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Extending the Boundaries : Portraits of Activism in Perth, Western Australia

Alan Wilson
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“EXTENDING THE BOUNDARIES”:

**PORTRAITS OF ACTIVISM IN
PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

ALAN WILSON

M. Soc. Sc.

1998

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

“EXTENDING THE BOUNDARIES”:

**PORTRAITS OF ACTIVISM IN
PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

ALAN WILSON

B.Sc. (Hons Geology); Ph.D. (Geology)

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

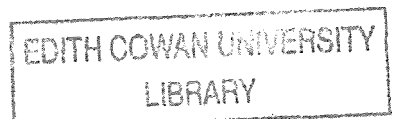
for the award of

Master of Social Science

at the Faculty of Health and Human Sciences,

Edith Cowan University

Date of submission: July 1997



ABSTRACT

For some analysts, post-industrial capitalist societies have pathological deficiencies which manifest themselves locally and further afield, in marginalisation and oppression of people and despoilation of the environment. For those who are passionately driven to challenge those consequences of the dominant paradigm, activism is deemed to be a potent force for effecting social and political change. The aim of this study was to establish how activists integrate issues, context, strategies, personal factors and other influences into a strategy for action.

This research utilises a qualitative approach to examine the activism of seven individuals in Perth, Western Australia, who are working to effect transformist or reformist change in a number of areas of social justice, the environment, peace and human services. Some are aligned to new social movements, others work from a Christian socialist tradition and one is pursuing transformative change for his indigenous people. Each person participated in three semi-structured interviews. Supporting data were gathered concurrently. Data analysis and interpretation were supported by triangulation techniques and validation by the participants.

By their late teenage years at least, these activists had been strongly oriented towards activism by interaction with family members, school teachers or activist mentors. That activist perspective seems also to have been influenced by the timing of events or situational circumstances. When assessing any situation, these activists seem to filter

observations through their value system to determine whether there is a discrepancy or contradiction. Thus framed, issues are taken up irrespective of the consequences. Most of these activists choose to work with others, but occasionally they will act alone for a variety of reasons.

For all but one of these activists, campaigning has a public side which includes engaging the community and raising public awareness, as well as the 'hidden' side which includes lobbying politicians or committee work. Although there is no single approach to activism, each of these activists does go through the same processes when developing a campaign. To achieve their objectives, most of the activists are pragmatic and eclectic in their choice of strategies and tactics, utilising both grassroots methods and urging direction from political or bureaucratic elites. Perseverance, campaign experience and the ability to maintain self integrity are regarded as particularly valuable attributes. Both during and at the conclusion of a campaign, these activists try to put aside time for self reflection on their activism, its origins and motivations.

Some social movement theorists posit that activism is a very social process and all of these activists emphasise the importance that interactions with others have on the success of their activism. For those who have an affinity to a new social movement, their interactions with others prefigure a desired future in an attempt to guide society.

If they are to extend the boundaries of what is wanted, what is possible, what is achievable and what is acceptable in society, these activists recognise that they must

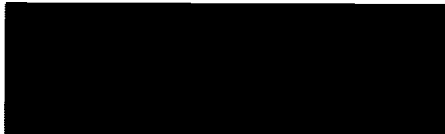
challenge themselves and others to identify, question, alter or remove their assumptions, blinkers and limitations.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text;
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signature:



Date: 25.7.97

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all those activists who are working (and in some cases suffering) for those who are marginalised or oppressed, as well as for a world which is ecologically sound, beautiful and amenable to all species.

Some words and music which inspire me and reflect the spirit of this thesis:

“Imagine there’s no heaven, ... no hell below us, above us only sky,
Imagine there’s no countries, ... nothing to kill or die for, and no religion too,
Imagine no possessions, ... no need for greed or hunger,
Imagine all the people living life in peace,
Imagine all the people sharing all the world,
You may say I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one,
I hope some day you’ll join us, and the world will live as one” (John Lennon).

“I want to break free, ... you’re so self satisfied, I don’t need you” (Queen).

“Terra Nullius is dead and gone” (Yothu Yindi).

“The time has come to say ‘fair’s fair’, to pay the rent, to pay our share”

(Midnight Oil).

“When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist” (Dom Helder Camara).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A qualitative research project like this inevitably draws in people who are peripheral to the actual study but whose contribution is nonetheless significant. I am extremely grateful to former Master of Social Science course coordinator, Dr Hyung Shik Kim, on a number of counts. Although my qualifications are principally in the natural sciences he had faith in me and supported my application to do this Master's course. For a few months when I started to prepare a research proposal on another issue, he was a generous supervisor, but my greatest gratitude to him is for generating a lively and intellectually stimulating environment. To the Edith Cowan University (ECU) library staff who located many obscure publications, and to Vicki Banham, Gerrie Sheratt, Irena Reilly and Shaluka Gunasekera of the School of Community Studies (ECU) for their assistance, many thanks. I would like to thank my fellow qualitative research students Paul Howrie, Teresa Hutchins and Ruth Marquis, and a student colleague and friend Edmund Mazibuko, for constructively criticising my research proposal. I am also indebted to Ruth and Teresa for co-coding lengthy interview transcripts. I am grateful to those ECU staff and students who contributed ideas during my research proposal seminar. To Dr Pat Baines of the School of Social and Cultural Studies and Dani Stehlik, Master's graduate from the School of Community Studies, ECU, who formally critiqued my research proposal, a big thank you. I appreciate the contributions of Dr Bob Jackson, Centre for Development of Human Resources at ECU and Dani Stehlik who suggested the names of human service activists who might be participants. I also wish to thank a

key informant, Kath McGinty, formerly coordinator of the One World Centre, who contributed an extensive list of potential participants.

I wish to thank all nineteen activists who participated in the study. Seven individuals were interviewed for the main body of the research but unfortunately for ethical reasons they must remain anonymous. To those seven people who stuck with me through three interviews, I owe an overwhelming debt of gratitude. They were generous with their time and when we were flagging, they kept us going with cups of tea and biscuits. At the outset I was a complete stranger, so I wish to thank them all for talking so openly with me from the beginning. When I requested additional information they sent it to me and when I requested feedback they obliged. Truly, it has been a privilege getting to know each person. I want to conclude by thanking them for their input, rich and resonating quotes and wishing them every success with their activism.

This endeavour has been enhanced by the intellectual stimulation and analysis of a number of sources and I wish to express my acknowledgements to them: ABC Radio National, in particular Phillip Adams and Geraldine Doogue, The Guardian Weekly and various ABC and SBS television programmes. Cadbury's made writing of the thesis a lot more pleasant.

I'd particularly like to thank my wife Anne who has been extremely supportive throughout this long haul. She has always been willing to discuss the thesis topic with me and for that I am grateful. Neither of us are particularly speedy keyboard operators

and so I do appreciate her transcription of three interviews. To David and Fiona, many thanks for extricating me from computer black holes. I hope that Anne, David and Fiona will forgive me for the time that I spent on the research when I could have been with them. I hope that their and my extended family's world, is enhanced by the achievements of activists such as those I interviewed. A very big thank you to Corina whose presence helped to put the study in perspective. She has encouraged me and lifted my spirits when the going was hard.

There is one final person whom I'd like to thank and that is my supervisor, Dr Sherry Sagers of the School of Social and Cultural Studies, ECU. Her input, guidance and support has been immense. It has not been an easy transition for me from natural science to qualitative research in social science but Sherry has eased that passage with her patience and understanding. She has encouraged me when I was stuck, kept me on track and has been positively critical throughout. I have appreciated her perceptive comments and the intellectual stimulation which she has generated. She has been generous with her time and has been there for me when I needed support. Without Sherry, I'm not sure that I would have finished. I can say quite confidently that if there is any merit in this research then it is in no small measure due to her.

For me, completion has been a minor triumph of will over circumstances. Sherry, thanks for hanging in there with me. It has been a privilege for me to have you as my supervisor - I chose well. I'm sure that I have caused you more than a few headaches, but at least now you will not have cause to shriek at my sociological naiveties! You have given so much of yourself and I am happy to see that in return you have adopted

this red Green “ideologue’s” calm approach to tight timelines. I have enjoyed working with you; we’ve had some fun and some laughs - enjoy your ‘retirement’!

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INTRODUCTION

This research study utilises a qualitative perspective to identify and examine the processes of activism as evinced by seven activists who are currently active in Perth, Western Australia [WA]. Within the group there is a mix in terms of gender, age, class and background. Although the number of participants is small, the range of issues in which they are interested is substantial. Included are those that relate to specific groups - women in general and lesbian, indigenous people, people with an intellectual disability as well as the more general areas of social justice, environment, peace, disarmament and development. Some of the activists work purely on local issues, others have a more global perspective. All of the activists are working from a perspective in which those who are, or are deemed to be marginalised or oppressed, are considered to be important. On the more general topics, their objectives are to work for a future in which decisions affecting quality of life are not made by and for the rich, powerful and influential. In the absence of a more suitable term, 'progressive' is used here in reference to this specific combination of perspective and objective (Melucci, 1989, p. 213).

The character of this research project owes a lot to the circumstances which led me into the topic and so it is important to review these briefly before continuing. When I started the Master's course I was employed in the field of intellectual disability later moving to that of 'at-risk', young teenagers. I wanted to pursue a research topic with

a human service component but which also would allow me to include my interest in global, social and political issues. At the beginning of 1993 then, my proposed research topic was - "The politics of Australian international aid programmes: their value base, appropriateness and effectiveness." It was relevant to that topic that I have strong reservations about the direction being taken by Western capitalist, high-income societies (Korten, 1990, pp. 9-23). I believe that they have pathological deficiencies which manifest themselves in several domains, one of which has become the responsibility of human services (Emy and Hughes, 1992, pp.537-538).

It was because of that analysis that as I read around the subject of aid / assistance / development programmes, the focus of my research interest began to move. I became interested in the role being played by activists, both in Australia and overseas, in questioning the export of Western assumptions, values and models. At this point it is pertinent to note that in my 'previous life' as a geologist, I had been seconded to the Swaziland government and so have had personal and observational experience of assistance programmes. That interest in human service and development activists and activism was regrettably narrowed on cost and logistical grounds to Perth-based activists. I felt that such a project without the opportunity to do an overseas research component would have been frustrating. So in order to meet my needs for a research topic in keeping with my diverse interests, I chose to maintain the orientation on activists but to broaden the scope to include those working in such fields as social justice, peace and the environment.

Research interest into activism and activists peaked for some time following the apogee of mass public discontent in Western societies in the 1960s. Then, much of the focus was on sociodemographic typologies, value systems and social movement mobilisation. Since the early 1980s, nuclear, peace, social justice and environmental issues have been amongst the principal community concerns although the publically expressed discontent has been less than in the '60s. More recent research interest has focussed on the character of social movements and microsocial interactions. Surprisingly little however has been written in the academic literature about the processes of activism. In fact the phenomenon of activism has not been researched to any great depth and although there is some understanding, no comprehensive theory has been developed.

The purpose of this research then was to identify and explain the considerations and procedural steps taken by activists. The principal research question was - 'How do activists integrate issues, context, strategies, personal factors and other influences into a strategy for action?' In support of that main question there were four supplementary questions. As these may have influenced how the whole topic was approached a short digression is in order. Composing the questions which would frame this research was an exciting time. Not only was I going to be investigating a fascinating subject, I hoped that as an aside I would be able to resolve one of my own personal queries - 'Despite my views and deep concerns on a number of diverse issues, why have I not become involved in issues about which I feel strongly?' With hindsight, I feel that this personal question led me to frame supplementary questions which were too prescriptive in orientation. The four supplementary questions were - 'What are the

influences on activists and what is their relative importance?', 'Why are these influences important?', 'When developing a strategy for action at what point (s) are these influences considered?' and 'What do activists perceive to be the processes of activism?' To guide the study, a conceptual framework was drawn up based on my then understanding of the literature (Figure 1). Within the context of activism, it was envisaged that there are both internal and external factors which could influence how an activist worked. Thus for example, it was thought that activists would see an issue externally, and evaluate it internally in terms of their value system and worldview. It was felt that the skill of activism was the ability to process the various factors into a successful strategy for action.

It is pertinent to highlight the political context which prevailed during the research. The West Australian community was still coming to terms with the continuing ramifications of the WA Inc saga which involved corrupt arrangements between big business and the WA Labor government during the 1980s. During the period when the three interview rounds were held, there were no major waves of popular discontent and unrest such as occurred during the 1960s. In this sense then, the political context could be said to have been 'normal' or quiescent (things became a bit more heated after the interviews were over!) (Oliver & Marwell, 1992, pp. 251-252). Galbraith claims that such quiescence reflects a culture of contentment in which change is not sought by the economically fortunate, nor by the underclass which effectively disenfranchises itself (1993). The most significant political events revolved around State (WA) and Federal elections which brought conservative parties to power after a decade or more of Labor government. In Western Australia there were few major

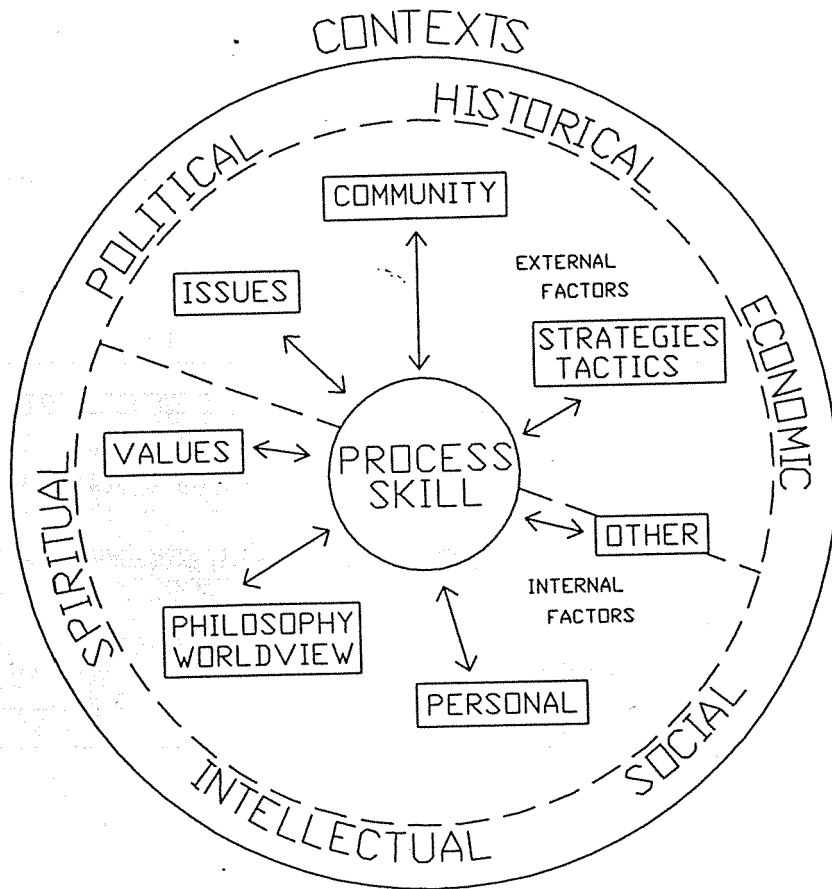


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

public demonstrations of discontent other than those related to industrial matters and the introduction of juvenile (so-called) justice legislation relating to youth offenders. A Liberal government with a decidedly conservative agenda was elected with a big majority in the March 1996 Federal election. Since then there has been an upsurge in publically expressed disquiet about race and indigenous issues and proposed legislation which could roll back the gains of the Mabo and Wik judgements. A Queensland MP, Pauline Hanson has emerged at the focus of this conservative perspective and her attempts to hold public meetings to promote her One Nation Party have met with

sizeable and rowdy demonstrations. Following the Port Arthur massacre in April 1996, there were big public demonstrations both for and against the prohibition of automatic and semi-automatic weapons. At the state (WA) level there has been a notable increase in demonstrations against Third Wave industrial legislation during 1997.

This **INTRODUCTION** has attempted to set the scene for the study. The next chapter - **SITUATING ACTIVISM**, is a literature review which contextualises social change, social movements, activism and activists.

SITUATING ACTIVISM

INTRODUCTION

This literature review is intended to introduce those concepts and understandings which are pertinent to the research topic. The aim is to give a feeling for what is relevant to an appreciation of social change and activism. The broad categories of the review include social change, social movements, activism and activists. The first of these, social and political change, is the stated objective of those activists who took part in the research. The review examines what constitutes social change and how it is thought to occur. Here, 'social' is used as an inclusive term and 'political' refers to one specific component. To achieve their goals, most but not all of these activists operate within social movements. It is important to understand the nature and role of such entities because they are an influential factor on the political scene. Activism is a multi-dimensional process aimed at effecting change. Those dimensions are varied and cover such aspects as context, tactics and social interactions. How these parameters are best integrated is a challenge for the activist. In the final section, those features which influence how an activist works are reviewed. These factors include value system, skills and attributes. Before discussing each of these sections it is pertinent to consider the procedure which was followed because this influenced how the research was conceptualised.

When I started to go through the literature, I approached it from two angles; specialist text books and CD-ROM searches of journal articles. I wanted to use the former to get a general overview of the theories of social change, social movements and of activism; the latter to get a more up-to-date and more detailed perspective on current research in these fields. Both investigative routes led me to material which was heavily weighted towards US activism. There was little research material available on activists as individuals. With hindsight it would probably have been fruitful to search out biographical or autobiographical accounts to fill this gap. It was apparent to me even at that point, that some of the literature covered situations with no direct parallel in the Australian context; for example, paid neighbourhood activists. Also, although I was aware of the structural differences between the Australian and US political arenas, I did not appreciate the extent to which this might influence activism in those two countries. Intuitively however, I felt more at home with the Australian and European literature. I was not sure whether this was a reflection of my own cultural associations or an appreciation that this body of research was tapping into something different from the North American experience and more commensurate with the Australian experience as it was related to me.

There was a pattern to my reading of journal articles which although loosely defined, did influence how I came to grips with the topic. I started by reading books about social change and social movements, then concentrated on articles many of which were based on social psychology. These texts focussed on early influences on activists and specifically on their value systems. It was a surprise to find that there was relatively little written about influences. The accent was on group characteristics and

mobilisation rather than on a wholistic perspective of specific individuals and this was a disappointment. After that I moved on to specific aspects of social movements such as how issues are framed and how that was linked to mobilisation. I found that the literature did not seem to address questions of how activist groups linked their strategies and tactics to a specific philosophical stance or worldview. Having reviewed the path that I took through the literature, I now want to discuss its content.

SOCIAL CHANGE

The forces which induce dynamic evolution in societies also play on the social fabric. The structure of social relationships may yield or resist, but is unlikely to remain unaltered. When the change is structural, basic institutions are modified. Such significant, irreversible alterations are termed social change (Baldock, 1978, p. 1; Giddens, 1993, pp. 650-651).

Slow rates of social change seem to be associated with isolated, pre-industrial societies. Much faster rates of social change are evident in industrial and post-industrial societies. Some change may be unintended or spontaneous such as when a new technology is introduced. But the focus here is on change which is sought: a premeditated metamorphosis of social relationships. The desired outcome may be to introduce some new element into society (for example, legalisation of euthanasia), halt (stop woodchipping) or reverse existing social patterns (abortion on demand). Thus change can influence the spectrum of norms and mores in society. Boundaries may be extended allowing for more latitude and variation, or sanctions may be employed in an

effort to make society more homogenous. An example of activism extending the boundaries would be the ultimately successful campaign by Deborah Wardley to overcome structural discrimination in the Australian airline industry and become the first female commercial pilot with a major company (McKenna & Lawrie, 1992).

Theories of social change can be grouped on the basis of whether the focus is on content, form or cause of change (Boudon, 1986, Table 1). The content of change could reflect empirically identified trends such as the notion that in modern societies impersonal relationships supplant personal ones. Alternatively it could be focussed on those that establish structural or conditional laws such as the disappearance of class conflicts following industrialisation. The form of change can be subtle or radical: reformist or transformist. Sztopka clarifies 'reform' as 'change in society' and 'transformation' as 'change of society' (1993, p. 281). Reform is achieved in relatively small incremental steps whereas transformative change is more dramatic involving significant alterations to society. Delineating those two categories is based on a subjective analysis and is obviously dependent on the observer's perspective. The period over which change occurs is also relevant. Thus, what were considered to be reformist measures when implemented, might be viewed as transformative in a historical analysis. The third category identified by Boudon is cause of social change. This has been attributed to environmental pressures or to the outcome of tension between institutional actors (Giddens, 1993, pp. 649-656). Environmental theories maintain that societies change with time in response to contextual pressures. Theories which focus on competing institutional or structural forces derive from historical materialism.

Agency

Sztompka traces the “odyssey” of the idea of social change agency (1993, pp. 192-193). At the outset it was presumed to have been located in the supernatural, then in natural forces and subsequently in ‘great men’ [sic]. With the birth of sociology, society itself was deemed to be the agent but this organic perspective was supplanted by the notion that institutional elites hold the key to social change. Individual activists and social movements are now seen by some as equally potent agents of social change (Melucci, 1989; Touraine, 1988).

Sztompka concluded that in modern Western societies there are two possible agents for social and political change: institutional elites and social movements / activists (1993, p. 274). The former impose change from above, the top-down model. The latter seek change and work to bring that about. They lack legitimate authority and so cannot impose change, but they can try to influence those around them. If their objective is to change attitudes or behaviours say towards a marginalised group, they may try to do that by example. This would be an example of the grass roots or bottom-up model. Pressuring political elites to fund educational programmes targetted on the issue or even to legislate, represents a hybrid of the other two models. Commonly however the hybrid is also considered to be a grass-roots approach.

Social change, whether top-down or bottom-up, cannot take place in a social vacuum. Eder maintains that the contradictions which generate social change only occur within communicative relationships (1993, pp. 36-38). Indeed, it has been stated that

objective problems as such do not exist: it is only through the process of interaction between activists that problems are perceived and defined. Thus, social action is socially produced by and within cognitive, affective and interactive relationships. Context, goals, strategies, opportunities and constraints are collectively negotiated within social movements (Melucci, 1989, pp. 20, 25-26, 193, 197).

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

A social movement can be defined as “a collective attempt to further a common interest, or secure a common goal through [structurally informal] collective action outside the sphere of established institutions” (Giddens, 1993, p. 642). Another definition similarly invokes the parameters of location and degree of organisation: “loosely organized collectivities acting together in a non-institutionalized manner in order to produce change in their society” (Sztompka, 1993, p. 276).

Social movements reflect currents of discontent in society and they have been recognised since the earliest days of sociology. People join social movements or share an affinity with their aspirations because they wish to change the direction of society or some aspect of it. They are more likely to mobilise when their needs and wants are not being met, although that is by no means a sufficient condition. Many sources of discontent have been identified historically: amongst these are general working conditions, the distribution of resources in society, the inequitable treatment of different social categories and the desire to change or revitalise societal values and norms (Pakulski, 1991. pp. 4-30).

Theories

As a result of these historical findings, theorising about social movements is strongly influenced by contextual parameters, in part at least related to specific socio-historic events (Pakulski, 1991, pp. 3-29). But social movement theories also reflect the evolution of sociological thinking. Early analyses were based on models taken from the French Revolution, through workers' protests in the era of Victorian capitalism to the Bolshevik Revolution. These theories were based on a notion of mass society and they failed to focus on the actual orientations and attitudes of supporters or on the social aspects of movements. As a result, "movement ideologies, programmes and beliefs appeared highly incoherent, irrational and deviant" (Pakulski, 1991, p. xix). In a world which was supposedly evolving towards modernity and order, such displays of discontent were viewed in the functionalist tradition, as incompatible with conventional liberal politics. By association with movements, activists came to be viewed as eccentric, if not deluded or dangerous.

There is an extensive literature on theories of social movements. Smelser's collective behaviour paradigm has been one of the most influential in the field. This functionalist perspective assumes that social order is the norm and regards conflict as a pathological aberration. Thus social movement behaviour is defined in terms of theoretical assumptions as a "semi-rational response to 'abnormal' conditions of structural 'strain' " (cited in Giddens, 1993, pp. 644-645). This perspective places social movements at the margins of society.

Resource mobilisation theory is also based on a functionalist analysis. It asserts that movements are extensions or evolutionary components of conventional liberal democratic politics. Responses to new challenges and opportunities are viewed as rational and innovative. Modifications and changes to society are sought through accessible political structures and processes (Pakulski, 1991, pp. 12-12). Thus in this model, social movements are integrated into the operation of society (cf. collective behaviour theory). The theory has gained acceptance in the US context where political lobbying is a widespread practice. It has been pointed out that the theory does not deal adequately with larger scale mass movements (Pakulski, 1991, p. 14). The theory has been criticised also because it fails to answer how such action is constructed, how unity is produced, and which processes and relationships relate to collective action (Melucci, 1989, p. 20).

New social movement theory pertains to the ecological, anti-nuclear, feminist and local autonomy movements. "They articulate the tension between the expanding spheres of human autonomy and growing regulation inherent in the logic of (post-) industrial development" (Pakulski, 1991, p. 26). They address issues which are not readily mediated by institutionalised politics because of the emphasis on values and behaviours which conflict with that paradigm. Their focus is on macro-social deconstruction and re-construction based on a wholistic perspective (Korten, 1993, pp. 127-128).

The 'action identity' theory of social movements, has a conflict orientation (Touraine, 1988, p. 66). This theory is the most recently developed and it is also the most radical because it questions the very foundations of sociology. In what was an ethnocentric

perspective there was an assumption that societies were evolving towards a modern entity. Capitalism and democratic tradition were thought to be essential components which would enable society to evolve in a linear manner. Social integration was an expectation and conflict was seen to be an evil. More recently, others have seen protest as a sign of stable 'physiological' functioning (Tarrow, cited in Melucci, 1989, pp. 22-23). In the reconstructed sociology of Touraine, there is no social system but all is change. Social movements are posited as the agents, and act at the core, of change. In this paradigm, marginality of social actors is not a failure of integration (cf. Smelser) rather it is the hallmark of an opposition (Touraine, 1988, p. 106).

Classification

Several parameters have been used to classify social movements - goals, degree of change sought, structural location and what features they oppose. One of the simplest classifications has been formulated depending on movement goals (Eder, 1993, p. 107). Those with a cultural orientation oppose current forms of social life (for example the deep ecology movement), those with a political bias challenge the domination by the modern state (for example the 'New Right' movement). In a slightly more developed analysis Aberle has utilised a two dimensional classification based on goals and the degree of change sought (cited in Giddens, 1993, p. 643). Transformative (for example, deep ecology movement) and reformative (for example, anti-abortion groups) movements aim to change society; the former having the more radical or structurally far-reaching agenda. Redemptive (for example, religious

movements) and 'alterative' movements (for example, Alcoholics Anonymous) seek to change (usually some aspect of) the individual.

A third classification of social movements is based on the structural location of their activities: inside (affirmative action), outside (counter-culture; for example, legalisation of cannabis use), or in alliance with bureaucratic structures (action groups) (Sargent, 1994, p. 380). Another taxonomy of social movements is based on the premise that social movements oppose constitutive features of the political-administrative system (Pakulsi, 1991, p. 47). They are intrinsically defensive: their stance is oppositional. The author postulates that movements have either formal (instrumental) or substantive (value) rationality and that their organisational mode can be either hierarchical or decentralised. Based on these bipolar parameters, four movement categories are recognised: anti-bureaucratic (for example, less-government movement in the USA), anti-technocratic (for example, some urban social movements), anti-partocratic (for example, Solidarity in Poland) and anti-democratic (for example, European fascism).

Structural location

In contemporary Western, post-industrial societies there has been a proliferation of protest movements for everything. The genesis of these movements is attributed to the search for happiness and self-realisation which results from living in a 'programmed society' (Touraine, 1988, p. 111). Issues taken up by contemporary social movements often revolve around matters of such general values as equity, justice, and the like (Galbraith, 1993, p.17). It has been claimed that political systems are unable to

respond fully to such value matters resulting in social movements often operating in a different domain to the exercise of macro level political power (Offe cited in Pakulski, 1991, p. 62; Melucci, 1989, pp. 222, 230). For this reason they have been said to be institutionally or structurally “homeless” (editorial notes by Keane and Mier, cited in Melucci, 1989, p. 8).

A movement’s trajectory or career is determined by the character, strength and response of the political regime it opposes (Kitschelt, 1986, pp. 61-67). Social movements are stifled by closed and rigid polities or are assimilated by weak, open regimes. Empirical evidence suggests that social movement persistence is apparently favoured by strong, open regimes such as are prevalent in Australia (Pakulski, 1991, p. 68). Whilst willing to co-opt social movements when it suits, the ideological weight and assumed superiority of representative democracy is commonly used by governments or institutional elites in attempts to delegitimise [urban] social movements (Lowe, 1986, p. 78). This is a major strategic obstacle with which activists have to deal.

Orientation and function

With new social movements the common denominator which cements the frequently disparate, constituent bodies is not a coherent programme or set of principles but rather an orientation (Pakulski, 1991, p. 60). It asserts what the movement is for and against and is strongly value-based. The keystone of this entity is the social process through which activists create and continuously transform their world (Melucci, 1989,

pp. 25-27, 197, 202, 217). It is around this pluralistic, dynamic and unstable reality that a monolithic facade of solidarity is built. Thus anthropocentric formulations of social movements as unitary bodies with a 'personnage' and single purpose are misleading (cf. Touraine, 1988).

Whatever the orientation, Melucci claims that social movements are integral to a vibrant democracy and should be protected because they express the demands of civil society and expose the power relations of allegedly neutral or technical decision-making procedures (1989, p. 230). He argues that complex democratic societies produce as well as require the forms of individual participation and collective mobilisation generated by social movements (1989, pp. 11, 227, 231). Eder too values the role of social movements claiming that they move society by communicating issues. They challenge cultural traditions, highlight dilemmas, present an alternative cultural model and suggest a new moral order (1993, pp. 108, 114-115). Melucci has analysed how some of the larger contemporary social movements challenge and give that lead to society. He has recognised four structural features which characterise these bodies; the role of information resources, the effort put into constructing non-instrumental forms of organisation, the integration of actions in private and public life, the new awareness of global dimensions of complex societies. Integration of these characteristics creates a message about the objectives of the movement. Implementation of that message by movement participants is a 'journey' in itself, a process which Melucci asserts is at least as important as the intended destination (1989, pp. 205-206).

Resources

Material and human resources are vital to the health of any social movement. When a group challenges the dominant moral order, that support base is particularly crucial (Weitzer, 1991, p. 23). Gay and lesbian groups have had perhaps the best internal support and resource base of all the 'deviance liberation' groups (for example, people with non-heterosexual preferences, those with mental illness, drug users, paedophiles). In contrast, prostitutes have not had anything like the same degree of impact on public policy or opinion (Weitzer, 1991, p. 24). Weitzer showed that the 1970s San Francisco prostitutes' rights campaign (COYOTE) failed to meet its goals because it did not have a critical mass of members, lacked quality leadership, and was unsuccessful in generating supportive alliances.

ACTIVISM

Activism has been defined as - "participation in movements espousing direct action to promote or hasten political change" (Booth & Blair, 1992). This definition is unsatisfactory because it excludes individuals operating alone and because it assumes that all action must be direct. A personal definition for use in this study would be - 'Participation in activities within the public domain designed to promote or hasten structural change in society'. Inclusion of the concept of 'structural change' implies that there is an intention to alter the fabric of society or the way it operates. In order to effect change there has to be a point of contact between the activist and society and hence the inclusion of 'within the public domain'. Activists tunnelling under proposed

runways and road re-alignments have brought issues about continuing development squarely in front of the community in Britain (Figure 2). Terrorism can be seen as an extreme form of activism (Rubenstein, 1987, pp. 4-7). Advocacy is seen as that part of activism which is directed to effecting change on behalf of one or only a few other individuals (Brown, 1984).

The trend towards addressing what Melucci calls post-material questions is accompanied by the recognition that we are part of an interdependent, closed global system in which information is now a key resource. These new understandings have induced activists to expend a significant effort on the social process, both for its own sake and as a means of facilitating that information exchange (Melucci, 1989, pp. 205-206, 208, 209, 219). They must live with the dynamic tension between “a narcissistic desire for individualisation and a yearning for communal identity”. As a consequence, private and public lives are integrated within a life which reflects and heralds the desired future. Activists test the alternative reality in the “laboratories” of “submerged networks”.

Issues, strategies and tactics

Recognition that some aspect of society needs to be changed for the better is a pre-requisite for activism. Rootes argues that people will view the same situation differently because of differences in how their knowledge has been constructed; their perspectives are historically grounded in social or cultural situations (1990, p. 13).



Underground protest: Daniel "Swampy" Hooper in one of the tunnels dug at Manchester Airport.

SWAMPY, a scrawny environmental activist, turned into a media star in Britain when he left his comfortable middle-class home for a grimy tunnel below a planned new road in south-west England.

His seven-day underground stint to delay construction of the Devon bypass increased costs by \$1.5 million and was hailed as a victory by protesters who say other developments have been shelved as a result.

In May, the 23-year-old human mole burrowed underneath the site of a proposed new runway at Manchester Airport in north-west England, where the existing runway is creaking under a rising demand for air travel.

Environmentalists say the 3km second runway will destroy 400ha of precious woodland, kill wildlife and worsen air pollution.

Police moved in to evict the protesters, removing some from treehouses they had built. Others hiding in tunnels beneath the proposed runway to prevent the start of construction were harder to flush out.

Swampy — real name Daniel Hooper — joked that his first famous week underground had happened by accident.

"I just got stuck in my tunnel for a week and couldn't get out, and now I'm famous," he quipped.

Swampy's rise to fame has spotlighted a growing number of anti-road protest camps springing up across Britain, where concern is mounting over pollution caused by emissions from cars and aircraft.

Some activists even risk their lives, chaining themselves to trees as they are about to be felled. They say extreme action is the only way to force corporations and local government to shelve environmentally harmful developments.

Swampy's rise to fame has boosted national support for environmental action groups. Splashed across newspapers and magazines in recent weeks, his cherubic face

has boosted the image of green activists who put environmental concerns before their own safety and comfort.

"Obviously we'd rather have more focus on the issue, but Swampy's become a bit of a national hero and that hasn't done us any harm," said one Manchester campaigner, whose climbing harness identified her as a tree-dweller.

An air of jealousy could be felt at Cliff Richard Camp when Swampy proudly showed off a newly-acquired scarlet coat which covered his battered anorak and mud-spattered green boots.

"It's Armani," he joked, a reference to when he modelled a selection of designer suits, earning himself enough to pay off a \$1000 court fine.

But if his fellow protesters secretly begrudge Swampy his star image, they are starting to realise that having a high-profile campaign mascot is extremely useful.

"The whole Swampy thing has trivialised the campaign but the good thing is we're making money out of it," said a central figure at the Coalition Against Runway Two (CAR2) headquarters who called himself Smurf.

With a tidy sum from his appearance on a television quiz show and \$1150 a week during a brief spell as a columnist for a Sunday tabloid, Swampy has brought in much-needed cash to pay for the protest.

The CAR2 protesters accept that their action probably will not stop the runway being built but believe it will deter any future projects.

"Now, when the authorities consider chopping down trees to build a motorway, they think, 'Oh no, we're going to have those raggle-taggle protesters hanging around costing us money', so certain schemes won't even get off the ground," said one.

Figure 2. Folk hero 'Swampy' takes his protest underground (*The West Australian*, 23.6.97).

There are two theoretical positions, the grievance model and the frame alignment model. The former posits that social and political problems are concrete realities. The latter model postulates that issues are constructs, defined by mutual agreement based on shared perceptions. Koopmans and Duyvendak conclude that there is no direct link between objective conditions, grievances and mobilisation (1995, p. 248). Instead they believe that a problem is socially constructed in terms of the activist's worldview hence the importance of choosing a frame which resonates with the potential audience. Activists present 'facts' which are chosen to maximise the impact of the message.

Public concern becomes public issue only after a movement has assembled 'facts' and disseminated information (Pakulski, 1991, pp. 66-67). Those concerns with a 'critical edge' develop into issues. Equally, it can be argued that issues themselves have a 'critical edge' because it is not necessarily the most pressing social problems which generate the most action. Clearly, communication, and what is communicated are vital ingredients of effective activism (Figure 3). Activism done well, is designed to inculcate a feeling of crisis and create in the audience calls for an urgent response (Beder, 1991).

The links, if any, between activist methods (strategies and tactics) and theories of social change are rarely explicated in the literature. For example, theoretical frameworks are not identified in some experiential accounts (Alinski, 1972; Richan, 1991). One can ask whether a certain methodological approach is prescribed by, and therefore coherent with a particular worldview. For example peace activists would be acting non-coherently if they decided to use violence to achieve some goal. In contrast

it has been argued that negotiation and (protest) activism do not readily sit together within the same movement because the two strategies have opposing practical effects (Beder, 1991, pp. 55-56). The latter is designed to inculcate a feeling of crisis and calls for an urgent response, the former diffuses those feelings and inhibits public debate.

A strategy is an overall and integrated plan of action. It is designed to meet the needs of a particular context, with particular reference to resources, allies and the strengths and weaknesses of opponents (Rucht, 1990, pp. 161, 174; Rootes, 1990, p. 8). The plan must be designed to win over those who are neutral and overcome the objections or resistance of opponents. Research suggests that there are certain factors which appear to guarantee resistance to change; when there is a perceived threat to security, when the change is not understood, when the change is imposed and when a calculation of risks makes the change seem unsafe (Thomas & Veno, 1992, p. 23). Rootes suggests that knowing how opponents develop and structure their knowledge greatly improves the activist's prospects of eliciting change (1990, p. 13). There is a sense then that if activists are seen to be too far removed from a mainstream position, they will not even be listened to. They can promote a minority view, but to be effective in getting that message out to the community, there is a threshold of social acceptance which they cross at their peril.

Tactics are techniques implemented at the micro level in support of a strategic plan. They include actions or behaviours used in specific contexts with the intention of achieving a short term goal within the strategy. There are many forms of protest, what

Bang bang you're dead



As you walk around the exhibits today you may care to remember:

- (1) To be against war is not to demean the integrity, commitment and sacrifice of individual soldiers. It is about finding another way so that lives need not be sacrificed
- (2) Forty million people were killed in World War 2. This included 25 million civilians
- (3) A million dollars a minute is spent on arms. This could be used to find alternative solutions
- (4) Violence solves nothing. It only embitters the loser and creates a determination to engage in further violence.
- (6) Peace is not the absence of war. It is the managing of conflict in a nonviolent way. This is where the money that we spend on arms should be spent.

Figure 3. Handout prepared for RAAF Pearce open day (12.5.96 - Christian Centre for Social Action).

Cooper and Eichner call a “veritable palette of possibilities” (1991, p. 165). Demonstrations, marches, sit-ins and pickets are all valid tactics although their use has perhaps diminished since the 1960s and 1970s. Pickets and sit-ins can have a symbolic component, for example forming a human chain around the Greenham Common Cruise missile base in England. Vigils are non-confrontational protests usually associated with a religious or spiritual orientation, their symbolism heightened by silence.

It has been claimed that those who subscribe to the dominant politico-economic paradigm and who wish to effect change from within the system are proscribed from using such traditional protest action methods (Beder, 1991, pp. 53-56). She asserts that the public respectability, trust and compromise necessary for negotiation between parties is irrevocably damaged by such confrontational methods. As her article shows, the Australian environment movement has been caught on the horns of this dilemma. Fissures have developed between the more radical, deep green environmentalists who have adopted a confrontational stance and those conservationists who have sought to maintain a good working relationship with policy makers.

Activists have to be able to gauge public sentiments and know when their actions will become counter-productive. For example protest actions often alienate others who are not directly involved in a particular issue. Such has been the dilemma of forestry protesters in the south west of Western Australia. In 1994, in order to delay work and get media coverage they organised a series of blockades in specific coupes in the Pemberton district. One expected consequence of this action was to alienate timber and saw mill workers who claimed that their livelihood was under threat. But many

others in the district were alienated too because their perceived economic well-being was dependent on servicing the timber industry. Thus far, activists have been unable to ameliorate the alienation of timber communities (Peace, 1996).

Lobbying politicians and policy makers in the bureaucracy is an accepted part of the activist repertoire in electoral democracies (Graham & Hogan, 1990). The aim is to influence public policy or political decisions on reformist issues rather than transformist agendas. It is an effective tactic for a number of reasons. For some, access to those in power is relatively easy and a lobbyist may be able to guarantee electoral support on another issue. It can be done discreetly without alerting opponents. And perhaps because it is apparently less threatening and confrontational than say street protest, lobbying may be more socially accepted by both authorities and the community.

Theatre can also be a potent tactical tool for the activist. The drama and incongruence of street theatre such as a re-enactment of the Dili massacre, catches the attention of passers-by (Figure 4). Another typical example would be an anti-nuclear protest in which activists wear protective overalls and gas masks. Hooked by curiosity, the activists' message can be presented, flyers can be distributed, petition signatures and memberships can be sought. Humour can lighten the tone without detracting from the seriousness of the issue. The impact is widened immensely when dramatised images are shown on television news or current affairs programmes. For example, Greenpeace has become quite adept at promoting and selling "environment theatre" (Notion, 1990, p. 36). During 1995, marine protests involving harassment of Japanese whaling ships or French nuclear testing at Mururoa Atoll captured global attention.



Figure 4. Dili Massacre re-enactment, Perth Cultural Centre (Friends of East Timor, Christian Centre for Social Action, 12.11.95).

Non-violent action has played a significant role in activism; a good example being Gandhi's Salt Campaign in pre-independent India which mobilised a people to defy the colonial government (Sider, 1988, p. 15). There is an array of non-violent tactics open to activists ranging from dialogue and work-to-rule, through civil disobedience to resistance. Discussion and verbal persuasion allow the opposing parties to continue a dialogue in a constructive climate, a factor which may be of crucial importance in some situations. Various forms of social, economic and political non-cooperation, including strikes and boycotts can be maintained for a long time if the constituency is united and determined. In late 1989, a rapid escalation in the frequency and scale of non-violent demonstrations led to the demise and resignation of the Czechoslovak (communist)

government (Ash, 1990, pp. 78-130). Their credibility and “right to govern” had gone. Non-violence can work with relatively benign regimes but it may have limits with more brutal governments, especially those not responsive to international pressure.

The greatest degree of public alienation involves the use of illegal, violent or potentially dangerous tactics. Such use is often related to the activist’s agenda and to their confidence in the change methods invoked (DeMaria, 1982). Activists may feel warranted in using such techniques if they perceive the evil or threat is great enough (Berrigan, 1991). Usually such activities are employed surreptitiously and anonymously such as hammering large metal spikes into trees due to be logged and sawn. Tactically this subterfuge has three benefits. It is a means of avoiding detection, puts concerns in the minds of loggers and may deflect criticism from potential supporters.

Activists are now using the Internet, in addition to other means of mass communication, as a particularly effective method of getting a message out to a global constituency (Jagtenberg & McKie, 1997, p. 75). Although that constituency is numerically relatively small, it probably does occupy structurally significant positions in governmental, non-governmental and bureaucratic institutions. It is a particularly effective tool for those groups which either are unable to access the media or in some countries, unable to speak openly in public. This tactic is therefore suited especially to marginalised, underground or guerilla groups.

ACTIVISTS

It has been argued that social change movements in themselves are not the true change agents. Rather, social reality is in a permanent state of flux and it is individuals who through their everyday conduct, shape and reshape society (Giddens, cited in Sztompka, 1993, pp. 196-197). These then are the activists: the core members of social movements who are the most committed and passionate about the issues (Pakulski, 1991, pp. 73-76).

There is a surprising dearth of information in the academic literature about the formative influences on activists. A noteworthy exception is a paper which identifies the people, circumstances and events which oriented Vera Brittain towards a life of feminist and pacifist activism (Stewart & Healy, 1986). This topic of early influences is probably one in which coverage would be more comprehensive in biographies and autobiographies.

Much literature on activists has focussed on their value system. Although value priorities both shape and depend on ideological outlook, an Australian study found that "left wing student" activists can be discriminated empirically from non-activists on their means (instrumental) and ends (terminal) values (Ellerman & Feather, 1976). The inference is that the value system pushes a person into an activist role and an attempt to effect social change. If moral autonomy is the 'push' which engenders participation (Tygart, 1983), then the 'pull' is provided by previous involvement in activist activities and integration into a supportive subculture network (McAdam, 1988).

To effect social change, activists require a suite of capacities, abilities and faculties. Firstly, activists need to believe that their efforts will produce the desired change in society: “the chemistry of social action depends on the existence of and the fruitful reaction between dreaming and doing” (DeMaria, 1982, p. 190). According to Sztompka they need to be self-aware, persistent, innovative, have a sociocentric orientation, personal integrity and some level of indeterminacy and capriciousness. In addition they must be able to control action and maintain it autonomously in the face of external contextual pressures (1982, p. 166). He suggests that the combination of personal attributes accounts for activists being caught up in a permanent cycle of self-[re-] creation. Archer goes further suggesting that both individual activists and social movements attempting to lead structural and cultural transformation, are themselves transformed in the process (cited in Sztompka, 1993, pp. 199-200).

For the individual who throws out a symbolic challenge to society, personal investment and pressure to conform are heavy. That challenge can be disorienting and disruptive (Melucci, 1989, p. 215). Such has been the experience of one activist who has fought to preserve the natural beauty of Fraser Island off the Queensland coast from the depredations of sand mining, logging and subsequently tourism (Sinclair & Corris, 1994). For two decades, John Sinclair has had to deal with companies and their irate workers, indifference from those vested to protect the area, obfuscation from bureaucrats and legal challenges from several quarters including the then Premier (Bjelke-Petersen). The picture is not atypical and the consequences have been considerable; he and his family disowned and harrassed by most within their own

community, abuse and character assassination, government axing of his job, loss of career and finally a marriage breakup. He and loyal supporters did win the majority of the battles eventually, and despite the negative consequences, he admits to having been enriched by the 'war' which he feels has been entirely justified.

This literature review has described how social change is thought to occur and the methods by which activists either acting alone or within social movements attempt to bring about social and political change in society. Further, activists have been shown to require a range of skills if they wish to implement their strategies successfully. Even if they do achieve their objectives they are prone to suffer considerable personal consequences. Having placed the study in its theoretical context, the next chapter, **METHODOLOGY**, examines the methodological approach which was adopted.

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes and justifies the methodological approach which was followed in this project. This study into the processes of activism was undertaken in Perth, Western Australia between 1994 and 1996. The research methodology followed a qualitative research paradigm. Key informants provided the names of twenty three 'progressive' activists who might be prepared to take part in the research. After a round of short preliminary meetings this purposeful sample was reduced to seven individuals who represented a range of activist interests and methods. Each of these individuals was interviewed in depth on three occasions using a semi-structured interview schedule. Other data were gathered from the participants' diaries and by onlooker and participant observation. Data analysis and interpretation were supported by triangulation techniques and validation by the participants.

CHOICE OF RESEARCH PARADIGM

Social, that is human social science is by its nature different from the sciences of physics and chemistry. Not only is it different, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that social science investigates a much more complex domain. Variables are not only seemingly endless, but they include attributes such as choice and reasoned behaviour

which in themselves further complicate the picture. An alternative research framework, the qualitative research paradigm has been developed because it is credited with being much more compatible (or commensurable) with the social domain although it has consistently suffered from assertions that it is less 'scientific' than the quantitative paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, pp. 233-236; Sarantakos, 1993, p. 14). The study draws upon elements of different theoretical and methodological traditions. There is a component which is ethnographic but my fieldwork did not include extensive immersion in the culture. One could also argue that the principal question hints of a systems perspective. Although there was never any intention of deriving theory about activism, the coding approach allowed themes to emerge as in grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Thus the approach was eclectic and pragmatic - "Not all questions are theory based. Indeed, the quite concrete and practical questions of people working to make the world a better place can be addressed without placing the study in one of the theoretical frameworks" (Patton, 1990, pp. 89-90). Such an approach is justified because the "evaluation of the quality and usefulness of a study should be placed within the context of the author's purpose" (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1995, p. 13).

The principal and subsidiary research questions of this study (see Chapter 1) are aimed at resolving how and why individual activists act as they do. The activist's wholistic reality was being investigated and an operationalised quantitative approach would not have been suitable. The purpose of qualitative research in social science is to examine a natural situation in a way which enables that situation to be understood. The data base of qualitative research includes transcripts of interviews or conversations, direct

observations of the particular social situation being studied and documents which contain pertinent material (Patton, 1990, pp. 10-11). By their nature, each is replete with detail; be it the spoken or written word, body language or actions. Each of these forms of qualitative data seem at first sight to be quite 'solid': there would be little doubt about their meaning. However ambiguous phraseology or actions and body language which apparently contradict statements made by participants show that meaning can be elusive and much less 'solid'.

The principal epistemological assumption of the study is that it is possible for the researcher to understand the participant's reality. That assumption is founded on the basis that what is communicated in interviews has the same meaning for the researcher as the speaker. Ultimately the assumption hangs on whether the content of language can ever have identical sense for two people. Even a verification strategy such as was used in this study does not negate that doubt, because although the language content may seem coincident, the perspectives may not be. Having discussed why the qualitative paradigm was chosen for this study, it is necessary to examine what ethical issues were raised by that choice.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Every social science research project has its own set of features which can cause potential harm to participants (Patton, 1990, pp. 353-357). It is the ethical duty of the researcher to consider those matters and take action to prevent any participant from such an experience. One of the most obvious in the present study is the requirement to

ensure confidentiality. All of the potential participants are known within their respective fields to be activists; some have figured prominently in media reports and are more widely known. Given an undertaking made at the outset of the study, there was a need to ensure that none can be identified from material contained in the thesis. Consequently, any quotations or information which might identify a participant (such as specific roles in particular actions) have not been included in the text. I undertook to do the initial deletion of potentially identifiable material. Timelines have prevented the relevant draft text from being sent to the participants for them to carry out their own check. Some activists were willing for at least some of their comments or positions to be linked to them. This put me in an ethical dilemma. Did I have an obligation to ensure that, given the risk that once identified, other perhaps more personal aspects of the study would not be linked to them? For example, disclosure of illegal activities would put the individual at risk of prosecution. Or did they have the right to allow information about themselves to be made public? I concluded that with such disclosures in the text, confidentiality would be compromised. As I had given them an assurance of confidentiality, any information which could be directly attributed to a specific individual has been excluded. The pen portraits which feature in Chapter 4, have been written to exclude material which could be linked to specific people although because the activist network in Perth is fairly small, those 'in the know' may still be able to guess at who is being discussed.

SAMPLING

Individuals were selected as potential participants in the study on the basis of purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990, pp. 169-181). That is, they were chosen because it was thought that they could provide material which would be information-rich and pertinent to the research questions. Although I was aware of some of Perth's more well known activists, my knowledge was limited. For this reason I needed to use key informants to extend my list (Saratakos, 1993, pp. 183; Patton, 1990, pp. 263-264). I did not ask the informants to provide me with detailed background on the individuals or any other information because I did not want their perspectives to influence mine. Acting on criteria supplied by me, they provided a list of Perth-based people who in their opinion had activist credentials. The only criteria were that the people nominated should be currently active or have been active within the last year in such issue areas as social justice, environment, peace, women, Aborigines, international development, trade unions, human services, deemed to include those working for youth, seniors, and those with disabilities. It was hoped that the final selection would represent a range of 'progressive' activist perspectives and methods. Although activists, by the definition adopted for this study do act in the public domain, many are not household names and some may even not wish to be publically identified as such. Thus, key informants were asked to filter out any person who they felt might feel this way.

It was important that the activists be currently or recently active because the study is dependent on context. What was relevant for activists in say the '70s may not be of significance twenty years on. The decision to extend the sample across a range of

issue areas was questioned at the research proposal stage. That choice was made to satisfy my wider interests and because it enhanced the prospects of gaining insights which a narrower sample might inhibit. For example, individuals working in a specific domain may have contextual constraints which influence their activism. The decision was vindicated when just such a matter arose with human service activists. This point could have been missed in a narrowly-focussed study. The decision to include only 'progressive' activists and exclude conservative activists was deliberate. It was based on a personal empathy with the objectives of those seeking to counter the current politically and economically conservative agenda.

The initial letter sent to all potential participants described in brief outline, the nature and purpose of the study, and its potential benefits to the community. Ethically, it was also important to inform prospective participants about the study methods, including in-depth interviews and possible output in terms of publication. Only then could they make an informed choice about whether to participate in the study (Patton, 1990, p. 356).

Twenty three names were put forward by the key informants. From that original list, three proved to be totally elusive and no contact was ever made despite many phone calls over a period of about two months. Circumstances and / or timelines prevented me from meeting with a further four. Preliminary meetings were held with the remaining sixteen activists. These took about half an hour and were quite informal and a summary was written immediately afterwards. Most individuals chose to meet me at their place of work, home or in one instance at a local cafe. The meetings were not

intended to be structured interviews and there were limited goals. I gave them a brief outline of the research project, obtained a short account of their activism and asked whether they had any interest in further involvement in the research. The main purpose in obtaining this information was to gain some insight into their activism in order to make my final selection of participants. A secondary function was to assist in choosing what seemed to be the most relevant questions for the three interview rounds.

At the research proposal stage it was thought that first and second round interviews would take between one and a half to two hours to complete (this was an underestimate in most cases), with the third round shorter. Given those times and the predicted volume of transcriptions, it was evident that I had to make a choice to research for depth or breadth (Patton, 1990, pp. 184-186). Interviewing many activists might have revealed a greater number of processes but I felt that in-depth interviewing of a few individuals would reveal more than relatively brief interviews could, about how activists link these processes (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1995, pp. 12-13). It was important that the final selection be representative of a cross section of activists in terms of methods and issue interests. I did not feel that understanding of activism was at the stage that individuals could be selected who were representative of typical, extreme or critical cases (Patton, 1990, pp. 169-176). Thus, variation was the key criteria in making the final selection. In collaboration with my supervisor, I selected eight as being an optimal number of participants. Although the small sample size can be seen as a drawback as it is not representative, it can also be seen as an analytical strength. Any common patterns are likely to be of significance.

Letters were sent to each of the eight selected participants informing them more fully about the study and asking them to confirm that they wished to continue their involvement with the study. One person who had been equivocal about further participation in the study pulled out at this stage. Rather than go through the selection process again, a decision was made to proceed with seven participants (four women and three men).

DATA COLLECTION

Several different methods of collecting data, or data triangulation, increases the chances of uncovering material which might otherwise go undetected by one line of investigation: that is, the data are more comprehensive (Sarantakos, 1993, pp. 155-156). This study used four data collecting methods: interviews, including the opportunity for reflection, addition or amendment; access to diaries of participants and self; participant observations in the field; and media coverage (Miller & Fredericks, 1994, pp. 26-31).

One cautionary note before moving on; the interpretations and findings in this study are based on what the activists said during their interviews. As with the accounts in the results chapters I have taken the evidence at face value. Except for attending a few rallies or marches in their presence I did not spend enough time with them to know whether their views, behaviours, methods were as they described or whether those were the ideal which they tried to emulate.

Data collection effectively began with the series of sixteen short, exploratory meetings with a range of activists. After the field had been reduced to the seven principal participants, three interview rounds were conducted. It was planned that the first two rounds would focus on specific aspects of the participants' activism, the third was more of a review. The first round (held between 26-5-94 and 2-11-94) covered the aspects of sociodemography, early influences, values, theoretical orientation and history of activism. The second round (17-11-94 and 30-3-95) covered strategies, tactics, influences of successes and failures, and interpersonal factors. In the final round, (2-11-95 and 15-2-96) they were asked to validate their pen portrait which had been prepared from an analysis of material from the first two interviews (Chapter 4). Then they were invited to respond to questions which were intended to help integrate information garnered during all previous interviews. Finally they were asked how would they like to be remembered.

Each of the principal participants was asked to provide a copy from their diary, of their activist engagements over a period of either a week or a month. The aim was to establish how they structured their time between different activist interests and activities. Even although it has been shown that diaries can be misleading, the information in diaries was taken at face value and for the same reasons as with the interview material (Pyke & Agnew, 1991, p. 129). This information was then used in conjunction with interview material to form a comprehensive picture of the way in which activists allocate their time.

It was necessary to see each of the principal participants in action to experience their activism at first hand. Such participant observation allows the researcher to “be the eyes, ears and perceptual senses for the reader.” Participation enables the researcher to develop an insider’s view and is to be distinguished from being an onlooker which because it is more detached has less feel to it (Patton, 1990, pp. 26, 207). This participation technique permitted a cross check between what activists said that they did and the actuality. An additional benefit was that it was an opportunity to make observations which could support or add to data gathered in the interviews. The activists chose which situations they felt might be most appropriate or suitable for me to observe. I participated in several demonstrations, marches and rallies; joined a day-long picket; attended an eviction and an annual general meeting; prepared a mail out and was invited on an educational visit to the site of the former Aboriginal prison on Rottnest Island. I also attended an environmental group workshop which included activities designed to strengthen bonds within affinity groups.

Media reports are important to some activists and so a record was kept when one of the seven participants featured in television or radio news bulletins or had letters published in *‘The West Australian’* newspaper. A comprehensive and continuous coverage would have been extremely time consuming and could only have been justified in a different study. Thus it was never an intention to monitor continuously all media outlets, what was collected was often more by chance than design. But the information gathered was useful because it indicated how the activists raised, or responded to, issues of concern and it helped flesh out points raised in the interviews. On one occasion two participants were involved in an action which was covered on all

television channels. Wanting to assess what profile had been given to that item, each company was contacted for information on: the position of the particular item in the running schedule; its duration; whether the item had been shown on more than one bulletin; and potential viewing audience. Most companies were able to give responses to the first three queries but were extremely coy over the last. It was clear however that that particular public action had been shown to an extensive audience.

INTERVIEWS

The “primary focus of in-depth interviewing is to understand the significance of human experiences as described from the actor’s perspective and interpreted by the researcher” (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1995, p. 12). Such an intensive interaction enhances the interpretation of a dialogue because there are meaningful disclosures which can be heard in the nuance of conversation and seen in body language. These features are absent in text but an interview allows immediate probing to test what the researcher feels is being ‘said’ beneath the surface (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1995, p. 12).

Initially it was thought that plenty of time had been allowed for the completion of interviews and that the projected timelines for the completion of interview rounds was more than sufficient. The reality was quite different. It was often difficult to get mutually acceptable times to meet with some participants. Several interviews went longer than anticipated and had to be completed at later dates, fortunately within a week or so, ensuring that the context for any interview was essentially constant. These

factors lengthened the period over which an interview round was conducted; the first two being particularly affected. In turn, this influenced the overall schedule because the research methodology required that a round of interviews be completed before the next could commence. On both occasions this proved to be very time consuming and caused a loss of momentum in the study.

Interviews were carried out at places and times nominated by participants. Locations varied from empty offices in the workplace or belonging to a friendly organisation, benches in public spaces, homes, to the front steps of a house one hot evening. Most interviews took place during the day time and participants tried where possible to minimise interruptions, allowing for a flow to develop in the interviews. Immediately prior to the first interview, all participants were asked to sign a consent form which reminded participants that the study would be confidential and that they could withdraw at any time. Before each interview the participant was reminded that the interview was being tape recorded and also that at any time they could stop the interview if they wished. The tape recorder was always placed centrally between myself and the participant but probably became unobtrusive after a short time as it was only hand size. When asked, no participant said that they felt intimidated by its presence.

Not only was it important to maintain confidentiality, but each of the participants had a right to privacy (Patton, 1990, p. 355). During each interview I made every effort to be aware of this right. Whenever the interview content raised questions which could

have intruded into personal or private matters, the interviewee was given a clear understanding that they could refrain from answering (Sarantakos, 1993, p. 24).

At the start of both the second and third interviews participants were asked to reflect on their previous interview. Was there anything to add or wished to amend from what they had said previously? The answer was invariably, 'No', with one exception. In that instance, a participant wanted a number of responses connected to one issue deleted from the transcript of the previous round. Even acknowledging the confidentiality guarantee, that person felt happier with the material deleted and this was agreed to. The reason for the request however did give an insight into the considerations activists have to make.

All tapes, transcripts and potentially identifiable texts or materials were marked with an alphanumeric code and kept under close security during the entire length of the study. Copies of transcripts were forwarded to participants as they were completed. At the end of the study each participant will be offered the tapes as a memento. If they do not wish to keep the tapes they will be dubbed over.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Validation of findings

I have been the main analytical and interpretive instrument and followed a thematic coding procedure akin to that described by Strauss and Corbin (1990). In addition it

was planned that there would be three checking procedures in place through which one would expect that the findings would more closely reflect 'reality' than one method alone. The first involved the participants themselves. At the completion of each major analytical and interpretive phase, they were asked to validate the researcher's work. That is, they were asked to check whether the observations, analyses and interpretations were coincident with what they did, said or thought during data collection. This form of validation is known as communicative validation (Sarantakos, 1993, p. 76). The second cross check involved two student colleagues who were also undertaking qualitative research for the Master of Social Science degree. Each of these co-coders undertook to respect confidentiality within the study. Their function was to read two pen pictures and then thematically co-code from the relevant transcripts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The purpose of this check was two fold. The first was to ensure that the researcher's analyses, interpretations and findings were consistent with the data collected. This has the effect of improving dependability because more than one person has worked through the same processes and reached similar conclusions. The second was to reduce any intrinsic researcher effect (by pointing out any biases) and to act as a prompt, where other lines of enquiry might be suggested. In essence this cross-check was a substitute for investigator triangulation in which several researchers investigate the same topic (Patton, 1990, p. 187). It had the additional benefit that the co-coders were analysing the data from a different theoretical perspective (theory triangulation - Patton, 1990, p. 187). Both features contribute to the credibility of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 247). The final check was to have involved the principal, key activist informant, who because they belong to and understand the activist culture could make an assessment of findings

and say whether they are valid (Sarantakos, 1993, p. 183). That person was to have been asked to comment as follows: Were the findings believable from an activist's perspective? Were there any aspects which seemed novel, unusual or inconsistent? Did the findings suggest further interesting lines of enquiry? The timeline for thesis submission prevented this last check from being carried out.

Trustworthiness

A judgement on whether the findings of a study are to be trusted is based on a set of criteria which define the rigour of the enquiry. In the qualitative research paradigm, the overall goal is trustworthiness. It comprises four elements; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, pp. 246-249).

To be credible, the research techniques and methods must be firmly grounded and have been conducted in a rigorous manner (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, pp. 246-249). Open ended questions were written to avoid any suggestion that they were inviting a response which suited the researcher's perspective. Every effort was made to avoid asking leading questions and prompting although there was the odd failure. Three in-depth interviews were conducted with each activist. That means that their full attention was on activism for about six hours on average, in addition to the time which was spent with them in the field. This does not mean that every aspect of their activism is known but it does suggest that the investigation was conducted in a moderately comprehensive and credible manner (Patton, 1990, p. 255). Likewise, I

have had prolonged exposure to the data during analysis and interpretation. The peer review/ debrief also enhances the credibility of the findings.

In the qualitative paradigm the researcher influences the way in which data are collected and the analysis is unique to that individual. The entire endeavour is a reflection on the researcher. For the purposes of assessing investigator credibility it is necessary to give a pen picture (Patton, 1990, pp. 472-473). This is my first attempt at qualitative research although I have undertaken theory units at ECU and have been involved as an evaluator in a quality-of-life study (people with an intellectual disability). For over three decades I have sought to keep myself informed across a diverse range of social and political issues through radio, television, quality newspapers and general reading. The biases that I brought to the research are as follows: I do not identify as Australian or British but consider myself to be a citizen of the planet; my philosophical framework is close to the Greens (mid-green and deepening, I think); although my spiritual understanding is far from firm, I recognise a connectedness throughout the biosphere and do not accept that humans have any special rights or privileges within it. I also recognise a strong resentment towards privilege in general; a view which stems from my experience of the class system in Britain.

There are issues within the context of the research which limit the transferability of the findings (Pyke & Agnew, 1991, p. 111). The purposeful sampling only included activists working for 'progressive' goals and so findings may not transpose readily to those individuals with a conservative agenda. However the research topic is about process and since this is at least partly a cognitive endeavour, one could make the

reasonable assumption that there would be commonalities with other activists. The small sample size does reduce the extent to which the findings can be extrapolated to a wider field. Patterns which are common to many or all of the participants are likely to be significant and to have widespread validity. There are other contextual aspects which constrain the transferability of the findings. As an endeavour, activism is likely to vary between cultures because mores, norms and taboos will limit what is an acceptable course of action. There is a time-specific component. For example, demonstrations which were perhaps the typical form of action in Western countries in the 1960s and 70s have fallen out of favour as the principal tactic of the activist. The role and methods of social and political activists are influenced by the agendas and responses of the governments under whom they operate. Finally, even allowing for cultural differences, a radically different political climate would be a significant modifier of activists' behaviours.

Dependability of the findings is enhanced when the researcher provides an audit trail of how they were established. It allows other researchers to follow the arguments and reasons which led to those particular findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, pp. 247-248). This means that the researcher has to provide a discourse on how the data were analysed, what specific conclusions were reached at each stage in the process, and how those conclusions fit together into a coherent argument. This is termed argumentative validation (Sarantakos, 1993, p. 77). In order to develop an audit trail of ideas and insights, a diary and a series of butcher's paper records were kept throughout the study. These proved invaluable when it came to looking at how the analysis had progressed.

As has already been described, data, investigator and theory triangulation have all played a part in this study. Each of these procedures contribute to the confirmability of the study findings (Miller & Fredericks, 1994, pp. 26-31, 66-67). Other material which supports confirmability was the reflexive content of the diary and butcher's paper records which link evolving findings to original data (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 248).

This chapter has justified the use of the qualitative research paradigm and has described the detailed method which was followed in the study. All interaction with participants was carried out with the intention of ensuring that the research was pursued along ethical guidelines. The various means of collecting data and using cross checking procedures have ensured that the findings are trustworthy. The next chapter, **ACTIVIST PORTRAITS**, provides a pen picture of each activist, including information on their background and activist interests.

ACTIVIST PORTRAITS

INTRODUCTION

The findings of the research are included in the four following results chapters. This, the first - **ACTIVIST PORTRAITS** - comprises a brief profile of each activist. It reports on what made them become activists, the issues with which they have been involved and their worldview. The next chapter - **“IT’S JUST LIKE A RED RAG; I JUST GOTTA START” - Taking up an issue** - examines those processes which occur at the outset of an activist’s campaign. It looks at why a specific set of circumstances becomes an issue for an activist and what aspects an activist has to consider when they decide to take on the matter. The chapter **“CAPITAL ‘A’ ACTIVISM” - Campaigning**, covers all of those processes which occur during the period when the activist is endeavouring to effect change by presenting the arguments to the community and to institutions. The fourth results chapter - **“WE’D ALL HAVE BEEN GIVEN A PLANET EACH” - Working with people** - examines the interactions which occur during the campaign between the activist and their supporters, their allies and those for whom they advocate. It also examines the relationships between the activist and those who intentionally or otherwise are in opposition to the activist’s objectives. Within each chapter there are self reflective comments by some of the activists on how they perceive relevant aspects of their own

activism and that of others. Having very briefly described the content of each results chapter, the focus now returns to the **ACTIVIST PORTRAITS**.

This chapter comprises a series of pen portraits of each of the seven activists who took part in the main body of the research. Some activists have been active for over two decades and others for much less and this explains the varying lengths of portraits. The content of this chapter was derived mainly from the transcripts of first round interviews. Table 1 (page 76) includes further information on the principal issue interests of each of the seven activists.

SUZI

When the study began in 1994, Suzi was thirty seven. Her parents, who were professional people, migrated to Western Australia from England when she was ten. Although she has a university degree, she has mainly worked as a tradesperson. She has stood for the (WA) State parliament representing a minor party. Suzi acknowledges that her parents and brother were the people who most influenced her orientation towards activism. Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War was also a significant influence. The realities of war appalled her and she was shocked and outraged at Australian involvement. That war and a campaign in support of marijuana legalisation (which she did not smoke), were the two events which caused her to become involved in activism.

Suzi considers non-violence as one of her principal values. Honesty, being true to higher principles, honouring of an individual's spirit and respecting opponents are other important values which guide her activism. These values became embedded as she was growing up within a supportive and intellectually critical family environment. During her teenage years she would often contemplate or meditate on her values. She would like to see greater respect between individuals in society as well as for community values. Another objective is to be able to engender within society a sense of awe about the environment.

She feels that by 'remembering' and tapping into our ancestral consciousness we can 'see' a desired future. She feels that governments are usually unsuccessful in engineering social change and she believes in the 'bottom up' principle. She is a firm believer in the potency of community education and of empowered individuals to effect change. Suzi accepts that change can be rapid once it is viewed as preferable by a critical mass of individuals. She believes that change sometimes only occurs through resistance and coercion. Suzi likes the term 'activist' because it places an importance on 'doing.' She posits that while paid activists sometimes do have to make compromises, it is often they who sustain social movements.

Suzi's first activist efforts occurred during her school years, and then later during the environmental protests in the northern part of the Darling Range jarrah forest. Her choice of issues is dependent not only on interest and concern, but also on location. The crucial factors in Suzi's approach to activism are the resources, time and energy available to her, in addition to making a judgement about what is the most critical

issue. She is particularly attached to environmental activism because it allows her to operate within the setting she loves. She has subsidiary interests in international aid and feminism.

Suzi does have a mental check list which she goes through when developing a campaign but she will use her intuition when dealing with unexpected or random elements. She finds strategising more difficult in those campaigns in which the issues are broadly defined. She uses many tactics in her activism and would be prepared to use tactics which are illegal if the situation warranted it, but would not contemplate any which involve harm or violence towards people.

Suzi believes that luck contributes to a successful campaign. Other factors include building awareness, ensuring that the participants are connected, committed to each other and feel good about what they are doing. For her, a successful campaign does not have casualties. A lack of commitment, a breakdown in interconnectedness, burn out and incurring the full force of legal repercussions can all contribute to campaign failure. She accepts that the successful activist needs an extraordinary amount of energy, an ability to maintain personal integrity against opposition, to enthuse and energise, to communicate well, to argue well and to be able to wear down the opposition.

Suzi normally operates within a group but she will sometimes leave the group to meditate. If progress is slow, or if she disagrees with the group's approach she will work on her own. She finds that interpersonal difficulties tend to arise with her allies

when there are fundamental differences in the approach or method to be adopted. She acknowledges that she finds it hard to accept people who were allies and subsequently joined the opposition.

Suzi feels that she has an abundance of energy, a good history and knowledge of issues, an awareness of subtleties in group dynamics and an ability to strategise. She feels that she is a good leader, letter-writes well, has a commitment to drawing in others and nowadays a greater tolerance to others whose style or perspective is different. She feels that a spiritual dimension adds to her activist attributes as does her irreverent sense of humour.

ANDY

Andy was brought up in Perth by strict Catholic parents. At the outset of the study in 1994 he was forty one years of age and married with three children (a fourth on the way). He was working fulltime and unpaid from an ecumenical base which he had jointly established with another Christian activist. The location of his activities then moved to a place which could also serve as a drop-in centre. His only income was through donations from well-wishers and a share of that derived from his wife's part-time job. He has had a career as a teacher.

There were many early influences on Andy's orientation towards activism: the employment discrimination directed against his father, the self denial of his mother, the injustices and brutality of his schooling, his abhorrence of the Vietnam War, his

appreciation of the Young Christian Student movement and several local and international Christian activists. He acknowledges that his mother was a fighter, that he rebelled against a strict upbringing and that his wife affirmed him as a person of value and gave him Biblical awareness. He recognises that a study tour to the poorest parts of the Philippines was his most profound conscientising experience. He experienced a profound emotional effect upon returning from there. He despised his own country but the experience had deepened his spirituality making him realise his options for life and caused him to harmonise his lifestyle with his values. Involvement with the Fringe Dwellers of the Swan Valley has also fired his activism.

His values are Christian ones; loving his neighbour as himself, sharing with others, mercy, forgiveness, compassion and dignity of the person. He feels compelled to act for justice, to empower others and to resist the current values of society. He has always held these values although they were found again, reaffirmed or enhanced by the influences of some school teachers, the Young Christian Student / Young Christian Worker movement, his wife and the visit to the Philippines. His work is a calling and his values underpin all that he does.

Andy feels that he is responding to a call from God. He has worked on many issues and partly that was because of his role within a Christian agency. For the poor and the oppressed he wants to bring justice, equality, equity and access to resources. He seeks peace between people and the demise of economic rationalism. He would also like to see a greater global responsibility to brothers and sisters overseas. He feels that change comes about at the grass roots level by empowering people, through mutual

support and strengthening the power of the community. Andy recognises that there are some paid activists who are genuine in their commitment but it is a difficult role and they are in danger of losing their jobs (as he did) if they overstep what authority deems to be acceptable.

Andy sees many factors within the context of his social action including recognising his limitations, whether the issue is a neglected or unpopular one and whether he feels that he is needed. He recognises that there are discrete steps in developing a strategy for action. He follows a motto of 'See-reflect-act,' and may go through this sequence quickly or slowly and at various stages during a campaign. Andy tries to use his intuition and is prepared to change his priorities.

Andy will use public actions, the media, or work behind the scenes with bureaucracies or on committees to bring about the changes he seeks. He believes that tactics should challenge people and favours those which are empowering to his supporters and which have a powerful effect on the community. He also recognises resistance as an extremely powerful weapon. He is quite prepared himself to use illegal tactics if the evil is great enough. Andy accepts that demonstrations and marches have not changed governments and he places less reliance on these tactics than he used to. He accepts that it is detrimental to demonise opponents and endeavours to see their point of view. On completion of a campaign whenever time permits, he will debrief and evaluate its processes and impact.

Andy believes that God calls him to be faithful not to be successful. The opposition's bottom line objectives may preclude a successful outcome and unexpected happenings can sink the best laid plans. Nowadays he feels that he has more spirituality and that his activism is guided and focussed through greater, but still not enough, use of prayer and reflection. He questions his motivation more than he did and has used retreats to gain courage and insight.

He believes that a successful activist is marked by strong commitment, a good methodology, an involvement with others, having a supportive and resourceful community. He recognises the need to nurture his spirituality, to network, thank others, plan and prepare thoroughly, use experts, be able to take spontaneous action and be prepared to spend time in prayer and reflection.

Andy feels that he brings a history of commitment to his call, a stand for justice, credibility, a Christian presence, motivation, leadership abilities and a knowledge of the limit of the rules. He believes that he will not put others in danger, gives people responsibility and empowers them, supports and complements the work of others, shares resources, has good organising skills, is able to develop working groups and speaks well in public.

JENNY

When the study began in 1994 Jenny was forty six. She was brought up in country Western Australia and had an emotionally abusive childhood. She obtained a

university qualification and took up employment in a government department. Her activism is voluntary and is done partly in association with an indigenous organisation. She had a breakdown at one stage resulting from her traumatic childhood.

Jenny feels that her experiences with Aboriginal people who lived and worked on the family farm had a profound influence on her decision to work for social and political change. She feels that she owes them a huge debt. Her husband too has played a significant role. Jenny felt personally devastated after listening to a young Aboriginal woman in Bandyup Prison whose circumstances led her to decide not to have children. This poignant story prompted her to start working for change. More generally, she feels that Aborigines have not received just reward for their contribution to the community.

Jenny holds people-centred values such as love, justice, no discrimination, faithfulness, reward for effort, a right to basic well-being and empathy with others. She sees herself as personally conservative and publically radical. Her values have continued to develop since she was a girl and they form the basis for her work.

Jenny would like to see Aborigines getting back their land. She would like to see more equality in society, fewer people being imprisoned and treatment programmes for abused children particularly those with financially poor parents. Other changes for which she is striving are a reduction in unemployment particularly youth unemployment and more indigenous involvement in Aboriginal health programmes. Jenny wants to see modifications in the practices of bureaucracies, for example in the

rehousing of evicted tenants. She believes that change comes about through grass roots activism. She feels that white Australian society would benefit if it adopted some Aboriginal values. She feels that there is room for collaborative work between paid and unpaid activists such as herself.

The apparently negative or uncaring attitudes of bureaucracies and political parties are significant factors in the context of her activism on Aboriginal housing campaigns as is the lack of indigenous involvement and representation in government, unions and the welfare sector. Another major consideration for her is the stress within many Aboriginal families which influences her choice of tactics.

Her choice of tactics is strongly influenced by the views of those Noongars [indigenous people of south west Western Australia] who are directly affected by bureaucratic decisions. Jenny likes to develop a united front with a number of like-minded bodies such as the churches, welfare agencies and community groups. She tries to get Aboriginal families involved in negotiations with bureaucracies and to link them with those institutional structures which have Aboriginal representation. She encourages support from the Aboriginal community and endeavours to accompany them when they make representations to decision-making bodies. These days she feels that it is appropriate for Aborigines to speak for themselves and she will only speak publically if invited by them.

Jenny tends to use the media, legal process and public action as her main tactics and would seldom consider being on a committee. Jenny has cut down on direct actions

because they can further traumatise an already emotionally distraught family. She feels that she needs to be aware of the threats to funding, organisations and to spokespeople. In particular she does not want Aborigines to be further disempowered. Jenny prefers to work outside bureaucracies and would like to see them more regulated.

A successful campaign is marked by unity of Aboriginal groups, participation at every level, careful documentation of the circumstances of those needing support and by taking account of the feelings of individuals and families. The reasons for failure often include white racism at the community level and a lack of consciousness at the party political level. She prefers to be supportive behind the scenes encouraging Aborigines to take a leading role in working for change. In her activist work she has been confronted by many emotionally distressing situations and on occasions has become overwrought. Jenny is working to minimise that effect because she believes that it is very important for her 'to live to fight another day' and 'to keep her eye on the main game.' In the past Jenny did not always separate her own emotional traumas from her activism but now she recognises the need to separate the two to enhance her activism. She feels that the most successful activists are those who have suffered greatly because it grounds activism, develops empathy, discipline and clear judgement.

Jenny always operates within a group, not only out of necessity given the issues, but also from preference. She finds that it is very soothing to work with Noongars because they work carefully and without haste. She finds it difficult to work with insensitive white people, particularly bureaucrats and politicians. Jenny believes that

she is dedicated and persistent and is prepared to study to achieve skills which are relevant to her activism. She considers that she has good writing skills and writes good reports. She has a good knowledge of many Aboriginal families. She feels that she is becoming more able to see things from another person's perspective. Jenny has a good network through the union movement and many contacts in law.

ERIC

Eric who was forty six in 1994, is a member of the Noongar people who are indigenous to south west Western Australia. He was brought up in Perth by parents who were deeply committed to their family. His mother became, in effect, mother to many homeless or disadvantaged children and she was also active in two community-oriented social movements. There were a number of people who had an influence on Eric's orientation towards activism. His parents invited many local and interstate political figures to the house and these also influenced Eric. As he began to experience discrimination for himself as a pre-teenager he became angry with a system which he felt was neglectful. This was when his activism began and it was motivated by a belief in an ethos of mutual care.

Eric's values include honesty, helpfulness, supporting others, listening to them, assisting them to focus on issues and how they might be resolved. They have been picked up through sharing and learning, and by observing his mother's work in the community and his father's stability and commitment to his family. Political training strengthened and sharpened those values. He tries not to judge people too quickly and

believes that it is important when asked to give help to also give some direction. He likes to pursue all avenues when tackling an issue and tries to establish the nature of family relationships and people's environment or circumstances.

Eric is seeking to bring about many changes in society including empowering Aborigines, giving them control over their affairs and enabling them to exercise freedom. He feels that indigenous advancement is best met through the auspices of an Aboriginal government run by indigenous people who are real achievers. Eric believes that Aborigines should be identified by tribe, and that they should retain and have control over their intellectual, cultural, religious and spiritual identity.

Eric believes that radical change is necessary and that it comes about by opportunity for those self directed, non-conformists who want to achieve better things. He believes that his function as an activist is to awaken people, inspire them, and put across a point of view. He asserts that paid activists are constrained by boundaries which they do not want to cross and by a desire not to create too much controversy.

Eric feels that by keeping abreast of what's happening both nationally and globally he can operate proactively, which he sees as important. He keeps in touch with people and other activists nationally and overseas, and also tries to meet important political visitors to Western Australia. Eric keeps his name to the fore by talking on radio, faxing letters and articles to newspapers and TV stations and using the Internet. He feels that his political paintings are also a factor in his activism.

Eric accepts that it is important for him to keep in mind what the public is saying and to respond to government when required. He believes that it is important for the public to be reassured on some issues (land rights). For Eric, developing a campaign is like reading a book; there is a sequence to it. He feels that it is important to listen and talk to his supporters, speak in their language, cater for their physical well-being, and be involved in the everyday things. Eric feels that intuitively he can tell when there is going to be a need for spontaneity and that can be an exciting time. He monitors his opponents' tactics, checks on 'destroyers,' and will pre-empt some counter or detrimental action. He acknowledges that he does not shirk from a 'blue.' In what he accepts was an apt observation, he was described as having the joint characteristics of a butterfly and a tiger; cool and colourful, stealthy and quick to pounce.

Eric uses a broad range of tactics in his activism: the Internet (he has his own home page), puts out material in foreign languages, contacts various ethnic groups and uses his overseas network, mail and telephone services and speaks at conferences. He does not feel that there is much value in the legal process. Although he believes that his community has been subjected to State terrorism, Eric does not consider using violence nor does he condone retaliation. He accepts that when TV cameras are filming a direct action he needs to ensure that his slogans are heard, including those voiced in foreign languages. During a rally against Pauline Hanson, other activists emphasised, just as Eric does, the need to get their message across in languages other than English (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Multilingual banners, anti-racism (Pauline Hanson) demonstration (North Perth, 4.5.97).

For a successful campaign, Eric accepts that he needs to get to know the facts, needs to have a firm idea of what will be achieved and needs to encourage involvement by passers-by. He acknowledges that it is also important to talk about success in order to generate success. He will present an issue in a simplistic way and get it across to lots of people. He will take on other people's concerns, be constructive and be prepared to answer criticisms. Collaborators, and being let down by colleagues whose funding may be jeopardised by involvement, have the potential to cause campaign failure.

Eric has worked on his anger and these days feels that his activism reflects greater experience. He feels that successful activists are born although he accepts that experience and political training are valuable. His decisions to work alone or in a

group depend on the situation. Sometimes it is necessary to act spontaneously, perhaps to keep the momentum up and then he usually acts on his own. He never abandons things.

Eric acknowledges that there can sometimes be interpersonal difficulties when he works with Aborigines who are employed by government departments or involved with Christian Churches. He tries to accept differences within his network of allies but is dismissive of ATSIC [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission] as an organisation.

Eric believes that his Noongar heritage is a strength which he brings to his activism. He acknowledges that he is not shy and or afraid to speak to large groups. He feels that he can keep people's attention and make points clearly. He maintains that his activism has been consistent through time. He has travelled extensively overseas and is a strong unionist: both aspects have given him an extensive network of contacts. Eric tries to empathise with others, to understand their past, tries to fire them up and get them fighting on issues.

GWEN

Gwen was fifty one when the study began in 1994. She comes from a large family and spent her entire school years as a boarder at a Christian school in Perth. Whilst her family was growing up, she managed separately, and jointly with her husband, a number of successful small businesses. All of her advocacy work is voluntary and part-

time. Gwen feels that her mother was the most significant influence in developing an activist outlook, although nuns at the convent school she attended also played an important role. Later in life she met and was influenced by a Victorian human service activist.

Gwen's first contact with people with an intellectual disability was at an institution in Swanbourne (Perth) when she was a teenager. Then, aged about thirty seven, Gwen responded to a newspaper advertisement seeking volunteers to work at a school for children with intellectual disabilities. She started advocating for changes to staff practices which she felt were demeaning to the pupils. However when she was about forty three, the spark which set her off on a course of passionate activism was visiting the large institution at Caloola in Victoria, which accommodated several hundred people with an intellectual disability. She felt very angry that such an institution still (then) existed in Australia. It was such a de-humanising place and she threw herself into trying to close it down.

Gwen's principal value is equality. She believes that everyone should be treated equally and that those who need support from the community should get that as a right. Gwen feels that she has always held this value and that it enables her to empathise with others.

Gwen's principal goal is to improve the quality of life for those who currently lack that because of their intellectual disability. She would like to see the relevant government department alter the way that it works in order to improve services for those with

disabilities. She would also like to see community attitudes become more accommodating and understanding. She believes that change is brought about by government policy implementation. She sees herself as an activist because her principal activity for people with an intellectual disability is advocacy.

When Gwen advocates for others, her first step is to try and establish the facts of the case which usually concerns discrimination or inadequate care. She does her homework, cross-checking with other people, looking at circumstances and possible contributing factors. She uses a network of others in the field to assist her. Gwen always tries to go through the correct channels and uses the appropriate protocols to get to the person or persons who can bring about the change she is seeking. The principal targets for her activism are agency managers, politicians and bureaucrats.

Gwen tends to use committees as a means of bringing about change. She is hesitant about using the media but has written to newspapers and contacted radio stations. She would not use any tactic which has a negative impact on the privacy or dignity of the individuals for whom she is advocating. She tries not to highlight a person's incapacity when she is making a case for them. Although she has only used it rarely, she has found that 'blowing her cool' can make others more amenable to the changes she seeks.

Gwen feels that the most important factor in bringing about change is for the activist never to accept failure. One of her goals is to create awareness amongst those who have the power to effect change. Gwen recognises that there are always new goals to

be reached. She feels that nowadays she is more calculated, has a network and is prepared to use it, is more prepared for consequences, uses her time and energy more efficiently and has more credibility amongst the professionals in the field. For Gwen, the successful activist has a goal and perseverance, is not side-tracked, does not change issues, is always checking back with their values, is humble and needs to know why they are motivated.

Earlier in her activist 'career', Gwen felt that she lacked credibility and could not be categorised because she lacked professional qualifications. She thinks that people were wary of her because they suspected that she had an ulterior motive. Gwen acts on her own although she uses committees as a resource and for information gathering. She recognises that being on committees gives her credibility and therefore more power to influence change. She feels that she has demonstrated a commitment to those on whose behalf she advocates. Gwen feels that one of her best attributes is that she knows personally the individuals for whom she is working. She knows their perspective and therefore is able to keep their concerns at the forefront of her efforts. Gwen also feels that she knows where she herself is coming from and why she is doing it.

BRETT

Amongst the seven, Brett is the youngest activist by some way, being only twenty three in 1994 when the study began. He is from Perth and comes from a middle class background which espoused a conservative ideology at variance with his perspective.

He is not in waged employment and has suspended his university studies. Much of his time is spent in unpaid activism with various groups related to peace, anti-militarism and anti-neocolonialism.

As he grew up and became aware (after the event) of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, he became disgusted with the whole notion of war as a supposed solution to solving conflict. He felt personally threatened by nuclear weapons and became affronted and angry. He was amazed at the public's apparently blase attitude to this global and horrific threat. He joined a nuclear disarmament group, several of whose members influenced his activism.

Brett feels that his values do not correspond exactly to those of any political party but he feels close to the principles espoused by The Greens. Those principles include caring for the environment, peace, social justice and participatory democracy. He has a pacifist stance, rejects capitalism and resents situations in which a few people have control over others. His values were acquired as a teenager and he is continuing to refine them.

Brett has moved from single to multiple issue work believing that there is a connectedness between them. He recognises that the changes he wants to see in society will take a long time to occur. He supports the call for East Timorese self determination and is a committed anti-militarist. He would like to see conflicts being resolved non-violently, a reduction in the importance of nationalism and national sovereignty, and people becoming more self aware and politically astute. He feels that

it is important for there to be a greater level of political activism and increased debate on peace and disarmament. Although he acknowledges that there are several ways in which change can occur in society, he is only interested in community or grass roots' methods because he believes in the benefits of people working together.

When Brett is about to take up a particular issue there are a number of issues which he has to take into account including his personal social situation, the political climate and obligations to others. He sees it as particularly effective to convince the public that they have the power to effect change. Brett is quite happy to use any tactics to achieve his ends but he would not use violence against the person or damage property. Actions should be appropriate to the issue, accessible and thus not offend the sensibilities of those involved or those who might potentially be on his side.

Brett accepts that the social bond between himself and other activists is a fundamental part of his activism. He works hard to ensure that the group is working in harmony, that it resolves internal conflict, supports new members, utilises new perspectives, clarifies issues. He asserts that it is vital for groups to have appropriate (participatory and non-hierarchical) power and decision-making structures. He believes that public education is an effective means of minimising the influence of opponents' tactics.

Brett feels that successful campaigns have been those with clearly defined aims and which involve committed people. Having a sympathetic public and working with issues which are already in the public arena are also important factors. Amongst

aspects which precipitate failure are misjudging other people's commitment and presenting the case in an inaccessible way.

He feels that the successful activist has the ability to excite and work well with others. Furthermore they are good listeners and administrators, personally organised, able to make and keep a commitment, able to accept that there is more than one way of achieving an end, flexible, experienced, have vision, self-confident, know about and are honest with themselves, and recognise those with common values.

Brett enjoys working within groups although sometimes there is not a group with which he can work on an issue and this is frustrating for him. He has noticed that some of the interpersonal problems within activist work include the tendency to form stereotyped images of others and thereby prejudge them, and the difficulty some individuals have in attaching to groups and vice versa. He feels that some friendships which develop between activists can have a detrimental effect on good group dynamics.

Brett feels that the attributes which he brings to his activism include, knowledge of his skills and an honesty about the deficiencies, a desire to learn from a wide network of contacts in different groups, and an ability to organise meetings, make connections between issues and be a catalyst for information flow. He recognises that sometimes he does miss opportunities and may misjudge people. He likes to deal with challenges to his philosophy and seeks such opportunities by attending different forums.

TRISH

Trish was thirty nine when the study began in 1994. Her family came to Perth from elsewhere in Australia when she was four. She holds a part-time position in an education establishment and also runs a small private business.

Trish acknowledges that her orientation towards activism was influenced by a number of individuals - her parents, brother, two teachers, an aunt, an uncle and a senior student at school. There was no event which put Trish on a course to activism but family memories of the Holocaust became impressed on her consciousness in her school years. It was perhaps this link that made her identify with those who were bullied and she hated seeing that.

She believes that there should be opportunities for all, equity in a global sense and self determination for those who wish to be in charge of their destiny. She affirms the importance of compassion and of education. She believes that it is beneficial for people to bear responsibility for and connect with each other. She admires those with courage, those who take risks and social change crusaders. She feels that she has always held true to a stance of non-discrimination. She recognises that she was developing a 'feminist' perspective at school without using the term.

Trish has a range of objectives in issues as diverse as - more 'space' for feminism and gay and lesbian perspectives, land access for Aborigines, a zero defence budget, and cities to be designed for people rather than business. She accepts that change is often

brought about by people working within groups and for widespread change she accepts the validity of the 'hundredth monkey syndrome.' Trish affirms the value of public education to enable people to overcome their apathy and become empowered. She accepts that governments can effect change but only when there are sympathetic public servants in relevant positions of authority. She believes that Local Government has the potential to direct a lot of socially valuable change.

Trish acknowledges that she is an activist both paid and unpaid. Her activism follows a consultative community approach. She believes that it is important to 'extend the boundaries' in an intellectual sense but also practises that on a more practical level in her activism. Even as a young teenager she began to take on calculated risks. She recognises the importance of perseverance in activism.

She likes to be able to work on several quite different areas, all of which have interest for her. There are a number of crucial factors which Trish has to consider in her activism. She is aware that in the women's movement over the centuries there have been cycles of progress and retreat and backlash is inevitable. Lack of resources is a major factor in her activism on environmental and gay and lesbian issues.

She has a very thorough approach in developing a campaign which may vary depending on whether she is being pro-active or reacting to an existing situation. During the learning stage of a campaign, she will establish a frame for herself and others. She endeavours to recognise the internal and external blockers and be sensitive to cues. Trish tends to work with those who may be amenable to being converted

rather than those maintaining an opposite stance. She uses a range of tactics; the media, direct action, committees, letter writing, and minor illegal stunts. Although she does seek consensus, experience has taught her not to give it primacy because it can take so long to achieve.

Trish feels that a campaign has been a success if media coverage has been good, positive and accurate, if the participants are not damaged and they feel good about the outcomes. Even if there is only minor movement towards the goal, a campaign can be said to be successful. She acknowledges that one of the most evident reasons for failure is intra-ally conflict.

Trish has extended her networks into more areas and feels that she has learned lots from others over the years and this has improved her activism. She has adopted a more wholistic style, ensures that processes are maintained and kept on track and tries to make participants feel good about their involvement.

She believes that successful activists work reciprocally within extensive networks, have good interpersonal skills, communicate assertively, make people feel good, are available to others, can 'suss out' the 'lie of the land,' communicate well both in writing and through the media, are able to manage, can access resources, are able to develop supportive groups, nurture self, are determined and persistent, have a historical and political perspective which provides a framework for analysis, are skilled at dealing with different kinds of people, have vision and are able to empathise with those who are not allies.

Trish likes to be able to work in groups but also enjoys the freedom of working alone. She acknowledges that she is a perfectionist and that she can be impatient particularly when others are slow. She accepts that occasionally she makes value judgements about people. She considers herself to be fervent and recognises and tries to curtail her occasional impatience.

She feels that her attributes and skills as an activist include: her extensive networks, ability to have her finger on the pulse of many issues, media skills, good communicator and facilitator of groups, adept at conflict resolution and good interpersonal skills with a variety of people. She considers that in a crisis she is able to see clearly and calm others. She believes that she is a good strategist, has determination, is able to ask for assistance, can move into new areas and quickly learn what is important without the need for formalised training. She feels that she is able to market herself well. Trish considers that she has chameleon-like qualities which she sees as invaluable since they allow her to move easily between different areas of her activism.

This chapter has introduced the seven activists and the next chapter, **“IT’S JUST LIKE A RED RAG; I JUST GOTTA START” - Taking up an issue**, describes how these individuals assess and then become involved in situations (for Table 1, see over page).

	Suzi	Andy	Jenny	Eric	Gwen	Brett	Trish
Age (1994)	37	41	46	46	51	23	39
Social justice	X	X					X
Lesbian feminism							X
Feminism	X						X
Aborigines		X	X	X			
People with intellectual disabilities					X		
Illegal immigrants		X					
Peace	X	X				X	
Anti-militarism						X	X
Anti-nuclear	X					X	X
Anti-neocolonialism		X				X	
Pro-choice							X
International aid	X	X					X
Environment	X			X		X	
Prisons		X					
Landmines		X					
Anti-racism		X	X	X			X

Table 1 Principal issue interests of activists participating in this study (X).

“IT’S JUST LIKE A RED RAG; I JUST GOTTA START”**- Taking up an issue****INTRODUCTION**

What sets activists apart as a sub-culture is how they perceive the world and how they respond to it. Others observe social injustices or corporate desecration of the environment and can continue their lives without any undue concern. But for activists, the impact is much more striking and challenging. This chapter examines what feelings are generated by such observations and how and why activists respond in the way that they do. For them, it is an issue; a matter of some greater or lesser concern which they are driven to try to resolve. The issue can not be overlooked or dismissed; it has to be taken up. The influence of context, public perceptions and of resources available, are all pertinent to the activist as they develop a strategic plan of action. The chapter concludes by reporting on how activists approach the more detailed planning of a campaign.

RECOGNISING AN ISSUE

An activist’s value system seems to act as a filter through which they view the world (Stewart & Healy, 1986, p. 16). What is observed, heard or sensed personally or through a network, about situations, practices and processes, is passed through this

filter. The information is filtered to test whether it contains aspects which conflict with their value system. These contradictions or discrepancies although they may be consistent with frames legitimated by government are seen as violations (and that is not too strong a word) against the activist's value system (Gamson, 1988, p. 219; Eder, 1993, p. 38). For activists, recognition of that conflict is the point when perceived 'wrong' becomes an issue. This process of observation and evaluation against a value system can be regarded as the first an activist takes (Sills, Butcher, Collis, & Glen, 1980, p. 191). More information or further analysis may expand or refine the issue, but it has been born. Unjust situations, discriminatory behaviour, malpractices and deficiencies in institutional procedures and processes and a sense that community values are warped, seem to be the most commonly identified issues for progressive activists (Figure 6). For Suzi, it does not matter whether it is people starving in Africa or a tree being knocked down at the end of the road. That knowledge or awareness of something being 'wrong' acts as a trigger, which in Andy's case often initiates an immediate response: "I just get so angry if I see injustice or things you know that have nothing to do with me, you know I'm poking my nose in. Its just like a red rag, I just gotta start."

Dear Friend of East Timor •

IN HIS OWN WORDS " Well if there'd been a more public process there probably wouldn't have been the Treaty" - Keating ABC 7pm News - Monday 18 December 1995 after the signing of the Agreement

Well, you may ask "what kind of democracy do we in Australia enjoy?" On the eve of the 'silly season' as soon people call the Xmas break, Keating does a deal with a military dictatorship (Indonesia) who not only is constantly condemned for its human rights abuses but recently topped the poll of 41 countries surveyed as being the most corrupt. The Agreement is announced three and a half days before it is to be signed, Parliament is not sitting leaving no time for Keating to take on board criticism of, or amendment to an Agreement that could have a profound effect on Australia.

PALM SUNDAY

MARCH 31 1996

CONFRONTING THE IDOLATRY OF MONEY



***Starting Midday at the Reserve Bank,
45 St Georges Tee, then proceeding with
palms to the Stock Exchange for a liturgy***

Figure 6. Comment on sneaky preparation of security treaty between Australia and Indonesia; Palm Sunday flyer re. march to the 20th century 'temple', Perth Stock Exchange. (Friends of East Timor, Feb. 1996; Christian Centre for Social Action, March 1996)

“YOU’VE GOT TO LIVE TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY”

- Involvement and its consequences

If the violation to one’s values is particularly strong there can be a sense of outrage. When such an issue has been recognised an activist can feel obsessed to get involved. There is no option; they can not ignore it, they are obliged to act (Berrigan, 1991, p. 369; Sinclair & Corris, 1994, p. 59-62). For Andy, whose activism has a strong Christian foundation, involvement is not an option but a directive from God. Getting involved may be a spontaneous action fuelled by outrage but it can also come from a more deliberate and analytical approach. Andy will often use the methodological framework known as ‘See-judge (reflect)-act’ (Cort, 1988, pp. 303-304). The issue is recognised, the situation is analysed and the activist chooses to become involved.

Other factors too come into the debate about whether the activist should become involved. If others are not doing it, then there is clear justification for self involvement. If not, who will work to protect that particular A class nature reserve? Or, who is going to work to support those marginalised people who are falling through the support networks? When there are many issues calling for input, a value-based judgement, reflecting the activist’s philosophy and perspective is used in the selection process. The choice may mean that on some issues, an individual is strictly an activist working for many on a broad canvas, whilst on others they may be advocating for one or a few individuals.

The decision to get involved may be made not in the full knowledge of possible consequences as was the situation with the so-called McLibel case in Britain. Even though the consequences were unexpected and emotionally heavy, the two activists involved seem to think that the issue warranted their involvement (Figure 7). After all, the positive outcomes for handing out some pamphlets were beyond all expectations. McDonald's response to the leaflets cost the company \$22 million in court costs and twelve million people have so far visited the activists' main web site. But even when there is a very real awareness of potential cost to self, employment, loss of funding and family, a decision to become involved is made despite these (Sinclair & Corris, 1994). It is also a decision Andy makes irrespective of public opinion. With a little laugh he summed up his position quite clearly:

If the issue's important, if the issue is one that calls for support, basically I don't give a stuff what other people think about it. ... I have four little children and I'm conscious of the sorts of things I do in terms of how that affects them. But ultimately if a thing has to happen then they have to learn to accept what I do.

Because activists tend to be challenging the status quo, they often find themselves to be targets of abuse. Jenny who works to improve housing conditions for Aboriginal families has experienced this: "I think they think I'm unreasonable and fanatical. .. you probably have to have a white fanatic to get it across to white people. ... I probably do irritate people." Because she feels "so emotionally bonded onto so many Noongar families", Jenny acknowledges that she has a tendency to become very emotionally

McProfit... McMurder... Mc Garbage... McHunger... McWasteful...

What's Wrong
With
McDonald's?



Small fries fight back after McLibel case

LONDON

TWO vegetarian activists have vowed to continue handing out their anti-McDonald's leaflets after losing a marathon libel case against the fast-food giant.

Despite Thursday's ruling that the leaflet defamed the company, McDonald's has not sought a court order blocking further distributions of the pamphlets by Dave Morris, an unemployed former postman, or Helen Steel, a part-time barmaid.

McDonald's was still unsure whether it would seek such an injunction. "That and a lot of other questions have yet to be decided," spokesman Robert Parker said.

Groups of anti-McDonald's campaigners say they will hand out the leaflets — entitled "What's wrong with McDonald's? Everything they don't want you to know" — during protests at about 500 British McDonald's restaurants today.

"No courts and no force on this planet are going to stop me expressing my opinion," said Mr Morris, at the end of the longest trial heard by an English court.

Minutes after leaving the High Court in London, Mr Morris and Ms Steel, who say their court defeat was actually a victory, were handing out the leaflets again.

"Judge for yourselves; read the leaflets. We will not be silenced," they shouted.

After spending an estimated \$22 million on the case, McDonald's was awarded only \$129,000 in damages. But the multi-billion-dollar company says it will not pursue the pair for the money.

Both Mr Morris, 43, and Ms Steel, 31, say they are penniless.

The top McDonald's executive in Britain, Paul Preston, said he was mostly satisfied with the ruling, which came on the 314th day of the so-called McLibel case.

"We wanted to show these serious allegations to be false and I am pleased that we have done so," he said.

Mr Preston said the decision vindicated the company.

But many observers claimed the McDonald's victory was a hollow one.

Even though Justice Roger Bell said the pair libelled McDonald's by alleging the company was tearing down rainforests, con-



Still smiling: Dave Morris and Helen Steel ask people to read their leaflets and judge for themselves after McDonald's won a libel case against them.

tributing to Third World starvation, and serving unhealthy food that might cause food poisoning, he sided with the left-wing campaigners on several points.

The judge found that the fast-food chain was responsible for animal cruelty and that it ran ad campaigns that encouraged children to pester their parents for McDonald's food.

Mr Bell also agreed with the defendants' contention that McDonald's paid low wages in Britain, which kept pay rates down throughout the British catering industry.

McDonald's issued writs against Mr Morris and Ms Steel and three other protesters in 1990 — four years after they handed out the leaflets in Trafalgar Square.

The company expected them to cave in and apologise in court rather than take on the might of a global corporation.

They were wrong. The other three protesters did apologise in court but Mr Morris and Ms Steel chose to defend themselves — a decision they have no regrets about, despite the harrowing toll on their health and personal lives.

"If I had known how long it was going to last — over seven years from the writs — how much work was involved, how daunting it was going to be, I would have fought it anyway. It's important to stand up for what you believe in," Ms Steel said.

The multi-national burger chain wanted to sue to retain the faith of its millions of employees and customers and hoped that by doing so it would muzzle the worldwide protest campaign against its corporate culture and practices.

But the case has had the opposite effect, spreading the allegations far and wide to millions of people who would otherwise have never seen the leaflet.

More than two million of the offending leaflets have been handed out since the trial began and the biggest of the several Internet sites devoted to the case, McSpotlight, has been visited almost 12 million times since its launch in February last year.

Mr Morris and Ms Steel say they will appeal their case to the human rights courts in Europe.

Figure 7. The McLibel saga and outcome (montage, *The West Australian*, 21.6.97; Christian Centre for Social Action, June 1995).

caught up in the “life and death” issues and this has been detrimental to her health. In order to minimise the harm to herself, she is trying to find alternative yet satisfying strategies which permit emotional attachment but reduce the stress. Despite the toll, Jenny realises that it is important to be able to continue the struggle: “I think perhaps a more stable person would just keep their eye on the main game more and just realise that you must stay balanced. ... You’ve got to ... live to fight another day.”

“I’VE WONDERED IF I’M A BIT TOO MUCH OF A CHAMELEON”

Some activists may be involved in several issues, or even issue domains, at a time, but Gwen prefers to concentrate on one domain. She feels that she can give everything to that one issue. She becomes so focussed that nothing can divert her attention from her goal. Other activists like Trish choose to work in more than one field. She sometimes questions whether this enhances her activism, but on balance she feels that it does: “Sometimes I’ve wondered if I’m a bit too much of a chameleon, ... because I like to step into all sorts of different arenas, but that’s a skill which can be very useful in political activism.”

If Brett was to be a member of only one group, he would not be able to satisfy his need to address those issues which beckon him. He believes that participation across different groups can sharpen perspective, extend knowledge and teach skills. It also channels information and builds bridges between groups and thus strengthens network links. But these activists generally see many issues which deserve involvement and they acknowledge that there has to be a rationalism of effort. Like most, Suzi has to

juggle her activist effort to where she feels that it is most needed: “Constantly, there’s see-sawing of energies, of resources being directed to whatever seems to be the most critical things at the time.”

When there is a group of activists already working on an issue, consideration may be given to the difference involvement would make to the overall effort (Oliver & Marwell, 1992, p. 252). If numbers are sufficient and they seem to be managing well enough, then efforts can be directed elsewhere more productively. If Trish is to continue to follow her activist interests she has to consider how she will allocate her effort, which because she has eclectic interests can make for difficult decisions. She has to also make adjustments to her personal life by working only part-time, freeing up time for activism.

Even when the issue presents a clear conflict with deeply-held values, an activist may still feel disquiet about involvement in an issue. When the values have sent such a clear message why should there be such a tension? Clearly, there is some other factor at work. For Andy the disquiet lies at the spiritual or psychological level and he questions himself whether it is his ego or God which is driving him. Gwen too, is of like mind but for a slightly different reason. She does not want to be doing things for an ulterior motive and has developed a monitoring strategy as a preventive measure. But if the decision is to get involved, then the next step is to get informed about the issue.

“VERY DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF REALITY” - Getting informed

Recognising an issue and deciding to get involved are insufficient foundations for mounting a campaign to redress a particular ‘wrong’. Knowledge is a critical resource without which time and money are wasted (Oliver & Marwell, 1992, p. 255). Only by developing an in-depth view, can activists address issues in an informed way (Sinclair & Corris, 1994, pp. 68-69). Activists refer to the process as doing their homework. Information is sought from many sources; their network and other activists, newspapers, television and radio, books and the Internet. A short cut to gathering information can be taken by contacting those who are perceived to be key people in the field. They may be those who have had a long association with the issue or made supportive statements.

The information required and the way it is collected may vary depending on the nature of the issue. Take as an example Gwen, who is advocating on behalf of individuals with an intellectual disability who have suffered an injustice. She finds that she may need to interview that person and others more than once to get the full facts on the matter. It is a tedious and time-consuming exercise but at least when completed, she can more effectively advocate for change. It can also be important to become informed in areas which at first sight seem tangential to the issue but which may be relevant or instructive. For example, Jenny has studied anti-colonial, indigenous, and cross-cultural literature in an effort to see things from other perspectives, whilst Eric maintains that being world-travelled can assist an activist to develop a more rounded view on issues. Through such experiences he and others learn from those activists that

they meet different ways of tackling issues. It is evident too that information gathering is not a passive exercise as Trish points out: “But you’ve got to be careful because depending on the faction or perspective of the person that you’re talking to, they can give you very different versions of reality.”

Activists will compile a wealth of facts about an issue and who is involved in it. But that is only a basic data base; it is information, not knowledge or wisdom. For that they need to process the information, analyse, evaluate and interpret it. Such immersion in the issue produces an in-depth perspective which is both comprehensive and internally consistent. Groups of activists will often pose themselves questions about what they will do with the information they possess. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses in the activist’s own and their opponents’ positions? What factors could assist a campaign and which could have a deleterious effect? Are there any organisations or even relevant government departments which would be able to provide assistance, comment or advice? All of these questions assist the activist to develop an understanding and appreciation of context. Doing this kind of homework is crucial because it will determine how the campaign will be pitched.

CONTEXT AND ITS INFLUENCE

Trish’s reference to “different versions of reality”, is an acknowledgment that issues, amongst other things, are not absolute. Political rhetoric certainly reinforces the notion that political and social issues are almost concrete in form. In the view of some, issues are constructs which emerge during the information-gathering stage from an

analysis of a particular situation (Koopmans & Duyvendak, 1995, p. 236). They belong within a context; be it political, economic, cultural, philosophical, spiritual or whatever. Having such an understanding, enables the activist to analyse the issue in its entirety and prepare a campaign which has an appropriate historical and political perspective. The context may not totally determine how, or even whether, an activist works on an issue but it does have a strong influence, as Brett explains: “The United Nations has never recognised Indonesia’s annexation of East Timor ... and that cuts out a whole range of United Nation’s forums [for applying pressure].”

One aspect to the context which is vital to understand is the location of power in an issue. Without knowing that, it is ineffective to rail for change if the effort is dissipated at a multitude of non-critical targets. Thus, because pressure is seen to be so critical to achieving success, much thought is given to where the pressure should be applied, what form it should take and at whom or what it should be directed. Once identified, vulnerable or strategically placed targets will become the focus of pressure during the campaign (May, 1994, p. 621).

Researching an issue will almost inevitably throw up a range of barriers to change. It is crucial to understanding the perspective of those opposed to change, if one wishes to discuss issues with them or to undermine their position (Ingamells, 1994, p. 203). The context may also contain systemic aspects which inhibit or frustrate attempts at change. For example, activists working on behalf of marginalised groups may not be able to harness the support of powerful institutions because members of those minorities are excluded and empathy is lacking. For Jenny the position is stark:

We're much further back than we should be because there is exclusion of Aboriginal people at all sorts of important levels of Government and ... local government, in the bureaucracies, in State political parties, in the trade union movement, in hospitals, in welfare rights centres.

As a consequence of being marginalised and excluded, Aborigines succumb to the onslaught from ill-considered government policies. For example, the trauma of Homeswest evictions is causing a devastating morbidity in the affected Aboriginal families. Serious illness and premature deaths, either 'natural' or by suicide, are a documented by-product of the evictions. Jenny acknowledges that latent racism has surfaced as a result of Homeswest eviction policies and practices (Figure 8). Some members of the non-indigenous community feel encouraged, indeed vindicated, by the policies and willingly encourage the eviction of Aboriginal families. Therefore she must shape her activism so that it highlights the injustices, but in such a way that there is no further deleterious impact on families. The context of Eric's activism is similar. He resents that racist attitudes towards Aborigines are commonly aired on some commercial, talkback radio programmes and he will respond to such speakers immediately.

Trish has a philosophically resigned outlook on the context for her feminist and lesbian activism based on an historical analysis of social change relating to women. She notes that while it is exciting to see enlightening change, she is under no illusions that the pendulum will inevitably swing back. What can make it even more galling is that



Figure 8 Eviction of Aboriginal Homeswest tenants in Perth (15.11.96).

sometimes the larger the gains, the greater the backlash. Although the context can seem hostile, elements within it do change over time. For example, when the Mabo decision was handed down recognising Aboriginal land ownership prior to invasion, Jenny felt that its symbolism gave indigenous people support from institutions which previously they felt had been impervious to their pleas:

I'm not sure that it will translate necessarily into material terms. But for them, the recognition of their prior ownership and occupation and their culture and religion, ... , because that affects every area of their lives, I think it's giving them a renewed feeling that they can speak and will be listened to.

The parameters or dimensions of a particular context are also at least partly determined by the activist's own experiences and perspectives. For some activists, local environmental issues may be just that, local; and they will be dealt with as and when they come up. But others may see a local issue as being part of a bigger scheme of related concerns. This perception alters how the issue is both viewed and pursued. Suzi's experience is instructive. She believes that visiting or working in other countries sensitises the individual to the global nature or context of many issues. But as with all activists she too has to consider what the context and perceptions are at the local level.

“FRINGE OF THE FRINGE” - Community perceptions

Before they can construct a strategic framework for a campaign the activist must know about themselves, what their philosophical position is, what they see as their role in society in general and how they want to function with their peers and supporters as well as in the broader social movement. They need to reflect on their role to find a position which is politically and personally amenable. This can include being aware of how they are perceived by the community because that may determine how they will approach an issue. Public perceptions of activists often include notions of “rabble” and an “aura of violence” (Martin, 1994, p. 13). As Trish remembers from a previous era: “but it wasn't even ‘loony left,’ ... they just saw us as total outcasts of society; as being really ... on the fringe of the fringe.” But even when activists are seen to be a bit eccentric they can still engender considerable community support (Wasielewski, 1991).

'Swampy' became a folk hero across Britain and further afield when he and others, in defiance of bailiffs and police, occupied a warren of hand-dug tunnels under the route of a proposed road re-alignment (Figure 2).

A campaign must be planned therefore with an appreciation of community perceptions. What is the level of awareness and concern in the community about the issue? What is the community's attitude on the issue? Is society interested in change or is it even hostile to the proposals and the activists (Peace, 1996, pp. 47, 51)? Trish stresses that knowing how a significant part of the mainstream feels about an issue is crucial if they are to become interested and active on issues but some topics are always difficult as Trish has found: "like the lesbian politics, where you've really got a very small percentage of society who actually think what you're striving for is right."

So the quest is to locate people who could be expected to be sympathetic on the issue. Is it likely that sympathisers can be recruited as participating supporters? It does not help if the natural constituency is thought to be uninterested and perhaps even suspicious as Trish sometimes feels with some in the feminist movement. While no campaign is easy some can be guaranteed to be difficult and emotionally draining. According to her, ethical and philosophical issues such as the abortion / pro-life question tend to be the most emotionally charged. Attitudes can be so entrenched and polarised that debates are often pointless; compromises and progress are difficult if not impossible to achieve. It is at such times that belonging to a supportive group can be a lifesaver.

“YOU END UP JUMPING OFF A BRIDGE” - Forming a group

During the homework phase, an activist will meet and establish contacts with many people. These personal contacts are important in themselves because they may be the genesis of new activist networks or friendships. They allow activists to identify those with similar values, to evaluate the perspectives others hold, both individuals and groups. It is also a time when an activist can become aware of the experiences and deeper social values of their supporters. Such knowledge acts to bond them together (Melucci, 1989, p. 35). But as Brett has found, it is important to make the correct choices, because it can prove traumatic to work with someone whose agenda turns out to be different from that originally envisaged.

Sometimes there is merit in getting involved where issues already have some level of support. Brett feels that it is useful to lobby on ‘live’ issues, that is ones which are currently in the public arena. His reasoning is two-fold. Firstly, the chances of bringing about social or political change are that bit closer than they would be with a ‘new’ issue with no public profile or activist momentum. Secondly, when awareness has already been raised, as after the Dili massacre according to Brett, “when people already have a sympathy with the issue”, or at an RAAF open day, activist efforts can be put directly into involving the community in the change process (Figure 3).

If the issue has been around for a time there may be a social change movement associated with it already. It is not necessary to work with others but most activists seem to seek others who have similar perspectives, potential allies in effect. They

decide to form a team to work on the issue bringing and swapping a variety of skills and experience to the task (Brown, 1989 p. 229). There are always ideas or suggestions which deserve to be given some attention and a group can be used as a sounding board. In a larger group, a small core team may be assembled to work on organisational, coordination or research functions. The task is not so mountainous when there is a mutual interest and when effort is shared. As Andy states: "If you try working on these sort of issues on your own ... you end up bashing your head against a brick wall and you burn out or you jump off a bridge or something."

Although the prospect of achieving change relatively readily is an enticement, it is not everything according to Brett. Just because an issue has not got a public profile is no reason to drop it if there is a matter to be addressed. He will take on and develop 'new' grass roots issues, some of which stem from his interest in the injustices which result from neo-colonialism in the Indonesian archipelago. Finding out what is happening on the ground is not easy because the situation may not yet have become an issue to outsiders. Research is time-consuming and information sources are few. Wanting to highlight the situation in one location he has joined with a few other activists to research specific topics, with a view to eventually giving the issues a public profile. Some colleagues felt that having a demonstration would be a good way to gain attention but Brett advised caution. He did not want to stifle enthusiasm but felt that as the issue had no public profile, a demonstration would achieve nothing.

Although there are many benefits to be gained from working together as a group, there are potential pitfalls, particularly in relation to communication. Suzi's experience has

taught her that group processes work much better when there are established communication rules. This is one of the first tasks a new group must set itself. Even at this early stage, the basic direction of a campaign may be decided. If the group is large, it may be necessary for practical purposes to select a small team or core group to work on various aspects, whether task or process. Brett feels that a core group can give the others a sense of security. The group's philosophical outlook will determine whether the core group operates autonomously or under the direction of the larger group.

Gwen is the exception amongst the seven activists because she chooses to work autonomously. Her activism involves interaction with agencies and government departments. Experience of the latter's bureaucratic culture and failings has led her to conclude that only by working autonomously is she really able to advocate effectively:

I'm not prepared to accept everything that they put down because I feel that unless you're coming from every individual's point of view you can hurt a lot of people. ... So that's why I like to be on my own; autonomous.

Gwen acknowledges that for someone who works alone and with bureaucracies, having credibility is necessary for her advocacy to have any chance of success. In her early activist days she felt that she lacked credibility because she did not meet any of the nominal 'qualifications' for anyone working in the field of intellectual disability. She did not have a relative who had an intellectual disability nor did she have an

educational qualification in the subject. But she feels that she has developed a credible track record of commitment, knowledge and understanding. Without that respect, Gwen believes she would not be able to achieve as much on committees and through government departments.

“ABSOLUTELY NO RESOURCES, BUT LOTS OF GREAT IDEAS”

A campaign can not be run without resources, of which time and in big chunks, energy and materials seemingly are universal prerequisites and perennially in short supply (Oliver & Marwell, 1992, p. 257). For some activists if not all, one of the first questions they ask themselves is, ‘Can I take on this issue? Do I have the time to be involved?’ Consequently, resources are used carefully and focussed on the most pressing issues. This juggling of effort may mean that the activist will work for a period mainly on say anti-nuclear issues and then take up environmental issues if the threat seems greater. Suzi’s experience is typical: “Constantly, there’s see-sawing of energies, of resources being directed to whatever seems to be the most critical things at the time.”

Apart from time, money too, even in the most minimal campaign is necessary. It may only be to cover the cost of phone calls but if a large network is to be contacted, that can be a significant cost. Materials need to be purchased in order to prepare publicity flyers, literature and posters *et cetera*. Funding is needed to cover printing and possibly postage costs. Activists acknowledge that they will use their own personal money to support a campaign, whether it is the cost of phone calls or ferrying people

around in their car. Restricted resources or limited funds can inhibit an activist from participating in their chosen role as Brett was to find when his car, which he was using to ferry people, was stolen during a South West forests campaign. Larger campaigns and those in which bigger groups are involved do require some level of funding. Many activist groups work with the minimum of resources, and seeking funds can become the job description. Trish always finds it quite frustrating to be applying time and energy into maintaining an organisation, given that her main goal is to promote change. But at least she can see a funny side to it as she recalled a time when five activist organisations shared a building in Perth:

And we were literally on the bones of our arses. And it got to the point where as the coordinator, most of the work that I was doing was to raise money to pay my salary to be the coordinator. ... I always seem to end up in jobs or in unpaid work where we've got absolutely no resources to do anything and we all have lots of great ideas.

Attempts to source funds include seeking donations from what are thought to be sympathetic individuals or organisations. Financial support from government bureaucracies is geared to their budgetary cycles so if they want to access those funds, activists like Trish are forced to plan around those timelines. In addition governments and government policies change and funding support can disappear almost overnight, which makes planning difficult. Even when governments have been supportive, they may withdraw their financial support if a particular campaign or event is likely to create a political backlash. For example, they may support organisations promoting

women's rights, but discontinue financial backing for a march supporting the rights of lesbians. Such experiences can test the resolve, principles and objectives of the activist and the group, as she concedes. Government largesse is rarely directed to marginalised groups and according to Trish, even less so to lesbian and gay organisations:

A friend ... puts in magnificent ... funding submissions to all of the rounds of grants that are available. But it appears to me, particularly at the[WA] State level, whenever people see the word 'gay' or 'lesbian', it just goes in a 'not-to-be-funded' pile.

The resources that need to be put into a particular campaign might at first sight seem quite disproportional to the situation but, as Andy justifies it in connection with a complex immigration / deportation case involving one individual, his decisions are based on a value system far removed from clinically detached legal arguments or theories of economic rationalism:

If I looked at it legally, I might say, 'There's a very slim chance of him remaining in Australia [he did obtain residence].' If I looked at it in terms of time allocation I might say if I was working for an organisation, ... 'Well how can I justify spending so much time on one person?' Well, that's not how we sort of attempt to make decisions here. He's a person who needs support.

Having appropriate facilities can enhance or hinder the group's operations. A convenient meeting place is required because once a group gets beyond a certain size, an activist's home is no longer appropriate. With an office or premises dedicated to the group's activities, it has a base and an address. Eric has found that having such permanency is vital to the proper functioning of his activism. Materials and files can be stored and computer and telephone services can be installed. For big meetings it may be necessary to hire or use other facilities. For example, the now-disbanded WIRE [Women's Information and Referral Exchange] offices in central Perth, were used as a base by several women's groups. Multiple use of the facility enhanced its status as a venue for activists to meet. There were opportunities for groups to network with each other and to distribute materials and notify potential allies and supporters of forthcoming events.

“I'VE GOT MY FINGER ON THE PULSE” - Networking

An activist's network is also a significant resource. No campaign is tackled without using the network in some way, be that for accessing information or seeking moral and logistical support (Tranter, 1995, pp. 89-91). And that list of potential supporters may go far beyond those whom the activist knows on a personal basis. For example, churches, welfare agencies, community groups, social justice commissions and the union movement may be contacted if it is judged that they can add weight to a protest. The network will include allies who have the same broad objective, at least for the issue in question. An activist's network needs to be continuously nourished and extended. That involves talking to people, phoning them, as well as meeting visiting

activists, trade union officials and politicians. Activists like Trish who have worked in a number of issue areas and who have been employed in the community, public, private and academic sectors are more likely to have a network which is correspondingly eclectic. It requires a lot of work to maintain a good network according to Trish, but the effort is not without benefits. Through her contacts, she is abreast of significant and relevant matters. But she is just as liable to pass on issues to network colleagues if they can handle it more easily than she can. Thus the value of Trish's strong network is appreciated mutually (Oliver & Marwell, 1992, p. 270): "I've got my finger on the pulse of a lot of stuff, not just in narrow areas; and I know that people use me as a resource in that way."

Contacts are those people within the network who are able to supply information, act in some way as intermediaries, but who are not yet members of an activist group. Key contacts can be used to involve others or to put the activist in touch with people who could be useful to them. A contact list of names, phone numbers and addresses is maintained, but it needs to be used with discretion according to Brett: "I try and match up where people might be interested and do it in a quiet way because ... people can get upset about their names being used for everything."

However there is no guarantee that the contact will always be able to ease the activist's path. Sometimes they have their own position to consider as Andy eventually discovered after being advised to pursue a particular line with a bureaucrat:

And we seemed reasonably happy with him until our very last meeting where he sort of backed off a bit. But I mean the reality for the [job title] is, ultimately it's [the department] who pays his wages and if he takes up our battle too strongly he's gonna get shit from on high.

When the activist recognises their own limitations, both in terms of individual input and of knowledge, they may invite experts whose outlook is broadly similar to participate in a campaign. They may be asked, as Andy did, to provide specific knowledge on a particular point (of law, say), where that is crucial to the issue or to some aspect of the campaign. Ultimately though it is the activist or the group members who need to take all of the information they have acquired and use it to determine objectives.

“PEOPLE WAKING UP AND SAYING ‘LET’S DO THIS’ ” - Setting goals

When the issue has been fully explored the activist is in a position to set goals or objectives [here used synonymously] which are consistent with their value system. Suzi does not feel that all successful activists have to have vision to determine objectives. She posits that some people do not have the bigger picture and they are only working for specific change in society. Trish is in agreement but she stresses that in her view, an individual's activism is greatly enhanced if they have vision. It enables them to imagine a world where things can be a lot better for everybody. Objectives do not necessarily result from group discussion but can also come from inspiration or revelation according to Brett: “Some of the best things that have happened have come from people waking up one morning and saying ‘Let's do this’ .”

Objectives always need to be clearly defined so that there is no misunderstanding or confusion among the group about what are the targets. So whilst some goals are self-evident (for example, stopping evictions), it is less easy to say when the broader objectives, which might include raising awareness, educating and empowering people, have been achieved. Goals which are tangential to the issue may be ultimately vital to a campaign. Thus a goal amongst those protesting might be to take care not to trigger anti-activist legislation as happened to Suzi during the Wagerup (bauxite mining) campaign: “They passed legislation very rapidly which doubled the fines and increased the prison sentence. And I mean just ‘Whoa.’ ... We triggered off something which was just bigger than people were able to handle.”

“HAVING A DIRECTION AND A SOLUTION” - Developing a strategic framework

When the objectives have been confirmed by the activist or the group, they still need to be embedded in a blueprint for action. An overall campaign plan is required also to ensure the wise deployment of scarce resources. That strategic framework is constructed on and around a foundation comprising the activists’ jointly negotiated value base, philosophical outlook, the political context of the issue, the objectives and experiential learning about how best to run a campaign (Rootes, 1990, p. 8; Melucci, 1989, p. 35; Martin, 1994, p. 15). In short, the framework is a mirror which reflects how the activists see the world and how they believe they can best achieve the change that they seek.

For example, in those areas where people have been seeking justice for Aboriginal groups, using the legal process has become increasingly the means by which some activists have approached the task. Although Jenny considers that ATSIC [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission] has not met the needs of Aborigines, she cites the Equal Opportunity Commission and the Ombudsman's Office as effective institutions for addressing injustices, and she is very supportive of utilising these legal/administrative processes. Eric's view is quite to the contrary. He considers that the institutions set up to redress the balance between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Australia have produced nothing. Citing the National Native Title Tribunal, he claimed that despite it being in force for over a year, not one Aboriginal claim had been successful. He feels that once the High Court had determined the validity of Native Title that should have been the end of the matter. Instead, the process is continuing, with the benefits accruing not to Aborigines but to others:

She told me of an anthropologist charging seven hundred dollars for one day's consultation on how people should go about to do a claim. And I thought, 'Certainly making him rich. And that's not really the purpose of what it's really about.' ... They want to fiddle around the courts for time on end and give us nothing.

Like other activists, Eric uses strategies which focus on that element in the context most vulnerable to pressure. Take the campaign to highlight the history of Aboriginal imprisonment, death and burial on Rottneest Island. The objectives are to gain an

acknowledgment of those facts and a relocation of the main tourist camping ground which is situated immediately adjacent to Aboriginal gravesites. The principal contextual aspect of the campaign is that the island is completely dependent for its economic well-being on the tourist industry. It is regarded with particular affection by West Australians and is deemed to be one of the principal holiday destinations in the state. Eric believes that a strategy which threatens to undermine the island's economic health will do most to achieve the campaign objectives. The approach is to educate tourists about the island's unedifying history, to draw their attention to the conditions that Aboriginal prisoners lived under, and to draw parallels with "slave camps" elsewhere in the world (Figure 9). The intention is to put pressure on the individual's social conscience, to persuade them not to return to the island until politicians and the Rottneest Island Board have taken action to resolve the situation. The strategy is outlined bluntly by Eric:

But you wanna focus on the tourists ... would they go into Auschwitz prison and ... lounge around there? Once you get the people saying, 'Well, we're not going there again', or 'We're not going to camp here', then it starts to affect the dollar of the people, who'll start to wanna talk to us about how to resolve it.

Brett believes that a strategic plan should comprise not only a plan of action or direction but also a solution to the problem (Benford, 1993, pp. 199-200). He is convinced that when a group is being formed it is important that the participants be well-informed and that they can see that there is a both a goal and a viable means of

achieving it. The strategic plan needs to have a set of core features which are intrinsic to successful implementation balanced with a capacity to be flexible. A plan which can be implemented with a degree of freedom gives the activist scope to vary tactics to meet evolving circumstances. For example, a contingency plan will ensure that unexpected opposition or unforeseen events do not derail the campaign.



Figure 9. Informing tourists on Rottnest Island about its former status as the site of an Aboriginal prison (26.4.97).

PLANNING LINEARLY, WORKING Laterally

When the context has been considered and a strategy developed, the activist is ready to develop a more detailed plan of how the campaign will be run. An effective way to

plan a campaign is to work with a checklist of tasks and other matters which have to be addressed. Suzi has found an approach to her activism which has enabled her to work more efficiently and effectively. Although the length of a campaign is not always a crucial factor, the sequencing of each element usually is significant. To ensure that all of the tasks are done at the appropriate time, she utilises a method called critical path analysis. Such a scheme identifies those tasks which need to be completed before others can begin. The aim is to minimise delays and ensure that the campaign process is run efficiently. The chart can also include those dates which have significance for the campaign, for example, the date when a particular issue is to be discussed in Parliament, or the anniversary of some relevant event. Although the critical path technique which Suzi alludes to has its origins in the very quantitative world of engineering, she is able to incorporate intuitive and affective aspects in an approach which has worked well for her:

I suppose what eventuates from experience across a range of campaigns, is you know the nuts and bolts of what'll make it work ... and I think it also has the possibility to build in some of the intuitive things too.

Experience is therefore crucial to how Suzi operates; in this case where specific objectives and quantifiable outcomes have been determined for discrete, well-defined issues (Oliver & Marwell, 1992, p. 255). In contrast the approach is much less suitable for more general or open-ended campaigns where the activism seems to become even

more demanding. Suzi's experience with a London-based anti-war group is a good example of the difficulties and frustrations of working on broad issues:

What you were actually attempting to do was to change the whole psychology of a nation. And you kind of went, 'Where does one start with this?' And it was much much more challenging, emotionally and psychologically to keep working on that because, you never had a sense of having made any difference.

Suzi believes that there is a place for intuition and a degree of randomness in how she tackles her activism. Sometimes she feels slightly ill at ease because it is at odds with her science-oriented education. But having a philosophy which accepts a measure of chance and non-(scientific) rationality makes this more easy to accept. She believes and has faith in things working out for the greater good and welcomes a non-linear element to influence how she works. She assesses what the day has given her and then responds intuitively rather than working to a pre-arranged schedule, tuning in to what seems to be the most important matter of the day. Although Suzi is aware of the dangers of reactive activism, the approach has worked for her: "So perhaps that's how I've developed to cope with the really big stuff because otherwise you just go bonkers basically."

This chapter has examined the factors which determine whether an activist will take up an issue and also those aspects which influence or perhaps even determine how a campaign will be pitched. The following chapter, "**CAPITAL 'A' ACTIVISM**" -

Campaigning, describes the detailed processes and considerations involved in one of the most central aspects of activism.

“CAPITAL ‘A’ ACTIVISM” - Campaigning

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter we saw how activists recognise and get involved in an issue. In - **“CAPITAL ‘A’ ACTIVISM” - Campaigning** we look at how they go about getting their message out into the community and how they exert pressure to effect social and political change. The process of campaigning is at the core of activism and it has several sub-processes such as engaging the community and organising public events to raise community awareness. But there is also a hidden side to campaigning such as committee work and the evaluation and self reflection which concludes a campaign. The community does not see these hidden steps and the first they know about a campaign is when they are engaged by activists.

“GET THE PUBLIC TO SEE THAT THEY ARE A FORCE THEMSELVES”

- Engaging the community

The aim of a campaign is to persuade as many community members as possible to support the cause (Klandermans and Oegema, 1987). Koopmans and Duyvendak claim that this is the discursive battle which must be won over oppositional arguments (1995, p. 246; Ingamells, 1994, p. 203). When planning that phase Suzi visualises a model in which the centre of a circle represents the objective of a campaign. Those

people closest to the centre are those with values and a perspective likely to make them potential supporters. This is where she will put most of her energies. Trish's model is similar although her emphasis is on the people who might be swayed either way. Her aim is to get them to shift their thinking towards her perspective (Ingamells, 1994, p. 203). She has adopted this model because her experience has demonstrated that trying to talk with those who have a totally opposing view has been fruitless. So in an anti-racism campaign Trish will gradually eat "away at the boundaries between people who consider themselves anti-racist and people who nearly consider themselves anti-racist".

If engaging the community is to be successful, the activist needs to be aware of their inherent fears which fuel resistance. Eric believes that the WA community in general is afraid of change and particularly as it relates to indigenous issues. Therefore he talked of planning an Anzac Day picnic in a park in central Perth but to change the emphasis from militarism to a day for re-assurance: "To have people ... sit down and ... welcome and just ... acknowledge each other." Invitations to attend such events can be made to be attractive even although the issue is serious (Figure 10).

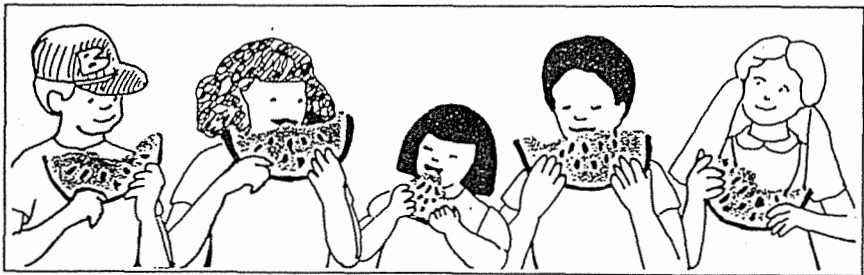
Some argue that people are miseducated to believe that change can only be effected by elites or heroes (Rosengard, 1982). People who feel marginalised in society in particular often express that they are helpless and powerless (Gilbert, 1988, p. 759). Andy will involve them in issues which have a chance of a successful outcome. He reasons that when they see that "they're making some impact", they will feel empowered and grow in self-confidence and self-esteem (Sills, Butcher, Collis & Glen,

The forest blockaders say

Hello and Welcome

Hello and welcome to this exciting second edition of your newsletter on what is happening with W.A.'s forest campaign. The news is that we may have pulled out of the forest but the campaigning is still going on stronger than ever, both in the city and in the towns of the south west, and that we will be back in the forest by early October.

Watermelons Not Weapons



Sunday 17 November in the gardens of 4 Travancore Street, Maylands at 12:00 noon

A delicious vegetarian lunch for just a \$10.00 donation - have fun sharing songs and stories

A fundraiser for the *Asia-Pacific Anti-Militarism Forum* - working together for peace & human rights

Call Campaign Against Militarism and come along - 227 7880

Pig Out for Peace 2

Figure 10. A newsletter for the 'true believers'; having fun for a good cause (Western Australian Forest Alliance, Sept. 1994; Campaign against Militarism, Nov. 1996).

1980, p. 191). Philosophically, Brett is committed to empowering the community to effect structural change. In his view, electoral democracy is essentially disempowering and unlikely to bring about fundamental change in society. For him it is essential to “get the public to see that they are a force themselves which is more about real long term change”.

It is important for Suzi is able to assess how the issue may be made inviting or compelling for the community (Benford, 1993, p. 200). She is only too well aware that colleagues and supporters are too caught up in the issues or campaign to have an unbiased view of community perceptions. She asserts that an ability to get on with others enables her to engage in the social fabric at various levels to gauge public awareness on an issue and reactions to a campaign. Getting meaningful feedback on community perceptions is easier with geographically specific campaigns than more regional ones. Suzi recalled a campaign on the south coast, where even although she was living in Perth, through the local community newspaper and contact with people living locally, she had a good indication of local feelings.

Community perceptions of activists sometimes may be of a rabble intent on some violence and if people are to be won to an issue that view needs to be countered (Martin, 1994, p. 13). Thus when advocating for people with intellectual disabilities, Gwen has a strong desire to convince others that those she represents do not pose a threat. She does not want to alienate those whom she is trying to win over by marginalising herself through dress or behaviour (Tranter, 1995, p. 86). So for Gwen, personal presentation and image are important aspects of her activism: “ ‘Yes, you do

look as though you're a law abiding citizen, that you're not really radical' .” Brett believes that when they are too different from accepted norms, presentation and image can deflect attention from what is a just cause. He considers that the approach of an allied activist group is counter-productive: “They look bizarre, they act bizarre, they present themselves in a bizarre way, like verbally, and they're just not accessible to people at all.”

“HERE’S WHAT THE INFORMATION IS” - Preparing the message

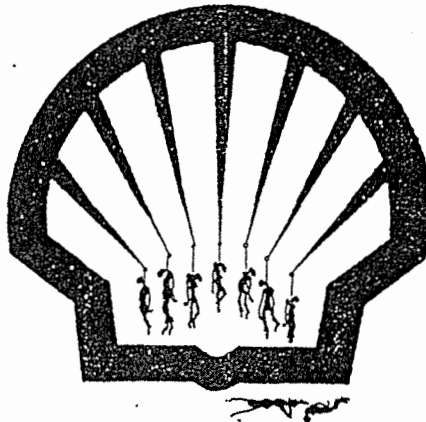
The assumption which lies behind the imperative to get the message out to the community is that once there, public pressure will force change. Activists will use any number of a wide range of options to make the community aware of the issue - newsletters, press and fax releases, flyers and other publications can be disseminated at public meetings as well as through networks, groups and the Internet (Klandermans and Oegema, 1987). Poignant or clever artwork and cartoons can present a message very effectively as they did with the campaign against Shell’s involvement with the Nigerian regime which executed Ogoni dissidents, and the campaign to deny Indonesia’s choice of ambassador to Australia (Figure 11).

In the domain in which many progressive activists work, it is common to find that much of the readily available sources of ‘information,’ have been prepared by government bodies or large, well-funded organisations. Brett argues that although these documents often omit inconvenient information, contain misinformation or outright lies, it is all that the community has to go on. If he wants to be able to present



"West Australian" cartoonist Alston on the proposed appointment of Lt. General Mantiri (who justified the Dili Massacre) as Indonesian Ambassador - cancelled due to widespread protests in Australia.

\$hell on Earth



"Shell, the multinational oil giant, has admitted importing weapons into Nigeria to help arm the police. The company said the weapons are to help protect its oil installations. However, activists accuse Shell of arming the death squads who have been brutally suppressing the Ogoni people." (*Guardian Weekly* 4/2/96)

"Wherever I went I could see that Shell were not operating their facilities properly...they were not meeting their own standards, they were not meeting international standards. Any Shell site that I saw was polluted. Any terminal I saw was polluted."

(*Mr Bopp Van Dessel, former Head of Shell's Environmental Studies*)

- Figure 11. Artwork used in support of the campaigns against the proposed Indonesian ambassador and Shell's involvement in Nigeria. (Friends of East Timor, Feb. 1996;
- Shell Nigeria Action Coalition - 1996).

an alternative picture, Brett has to analyse these documents and research other relevant information so that at a public meeting he can say “No that’s not actually the case”, and “Here’s what the information is” (Ingamells, 1994, p. 203). When preparing publicity material for a talk at a forum or a public event, activists like Andy and Brett will give consideration to the intended audience. If the event highlights military hardware such as an open day at RAAF Pearce, flyers are prepared which challenge people to look behind the ‘glamour’ (Figure 3) The content, form and presentation should be appropriate to the likely audience demographics. Eric’s political training has taught him the value of presenting issues clearly, simply and directly but this is not always so easy when the issue is multi-layered. Andy was involved in one such complex immigration / deportation case involving a foreign national who was convicted of a stigmatising crime. Andy feels that it was because the issues and extenuating circumstances were presented in such a clear and fundamentally appealing way that eventually the case was won after a long and arduous campaign.

“I’M REALLY GOING TO DO SOMETHING DRASTIC”

- Applying pressure

When a campaign is being organised, an activist will judge how, where, when and at whom it is best to apply pressure for change. Targets are prioritised and approached in sequence and once the pressure has been applied it must be maintained. For example, Australia is signatory to many international treaties and internationalising an issue can put discomfiting pressure on authorities, according to Eric. During the Old Swan Brewery campaign, an international observer group was invited to visit the Wagyl

[spirit serpent] site where the Brewery picket was taking place. This gave protest organisers the opportunity to internationalise the issue by showing how police deal with Aboriginal protesters on a sacred site. Similarly, Eric believes that internationalising the issue of Aboriginal deaths in custody did force the Federal government to establish a Royal Commission. Australia was similarly embarrassed when an activist was jailed for ten weeks prior to the 1996 Federal election for advocating that people put both major parties equal last on the ballot paper, which is a legal manoeuvre (Figure 12).

At the completely opposite end of the scale, expressions of genuine emotion, properly and not too clinically harnessed, can have positive outcomes for change. Gwen has found that “blowing one’s cool”, short circuits procrastination and obfuscation by bureaucratic functionaries. Likewise, using or even threatening to use the media, can have a galvanising effect on individuals or organisations. She has experienced periods of frustration over many years and she has found now that it is vital to act immediately. With a mischievous grin, Gwen says that the results can often be almost instantaneous when that emotion is conveyed through the phone: “I’m fed up. You can tell Mr Such and Such that I am very upset and I’m really ... going to do something drastic.”

Politicians seem to be the primary targets for some, although certainly not all of these seven activists. Andy asserts that this is especially the case if they are in a policy-making position, if they are electorally vulnerable or if they are thought to be wanting to improve their image. For example, activist pressure forced the Australian Foreign Minister (Gareth Evans) to persuade Indonesia to withdraw its nominee for

Report hits at rights abuses

LONDON

AUSTRALIA has come under fire for its treatment of political activist Albert Langer and the high rate of Aboriginal deaths in custody.

Amnesty International's latest report on global human rights abuses, released today, described Mr Langer as a prisoner of conscience.

Mr Langer was jailed for 10 weeks for breaching a court injunction to stop a campaign advocating an alternative, but legal way of filling in ballot papers.

Amnesty noted that although Aborigines made up 2 per cent of Australia's population, they accounted for more than 20 per cent of all deaths in custody last year.

The report also singled out Australia's treatment of 46 Chinese boat people who were held at Port Hedland detention centre after landing in February last year.

It said that since 1989 more than 800 children had spent up to two years in detention in Australia.

Other human rights issues noted by the report included the WA Government's refusal to initiate an inquiry into the 1988 death of Stephen Wardle, a non-Aboriginal Australian, at the East Perth lockup.

Protesters all at sea

PROTESTERS had problems telling a rice-loading vessel from a woodchip ship when they staged a raid at Geelong yesterday.

About 40 members of Friends of the Earth boarded the wrong ship — a ship loading rice instead of the woodchip vessel on which they had planned a protest against woodchip exports.

Local police had to tell them of their mistake. They stayed at the scene in case the protesters struck again when the real woodchip vessel arrived yesterday afternoon.

Jail term likely for firebomber

BY ROY GIBSON

TWO empty wine bottles, a piece of cloth and less than two litres of petrol was all it took to turn 20-year-old university student Bosco Boskovich into a firebomber.

The two molotov cocktails he and another person threw at the French Consulate in West Perth in June gutted the building and caused damage estimated at \$250,000.

WA's Director of Public Prosecutions, John McKechnie QC, told the District Court yesterday that Boskovich was incensed at France's decision to resume nuclear testing at Mururoa Atoll.

"While the motives in one sense can be understandable, given the community's view about French nuclear testing, this action strikes not at France but at the heart of our community," Mr McKechnie said.

Boskovich was not a hard-core political terrorist but had committed a serious crime and had to be jailed.

Boskovich, of Swansea Street, East Victoria Park, pleaded guilty to arson and was remanded in custody by Judge Antoinette Kennedy, who will sentence him on Monday.

"It seems imprisonment is the only option but I want time to consider it," she said.

"I understand the misery this has brought on this young man and his family. I am confident this is every family's worst nightmare — and every parent's worst nightmare — come true."

The court was told that after the attack, Boskovich telephoned media outlets and claimed responsibility on behalf of the Pacific Popular Front. There was no such organisation.

Defence lawyer Richard Utting submitted that the court should consider fining Boskovich or imposing a community service sentence.

He said that the night before the attack, Boskovich had been drinking with friends and discussing the French decision to resume nuclear testing.

The court was told that in May Boskovich changed his name from Michael Joseph Keenan. He was a design student at Curtin University and hoped his distinctive name would help him gain recognition in the market place.

Another person charged over the firebombing is due in court next month.

Bomber says he's so sorry

ONE of two people charged over the bombing of the French consulate in West Perth on June 17 has pleaded guilty, saying it was an ill-conceived, spur-of-the-moment act.

Bosco Boskovich, 20, of Swansea Street, East Victoria Park, pleaded guilty in Perth Magistrate's Court yesterday to one charge of causing damage or destroying property by fire.

Police allege Boskovich and co-accused Maya Catts, 21, of Etwell Street, East Victoria Park, threw molotov cocktails through a window at honorary consul Robert Pearce's Colin Grove surgery.

Ms Catts also appeared in court yesterday but was not required to plead. She was released on bail to appear again on September 15.

Boskovich's lawyer, Richard Utting, told the court Boskovich was not "some crazed Balkan bomber".

In a written statement outside court, Boskovich said he wanted to apologise to Dr Pearce.

The statement said Boskovich was a gentle and talented humanities student whose actions on the day of the fire were out of character.

"He is now suffering the most profound regret for his actions," it said.

Boskovich was not connected with any terrorist organisation or anti-French movement and his acts were ill-conceived and spontaneous, it said.

Boskovich — who faces a maximum penalty of 14 years' jail — will be sentenced on August 22.

Figure 12. Newspaper reports in response to electoral rights, firebombing and woodchip protest activism (*The West Australian*, 19.6.97; 22.7.95, 23.8.95; 14.12.96).

ambassador (Figure 11). According to Trish, they can also be relevant targets in a broader context of public discussion and education. They may be willing to fund mail outs by activist groups and they are also in a position to influence their electoral constituency through community newsletters and other publicity. Whilst acknowledging that politicians do have power, Suzi does not feel that they have a great deal of control. She does not view them as leaders rather as intense followers, literally and figuratively, of opinion polling; changing their stance to harness the mood swings of the electorate. Trish is of a similar mind and she will exacerbate that insecurity by getting supporters to contact their representative (Eder, 1993, p. 52): “But I think there’s a sort of critical mass when enough people come along and talk to politicians that they’ll think, ‘Oh, maybe this really is a trend that I hadn’t realised’.”

Activists like Suzi, consider bureaucrats, who are required to write and review potential legislation as well furnish options and advice to their Minister, as possible conduits for her views. She will lobby them so that they may put forward her alternative options or strategies in a well-argued way. Tackling the key person in a bureaucracy saves time and energy according to Gwen, who previously not knowing personnel, “used to hop in boots and all”. (May, 1994, p. 621). Sometimes her calculated intervention can effect incremental change without the necessity for campaigns. But that positive experience of bureaucracies is not supported by others. Experience has shown Jenny and Eric that systemic ‘constipation’ within a WA bureaucracy which has a statutory obligation to oversee Aboriginal matters, may make it pointless for them to apply pressure through the most obvious channels. For them,

the body is white-dominated, culturally questionable, and has not demonstrated a willingness to act independently from Ministerial direction.

Other government employees may be the focus of action if their work is believed to be contrary to the group's goals. Andy's experience has taught him that holding a peace vigil in Bentley, outside Australian Defence Industries which manufactures military equipment, does have an impact on those who work there. He believes that even if their minds are not changed on an issue, neither can they remain immune from the reality that their work is not regarded well by others in the community.

Andy asserts that any powerful and influential institution in society which claims to have a concern about social justice issues should be made to speak out on issues of concern. He cites the Christian Churches as being not always willing to speak out for the poor and the oppressed whom, on his reading of the Scriptures, they are supposed to support. He is particularly scathing of very senior clergy whom he feels should be asked "to get off their backsides and do something. ... A lot of them are like sleeping giants."

"YOU'VE GOTTA WORK ON A STUNT THAT GETS THE MEDIA THERE"

Although these activists seem to have some mixed feelings about the media, probably all would agree that it is a bonus when they are supportive of the cause. By cultivating empathetic and supportive media personnel, Suzi can use those links either to glean information or to provide material for public dissemination. Media work requires a

degree of preparation not only in terms of the information that they will want, but also self preparation. The intrusion and its intensity can be stressful so although there are rewards for working with the media, the experience can also be quite daunting as Suzi admits: “It’s quite an aggressive sort of thing to engage in ... and ... you can feel that you’ve been done over basically by what they ... ask.”

Suzi, Trish and Eric know that intensive media liaison is often required to ensure that the issue is accurately portrayed, that the focus is appropriate and that they are not presented in a negative, dismissively humorous or marginalised light (Weitzer, 1991, p. 36). Gwen too, would be disappointed if the disability of an individual was highlighted rather than the injustice of their circumstance. Eric believes that it is important for him to keep his views and name in the press, perhaps as often as three or four times a week. But he acknowledges that a public profile in itself is not sufficient. He knows that how the community perceives him, has a strong influence on whether his message will be heeded. Therefore to ensure that the publicity is favourable, he has to think about and enhance the image that will be transmitted.

Because the competition for TV news bulletin space is intense, there has to be a visually exciting or symbolically challenging drawcard which the media will find hard to ignore. One such event was when Andy and others, dumped a whole trailerful of old boots on the steps of Parliament House in Perth as a gesture against ‘boot camp’ legislation. And ultimately, despite the preparation, effort and liaison, there is no guarantee that the media will attend the event or present a news item about it because there may be ‘sexier’ issues on the day.

Newspapers offer the prospect of more in-depth analysis of an issue than TV news can offer. But no matter what care the activist takes to brief the media, distortion is always possible (McNair, 1988; Herman and Chomsky, 1988). After such an experience the activist may refuse to work with any media again, deciding that the risks of unfavourable misreporting outweigh any potential gains. Andy appreciates the importance of the media in presenting the message although he can empathise with his colleague's perspective: "Mike was at the point I think where he says, 'Screw the media. Basically you do the action. ... It's a faith thing and whether the media are there or not you go ahead and do it'."

Alternative media outlets such as community radio stations are options which Trish uses. Although their audience is relatively limited, by their nature they may give access to those who feel on the margins and who may be more receptive to alternative views. Their interest, as with any media organisation, can be sparked by a creative news release although Trish argues that there has to be a reason for them to cover it: "[If] it's an annual event, they might get sick of it. They might have decided it's a really fringe thing, so you've just got to come up with gimmicks basically." An interview on commercial radio talkback shows is another opportunity to present a point of view but to a different type of audience. Such an option requires preparation if the host is a reactionary individual intent on setting up the activist. However, once 'on air', the activist can change the framework of the interview to suit their own agenda. Trish has used this technique with one of Perth's most reactionary and controlling talkback 'shockjocks': "And once you get yourself on the air ... you start trying to change the

framework of the interview ... to suit the purposes of the campaign ... It's extending the boundaries."

"CAPITAL 'A' ACTIVISTS" - Public actions and committees

By commanding community attention, a public action is a vehicle for highlighting an issue. The aim is to engender a feeling of concern and maybe even moral outrage in the observer. Thus provoked, the activist hopes that the onlookers, and those whose awareness of the action has been raised through an intermediary such as the media, will respond with feelings of crisis and demands for an urgent response (Beder, 1991, p. 55). That triggering of a sense of purpose puts pressure on those organisations or social institutions in which change is sought. And of course it is not just the community which feels that urgency as Suzi explains (Benford, 1993, pp. 201-204):

On a ... spiritual level I have an understanding that the concept of time is so artificial that it doesn't exist. But on your day to day dealings ... with political realities, environmental realities, you're really aware that there isn't time to piss around. ... We can't just be complacent about what's wrong ... because it becomes a reason for just saying ... 'mañana'.

But whatever the urgency, as Eric emphasises it is important to choose actions and tactics carefully with a purpose in view and an understanding of why it is likely to work (Rootes, 1990, p. 5): "Just don't go and do something. Try and figure out how

to do it.” There are a variety of tactical options available including demonstrations, street theatre, vigils, as well as illegal acts. With all such public actions there is a danger that the authorities may take a more belligerent and oppositional stance than they would if approached more discreetly (Vernon, 1980, p. 230). So some activists prefer to work through committees or lobby in private meetings where the degree of seclusion may work to their advantage (Beder, 1991, p. 54; Graham & Hogan, 1990, p. 516). Although being on a committee does not conjure up notions of activism, Trish recognises that it is a valid part of her repertoire: “ ’cos it’s funny; I think of political activism, a capital ‘A’ activist, as someone out there chained to something. But a very large part of my work is actually the committee work.”

Committee work only involves a very small part of the community and most of the seven activists, whilst acknowledging its value, also wish to take the message to as wide a range of community members as possible. Perhaps surprisingly, the likely weather is one of the first considerations in organising a public event. Too hot, wet or cold and supporters, and more especially uncommitted onlookers, will be reluctant to attend or stay for a long period. Given the time of year it may be possible to prepare variations to the programme which would ease discomfort or at least be a distraction. For example, a band or street theatre provides welcome relief amongst a series of speakers (Figure 4). Depending on likely attendances and location, it may be possible to provide food, drinks and warmth (a camp fire). Such consideration is appreciated by the supporters. With the Rottneest campaign Eric’s tactical choice has to be based on consideration of the logistics and cost of preparing publicity materials, ferrying supporters to the island, accommodation and maintaining a presence over a period.

Public holidays and major sporting events generally reduce participation and so are avoided. But mistakes in preparation do get made and can be embarrassing such as the occasion when woodchip protestors boarded the wrong vessel (Figure 12).

Public events require permission from one or more bureaucracies, including the local council and police. According to Trish, dealing with such authorities can prove to be mini-campaigns in themselves because there is often a complete lack of empathy with the cause. Lacking any awareness of the symbolism of particular events such as 'Reclaim the Night', ludicrous alternatives are proposed, designed principally to make life easier for the authorities as Trish well knows: "But we specifically chose Northbridge and night time [not Langley Park and day-time] so that women could march around triumphantly in a place, and at a time, when normally they might be feeling more nervous and scared."

Marshalls have to be trained so that they can properly fulfil their functions to keep a march going smoothly, and act as ambassadors with onlookers who are considered to be potential supporters, and police. Venues may have to be hired as well as sound equipment and possibly a band. Whistles and balloons can be purchased, floats can be organised. Fortunate is the activist with previous experience and a large corps of supporters who will take on delegated tasks. A festive atmosphere at a march or rally raises people's spirits and enthusiasm for the issue. Trish feels that it is important to have a high energy level with 'Reclaim the night', so she will do a lot of work to get women enthusiastic and "the kids as 'hyper' as possible". The idea is to have a bit of fun but sometimes bureaucratic regulations can take some of the enjoyment away as Trish admits with a rueful smile:

In the old days before they outlawed fireworks, we used to all carry sparklers but ‘they’re too dangerous now’ even though we’re dealing with an issue of rape, which of course is not nearly as important as what could happen to us with a sparkler.

Even when the public action concerns very marginalised groups, Eric asserts that activists should not assume that there are no mainstream sympathisers around. Whatever the form that a direct action takes it is important that it draws in the community and immediate passers-by. Brett has found that having a silent vigil can be a very effective way of encouraging onlookers to find out more about what is being commemorated. A vigil has an air of respectability which makes it non-threatening and therefore accessible to the community. This civil demeanour has the effect of legitimating the action (Rootes, 1990, p. 14; Williams, 1995, p. 140). During vigils or marches activists can speak with onlookers, explain the issue in simple, direct and clear terms and encourage people to be supportive by joining the march or signing a petition. Andy recalled a Holy Thursday vigil held to pre-empt any possible re-introduction of capital punishment, during which he and a colleague stood at opposite ends of the Hay Street mall with a large cross on which was emblazoned ‘I oppose the death penalty’: “So people would go, ‘What are you standing there like that for? What are you, an idiot?’ And we just talked to them, the significance of the day.”

Symbolic imagery is a powerful attribute of some direct actions, such as the overturning of tables outside the 20th century [Stock Exchange] temple during a Palm

Sunday rally (Figures 13 and 6). Andy recalls the impact of a church service and subsequent march held to commemorate the Dili Massacre. Three priests each carried a large cross, inscribed with the words - 'Dili Massacre, East Timor'. During the march to Forrest Place, about another two hundred and seventy small crosses each bearing the name of a victim, were carried by members of the congregation. Andy is in no doubt that the effect of this powerful image led to its publication to a wide readership in the Sunday Times shortly afterwards: "And to me, sometimes it's important for that image to be seen. 'Hey! Here's the Church standing with the poor and the oppressed'." The same crosses were used on a subsequent march with equally telling effect (Figure 14).



Figure 13. Symbolic overturning of tables on Palm Sunday outside the Perth Stock Exchange (23.3.97, Christian Centre for Social Action).

Absolute numbers are not always necessary to make an impact in the community's consciousness. Change can be wrought through the power of a single individual's witness as Andy can testify in connection with a colleague and the Mabo legislation: "He's ... kneeling on the steps of ... [Parliament House] ... for fifteen days praying. Now, from a world perspective a lot of people think he's a nutter ... [but] that presence changed some people's views on the issue."



Figure 14. Poignancy and colour at the start of a march in support of East Timor self determination (12.11.95).

“YOU’VE GOTTA PLAN IT SO IT DOES HAPPEN” - Having the right tactics

An action which is mounted with creativity and flair presents arguments in a direct, simple, and persuasive and perhaps humorous way (Sinclair & Corris, 1994, p. 65; Johansen, 1991; Oliver & Marwell, 1992, p. 270). With a laugh Trish recalled such an action which was held to convince college authorities of the need for childcare facilities on the premises: “[In the foyer we] got a whole pile of pre-school children, ... millions of balloons ... and we didn’t have to do anything after that, it was just total chaos.” The blockade inconvenienced staff who had “to run the gauntlet of children. And, ... I think we really brought home to them the fact that ... , children aren’t these things you can just pop in a drawer or tie to the clothes line.” Creative tactics may require advanced preparation if they are to achieve their maximum impact. In one action at a premises which was being picketed, Eric wanted to pull down a security fence in front of TV news cameras. He related that to keep to his dictum of ‘you’ve gotta plan it so it does happen’, he weakened the fence during the middle of the previous night by cutting most of the wire strands. The following day at the appointed time, he and his supporters were able to push the fence over and walk into the compound past police armed with batons and shields who were barricading the gate.

Keeping tabs on opponents enables the activist to be tactically prepared for various eventualities. They may wish to precipitate an event which gives them an advantage or respond publically about a statement made by their opponents. Some activists like Eric, may wish to be proactive in disrupting their opponents’ plans, tactics and speeches. Tactically this can be productive in preventing opponents from developing or presenting their arguments clearly.

When other tactics have failed to bring about change from those whose hearts are “of bloody stone rather than hearts of flesh”, Andy will move towards ‘resistance’ in which he puts himself ‘on the line’(Cooper & Eichner, 1991, pp. 165-167; Rucht, 1990, p. 172). He would probably support Falk’s claim that a ‘resistance’ action is an attempt to define the urgency of a claim, the impotence of mainstream responses and with a view to converting the other person without being a casualty oneself (1987, p. 180). Resistance is something he does not undertake “with any great joy” because he may be jailed, but it can be a remarkably effective tool. Andy laughed as he recalled: “It may be just sitting in someone’s office and praying. Now that ... can have amazing results. In fact the last time it ended up in five of us getting six days in jail.”

“I JUST LIKE TO BE WILD OCCASIONALLY” - Spontaneity

There is a place for spontaneity in the middle of an action, particularly when it is felt that injection of action or excitement will lift the spirit of supporters. Eric recalled an incident during the Old Swan Brewery protest at the Wagyl site when he climbed a 30 metre pine tree to put an Aboriginal flag on the top to “show the heights we [Aborigines] can go to”. Trish admits that she can get frustrated at times in a group with the constraints of working through process and she will react spontaneously. Blocked consensus, a need for an urgent response or a decision by others to go in different direction can cause her to feel baulked. Despite the potential loss of benefits that being in a group ensures, Trish who is a ‘doer’, will exercise her valued freedom autonomously and maybe anonymously (Friedman & McAdam, 1992, p. 161):

I just like to be wild occasionally ... I just wanna go out and do it with my friends, or my political allies. ... And ... I sort of delight in that way of operating sometimes because you can just go as far as you wanna go.

Although very serious about her activism, Trish is determined to have fun whilst doing it. There is one very loosely defined group which has no headquarters or post box address and which does not hold formal meetings for which she expresses an affinity and fondness because it allows her a significant degree of spontaneity:

I'm a bit of an anarchist in some ways. I belong to a group which is called FUGM; the Feminist Urban Guerilla Movement. And all you need is one or two feminists and a spray can and a sense of adventure.

“YOU REALLY HAVE TO BE RIGHT ON THE BUZZER”

- Taking opportunities

Chantal did not take part in the main body of the research but during a preliminary interview she gave an excellent example of how an activist weighs up an unexpected opportunity. Prior to my arrival, she had been advised that Brian Burdekin, the Human Rights Commissioner, was in Perth for that day only. She had some pressing issues about which she wanted to approach him. But she was in a dilemma. Should she hurry off in an effort to see him and give him a hastily assembled, verbal report on

these matters? He did not know her and would not know of the background to the issues. In the circumstances would he be able to act on what she told him? Or, should she spend more time putting together a comprehensive written report and mailing it to him? Would the personal contact, she asked herself, achieve more, even if the content was not as polished as she would have liked? Unfortunately, and rather anticlimactically, I never found out whether Chantal went to talk with him as my short interview ended before she had finalised her plans for the day.

Just as luck is supposed to be largely due to hard work, Eric believes that opportunities can be created. This is why he will always “try to turn every stone that’s around the place”. When opportunities do come unexpectedly, they have to be taken or they can be lost. Immediate responses are sometimes required, whether it is a media interview or a response to an evolving deportation situation. In such tight situations, the normal processes have to be compressed; there just is not time to work through things properly. In those cases, activists fly by the seat of their pants according to Andy; his ‘see-reflect-act’ methodology goes out of the window (Sinclair & Corris, 1994, p. 63). Even if he is unprepared, Eric is unlikely to forego an opportunity should it arise: “It’s like cards, ... you’ve got to deal [with] them as they fall.” When the activist has advance notice about opportunities their preparation can be more methodical and given greater consideration. Trish asserts that it pays to be vigilant throughout the year even when a collective has only one public event annually. Given such a context, Trish will make every effort “looking for innovative strategies of what we can do” to turn all opportunities into productive outcomes.

Sometimes a matter will be reported which an activist feels can be turned into an opportunity to put over a specific message. However if there are other calls on time, the opportunity can disappear, much to the activist's frustration. Suzi recalled a bush fire which destroyed an area which was the subject of parliamentary scrutiny regarding its future status. At the time she was associated with a geographically-dispersed group which had been campaigning to have the area declared an A-class reserve principally on the grounds that it was home to an endangered species of bird. At the time, Suzi was very busy with equally pressing commitments and she was unable to formulate action within what she considered to be the two day opportunity 'window'. This episode supports the contention that success owes more to the ability to move quickly or luck than it does to planning (Oliver & Marwell, 1992, p. 254). Two factors in losing that opportunity were Suzi's geographical separation from the area and from her colleagues:

I just didn't quite know what to do to respond to that because I thought, 'Well, OK, this could be used as part of this campaign but I'm not quite sure how.' ... So things that require media response, you really have to be right on the buzzer otherwise you lose it.

“CLEAN UP WITH A GOOD HARD TALK” - Public speaking

Public events can be one of the main means of getting the activist message out to the community. Having a varied programme, scheduling accomplished speakers wisely or having short interludes with music can overcome this. Speakers can be encouraged to

emphasise different aspects and they should be left in no doubt about the importance of not running over time. A strong final speaker ensures that the gist of the message is presented with maximum impact. Suzi is in no doubt about the efficacy of a good communicator in helping to change the way people think:

To persuade and present information and arguments in a convincing way is pretty critical. ... Some of the successful activists ... [are] so personally committed and convinced about their belief that they actually persuade everybody else. Sometimes they're just bloody good at arguing, they wear the opposition away ... [who] think, 'Oh God, give in, I just can't bear it!'

During Eric's political training, much emphasis was placed on the tactics of public speaking and he applies these constantly. Extensive preparation is essential so that a comprehensive view is presented. He tries to ensure that everyone present, regardless of age or circumstance, feels that they are being spoken to directly. Wanting the verbal message to be reinforced, he uses body to animate his talk. If opponents have been speaking previously, he will "cut up their talk" to enhance his own position. He may "prime the pump" by getting supporters to ask prepared questions from the floor. If Eric is the concluding speaker he maintains that:

It's good to try to hear what the other people are saying. And then say the things that they didn't say or reinforce some ... elements about it. ...

Try to be the person who's gonna pull this all together ... [and] clean up with a good hard talk."

"I THOUGHT WE WERE HERE IN PEACE" - Police presence

Some issues generate a lot of heat and anger and in public actions the activist is liable to get caught up in that. Andy knows that he should not respond to provocation or to violence in an inappropriate way but that rule can be forgotten in the heat of direct action. He recalls an incident during the long-running, Old Swan Brewery protest when for a moment as he "was verbally ... dissecting this sergeant who'd just been bashing someone up", he forgot his dictate to respect the other. "I remember Mike reaching across a crowd and tapping me on the shoulder as I'm screaming at some policeman, 'I thought we were here in peace', he says." Eric does not view the police as a neutral entity in an action. Experience has taught him that photographing or better still videoing public actions, minimises the risk of police violence and at the least can provide evidence of provocation or brutality. He is aware that police may infiltrate a crowd in plain clothes, incite others to break the law and set traps for the unwary. By wandering through a crowd, as he did during the Old Swan Brewery protests, observing clothing and listening to comments and responses, he can sometimes identify police provocateurs.

Not all activists have had such difficult relationships with the police. Trish makes the observation that in recent years they seem to be making an effort to change their collective attitude on 'Reclaim the Night'. She welcomes this improvement, so much

so that in recent years Trish's contacts with those officers who are veterans of the march have had their funny moments. On occasions she has noticed police marshalls singing along with marchers and another whose experience of the event, enabled the march to be redirected before it took the wrong route: "I'm not saying they are all perfect but ... they've got to the point where they're sort of accepting of what we're doing as valid."

"I'VE JUST GOT TO PUT MY TOE OVER THAT LINE" - Illegal tactics

Committing an illegal act is a means of highlighting an issue or making a statement; either the act or its result needs to be public to be effective (Rucht, 1990, p. 160). Not all activists would acknowledge that they use illegal tactics to draw attention to an issue of concern to them but if the issue warrants it some will do so. Civil disobedience can ensure press coverage but perhaps even more importantly, it can have a fundamental and dramatic effect on participants. Andy recalled such an instance at a government weapons establishment where after praying for an hour, nearly everyone in a group used ash to write a giant 'NO' on a wall. For those who took part in this action, the illegality itself and the justification for it, proved extremely empowering, according to Andy: "They found it incredibly liberating. And it's just in a little way they've taken one more step towards being able to take a stand against the principalities, and powers of evil that dominate this world."

When the evil is bad enough and there is no other option for furthering her cause, Trish has used illegal action to highlight an issue (Berrigan, 1991). One such case involved a

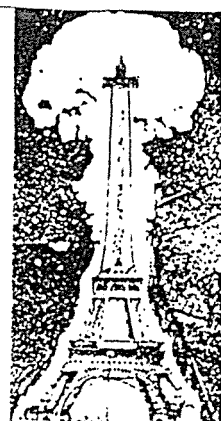
protest aboard a US warship during which colleagues were arrested for unfurling banners. But she chooses her illegal actions with some circumspection because she is fearful of being caught. Even when there is little chance of being apprehended she still has a strong feeling of reluctant participation, which is somewhat surprising given how Trish feels about extending the boundaries:

If we are somewhere in an action and the police say we're not allowed to go past a certain point, I don't know what it is in me, but there's some part of me that decides that I've just got to put my toe over that line.

For those activists who contemplate using illegal tactics there are two considerations. Being arrested may be a symbolic gesture worth the inconvenience and honour, as it was to Tasmanian senator Bob Brown, but a planned decision to create a situation where that will happen is not taken lightly (Benford, 1993, p. 208; *The West Australian*, 14-6-97). Not only are there others to consider, maybe a spouse and children, but there is also self. The threat of being stripped and body searched is not a pleasant reward for standing up for social justice (Berrigan, 1991, pp. 367-368). Secondly, illegal tactics, whilst they may get attention are liable to backfire if framed in a negative light by the media or spokespeople for the *status quo*. Although there was a strong community feeling against nuclear weapons testing at Mururoa, that sympathy was not accorded to those who firebombed the French consulate in Perth (Figures 15 and 12). Brett is unequivocal that some actions are counter-productive: "You're not going to get general public support against uranium mining by burning down CRA's

**A CHRISTIAN
RESPONSE TO
THE FRENCH
DECISION TO
RESUME
NUCLEAR
TESTING**

Yo
plait
in
your
own
backyard



Nuclear tests & Tahiti
China Backgrounder
Kakadu U-pollution
Kangaroo 95

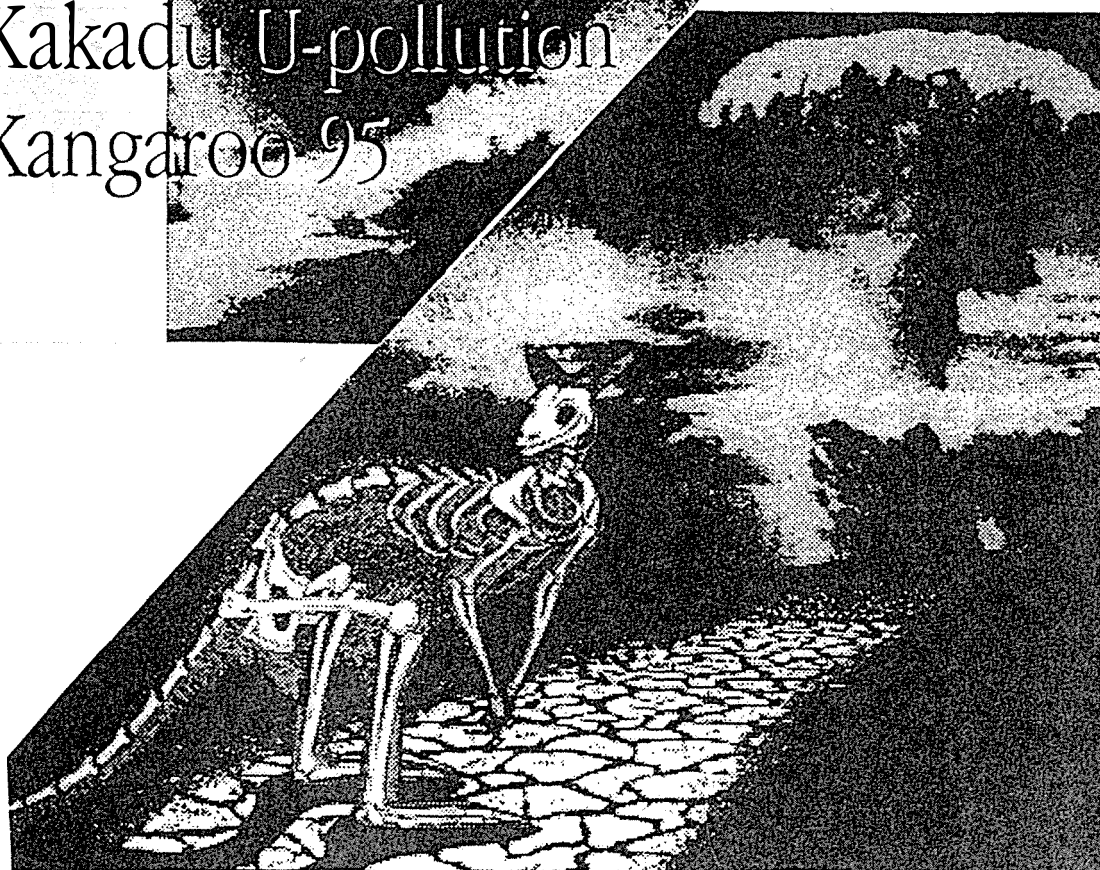


Figure 15. Response to French nuclear testing in the Pacific (Christian Centre for Social Action - June 1995; People for Nuclear Disarmament - October 1995).

office or something like that because the public will react very strongly to it.” Suzi is equally adamant that there is a place for illegal action because “There are some things that are wrong and they constantly need to be being challenged.” She thoroughly approves of those who smash navigation equipment or satellite dishes at military installations (Berrigan, 1991). She is in total agreement with Andy who has every sympathy with those activists who cause millions of dollars damage to military equipment despite it being against prevailing community values:

[B52 bombers are] weapons of destruction that destroy lives, kill people, maim people. And every one of them takes away from the Third World in terms of the amount we spend on those evil things, deprive ... , people are starving every day, forty five thousand kids die of hunger or hunger related diseases.

Suzi is resolutely committed to pursuing her activism in a non-violent way. But she has tried to visualise what it would be like for her if she were living under a politically oppressive regime where the constraints on peaceful activism were radically different:

If I was in South America ... in some village somewhere, I can't guarantee that I wouldn't resort to arms. ... I can't say absolutely 'No way', but I would hope that I would still say 'Absolutely no way', but I've never been tested on that one.

“IT’S NOT ALWAYS ADVISABLE TO HAVE A WAR” - Setbacks

An activist’s mettle is tested when a campaign has received a setback. Campaign setbacks, such as arrests or forestry blockades being broken, can cause morale to drop and enthusiasm to wane. It can be a critical time. People who are no longer ‘hyped up’ about an issue will lose momentum. Therefore it is crucial that the situation be turned around. If they are able to stay balanced, centred and calm, activists can have a pronounced positive influence on a group which is feeling disoriented and rattled. Inspirational, positive leadership encourages supporters and gives direction; sometimes only small gestures can be effective. A creative quick response may avert a potentially damaging situation, although reactive responses have their own intrinsic dangers and are treated cautiously. A touch of humour may be all that is required to defuse a tense stand off. But major setbacks or defeats can have a devastating effect on some supporters as Suzi admits. In the Northern Jarrah Forests Campaign, supporters put in months of training and effort but she felt that the WA government was determined to prevail and so it steamrollered the activist opposition with heavy legal sanctions. The result for some supporters was a feeling of major anti-climax and despondency. For those who have been intensely committed such defeats can be taken personally and they may need to be counselled. Benford maintains that if some action has had no positive benefit then it is pointless to use euphemisms to describe failure (1993, p. 208).

Escalating a situation is often used by opponents as a tactic to increase pressure on activists. If the campaign is not to be set back the individual has to choose an

appropriate response. An example occurred when Andy was involved in a series of meetings with public servants. To him, it seemed that they were lying and had a number of agendas, one of which was an intention of wrecking negotiations. He had to consider whether this was a deliberate ploy intended to raise tensions and provoke him into challenging them and questioning their authority. But as Andy commented, he had to consider what his overall objective was, and so he chose to tread lightly: “It might fan my ego to have a bloody war with somebody but ... how’s that gonna affect the people [whose futures were being discussed]? It’s not always advisable to have a war.”

“AND THERE’S ANOTHER CRISIS THAT YOU’VE GOTTA

BE INVOLVED IN” - Evaluating outcomes

After an event is over, Trish likes to celebrate that she and her colleagues did it. For her, winding up with a post-event dance is an excellent way of concluding a major event or campaign. It allows people to let their hair down. The hard work is over for the moment. Immediately afterwards, she and her close associates will debrief in a coffee shop. They document what aspects of the event went well and which did not. They are particularly concerned that participants feel positive about what they have done and that none have been damaged by the experience. Later, the core group can get together for a more comprehensive evaluation of the whole campaign. They will compare the achievements with the objectives and assess why some strategies worked and others did not. When a campaign winds up there is also a need to make preparations for the next one. Trish will record who has got the group’s records, files

and banners, and which people within bureaucracies were contacted to gain approvals for marches. Having that information readily available, enables the next collective to have a head start in their campaign.

Andy regrets that he does not give more time to evaluating outcomes. He knows that he should spend time in prayer and reflection and he sees this omission as a specific weakness in the way that he works. He acknowledges that if he would give himself time to sit back, analyse situations and consider various options both during and after a campaign, his activism would be enhanced. He would like to find time to thank God for helping him achieve the campaign outcomes but it never seems to happen:

Because you'd roll out of one bloody thing and you'd get back to the office and there's another crisis that you've gotta be involved in. And so you just barrel straight into that and ... in three months time you'd think, 'Gee, ... what really happened ... during whatever?'

Jenny places considerable emphasis on the importance of symbolism in outcomes. She believes that negative community perceptions of Aborigines based on racial stereotypes are reversed when Aborigines organise successful demonstrations such as one in solidarity with the homeless Park People who bed down at Weld Square in East Perth. Gwen does not feel the need to strive for extravagant goals because as she points out, outcomes are defined relative to each other. One activist's desired goal or outcome, might be just the first step for another. In this sense, Gwen says that her activist work is on-going, she never 'arrives' because there are always more goals. Trish takes a

philosophical view. While the gains on a campaign may be small, she is able to see them in a historical perspective. They are all cumulative, incremental steps to change and in the context maybe all that could have been achieved at the time.

“THOSE WHO’VE LIVED IN PARKS AND BEHIND BRIDGES”

- Staying grounded

Any contact with activists indicates that they are busy people with limited free time and the context in which they work can be stressful. Campaigns may not be going as well as they had hoped and opponents may be causing them lots of problems. Some admit that such frustrations may make them respond in ways which clash with their philosophical outlook or may cause them to lose focus on why they have taken up an issue. So they acknowledge that within a busy schedule they must find time for themselves, for self reflection, self analysis and self maintenance. Such breaks, allow them the chance to recuperate from the stresses of campaigning and to recover their energy and enthusiasm for the issue. Simply too, those interludes give the individual an opportunity to reflect on their activism, its origins and its motivations.

One of the aspects which comes out of these periods is a general agreement that activists must maintain contact with their spiritual roots or philosophical base. Eric is quite definite about the need to cherish his roots because they underpin his activism. Some activists reflect or meditate at regular intervals on their value system whilst others find that a less intellectualised but equally valid approach works for them. For

instance, Jenny acknowledges that contact with the marginalised members of society for whom she works, keeps her grounded:

You must ... never lose touch with the people who've lived in parks and behind bridges ... how they feel and what it's meant to them. I think that's the thing, that if you can hold on to those ideals I think you ... keep on track.

Jenny is confident that by staying grounded, activists will maintain their integrity and not get side tracked by attractive peripheral issues which have the capacity to feed their ego. She draws strength and inspiration from those individuals belonging to those marginalised communities who have made an impact; the likes of leading Noongar activist, Robert Bropho, the Fringe Dweller movement and the author, Jack Davis. From their suffering, imprisonment and vilification she has learnt that “clearer judgement springs”. She has also learnt that “You've got to be careful not to be sucked in by money, status, [and] smooth talking.”

When he has time to reflect, Brett regards challenging his own intellectual and philosophical framework as an integral part of his activism. Analysing the framework of his activism assists him to make connections between issues which at first sight may seem unrelated. The result is that his activism is integrated and coherent. But the challenge which he can throw out to others at a forum can be returned and cause him to question his most fundamental values. Citing as an example his commitment to a

philosophy of non-violence, Brett asks intriguingly, “ Where would the issue of East Timor be, if there wasn’t an armed resistance in the country?”

THE BENEFITS OF EXPERIENCE

Eric believes that activists are born and not made although he acknowledges that they can work to enhance their activism. Significant improvements can be achieved through experience and all of these activists are very aware of its benefits. Suzi has worked on many campaigns both in Australia and internationally. She has met and worked with many activists in anti-nuclear, peace and environment campaigns. She is well aware of the contribution those campaigns and people have made to her own activism. Both people and technical skills have been honed in the process. Brett who is younger than Suzi is just as aware of the benefits of experience, particularly as it relates to groups. He has absorbed lessons from watching the deleterious impact of inappropriate group dynamics. As a consequence he chooses to work with groups having power structures which promote empowerment and in which direction is chosen by consensus rather than by an authority figure. For Brett, top-down power structures are destructive (Brown, 1989, p. 226; Cooper & Eichner, 1991, p. 162): “Many things done by younger people these days try to get away from having a head person with top down stuff, because it’s really destructive. Egos get in the way.”

Because of its fundamental importance to their work, all of these activists acknowledge that good communication skills are not only vital to them but they are enhanced with experience. Whether it is at a picket outside the Hyatt Hotel against Indonesian

involvement in East Timor or at a rally at the Perth Cultural Centre, Andy's booming voice can be heard over traffic noises and chanting demonstrators. He gives directions, calls out the new slogans and generally inspires confidence in supporters. In contrast, Jenny is quietly spoken and one would be hard pressed to imagine her taking on Andy's role at a noisy demonstration. She feels that writing is her forte and as a consequence her activism is done more through the pen than the voice. Andy's style lends itself to direct action, Jenny's to lobbying and submitting reports behind the scenes. Brett who prepares publicity material for some of the groups with which he is involved is grateful that he has good computer, typing and spelling skills. Gwen has worked in the hospitality industry for many years and is able to draw on that experience in her activism. With that knowledge she is in a position to assess which venues might be the most suitable from the aspects of size, cost and accessibility.

“THE LONG HAUL IS WHAT WE'RE ABOUT” - Stickability

All significant social or political change takes a major input of effort and time. By common consent amongst these activists, commitment and persistence over a long period are amongst the most vital activist attributes. No amount of effort will budge a thoroughly obdurate government bent on proving its machismo, witness Nookanbah 1980 (Bennett, 1989, p. 18), but perseverance can cause a stubborn government to wilt in the face of considerable financial losses. Take the case of the location of the proposed Dampier to Perth gas pipeline in the vicinity of the Wagyl sites in the Swan Valley. Andy claims that despite all attempts at developing a creative solution which would not interfere with the sites, the WA government was fearful that a victory to the

Noongar custodians there, or at the Old Swan Brewery, would open the floodgates to claims elsewhere. He feels that the government was determined to be bloody minded and hard hearted but in such cases:

You just maintain the position, ... the struggle, ... your protest ... and ... you just hang on in there. ... The long haul is what we're about. We're not going to get short term results as we fight the evil within the system ... it's been there for a long time. ... And sometimes issues fail because people give up too quickly.

Jenny has pointed out that it is only those who are dedicated to a cause who can sustain that level of persistence. In Eric's experience, activists who are both persistent in pursuing justice whatever the obstacles, and consistent in their attitude and direction are much appreciated by their supporters. Brett emphasises that if he personally demonstrates his commitment, then supporters will be much more likely to follow that example. But the reality is that no one can go on for ever and Andy is quite willing to admit that energy is not infinite: "Now sure, we talk about issues at home ... and we might ... be planning things in the evening but ... when you're trying to do that after putting four kids to bed ... you're buggered." The energy Andy talks about is not just sheer physical energy, there is also an emotional demand which must be met. With all of the oppositional challenges that an activist faces, they need to be able to maintain a complete belief in themselves throughout a campaign. Suzi recognises that having "extraordinary amounts of energy" is a blessing for her and although she gives the impression of being able to keep going twenty five hours a day, that other element is

required: “You have to have ... an ability too, to sustain your own sense of integrity and worth against a lot of opposition. So sort of having a ... stickability.”

As Andy was acknowledging by implication, activists have to learn to pace themselves. In the formative years there can be a tendency to try to do everything. Experience teaches that that is neither possible nor desirable for the individual. The energies, knowledge and skills of others are required for extensive and involved campaigns. Maintaining self by acknowledging and managing stress is extremely important as otherwise burnout is the result. Suzi’s experience is salutary: “It’s ... letting go of the need to feel that I have to do absolutely everything, ’cos that’s certainly something that has brought me to total exhaustion at certain points of time.”

“I’M ABLE TO DO MORE, WITH LESS FEAR”

By knowing themselves honestly, activists can work on perceived faults. Fear is a commonly expressed factor amongst these activists. They may be afraid of being assaulted by police during a picket, or of being arrested, imprisoned and body-searched. By appropriately managing such fears, an activist can develop courage and be less likely to feel overwhelmed and incapacitated by them. For Andy, his main fear was not going to jail itself but the fact that he might be body searched (Berrigan, 1991, pp. 367-368). He saw the whole process as unnecessary and intentionally dehumanising. On both occasions when he was being taken to jail, he prayed that he would not have to go through the process. He was grateful that on neither occasion was he subjected to this treatment. Andy feels that he has been given more courage, as

he puts it: “As my relationship with God grows, I’m able to do more ... with less fear. I’m not saying the fear goes. ... I’ve been [to jail] twice now only for short little grabs but I’ve got over the fear I think.”

This chapter has examined the task oriented processes of campaigning including some means of applying pressure, tactical considerations and the need for time to be spent evaluating campaigns and reflecting on personal motivations and methods. The following chapter - **“WE’D ALL HAVE BEEN GIVEN A PLANET EACH”** - examines what it is like to be working with people during a campaign.

“WE’D ALL HAVE BEEN GIVEN A PLANET EACH”**- Working with people****INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter dealt with the processes of campaigning. It reported on how these activists seek community support, how they apply pressure to effect change, and how they respond to circumstances which arise during a campaign. This chapter examines how these activists work with those whom they come into contact during a campaign. Many of those individuals will be other activists within their network, supporters, allies and those for whom they may be advocating. But there may also be an involvement with opponents and those who either intentionally or otherwise can effectively hinder or block any progress towards change. Clearly then, working with people whether supporters, allies or opponents is a core part of activism. All of these activists acknowledge that how these interactions are handled has the potential to enhance or wreck a campaign. At the outset however the immediate priority is to get to know each of the people with whom one is involved.

“YOU'VE GOT TO IDENTIFY WHERE EACH PERSON IS ‘AT’ ”

- Group development

It is often during the information-gathering stage that like minds come together to pool or swap information. Working with others is not just something that Suzi does because it eases the workload. It is driven by a value-based perspective of what sort of society she is striving to achieve (Falk, 1987, p. 189). It is a practical statement and validation of her philosophical and social worldview. Concluding with a hearty laugh, Suzi says that if she had been meant to work alone, the cosmos would have been populated differently: “We’d all have been given a planet each.” Brett relishes working with like-minded individuals in a social atmosphere and is keen to start a group which develops its own campaign (Melucci, 1989, p. 60). Experience has taught him that it is important to get to know those with whom he is working: “You’ve got to identify where each person is ‘at’, what might scare them or what might excite them.” Developing that knowledge of individuals is part of the group building exercise. With that understanding Brett can suggest options with which the majority of the group feel comfortable. He recalled an incident when some allies wished to have a demonstration, but he knew that many new members either were not ready or were not in favour of that option. Knowing how they felt and not wanting the demonstrators to look marginalised, Brett put group development over immediate direct action: “I had to say, ‘No, I don’t think it’s best to do that at this stage’, which can often be a hard thing to do ‘cos you don’t want to say ‘No’.”

An ability to get on with a wide variety of people is obviously a positive asset for any activist, particularly as it can be used as readily with opponents as colleagues. Having good conflict resolution and interpersonal skills makes an activist's work much easier according to Trish. But for her it is important to communicate assertively whilst; "not treading on other people's rights or restricting other people's rights but not neglecting [my] own rights and responsibilities as well". Working with others both within the activist network and beyond has had its impact on Suzi, who acknowledges that she has developed a greater tolerance to other positions and opinions. Some of that evolution she attributes to her job as a tradesperson within the building industry during which she came into contact with a cross section of the community. Those interactions Suzi feels, have made her a better activist because she feels that now she is more patient, tolerant and has a better understanding of others; "of why people view the world like they do or why they make decisions like they do". By getting to know others, Trish is able to identify those aspects which have the potential to cause problems for the group; those who lack skills to work collectively or productively or those whose personality or behaviour upsets others. Based on experience she recognises the need to take action at an early stage to remedy such situations.

Effectively harnessing the talents and energies of a group of individuals will maximise a group's potential. Both task and social roles need to be fostered and maintained, because if there is an imbalance the effectiveness of, and harmony within the group will be reduced. Suzi has observed that groups can work out their own dynamics without direction and as they do, a group intuition develops and people slot into appropriate roles. Suzi concludes that although the group intuitive process is less pronounced than

at the individual level, it does enable the group to operate very effectively “because ... their minds are engaged on the same purpose and then you’ll find there’s very little disagreement. And people think, ‘Ping, we need to do this’.”

Suzi recognises that her experience of working in groups is extremely valuable and she is able to apply that understanding to make the groups more constructive and productive. She believes that having good communication patterns is vitally important for any group and it is one of the first matters that a new group must address. At this early stage of group formation each person should feel assured that their needs will be met and that their roles will be fulfilling. These activists accept that there has to be respect for others, honesty and flexibility. Activists need to honour their own personal direction but be willing to work cooperatively with others, recognising that their peers have perhaps equally valid ideas of goals, organisation and time. Since within any group there will usually be some variation in background and outlook, this requires tolerance and consideration. Trish is someone who likes to get on with things and acknowledges that she needs to be patient and understanding: “I know I work efficiently and quickly and I find it difficult say, if we’re doing a huge mail out, and ... I’m getting through ten letters while someone else is still working out where to fold the bit of paper.”

Working with others in a group brings the activist into contact with those whose experiences of activism can be instructive. Such learning has hastened the maturation of activists like Trish and she has cherished those opportunities which have come her way (Brown, 1989, p. 229). But recruits too have lots to learn about activism.

“A LOT OF IT IS JUST BUILDING CONFIDENCE” - Recruits

Many would-be supporters who may feel passionately about an issue will hesitate before they join a group. Not only can it be a somewhat daunting prospect to join an existing group, but if it is newly formed, there is an added dimension to consider. Trish remembers what it was like for her and she can empathise with how prospective supporters think: “ ‘Oh, if I go along, I have to do it all’, but as the momentum start[s] to build, ... a lot of it is just building confidence within the community, that if they actually participate, they’ll be able to do it.” It can be easy to forget that what is commonplace for current group members is not so for newcomers. As Trish admits, an established group develops a way of thinking, a way of talking about issues and a way of doing things (Touraine, 1988, pp. 26-27). She can appreciate that she has to be able to move outside that culture temporarily if the newcomer is to be made welcome. From her own experience as a newcomer, Trish has been able to draw some further valuable lessons about how best to handle recruits (Brown, 1989, p. 229):

When I was new to the issues, I know I said a lot of really, well what I might consider now to be ignorant things, but we all start from a place of ignorance. And ... I think it’s really important to diplomatically and gently encourage people away from ignorance into ... awareness about the issues without giving them ... negative feedback which is going to really hurt.

An activist who is open about themselves, about their rationale for involvement and who puts in the effort will gain the confidence and contribution of supporters. Andy is keen to involve new recruits in group activities because it makes them begin to feel part of the team. By encouraging that participation and affirming their efforts, the activist will establish a rapport with recruits. When supporters realise that their contribution is valued and an integral part of the overall effort, they will want to continue their participation. According to Eric, the more that recruits enjoy their experiences, the more that they will wish to repeat them; ensuring that they remain involved and contributing to the campaign (McAdam, 1988, p. 149).

The arrival of recruits brings an infusion of energy, new perspectives, reinvigorates others and allows those who have contributed over a long period to wind down without feelings of guilt. A group's ability to continuously regenerate in such a healthy manner prolongs its life and vigour. Inevitably however, membership changes induce an evolution in the group and this can create problems and be discomfiting for some long term members, according to Brett. For these reasons, he believes that it is essential that the recruiting and training process be handled well. Trish gets excited when new people join the group, because of the infectious passion they have for the cause. Training recruits is crucial for the long term future of a social movement, because as she is aware, they will eventually be the ones who have the job of guiding future activists (Oliver & Marwell, 1992, p. 255; Sills, Butcher, Collis & Glen, 1980, p. 195):

They mightn't necessarily know very much about the detail of what's happening, but they've got a heart-feeling that they want to get involved. And they're the sort of people that need ... lots of affirmation and support.

People who have not been involved with an activist group before, will need direction at certain stages if they are to complete tasks satisfactorily. This hesitancy passes with time but at the outset, the activist, is usually committed to either demonstrating a procedure or doing the job themselves. Brett has found that it can take quite a time to instruct newcomers in how a job is to be done, and even then he may need to do extra work just to get them started. That has been Andy's experience too in some of his work with the East Timorese community. He was asked for advice which only the experienced activist can give on which priests would be willing to participate in actions and "how to keep the crowd motivated, how to keep the chants going and operate within the bounds [of what is legally acceptable]".

When a group is forming there is usually a lot of enthusiasm for the cause. People are fired up and keen to use their energy. Thus when potential supporters have been invited to attend an information night, there will be an air of expectation and possibly excitement. There are good reasons why energy levels once raised should not be allowed to dissipate as Suzi explains: "There's absolutely no point, in fact it's very counterproductive to get everybody fired up at a public meeting and then not ... point them in any direction that they can put that energy." In order to maintain that momentum, Eric will ensure that potential or new supporters always leave a meeting or

direct action with something to do, such as write to parliamentary representatives (Figure 16). He wants to get the most value from new supporters but he is very keen that they leave a meeting or direct action having had a good experience, picked up knowledge and made friends (McAdam, 1988, p. 147). He believes that the mutuality of that shared experience is reinforcing for the recruits but it has a value for him as well (MacQueen, 1992, p. 63), “ ’cos you need the ongoing support. And you need to ... gain value from that newly created contact ... you’ve made. ... And care for them, because you want them to care for you.”

Whilst they share the workload of activism, supporters do need to be supported, particularly those new recruits who may be feeling apprehensive. They are best introduced on ‘easy’ campaigns presenting them with things that they can do and showing them that there is direction, for example, making banners. But for Andy, that is just an introduction. Although initially they may wish to “do dog’s body jobs like open letters, pack letters, fold newsletters,” his aim is to move them more into the core of the work with “involvement in an issue, so that they feel [empowered]. And it also develops the network and the support”.

Having supporters is not sufficient though, there needs also to be energy and enthusiasm. These activists acknowledge that whilst recruits often bring those attributes with them, it is always useful to have an experienced individual in the group who is naturally talented at exciting others.

So Why Will YOU Be Celebrating Australia Day?

What's in it for you? To share in the so called glory of the past?

... or to make a stand and confront the atrocities of an unjust system and not allow it to continue.

What are you going to do about Invasion day?

- * Write a letter of protest, Fax or telephone the Prime Minister of Australia Mr Paul Keating about this matter.
- * Contact your local member of Parliament and ask him/her what they are going to do on this day.
- * Ring your local Talk Back Radio Station and give your point of view.
- * Ask the management of the TV Stations in your area, are they going to present any of the Aboriginal point of view with equal balance.
- * Write to your local newspaper about the injustice of celebrating and calling it Australia Day.
- * Fly the Aboriginal Flag at half mast and explain to people why.
- * Photo copy this leaflet and distribute copies to friends and other interested parties.
- * Join in the resistance activities and assist in the ongoing struggle to bring about a positive change for our people.

ABoriginal Government of Australia

Figure 16. Giving people things to do, Invasion (Australia) Day(Aboriginal Government of Australia - January 1995).

MAKING PEOPLE “JUMP AND UP DOWN” - Exciting others

Brett admires those activists who have the ability to excite others about an issue or event. Their excitement is infectious and they attract followers who are willing to join them in a campaign. He named peace and anti-nuclear campaigner, (former senator) Jo Vallentine, as someone who had the ability to excite people and make them “jump up and down” about an issue: “[she]’s ... always been good for that. And ... there are people in most groups that can do that. That’s really important.” Trish recognises the importance of exciting others because she has seen that being fervent about an issue or event, raises morale and enthusiasm amongst supporters.

Those who become involved in issues, do so because they are committed and serious about working for change. Although there is nothing wrong about being serious about an issue, sometimes activists take themselves too seriously according to Suzi. She has found that injecting some humour at the right moment can have a healthy effect on group dynamics. Supporters enmeshed in details of a campaign can sit back for a moment and laugh, tension is released, and maybe things are seen in a different perspective. Interestingly, Suzi does not see herself as a particularly humorous person when she is on her own but “clowning around and ... trying to lighten up the desperation that is often around” is a role that she finds herself slipping into within a group. Being able to excite others or add a touch of humour to a situation which seems fraught will be wasted if not everyone in the group is committed to the objectives.

COMMITMENT: TO WHAT AND TO WHOM?

The activist has to check on the commitment of their supporters (Oliver & Marwell, 1992, p. 258). Are they willing to put themselves on the line for the cause? Misjudging commitment or reason for involvement can produce problems later in the campaign if they pull out at a time when their contribution is needed and expected. Some supporters may feel constrained in the actions they wish to take because of other considerations. It is a factor of which Eric in particular, is aware: "Most of them are on government funded programmes. And understand that they are not gonna come out and show their true colours if they think that their finances are jeopardised." But supporters should never be pushed too far anyway. According to Andy, if the stakes are high enough, he will put himself into tight situations but he would not ask this of others: "I'm not going to get a whole lot of people arrested. I don't believe in thrusting people who aren't prepared into situations that are gonna end up in chaos and people get hurt and carted away."

Some events by their very nature, such as the 'Reclaim the night' march, will attract involvement from those who feel strongly about an issue and in addition who may never have taken part in a public event. Trish is aware that potential supporters will feel hesitant and very vulnerable about attending and she tries to ensure that the climate is conducive to participation: "There we are, dealing with a really hot issue like rape, which brings up a lot of fear for a lot of the group that we are trying to attract along, and we are trying to find ways to make them feel that they are going to be comfortable."

It is clear that these activists feel a considerable degree of responsibility for the well-being of their supporters. But they are also accountable to them and must consult regularly. The purpose is to ensure amongst other things that all group members are pursuing the same aims. For example, Suzi has found that at times, she gets the feeling that members' priorities differ from her's. Whilst she is putting her energies into one aspect others are busy elsewhere. It seems that the urgency she feels about some particular matter is not shared by the rest of the group. She tries to assess whether the divergence of priorities is due to differing agendas or whether it is related simply to members concentrating their efforts on specific elements of the campaign. To minimise dissipated effort in the group, Suzi admits to mentally juggling with such matters, and questioning her own motivation:

So I'm constantly trying to check back whether it's just me having a personal attachment to achieving that aim because it would be something I feel I would've personally been involved in achieving. So I guess on some level there's some personal kudos attached to that.

There is a consensus amongst these activists that those supporters who have made a commitment to a group, need and deserve support and consideration.

“YOU’VE GOT TO NURTURE THE ‘TRUE BELIEVERS’ ”

Supporters who form a picket line at the Old Swan Brewery or stand in a forest blockade for hours on end appreciate the activist's attention to their physical well-

being. Eric realises that direct actions are demanding and he tries to ameliorate their effect by “cater[ing] for the people and their energy”. This may mean providing food, transport after the event, or if the weather is wet and miserable, hot drinks and a camp fire (Figure 10). For Trish, nurturing supporters and particularly the core members is a vital activist role and one to which she and other activists have an effective solution. Between events and meetings, preparing and distributing a newsletter not only keeps people informed and enthused but it acts as a signal that they are not forgotten (Figure 10). Trish maintains that it should be a regular, readable and positive newsletter which “is also interspersed with cartoons and graphics ... so that people want to read. ... You’ve got to nurture the true believers”. A further benefit of distributing a newsletter to supporters is that it enables them to see where their contribution fits into the larger social movement. Andy will include newspaper articles in the newsletter such as one on landmines and send it to people in the Landmines Group “just as a way of keeping up their interest in the issue and saying ‘Hey Hi. Are you still working on this issue?’ ”

Campaigning can be stressful and it is important that those involved do support each other. By making themselves available, activists can acknowledge and address supporter’s concerns. Eric contacts his supporters frequently so that he can keep them familiar with what is going on because he recognises that his supporters appreciate that effort: “I think having this continual association with them, ... like a man was saying the other day, ‘We need you to come out and speak strong about something’, ... they know they can rely on me.”

Activism seems to make considerable emotional demands on those who are involved, and conflicts or setbacks can have a major personal impact. Those who are upset as a result of such interpersonal conflict or from issues directly related to campaigning need to be nurtured according to Brett. He recalled such an occasion when a colleague became upset following the publication of “a very nasty response”, to a letter they had written to the newspaper. Brett appreciates that in terms of the group’s ‘code’, it was necessary to nurture that person through that stress because “that comes back to care and nurturing within the group; looking after each other”. When that support is not forthcoming, Trish has experienced that the outcomes can inflict damage not just on the group, but sometimes on the social movement. Thus for her it is a challenge to develop a good balance “between being task oriented but ensuring that people are feeling good about what’s happening because otherwise you just lose people. And when you lose people unfortunately sometimes they can become the detractors”. Those comments clearly indicate the importance of ensuring that people do not get forgotten, in the push to reach objectives.

BALANCING TASK AND PROCESS - Group dynamics

Activism by its very nature produces people who are focussed on achieving a goal. It is their *raison d’etre*. However there is a danger as some of these activists admit, that total focus on task can be detrimental to eventual outcomes because interpersonal relations are not being nurtured sufficiently. Trish admits that in the past she has been too focussed on goals but experience has taught her to modify that approach and work for a balance between task and process:

In times gone by, it was all I could do to keep up with what appeared to be happening, whereas now I work really hard to ensure that what is happening is really on track, and that people are feeling good about it and that we are achieving what we're heading for.

Socialising can establish, affirm and strengthen a sense of community within a group. Once these bonds have been formed, the activist has to monitor group dynamics to ensure that individuals remain connected and committed to each other. Intra-group differences should not be personalised but need to be discussed so that destructive tendencies can be reduced or eliminated. There are several common ways in which these differences can manifest themselves. Covert communication between individuals within groups poses particular dangers for group cohesion according to Suzi: "There's this sort of second level of communication of all sorts of information going on within the group, and unless that is acknowledged and discussed and dealt with, it'll fester away." Brett has noted that personal issues also, such as relationships between members of the group, have the potential to be particularly damaging: "Some partners don't work well in a group together because they might not treat each other or treat the rest of the group as equals any more because there's an extra dynamic in there." Typically a disagreement between partners over some point or issue can lead to an expectation of support not being fulfilled. A grievance ensues, resulting in energies and focus being directed from the principal task in hand. Because of their inherently deleterious potential, he has found that these situations must be managed promptly and

with tact however interpersonal tensions are not the only internal, destabilising influences which a group can face.

GANDHI: “I BET HE WAS A BUGGER TO WORK WITH”

Suzi has noted that visionary, intuitive individuals can cause tension unwittingly. They are inspirational individuals who may well be founder members and are likely to have made considerable contributions to the group. But in Suzi’s experience, this only exacerbates the problem because other group members may resent the assertion that the visionary has consistently got access to the ultimate answers. Suzi has observed that ultimately, the visionary’s virtues can become detrimental to group cohesion:

And they can’t disengage ... that ... spontaneous, inspirational ... stuff from an [assessment that] the group feels something slightly different. ... There’s not much room for compromise, because as soon as you start to question that sort of stuff, it actually goes away.

She concludes that there is always going to be a tension between those visionary, intuitive individuals who bring insight and those who bring perhaps a more pragmatic or practical perspective. To illustrate her point she quotes an example taken from the life of Mahatma Gandhi. During a period of community violence, without consultation or consensus-seeking, he announced that he would fast until the fighting stopped. She imagines that it must have been incredibly infuriating to his followers who were probably deeply concerned that he might die, with all that that would imply for

sustaining a campaign and its goals. Suzi adds with a big laugh: “He strikes me from ... what I can gather, to have been very much directed by ... his spiritual, ... inspirational thing. Now, I mean, I bet he was a bugger to work with.”

When people are ‘hyped up’, they become more confident about what they are doing and will be more enthusiastic in their approach. In their zeal they may make suggestions which are inappropriate. As Brett described above, the skill is to redirect them with an explanation, not stifle their enthusiasm or curb their desire to contribute ideas.

“EVERYBODY WOULD KNOW WHAT I WAS THERE FOR” - Advocating

When the activist is working for others in an advocacy capacity, it is important to be circumspect in how an issue is managed. For example the situation might involve someone with an intellectual disability and Gwen is adamant that their privacy needs to be maintained, which is a constraint on how she can publicise the issue. Individual and family feelings and stress levels have to be considered as does the potential for harm to dependent relationships with service providers. Gwen commonly attends meetings or case conferences held to discuss service delivery issues for people with an intellectual disability. She has found that the process itself, seems to divert the focus inadvertently from the individual or group at the nominal heart of the meeting. She sees it as her duty to bring the focus back on to where it belongs. Then, thinking about those whom she knows and represents, Gwen asks herself “what decisions they would probably like to take. I don’t like to speak for them but knowing their personalities and

knowing their lifestyle ... how the majority of them would answer questions. And what they really want". In committees drawn from a diverse range of human services, Gwen is particularly determined that the perspective of those for whom she advocates is clearly presented and understood by the members before any decisions are made. Her single-minded focus makes Gwen laugh:

It was very important that anything they talked about, they got the perspective of the person with an intellectual disability. ... And everybody who was there at that table for that meeting would know what I was there for!

But it is equally important for Gwen that those for whom she advocates know of her unambiguous commitment to achieving things for them:

As long as ... they believe in me, I don't care whether anybody else does or not. My ultimate aim is that the people I'm supporting know I'm there for them. I'm not there for anybody else or for anything else. And that's the most important thing to me: that they know that.

Gwen chooses to work autonomously and for her that means that she does not have to worry about a group, her supporters or indeed allies. For the other six activists however, forming working relationships with allied groups is a necessary and, if successfully managed, beneficial exercise.

“IT’S GOT TO BE A RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP” - Working with allies

Allies are those individuals or groups who have broadly the same goals on an issue and are willing to work with each other to achieve those objectives. Eric will point out to other groups with similar concerns or grievances, say ethnic minorities, that their values are being eroded by the same situation affecting Aborigines (Diani, 1992, p. 14). Jenny too has used this approach to gain broadly-based support on the issue of Homeswest evictions of some Aboriginal families. Not only have her colleagues tried to get an open commitment to indigenous people from legal centres and welfare rights organisations, they have also sought “broad support from churches, from various welfare agencies, from community groups generally to present a united front against Homeswest eviction practices”. Gaining allies through networking increases the absolute numbers of those involved in an issue (Eder, 1993, p. 52). The immediate benefits are that there is seen to be increased interest in an issue and a greater amount of pressure can be brought to bear on the targets. For example, Eric was planning to invite other indigenous groups including Maoris, to support an Aboriginal campaign about land rights and he would ask them: “ ‘Do you believe in land rights? If not, why not?’ Or if, ‘Yes,’ ‘Well, let’s get committed about it. Let’s get together and have a joint land rights march and support each other’ .”

The ethical consequence of networking is that a degree of reciprocity is required as Trish indicates (Oliver & Marwell, 1992, p. 270): “You can’t always be asking for more and more from them. You’ve got to provide something for them so that they

want to keep up working with you.” Although there is a numerical advantage in having allies support a campaign, because of the reciprocity factor, there can be a concern or danger in such an arrangement. For example, as Trish stresses, their next issue or public action may not be one which for whatever reason, the activist wishes to support. Often liaison between groups with strongly divergent philosophies (say conservative Christian and radical socialist) falters at such points. Whilst it is not essential for allies to have similar philosophical outlook and political perspective, differences in tactical approaches can be problematical (Sinclair & Corris, 1994, p. 86). Andy recalled an instance when the group with which he was associated, wanted to occupy a government minister’s office after it closed to the public for the day. Their intention was to pray about the issue and not to be involved in any action which would detract from their principled stance. In contrast, an allied group was prepared to take a more militant posture. According to Andy, those differences had to be acknowledged openly and the allies were asked to leave:

We were afraid that a scuffle might develop ... with the security’s people and we had planned exactly what we were going to do and how we were going to respond. So it’s not a good idea to have outsiders in that situation.

Where groups have not been allied before, assumptions and preconceptions based on prejudices about their philosophy, presentation or behaviour can lead to stereotyping, as Brett has experienced (Cooper & Eichner, 1991, pp. 164-165). One group with which he was associated was viewed unfavourably by an allied group. He was certain

that ‘baggage’ they had with his group was automatically attached to him. Such barriers need to be broken down so that effective communication and collaboration is possible. This can be achieved by stressing the commonalities between the groups and gently educating each other about perspectives. Brett has found that encouraging social contact between the groups can also strengthen the bonds and lead to fruitful outcomes (cf. Diani, 1992, p. 17): “But having socialised with them and spent a lot of time just being, talking with them and so on, that’s now broken down and that’s not a problem. We can do good work together.” Similarly, Eric believes that by socialising with allies both parties can come to a fuller understanding of each other’s “deeper social values”. The outcome is that they can work together more effectively for mutual benefit. As Brett’s activism has evolved he too, has realised that socialising with allies, and particularly with those with radically different perspectives is vital “because it helps you understand where they’re at and what they’re prepared to do and on what level you can work with them” (Sills, Butcher, Collis & Glen, 1980, p. 197; Vernon, 1980, p. 230). Such an approach is also likely to strengthen the unity between coalition allies which can be a crucial factor in a campaign (Falk, 1987, p. 176). Trish has found that work is always required to minimise or eliminate divisions between allies:

It might be that people coming in from different political perspectives and different backgrounds can come ... with pretty entrenched views and attitudes on how it should happen. And that’s when you can start getting division. And of course the mainstream really loves that, if they find that particular fringe threatening.

Relationships with allies can go through an entire campaign without problems, but sometimes however, situations develop with others which require divisive behaviours to be highlighted.

“HAVE THE STRENGTH TO ‘BLUE’ WITH THEM”

- Blockers, destroyers and collaborators

Within the activist’s group it is acknowledged that there will always be obstructive or destructive elements. Keeping a watchful eye open for such ‘destroyers’ is vital because they can have a serious detrimental effect on group dynamics and output (May, 1994, p. 624). Trish is always alert to minimise the impact of such individuals. After such individuals have been identified, Eric will confront them and tell them that he knows what they are doing to block the group’s aspirations. He finds that having a ‘blue’ will often allow matters to be discussed and resolved. What can be equally potent according to Trish are obstructionist tactics employed by someone “who really doesn’t want you to make any progress and they sabotage your work by ... putting legal barriers in the way or ... by bad mouthing your group around the place”. Perhaps the most difficult problem to solve is the individual who has been ‘planted’ in the group to cause dissension. Because they are assumed to be genuinely committed to the cause, it may take some time for the activist to uncover that person’s agenda. In the meantime they can create havoc as Trish has seen in the environment movement:

You actually get people coming in, sabotaging the process, setting people up against each other. And if you've got a lot of antipathy and a lot of conflict in the group ... then it's really hard to get things going properly.

Suzi claims that when people work together as activists, they develop very high expectations of each other and it seems that very strong bonds are generated between them. She admits that if they join the ranks of the opposition, perhaps getting a job with them, it is a dreadful blow to her and she finds it difficult to work with them again. For Suzi, losing someone who was a trusted colleague in such a manner, is akin to a grieving process and she has found that her drive leaves her for a time: "You personally lose some potential momentum because you feel, you know that person was so committed and they were so involved, 'I trusted them and now they're doing this'."

Aboriginal activists like Eric may target those 'coconuts' who collaborate with government departments involved in indigenous matters, "'cos they've sold out". He will publically condemn them for doing what he believes is the government's dirty work and oppressing their people. On occasions, Eric will ask for assistance with indigenous issues from government departments or government funded organisations. It may be that he wants to send a fax, but no matter how trivial, he knows that some bodies will not help. He is scathing of those Aborigines who work for such organisations and who refuse to be of assistance: "They've got their positions, they've got their survival mentality. ... Some people say, 'Oh, don't criticise 'em'.' But I do: 'cos they're the collaborators, they're the oppressors of our own people."

But for these activists it is their opponents, rather than collaborators or blockers, who have the most to gain by causing problems for them.

“SOMETIMES YOU’RE HAVING A BAD DAY AND YOU THINK

‘OH, BUGGER OFF’ ” - Opponents

Some of these activists concede that maintaining a good relationship with opponents and respecting their right to hold contrary views is worthwhile and consistent with their philosophical stance (Falk, 1987, p. 189). Suzi accepts that this has perhaps become easier for her over the years as she has become more tolerant towards other positions and opinions. She maintains that no matter how outrageous, rude and obnoxious opponents can be, she still feels that there is something there to which she can relate. Sometimes the opportunity to practise that philosophy comes in unusual circumstances (Rootes, 1990, p. 13):

You’re sitting in front of a bulldozer down at Wagerup and a truckload of contractors come steaming in, dust everywhere, screech to a halt. I mean your first reaction is to run. But ... what we did we went straight up to them and said, ‘Hallo,’ shook their hands, ‘My name is Such and Such’, and they... go, ‘Oh, oh [taken aback tone]’, and it completely throws them off guard.

Following that potentially threatening entrance, Suzi was able to give them an opportunity to have their say over a coffee. She has found that such an approach has always worked even with those who she feels have been ready to give her a “thick ear”. Suzi believes that the technique works because a part of them is being addressed that is above the issue. But as she admits with a laugh, there are occasions when it is hard to implement: “But ... sometimes we forget to do it too. Sometimes you’re having a bad day and you think, ‘Oh, bugger off’ .”

And that last throw-away line is important because it shows that it is not always easy to follow principles in heated moments or when the pressure from opponents is at its greatest. Suzi knows of that truth and she endeavours, through meditation and reflection, to maintain a state of equanimity because then she is less easily knocked off balance.

Both Suzi and Trish recognise that if they treat opponents in such a way, it can be possible to talk things over to achieve small results which would not transpire from a negative or aggressive posture. Trish remembers an occasion when she was working with an NGO, where she and some colleagues visited their local sitting member to discuss Australia’s financial commitment to overseas aid. She was able to put her point about the need to increase the commitment across to a politician whose views were quite contrary. Because she was able to put over her point of view and got public exposure, the outcome of her meeting with an opponent was more than satisfactory to Trish: “We talked for about thirty minutes and interestingly enough,

there was even a photograph in the local paper to show that he had at least discussed these issues and I think that's very important.”

Like all of these activists, Eric is keenly interested in knowing what his opponents are doing, but in contrast to Suzi and Trish, he has little interest in meeting with them: “I keep an idea on what they're doing because you can only respond if you know what they're thinking about. ... I really don't meet with them because I don't think they've got anything to contribute.” In the past when opponents made outrageous statements, Suzi admits that she used to fire off a strong rebuttal. Analysing why she worked that way, she realised that it was because of the implied personal component. However over the years Suzi has found that sometimes letting things go has actually been more constructive because it defuses the situation and now she hesitates, to check “that one is not responding ... in a personal way ... ‘Oh, I can't bear them, to let them have the last word on that’.”

This chapter has described how and why this group of activists work with people during a campaign. For these activists, being able to deal appropriately with recruits, supporters, allies and opponents is a necessary component of a successful campaign. Those individuals or groups with whom an activist is aligned, have to be supported, trained, understood and nurtured if they are to maximise their cooperative efforts. Most of these activists choose to treat their opponents with respect, but all of them will spare no effort to minimise the impact of those who endeavour to wreck or derail a campaign. In the final chapter, “**EXTENDING THE BOUNDARIES,**” an attempt

is made to draw out the main themes from the research and relate them to the activist literature.

INTRODUCTION

The previous four chapters have dealt with the results of this research. In the first of these, **ACTIVIST PORTRAITS**, a brief profile on each of the seven activists was presented with the intention of making each individual ‘come alive’. The aim was to enable the reader to say to themselves, ‘Yes, this is a person whom I feel I have met and about whom I know something.’ Having made those introductions, the activists then told the reader what makes them take up an issue, about the potentially painful consequences of involvement and how they go about starting a campaign (**“IT’S JUST LIKE A RED RAG; I JUST GOTTA START” - Taking up an issue**). By their accounts this early phase is crucial to later success: information, context and strategic framework are particularly vital determinants. The nuts and bolts of campaigning; the activities, the fun, the frustrations, the obstacles, the tactics were related in the next chapter, **“CAPITAL ‘A’ ACTIVISM” - Campaigning**. The activist’s perspective enabled the reader to begin to appreciate the realities of working for social change. Having identified the elements of a campaign and how these are managed, the activists then related just to what extent, activism is a social as well as an instrumental process - (**“WE’D ALL HAVE BEEN GIVEN A PLANET EACH” - Working with people**). Supporters, networks, allies, opponents and the community all require some sort of response. How the individual activist responds, or feels that

they ought to respond, is a reflection of the sort of world they are seeking to achieve. Into the three later chapters are woven self reflective critiques which give an insight into what activists deem to be important for them such as, particular attributes, staying grounded or evaluating their efforts.

During the analytical stage of the research, a number of themes were recognised and these findings have been discussed in the results chapters. In this final chapter, some broader aspects which deserve further attention are discussed, drawing comparisons with the literature. Those who have been involved in triangulating the research have drawn out the same general themes as have been described in the results chapters, but they have provided additional perspective which is included here. The aim of this chapter is to provide responses to the four supplementary questions and the principal research question which were posed at the outset of the research (see **METHODOLOGY**). The opening section covers those points which shape activism.

SHAPING ACTIVISM

The influence of particular people, circumstances, and specific events have all been factors for these seven activists. Exposure to one or all three factors prior to the age of about twenty does seem to have had the most potency, at least with this group. That finding is consistent with other research as described below.

There is almost unanimous agreement amongst all seven activists interviewed for this study that people, rather than circumstances or events, have been the factor most

influential in determining their perspective and orientation towards activism. Ellerman suggested that extra-family influence and imitation might be a more important contributory factor than immediate family contacts but results from this research suggest a more complex pattern of influence (1988, p. 259). A tripartite division is evident; parents and extended family members, school teachers, and significant others such as activist mentors and liberation clergy. If one considers when each would have been influential, this list implies a chronological dimension. Family influence is the first and the most prolonged; indicating also a quantitative dimension. The activists in this study have indicated that their families established environments which ranged between loving, tolerant and supportive to cold, authoritarian and abusive. The former encouraged exploration, the latter induced withdrawal. Whatever the setting, core values were established at this stage. Socialisation at school broadened the perspective; the individuals looked up to specific teachers who were respected for their views and attitudes. The third category includes people who are admired and who perhaps fulfil roles as heroes, role models and mentors. Some of these may only have been known through books or other information sources, which would imply a qualitatively different influence from family or teachers. The individuals in this category are people with whom the teenage incipient activist can identify through their similar ideals, goals, direction and means. This is certainly not activism by imitation as suggested by Ellerman (1988, p. 259), perhaps rather activism by example.

What of the role played by events in shaping the activist orientation of those involved in this study? The events which cause people to change their thinking or attitude do not necessarily spring from earth-shattering, momentous happenings. When someone

is 'primed' for that shift, even a small incident can be the trigger; personal experience tells us that. But events which have national or global impact such as famine or the Vietnam war also have great weight and so it was for Suzi, Andy and Brett (Stewart and Healy, 1986). Unlike the other six activists whose principal influences were people, the Vietnam war and the threat of nuclear weapons were the principal factors in determining Brett's orientation towards activism. For all three, the war provided contradictions with their worldview; Australia was abetting a neo-imperialist policy, it was supporting a ruling elite to the detriment of the bulk of the populace, and war was not viewed as a constructive method of solving conflict. Their extended analysis was played out during the teenage years, even if for Brett, the mode was in action-replay. As mentioned earlier, there is this emphasis on the importance of timing with respect to identity development (Stewart and Healy, 1986. p. 18).

Circumstances too, can induce individuals into an orientation towards activism and two examples are evident from amongst the seven activists. In the first, Jenny deliberately chose to become involved in issues affecting Aborigines, in an effort to repay a debt to Aboriginal farm workers who loved and supported her during an extremely traumatic childhood. In the second, working as a volunteer with people with an intellectual disability, Gwen refused to go along with, and then began to change, toileting and bathing procedures which she considered to be undignified. Both activists became active in response to situations which affected them deeply and directly.

Stewart and Healy suggest from empirical evidence that the need to be generative (to do something for the future) comes after the development of consciousness and so

there can be a delay between the formative event(s) and the onset of activism (1986, p. 29). The delay can be significant as in Gwen's case, teenager to thirty seven year old, or far less as for all others in this study. One might conclude then that the intensity of the formative event's impact, the impression it leaves and the opportunity for response may all play a part in determining if and when activism is initiated.

In terms of the principal research question, it is demonstrably clear from the findings of this research that people, circumstances and events all have the capacity to shape activism. However they are only some of the factors which prime the individual towards a life of activism. Each individual must develop also a value system which is the driving force behind activism, as previously described, and it is that aspect which is now examined.

VALUE GENESIS AND CONFIGURATION

The process of value formation and acceptance for these activists was certainly not passive, but from an analysis of what the activists have said, an interesting distinction can be made. Three activists, Eric, Jenny, and Andy, admit to having been heavily influenced experientially through respectively, on-going discrimination, abusive parental situation, and school brutality. In contrast, value development and critique had a more intellectualised foundation for the other four individuals. But it is an appraisal grounded in real, and usually close family situations, Trish's family's memories of the Holocaust being a particularly obvious one. I do not suggest that the former three activists, because of their experiences, feel more deeply or passionately

about their activism. But I do feel intuitively that their raw and painful memories would elicit immediate empathy when they are confronted by the similar plight of others. For them, it is a memory of a 'lived experience'. Jenny's admission that she gets overwrought when a Noongar family is about to be evicted from their home, is an indication of the depth of her empathy which perhaps flows from her own traumatised childhood. Having examined briefly the roots of value development for this group of seven activists, it is appropriate to look at the variation in their value systems.

Over two decades ago there was a flurry of investigations into the values held by activists. In that time Western societies have changed significantly; unquestioning supplication to the individual, economic growth and the market place are *de rigueur*, there is an enhanced awareness of environmental and global issues, new technologies pose bioethical concerns, information technology and the control of information flow by media moguls and governments demand consideration (Jagtenberg and McKie, 1997; Suzuki, 1993). It is a fascinating question to ponder whether cultural changes over the span of a generation have changed the value system of activists. Earlier studies utilised the Rokeach value listing but not only is this scheme not comprehensive, some of its categories are conceptually flawed and not always commensurable with those expressed by these activists (Ellerman & Feather, 1976; Thomas, 1986). Thus, the findings from this study are not directly comparable with the earlier literature although some comments can be made.

The values expressed by these activists are usually framed in terms of their spiritual or religious orientation but in some cases whatever their beliefs, the essence is the same.

There is the same emphasis on equality, but freedom which was ranked with equality in previous studies of both political and social activists, did not even get a mention (Ellerman and Feather, 1976, p. 274; Thomas, 1986, p. 190). The nearest equivalent values, self-determination and participatory democracy, were nominated by one activist each. It could be argued that freedom has lost its pre-eminence since the end of the 'cold war' but the issue interests of some of these activists, for example East Timor self determination, suggest its continuing importance. In the concluding section of his article, Thomas asks whether different value configurations would vary with the form of activism (1986, p. 192). This becomes an even more relevant question, if one accepts as some authors do, that new social movements are expressing a more distinctly social, as opposed to political orientation and value base (Pakulski, 1991, p. 26; Melucci, 1989). The question is valid for this study too because, without wishing to pre-empt a later discussion, some of the activists do have an affinity with new social movements. Analysis of the data from this study indicates a strong emphasis on social concern for others. Empathy, compassion and supporting others are values commonly mentioned, although in Ellerman and Feather's study they would be subsumed under the term 'helpful' (1976). Other values not included in the Rokeach value list but expressed by more than one activist in this study include justice, education, peace, non-violence and caring for the environment. What is clear from an analysis of the value orientation of these activists, is confirmation of the inadequacy of left / right political labelling (Melucci, 1989, p. 168).

Through their values, these activists have a vision of a better world and most express an absolute imperative to act irrespective of consequences, even to those they love the

most (Stewart and Healy, 1986, p. 29). So, discontent with a situation is the driving force of activism. One of the co-coders for this study, working from a phenomenological perspective, indeed found this to be the core theme of the transcripts which she read. She concluded that these activists were driven by an “uncomfortable consciousness”. By this she meant that whilst others could see an unjust situation, recognise it for what it was and not react, these activists were forced to act based on their troubled awareness of a situation.

DECONSTRUCTING THE CONTEXT FOR CHANGE

The analysis of research material from this study has led to the conclusion that these activists have a core value framework which determines how they perceive situations (Stewart and Healy, 1986, pp. 16, 28). Lahar argues that as individuals we are subject to the values and reinforcing structures of social and economic systems (1991, p. 34). She claims that as a result, “we are conditioned by collective perceptual filters”. It is only with the most critical perspective and analysis that we can deconstruct our world; “the multiple layers and strands of ideologies and practices” that power and govern society have to be disassembled. For these activists, particularly the likes of Brett, Suzi and Eric who have transformative agendas, this is the challenge they must face. In order to create a better world they must deconstruct before they can reconstruct. That disassembling and subsequent reconstruction of social structure must make sense not just to them but to the community at large. And with that goal in mind, they seem to recognise that they have to be able to speak the language of those whom they wish to influence or change. In effect they are acknowledging that individuals have their

own reality and this is why Brett for example, will pitch his talk and information pamphlets for a specific audience.

In this study there has been no general agreement amongst the activists on whether social and political change is effected from above or below. Only Gwen is convinced of the superiority of change directed by institutional elites, although she has implemented change from the grass roots. In contrast, Eric is utterly contemptuous of change directed by parliamentary political elites (Koenig, 1975, p. 475). That perspective has its origins in his belief that the political system has done nothing for indigenous people. Brett is committed to participatory democracy at all levels and so he attempts to avoid doing anything which legitimises the notion of electoral representation. The other activists adopt a more pragmatic and equivocal position. They utilise grassroots methods because they consider it to be more efficacious and more in keeping with their overall ideology. However if change can be effected through elites they will pursue that tack just as vigorously (Koenig, 1975, p. 475). It is just such an eclectic process which supports Diani's contention that there is scope for synthesis between resource mobilisation / political process and new social movement / action identity theories (1992). Dissatisfied with their social or political environment, these individuals examine ways in which society can be modified to suit their needs and wants (Melucci, 1989, p. 49). The orientation is not necessarily selfish, because although those requirements are personally felt, it may be intended that others are to be the chief material beneficiaries. Melucci asserts that it is just such individuals acting within small groups of like-minded people who are the instigators of social change. It

is not imposed from outside or above but begins at this ‘molecular level’, a view which exemplifies the grass roots model (Melucci, 1989, p. 77).

Although some of these activists emphasise an intrinsic, microsocial dynamic to activism, they are acutely aware that their activism takes place in a much wider social context which has many implications for how they work. The context in which activism is situated is multi-dimensional, including the specifically political fabric, the availability of resources including personal time and whether a campaign will benefit from their involvement. These are important factors because they may constrain choices on what issues will be tackled or how a campaign will be conducted. As described in the results chapters, the impact of these influences waxes and wanes during an evolving campaign depending on the specific processes in train. Contextual parameters, like issues, are not objectively defined but dependent on the locus and lens of the observer. In other words they are subjectively constructed based on the individual’s experientially based outlook.

WORLDVIEWS, ALLEGIANCES, IDEOLOGIES AND AGENDAS

The activists were asked what changes they were seeking to achieve in society. Their answers give an indication of what they deem to be the intrinsic structural or systemic deficiencies and the extrinsic deleterious factors. Thus by interpretation, it is possible to determine the orientation from which they are coming and thus to assess their perspective on the world. Orientation and perspective manifest themselves in an allegiance to particular positions and this aspect is now examined.

One of the broadest issue groupings to emerge over the last two decades is that known as eco-pax and it is deemed to be the archetypal new social movement (Pakulski, 1991, pp. 158-160). Subsumed under the rubric of 'eco-pax', is a trinity of diverse issue interests; ecological, anti-nuclear and pacifist each with its variety of ideological perspectives. Others identify the three domains as distinct movements and would refrain from using the supergroup epithet (Jagtenberg and McKie, 1997, p. 101). Pakulski argues that a level of integration between domains is both common and sufficient enough for the eco-pax grouping to be called a single movement and he asserts that the evidence is publically on show during major demonstrations or rallies (1991, p. 160). Evidence from this study supports the notion of cross-over support as three activists, Suzi, Trish, and Brett, have had a strong and lengthy commitment to all three domains.

Talking with those activists who have an affinity with this movement there is a sense that what they are striving for is almost tangible. It is a transformative and wholistic perspective embracing both a philosophy and a way of life (Touraine 1988, p. 11; cf. Pakulski 1991, p. 26). Ethical choices, values and norms are woven together to create something which is integrated and coherent. And it is pursued with a belief which suggests a spiritual dimension. But this is not just the framework of an individual. There is enough similarity in stated outlook for a claim to be made that this is a mutually shared set of beliefs. But such an understanding can only develop through social interaction (Diani, 1992, p. 14). In the dialogue, shared meanings and collective identities are produced through communication, negotiation and decision-making

(Melucci, 1989, p. 35). The emphasis placed on social process by those activists who belong to the eco-pax movement certainly supports the claims of Diani and Melucci.

Reference has been made to the cross-over commitment between issue domains which is a feature of the eco-pax movement. I would suggest that an eclectic outlook is engendered by the perspective's structural analysis of societal (mal)functioning. Issue interests which belong to quite different domains are seen to be interconnected because they stem from the same set of social contradictions. Certainly for some, enthusiasm is sustained by diversification, but the decision to work on several apparently diverse topics is perfectly rational since activism is integrative. Therefore eclecticism is not coincidence or whim but a choice or desire, substantively-driven, to tackle the same root causes on a number of fronts. Perhaps then it is not surprising, as Pakulski has noted, that as activists such as Trish range across the domains much as described here, thematic boundaries within the eco-pax movement are becoming less discernible (1991, pp. 195-196).

It is hard to put a political label on Eric, other than to say he is an Noongar activist. But that in itself says nothing about his political perspective and is misleading in terms of his dualistic spiritual orientation; traditional indigenous beliefs and Muslim. Of the seven activists interviewed he is the only one who has ascribed minority status; his upbringing was working class and almost certainly the least materially advantaged. His network is probably the most extensive of any amongst the seven activists and it may also be the most diverse. Although he has extensive contacts in the indigenous community, Eric does not seem to belong to a specific community as do some

Aboriginal activists, for example, Robert Bropho and the Fringe Dwellers of the Swan Valley. This makes Eric vulnerable to calls that he represents no one other than himself; a constant problem for indigenous activists. But the demand from those who wish to use his JP services, shows that he is a recognised and valued figure in the indigenous community.

Eric is contemptuous of a system which he feels has failed his people. His analysis emphasises an exploitative relationship and so his primary focus is very much on issues which impact on indigenous people. His political agenda is certainly transformative and although it is difficult to crystallise the nature of that alternative paradigm, it is collectivist and would comprise an institutionalised acceptance of Aboriginal culture having equality and political autonomy. He has an affinity with the eco-pax movement because it is tackling issues in a way which would benefit indigenous people. Although he does not advocate violence to achieve his ends he has sought to have contact with figures who are known or alleged to approve of such methods - Muammar Quadafi, Saddam Hussein and Gerry Adams. In the interviews, none of them are praised by Eric for their methods, leadership or achievements so maybe he feels that their stance against the same powerful forces he confronts, mirrors his own situation. Alternatively there may be a desire to shock, gain a degree of notoriety by association and thereby get attention for indigenous causes. Although that strategy can backfire, it may enable him to get his message across.

The other three activists identify as Christians, although only Andy spoke at any great length about the connection between his religious convictions and activism. The

aphorisms or phrases that he uses are not always taken from the Bible but they do derive from a literature which is both Christian and activist. His emphasis on the content of Matthew 25, the see-reflect-act methodology and his role models in liberation theology all affirm a Christian socialist perspective (Cort, 1988, pp. 32, 303-304, 309-311). That allegiance is pre-eminent over any social movement affiliation. Andy's objective and practice parallels Cort's reading of Jesus' teaching. For salvation, it is not possible to have a vertical relationship with God in the hereafter without a horizontal loving relationship with all other human beings in the here and now (1988, p. 33). This is what Andy's activism is all about; living a Christian life through democratic socialism. One co-coder who approached the transcripts from the critical tradition, described Andy as a humanitarian activist, who was operating with an understanding of multiple perspectives and from an anti-pragmatic foundation. Andy's social movement affinity is with eco-pax, but because of his Christian socialist persuasion, he is not as embedded in it as are Trish, Suzi, and Brett, who have no such other strong allegiances. He certainly rejects a considerable proportion of the dominant societal paradigm but whether he embraces a fully transformative agenda is an unanswered question.

Both Jenny and Gwen said very little about the role Christianity played in their activism, other than the fact that its values guided their activism, although Jenny did acknowledge that she had tried to synthesise elements of Aboriginal spirituality and her Christian beliefs. There are sufficient allusions for a tentative conclusion to be drawn that they are close to the Christian socialist tradition. Although Jenny does not support some of the ideas that have been promoted by the Labor party or its feminist adherents,

a general affinity to socialist principles remains. Her network reflects an affinity with the somewhat inchoate, minority rights social movement. Her objectives appear to be within the dominant paradigm so she can be categorised as a reformer. Gwen asserts that it is government's responsibility, not the business of charity organisations to ensure a good quality of life for those whom she represents. Caring for and supporting those in need, is or at least ought to be a community concern, and by implication, supported by collective action through taxation. The objectives are reformist rather than transformist, the perspective and the solution are in the socialist tradition.

This sample of seven activists is too small to make any meaningful analysis of the impacts of class, gender, race or age on activism although a few brief points can be made (Jagtenberg, 1992). Eric emphasised exploitation as a damaging social process with which he had to deal. His own and his family's working class experiences of how society works, and particularly in relation to indigenous people, may well account for such an analysis. None of the other activists has similar formative experiences because they come from middle class backgrounds within the dominant cultural group. Their perspectives on the causes of marginalisation and oppression are founded on a more intellectualised analysis of the world.

At the research proposal stage, one of the nominated reviewers, commented that she felt that there would be a perceptible difference between the styles of female and male activists due to gender socialisation (Lahar, 1991; Hyde, 1986). Let us examine a few examples. Some feminist analyses assert that it is a male trait to adopt a linear and systematic approach to a problem. However the activist who most clearly articulated

such a style was Suzi, although she does incorporate an intuitive element into that style. Intuition is considered to be a more female trait and certainly Suzi, Gwen and Trish were the activists who most spoke about it. One can argue that in such a feminist analysis, Eric's style is typically male. It is perhaps exhibitionist, publically confrontational, forthright and condemnatory to opponents or those deemed to be obstructionist (Hyde, 1986, p. 547). But Brett, who is a generation younger than Eric, does exhibit quite different traits, which are said to be feminine (Hyde, 1986, p. 547). He adopts a lower profile, stresses the social process, is non-competitive, consensus-oriented, and very unlikely to publically condone oppositional forces in Eric's manner. These examples show that even within this small sample there is a remarkable spectrum of styles, almost polar opposites, even within one gender. It could be argued also that Eric and Brett, and Gwen and Suzi exhibit generationally different socialisation patterns. But as described above, there are too many variables, other possibilities and insufficient participants to make definitive judgements.

This section has attempted to categorise the activists in terms of their worldviews and ideological perspectives. When the study began I had a sense that there would be a link between those perspectives and their choice of strategical and tactical approach. In fact, very little of significance has come out of the study in terms of influences on the choice of strategies and tactics. For those two activists, Gwen and Jenny, working with marginalised members of the community, strategies and tactics do have to be carefully considered so that further trauma is avoided. But their decision is hardly ideological. Gwen does hold to the view that change which is directed from above is efficacious and so her strategies and tactics are designed to fit that scheme. The

already described choices of Brett and Eric to avoid dealing with institutional elites is ideologically based. Apart from those few points there is no other suggestion that their strategic or tactical approach is ideologically founded. Rather, they have indicated that their style is more influenced by experience of what has worked historically for them. Thus, although each of the activists has their own style, they are quite pragmatic about their choice of strategies and tactics. They will utilise whatever methods they feel will effect change most readily. And one aspect which they all acknowledge is important to effecting change is the quality of interactions with others.

ACTIVISM - A VERY SOCIAL PROCESS

This research has focussed on activists as individuals rather than as members of much wider social movements. Therefore the emphasis has been on micro level factors and relationships and only dealt with the grand scheme in order to put their activism into context. At the outset questions were chosen which it was hoped would give a broad cover of both the instrumental and social aspects to activism. Hopefully that goal has been achieved but what has surprised me, is the extent and importance of the social process. It was not a case of thinking that social aspects were unimportant rather there was an assumption that campaign objectives would take an obvious priority. These social aspects are now addressed, irrespective of an individual's allegiance or otherwise to a new social movement.

Activism which involves letter writing, donating money, signing petitions does not draw the individual into on-going interaction with an activist group and it has been

referred to as a low risk or low cost process (McAdam, 1989, p. 746). It is essentially a non-social activity and as such has no intrinsic potential for transformation of the individual through socialisation. In contrast, he asserts that those who participate in what he terms high-risk activism, such as marches or direct actions, are resocialised by their involvement (McAdam, 1989, p. 758). McAdam ascribes the transformation to two factors; the events to which they are exposed and immersion in an activist subculture. Andy's conscientising experience in the Philippines and Gwen's at Caloola are examples of the first factor. This is the 'push' which McAdam talks about in his earlier paper (1988, p. 151). The corresponding 'pull' (McAdam, 1988, p. 151) is provided by the positive and supportive relationships which are generated in the subculture; that is, within social movements. And it is to this which we turn to examine what this study has revealed about social relationships amongst activists and their supporters.

For this group of activists, choosing to work with others is the norm. Gwen who tends to operate autonomously is the exception but there are reasons for her choice as has been explained. Of all the activists, it is Brett who is the most explicit in his commitment to the social process, although it is a view evidently shared and practised by several others. He is firm in his belief that socialising with others, getting to know them at that level, is absolutely essential for his activism to be successful. It is a strategy which he uses to enhance his working relationship with other activists. He puts great emphasis on establishing a bond with others, not just in his own group but also with those who are allies.

Melucci emphasises the importance of the social link. New models of social interaction are constructed which meet the sought-after criteria. They are then tested by a “submerged network” of like-minded others in “laboratories of experience” (1989, pp. 60, 208). Melucci asserts that “those who participate within the organisations of a movement view their participation as an end in itself. Their ‘journey’ is considered at least as important as their intended destination” (1989, p. 205). This subcultural phenomenon does not fit the living patterns of all the activists who participated in this study but it does fit Suzi, Trish, and Brett. McAdam (1988) contends that the nature and number of interpersonal ties with other activists or supporters ‘pulls’ the ideologically committed into a group. Andy, Trish and Brett all stress the importance of integrating new recruits into the group, a function which is viewed as a predictor of on-going activism (McAdam, 1988, p. 149). The tenor of large sections of Brett’s interviews in particular are wholly in line with Melucci’s theorising. Activism’s content and form, the networking, the swapping of information, the strategising, the mutual encouragement are so linked to a social process that it does not seem that a demarcation line can be drawn between activism (work) and leisure time. This is his life; activist method and subcultural norms and expectations are intimately intertwined. The group’s emphasis on the social aspect of interaction, the belief in mutuality and a supportive environment, the desire for open and honest communication, the need for participatory and consensual decision-making; all resonate with Melucci’s interpretation. The process being described here is of a subculture evolving not blindly, but through the deliberate actions of individuals acting in groups. It is what Touraine calls ‘historicity’ (1988, pp. 25-26).

Most of the activists who took part in the research have extensive networks of friends and colleagues with whom they keep in touch even when they are not involved in the same group. With them, they share a perspective on the world, a set of definitions about how things should be and how they should be brought about (Taylor & Whittier, 1992, p. 114). That framing of the social situation is the glue which Benford (1993, p. 199) asserts creates solidarity. For one of the co-coders, one of the overarching themes was this notion of the individual being part of a community oriented, collective consciousness; an awareness of the individual being part of a unified 'whole'. The activists interviewed acknowledge that they cannot help but feel a strong comradeship with those who have jointly been involved in civil disobedience or illegal actions. Diani (1992, p. 16) says that the feature which separates social movements from protest events is the sense of belongingness which outlasts the latter. In other words, a solidarity is created which transcends the purely functional need of the group to work together towards a common objective.

The sense of camaraderie and belongingness is in evidence at rallies and demonstrations. Those activists I was able to observe in such situations did exhibit such behaviours. Fond greetings and hugs with old friends were the evidence of a solidarity forged in previous campaigns. That solidarity exists even with allies who retain their specificity and distinctive traits (Diani, 1992, p. 14). Even when the encounter is accidental and with someone unknown, there is a sense of commitment and obligation. At an anti-racist demonstration timed to coincide with a breakfast engagement for the Queensland MP Pauline Hanson [One Nation Party], I observed Andy intervening to prevent demonstrators giving police the opportunity to arrest

them. Despite having bought a ticket, one person was incensed that he had been refused entry, simply on grounds of colour. Andy's concern was as one who had been in a similar situation; he felt that it just was not worth those individuals getting arrested for the separate points that they were trying to make.

Each of these seven activists has developed an integrated vision for the world; for some that requires reform, for others transformation. And it is through the social process that each endeavours to effect the changes that they are seeking. Whether they subscribe to the grassroots or top down model, each recognises the importance of convincing other people of the need for change. It is through the medium of the social process that they prefigure that future by attempting to interact in a manner which is consistent with their worldview and vision. There are times when each of these activists take themselves away from the social milieu to reflect on the progress of their activism and the next section examines what they deem to be significant or important for them.

EVALUATING THE ACTIVIST LIFE

Any contact with activists indicates that they are busy people with limited free time. That tempo and the context in which they work can be stressful; campaigns may not be going as well as they had hoped, opponents may be causing them lots of problems. They admit that such frustrations may make them respond in ways which clash with their philosophical outlook. They admit too, that these same frustrations pose a danger that may cause them to lose focus on why they have taken up an issue. Thus,

they acknowledge that within a busy schedule they must find time for themselves; for self reflection, self analysis and self maintenance. Such breaks from the hurly burly, allow the activist the chance to recuperate from the stresses of campaigning and to recover their energy and enthusiasm for the issue. More fundamentally, those breaks give the individual an opportunity to reflect on their activism, its origins and its motivations.

All activists obviously want to have a successful conclusion to a campaign. Achieving an objective which was decided at the beginning of a campaign is the ultimate success for these activists. But with long campaigns interim measures are used - raising awareness, involving people, empowering them to take action and lastly, ensuring that supporters are not emotionally damaged. Even in campaigns where objectives are not reached, there can be some successes and the same measures are used. Although it is not a long list, these four interim measures ensure that issues will continue to be addressed through growth in interest and understanding, recruitment and participation in activism.

But what of personal success or satisfaction? In much of Western society today success seems to be measured by many in terms of income, material possessions and occupational status. Such indicators do not rate very highly within the value systems of these activists, which is perhaps just as well, because only two appear to be employed and paid at a level commensurate with their qualifications (Ellerman, 1988, p. 258; McAdam, 1989). Several acknowledged that they had made decisions to give priority to their activism in lieu of specifically income-oriented objectives. Just as

examples, one is totally dependent on donations plus a share of what a partner can earn through part-time work, another is entirely dependent on social security. Choosing not to be in paid employment, not to complete professional qualifications or to only work a reduced number of paid employment hours are examples of such commitment. So if commonly accepted parameters of success are invalid measures for these activists, what for them counts as and contributes to success?

In fact, it is even an assumption that success is at all important to them. As Andy argues, it is not being successful which counts rather being faithful to what one feels called to do. It is a view which probably strikes a chord with the other six activists. But while all agree that it is vital to stay true to one's principles, there is also a desire to achieve as much as one can. So perhaps the question can be reframed - 'Whilst remaining true to one's principles how can an activist maximise their activism?' What makes an activist successful? There are two facets which contribute to successful activism - personal qualities and what can be termed technical expertise. Those interviewed acknowledge that both are capable of being enhanced. In the first category then, what are deemed to be necessary or desirable personal skills, talents and attributes? Good interpersonal skills seem to be a pre-requisite, such as - being able to get on with many different types of people, being able to excite, inspire and motivate others, being able to listen to and empathise with others and know where they are 'at'. Other personal qualities which enhance activism include - knowing one's strengths and weaknesses, a willingness to learn from others and consider or tolerate other viewpoints, energy, perseverance and an ability to communicate assertively and well.

A distillation of what those interviewed deem to be technical expertise necessary for a successful campaign is bound to sound prescriptive unfortunately, but this is the essence of the research findings. At the outset it is important to choose the 'right' issue for the 'right' reasons. A comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the issue will be derived by doing the necessary homework. The activist must develop an analysis which enables the issue to be framed in simple terms. The objective and the strategy should be clearly defined and underpinned by a depth of experience. The argument for participation needs to be motivationally compelling and accessible to the community. The approach needs to be inclusive, supportive and empowering. Networks should be developed and used. Tactical flexibility keeps interest up both among supporters and media and keeps opponents guessing. Pressure and momentum need to be maintained throughout. Even under pressure personal integrity and commitment must be maintained. Localised defeats or peripheral issues must not be allowed to drain enthusiasm for, or divert effort from, the long term objectives. Frequent appraisal of the campaign status ensures that tactics and resources are always being applied effectively.

These activists integrate their early influences, value system, experiences of campaigning, social process, and self reflection, into a coherent and potent force. The target is to change the existing parameters in society, both locally and globally.

“EXTENDING THE BOUNDARIES”

This study has examined how seven Perth-based activists working in a number of different fields practise their activism. Their worldviews and agendas are quite varied but all are endeavouring to enhance the quality of life for those who are marginalised or oppressed. Some are also engaged in struggles to prevent further deterioration of the environment at the hands of those who cannot see or do not care about the destruction they wilfully cause. Although there is a kaleidoscopic variation in background, education, outlook and issue interest, some fundamental strands seem to be woven into the textural fabric of each activist.

Each individual seems to have developed an orientation towards activism as a result of the influences of people, events or circumstances which pertained prior to or during their teenage years. Through family members, teachers or activist mentors they acquired a value system which demands a response from them, whenever they encounter situations affecting others which they feel are unjust or intolerable. They choose to become involved in an issue, irrespective of the consequences. They will inform themselves about the issue, and perhaps form a group to work on it. After they have developed a strategic framework for a campaign they engage the community, presenting it with a clear message that change is required, and suggesting how that may be achieved. If they feel that individuals or institutions have the power to effect change, they use a variety of proven tactical devices to apply pressure on them. Campaigning requires flexibility, spontaneity, an ability to take opportunities and a stickability in the face of barriers, obdurate opposition and setbacks. One of the core

features of successful activism is the social process. It seems that activism is facilitated by the ability to understand the perspective of others especially opponents and the ability to get on with others, particularly supporters and allies. Training and nurturing supporters brings its rewards in terms of their enthusiasm, effort and supportive response when the going get tough. Self reflection and evaluation of campaign status and outcomes, ensure that activism is kept on track.

The track that these activists are on, is best explained through a phrase used by Trish who claimed that she thought that it was important for her to “extend the boundaries”. By that, she meant that she wanted to push the limits of what was seen as normatively acceptable. An apt example involves the police if only because they belong to an institution which has been created to maintain order within limits determined by others. During marches or at demonstrations the police will try to establish where people can stand or define how much of the road width can be used. Whatever the ruling she admits to continually just putting her foot over that line both literally and figuratively. This is not just a desire to flout authority or to be awkward, but a challenge to restrictions which she believes are essentially arbitrary and not necessarily in the interests of all. But that libertarian challenge is paralleled in the broader context of her activism, whether it is fighting for legislation to outlaw discrimination on grounds of sexual preference or to permit abortion on demand.

Extending the boundaries is also a figurative challenge for these activists in their quests to enhance the world. By their own admission they are called to question themselves about their philosophical perspective, their worldview, their objectives and the way

that they operate. The challenge which seems to have an almost spiritual dimension for them, is to enhance their activism by improving the quality of their social interactions, developing better technical skills, and reflecting on their understanding of change processes. By developing and implementing best practise, they are positioned to push for the changes they seek.

Taylor and Whittier assert that activists construct a positive identity by a reverse affirmation of the characteristics attributed to them by mainstream society (1992, p. 111). Thus in a sense, it is they who establish the boundaries to their social territory within the wider social landscape. Wasielewski argues that the structural location activists occupy in the community's perception, is advantageous to their change goals (1991, pp. 90-94). She argues that as long as they stay just on the inner fringe of mainstream society and cultivate a degree of acceptable defiance and deviancy, they are uniquely able to introduce alternative vistas which will be considered by the community because they come from a nominal insider. Extending the boundaries from the inside would seem to be the way in which all of these activists work except Eric. He perhaps sees himself as being on 'the outer' and this may explain why his activism has a tendency to be more 'in your face'.

These activists, whether part of broad social movements or more narrowly contextualised, are working to change the world in small and large ways. At first glance their objectives seem to be, and in fact are quite diverse. But at a deeper level there is a similarity. All are trying to change aspects of their world to make it a better place in their eyes. By implication, a better world is one with fewer or indeed no

issues, because then there is no clash with their value system. Violations of the value system, whether they affect the activist directly or indirectly through others, are felt to be breaches of a particular code. Some invisible, self-delineated boundary has been crossed. Note that the line is defined by a value, it does not necessarily imply a restriction, indeed it can imply the opposite. When they address an issue, their aims are to highlight that line to others, to encourage them to consider its implications and to incorporate its meaning into their lives (Ingamells, 1994, p. 171).

All of these activists are challenging the way in which their world operates, they want to make it safer, more peaceful, more just, more tolerant of difference and an ecologically pleasant place in which to live. This is the philosophical and spiritual challenge which these activists pose for the community. None of them is under any illusion about the extent of the task, but they all feel that they can work towards those objectives by moving the boundaries incrementally towards their vision. They have different perspectives on the world and how it works and so they employ diverse methods to achieve their ends. However they approach the task, their aim is to alter the perspective of others. If the vision is to ensue, they recognise that a metamorphosis of community attitudes and behaviours is required. Although they have worked through the philosophical foundations of their own stance, they need to enable others to do the same if sustained change is to take place. Each person is challenged to justify their boundaries of what is wanted, what is possible, what is achievable and what is acceptable. To facilitate that process, the challenge for activists is to enable themselves and others to identify, question, alter or remove their assumptions, blinkers and limitations.

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