as a result of economic policy of corporate governance.<sup>70</sup>

Sustainability, if left solely to liberal capitalism for its implementation, would undoubtedly fail. Integrationism, however, has ensured that the capitalist economy and its symbiosis with the centralised bureaucracy are only part of the sustainability equation. The green movement has had a long-term, irreversible transformative effect on society, evident in the widespread adoption of practices such as recycling, water conservation measures, the use of solar and other ‘green’ energy alternatives, backyard and small-scale composting and other organic agricultural and horticultural methods. The fact that approximately 60,000 consumers, including 2,500 businesses, in Australia are currently opting to use ‘green power’ from renewable sources at a higher cost to individual consumers than the standard coal-fired power<sup>71</sup> would seem to contradict the Hobbesian-Hardin theory that all individuals will act in their own self-interest rather than in the interests of the community as a whole. It is possible that in acting in the interests of sustainability they are, in fact, acting in their own genetic interests in ensuring that their descendants will inherit

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<sup>69</sup> G.Hardin, “Tragedy of the Commons”, *Science*, Vol.162, No.3858; December 1968, 1247

<sup>70</sup> R.Tennant-Wood, 2002, “Local Green Governance: the value of community and a sense of place”, *Ecopolitics Journal* Vol.1, No.3, 56

<sup>71</sup> Sustainable Energy Development Authority, *Greenpower*, <http://www.greenpower.com.au/>

sufficient resources for their needs. It is also possible that there is a certain level of altruism present in acting in the interests of the community at individual cost. More likely, however, and notwithstanding the presence of either or both of the above, environmentally aware actions at individual and local community level are the results of internalisation and institutionalisation of these practices over a period of some three decades. This represents a transformation of society and social attitudes at the grassroots level.

The preservationist reliance on centralised government policy and regulation on isolated areas of environmental concern gave way, through the rise of the environmental movement, to the awareness of ecological interrelatedness. The 1972 coining of the slogan "Think globally, act locally" and its subsequent cooption as the expression of green ideology provided the essential direction for human action on the environment. The development of the green democratisation and integrationist approach and establishment of the eco-bureaucracy allowed the slogan, and its theme, to be absorbed as a means of ensuring grassroots participation through the agency or encouragement of the centralised structure, for example, the promotion of 'green power' as a desirable alternative to non-renewable energy sources. The issue of agricultural land degradation in Australia has been of concern to farmers, rural communities and legislators since the 1930s<sup>72</sup>. Practices such as ring-barking, broadacre land-clearing, overgrazing and damming coupled with infestations of rabbits and weeds, resulted in problems such as soil erosion, topsoil removal and degradation of natural waterways. Within the parameters of preservationist policy, there were few means by which government could approach the problems holistically and little agreement over whether policy was a matter of state or federal responsibility<sup>73</sup>. Ultimately, it became the responsibility of

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<sup>72</sup> S.Lockie, "Community Environmental Management? Landcare in Australia", in Lockie and Bourke (eds) *Rurality Bites* (Annandale: Pluto Press, 2001) 244

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*



landholders to practice land and soil conservation measures in order to ensure continued agricultural productivity.

Institutions, as agents for human development, are central to the broad social framework wherein collective and individual achievement is facilitated, but the method through which is this achieved tends to be retrospective rather than progressive. Dovers points out that:

Humans only achieve things collectively through institutions, mostly public institutions. ... through which individual and private interests [are] enabled. Institutions reflect past rather than present understanding and imperative, naturally enough, and we still understand little about institutional change and design and the nature of policy learning.<sup>74</sup>

The eco-bureaucracy established in response to the integration of the environmental movement bears testimony to that view, nowhere more evident than in the process documents prepared for the 'Decade of Landcare', launched in 1989 by then Prime Minister Hawke aimed at engaging and combining the strengths of grassroots skills, human resources and resourcefulness and local knowledge, with the expertise and economic and political control of the ecocracy. The official policy documents, "produced essentially by the bureaucracy for the bureaucracy ... are defining documents and certainly establish a set of values and beliefs, but, despite appearances ... are not practical process documents."<sup>75</sup>

Despite this, or perhaps partly because of it, the Landcare Program, which has endured beyond the originally intended decade, has proven to be a highly successful model of grassroots participatory environmental policy. Its vertical integration into policy and community process from an entry point at two separate levels - bureaucratic and community - has facilitated adaptive change

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<sup>74</sup> Dovers, (2000) op cit. 15

<sup>75</sup> M.Bailey, "Landcare: Myth or Reality?", in Lockie and Vanclay (eds) *Critical Landcare* (Wagga Wagga: Centre for Rural Social Research, 1997) 131

at the organisational stratum, collective achievement in communities, and has worked in the individual interests of individual stakeholders. This multiple-level institutionalisation, retrospective insofar as action is almost exclusively restorative and concentrated where problems already exist (as indicated in Figure 6.2, which shows the 10 most addressed issues by Landcare groups in NSW), is reliant on available models for reparation, and also in its hierarchical organisational framework, is also a model for progressive change in its localised approach and engagement of the 'sense of place'<sup>76</sup> that exists among communities. While Lockie has argued that Landcare is a means of maintaining the legitimacy of the state by abrogating its responsibility for environmental issues<sup>77</sup>, its main strength, in terms of delivering results on environmental issues, is the fact that at grassroots level, the bureaucracy has minimum influence. The institutional weakness in the Landcare model is the issue of accountability for environmental policy implementation. Morrisey states that:

One of the central tenants (sic) of the Government's Landcare policy has been the devolving of responsibility from governments to local communities for environmental management. Devolving responsibility to communities is particularly relevant because devolution and local responsibility are central themes of community development and seen as necessary for sustainability.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Tennant-Wood (2002) op cit. and A.Carr, *Grass Roots and Green Tape* (Annandale: Federation Press, 2002)

<sup>77</sup> Lockie, 1993, "Landcare: Self-help, local knowledge and the state" (draft), paper presented to *Ecopolitics VIII* Conference, 1993, Griffith University,

<sup>78</sup> P.Morrisey, *Interest Groups and the Landcare Forum: How do they influence sustainability in rural Australia?* 1999 PhD Thesis, Southern Cross University, Lismore, 17

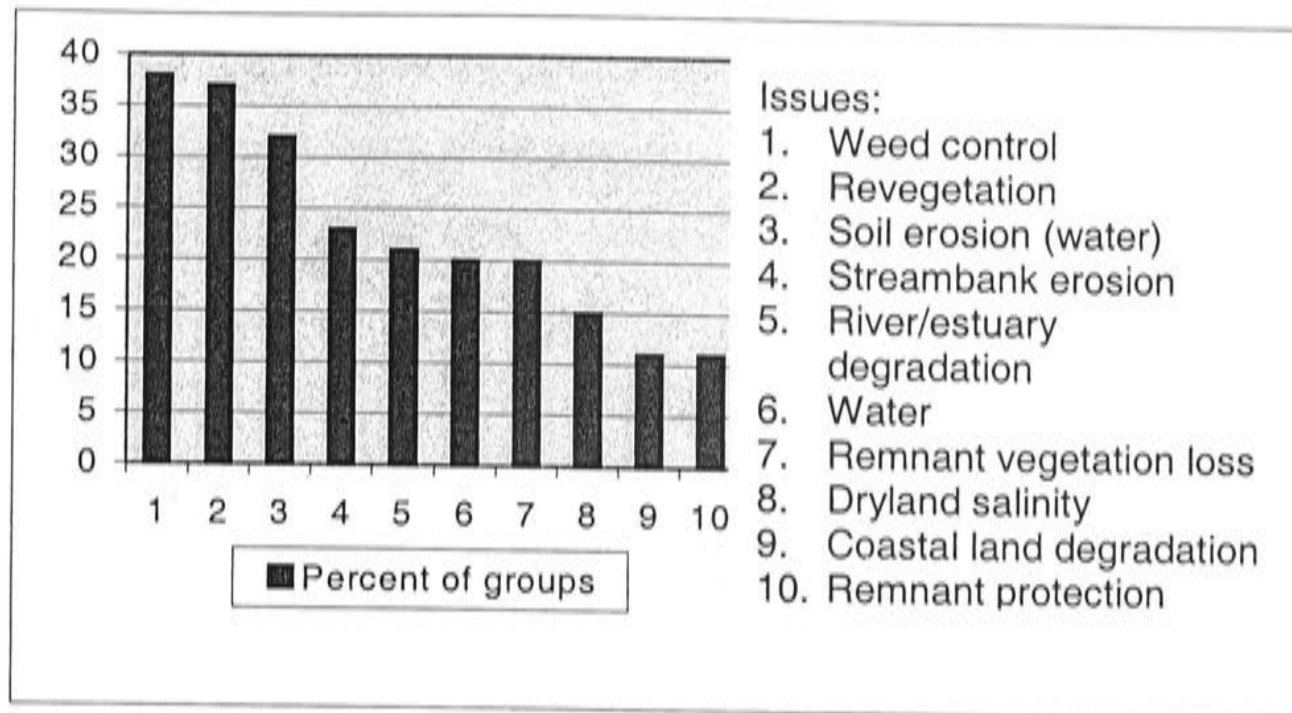


Figure 6.2: NSW Landcare groups, top 10 issues by percentage of groups  
 [Source: DLWC Landcare Directory, 2001]

While community development remains a necessary part of social sustainability, the issue of devolution of responsibility is also problematic in terms of where, in the institutional structure, lies accountability. Bureaucratic handwashing on a Pilatean scale is an inherent danger where policy is integrated vertically downwards. Where technical expertise is supplied by the ecocracy, however, through provision of a hierarchy of professional appointments, accountability is not so easily abrogated. State Landcare Councils and working groups, Landcare facilitator positions at state and regional levels, and Landcare program coordinators at community level form a chain of responsibility from the ecocracy down, with the on-ground personnel ensuring community interests and perceptions are adequately addressed through the appropriate bureaucratic channels. The community groups that form the Landcare network are responsible for identifying issues and providing labour: indeed, many Landcare groups form with the specific intent of addressing one issue, and once completed, the group may then disband or

target another single issue<sup>79</sup>. Community Landcare groups assume responsibility for these tasks, and, as community groups, are accountable only to themselves. There is a strong sense among these groups that the bureaucracy is accountable to them, not the other way around: "groups can afford to say 'we're the community, we're in charge here'"<sup>80</sup>.

The sense of 'ownership' of the local environment has been highly evident in the Snowy campaign and in terms of Landcare, this was not restricted to the Dalgety community, but extended through Landcare groups in the Upper Snowy Region. Rosie Chapman, an environmental science graduate with over a decade's experience in community environmental management through Landcare, was appointed Upper Snowy Regional Landcare coordinator in July 2000 and has worked closely with local groups in the region on projects directly and indirectly connected to the unrelated campaign to save the Snowy. The East Jindabyne Landcare group embarked on a major project to rehabilitate the eroded and degraded foreshore of Rainbow Beach close to the Jindabyne dam wall, while the Bungarby and Berridale-Rocky Plains groups began a systematic program to remove crack willows from the streambanks and streambeds of the Wullwye and other small creeks that flow into the Snowy below the dam. The Dalgety-Numbla Vale group, consisting of many members of the Dalgety and District Community Association, worked on the riverbed of the Snowy, rehabilitating the channel itself and removing noxious weeds and willows. The concept of place attachment is an important factor in community environment programs and is unlikely to occur on a national scale unless a specific place has considerable symbolic national value<sup>81</sup>. Interesting in terms of the Snowy River campaign is that, while the river does occupy a significant place in the cultural

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<sup>79</sup> Comment from R.Chapman, Upper Snowy Landcare Coordinator, interviewed, June 2002, transcript in possession of author

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> M.Vorkinn and H.Reise "Environmental concern in a local context: The significance of place attachment", *Environment and Behavior*, Vol.33, No.2, March 2001

legacy of the country, this only became a factor when national environmental NGOs or individual politicians released media statements designed to elevate the issue to national status. The NGOs were not a driving force behind the campaign, and, according to the local campaigners and the groups who worked on rehabilitating the streambed, appeared only for the photo opportunities. While national 'ownership' of the Snowy may have brought the media to town, it was the choked and degraded streambed that was of concern to the community.

Carr identifies four distinct criteria leading to a sense of community in groups: "membership, influence, emotional connection and reinforcement of needs."<sup>82</sup> I would add to those a fifth and less definable category: that of establishing and fitting into a group 'ethos'. Landcare groups are either 'green' or 'brown', reflected in the attitudes of their members. Seldom do Landcare groups consist of individuals from both environmentalist and conservative categories<sup>83</sup>. Carr touches on this when she indicates that in choosing not to join a community group people wished to avoid such labels as "radical greenie fringe"<sup>84</sup>. The term Landcare, in the 13 years since its inception at a national level, has come to represent a far broader concept than its original intention. In much the same way as 'sustainability' has become a generic term for all things environmental, so Landcare has become a generic term for the social or 'grassroots' manifestation of sustainability. Belonging to a Landcare group can be regarded as a hands-on equivalent of eschewing the plastic shopping bag at the supermarket and taking the polystyrene-packaged chops home in a calico bag: it is an individual choice reflecting individual values, but is not necessarily in the best interests of ecological sustainability. The institutional basis of Landcare has resulted, in many cases, in issues being addressed according to methods that have worked in the past, or are believed to be the most effective in

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<sup>82</sup> Carr (2002) op cit. 164

<sup>83</sup> R.Chapman, 2002; and anecdotal evidence from Landcare members interviewed

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.* 165

achieving a short-term result. This has been evident in such practices as chemical herbicide use on weeds near waterways<sup>85</sup>, or filling erosion gullies with old machinery<sup>86</sup> – both unsustainable and ecologically unsound practices, but both reflecting the problem identified by Dovers as being one of institutions reflecting past understandings.

The ecocratic evolution has paralleled the development of green political thought. Where environmental issues were regarded as problems belonging to agriculture, primary industry production or public health, they were dealt with according to the parameters of those specific bureaucracies within the broad socio-political confines of preservationism. The era of change represented by the apocalyptic view of ecological collapse, with the emphasis on social transformation and an ecologically holistic approach to the environment, gave rise to a new politico-institutional means of approaching the environment. Green democratisation and integrationism did not appreciably transform the political or economic order, but absorbed social attitudinal change into its institutional framework. Broad scale social change on environmentalism has been gradual, but reflected in ecocratic measures to ensure holistic management and stewardship of the natural environment that will:

- i. ensure continued liberal capitalist market growth;
- ii. allow for grassroots community participation;
- iii. incorporate the concept of ecologically sustainable development into mainstream policy implementation;
- iv. ensure the long-term sustainability of the eco-bureaucracy;
- v. minimise risks to the environment; and
- vi. create vertical integration of environmental policy through all sectors of society.

While integrationism has created a situation that allows for both restoration

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<sup>85</sup> Comment, R.Chapman, Upper Snowy Landcare Coordinator, 2002

<sup>86</sup> Anecdotal evidence from Upper Snowy Landcare group members, 2002

of existing problems, through community and 'grassroots' organisations, as well as long-term planning and preventative measures through application of the precautionary principle, there still remain several areas of practice that are unsustainable or environmentally cynical. Many of these practices are directly attributable to global economic factors and the economic hegemony of the corporate sector and the power nexus between industry and the eco-bureaucracy. Much of this comes under the broad heading of risk management: a growing industry in an increasingly environmentally aware society.

## Chapter 7

### Crises and risk management: perceptions, action and reaction

*Environmentalists have long been fond of saying  
that the sun is the only safe nuclear reactor, situated as it is some  
ninety-three million miles away – Stephanie Mills*

#### *A political construct of accidents, events and disasters*

In the three months from July to October in 1999, several major earthquakes in Turkey, Greece, Taiwan and Mexico shook the Earth literally and metaphorically. In excess of 40,000 human lives were lost as a direct result and many more tens of thousands of people were injured and left homeless. The economic cost was counted in billions of dollars, the social cost inestimable. Earthquakes, however, regardless of their severity and apart from the human toll, are natural occurrences and it is only when considered in relation to their effect on human society that they are described as 'disasters'. There is no human technology that can be applied to reduce the risk of earthquakes and where these events occur in remote and uninhabited locations they are not described as 'disasters' but 'seismic events' or 'seismic activity'. The term disaster applies only where humans are at risk. Those not directly involved learn of these disasters through the media and assistance in the form of charity-based relief funds and government financial and medical aid is arranged, but at no point is human society regarded as at fault. It is a natural risk and as such, something we accept and adapt to within our own limitations.

On September 30<sup>th</sup> 1999 an 'accident' occurred at a nuclear power plant 160kms north of Tokyo on Japan's largest island of Honshu. Three people were reported as having suffered severe exposure to radiation, forty-nine people suffered lesser exposure and many others were considered at risk. The populations of nearby villages were evacuated in the face of chain reaction leaks. In terms of lives and damage, this 'accident' was immeasurably less



significant than the earthquakes that had occurred over the couple of months prior. The Australian media, however, carried the accident as a lead story for two days. On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Sydney Morning Herald printed a smaller article alongside the continuing report of the nuclear accident. The article, "It couldn't happen here – could it?"<sup>1</sup> highlighted the Lucas Heights nuclear reactor in Sydney, drawing comparisons between its operations and that of the Tokaimura plant and quoting the director of environmental and radiation health at the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency as saying a similar accident could not occur in Australia<sup>2</sup>. There has been no similar report quoting seismic experts on the likelihood of our suffering a catastrophic earthquake because, of course, that is beyond human control. Nuclear power plants, on the other hand, are a human invention and accidents, therefore, are 'caused' by humans. Even though statistics and the occurrence of events indicate otherwise<sup>3</sup>, the risk from nuclear accidents is perceived to be far greater than that from earthquakes or other natural disasters<sup>4</sup> because there is something that can be done about minimising or controlling man-made risks. Governments can legislate to protect us from ourselves within the construct of liberal democracy; indeed, it could be argued that they have an obligation to do so. Political parties and organisations can take a leading role in influencing our perception of risk, our demands on government with regards to protective legislation and the ways in which governments respond to such demands.

This chapter will examine the concept of risk and its influence on environmental policy development in order to support the thesis that the paradigmatic evolution of eco-politics has rendered the green movement

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Kerr, "It couldn't happen here – could it?", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, October 2 1999, p.23

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> In the second week of August, 2002, more than 1000 people were killed in floods on the Indian subcontinent and a further 100 in the Czech Republic, Germany and Russia, with thousands more evacuated and displaced. No deaths were recorded from nuclear accidents.

<sup>4</sup> P.Slovic, 1987, "Perception of Risk", *Science*, Vol.236, pp.280-285

virtually obsolete in terms of driving policy or leading public perceptions of environmental issues and risks. Risk management can be divided into two key categories, divisible into four sub-categories (Table 7.1). This chapter will concentrate on the sub-categories of 'long-term' and 'direct' risks as these are the areas of risk analysis and perception directly related to environmental politics and the development of ecological thought. To this end, one example from both of these sub-categories will be used to examine how it represents a risk, and how the political management, or mismanagement in some cases, of that risk impacts on the natural environment. The external and internal risks contained within the first category will be examined insofar as to establish the definitive criteria of differentiation between the two key categories and place the concept of risk management in a political context. The issue of drought risk in Australia, and its management and control, will be approached as an example of an external risk that has shifted, in accordance with directions in eco-political thought, to now represent a direct risk. Ultimately, the ways in which governments respond to certain risk situations determine how, in the post-political construct of ecology and environmentalism suggested in the next chapter, human development will integrate with the environment.

It is recognised that the creation and maintenance of a secure society is an obligation of government. While the term 'security' has come to be understood in either an economic context, relating specifically to government financial provision for citizens unable to provide sufficiently for themselves, or in terms of national security ensured through defence policies and strategic negotiations, treaties and alliances, the concept of social security will here be used more broadly to encompass issues of environmental security. This refers to the

Risks to human life and livelihood	<i>External risks</i> – ie. minimising, avoiding or compensating for damage to human society from risks beyond human control, such as earthquakes and asteroid strikes.
	<i>Internal risks</i> – ie. protecting us from ourselves, eg. crime, traffic accidents and health risks resulting from certain behaviour or situations.
Risks to the environment	<i>Long-term risks</i> – ie. the damage or potential damage that human society can have on the environment but which is not immediately apparent, such as climate change and species loss, and which requires scientific (both physical and social) analysis in order to determine the holistic and long-term effects.
	<i>Direct risks</i> – ie. damage to the human environment or that area of nature that directly impacts on human society, such as waste disposal and land degradation and which is apparent in the short or immediate term.

Table 7.1: Risk categories

maintenance of both natural and human environments, an awareness of their interrelatedness, and management of the risks associated with the specific social, political and environmental paradigmatic frameworks. The identification and management of risks is an essential basis for social security and the political approach taken depends largely on the ideological factors underpinning individual governments. Anthony Giddens, in the 1999 Reith Lecture series, described the welfare state, the development of which “can be traced back to the Elizabethan poor laws in England”, as a:

... risk management system ... designed to protect against hazards that were once treated as at the disposition of the gods – sickness, disablement, job loss and old age.”<sup>5</sup>

In contemporary society the environment – its use and management – is also

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<sup>5</sup> Anthony Giddens, “Risk”, *Runaway World: The 1999 BBC Reith Lecture Series*, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith\\_99/week2/week2.htm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith_99/week2/week2.htm)

inextricably linked to the concept of the secure society. Risk management, from a political perspective, is more about addressing, managing and containing the negative effects of human development on nature, once considered the inevitable and irreversible consequence of civilisation, rather than attempting to control nature's effects on society.

Economically and litigiously, risk management is big business. While I have no intention of attempting to unravel the complexities of the insurance industry in this thesis, it must be acknowledged that the growth of this industry, and its legal implications, are a function of the significance placed on risk by policy makers and the power nexus between politics and the business and industry sector. Further, the sustainability of growth in this sector is questionable, and current trends and evidence would suggest that government intervention may be necessary to control the profit imperative inherent in the identification and marketing of risk as a consumer product. Whereas Hobbes described life in a 17<sup>th</sup> century state of nature as potentially "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short"<sup>6</sup>, the marketability of the state of nature in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is such that if life cannot be longer, then its brevity will be amply compensated. The temporal and spatial aspects of risk will be dealt with later in this chapter in relation to the management of direct risks, but the point noted here is that 'risk' is a relatively modern socio-political concept and refers mainly to post-industrial revolution society.

Risk management and environmental policy are inevitably tied together in a difficult relationship. It is this relationship that was at the basis of the Snowy Mountains Scheme when it was first conceived in the late 1930s, and this becomes the point of reference for the management of an external risk, in this case drought, as a risk with direct or immediate effects, with the resulting long-term risk of degradation in the lower Snowy. Leiss and Chociolko point out that risks involving our health and the condition of the natural environment are

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<sup>6</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*

among the most contentious of all contemporary issues<sup>7</sup>. They are also the issues that most immediately affect the population with solutions more likely to involve scientists and engineers rather than political strategists or economists. In providing for social security in that broad context, however, it is necessary that environmental policy addresses the contentious issues in such a way as to both defuse controversy and ensure political stability. Where preservationist environmental risks involved specific actions to address problems on an individual basis according to the specificities of the issue and affected area, the integrationist approach has been to minimise risk by recognising its existence and likely effects and then take preventative measures through either the precautionary principle at the institutional level, or in creating opportunity at industry and corporate level. This approach is environmentally justifiable in its holistic view of ecological factors, however, the establishment of risk management as an industry has created a potential new set of risks to be addressed by similar means, with the consequent risk of reactive environmental risk-minimisation devices rather than long-term preventative measures.

*External risks: acts of God and other catastrophes*

While we can insure against damage from external risks we cannot prevent them from occurring. Storms, earthquakes, floods and drought fall into the broad category of what used to be called 'acts of God', now a seldom-used term in a more secular age. The potential danger to human life and property from these risks is constant and accepted, and although a certain fear may prevail, communities in areas that frequently experience certain types of natural risks internalise the steps to be taken in the event of a risk occurrence and accept consequences accordingly. After Cyclone Tracy flattened Darwin in 1974 the local government introduced building covenants to insure against the

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<sup>7</sup> W.Leiss and C.Chociolko, *Risk and Responsibility* (Quebec City: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994) 3

recurrence of similar devastation, and in particular loss of life, but it cannot insure against the recurrence of a cyclone of similar force. While governments can legislate to minimise actual damage from external events, it is impossible to legislate against the cause and impossible to know the effects until after they have occurred. Institutionalised political action, therefore, as pointed out in the previous chapter, is based on precedents and past understandings of issues<sup>8</sup>.

Giddens points out that prior to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there was no concept of risk:

The idea of risk appears to have taken hold in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and was first coined by Western explorers as they set off on their voyages across the world. The word 'risk' seems to have come into English through Spanish or Portuguese, where it was used to refer to sailing into uncharted waters.<sup>9</sup>

Risk, then, according to the Giddens definition is an entirely sociological construct and does not exist anywhere in nature independent of human understanding. Employing the risk factor in government lobbying in respect of environmental policy amounts to the difference between perceived future risk as defined by experts and actual risk as defined by society. This distinction is categorised by Shrader-Frechette as cultural-relativism, which reduces risk evaluation to a purely sociological judgment; and naïve positivism, which uses only objective scientific methodology in risk evaluation ignoring all value judgments<sup>10</sup>. Schrader-Frechette argues a middle path, claiming that:

... it is false to say that hazard assessments can be wholly value free (as many naïve positivists claim), and it is equally false to assert (as many cultural relativists do) that any evaluation of risk can be justified.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> S.Dovers, *Still Settling Australia: Environmental History and Policy* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000)

<sup>9</sup> Giddens, 1999, "Risk" op cit.

<sup>10</sup> K.S.Schrader-Frechette, *Risk and Rationality* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991) 30

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.* 30

The concept of managing external risks falls into two categories:

- i. where the risk is perceived mainly in terms of human life, such as in the case of severe storm activity, earthquakes and other violent meteorological or geophysical events;
- ii. where the risk is perceived in terms of human livelihood, such as the risk to farmers in the event of severe drought or flood.

It is only relatively recently that these events have been regarded as risks, and, strictly speaking, given Giddens's explanation of the origins of the term in respect of sailing into uncharted waters, the word 'risk' does not necessarily apply in its narrow sense. The terminology and the political response are inextricably linked, as it is the perception of the term that precedes and determines the response. The risks to life associated with the first category are accepted, in much the way they were prior to the Enlightenment. People choose to live in regions that are prone to violent storms, volcanic eruptions or earthquakes, and while measures may be taken to reduce risk to human life, such measures generally take a form that may allow for people to take protective action in the event of a catastrophe: for example, severe storm warnings, public education campaigns and building covenants. The concept of risk management, in the case of external risks, is something of a misnomer, implying as it does, some form of control over the source of the risk. In the case of external risks no human control can be exerted, and therefore only the outcome of the risk can be managed according to social perceptions of danger.

In cultural-relativist terms danger is perceived according to any number of associated beliefs. Natural catastrophes are still regarded by many religious believers across cultures as 'acts of God'. To attempt preventative action against a natural occurrence, or the will of a particular deity could be regarded as futile at best and interfering with the natural order at worst. Social values, therefore, have been instrumental in determining reactions to the likely or possible outcomes of natural disasters on human life generally. Threats to human

livelihoods, on the other hand, are regarded differently. The provision of 'drought relief' by the Australian government to primary producers whose livelihoods are threatened by what, essentially, is a natural cyclical<sup>12</sup> climatic occurrence is generally regarded as a legitimate and necessary welfare function of government<sup>13</sup>. For political reasons, for many years drought was treated as a natural disaster. Botterill and Chapman point out that:

Constitutional responsibility for responding to disasters lies with the State governments and initially the Commonwealth was not involved in disaster relief.<sup>14</sup>

This began to change in 1939 when the Commonwealth provided financial assistance to Tasmania after bushfires, and "from then on the Commonwealth became involved on an ad hoc basis, gradually increasing its financial contribution."<sup>15</sup> In 1990 the Drought Policy Review Taskforce:

... rejected the concept of drought as a specific, defined event based purely on its climatic features and argued that it was inappropriate to treat it as a disaster.<sup>16</sup>

The fact that no human lives are directly at risk due to the occurrence of a drought has shifted the political approach from that of natural risk to a risk that should be managed by those whose livelihoods depend upon rainfall. Leading freshwater ecologist, Professor Peter Cullen, has stated that government financial relief and suggested technical measures such as turning rivers inland are not solutions to drought and farmers should better manage the risks associated with their industry:

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<sup>12</sup> The Australian Bureau of Meteorology cites research indicating that severe drought conditions affect some part of Australia every 18 years.

<http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/drought/livedrought.shtml>

<sup>13</sup> L.Botterill, *Muddling through or just a muddle : Australian government responses to farm poverty 1989-1998*, Unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2001 and L.Botterill and B.Chapman, "Developing Equitable and Affordable Government Responses to Drought in Australia", paper presented to Australian Political Studies Association Conference, ANU, October 2002

<sup>14</sup> Botterill and Chapman, (2002) op cit.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*



You can't drought-proof Australia. We need to learn to live with the landscape, not trying to fight against it all the time ... We have sufficient knowledge now to set a new direction. This involves some radical changes in land use towards those that can buffer the variable climate that is intrinsic to Australia.<sup>17</sup>

Environmental historian, Dr Libby Robin, found in the 1980s that farmers who had access to southern oscillation index data that predicts *El Niño* weather patterns did not believe themselves to be 'victims' of drought as they were able to prepare<sup>18</sup>, while Dr Neville Nicholls, Senior Research Scientist with the Bureau of Meteorology, believes that with current access to southern oscillation index and other related data, all farmers should be well-prepared for drought<sup>19</sup>.

Australian farmers, of course, have always attempted to manage drought. The diversion of watercourses for irrigation and impoundment of natural runoff in dams has been a feature of Australian agriculture since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and ownership of water has always been highly contentious. Wigmore relates incidences of "armed men guarding private dams ... in the latter half of the [19<sup>th</sup>] century"<sup>20</sup> and the subsequent state legislation to ensure that storage and diversion of water was regulated. The ambitious scheme to divert the 'wasted' waters of the Snowy for irrigation west of the mountains was conceived as part of a Commonwealth plan to control and manage the risk of drought and its effects on the livelihoods of the rural sector. The attempted management of drought from the early days of the colonies became an entrenched part of the Australian culture, to the point where the political approach taken to manage it shifted from that of external risk, that is, minimising, avoiding or compensating for damage to human society from risks beyond human control, to a direct risk,

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<sup>17</sup> P.Cullen, quoted on ABC online news, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2002  
<http://abc.net.au/news/justin/nat/newsnat-11oct2002-56.htm>

<sup>18</sup> L.Robin, pers.comm.

<sup>19</sup> N.Nicholls, 2002, "Climatic outlooks: from revolutionary science to orthodoxy", paper presented at *Climate and Culture in Australia: National Academies Forum*, Canberra, September 2002

<sup>20</sup> L.Wigmore, *Struggle for the Snowy* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1968) 68

that is, one that damages the human environment or that area of nature that directly impacts on human society and can be controlled. This latter point became the focus of the campaign to save the Snowy River from ecological degradation caused by post-War government policy to remove the risk of drought. In attempting to control an external risk by shifting it to a direct risk, government policy in fact created a direct causal link to a resultant long-term risk, that is, the ultimate effect on the Snowy River of 'drought-proofing' the inland.

*Internal risks: the enemy within*

Society creates and maintains risks simply as a function of society: the endemic dangers of civilisation. These risks involve the potentiality of harm to individuals or communities from other people and include such factors as road and traffic accidents, crime at all levels, health risks posed by certain behaviours such as smoking, drug-taking and participating in 'high risk' activities, and acts of aggression such as war or terrorism. It is risk at this fundamentally social level that human laws are able to 'manage' through enacting and enforcing certain regulations and applying justice to those whose behaviour poses significant 'risk' to others. Although superficially, this form of risk does not appear commensurable with environmental policy and law, White argues that there are certain parallels stemming from the basic social constructs of 'risk', both in "the ways in which risk terminology is deployed as a means to secure particular social ends", and in providing indications for future regulatory directions<sup>21</sup>. There is also considerable overlap between risks posed to society through environmentally unsafe behaviour, such as pollution to waterways and waste disposal, but which have only been generally recognised as direct environmental risks since the rise of the environment movement.

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<sup>21</sup> R.White, "Criminality, Risk and Environmental Harm", *Griffith Law Review* Vol.8 No 2, 1999 236

While all internal risks could be categorised as direct risks, the distinction is drawn in the context of their social construction. Direct risks, for the purpose of this thesis, are defined as those risks that pose some threat specifically to the environment. That they also pose a threat to human life in terms of the human-nature interrelationship is acknowledged, but it is consequential. Internal risks are constructed purely in cultural-relativist terms, that is, according to social value judgments. Further, these are risks that can be ordered and controlled by political and legal means towards socially acceptable outcomes. These outcomes themselves are dependent upon the dominant political approach and White points out that the maintenance of social security also reflects and reinforces the prevailing discourses and ideologies:

For instance, 'security' is essentially being privatised. Responsibility for managing 'risk' has been individualised, in the sense that each person is deemed responsible for their own safety and security needs. People are thus exhorted to purchase security in much the same way as any other commodity (eg. home alarm systems). This is reinforced by the demands of insurance companies to ensure that adequate security systems are in place, as a precondition to the claiming of benefits.<sup>22</sup>

The language of risk also serves to reinforce the legitimacy of the dominant political paradigm over other political discourses or ideologies. Slovic states that:

The dominant perception for most Americans (and one that contrasts sharply with the views of professional risk assessors) is that they face more risk today than in the past and that future risks will be even greater than today's.<sup>23</sup>

On the same subject, Wildavsky comments that despite the fact that the current civilisation is the best resourced, most technologically advanced, best-protected

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid.* 239

<sup>23</sup> P.Slovic, 1987, *op cit.* 280

and longest-lived of human civilisations, it "is well on its way to becoming the most frightened."<sup>24</sup> Where risk is implied, a frightened population will look to a strong central authority for protection. Strategic political use of the word 'crisis' to describe various and diverse situations, including economic trends, war, and environmental issues, implies danger. Where government pronounces itself as being in control of that situation and addressing it through the safe and legitimate means of political channels its position is strengthened. Socially, the effect of risk as a political device is the maintenance of the status quo. As Wells points out, "the politics of crisis is the politics of fear."<sup>25</sup> The use of the fear factor in risk management will be examined later in this chapter, but the point made is that internal, socially constructed and cultural-relativist risks can be created and manipulated towards a specific political goal within the political institutions and processes.

Ideologically, and from the perspective of environmental policy development, manipulation and promotion of internal risks can provide support for policies of economic and strategic security at the expense of the environment. In the wake of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on September 11 2001, President George W. Bush declared war on terrorism and subsequently sought and gained Congressional approval for massive spending measures on military defence. Chomsky points out that this is hardly a novel political tactic:

We should recall that the Reagan administration came to office 20 years ago proclaiming that 'international terrorism' (sponsored worldwide by the Soviet Union) is the greatest threat faced by the US, which is the main target of terrorism, and its allies and friends. We must therefore dedicate ourselves to a war to eradicate this 'cancer', this 'plague' that is destroying civilization.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> A.Wildavsky, quoted in *ibid.* 280

<sup>25</sup> D.Wells, *In Defence of the Common Wealth* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1990) 38

<sup>26</sup> N.Chomsky, *9-11* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001) 68

Where the main threat to a society is perceived to be from human sources, increased spending on measures to control and reduce the risk will be socially justified along the ideological lines of the dominant political paradigm. Governments that are spending massively on military hardware will seldom place environmental policy high on the political agenda as in the case of the Reagan and Bush (Snr and Jnr) administrations. The use of national security as justification for this also reinforces the notion of the crisis and in so doing, effectively neutralises the environment movement and environmental organisations, which, if they maintain pressure over environmental issues, risk being accused of caring more for the environment than people.

#### *Long-term risks: ecology, society and the Big Picture*

Preservationist environmental policy recognised ecological concerns and placed them within the boundaries of conventional attitudes and behaviours towards nature. That is, ecology was categorised as a science and consulted where scientific facts on nature and its interrelationship with humans were required. Ecologists were not consulted on environmental value judgments, social issues, development and planning or ethical questions<sup>27</sup>. This has been the case in most parts of the world, where progress from the time of the Industrial Revolution, and particularly since World War II, advanced at the expense of the environment. The period of the social revolutions that led to the rise of the environment movement called for a new approach to technological progress that considered the effects of development beyond the immediate benefits to society, politics or the economy.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the era of space exploration, which coincided with the era of social movements and environmental apocalypticism, provided a catalyst to viewing the earth from a perspective different from

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<sup>27</sup> L.Robin, 1994. "Nature Conservation as a National Concern: The Role of the Australian Academy of Science", *Historical Records of Australian Science*, Vol.10, No.1, 1-24; also pers. comm.

previous understandings and practices. Terms such as 'spaceship earth' implied the concept of unity and direction, and personification of the earth through the name 'Gaia', after the publication of Lovelock's *Gaia* hypothesis<sup>28</sup>, added a personal dimension to the need to nurture and respect a living organism. The 'global' environment as a single ecosystem, became, for the first time the focus of attention that sought to repair and conserve rather than subdivide and exploit. Risks, too, became global. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the growing awareness of damage to the ozone layer, climate change and its predicted changes to sea levels and threats to coastlines, the BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) threat to agriculture and human and animal health, hazardous waste 'trading' and species loss had led to pressure on governments to be proactive in conservation and preventative environmental measures.

Beck defines modern risks, as opposed to the external risks that have always faced humankind, as those which are "politically charged", or:

... based on decisions ... that focus on techno-economic advantages and opportunities and accept hazards as simply the dark side of progress.<sup>29</sup>

Long-term risks, as defined for the purposes of this thesis, are exclusively based on techno-economic decisions and the uncertainties that have arisen as a result of these decisions are based on prior scientific understanding of certain outcomes. These are "risk situations for which we have very little historical experience for confronting."<sup>30</sup> The knowledge currently at our disposal on the projected effects of climate change is based on (a) climatic precedents and cycles such as the ice ages; (b) the correlation of human industrialisation and rapid deterioration of the atmosphere leading to climatic anomalies [based on (a)]; (c) the physical composition of the atmosphere and the natural greenhouse effect;

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<sup>28</sup> J.Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979)

<sup>29</sup> U.Beck, *World Risk Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999) 50

<sup>30</sup> Giddens, (1999) "Risk", op cit.

and (d) the cumulative spatial and temporal effects of certain industrial byproducts on the atmosphere [based on the results of experimentation using current technologies]. Despite the certainty of what is known, however, there remains considerable uncertainty regarding appropriate measures to be taken to address a situation that has no predetermined timeframe or outcome.

Scientific uncertainty, economic interests and costs, political tensions and the fundamental question of equity between developed and developing countries all came to bear on an issue which one diplomat has called perhaps 'the most complex public policy issue ever to face governments'.<sup>31</sup>

The international political balancing act required to address all these frequently conflicting interests is itself a risk in terms of domestic policy development.

Initial effects as a potential and predicted outcome of climate change, or global warming, include rising sea levels as the polar icecaps and glaciers melt, increased likelihood of drought and more frequent extreme weather conditions. As a consequence of these effects, the global community will be affected by inundation of coastlines, many of which are densely populated; coastal erosion; inland salinity; loss of agricultural land and further loss of biodiversity<sup>32</sup>. However, as Elliott points out, there is considerable difficulty in predicting impacts based simply on the relative composition of the atmosphere and research, as a result, "confirms trends rather than proof, emphasising probable rather than certain outcomes."<sup>33</sup> Political responses by individual governments to the uncertainties inherent in climate change predictions have been anchored firmly in their ideological bases. For governments, solutions must be politically viable at the electoral level and promote positive economic results. The precautionary principle, now widely accepted in environmental policy development, operates on the practice of anticipation. Preventative

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<sup>31</sup> L.Elliott, *The Global Politics of the Environment* (Houndsmills: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998) 60

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.* 62

environmental measures can be enacted in advance of anticipated damage from current practices based on scientific predictions. On a socio-political basis, governments also anticipate the reaction of the electorate if no action is taken in respect of environmental issues: governments want to see socio-political climate instability even less than physical climate change. The precautionary principle, therefore, is a politically conservative measure towards the immediate benefit of governments and the eventual benefit of the environment.

The concept of the precautionary principle is not new. It was used in public policy as early as the 1850s in London when the handle of a street water pump was removed to prevent use of the pump in an attempt to control a cholera epidemic. Although the correlation between polluted water and cholera was not scientifically conclusive, the action was recommended as a "necessary public health action, where the likely costs of inaction would have been far greater than the possible costs of action."<sup>34</sup> While clearly an example of public policy acting in advance and anticipation of conclusive scientific fact, this was also a matter concerning public health and was not perceived as relating to environmental health. Similarly, the precautionary principle applied to fisheries in the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>35</sup> aimed at avoiding depletion or exhaustion of the resource in terms of the fishing industry and the supply of a commodity to marine resource-dependent countries, rather than species extinction or the balance of the marine ecology. These examples of precautionary and anticipatory policy were exclusively state-centric and based on the requirements of separate areas of government responsibility. The precautionary principle in its most recent political applications is both national and global in scope and based on an ecologically interrelated understanding of policy areas.

In accordance with the ecological perception of long-term risk management, there has been a move towards political overlap of policy areas such as

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<sup>34</sup> P.Harremoës, Introduction, in Harremoës et al, *The Precautionary Principle in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (London: Earthscan, 2002) 5

<sup>35</sup> M.MacGarvin, "Fisheries: taking stock" in Harremoës et al, (2002) op cit.



agriculture, health, trade and industry, with risks inherent in each and all to be managed in conjunction with environmental issues. This approach has been evident in the BSE crisis in the UK and Europe from the late 1980s, which has had practical implications for all of these policy areas. Scientific knowledge of the human variant of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD), is alarmingly scant:

Although an estimated 750,000 BSE-infected cattle were eaten by humans between about 1980 and 1996, no one knows how many people actually became infected, nor how long it takes for an infected person to become sick. Past projections of the possible death toll have not relieved the uncertainty.<sup>36</sup>

The risk potential for agriculture and trade at, initially, British and EU level and then ultimately, globally, were at source eco-political, where the prefix retains and emphasises its original etymology. Grove-White argues that the BSE crisis reflects:

... crucial features of these new patterns of risk crisis ... In the immediate furore, and in a universal anxiety to establish a bedrock of certainty in which to locate trust, there has been an intensified focus on 'the expert' – in this case, the scientists studying cause-effect relationships between BSE in cattle and CJD in humans. Predictably, given the alarming stakes for public health, the political exchanges and media witch-hunts have followed ritual patterns: allegations of political neglect and bad faith, reflecting a large measure of hindsight in relation to what 'the scientists' have been telling us.<sup>37</sup>

Although the connection between BSE and CJD was established in the mid-1990s, the British government was reluctant to act immediately. To enforce regulatory measures while there remained a large measure of scientific

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<sup>36</sup> M.Balter, "Uncertainties Plague Projections of nvCJD Toll", *Science*, Vol.294, October 2001, 770

<sup>37</sup> R.Grove-White, "Risk Society, Politics and BSE", in Franklin (ed), *The Politics of Risk Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998) 51

uncertainty was to risk an economic crisis as a result of inevitable loss of confidence in the British beef industry at the domestic level and potential trade bans at the international level. Conversely, not to act was to risk a health crisis the nature of which was unpredictable. Ultimately, the risks associated with inaction outweighed those of action, although the European Commission had unsuccessfully requested the British government as early as 1989 to cease exporting stockfeeds made from animal waste material<sup>38</sup> to member states. The risks to the environment, agriculture, trade and human and animal health stemming essentially from modern agricultural practice is at the core of long-term risk management. It is politically-charged and the ultimate effects are unpredictable, highly reliant on scientific analysis and not confinable within spatial and temporal frameworks. Long-term risks as a broad concept are problematic to institutional politics as they largely defy categorisation in specific policy areas, unlike many of the direct or internal risks. Banwell and Guest point out that CJD represented:

... a different risk experience from the more commonly discussed public health risks. The so-called lifestyle diseases where experts place more emphasis on the risks associated with smoking, drinking and eating 'unhealthy food' than the general population ... In such cases, lay experience gives people a basis for forming their own judgments about risks ... With BSE and nvCJD, individuals had no personal experience upon which they could form their own risk estimations.<sup>39</sup>

The lack of precedents on which to base risk assessment leads to a reliance on centralised institutions for decision-making that will be in the best interests of the community and the environment. Long-term risks that pose uncertain

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<sup>38</sup> This practice, which involves supplementing the natural diet of cattle with a mixture of ground offal and bone material from abattoirs, itself is widely criticised as unsound, unsafe and unnatural.

<sup>39</sup> C.Banwell and C.Guest, "Carnivores, Cannibals, Consumption and Unnatural Boundaries: The BSE-CJD Epidemic in the Australian Press", in McCalman et al (eds), *Mad Cows and Modernity* (Canberra: Humanities Research Centre ANU, 1998) 23

risks to the environment, both natural and human, are therefore essentially political risks. On broad environmental issues of global significance such as climate change, the BSE agri-environmental crisis, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, transportation of toxic waste by sea and widespread loss of biodiversity and species extinction, action at local level is unlikely to have much impact globally without institutional direction and support based on sound analytical advice. Jänicke believes that, in this respect, Western nation states are failing, given that institutional solutions currently in use either address the symptoms of the problem or displace the problem:

... from one medium or place to another – from water into the air or the ground, from densely populated areas to mountainous regions, or from industrial countries to the Third World (as at Bhopal).<sup>40</sup>

The spatial and temporal scales of long-term problems, combined with lack of lay experience and knowledge ensures a perpetuation of the dominant paradigm through institutionalisation and state reliance on political precedents and past understandings.

*Direct risks: playing with nuclear fire*

Most environmental risks of immediate concern in modern society, such as pollution, waste, land degradation or nuclear accidents, fall into the category of direct risks. It is these risks that are the most visible in terms of their immediacy and most commonly targeted by green political activists and political parties wishing to gain maximum environmental mileage from highly visible and localised issues. Direct risks are the products of unsustainable human activity and development. The symptoms of these environmental problems may pose risks to human health, agricultural productivity, ecological integrity, aesthetic

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<sup>40</sup> M.Jänicke, *State Failure* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990) 47

considerations, local economies or social justice. Direct risks differ from long-term risks in:

- i. their spatial and temporal scope: they are more localised and immediate and do not necessarily require international or cross-border solutions;
- ii. certainty of outcome: in most cases the outcomes direct risks are based on prior knowledge;
- iii. approach: in many cases, direct risks can be addressed at source and
- iv. there is less reliance on a centralised institutional approach.

Using Schrader-Frechette's definitions of risk assessment techniques as a basis, grassroots activists and communities have tended towards cultural relativism, using value judgments as justification for determining environmental risk. The NIMBY syndrome provides an extreme but very common negative example of this. The representative extension of NIMBY are the NIMTO (Not In My Term of Office) and NIME (Not In My Electorate)<sup>41</sup> syndromes, both of which, although lightheartedly, if not cynically, termed indicate the social and political immediacy of issues such as the siting of waste disposal facilities, transportation routes for hazardous waste, land-zoning for industry and potentially harmful industrial activities. Governments, on the other hand, have tended towards the naïve positivist end of the spectrum, trusting objective scientific methodology or using it as justification for inaction on ethical or social concerns on the same environmental issues. Instruments such as environmental impact assessments (EIA) are frequently used as the basis for decision-making on environmental issues, and while it is now common practice for the EIA procedure to involve some measure of public participation<sup>42</sup>, Molesworth notes that there are certain 'disadvantages' in this practice, including:

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<sup>41</sup> Devereux, Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts, *Waste Disposal* (Canberra: Senate Printing Unit, 1994) 171

<sup>42</sup> Thomas, *Environmental Impact Assessment in Australia* (Annandale: Federation Press, 2001) 249

- only those with scientific or technical training are able to contribute to positive and constructive decision-making;
- members of the public tend to be subjective;
- the existing political process works to take into account public opinion; public participation is almost interference;
- public participation is not truly representative of public opinion;
- public participation adds to the costs of projects or governing;
- the public cannot appreciate the importance of many affairs of State (which only government or its agencies can fully appreciate)<sup>43</sup>

These points, made by a leading lawyer, indicate an industry-centric view of the hazards of including public participation and community consultation in environmental decision-making and risk management and in so doing, completely circumscribe the whole point of community participation. As a result, the most effective community involvement in risk management and environmental issues operates outside the institutionalised process including both governmental and NGO institutions. This approach is underscored by the Snowy campaign, which succeeded largely because of the deliberate separation maintained between it and the institutionalised environmental organisations which represent very specific ideologies and political positions often directly conflicting with those of government or industry.

The risk perception associated with nuclear power is used here as an example of direct risk, where issues of nuclear safety have been prominent particularly in Europe and the US for several decades. The nuclear debate covers a number of risk scenarios: the possibility of an 'accident' at a nuclear power station; the transportation and ultimate location of nuclear waste material; and concerns about nuclear weaponry. These are essentially direct

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<sup>43</sup> S.Molesworth, "The Case for and Against Community Participation" Paper presented at *Rivers and Community Resource: A Community Responsibility*, Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works, Melbourne, 1985

risks in that the outcome of each of these scenarios is based on prior knowledge of expected effects on the natural and human environments. Despite the low probability of actual risk occurrences compared with numerous other direct risks, the social perception of danger is rated very high. Of 30 risks associated with activity or technology presented in a US survey to members of four separate categories of people in 1987, two of the categories (The League of Women Voters and University Students) rated nuclear power as the most dangerous. A third category (Active [Recreational] Club Members) rated it at number 8, while in contrast, Experts rated it as number 20<sup>44</sup>. Starr places nuclear weapons (war), nuclear reactor accidents and nuclear weapons fallout as the three most highly rated risks perceived by the public in a study of 81 separate risks<sup>45</sup>.

The results of a nuclear accident or nuclear war in terms of irreparable damage to the environment and potential risk to human life and long-term health are well-documented and have never been in dispute. The accidents at Three Mile Island (1979), Chernobyl (1986) and Tokaimura (1999) are now entrenched in both the public consciousness and the official record, as are the images of Hiroshima and the nuclear tests at Maralinga and Moruroa Atoll. Movies such as *The China Syndrome* (1979) and *Silkwood* (1983) gave popular exposure to the government and industry secrecy that often surrounds the nuclear industry and served to highlight the inherent dangers of nuclear facilities. Otway believes that the approaches taken by governments in balancing public risk-perception against the benefits of nuclear energy, not the probability of accidents, is the real controversy:

... in general the [anti nuclear power] group ... assign high importance to the risk items while the pro group view benefit-related attributes as most important.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Slovic (1987) op cit.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Otway quoted in Schrader-Frechette, 1991, op cit, 91

Further, and more significantly:

... although both pro and con groups "strongly believe that nuclear power is in the hands of big government or business ... the pro group evaluates this attribute positively, the con group evaluates it negatively ... There were no significant differences between the [pronuclear and antinuclear] groups on the *eb* [evaluation-belief] scores of any items related to risk."<sup>47</sup>

These findings would appear to align with the popular view portrayed through the movies as well as reflect the concerns of the public regarding the ownership and control of nuclear facilities. Following from this, the conclusion could logically be drawn that the general opinion of the 'experts' in the Slovic research would be based on the probability of an actual accident rather than their perception of risk outcomes *per se*. The high-risk perception of the other groups would be based on a combination of elements including cultural relativist judgments on nuclear war, and beliefs about the safety of government and business in providing for social security.

An integrationist approach to environmental politics, represented in many procedural and ideological objectives by the WCED Brundtland Report, *Our Common Future*, approaches the issue of nuclear energy via Schrader-Frechette's 'middle path' of scientific proceduralism<sup>48</sup>, using scientific as well as ethical and social factors in risk management. The reality of the situation, however, is often value judgments based on economic factors. The main causes of the accidents at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl were recorded in the WCED document as "human operator error"<sup>49</sup>, underlining the safety of the facilities themselves under the 1975 international Nuclear Safety Standards (NUSS) code. The Brundtland Commission however, does not dismiss the risks associated with nuclear technology itself, stating that:

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<sup>47</sup> *ibid.* 91-92

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> WCED, *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) 185

... available analyses indicate that although the risk of a radioactive release is small, it is by no means negligible for reactor operations at the present time.<sup>50</sup>

Deliberately stated in cautious tones, the report acknowledges the possibility of accidents and the perception of risks. This approach stands in contrast to the statements of reassurance from government and industry spokespeople on the subject of risks arising from nuclear accidents. Falk's detailed analysis of the Three Mile Island accident clearly indicates the official obfuscation surrounding the cause and effects of that accident<sup>51</sup>, and Papadakis's research on attitudes towards nuclear power in Europe shows that the public have concerns about the lack of information they receive about nuclear power stations<sup>52</sup>. Lack of information, or misinformation, increases the perception of the existence of risks with heightened public suspicions of corporate and government cover-ups. When governments have acted to reassure the public about the safety of nuclear energy or to downplay the existence of risks, it has often stood in contrast to the messages being received from other agencies. Because of the known outcomes of nuclear accidents as direct risks, the attitudes of government and industry have served not so much to assuage public concerns but to feed them. Where fear exists, government, in order to maintain its position, must act to address the questions of society in such a way that retains confidence in the centrality of the political institutions and provides apparent solutions to the issues of concern. This frequently results in policy that addresses only the immediate effects, that is, the symptoms, and fails to address the cause of the problem or the real concerns.

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<sup>50</sup> *ibid.* 185

<sup>51</sup> J.Falk, *Global Fission* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982)

<sup>52</sup> E.Papadakis, *The Green Movement in West Germany* (London: Croom Helm, 1984)



### *The fear factor in environmental policy*

There is a clear but very fine distinction between the perception of a risk and fear of its occurrence, the former arising from known factors and the latter, largely, from unknown. According to Douglas and Wildavsky, within certain social groupings members will react to certain risks by either downplaying or emphasising them as a means of controlling and maintaining the status quo of that group<sup>53</sup>. This behaviour reflects at a localised level the behaviour of the dominant political institutions towards actual and perceived risks to society or the environment and ultimately, to itself. Where the central authority has no solution to a perceived risk or problem it is more likely to downplay that as an issue of concern. Where there is an institutionalised approach to a problem, however, the risk is likely to be highlighted or emphasised as a means of strengthening the public's faith in the institution and thereby maintaining the political status quo.

In the case of long-term risks, for example, climate change, where scientific evidence may be ambiguous and central institutions are uncertain as to the formulation of a policy response that will not threaten the liberal capitalist economic hegemony, environmental risks can be dismissed as vague and inconclusive. This has been the case in the USA and Australia, where governments have consistently placed the economic risks associated with conforming to uniform reduction targets for greenhouse gas emissions more prominently than the environmental risks associated with not conforming to reduction targets. In implying that we have more to fear *economically* by complying to targets than *environmentally* if we don't, the government ensures a hegemonic maintenance of liberal capitalist ideology as it applies to the security of the national interest, and hence, the security of society. In Europe, by

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<sup>53</sup> M.Douglas and A.Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) 112

comparison, where the precautionary principle has been integrated into environmental policy for two decades, the government can emphasise the risks of non-compliance to greenhouse gas reduction targets in environmental terms, as this is an area of paradigmatic strength. While integrationism applies in both these cases, the approach varies within that particular framework according to the perception of the risks and consequences of certain actions.

Risks confronting society are not a result of the dominant political model: they are symptomatic of a prevailing social ethos based on available information, perceptions and scientific advancement. This, then, is scientific proceduralism. For example, society is far better informed in 2002 about the health risks involved in such activities as smoking, sun exposure and having x-rays than we were in 1962. Similarly, there is considerable information available about the use and effects of agricultural chemicals, aerosols, waste incineration and PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls). Additionally, there are new risks that have arisen as a result of diseases such as HIV/AIDS and CJD, for which there are certain specific risk-avoidance behaviours, and risks associated with new technologies such as genetic modification and certain medical procedures. These constitute risks for which society has documented evidence and certain institutionalised procedures for risk management and minimisation. There are still risks, however, for which value judgments remain the sole arbiter of behaviour. In the months following the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington DC in 2001, airline travel and employment in the airline industry dropped dramatically and worldwide<sup>54</sup>, despite there being no evidence to suggest that airline travel itself was more dangerous after September 11 than before, and despite increased security measures in airports. Furedi states that all “risk concepts are based on the distinction between reality and possibility.”<sup>55</sup> Within a dominant political paradigm fear of possibility, regardless of how

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<sup>54</sup> US Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *Impact of September 11 on Airlines*, 9<sup>th</sup> January 2002 [http://www.bts.gov/PressReleases/2002/bts001\\_02.html](http://www.bts.gov/PressReleases/2002/bts001_02.html)

<sup>55</sup> F.Furedi, *Culture of Fear* (London: Cassell, 1997) 18

small, and reality of risk, regardless of how large, can be manipulated according to the requirements of the central authority and through balancing scientific or historical evidence against value judgments.

Strategic use of the word 'crisis', as mentioned earlier, is a device used to emphasise certain risks towards the objective of maintaining the status quo. The BSE crisis was not described thus until it had been recognised as such by European governments and institutionalised risk management measures were in place to ensure social security. While scientists have been warning on the severely degraded state of Australia's Murray-Darling Basin for some decades, it has only been described as a 'crisis' situation since the Australian government instigated political and bureaucratic measures, such as the Murray-Darling Basin Commission to identify, describe and recommend restorative and protective action. Through using the word crisis to describe certain risks that are under management by the central institution, there is an implicit message, translating at wider community level as fear, that without the central institution the situation is in imminent danger of escalating into an uncontrollable or potentially disastrous situation. Paradoxically, to use the word crisis to describe a situation for which there is no institutional solution in place but which may, in fact, be a crisis, is to risk precisely that which the authority seeks to avoid, that is, social unrest. Further, as Wells points out, there remains an inherent danger for government in persisting with this approach due to the difficulties in sustaining fear as a control mechanism where there are no apparent immediate dangers, and in the unpredictability of human behaviour given real crisis situations.<sup>56</sup>

The results of risk manipulation are, as Beck described it, a form of "organised irresponsibility."<sup>57</sup>

In other words, the institutions involved and affected do not merely

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<sup>56</sup> Wells, *op cit.*

<sup>57</sup> U.Beck, *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995) 64

dispose of highly effective instruments and strategies for 'normalizing' industrial self-jeopardization. This normalization has been achieved precisely by demanding and doing the same as has always been demanded and been done: inquiring into 'causes' and prosecuting 'guilty parties' in accordance with hitherto valid conceptions. The greater the shock with which public consciousness apprehends industrial self-jeopardization, the more important it becomes not to allow what is produced under systemic constraints to appear as such ...<sup>58</sup>

This is the basis of the fear factor. Where the central political institutions are in danger of losing authority in the face of unresolved questions, policy is either developed to address a 'crisis', whereby certain parties are held to be 'at fault' and instruments put in place to redress the situation, or the situation is not deemed to be severe enough and fears are allayed or displaced to another political risk area.

If, as Kasperson asserts, "the defining of risk is essentially a political act"<sup>59</sup>, it should logically follow that the solutions should also be political. Environmental risk management strategies to address either long-term or direct risks, such as pollution control, greenhouse gas reduction, water quality and supply, waste management and land conservation are therefore administered by governments either directly or through agencies. It is the pressure brought to bear on governments to enact such administration that is the crucial factor in determining who, or what, will carry out environmental policy and who, ultimately, is accountable. Until relatively recently, the environment movement has played a crucial role in this area, however, the integration of the environment into mainstream politics has paralleled the integration of the green movement itself into the corporate structure of industry and liberal democratic

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<sup>58</sup> *ibid.* 64-65

<sup>59</sup> Roger Kasperson, "The Social Amplification of Risk: Progress in Developing an Integrative Framework", *Social Theories of Risk*, Krimsky & Golding, eds. (Westport: Praeger, 1992) 155

government. The role of the environmental NGOs is now virtually restricted to media activism and fund-raising. The perception and management of environmental risks has allowed for the development of institutional responses to environmental issues which accord to political means and resources and reflect grassroots social concerns that are neither ideologically nor politically based.

## Chapter 8

### Post-political ecology and a return to Arcadia

*Finality is not the language of politics* – Benjamin Disraeli

*Whither the green revolution?*

In the 1993 movie *Jurassic Park* a scientist uses biotechnology to recreate dinosaurs and plant species from a number of prehistoric epochs to populate the eponymous theme park. The result, inevitably, is a rather gruesome chaos as the dinosaurs escape, bearing out the underlying theme that the use of technology should be based on sound empirical and ethical principles:

I'll tell you the problem with the scientific power that you're using here – it didn't require any discipline to attain it. You read what others had done and you took the next step. You didn't earn the knowledge for yourselves, so you don't take any responsibility for it. You stood on the shoulders of geniuses to accomplish something as fast as you could and before you even knew what you had you patented it and packaged it and slapped it on a plastic lunchbox, and now you're selling it, you want to sell it!<sup>1</sup>

The movie, adapted from Michael Crichton's 1990 novel, is only one of a number of works of prophetic fiction to have provoked both fears and concerns about the use and future of technology in the context of social and ethical issues. Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Orwell's *1984* (1949) were both groundbreaking works of fiction when they were written, and subsequently became benchmark standards against which social progress was measured. *Jurassic Park* is possibly destined to the same socio-historical niche with claims

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<sup>1</sup> Quote from *Jurassic Park*, United International Pictures, 1993

by scientists in recent years that it may be possible to clone the (presumed) extinct *thylacine* (Tasmanian tiger)<sup>2</sup>.

This chapter and the conclusion that follows are not an attempt at a post-integrationist prediction of the end of ecology or politics but rather draw some general conclusions about environmentalism and the future of green politics using the Snowy River campaign as an example. The purpose is to suggest, as a possible future direction based on the preceding thematic discussion of eco-political development, a construct of nature and its interrelationship with humankind that goes beyond a political interpretation based on the concept of institutional or formalised politics, and for which there are significant indicators. This chapter will analyse the eco-political construct in terms of its social and environmental strengths, and the trends that are emerging as a result of these, concluding that the integration of the environment and environmentalism into mainstream politics is not adequately addressing ecological problems from the local and localised perspective. The move from integrationism towards an environmental heterodoxy is not a revolutionary act but a logical development from political action based on an institutional structure, to extra-political action based on broader beliefs and which may form the basis of future directions for environmentalism.

Revolutions, as a general concept, require certain elements for their instigation and implementation:

- i. widespread social discontent (which may manifest as anger, fear or loss of confidence) in the existing situation;
- ii. an achievable, or at least believable, alternative vision;
- iii. belief among society that the alternative is better than the status quo;
- iv. informed leadership.

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<sup>2</sup> Australian Museum Online (2002) *Australia's Thylacine: To clone or not to clone?*  
<http://www.amonline.net.au/thylacine/>

In this, all revolutions, whether political, scientific, social, or economic are inherently political acts. They all seek widespread change by popular demand. The ecological crisis exposed by Carson in 1962, and preceding the development of the 'green revolution', was based on scientific evidence and called for the science of ecology to be employed more as a basis for political and economic decision making on environmental issues:

Much of the necessary knowledge is now available but we do not use it. We train ecologists in our universities and even employ them in government agencies but we seldom take their advice. We allow the chemical death rain to fall as though there were no alternative, whereas in fact there are many, and our ingenuity could soon discover many more if given the opportunity.<sup>3</sup>

She goes on to present what, effectively, became an ecological call-to-arms:

Have we fallen into a mesmerized state that makes us accept as inevitable that which is inferior or detrimental, as though having lost the will or the vision to demand that which is good?

... On every hand there is evidence that those engaged in [chemical] spraying operations exercise a ruthless power. ...

... If the Bill of Rights contains no guarantee that a citizen shall be secure against lethal poisons distributed either by private individuals or public officials, it is surely only because our forefathers could conceive of no such problem.<sup>4</sup>

Carson's call was for a new ecological awareness that would result in industrial and agricultural development based on sound ecological and ethical principles – in effect, an eco-social revolution. Her final paragraph was a damning indictment of society's treatment of nature under the style of ad hoc policy development and short-term decision-making that had characterised the previous construct of environmental thought:

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<sup>3</sup> R.Carson, *Silent Spring* (London: Penguin. 1962) 28

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* 28-29



The 'control of nature' is a phrase conceived in arrogance, born of the Neanderthal age of biology and philosophy, when it was supposed that nature exists for the convenience of man. The concepts and practices of applied entomology for the most part date from that Stone Age of science. It is our alarming misfortune that so primitive a science has armed itself with the most modern and terrible weapons, and that in turning them against the insects it has also turned them against the earth.<sup>5</sup>

There was, however, an ambiguity in Carson's approach that made science itself very uneasy and brought the political left wing clearly into the picture. The technology and development that had resulted in the environmental degradation and ecological crisis were essentially the results of science. The Old Left of the preservationist era had accepted the role of science and technology as the vehicles of social progress: "For them, scientifically wrought forces of production would, under socialism, be set free from the shackles of capitalism."<sup>6</sup> The focus was not on science as an agent of ecological destruction, but on the capitalist system that controlled science. The emerging New Left in the early 1960s, however:

... was skeptical of science because of its visible *effects* ... the Vietnam War was predominantly a technological war, a lesson not lost on antiwar activists ... and, of course, the ever present threat of nuclear conflagration loomed over the lives of the generations born after 1940 for whom the A-bomb was a defining feature of social and psychological worlds.<sup>7</sup>

The green movement that grew out of the awareness of a pending ecological crisis understood that, firstly, the role of science in society had been one of progress, and that this progress had elements that were used destructively and had wrought damage on the environment; and secondly, that in order for

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<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* 257

<sup>6</sup> S.Aronowitz, 1996, "The Politics of the Science Wars", *Social Text*, Vol.14, Nos. 1 & 2, 183

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* (original italics)

environmentalism to succeed politically, scientific evidence would be necessary to support the claims of an environmental apocalypse. It was not science itself that needed to be changed, but the institutions perceived to be in control of science.

The 'reclamation' of science by environmentalism, successful in terms of providing informed leadership for the environment movement and the establishment of green democratisation, was not universally accepted. There remained those, represented broadly but not entirely by the deep ecologist school of thought, who continued to regard science as the cause of imminent ecological collapse and who, as a result, turned more to philosophy as a basis for revolution. Despite this, however, environmentalism as a broad social movement, came to be defined and led by the writings, not only of Carson, who died in 1964, but also scientists such as James Lovelock, Paul Ehrlich, Garrett Hardin and those who comprised the Club of Rome.

The past two to three decades of integrationist environmental policy have been defined by the ability of centralised institutions to address, through the channels of political process, the environmental challenges of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. From its first steps in Stockholm in 1972, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) has demonstrated a strong integrationist approach by connecting environmental science with government and society. The strength and acceptability of the UNEP lay in the fact that at its base was scientific advice:

The credibility of their advice lay in the fact that their understanding was scientific – that is, open to revision by new information. At the same time, UNEP could harness scientists' interests by sponsoring research. The result was to organize a politically effective community of credible actors.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> K.Lee *Compass and Gyroscope* (Washington DC: Island Press, 1993) 131

The Stockholm World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987, Rio de Janeiro UNCED (Earth Summit) in 1992 and the Johannesburg WSSD (Rio+10 or Earth Summit II) in 2002 have all used ecological principles as the starting point for political deliberations on environmental issues. The ecological foundation, however, has begun to yield to economic factors. The concept of 'natural capitalism'<sup>9</sup> has entrenched the ideals of liberal capitalism into environmental policy and green political parties have turned to a wider agenda of social and economic issues, partly as a logical extension of the human-environment interrelationship, and partly as a means of making themselves more electorally viable on the liberal democratic playing field. The last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw environmental issues become highly visible corporate campaigns from transnational companies to environmental organisations.

While the integration of the environmental agenda into mainstream liberal-capitalist policy has succeeded in commodifying and corporatising environmentalism, in the light of current environmental issues, how effective has it been ecologically? Despite a growing social awareness of environmental issues and general political recognition of their importance in terms of both political viability and ecological necessity, and considering the scope of investment in sustainable development<sup>10</sup>, international progress has been relatively minimal in the areas of long-term risks while state-centred progress on direct risks has often been restricted by economic factors or issues of domestic politics. In opening the Earth Summit in Johannesburg, South African President, Thabo Mbeki, admitted that global progress on environmental issues in the decade since Rio has been disappointing:

"Sadly, we have not made much progress in realizing the grand

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<sup>9</sup> Hawken, Lovins & Lovins, *Natural Capitalism* (London: Earthscan, 1999)

<sup>10</sup> M.Jacobs, "Financial Incentives: The British Experience" in Eckersley (ed) *Markets, the State and the Environment* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1995); P.Barnes and I.Barnes *Environmental Policy in the European Union* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1999)

vision contained in Agenda 21 and other international agreements," Mbeki said. "It is no secret that the global community has, as yet, not demonstrated the will to implement the decisions it has freely adopted."<sup>11</sup>

While there is much research still to be done on the impact, gains and effects of Agenda 21, Mbeki's assessment certainly does not correlate with either the progress made or the willingness to implement environmental measures at the local community level. The canyon between integrationist political environmentalism and grassroots action appears to be widening in terms of goals, achievements and method.

The role of scientific research in the progress of environmentalism and its consequent mainstreaming in terms of identification and scale of environmental problems has been fundamental. However important to this process, science itself has not been responsible for social attitudes towards the environment<sup>12</sup>, which are decreasingly represented by government rhetoric and bureaucratic policy. Further, as Blühdorn points out, the "processes of the functional differentiation of society" are constantly further separating the "institutions responsible for the perception and framing of environmental problems" from the "sketching and implementation of appropriate solutions."<sup>13</sup> Following this line of argument, the type of social revolutionary period of the 1960s, from which grew the environmental movement, may well be occurring again at grassroots and community level based along many of the same principles and containing the same elements as its forebear. That is, that there is a perceived crisis situation that the state is failing to address, widespread discontent, an alternative direction and informed leadership.

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<sup>11</sup> T.Mbeki, quoted in "Johannesburg Summit 2002", *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Division for Sustainable Development*

[http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/whats\\_new/feature\\_story25.htm](http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/whats_new/feature_story25.htm)

<sup>12</sup> F.Fischer, *Citizens, Experts and the Environment* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2000)

<sup>13</sup> I.Blühdorn, 1997, "A Theory of Post-Ecologist Politics" *Environmental Politics*, Vol.6 No.3, 129

In 1997 Blühdorn argued in favour of a theory of non-ethical, individualised post-ecological politics constructed around a pluralist “democratised” concept of nature oriented exclusively to the present rather than past or future concerns<sup>14</sup>. The perceived shift would be from “preservation” to “construction”, as the human species would engage positively in creating or recreating rather than dwelling on negative concerns “about potential or factual losses.”<sup>15</sup> Since Blühdorn’s paper was published there have been indications, based largely on shifts in political priorities at government level, of a change in the political construct of ecology, leading in turn to more community-based environmental initiatives. It is these recent developments that form the basis of what I perceive to be, rather than post-ecological politics, an alternative move towards a post-political ecology, which, like the Blühdorn theory:

- will be oriented towards the present;
- is based on a pluralistic concept of nature; and
- represents a shift away from a weakened paradigm.

Unlike Blühdorn’s theory, however, a post-political ecology could be seen as moving away from the current location of green politics within the established institutional framework to an extra-political location.

It is further argued that a post-political ecology cannot be constructed without a moral or ethical structure. The influence of environmental issues on the liberal capitalist political system effectively separated the fundamental green movement ethics of the intrinsic value of nature, intergenerational justice, considerability of life systems and the inherent interrelatedness of environmental issues from environmental decision-making. In their place was established eco-corporatism and eco-rationalism to create a new growth industry that has manifested in green consumerism. Industry-based

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid.* 141

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

environmental solutions such as bio-degradable, phosphorus-free detergents for dishwashers, supermarket bags made from cornstarch, and the boom in eco-tourism have systematically removed original green movement ethics, replacing them with feel-good panaceas that temporarily mask the symptoms but do not address the cause of ecological problems. Twenty years of politically objective and amoral integrationist environmental policy and eco-industrialisation have given us recycling, unleaded petrol and EIAs, but these have not addressed the problems of waste generation, global warming or land degradation<sup>16</sup>. To this end, a post-political ecology could be based on a green ethic along the lines of Goodin's 'Green Theory of Value', described and paraphrased by Radcliffe as:

... people want a sense of purpose and pattern; this can only be achieved within a wider setting; natural products provide that setting.<sup>17</sup>

Goodin accordingly places the human-nature relationship in an ethical framework:

... we value the products of natural processes precisely because they are the products of something larger than ourselves ... for my purposes, it would do equally well to say that the processes in question are things 'outside' of ourselves. The point is merely that such natural processes, and our relation to them, serve to fix our place in the external world.<sup>18</sup>

With Blühdorn I argue that a new paradigm of environmental action, constructionism, can emerge to replace the current environmental approach of integrationist environmentalism. Constructionism, as an approach to environmentalism, is likely to assume the grassroots values upon which current environmental action is based: values spatially and temporally defined as 'here and now'. Constructionism is not the global view encapsulated by the green

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<sup>16</sup> W.Tabb *The Amoral Elephant* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001)

<sup>17</sup> J.Radcliffe, *Green Politics: Dictatorship or Democracy?* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000) 69

<sup>18</sup> Goodin, quoted in Radcliffe, *ibid.* 69-70

aphorism “Think globally, act locally”: its fundamental approach more a matter of, “Think locally, act locally”. Constructionists would be neither experts nor theorists and the practice of constructionism neither entirely anthropocentric nor entirely ecocentric. It would rely heavily on social capital and place attachment as moral bases rather than the green ethics of moral considerability to nature and intergenerational justice but recognise the intrinsic value of nature represented by the perception of wilderness.

A post-political ecology can be described according to the criteria set out in Table 8.1. This model does not replicate the radical social change that occurred during the 1960s but it nonetheless does represent a significant challenge to the political order and comes at a time when the dominant liberal capitalist political order is already under threat from other external factors. It is worth noting that there are also certain similarities and parallels between the global political and social situation during the period of the social revolutions and rise of the mass social movements and the current social and political climate:

- Cold War *realpolitik* has been replaced by a Jihad *realpolitik*, involving the US and its allies on the one side, and the so-called ‘rogue’ Muslim states of the Middle East, Iraq and Iran, on the other;
- the movement for civil rights, and to a lesser extent, the women’s movement, have been replaced by the broader movement for human rights and women’s rights, evident in campaigns for environmental justice, social equality and refugees and against poverty and third world debt;
- as with the early environmental campaigns in the late 1960s and early 70s, environmental action at the turn of the century is being led largely by older people<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> L.Robin, *Defending the Little Desert* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1998); also demographic statistics of current environmentally-oriented organisations [Appendix 1]

Criterion	Characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social perception of state failure;</li> <li>• Knowledge-based community action;</li> <li>• an ethical foundation of cultural-relativist and socially and environmentally relevant principles specific to areas, communities or issues;</li> <li>• a focus on the present rather than past causal events or future risk possibilities;</li> <li>• a move away from the state-science paradigm to local and indigenous knowledge and place attachment as drivers for appropriate action;</li> <li>• a move away from large-scale programs aimed at changing social behaviours and attitudes;</li> <li>• 'fat-free' environmentalism</li> </ul>	<p>Loss of confidence in government's ability to address environmental issues; evident in electoral trends, public fora and declining influence of environmental NGOs;</p> <p>Identification and characterisation of local problems; participation at local level, (eg. Landcare);</p> <p>Values-based ecological decision making which takes into consideration such factors as local history, indigenous sensitivities and concerns, ecological integrity and intergenerational justice;</p> <p>Pragmatic view of environmental problems that does not make judgments about causes, but acts on their results to solve problems for long-term environmental health;</p> <p>Recognition that the bureaucracy-industry nexus that has failed to adequately address environmental concerns also includes the 'biodiversity industry'<sup>20</sup>. Local communities seek expert advice from independent sources and can tailor that advice according to local specificities;</p> <p>Focus on programs that utilise current environmental awareness and behaviours, and address community concerns rather than global;</p> <p>A pluralistic view of environmentalism that removes fear and guilt, replacing them with action based on social and environmental values.</p>

Table 8.1: Schema of post-political ecology

<sup>20</sup> Term used by Libby Robin, pers.comm., to describe corporate science



The criterion-based schema of a post-political ecology is drawn from the current grassroots environmental movement: a new green world order. It is characterised generally by what Indian writer and activist, Arundhati Roy, describes as 'the dismantling of the Big'<sup>21</sup>. The long-term risks requiring international cooperative action have become separated, theoretically and practically, as well as psychologically, from the direct risks at grassroots level. Ekins details a number of very specific environmental movements around the world, such as the 'Green Belt Movement' in Kenya led by Professor Wangari Maathai<sup>22</sup>, which, like the Snowy Campaign, utilise community skills, local knowledge and place-specific values to achieve social change. The change brought about thus is not the result of bureaucratic programs, often presented as education programs, which use guilt and the fear of crises to effect behavioural and attitudinal change on a socially homogenous scale, but the mobilisation of existing knowledge and attitudes which recognise environmental and social plurality. Political environmentalism, in this respect, may have reached a *fin de siècle* in which localised environmental action ceases to be part of the systemic eco-political machinery and moves to the periphery. As was the case with the Little Desert campaign in the late 1960s and is the case with the Snowy in the early 2000s, there is power in the periphery from an extra-political approach.

#### *Green politics in a post-political construct*

The decline in environmental effectiveness of integrationism has been accompanied by a relative surge in the electoral fortunes of green political parties at the close of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. While there are

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<sup>21</sup> A.Roy "The Greater Common Good", essay in *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (A.Roy) (Bombay: India Book Distributor Ltd., 1999) 9

<sup>22</sup> P.Ekins, *A New World Order: grassroots movements for Global Change* (London & New York: Routledge, 1992) 151

a number of contributory factors to the apparent greening of the liberal democratic electorate, it must be viewed in perspective in respect of liberal capitalism, environmentalism and the current socio-political climate. Within an integrationist contextual framework, situations which, taken in isolation could be regarded as aberrant, are institutional responses to situations or challenges. Blühdorn points to the paradox of the German Greens' position in a governing coalition against the 1984 statement of founding Greens member and activist, Petra Kelly, that the Greens were "working towards establishing a radically different society in which a party like the Greens would no longer be required."<sup>23</sup> The fact that almost two decades later the Greens are governing coalition partners in Germany and their antipodean counterparts are experiencing unprecedented levels of electoral success would indicate either that the radical social transformation envisaged at the outset of green democratisation has not occurred, or, as Blühdorn states:

For those Green Parties which have had a taste of political power, being re-elected has become the main objective taking priority over any ideological consideration.<sup>24</sup>

While the Greens argue that it is only through increasing and maintaining their electoral presence that they can continue to influence the political process<sup>25</sup>, this does not comply with Kelly's aim of voluntary political redundancy. The very concept of a green 'politics', however, is defined by the parameters of liberal capitalism. The fact that a green agenda has been incorporated into mainstream politics, however cynically or expediently that may be, indicates the shift of the greens from the periphery towards the centre, despite, or perhaps because of, statements made from the periphery prior to the process of integration.

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<sup>23</sup> I. Blühdorn, 2001, "Further to Fall? Adverse Conditions for the Survival of the Greens", paper presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions, Grenoble, April 2001

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*

<sup>25</sup> Interviews and discussions with elected Green MPs, former Green candidates and Green Party members elucidated very consistent responses on this point.

It is the post-integrationist movement of the Greens, however, that is at issue in this chapter and is most evident in the changing political role of the Greens in terms of electoral viability. Blühdorn states that since the entry of *Die Grünen* into coalition government with the SPD in 1998, their electoral support at both federal and *länder* levels has been steadily eroding<sup>26</sup>. This, according to Blühdorn, is partly a function of the political necessity of compromise – which is more difficult to avoid from a central position than from the periphery – and partly due to external political factors that are neither specifically Green nor specifically German<sup>27</sup>. While the theory that political compromise is more difficult to avoid from a position of political centrality than from the periphery may be correct, Blühdorn's assertion that the Greens' electoral support is waning has been proved wrong in the event. The German Federal election, held on September 22 2002, saw the SPD-*Die Grünen* coalition narrowly returned to government with an increase in the Greens' vote to 8.4%. This correlates with the situation in Australia where the Australian Greens' representation increased at federal level with the addition of a second senator as a result of the November 2001 election and the election of the Greens' first member of the House of Representatives as a result of the by-election in the formerly safe Labor seat of Cunningham; and the Tasmanian and New Zealand Green parties both having recorded an increase in their votes with consequently greater parliamentary representation in the respective elections both held in July 2002. There are several qualifying points to note regarding this situation, however, in respect of a construction of post-political environmentalism:

- Neither the Tasmanian nor New Zealand Greens are in government, a situation significant in the light of the 1989-91 Tasmanian Labor-Green Accord which saw Green support considerably reduced;

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<sup>26</sup> Blühdorn, 2001 op cit.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

- a decrease in support for the Australian Democrats has correlated with the increase in national support for the Greens indicating consistent rather than increased support for minor or alternative parties<sup>28</sup>;
- specific regional or national issues require policy development which reflects those concerns and this, in turn, affects polling, for example, the NZ Greens based their 2002 campaign heavily on maintaining a moratorium on genetically engineered imports and crops, an issue not relevant in Germany or Australia;
- the approach taken by 'major' parties to traditionally 'green' issues affects Greens' polling and support levels.

Blühdorn questions the need for a Green party in a post-ecologist political paradigm<sup>29</sup>, suggesting that in order to survive politically, the Greens will need to reinvent themselves as a party<sup>30</sup>. A post-political construct of the Greens may accompany significant changes in the perception and addressing of environmental issues. Certainly, since the emergence of a green politics in the late 1970s and early 80s, the role and method of Green parties has changed. An increase in their overall vote has taken them over the 4% threshold for electoral funding in Australian federal and state elections, allowing them to run more expensive, professional and high profile election campaigns. It is arguable whether the Greens running an expensive advertising campaign, in fact, achieves any environmental benefit while their representation remains

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<sup>28</sup> The Morgan poll of August 30, 2002 showed Greens support up 1% to 8% and the Democrats down 1% to 3%. One Nation support has dropped by 0.5% while support for Independents and Others is up 0.5% <http://www.roymorgan.com/polls/2002/3547/>

<sup>29</sup> Blühdorn (1997) and (2001) op cit.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* (2001)

relatively low<sup>31</sup>. In this, the reinvention of the Greens in the two decades of green politics has been from political pressure group to fully-fledged political party and in so doing, 'bled' support from the traditional parties but compromised the antiestablishment basis of their original principles.

The role of the Greens as an electoral vehicle for the 'protest' vote is unreliable and unsustainable in terms of creating a long-term political support base. The somewhat ambivalent position of the Labor Party on the issue of refugees at the 2001 Federal election is largely credited, certainly among the Greens themselves and the popular view [indicated in the cartoon, Appendix 2] with the 2.34% increase in the Greens' vote from 2.62% in 1998 to 4.96% in 2001, while the ALP (primary) vote fell by almost precisely the same percentage margin<sup>32</sup>. While there is a role for minor parties and protest parties in the democratic system, the question must be posed as to whether this is a role the Greens wish to fill indefinitely and if so, what kinds of protests do they wish to record? Environmental issues were not a policy feature during the 2001 Federal election campaign, focused, as it was, on issues of national security. The Greens, therefore, gained ground by taking a very strong opposing line to the Government's and Opposition's approach to refugees and the US war on terrorism. Issues of peace and nonviolence, of course, are part of the Green platform and as such it is entirely right that the Greens' policy on such matters should be made known to the electorate during an election campaign. However, as a protest party, they can only be assured of support on specific 'protest' issues for as long as those issues remain in the public consciousness through continued media attention, which is largely poll-driven and

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<sup>31</sup> N.Economou, "Green performance in Australian federal elections: Much ado about nothing?", paper presented at the Australian Political Studies Association Conference, Canberra, October 2002. Also, despite the addition of one senator in the current parliamentary term the Greens do not hold the balance of power in the Senate. There are currently 2 Greens in the NSW Upper House, 5 in the WA Upper House (with balance of power) and 4 in the Tasmanian Lower House.

<sup>32</sup> Figures from Australian Electoral Commission <http://www.aec.gov.au/>

determined by the policy agendas of the major parties. That is, protest parties gain negative support in the form of voter reaction against major parties rather than positive support for their own political agenda.

In many respects, the radical social changes foreshadowed by Petra Kelly in 1984 have taken place. The world in 2002 is far more conscious of the environmental effects of industry and development than in 1984, certain ecological behaviours have become internalised at individual and community level and global long-term environmental issues are the subject of international fora. The 'greening of industry' has identified:

... 'eco-efficiency' as a new driving force for industrial progress ...  
[and introduced] 'natural capitalism' in which economic activity can  
be adapted to ecological laws and principles.<sup>33</sup>

Industrial and urban development in liberal-democratic capitalist nations requires consideration to its environmental effects and processes exist to ensure consultation across the range of community, industry and government stakeholders. Environmental education is part of school curricula across the developed world, with many governments offering funding and other incentives for schools to become 'sustainable' in such areas as waste reduction and energy consumption<sup>34</sup>. The long-term benefit of such programs, from the perspective of green political thought, is the change that occurs in collective social attitudes and behaviour through educating the young in practical environmental issues<sup>35</sup>. The end of the Cold War saw the scaling down of nuclear arsenals, and several countries are introducing measures to phase out nuclear power. 'Green jobs' are being created through the increase of

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<sup>33</sup> A.Jamison, 2001, "Environmentalism in an Entrepreneurial Age: Reflections on the Greening of Industry Network", *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning* Vol3, No.1, pp.1-13

<sup>34</sup> S.Beavis & R.Tennant-Wood, 2001, "Waste minimisation in schools: mapping successful pathways", Conference proceedings of *Waste Educate 2001: Maintaining the Momentum* Conference, Brisbane, November 2001, pp.33-37

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

sustainable technologies and 'green' power is an option for many energy consumers.

The term 'green' itself and its political and social connotations have become mainstreamed to the point where 'green' is considered a positive attribute for businesses and activities and a majority of people consider themselves 'green' in at least some facets of their lives. A Roy Morgan Poll conducted in June, 2000 posed the question, "Do you consider yourself 'a bit of a greenie' at heart?": 55% of respondents answered in the affirmative, 26% said no, while 19% were uncommitted. When asked if they always try to recycle everything, 79% said yes, including 68% of those who disagree that they would consider themselves a 'bit of a greenie'.<sup>36</sup> In terms of the national approach to the environment, 76.6% of respondents to an on-line poll on August 28 2002 believed that Australia should do more for the environment<sup>37</sup>. These developments have all taken place since, and most likely as a result of, the entry of Green parties into the political process.

Despite this social and political change towards a green consciousness, the Greens do not consider that there is no longer a requirement for them to exist as a political party and certainly, there is no indication that the environmental issues of two decades ago have been fully resolved. Green parties worldwide continue to contest elections and their presence in the political process indicates an acceptance of both the party and their policies as a valid and viable alternative to major parties. Greens in elected positions seek reelection through exactly the same processes as their political opponents and with the same aims. Gaining sufficient votes to reach the threshold for electoral funding has become an important goal in Green campaigns in order to ensure party growth and legitimise future campaigns. Far from Petra Kelly's vision of the 'anti-party

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<sup>36</sup> Roy Morgan Polls, *The Bulletin*, June 13 2000,  
<http://www.roymorgan.com.au/polls/2000/3309>

<sup>37</sup> News.com "Have your say!" opinion poll  
<http://www.news.com.au/poll/display/1,7111,^^3^1^0,00.html>;

party' that could disband once social change had been effected, the Greens have become a mainstream political party with very similar aims and methodology to their opponents.

Green democratisation and integrationism through measures such as ecological modernisation and environmental institutionalisation have effected widespread social change in respect of the environment, but have also removed Green parties from their original core concern, the environment, towards concerns for political survival. In so doing, the 'green' agenda has, of political necessity, broadened to encompass areas of economic and social concern, which, while commensurate with environmentalism as a fundamental left wing political concern, is nonetheless not immediately communicable in terms of grassroots environmentalism. The role of Green parties at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, based on the Australian 2001 Federal election and the 2002 New Zealand and Tasmanian elections and the Cunningham by-election, is to fill the gap left by the rightwards shift of social democrat parties. The early green rhetoric of being 'neither left nor right' has been superseded by the political opportunity, indeed the necessity, to fill that left-wing gap.

Rather than the more 'traditional' issues associated with environmental groups, issues such as the rise of 'new right' and populist parties, domestic politics and elections, international action on global warming, population, refugees and multiculturalism and opposition to biotechnology in agricultural development have emerged as major issues of concern to members and supporters of The Greens in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century [see Figure 8.1]. The high priority given to issues of domestic politics and elections, which includes the performance of particular politicians and parties, Australian government reaction to certain issues, election campaign issues, Greens candidates and party policy, the performance of parties or governments on green issues, media reporting of specific issues and government-media relationships indicates that the old green guard has yielded to the more technical matters of electoral politics within the liberal democratic system. Interestingly, while the survey



period included September 11 2001 and its aftermath, neither the attacks on the World Trade Centre nor the American military reaction figured prominently as discussion points on either of the lists surveyed. There may be any number of reasons for this, but worth noting in the context of early green movement ideology, is that while anti-war rallies were being held around the country, the Greens, at least in this discussion forum, remained largely silent. Also interesting in the broader context was that discussion concerning the WSSD in Johannesburg was more centred on the 'Green' political presence and the Australian government's refusal to include Greens Senator Bob Brown in their delegation than the issues and outcomes of the Summit itself.

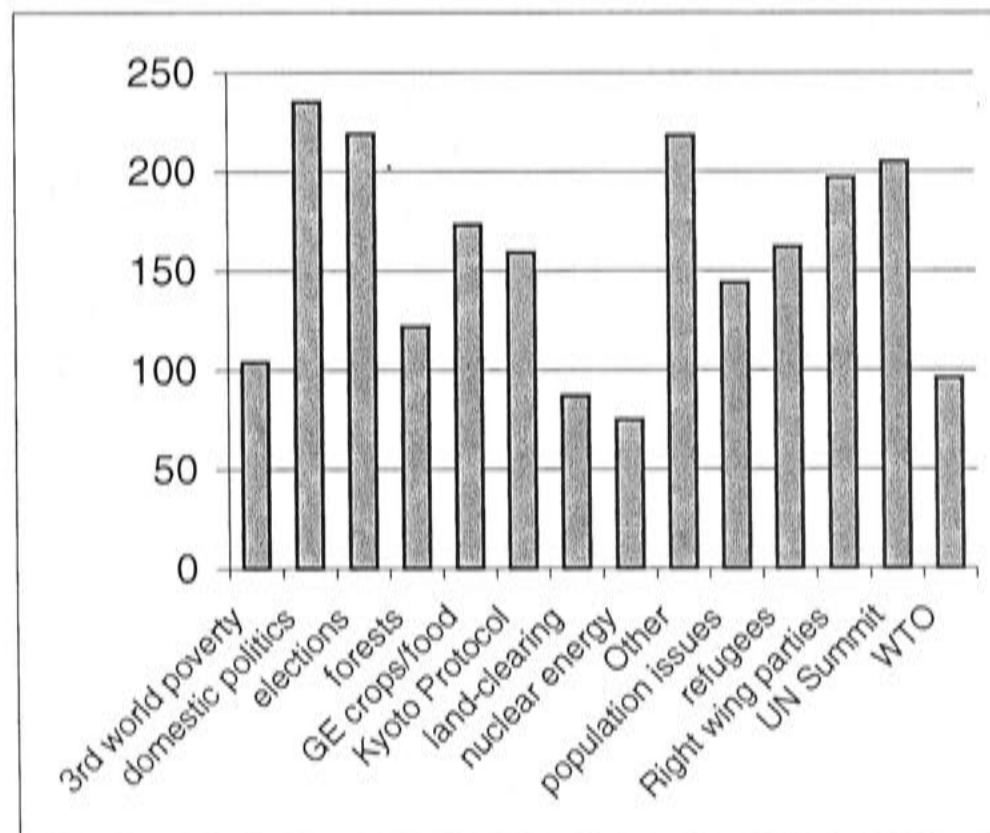


Figure 8.2: Issues raised in Greens electronic discussion lists 2000-2002<sup>38</sup>

In much the same way as post-materialism has been recast as neo-materialism, the Greens as a political party have reflected this change in their own party operations and policy. The role of the Greens in a post-political

<sup>38</sup> Data collated from a survey of the issues raised as discussion points and election issues from a total of 2240 emails from April 2000 to August 2002 on the Greens-activist and Greens-global email lists administered by the Australian Greens. Email postings were recorded from a total of 158 different subscribers. Issues described as 'other' include domestic violence, Indigenous issues, urban development, war and terrorism, feminist issues and general information about activities, publications etc. <http://us.altnews.com.au/greens/>

construct of ecology may be possible, as Blühdorn states regarding the German Greens<sup>39</sup>, only if the Greens can redefine themselves in a more mainstream political mould, with the inevitable result that much of their original 'green' ideology will be compromised. Both the conundrum and the strength of green politics is perhaps best expressed by the election poster used during the German election by *Die Grünen* leader and German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, showing a somewhat perplexed-looking Fischer, chin resting in hands, with the slogan, *Außen Minister, innen grün* (Outside Minister, inside green) – a slogan reminiscent of the 'watermelon green' (outside green, inside red) criticisms levelled at the Greens by conservative political opponents. The Australasian situation is somewhat less crucial for the Greens with less at stake in terms of political power and considerable redefinition having been accomplished through a gradual and fluid process of political evolution. Few would argue that the Greens in 2002 are a far different party from the 1972 United Tasmania Group in terms of aims, ideology or organisation. While the core philosophy has remained, the political methodology has become more oriented to the liberal democratic system within which they operate in much the same fashion as mainstream political parties.

*Beyond the political construct of nature: return to Arcadia*

The preservationist approach to environmentalism was characterised by an arcadian concept of the environment: a romanticised view of nature epitomised by the English parson and naturalist, Gilbert White, and described by Worster as the advocacy of :

... a simple, humble life for man with the aim of restoring him to a peaceful coexistence with other organisms.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Blühdorn, (2001) op cit.

<sup>40</sup> D.Worster, *Nature's Economy* Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 2

Following White was Thoreau, Whitman, Emerson, Muir and then Leopold, all of whom looked to nature and humankind's relationship with it in terms of preserving wilderness for the spiritual and cultural heritage of future generations:

... wilderness [was] an adversary to the pioneer. But to the laborer in repose, able for the moment to cast a philosophical eye on his world, that same raw stuff is something to be loved and cherished, because it gives definition and meaning to his life. This is a plea for the preservation of some tag-ends of wilderness ... for the edification of those who may one day wish to see, feel, or study the origins of their cultural inheritance.<sup>41</sup>

The construction of nature as a 'cultural inheritance' is problematic in the burden of human values it places upon the natural environment.

The Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Scheme was conceived out of human values and itself is regarded as a 'cultural inheritance'. The ambitious engineering project that would harness the fast-flowing waters of the Snowy and Eucumbene Rivers to generate hydro electricity and, more importantly, provide a reliable water source for the dry farming lands to the west bringing "stability and security to these fertile areas, allowing them to prosper and develop"<sup>42</sup>, was only part of the story. The scheme recruited thousands of workers, mainly from post-War Europe, and placed them in a volatile melting pot of nationalities, hard and dangerous work, extreme conditions and a social climate of racial intolerance and conservative values. Stories of racially-motivated violence and lawlessness in the isolated construction camps and an

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<sup>41</sup> A. Leopold, "Wilderness", in *A Sand County Almanac* Special Commemorative Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 188

<sup>42</sup> "Water – A Journey Westward", Snowy Hydro website, 2002  
<http://www.snowyhydro.com.au/corporate/water.cfm>

alarming high worksite death toll<sup>43</sup> are balanced against the positive social aspects of the project, reflected in the songs, poetry and stories that have lent legendary status to the project and its workers. While the violence and lawlessness are often painted in the romantic hues of the frontier spirit, and the litany of deaths and injuries are glossed over as testament to the toughness of the workers, socially, the Snowy Scheme was a brave experiment that worked. The Snowy Hydro remains the largest single employer in the shires of Snowy River and Cooma-Monaro<sup>44</sup>. Many former workers on the scheme remained in the district long after their employment ended, giving the region a multicultural heritage of which it is justifiably proud and which Cooma commemorates with a permanent display of the flags of all the nations represented by workers as the centrepiece of the town. To suggest that the scheme was ill-conceived, ecologically unsustainable or badly planned is tantamount to spitting on the Man from Snowy River: and therein lies the problem.

The fictitious (although there are many claims to his validity) Man from Snowy River, a legendary horseman without peer, dwelt among the snowgums and granite pinnacles of the alpine 'high country', beside the untamed waters of the Snowy River. A.B. Paterson's best-known character is immortalised in the Snowy River region through art, monuments, place names and high country equestrian events which test the skills of the best local horseriders. An annual 'Man From Snowy River' Award is presented to a local resident who best exemplifies the 'spirit' of the Man, and a 'Stripling' award for a junior Man<sup>45</sup>. Former winners of the Man Award include brothers Mick and Dave Pendergast, both now octogenarians, direct descendants of original settlers in the district,

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<sup>43</sup> Officially, the death toll is 124 over the 25 years of the project, but these statistics were not compiled until 1981 and do not include several multiple fatalities, nor fatalities that occurred on the roads around the project, often involving heavy vehicles, icy conditions, sheer drops and several lives. The police station in Khancoban alone processed 130 coronial inquests and that was only one of many stations throughout the region.

<sup>44</sup> Local employment information from shire councils

<sup>45</sup> Both awards can be, and have been, presented to women/girls who exemplify the generic 'Man'.

born and bred as mountain cattlemen who left the Snowy River only once in their lives when they enlisted to serve in World War II. The Pendergast brothers (there were seven of them, four still living) and their father, uncles and grandfather before them, held high country summer grazing leases in what is now the Kosciuszko National Park. Their hand-blazed tracks can still be followed through the sub-treeline scrub in the Thredbo Valley, up through the Cascades, the Diggings and Dead Horse Gap, and around the south and west faces of Mt Kosciuszko. Old hand-hewn fenceposts, stone chimneys and rusty barbed wire in isolated pockets of the national park serve as reminders that the perceived wilderness of the high country is a historical abstraction.

The Dalgety district has its own local legends, some of whom, like the Pendergast brothers, grazed the high country before the gazettal of the national park, but most are post-War soldier settlers or the descendants of selectors who settled the Snowy River valley south from Jindabyne, through Dalgety and down towards the Victorian border. In mounting a campaign to restore the river, the local residents removed all associations of 'cultural inheritance' from the river. Jo Garland has deliberately avoided using the word 'icon' to describe the river: "I don't like using that word – too many associations that aren't relevant."<sup>46</sup> Instead, she shows photos of the river at Dalgety before the Jindabyne dam and the same place in 2001, and points to examples of streambank erosion, stagnation, infestations of noxious weeds and channel siltation, all of which have resulted from the reduced flow of the river. With an impressive knowledge of river ecology gained from a decade of talking to scientists, ecologists and natural resource planners and reading environmental impact statements and technical reports, Jo explains precisely why 28% is the minimum flow required to restore the river to health and the optimum level for maintenance of the environmental flow. Compared to the language used by the politicians and the organisations lobbying for both the irrigators and

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<sup>46</sup> Interview with Jo Garland, Dalgety, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2002, transcript in possession of author

environmental organisations, which has been either liberal with references to history and legends or heavy with economic or technical jargon, the language used by the Dalgety and District Community Association has been simple, factual and direct.

The pollies and the experts from the Snowy [Hydro Authority] would come down here and talk [at a high level] about economics and water savings – but that’s their problem and it was just putting us off the track. We just kept reminding ourselves, what is important? The river is important. That’s all. It’s the river. We can’t solve their problems on the Murray, we can only deal with our own problem – and that’s the Snowy.<sup>47</sup>

The approach taken by the Dalgety community in their campaign to save the Snowy is in many ways the epitome of arcadian environmentalism, but why was it successful in an era of integrated environmental policy instruments and a high level of social consciousness of environmental issues? The Dalgety community and the Snowy River Shire Council have no doubt that had it not been for the sheer doggedness of the campaign, the corporatisation process of the Snowy Hydro would have been completed by the mid-1990s and the Snowy River would have died, regardless of its cultural heritage and iconic status. Certainly the river’s national significance helped in raising the wider public awareness of the issue and in taking the campaign beyond the local area, but it was not the campaign appearances by actors Tom Burlinson and Jack Thompson, or the “Snowy River Must Flow Again” bumper stickers on cars in Sydney and Melbourne that ultimately won the agreement to 28% environmental flow. The deciding factor was the absolute refusal of the local community to accept defeat in 1998 and agree to the 15% compromise that the policy makers believed was the solution to both the environmental and economic issues.

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<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

The irrigators and the South Australian government view the decision to restore the 28% environmental flow to the Snowy as the (Labor) governments of Victoria and New South Wales bowing to local pressure for the sake of votes on the eastern seaboard while ignoring that the real environmental problem lies in the Murray. Former (Liberal) South Australian Premier, John Olsen, believes there is an unbalanced preoccupation with the Snowy:

The historic flow down the Snowy is 60 percent, the historic flow down the Murray is 20 percent. Let's get our priorities right. And the Man from Snowy River and the Old Regret horse and the Museum is not on the Snowy it's on the River Murray, Corryong, yet this folklore that's developed on the eastern seaboard ignores the Murray.<sup>48</sup>

While a simmering feud persists between the Snowy River and Towong Shire Councils over which jurisdiction has rightful 'ownership' of the legend on a geographical and commercial basis, this simply indicates the level of obfuscation that occurs when icons and legends are used as a basis for environmental planning.

Murray Valley irrigators have also been angered by what they see as saving one river at the expense of another despite assurances that:

... they will not be disadvantaged and all the water will come from efficiency savings as irrigation infrastructure is upgraded through pipelining, major engineering works and improved maintenance of the water distribution system.<sup>49</sup>

They also have substantial cultural heritage on their side in the form of the Federal government's 1940s commitment to drought-proof the fertile land to the west of the Australian Alps by diverting the Snowy's flow, and the legacy of two centuries of Australian agricultural production. Politically represented by the National Party, the irrigators opposed the corporatisation of the Snowy

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<sup>48</sup> Olsen quoted in Fullerton, *Watershed* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2001) 189

<sup>49</sup> I. Paterson, "Water gates open into Snowy River", *The Land*, Thursday, August 29, 2002 p.6

Hydro and have invested considerable resources and energy through their lobby groups in fighting against the campaign to restore the environmental flow to the Snowy River. National Party President Helen Dickie believes that for as long as the Commonwealth retained ownership of the Scheme they were obliged to honour Chifley's commitment to the farmers, while a corporatised Snowy Hydro would not be under the same obligation<sup>50</sup>. On the morning the Mowamba aqueduct was turned off in the first stage of restoring the Snowy, a large contingent of Murray Valley irrigators rolled into Jindabyne "with 20 tonnes of irrigated lucerne hay to voice their frustration at the water taken from full Snowy Hydro Scheme catchment dams rather than from the promised savings in the water storage system."<sup>51</sup> The implicit question is whether Australia's rural and agricultural heritage, reliant on water for its viability, should have precedence over Australia's cultural and social heritage and if so, by what criteria is this determined? Both sides, I would suggest, could mount strong cases for the primacy of their legacies but ultimately, there can be no definitive answer.

The national environmental organisations have not been major players in the Snowy campaign. While they have occasionally provided a credible and nationally recognisable voice to the issue, it has been local action, culminating in the election of Victorian Independent MP, Craig Ingram in the formerly safe National Party seat of East Gippsland, on a single-issue platform of saving the Snowy that finally achieved the goal of an agreement to restore the environmental flow. Fullerton comments that the Snowy is not the only river in Australia to have suffered severe degradation from development, but it is the only one that has been saved.

One of the loudest messages from [the Snowy's] victory is the power of public opinion. Other rivers which have been 'brutalised' in this

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<sup>50</sup> Fullerton, op cit. 189

<sup>51</sup> L.Bull, "A 'snow job' says Murray, *The Land*, Thursday August 29, 2002, p.6



country go unnoticed. The romance of the Snowy has been its saviour, as Victorian Premier Steve Bracks demonstrated. 'To leave behind a legacy of the Snowy River running again for future generations is something I am very proud of.'<sup>52</sup>

Environmentalist, rock star, former Senate candidate for the Nuclear Disarmament Party and President of the Australian Conservation Foundation, Peter Garrett, also drew on cultural heritage to press the point of saving the Snowy:

It is important the Snowy is not held hostage to government failings on allocations, because it would be a tragedy if the beginnings of this unique decision on one of Australia's iconic rivers was derailed.<sup>53</sup>

What Fullerton, Bracks and Garrett, however, failed to recognise is the single basic grassroots element: the strength of the campaign was not in the romance, the legend or the legacy to future generations. The strength of the campaign was in its temporal and spatial immediacy. The river's condition *today* and *here* were the motivating factors behind the Dalgety community's campaign. Political process, while an essential component of the equation in reaching an end result, has not driven the locals and as recognisable political pressure groups, neither have the environmental organisations.

Essentially the presence of the ACF and the National Conservation Council on the campaign implied a 'green movement' political ideology that was not helpful to the local community groups when arguing their case to governments, farmers' lobby groups and industry from the local perspective. The Snowy River Shire is politically and socially conservative and 'greenies' are generally regarded as socially marginal at best and obstructive to progress at worst. Over the decade of the campaign the proponents dealt with governments and individual politicians from both sides of the party-political divide and remained consistent in their extra-political approach, appealing not to specific political

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<sup>52</sup> Fullerton, op cit.189

<sup>53</sup> Garrett quoted in *ibid.* 188

ideology or 'playing off' one side against the other, but arguing a case for the ecology of the river and its importance to the communities and stakeholders.

A post-political ecology, then, could represent a return to an arcadian culture of ecological restoration<sup>54</sup> characterised by local communities taking responsibility for, in both a metaphorical and literal sense, their own backyards. In contrast to the environmental movement's philosophy of 'think globally, act locally', which encouraged local campaigns that would ultimately have a positive effect on 'big picture' environmental issues, arcadian environmentalism thinks locally and acts locally. That this, may, ultimately have a positive 'big picture' effect is not a driving factor. The movement ideology of working for the greater good is not a priority; rather emphasised are the simpler values relating to what Worster describes as "a self-contained community with a deeply rooted sense of identity"<sup>55</sup>, and Light defines as "an effort to restore an important part of the human relationship with nonhuman nature."<sup>56</sup> This movement towards a post-political environmentalism is evident in a number of ways drawing on the criteria outlined in Table 8.1:

- the 'Decade of Landcare' announced in Australia by Prime Minister Hawke in 1989 signalled the beginning of a governmental shift away from directly addressing localised environmental issues, placing their solutions, officially, in the hands of communities led by experts;
- measurable loss of social confidence in the government's ability to solve environmental problems as indicated in polls and through the popular media;
- the 'corporatisation' of the large environmental organisations whereby they are no longer seen to represent the interests of grassroots environmentalists but are seen as quasi-political organisations;

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<sup>54</sup> A.Light, "Ecological Restoration and the Culture of Nature: A Pragmatic Perspective", in Gobster and Hull (eds), *Restoring Nature* (Washington DC: Island Press, 2000)

<sup>55</sup> Worster, op cit. 20

<sup>56</sup> Light, op cit. 49

- the removal of political ideology from environmental campaigns and the rise of community values.

While the campaign to save the Snowy must rank as one of the landmark battles in Australian environmental history, the fundamental difference that separates it from the other landmark campaigns such as Lake Pedder, Fraser Island and the Franklin underlines the change in direction of environmentalism. Lake Pedder, Fraser Island and the Franklin were all campaigns in opposition to development. The Tasmanian government policy of hydro-industrialisation and the Queensland government's support for sandmining galvanised national environmental campaigns that polarised the community and set 'environmentalists' against government and industry. The unsuccessful Lake Pedder campaign resulted in the birth of a political movement, and the Fraser Island and Franklin campaigns, backed by the national environmental organisations succeeded after the Federal government used its external powers under World Heritage agreements<sup>57</sup> to overturn state government decisions. The Snowy campaign, while of national significance and recognition, was never opposed to anything. On the contrary, the Dalgety community used the proposed corporatisation of the Snowy Hydro as leverage to achieve their goal. Nor were the proponents of the campaign opposed to the Murray catchment irrigators. Although they believed that, given the degraded state of the Snowy downstream of Jindabyne Dam, flood irrigation for rice fields in the Murray-Darling Basin was profligate, at no point did they suggest that the irrigators' right to water should be revoked and they supported the proposed measure of water savings. The Snowy campaign, unlike its predecessors, did not seek to *stop* anything, only to *change* something.

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<sup>57</sup> Robin, op cit.

*Does politics matter?*

At the outset I posed two questions: what has happened to the environment movement?, and does politics matter? The suggestion of a post-political ecology does not imply a post-political construct of society. It does, however, pose a challenge to the political order of environmentalism. Green democratisation and integrationism, as well as absorbing environmental policy into the mainstream political agenda, also absorbed the green movement represented by the major environmental organisations. Greenpeace, the ACF, the Sierra Club and The Wilderness Society are highly structured corporate and political actors<sup>58</sup>. Even the more radical Earth First!, based on deep ecological principles of 'eco-resistance' and holding to a more anarchic political view, is a streamlined quasi-political organisation. Spokespeople for these organisations are, in many cases, as well-recognised as politicians and the groups themselves represent a certain social 'electorate'. The methodology of environmental organisations, however, is still that of opposition to government or industry and large-scale issues. The Wilderness Society is currently engaged in campaigns opposing commercial development of Christmas Island and landclearing in Queensland<sup>59</sup>, while Greenpeace Australia is engaged in several campaigns against, variously, the proposed new nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights in Sydney, genetically modified crops, the Federal government's lifting of a port ban on Japanese bluefin tuna trading and the non-ratification of the Kyoto Protocol<sup>60</sup>. Do these organisations comprise the environment movement?

In early September 2002 a tanker carrying toxic chemicals ran aground close to the shoreline off the east coast of South Africa. Within five days it was burning and in danger of breaking up, its spill having become an 11 kilometre-long oil slick along the coastline endangering the World Heritage listed Saint

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<sup>58</sup> A. Jamison, *The Making of Green Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 165

<sup>59</sup> The Wilderness Society website, <http://www.wilderness.org.au/> 14<sup>th</sup> September 2002

<sup>60</sup> Greenpeace Australia Pacific website, <http://www.greenpeace.org.au/> 14<sup>th</sup> September 14, 2002

Lucia Wetland Park. News reports at the time stated that 'environmentalists' were working to block the mouth of the River Umfolozi with sand in an attempt to contain the oil spill and prevent it from affecting the wetland. The environmentalists were using bulldozers and other heavy equipment to shift sand into the river mouth under the direction of a 'disaster management official'<sup>61</sup>. None of the major environmental organisations issued a statement concerning the incident or its potential ecological effects. An exhaustive search of the websites and press releases of the major international environment organisations failed to find reference to the incident or its potential disastrous effects on the wetland ecology. Media releases from Greenpeace International, Friends of the Earth, World Wildlife Fund and Earth First! Worldwide all dealt exclusively with specific campaigns being run by those organisations, including abseiling down the statue of Christ the Redeemer in Rio to protest the failure of WSSD, and filing a lawsuit against the US government on behalf of victims of global warming. Is the environment movement in the River Umfolozi trying to stop a toxic tide or in court trying to prove a point?

It has been the underlying theme of this thesis that the environment movement, as conceived in the 1960s and 70s and acted upon through the 1980s, has come to a crossroads in its development. The movement succeeded in placing the environment in a political context but in so doing became politicised itself. This shift created a vacuum at the level of local environmental issues that the major organisations are unwilling to adopt as campaigns and which are not included in government environmental policy due to their specific and localised nature. The vacuum has been filled by community groups and grassroots organisations based not on the overarching principles of the Green movement, but on the arcadian environmental values of reconnecting community with

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<sup>61</sup> News reports from BBC news online <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2255873.stm> and ABC news online <http://abc.net.au/news/justin/nat/newsnat-15sep2002-33.htm>

nature and local environmental stewardship. From this, and illustrated by the Snowy example, environmentalism may be turning towards a constructionism: an ecological approach that operates outside institutional political process through a constructive view of the relationships between society, nature and the government-industry nexus and seeks to construct a positive role for community in the use, stewardship and management of natural resources. This becomes, then, a reconstruction of the type of social action evident during the era of social movements:

... many social movements of the past, much like the environmental movements of our time, have provided a seedbed, or alternative public space, for the articulation of utopian "knowledge interests" that have then been translated into more socially acceptable forms of knowledge-making ... Social movements, that is, have periodically served as important contexts for the reconstitution of knowledge.<sup>62</sup>

The role of politics, including Green politics, in a post-political construct of nature is not irrelevant in terms of the relationship between the environmental organisations and government-industry. However, where the environment movement and the major organisations view government and the government-industry nexus as part of the problem, constructionism sees government and industry as part of a solution. Government is able to provide the financial resources and the authority necessary to enable local communities to address environmental problems.

In terms of the global environmental crisis, this does not necessarily make for an optimistic outlook. While local communities are restoring rivers, revegetating coastal dunes, rehabilitating agricultural soils and creating urban wetlands, governments, driven by economic growth and industry, continue to equivocate over climate change, support resource extractive industries, generate waste and use the environment as a bargaining chip in trade negotiations.

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<sup>62</sup> Jamison, *op cit*, 46

Where the environmental 'big picture' is being addressed, it is through policy that ensures a measurable economic or electoral benefit and while this approach is opposed by the major environmental organisations, a resultant impasse continues to thwart positive environmental action. Small-scale, localised environmental management and stewardship, however, of the type illustrated by the case study, even where dependent upon political patronage, is growing<sup>63</sup>. It is likely to be successful in this respect because:

- taken on an issue-by-issue basis small-scale environmentalism is too small to present a major threat to the politico-economic dominance of the government-industry nexus;
- it allows governments to divest themselves of responsibility for environmental issues where local communities are taking responsibility;
- it facilitates negotiations which provide the so-called 'win-win' situations governments require for their continued legitimacy;
- the identification of local environmental problems and taking grassroots action in addressing them empowers local communities and reconnects communities with the environment;
- political patronage, usually in the form of financial resources or access to information or expert advice, allows governments to support environmental policy and community wishes.

To local and small-scale environmentalists, represented by a constructionist and extra-political approach, 'politics' is thus often regarded largely as an obstacle to be manoeuvred around or used constructively in order to achieve a desired outcome. The direction of environmentalism, on current evidence and illustrated by the Snowy campaign, appears to be changing from a view of the

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<sup>63</sup> A.Carr *Grassroots and Green Tape* (The Federation Press, Annandale, 2001); E.Weber *Bringing Society Back In* (MIT Press, Cambridge Mass. 2002); P.Gobster & B.Hull (eds) *Restoring Nature* (Island Press, Washington, 2000); D.McKenzie-Mohr & W.Smith, *Fostering Sustainable Behavior* (New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island BC, 1999), F.Fischer *Citizens, Experts and the Environment* (Duke University Press, Durham. 2000)

environment as integrated policy instrument, to ecology as community interest. This is characterised by small-scale sustainability and ecological restoration juxtaposed against a global climate of continued ecological exploitation in the form of corporate governance and environmental and social injustices. It may be that amoral management of the environment has created a park full of dinosaurs that are on the verge of escape.



## Conclusion

### Issues and agendas: what has happened to environmentalism?

*... I warrant he'll be with us when he's wanted at the end*

*For both his horse and he are mountain bred.*

On October 11<sup>th</sup> 2002 the Australian forest industry launched the Australian Forestry Standard (AFS). Negotiated and written by Standards Australia and endorsed by federal and state forestry ministers, the timber industry and the unions, the industry standard is aimed at ensuring sustainable forest management practices across all areas of the industry through AFS certification of products, applying to both locally grown and imported timber. Green groups were quick to condemn the standard, claiming that it would not be internationally credible. Speaking on behalf of World Wide Fund for Nature Australia, spokesperson Michael Rae stated that:

It doesn't pass the test in Brazil and the developing world, so how this government system expects that the market's going to stomach it happening in a developed country like Australia is laughable.<sup>1</sup>

Two days before the launch of the AFS, the Executive Director of the National Association of Forest Industries, Kate Carnell, told me that as part of the Standards Australia process, representatives of environmental organisations were required to be part of negotiations to ensure full and transparent consultation across all sectors of government, industry and community. "The NGOs walked away a month ago", she said. "They simply refused to negotiate. They say the structure of their organisations doesn't allow for them to negotiate, but if that's the case, what's the point of having the organisations? How can you possibly arrive at the best possible environmental outcome if the NGOs won't negotiate?"<sup>2</sup> While Carnell's interest is in promoting the industry she

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<sup>1</sup> M.Rae, quoted in "Forestry standard a rubber stamp: green groups", *Canberra Times*, Saturday, October 12 2002, 13

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Kate Carnell, October 9<sup>th</sup> 2002, transcript in possession of author

represents as sustainable and environmentally sound, her frustration at losing the input of the NGOs from the standards negotiation process was evident and, from the point of view of gaining the support of the 'green' sector of the community, justifiable.

The environment movement, represented by these NGOs, in refusing to negotiate with the forestry industry, government and trade unions on the design and delivery of a national industry standard, has effectively denied itself any positive input into the future sustainable management and environmental impact of an industry with a reputation for unsustainable practices. Certainly, from the point of view of the environment movement, the industry standard may only be window-dressing an industry long opposed by the greens for its ecologically destructive practices, but by remaining outside negotiations, the role of the NGOs is relegated to one of negative and reactive media statements. The industry perception, summed up by Carnell, is that the environment movement no longer has an environmental agenda. According to Carnell, the industry is keen to work towards the best possible environmental outcome, not only for the longevity of the industry itself but also, and crucially, because being 'green' makes good business sense.

The environment movement has also been noticeably absent from discussions regarding plans to 'drought-proof' Australia. In an ambitious plan with an alarmingly familiar ring, various media and corporate leaders announced financial support for a plan to turn Australia's northern rivers inland, thus providing water for the arid interior in times of drought. The plan has been dismissed by the 'Wentworth Group' of leading scientists as unrealistic, but cautiously welcomed by the Prime Minister and federal Minister for Agriculture as a possible alternative that would not be ruled out, but with a qualification by the Prime Minister that "you have to deal in reality and not deal

in things that are unachievable.”<sup>3</sup> While state and federal government ministers met with the instigators of the corporate-based Farmhand Drought Relief fund, media figures and scientists to discuss options for more efficient management of water resources, the green NGOs have remained apparently silent. Ultimately, the course of action the government decides to take will determine the position of the environmental organisations. Given the precedent set by the Snowy campaign, that direction may well simply be to support the grassroots local environmental campaigns.

Kate Carnell half-seriously suggests that the best way to arrive at sound environmental outcomes through negotiation may be to set up an environmental organisation for the sole purpose of negotiating between the NGOs and industry<sup>4</sup>. Carnell, as an industry leader, is well aware of the need to include environmental concerns as part of future industry development, but perceives that a vacuum exists between the government-industry level and the grassroots level while the environmental NGOs have moved out of the picture. Green movement activists may still stage blockades in forests and chain themselves to logging equipment, but such acts are ultimately futile against the weight of endorsed industry standards that claim long-term economic and ecological sustainability. A long-time environmental activist reluctantly agreed: “The grassroots [green] movement is still operating in the same way we were in the 70s. Everything else has moved on, but we haven’t. What worked in Terania simply isn’t going to work in the [South East forests] now, but what else is there?”<sup>5</sup>

The Snowy campaign does not represent ‘proof’ that environmentalism is heading in a new direction, nor has it been presented here as a unique and ground-breaking method of environmental management. What it does

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<sup>3</sup> John Howard quoted in Martin, “Support for water plan”, *The Australian Financial Review*, October 13<sup>th</sup> 2002, 2

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Kate Carnell, October 9<sup>th</sup> 2002

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Kristy Benecke and Anton, August 13<sup>th</sup> 2002, transcript in possession of author

illustrate is a weakening of the broad environmental movement and institutionalised green politics within the established political system and the growing strength and popularity of extra-political, independent, local community environmental action. While the environmental movement has made much ground over the past three decades, its current political position is limiting its ability to address issues of local concern without recourse to political ideology or process. In this period of change, localised campaigns such as the Snowy are looking to the examples set by the early campaigns such as Little Desert and Kelly's Bush, and are gaining importance as vehicles for environmental action, building, crucially, upon the strengths and gains of the movement that succeeded the early campaigns.

The Dalgety and District Community Association, meanwhile, are not resting on their laurels. The increase in flow down the Snowy from the Mowamba aqueduct has made a difference, but "the job is not yet done and we will be following progress very closely. We are optimistic that the governments will deliver on time."<sup>6</sup> On Australia Day 2002 the Snowy River Shire Council recognised the contribution made by the DDCA to the local community by presenting them with the annual award for the Community Organisation of the Year. In accepting the award President of the DDCA, Jo Garland, was typically modest and low-key, giving credit to past president Paul Leete and past and present members of the committee, including two long-time Dalgety residents who had died in recent years, and insisting that the job would not be over until there was 28% environmental flow in the river. While the outlook for environmentalism is unclear, the future ecological health of the Snowy River has been sealed through extra-political action and political authority.

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<sup>6</sup> Jo Garland, from Dalgety and District Community Association website, <http://www.ddca.asn.au>

**Appendix 1**  
**Environment group demographics**

	Dalgety & District Community Association	The ACT Greens	Upper Snowy Landcare
Total membership at June 2002	87	226	300*
Male	32	102	50%*
Female	55	124	50%*
Average age (group)	45-55	40-45	45-55
Major occupation (categories)	Farming; business	Professional; public sector; student	Farming

\* Figures for Upper Snowy are not exact as membership can vary according to a number of factors. The district Landcare Coordinator provided these figures and indicated an 8-10% margin of error. Gender breakdown was estimated according to active members. The coordinator stated that projects in and around towns attracted more women and young people, while farm-based projects attracted more men.

Appendix 2



Source: *Ecopolitics Thought + Action*  
Vol.1, No.3 Autumn 2002 p. x

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Neil Brown, *Upper Murrumbidgee Landcare Dist.*  
Kate Carnell, *National Association of Forest Industries and (formerly) ACT Legislative Assembly*  
Tricia Caswell, *Centre for Global Sustainability, RMIT and (formerly) ACF*  
Rosie Chapman, *Upper Snowy Landcare District Coordinator*  
Jacqui de Chazal, *ACT Greens*  
Rod Donald MP, *Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand*  
Lee Evans, *Cooma-Monaro Express*  
Jeanette Fitzsimons MP, *Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand*  
Jo Garland, *Dalgety and District Community Assoc. and Snowy Alliance*  
Gerard Gillespie, *Canberra and SE Region Environment Centre*  
Clr Debra Hassam, *Selwyn District Council, NZ*  
Stephen Hodgkin, *ACT Greens*  
Stewart Jackson, *Greens WA*  
Jack Kahla, *Upper Snowy Landcare Dist.*  
Ian MacDonald MLC, *ALP (NSW)*  
Julie McGuinness, *The Wilderness Society, ACT*  
Ross McKinney, *Snowy River Shire Council and (formerly) Kosciuszko National Park management*  
Liz McMahon, *Dalgety and District Community Assoc.*  
Peter Mitchell, *Kosciuszko National Park Advisory Committee*  
Catherine Moore, *Greens NSW*  
Harry Moss, *Dalgety and District Community Assoc.*  
Clr. Paul Pearce, *Waverley City Council and ALP*  
Dave and Mick Pendergast, *Jindabyne community and (formerly) high country grazing lessees*  
Clr. Neen Pendergast, *Snowy River Shire Council*  
Clr. Ken Prendergast, *Snowy River Shire Council*  
Günther Propst, *Jindabyne community*  
Shane Rattenbury, *ACT Greens and Greenpeace*  
Robin Sevenoaks, *Upper Snowy Landcare Dist. and SE Region Resources Recovery Group*  
Sheryl Stivens, *Mid-Canterbury Wastebusters, NZ*  
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