

## Communicating your Campaign Message

At some point in time in the life of any campaign you'll find yourself talking to others face to face about the issue. It may be informally, at work, at home, or in the pub. Or it could be part of your campaign strategy, engaging the public 'on the streets', maybe alongside other campaign techniques such as direct action or using the media.

### What your 'audience' believes:

Whenever you're trying to communicate a campaign message you're essentially trying to get someone to see your point of view and to believe in it. Many people would assume that the way to achieve this would be to know your facts and prepare a good argument. But look at these statistics:

Psychologists tell us that:

The words you use account for just 7% of what people believe (what you say: the verbal information)

38% of what people believe is down to your tone of voice (the way you sound: the vocal information)

But the majority of what people believe - 55% - is down to body language! (the way you look while you're talking: the visual information)

So getting the message across is more than just knowing your stuff and saying the right words. In fact it's how you say the words and how you look when you're saying them that count for the most. Non-verbal communication (visual and vocal) is actually more important than what you're saying! To maximise the effectiveness of your communication you need to reinforce your verbal message with matching and persuasive vocal and visual messages.

### What your 'audience' remembers:

Whoever you're communicating with will forget:

25% of what you say within 24 hours

50% of what you say within 48 hours

80% of what you say within 4 days

To maximise your effect, think about picking just a few (no more than 3) simple key messages and sticking to them. Don't get sidetracked. The only way to get your point home in the long term is to keep it clear, simple and to reinforce it. Better to repeat 3 points 3 times than make 9 separate points - your audience won't remember them all anyway!

Even if the audience doesn't remember the facts of what you said - if you come across as confident, passionate and intelligent, they will remember your arguments as confident, passionate and intelligent!

### Body Language & Tone of Voice

Tone of voice is vital. You know that from your own everyday experience. Simple comments or questions, if said in the wrong way can cause offence and close off all useful communication in an instant. Worse, communication is contagious - if you find yourself in a tense discussion, the tension can spread to those around you.

Eye contact is an important factor in all communication. If you want people to be willing to talk to you, you need just the right amount of eye contact. As you see someone approaching, make eye contact (and smile!), but don't let it become a staring contest. Let the contact go - you've acknowledged they're there and told them you're willing to talk to them. As they get nearer you can re-establish the contact and hit them with your opening line.....

Smile! It doesn't take a genius to figure out that smiling makes you more approachable. It's not always easy to smile at people who may represent everything that you work for an end to, but if it helps make them more receptive to your message....

Open Stance - to appear open to communication, you need to look open. So uncross your arms, come out from behind your stall, stop hiding behind your mates, and turn to face people. Keeping your hands in full

view - having your palms facing the person you're talking to helps. Keep hand gestures out of their space and out of their face. The more you relax the better, so be aware of your breathing and keep your shoulders down (tension often collects in our shoulders).

Speed of Movement.... Rushing towards someone in your eagerness to hand them your leaflet can startle and even frighten them. Remember they may have a stereotype of you as a dangerous hippy terrorist. You know you're lovely, but do they? If you've already made eye contact they know you want to communicate with them (indeed you've already begun to) so you can then saunter over in a friendly manner. Too slow, on the other hand, may send the message that you're reluctant to engage with them, you lack confidence and that you don't have faith in your message

Personal space - Ever been trapped on the street by over-enthusiastic street collectors and resentfully handed over your small change? If you want people to be receptive to your message they need to feel an element of choice in the encounter. Be aware of herding people into a funnel of leafleting campaigners, and watch for the obvious signals that they don't want to engage with you. Force someone to talk to you and they'll already resent you (and be less receptive to your message) before you start your opening line.

## **Some General Advice**

### **Opening Lines**

Work on a line that works for you! Some tactics that have been used successfully include:

Introducing yourself “Hi, I'm Matthew...”...it invites a response (“Oh, hello, I'm...”) and instantly you're in conversation; it's polite, non-threatening and doesn't immediately bombard someone with campaign info!

Ask an open question. Open question can't be answered with a 'yes' or 'no' answer - for example “What do you think of the arms industry” and so are more likely to stimulate conversation (in general questions that start with What, Who, Where, When, Why or How are open). That's not to say that all closed questions are 'bad', but try to avoid giving people an opportunity to avoid you by simply saying “No” to your “Would you like to sign this petition”

Ask a question unrelated to the campaign to start with. Engage people in conversation and then shift the conversation round to the campaign

Some people are naturals at this kind of thing. If you're not one of them but are working alongside one, take the time to observe how they approach people - what do they say? How do they look? Ask them if there's any advice they can pass on.

### **How not to win hearts & minds...**

Adults don't learn effectively if we challenge their self perception. All that usually happens is that they get defensive. So when you're in a potentially confrontational communication situation don't challenge the person, challenge their ideas. It's a fine distinction, but one worth thinking about. But what does that mean in practice?

In terms of the language you use, it can be as simple as saying “I disagree with what you're saying” rather than “I disagree with you”.

Meet people where they are at. You won't change the mind of an arms company executive by assuming (s)he's a heartless bastard. Find some common ground and go from there (do they have a family - so for example start by talking about their kids and taking it through to other families who lose kids because of the arms trade).

Remember that the way you look can have a powerful effect on the interaction. Is that “Arms Dealers are Scum” T-shirt really going to encourage an arms trader to stop and engage with you in open communication? Whether to change your appearance to suit your audience is always a controversial debate. We don't have the answer, but we are flagging it up as a relevant factor that you need to be aware of.

### **Win-Win Communication**

When we're out there trying to 'defeat the forces of darkness', armed only with our stout hearts, a pile of leaflets and a banner, it can feel like we're at war. The thing about war is that someone wins and someone else loses. The losers may be forced to change, but may not do so willingly. It's not always possible, but ideally in any encounter you have try to ensure that the communication is a two way process. If you can create a situation in which you're happy you've communicated your message effectively, and the person you

were talking to goes away happy that they were listened to, respected and given a 'safe' environment to consider making change, you both win. If they walk away feeling harassed and under siege, they're less likely to really absorb any of your ideas. If you need any proof of this, think about the times you've been bullied to accept new ideas. You might have accepted them in the end, but wouldn't it have been easier if you hadn't felt under pressure? Now, of course, the whole point of a campaign is to apply pressure for change, but even within 'in your face' actions there's plenty of room for one on one human (and humane) communication.

### **Dealing with Difficult Situations**

If you're 'on the street' (or in meetings, debates, or media interviews) long enough, sooner or later you'll need to deal with some of the following situations....

#### Answering Questions

##### **Do:**

- Decide whether the question is relevant and worthwhile. If not you might need to sidestep it (see Dealing with Time wasters). But by sidestepping we don't mean avoiding a perfectly reasonable question just because the answer's tricky!
- Throw questions back to the questioner, or others around you. Don't assume that you personally have to have an answer for everything
- Be honest if you can't answer the question that's asked
- Offer to find out the answer at another time and get back to them
- Signpost other sources of information, such as web pages and briefings that could answer the question for them
- Use examples in your response to ground it in reality and make it more credible
- Acknowledge the question - it shows the questioner that you respect them and are open to dialogue - "that's a good question...", "thanks for bringing that up..."

##### **Don't:**

- Waffle or pretend you know the answer when you don't - you could discredit the entire campaign in the eyes of the questioner. Simply acknowledge the question and admit you don't have the answer (see Do's)
- Feel you have to answer every question as it's asked - you're allowed to have time to think. You're allowed to politely decline to answer irrelevant questions
- Refuse to answer, ignore or block relevant questions
- Present yourself as an expert (unless of course you are)

### **Dealing with Time wasters**

The obvious lesson is don't waste time with time wasters - target your efforts to where you can actually make change. As campaigners we want to bring others over to our point of view. But we can't achieve that in one go, and many of our actions and encounters are strategically targeted at specific groups - whether the public, the media, employees of a particular industry or company, decision makers or any other possible group. So stay focused and ask yourself "Is this conversation the most strategic use of my time?"

Getting caught up in a heated and protracted discussion not only stops you from communicating to anyone but your current 'adversary', but it also can look bad, and raise the level of tension in the surrounding area. Someone else who was waiting to talk to you may decide to forget it rather than risk getting embroiled in the conflict. So agree to disagree. Thank the person for expressing their opinion and assure them that you respect their right to hold it. Be polite and firm and move on.

But don't assume that only those hostile to our cause can waste our time. If you've ever been cornered by a fellow campaigner that just happens to be passing, and decides to tell you all about their campaigning work, you'll know what we mean (or any of the other well meaning but long-winded folk out there). So what do you do? Well firstly why not simply explain that whilst you've enjoyed meeting them, there's lots of other people you need to talk to today. Suggest that you can continue your conversation another time, when you're not in the middle of something (but not if this is a barefaced lie!).

## **Dealing with Hostility -**

You might be met with aggression, incomprehension or any number of other negative responses whilst you're out communicating your message. The important thing to remember is that these are not personal attacks. People may disagree with your beliefs but they aren't attacking you as a person (even if it may seem like it). Let's face it, in 99% of cases you've never seen them before, and they know nothing about you. They're responding to stereotypes. Try not to do the same!

It might help to remind yourself why you're out there. Reaffirm the importance of the campaign work you're doing.

Think before you respond to avoid escalating the situation, and make sure you are calm, assertive and using non-threatening body language.

Buddy-up before you set off and stick with your buddy throughout the day. At least that way you're guaranteed some moral support and there's someone that can intervene if anyone (including you!) 'loses it'.

### **So, to summarise:**

Remember your body language and the way you use your voice - relax, smile and try to enjoy it. If you're having fun the people you are communicating to are much more likely to enjoy the encounter!

Pick no more than 3 messages that you want to communicate. You don't have to offload the whole campaign message instantly. Concentrate on making contact and getting one of your key messages across.

Remember to meet people where they're at - that means that you'll have to change the way you communicate to suit your 'audience'.

Seeds for Change; A non profit network of social change trainers

This briefing is @nticopyright - copy & distribute freely!

## **Dipping A Toe Into Public Motivation**

This handout summarises the work of four professional communication, campaign and marketing strategists with decades of experience in public communications. Since before October 2004 they had been very concerned that major plans by campaign groups and the government, to try and mobilise UK public action on climate change, are going to fail.

In February 2005 they commissioned a nationally representative telephone survey of over 1000 adults, who were asked a number of questions about climate change.

For anyone concerned with effective communication on an issue with climate change, it is essential to understand what 'opinions' or 'attitudes' really mean in terms of what people may actually do when a messenger asks them to take action, or how they will respond when they are told about a problem or solution.

Decades of research indicate that what drives behaviours, and attitudes, are motivational needs. Seeing as campaigns are intended to bring about behavioural change, otherwise there will be no result, it makes sense to examine the psychological needs that determine behaviours. If communication can be arranged to meet these needs, then it stands the best chance of being effective.

The research identified Three Motivational Groups:

- Settlers who currently make up 21% of the UK population
- Prospectors, currently making up 44% of the population
- Pioneers, making up 35% of the population

From this it identified three main sets of needs, matching the three main groups:

- Security or ‘sustenance’ needs (needs for belonging, identity, security/safety): people for whom with these needs are dominant, are the ‘Settlers’
- Esteem or ‘outer directed’ needs (the need for esteem of others and self-esteem): people for whom with these needs are dominant, are the ‘Prospectors’
- Inner-directed needs (needs such as an ethical basis for life, self exploration, finding meaning in life, discovering new truths) – the ‘Pioneers’

Faced with a call to action, such as drive your car less or abandon it altogether or buy this product not that, or help this cause for one reason or another, the different groups will respond according to whether it meets their needs – whether it “makes sense”.

Many campaigns fail because they present a proposal in terms that ‘work’ for one part of the population but not others. To be effective across the population, campaigns need to be put in the three different sets of terms, to meet the different needs.

For example:

- settlers tend to look backwards, to yesterday (which was better) and dislike anything new or different as this threatens identity, belonging, security
- prospectors live in the now, for today, and seek rewards in terms of fashion, status, success, achievement and recognition, and are unconcerned with belonging, security or identity because they have that already
- pioneers look forwards, both in time and to new horizons: they like change, discovery, the unknown so long as it is ethically acceptable but are unworried about status because they have already met those needs

So in the case of ‘climate change’, if it was a long term global problem, they might think:

- settlers: that’s not a problem unless it immediately affects my family, my local area, my identity, my traditions
- prospectors: that’s not a problem unless it affects my prospects for achievement and success
- pioneers: it’s a problem

If they decided it was a problem worthy of action, their responses would tend to be:

- settlers: someone should do something about it (leaders of the system, not me, at least not until everyone else is)
- prospectors: we should organise (preferably via well known high status brand, be that political, social or commercial – in the system)
- pioneers: I’ll do it myself (hang the consequences, I’ll change things if I have to, even the system –these are the natural activists)

When offered a ‘solution’ by others, for example a technology change such as a solar panel, they might react something like this:

- settlers: I’d rather not change (but if everyone else is doing it and it’s normal and it’s done with people like me, ok)
- prospectors: I’m not taking up causes or things that may not work but if it’s in fashion, it’s for me (if it helps me look successful)
- pioneers: if it’s for the good of the planet, we must do it

Effective ‘solar-panel’ inducements might include

- settlers: the Queen has them on her roof, Tony Blair has them on his roof, the Council supplies them, my neighbour has one – they’re normal
- prospectors: they add value to my home, they’re the latest thing, made by a blue chip company, and you can get the model changed in line with the latest trend
- pioneers: I’m in a network of interesting people doing this for a good cause

This picture is a gross simplification of the complex patterns that emerge when you look at the three main motivational states in more depth.

Nevertheless it is important to note:

- that different groups take action in different ways
- that different groups may elect to do the same thing but for very different 'reasons' because they are meeting different needs

Turning again to climate, here are some real examples of campaign-calls which 'work' for settlers or pioneers or prospectors:

- settlers: the American Detroit Project campaign ([www.detroitproject.com](http://www.detroitproject.com)) against SUVs, which portrays SUVs not as their usual safety and security guarantee but as a threat to individual, local and family safety because they encourage terrorism. How?

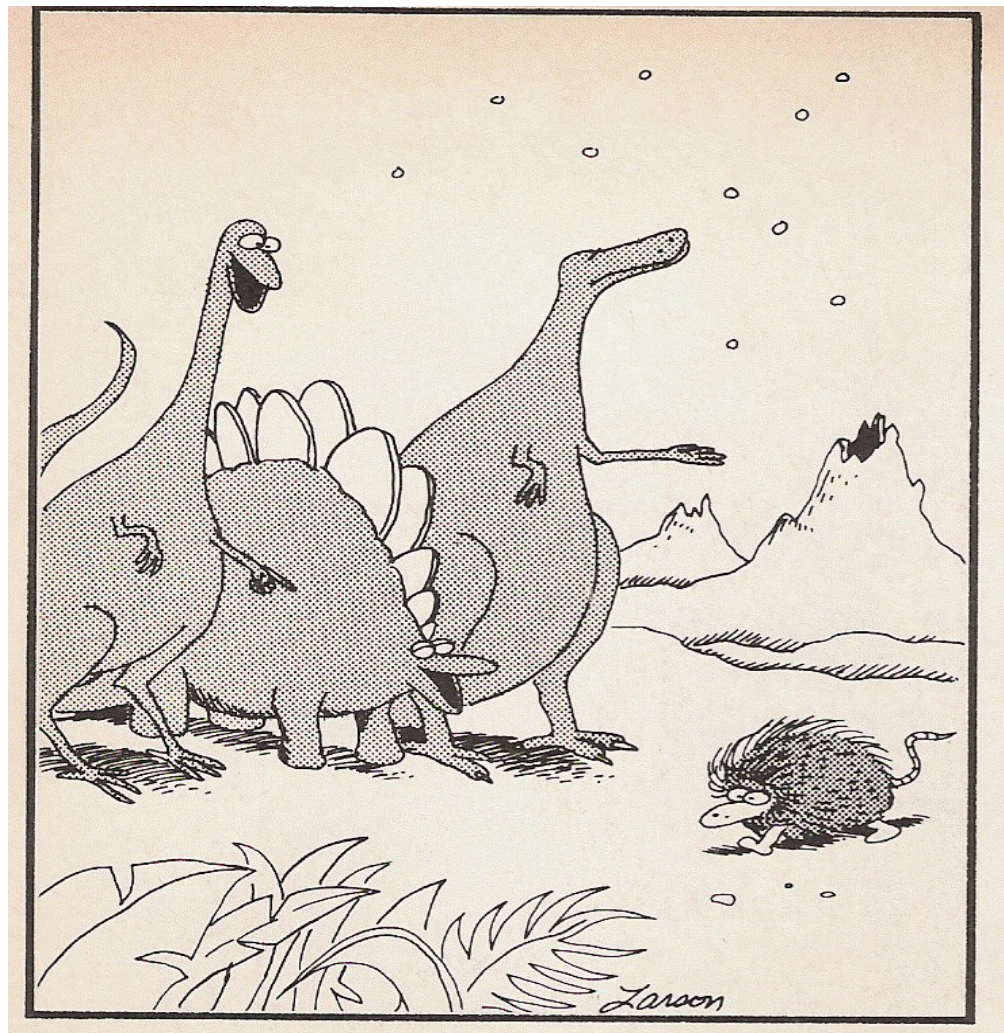
Because they use a lot of petrol, and in America, most petrol is imported from Arab countries so it's 'putting money into the hands of terrorists'. (Not all 'settler' messages need to be xenophobic – a threat to local identity could equally be the disappearance of much loved local flowers or traditions – no snow at Christmas perhaps).

- prospectors: the emergence of the Toyota Prius, an electric-hybrid car, which went in the US from a 'deep green' niche model (bought by pioneers) to a fashion icon when Cameron Diaz and Leonardo di Caprio started driving them (now there are waiting lists for the Prius in the US)
- pioneers: the majority of campaigns – boycott Esso, ride a bike to work to do your bit for people in remote Pacific islands threatened by sea level rise, buy green electricity to save the climate

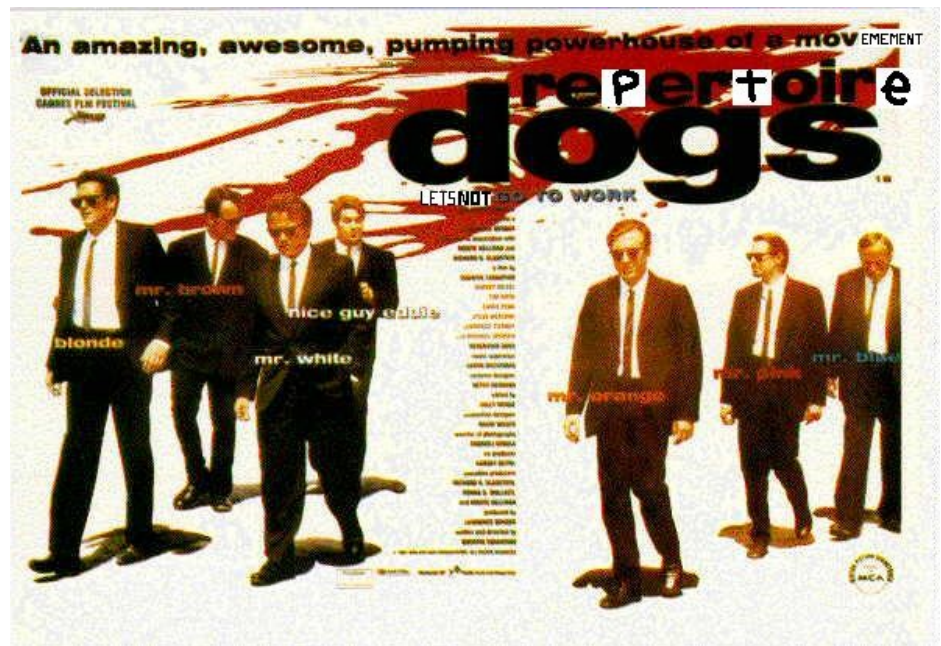
For full text see:

[www.campaignstrategy.org/valuesvoters/climatechangecommunications.pdf](http://www.campaignstrategy.org/valuesvoters/climatechangecommunications.pdf)

Chris Rose, with Pat Dade, and Nick Gallie and John Scott, May 2005



## Contentious cats and Repertoire Dogs



**And these children that you spit on,  
As they try to change their lives,  
Are immune to your consultations,  
They're quite aware of what they're going through.**  
Bowie, Changes

**'There is nothing quite so practical as good theory and nothing so good for theory-making as direct involvement with practice.'**

### **Introduction**

We may be in a completely new situation. In many ways we obviously are; never before, for example, have the stakes of struggle been the continued viability of our species. But that doesn't mean we can't learn from past struggles, adapting 'lessons' as best we can. On the whole, I think we are not good at this. Often the people who were in those struggles aren't around to ask. We don't, mostly, spend time reading about the civil rights movement, trade union history etc. We know our 'own' history, but not others'. But at its best history can give us ideas, perspective, moral strength and encouragement.

Our enemies- the State and its repressive apparatus, the corporations and their PR flaks- have 'institutional memory', and the resources to keep it healthy. They write reports, adopt and adapt. They can spend time reflecting, training and drawing on university-based academics to devise policy options. That doesn't mean they are smarter than us, or stronger, or don't get it spectacularly wrong (Burston-Marsteller for Monsanto). But it does mean they have an experienced cadre of specialists in social control.

This booklet isn't designed to make us all experts on social movements- most of us (present writer excluded) already are because we've been doing this for years. It's designed to give us some new (?) tools for thought and reflection.

### **What is a 'repertoire'? It's those things we do!**

"The word 'repertoire' identifies a limited set of routines that are learned, shared, and acted out through a relatively deliberate process of choice. Repertoires are learned cultural creations, but they do not descend from abstract philosophy or take shape as a result of political propaganda; they emerge from struggle. People learn to break windows in protest, attack pilloried prisoners, tear down dishonoured houses, stage public marches, petition, hold formal meetings, organize special-interest associations. At any particular point in history, however, they learn only a rather small number of alternative ways to act collectively."

**Tilly in Traugott**

### Top Ten examples of EF! repertoire

NVDA, lock-ons, tunnelling, tactical frivolity, office occupations, sabotage, samba, protest camps, street parties, blockades, pitched battles, tripods, squatting, indymedia, spoof newspapers, web sites, pie-ing, digging up Michael Heseltine's garden, crop decontamination, critical mass, working with groups without trying to convert them, *not* forcing ancient turgid crap down each other's throats, self-reflexivity, prisoner support, global coalition-building, skills share, non-hierarchical meetings, cool posters, billboard liberation, self-catering etc.

### Top Ten examples of the SWP repertoire

- 1, Newspaper selling and petitions
  2. Public Meetings
  3. Building the vanguard party
  4. Marching from A to B
  5. Whining about betrayal by trade union leadership
  6. Entryism
  7. erm, that's it
- [that's enough Trots. *Ed*]

"Each routine within an established repertoire actually consists of an *interaction* among two or more parties. Repertoires belong to sets of contending actors, not to single actors." **Tilly in Traugott**

As they wise up, we gotta use new tactics. The dangers are obvious; We end up making outwitting the police etc. the focus of our activity, because it's cheap therapy, offers immediate results and a frisson of martyrdom.

To feed our adrenaline habit, and impress ourselves and each other (which is why a lot of what we do gets done), we have to dream up new tricks, sometimes abandoning old ones, even if they were effective at connecting with people.

As children of the Television, we believe whole-heartedly in the power of images to change the world- we look for the perfect demo, blaming media distortion for the lack of effect on 'the silent majority'.

"Moreover, army and militia commanders had learned the lessons of previous revolutions in which troops had immediately been dispersed to prevent the construction of barricades spread across the capital. This approach exposed the rank and file to appeals by insurgents and to the risk of being disarmed. Based on this experience, the June insurrection was allowed to develop more completely before troops were dispatched in mass units with orders to attack..." Traugott, about Paris, in Traugott

### **Or, a slightly more recent example...**

Once a specific tactic is used, it ceases to be outside the experience of the enemy. Before long he devises countermeasures that void the previous effective tactic. Recently the head of a corporation showed me the blue print of a new plant and pointed to a large ground-floor area: "Boy, have we got an architect who is with it!" he chuckled. "See that big hall? That's our sit-in room! When the sit-inners come they'll be shown in and there will be coffee, T.V., and good toilet facilities- they can sit here until hell freezes over."

Now you can relegate sit-ins to the Smithsonian Museum  
page 163 of Rules for Radicals by Saul Alinsky

### **What are cycles of protest?**

A cycle of protest involves lots of protest activity, lots of people, from different social groups and different parts of the country - or different countries. Classic examples in recent times include the New Left and student protests of the late 60s and peace movement protest of the early 80s. The obvious down-side is that protest cycles tend to die away.

"Although protest waves do not have a regular frequency or extend uniformly to entire populations, a number of features have characterized such waves in





recent history. These features include heightened conflict, broad sectoral and geographic extension, the appearance of new social movement organizations and empowerment of old ones, the creation of new "master frames" of meaning, and the invention of new forms of collective action."

So when movements are on the up they are creating new groups, forms of action and having a major impact. But when they are the down curve - they are splitting over strategy, and losing support (because it's hard to stay hyper-active forever).

"The most important contribution of Tilly's concept of the repertoire is to help us disaggregate the popular notion of protest into its conventional and less conventional components. In each period of history some forms of collective action are sanctioned by habit, expectations, and even legality, while others are unfamiliar, unexpected, and are rejected as illegitimate by elites and the mass public alike. Consider the strike. As late the 1870s it was barely known, poorly understood, and widely rejected as a legitimate form of collective action. By the 1960s however, the strike can be considered as an accepted part of collective bargaining practice." **Tarrow in Traugott**

### **Why, according to these guys, do they arise?**

"Movements are held to emerge in response to the confluence of three factors: expanding political opportunities, established organizations, and the development of certain shared recognitions legitimating and motivating protest activity....(McAdam no longer holds this model)... the model stresses the confluence of three factors in shaping the chances of movement emergence. The first is the level of organization within the aggrieved population; the second, the collective assessment of the prospects for successful insurgency within that same population; and third, an increase in the vulnerability or receptivity of the broader political system to challenge by the group in question." **McAdam in Traugott**

It's not just about what these guys call political opportunities because people take action for other reasons than because the timing seems right and they think lots of people will support them. At Twyford and especially just after I think people took action because the issue seemed right despite the political opportunities being more or less non-existent (no allies within the political system, minimal evidence of mass public support etc. Instead it was the action of early EF!ers that helped to create other opportunities for folk that came after. Also - the EF! folk were helped by the existence of existing networks of peace and green activists with experience in NVDA and organising - who could pass on their repertoires). Derek shows this well in his book on EF! Ian Welsh is interesting too on what he calls capacity building. This refers to the way that NVDA movements since the anti-nuclear energy campaigns of the late 70s have fed ideas and repertoires into subsequent movements.

The State not using a big enough stick...(its 'enemies' scenting blood)

"Peaks of protest were more likely to occur when repression was uneven, intermittent, or half-hearted. In the closing years of the Old Regime, Tocqueville claims 'authors were harried to an extent that won them sympathy, but not enough to inspire them with any real fear. They were, in fact, subjected to the petty persecutions that spur men to revolt, but not to the steady pressure that breaks the spirit.'" **Traugott in Traugott**

### **Why does what go up come down?**

So that's cycles of protest on the way up. What are some of the reasons they decline?

#### What they do to us

State suppression (this can backfire on them- must be used carefully)

The State or voluntary sector 'buys us off'- recuperation..

#### What we do to ourselves

Burn out (and investing energy in non-sustainable projects)

Fading away getting older, having kids etc. (see 'Biographical Availability')

Internal divisions

### **Not waving but drowning?**

How much of this applies to 'us' now? Where might we be in the cycle?

On the way up, or 'the last gasp of the headless chicken'? Who can tell in the middle of it all? What can we do about it anyway? Answers on the back of a postcard, 25 words or less. No correspondence entered into, unless written on £20 notes. Judge's decision final etc. etc.

### **Movement Action Plan**

One useful categorisation of the different stages of successful social movements is the 'Movement Action Plan' developed by Bill Moyer out of experiences in the US anti-nuclear movement. There are two features of MAP that make it particularly useful for us. Firstly, it has no end point, but rather consists of simultaneous struggles towards a series of progressively more radical goals on several different fronts- reflecting the diverse and continual progress of a Green strategy. A goal is adopted that we believe will build empowerment, and we begin to build a campaign to achieve it. At the beginning, we will appear to be cranks; but as Schumacher points out, cranks make revolutions. The goal must be big enough to make a difference and to motivate the activists that will struggle to win it; but it must be small enough to be within reach, and not a tantalizing dream.

Secondly, he deals with the phenomenon of take-off, and the seemingly contradictory stage of powerlessness that follows it. "After a year or two, the high hopes of movement take-off seems inevitably to turn to despair. Most activists lose their faith that success is just around the corner and come to believe that it is never going to happen... Most surprising is the fact that this identity crisis of powerlessness and failure happens when the movement is outrageously successful....

Moyer identifies the causes of this as unreal expectations; the failure of power holders to simply capitulate in the face of such success; disappointment that the take-off stage- a time of unsustainable activity- is short lived; and failure of the mass media to recognize the movement or credit it with concrete achievements.

Burnout, organisational crisis, and directionless action are all likely in this stage. However, Moyer argues, if groups consolidate and provide personal and political support, retain a commitment to non-violence, adopt models of organization and leadership based on empowerment, move from protesters to long life social change agents, and develop a wider strategic understanding, then the movement can recognize success when it is being presented as failure, and move on to Stage 6: majority support.

Begg page 261-262. citing Moyer, B. *The Movement Action Plan* Movement for a New Society 1986

Obviously there are several reasons why this may not happen for us.

- 1) We, for the most part, had fewer illusions about the mass media.
- 2) We aren't just on about nukes, we're on about changing our fossil fuel usage, our treatment of each other and other species. Blowing ourselves up is, by comparison, a minor worry.
- 3) History doesn't always repeat itself, as either tragedy or farce...

### **Random Definitions**

#### **Antinomian Movements**

Groups of people who seek to change social conditions they deplore by repudiating or violating social or legal codes they assume have caused the deplored conditions.

#### **Barricades** (irrelevant, but fun trivia)

"Henri had ordered his troops to enter Paris against the chance that the arrival of the enormously popular and ultra-Catholic Duke of Guise would incite unrest. Their deployment prompted precisely the result it was intended to forestall. Parisians, enraged at this armed intrusion, followed the instructions of Cosse de Brissac and reinforced the chain barriers by heaping earth and paving stones into wooden barrels (or *barriques*, in the French of that day, whence the term barricades). The Royal Guards suddenly found themselves isolated in small units. With their lines of communication broken, they became highly vulnerable to the barricade-builders who had so quickly asserted control over the capital. After initial collisions in which a few guardsmen were killed and many others disarmed, the troops- and eventually the king himself- were forced to withdraw from the city." **Traugott in Traugott**

### Biographical Availability

EF! actions often demand that you are in your 20s or early 30s, physically fit, with no kids, mortgage or 'real' job, and are willing to get nicked. Obviously not every EF!er fits into that, but most do. That is 'biographical availability.'

### Charivari

Noisy musical and carnival-esque demos go way back. Compare with today's Samba. For interesting account of dance's importance: McNeill 'Keeping Together in Time'

### Demonstrations

"By the 1820s political organizers and public authorities were clearly negotiating agreements about street demonstrations, although the word itself gained currency only in the 1830s. (The term apparently leaped almost immediately from its military version, a deliberate show of force for intimidation of potential opponents, to a civilian analogue.)" **Tilly in Traugott**

### Friendship Networks

"... initiator movements encourage the rise of latecomers not so much by granting other groups increased leverage with which to press their claims, but by setting in motion complex diffusion processes by which the ideational, tactical, and organizational "lessons" of the early risers are made available to subsequent challengers." **McAdam in Traugott**

Skills share from these, formalised through Blatant Incitement Project etc.

### Frames of Reference and 'Discursive Repertoires'

(Sometimes equals speaking Truth to Power, on its terms...)

"Much as any challenging group has a limited action repertoire, so too does it have a limited discursive repertoire. Constrained by the hegemonic talk of the power holders, this counter-hegemony is generally piecemeal, with challengers often appropriating at the margins. They seize upon silences and contradictions in moral justifications of domination and negate or reverse those points in the dominant discourses. Akin to instrumental repertoires, discursive repertoires are relatively stable and recurrent." **Steinberg in Traugott**

"Movements... are "actively engaged in the production of meaning for participants.... They frame, or assign meaning to and interpret, relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents." Finally, Gamson (1992) has sought to extend the framing concept by distinguishing between what he sees as the three principle components of any "collective action frame". Gamson labels these three components a) injustice frames, b) agency frames, and c) identity frames. Injustice frames define some aspect of life not simply as illegitimate but as affectively intolerable. Agency frames offer an account of how the group can effect change in the offending condition(s). And the identity frame offers the group an altered- often dramatically so- collective vision of itself." **McAdam in Traugott**

The obvious example of this for us is SchNews

### Initiator and Spin-Off Movements

"The first category consists of those rare, but exceedingly important, *initiator* movements that signal or otherwise set in motion an identifiable protest cycle. Historical examples of such movements would include Solidarity in Poland and the American civil rights movement. The second and more "populous" category of movements includes those *spin-off movements* that, in varying degrees, draw their impetus and inspiration from the original initiator movement." **McAdam in Traugott**

### Issue attention cycle

Devised by an American, this framework seeks to show how 'issues' come before the public and then disappear from view. It needs to be considered alongside Herman and Chomsky's media filters model...

1. Pre- problem stage
2. Alarmed discovery and euphoric optimism
3. Realising the cost of significant progress
4. Gradual decline of intense public interest
5. Post-problem stage- prolonged limbo.

For a discussion of this, and critique of its limitations, see Robinson 2000. In the meantime, don't be depressed that individual 'issues' drop off the radar without having been solved. Joe and Jane Punter may well have been 'softened up' by seeing the problems in the system. Every unsolved problem adds a little more doubt, fritters away a little more trust in the system and its legitimacy, in the way that Blair has lost the trust he had in 1997. Whether this ever reaches critical mass, and whether the crisis would be resolved in favour of ecological and social justice rather than some nasty fascist response is partly up to us.

### Multiorganisational Field

Movements and their constituent parts interact with other bodies and influences within a 'multiorganisational field', itself composed of 'conflict and alliance systems' (Klandermans 1992, 1997). Movement leadership can only be adequately grasped as a dynamic process, carried out in social contexts where others also strategise, opposing and aiding movement projects, and compelling movement re-thinking and re-organising (Ellingson 1995).

### Recruitment

How new people get drawn into the movement. It's almost never from the brilliance of our rhetoric, but via friends/acquaintances. Unfortunately, we can scare a lot of people away, though at least we don't piss them off by trying to 'recruit' them.

### **And if our cycle gets impounded by the council, take solace in the following. We'll be 'the seed beneath the snow'-**

"...my view is that enduring movements such as feminism never really die, but rather are characterized by periods of relative activity and inactivity. Moreover, I am increasingly persuaded that movement leaders and organizations are most critical to the struggle not during the peak of a protest cycle, but rather during what Rupp and Taylor term the "doldrums." During the "lean years" career activists and the formal organizations and informal networks they maintain serve a critically important "keeper of the flame" function. That is, they serve to maintain and nourish a tradition of activism, making it available to a new generation of activists during the next protest cycle." **McAdam in Traugott**

So what is Earth First! for? Are we the foot soldiers who give FoE and Transport 2000 cred and a minor amount of leverage in the corridors of Whitehall? Are we the people who open up physical and theoretical space(s), spaces which are then colonised by junkies, beards and Trots, spaces that are recuperated by parasites and multinationals? How can a voluntarist movement sustain itself in the absence of a social base?

*"In all their variants, demonstrations involve at least four actors: demonstrators, objects of their claims, specialists in official control of public space (usually police), and spectators. They often involve others: reporters for mass media; counter-demonstrators; allies such as dissident members of the ruling class; spies; operators of nearby establishments that crowd action might engage or endanger; pickpockets; gangs itching for a fight; political scientists eager to observe street politics, and so on..." Tilly in Traugott*

[These categories are not mutually exclusive!!]

*...Harwood blinks. 'It's what we do now instead of bohemia,' he says.*

*"Instead of what?"*

*"Bohemia. Alternative subcultures. They were a crucial aspect of industrial civilization in the two previous centuries. They were where industrial civilization went to dream. A sort of unconscious R&D, exploring alternate societal strategies. Each one would have a dress code, characteristic forms of artistic expression, a substance or substances of choice, and a set of sexual values at odds with those of the culture at large. And they did, frequently, have locales with which they became associated. But they became extinct."*

*"Extinct?"*

*"We started picking them before they could ripen. A certain crucial growing period was lost, as marketing evolved and the mechanisms of recommodification became quicker, more rapacious. Authentic subcultures required backwaters, and time, and there are no more backwaters. They went the way of Geography in general. Autonomous zones do offer a certain insulation from the monoculture, but they seem not to lend themselves to re-commodification, not in the same way. We don't know why exactly."*

William Gibson, 'All Tomorrow's Parties'.

## **Bibliography**

**Alinsky, S.** (1970) Rules for Radicals quite good- it has ideas for repertoires, and a sensitivity to movement cycles. Loses the plot a bit at the end, with excusable enthusiasm for what we now know are AGM-actions of limited impact.

**Aufheben** (1993) Auto-struggles: The Developing War Against the Road Monster

**Begg, A. (2000)** Empowering the Earth

**Doherty, B.** (1999) Paving the Way: the Rise of Direct Action against Road-building and the Changing Character of British Environmentalism Political Studies, XLVII, 275-291.

**Downs, A.** (1972) Ups and Downs with ecology- the "Issue-Attention Cycle" The Public Interest p 38-50. (contact Cattleprod for a copy if you like)

**Dyer-Witherford, N.** (1999) Cyber-Marx Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism. This book is extra-ordinary. Excellent historical and global overview of where we are at.

**McNeill, W.** (1995) Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History

**Piercy, M.** (1980) Vida excellent novel about the anti-Vietnam War movement and Going Underground. This truly is a must-read for all activists.

**Robinson, N.** (2000) The Politics of Agenda Setting: The car and the shaping of public policy Ashgate

**Tarrow, S.** (1989) Struggle, Politics and Reform: Collective Action, Social Movements and Cycles of Protest

**Tarrow, S.** (1998) Power in Movement

**Traugott, M.** ed (1995) Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action

**Wall, D.** (1999) Earth First! and the Anti-Roads Movement in Britain

**Zolberg, A.** (1972) Moments of Madness Politics and Society 2 (Winter): 183-207 (Contact Cattleprod for a copy)

### **Websites worth a look.**

[www.casagordita.com/tools.htm](http://www.casagordita.com/tools.htm)

[www.cco.org/index](http://www.cco.org/index) site for campus organisers

[www.schnews.org.uk](http://www.schnews.org.uk)- simply the best!

## **Eco Feminism**

by Elizabeth Carola

Eco feminism isn't for everyone, but it is for me, and here's why. It combines the theories and practise of some of my favourite things (cue song?), and underpins an important if not essential model to understand and grapple with life, both as we live it now, and how we may be living soon.

I discovered eco-feminism at university on joining the Women's Pentagon Action which for two years running (around the time Pershing and Cruise were being stationed in Europe) organised 15,000-20,000 women (easier to do in those days!) to encircle the Pentagon, ululate, kean and generally emote theatrical disapproval. It was a consciously spiritual, theatrical, publicly emotional contradiction to the seat of military might. Affinity groups had been asked to bring huge puppets to symbolise the four stages of response to the nuclear threat e.g. Despair, Grief, Mourning and Rage before a mass circle dance to Celebrate its Demise. It was women coming together and doing creative, anti-militarist stuff. It was great. Eschewing single issue politics, there was a joke that the group should be called Women Against Bad Things.

Shortly after the demo, I learned that eco-feminism, and groups like WPA, were in fact not great at all. According to my cultural studies lecturer, they were “dangerously essentialist” and essentialism was bad. Eco-feminism was said to purport that women were less violent than men—and this was not acceptable. Critiquing male behaviour (and apparently white people’s behaviour) meant you thought that behaviour was innate. And this was bad. Even naming patriarchy as culpable was, in this early post modern mind game, “essentialist.”

Confusing? I think it was meant to be. She did, after all, have a PhD to finish in something like “Re-Positioning Essentialisms”. It sure took the wind out of my sails. I had thought that the Women’s Pentagon Action had been saying the opposite, and anyway, our actions had been such fun! Ultimately, I decided that this critique of eco-feminism was mostly obscurantism. Nature/nurture debates can get very sterile and none of the analysts—from evolutionary psychologists to “social construct” feminists/socialists have ever had the definitive answer as to who does what why. But in as much as Bad Things--from militarism to rape, ecocide and greed--aren’t inevitable, we can and should fight them, and name the perpetrators.

Previous to all these lofty debates and fun activism, I had grown up in the red light district in New York. It was a neighbourhood you’ve heard of, much mythologised by middle class asshole film-makers for its noir cool, where (in reality) every time you left your flat you ran the gauntlet of pimps and the wreckage of female lives. Girls cost 25 cents and every morning on your way to school you would be told how much your 8 year old white pussy could earn. There would be a kind of FTSE 100 index of the daily worth of your little body (variable depending on the buyer) though the hollowed out stares of their actual employees belied them having any worth at all. Over the years, on our way to primary, and then secondary school, all but two of us were streetwise enough to avoid the prospectors and we felt clear this would not be our fate, but as a start to the day it was fairly salutary.

(The sex and drugs industries have long been swept off to the edges of Manhattan and the other boroughs to clean midtown up for nice wholesome tourists and multinational investors, Sometimes you miss the old days when at least it was all right there and the dialectics, as they say, were clear.)

Because of this and other experiences, the whole patriarchy thing never felt particularly abstract. I knew my worth as a female and how easily, in slightly different circumstances, I might be bought and sold. That feminism didn’t mean anything if it didn’t reckon with how many millions of women and children all over the world were being sold. Without getting into lots of boring debates, the porn/prostitution paradigm felt very clear to me and very connected to the general growing commodification of everything.

In contrast, getting away from the built environment whenever I could, felt amazing. Whereas my family and classmates seemed content to be spending their evenings and weekends incarcerated in airless flats in high rise tower blocks (where most people lived), I wanted to be out as much as possible, even if it just meant hanging out by the docks. It was getting away from from pavement and concrete, that helped me feel like *another world was possible*. Even if it was just the brackish old river. But things growing, like woods and meadows, felt like magic. Hallucinogenic. Mushrooms helped but, really, you didn’t even need these. Being around rocks, sand, sky, fields, woods felt very elemental and redemptive.

I just never understood why others didn’t feel the same. We know that, globally, capitalism has increasingly increasingly urbanised people, wrenched their connection from their land, from the means of food production, from wilderness and from the processes of creation. But I’ve never understood how people are sufficiently divorced from the earth to actively WANT to live 24/7 in the built environment, even if they have the means to get out. The urban middle class lifestyle of high rise lives and hotel holidays seems to extend to include urban feminists, a contradiction I’ve never understood.

One of my first jobs after uni was doing advocacy work for women in the sex industry who wanted to get out, trying to get them away from pimps and proprietors long enough to talk about options, or just to talk. It was good work. But the feminists I worked with liked nothing better than to spend their time off in horrible hotels. They were (and are) incredibly brave, committed, frontline women working in difficult circumstances against global violence against women and trafficking, who were at the same time completely disconnected from nature. How could such insightful women be in the grip of Nature Deficiency Disorder? And yes we all have contradictions, but that’s one I’ve never understood.

So combining environmentalism and the feminism on a deep level, has felt necessary for me. I have needed to get away from irritating cultural studies lecturers and futile debates about sex, biology and social darwinism and find a philosophy (and a gang) which felt connected to the earth and shares the sense that our fate is bound up with—her? its? his?—fate; an understanding that what violent men do to women's (children's, animals', plants' and other men's) bodies, reflects what they do to the earth. A philosophy which recognises men and white people as the architects of technocracy and militarism (your occasional Madeline Albrecht notwithstanding) but offers those of us who are white and/or male the opportunity to work for something different: like, a sustainable, genuinely non-hierarchical, close to the land model. A permaculturalist friend feels that all this is just a rewording of permaculture philosophy—and maybe the two are close—only eco-feminism offers the hope of building in genuine female equality on every level within this. But anyway, words are easy. We'll just have to try to do it.

## Ecofeminism Critique from “the Green Fuse”

Ecofeminism proposes three core premises:

1. The oppression of women and the domination of nature are fundamentally connected.
2. This is because patriarchal dualism places women and the concept 'Nature' in the same classification, which is deemed to be of less worth than the 'Culture/Masculine' classification.
3. Therefore any process that makes humanity more ecologically aware must also overcome the oppression of women.

Branches of Ecofeminism hold several subsidiary premises to be true.

In each subsection I'll ask a question relevant to a specific topic or premise.

What ecofeminists call 'patriarchal dualism' is very ancient and very widespread. It is certainly *not* restricted to the Western civilizations which cause so much environmental destruction. Significantly, most indigenous tribal societies, many of whom are held to be exemplary in their ecological awareness, hold very similar notions about masculine and feminine.

Anthropological research shows that there is no correlation between patriarchal dualism and the social status of women. David Maybury-Lewis writes:

*"...a very sexist cosmology can flourish where sex roles are not hierarchical, but egalitarian and competitive". ['Millennium'](#), page 133.*

So it's arguable that some societies are ecological, Earth-honouring and don't oppress women, but do have sexist cosmologies similar to Western patriarchal dualism.

But it seems that dualism itself is not the problem. It is at the heart of Chinese Taoist philosophy which Peter Marshall claims as "the first and most impressive expression of libertarian ecology". (Page 22, ['Natures Web'](#).)

The key may lie in understanding that there are different ways of ordering 'masculine' and 'feminine' dualities: The Bara people of Madagascar associate the male principle with enduring order, represented by the human skeleton, and the female principle with flesh which represents growth, vitality and change. "The male principle is associated, for a change with death and the female one with life". (Page 132, ['Millennium'](#), David Maybury-Lewis.)

There are many Goddesses who possess 'masculine' qualities. A good example is Morrighan, the bloodthirsty and lustful Irish war Goddess.

### ***Is ecofeminist dualism itself oppressive?***

Ecofeminism appears to have no problem with the classification of humans into two distinct groups with definite qualities. It is the way that patriarchy *uses* dualism that is at issue. Ecofeminist seems to propose an alternative dualism that values both 'Natural' and 'Cultural' aspects.

But is this ecofeminist dualism too analytical and reductionist? Is it legitimate to classify all the diversity of human life into two distinct groups?

Some feminists and ecofeminists use the persecution of Medieval witches as an example of patriarchal oppression:

"The reaction against the disorder of nature symbolized by women was directed...at lower class witches."

Carolyn Merchant, *'The Death of Nature'*

But at least 20% of those witches were men, and it seems as likely that their persecution was because they were a marginal group who did not fit into the cultural duality of the time. If this is so, then an ecofeminist dualism could have been equally oppressive.

[Queer theory](#) probably offers the strongest critique of ecofeminist dualism, and may paradoxically offer enormous insights to progress the broader project of social transformation.

### **Are women closer to nature than men?**

If 'femininity' and 'masculinity' are social constructions in what sense do feminine qualities belong to women?

Similarly, if 'Nature' and 'Culture' are social constructions in what sense are women are closer to nature?

The non-essentialist strands of ecofeminism would agree that women have both masculine and feminine qualities, but patriarchy encourages their femininity and categorizes them within an ideologically loaded system.

Similarly, the natural world *in itself*, is neither masculine nor feminine, but both. Aspects of nature exhibit competitiveness, aggression and hierarchy, all 'masculine' qualities.

The most non-essentialist ecofeminism can claim is that within patriarchal dualism;

- a. the concept 'Nature', 'feminine' qualities and women are classified together, while the concept 'Culture', 'masculine' qualities and men are classified together;
- b. those qualities categorized with 'Nature' are deemed as of less worth than those qualities categorized with 'Culture'.

The belief that 'women are closer to nature' is valid only if we adopt the first principle of patriarchal dualism.

### **Are men more alienated from nature?**

Many ecofeminists believe that patriarchy has alienated men from nature. But perhaps there are particularly *masculine* ways of connecting to our broader environment. Some Deep Ecologists advocate hunting, traditionally a very male practice, as a means of being more in touch with nature. Such notions are controversial, but worth discussion in this context.

Male hunting groups are common amongst the indigenous Tribal societies which many think hold profound ecological wisdom. It is also worth noting that some ecofeminists believe that that our separation from nature began with our shift from being a gatherer/hunter culture to an [agricultural society](#).

I think a detached look at Western society shows that women are just as alienated from nature as men. Women are as consumerist as men, and just as beguiled by the prevailing ideology whether we call it patriarchy, capitalism or simply [terminal gray culture](#).



### Is ecofeminism sexist?

Ecofeminism is not sexist in its core principles, but some of the beliefs held by some ecofeminist do see men as suffering from an "innately inferior capacity in areas of performance deemed significant". (From the definition of sexism in *The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*. Harper Collins, 1999.)

### Does ecofeminism conflict with feminism?

Ecofeminism seems to be in conflict with traditional feminism in several ways. Ecofeminism valorizes what have been seen as oppressive stereotypes and has a tendency toward [essentialism](#). One aim of Liberal feminism is to get more women into positions of power and wealth. Some ecofeminists question the whole concept of institutional power and wealth, and aim to topple the established institutions of power such as government and big business which mainstream feminists aspire to join.

### *Is there a feminine essence?*

Some Ecofeminist theorists rely on the essentialist notion that women are by nature more nurturing, caring and life affirming than men.

The word 'essentialism' is used in different ways in different contexts. For this discussion, I'm focusing on the 'Cultural' ('Radical') feminists notion that women are *in essence* more nurturing, peaceful, co-operative and closer to nature than men.

In this form, essentialism defines biology as destiny; men will always be the destroyers of the environment, and women will always be Earth's saviors.

Clearly, if men are innately greedy, aggressive or competitive, there is no hope for a politics designed to change them.

### *Are feminist definitions valid?*

Some feminist seem to use the words 'woman', 'female' or 'feminine' and 'man', 'male' or 'masculine' as if they were equivalent. But these terms are not interchangeable. 'Masculine' and 'feminine' refer to gender, whereas 'male'/'man' or 'woman'/'female' refer to sex.

To my knowledge (which is not comprehensive), ecofeminism has not taken sexual orientation or Queer Theory into account.

"Queer theory is a set of ideas based around the idea that identities are not fixed and do not determine who we are. It suggests that it is meaningless to talk in general about 'women' or any other group, as identities consist of so many elements that to assume that people can be seen collectively on the basis of one shared characteristic is wrong."

<http://www.theory.org.uk/ctr-que1.htm>

If ecofeminism is to incorporate Queer theory it would have to abandon much of what make it distinct. Where would ecofeminism be without a stable concept of 'woman'?

### *Did pre-patriarchal culture ever exist?*

The [Ecofeminist Visions Emerging](#) site says that their use of the notion of an ideal pre-patriarchal culture "is not to legitimate or sentimentalize some past paradise, but rather to allow ancient memory to fuel our imaginations as we uncover more life-affirming ways of living on this planet."

Where does this 'ancient memory' come from? Do we have a 'Race Memory' of such a time? At this stage of human awareness it is far too easy to confuse an imagined ideal with an 'ancient memory'.

Is there hard evidence of such a time? Not much. There is archaeological evidence for Goddess and fertility cults in early Mesopotamia that supports this possibility, but it is far from conclusive. Most anthropologists believe that the widespread myths of a time when women ruled the world are without any historical basis.

In *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory* Cynthia Eller argues that the notion of a pre-patriarchal culture is without foundation and that it this myth is actually harmful to feminist project.

Given that any pre-patriarchal culture existed before written history, how can we ever know what it was really like? We can imagine, and the thought experiment is a common philosophical tool, but we must take care not to confuse imagination or literary fictions with historical reality.

### *Would a pre-patriarchal culture be better than patriarchy?*

Matilda Joslyn Gage, a women's rights activist from the 19th century, cites evidence from around the world that lineal descent was once through the mother.

"The earliest phase of family life was entirely dependent upon woman; she was the principal factor in it, man having no place whatsoever except as son or dependent."

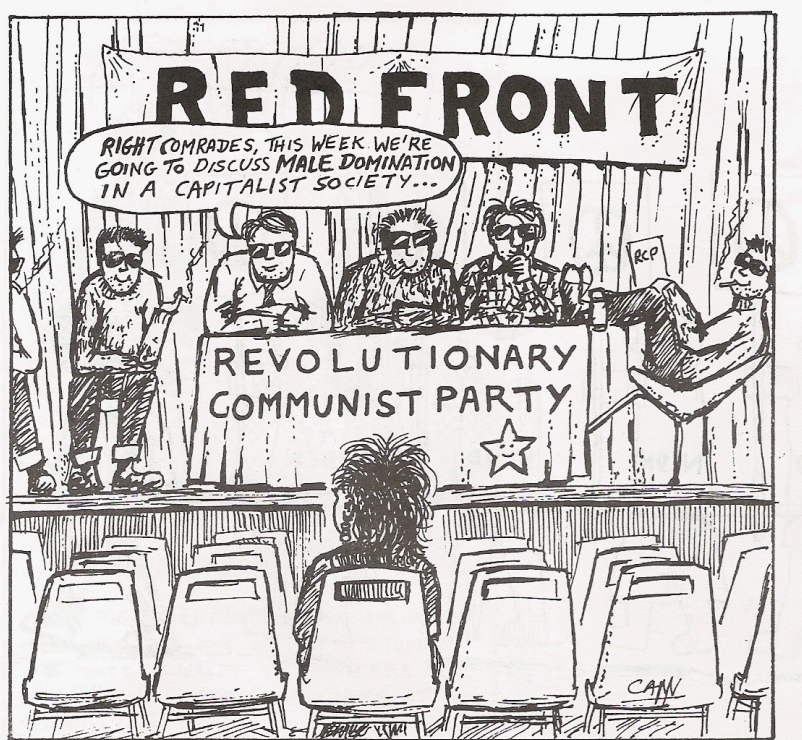
*'The Matriarchate; or, Woman in the Past.'*

Some oppose those who idealize pre-patriarchal societies in which women have more power: "Ecofeminism is 100 percent opposed to power-over relationships," wrote the McGuire sisters. "That includes the flip side of the coin in which women would dominate men."

## Challenging oppression within our movement

We often find it easy to criticise the actions of governments, corporations, and institutions such as the WTO, but we don't always find it so easy to accept criticism of what goes on within our own movement. It's 2006 and we still frequently hear complaints about overbearing, dominating alpha-male types within activist circles. Many of us can name a male activist who has committed rape or sexual assault, and who is still active and accepted within our movement. We still often have meetings and events which are difficult for disabled people to go to, or where creche is not provided (or where the creche is always run by the same small group of people who are themselves parents). Even within activist spaces we still often assume that everyone is heterosexual until proven otherwise.

And as for the non-white activists – where are they? At the monthly Climate Camp organizing meetings something like 95% of the participants have been white. We must be doing something wrong to make members of racial minorities feel unwelcome, but we don't know what, and we can't ask our non-existent black and Asian activist friends to explain it to us.



More than once I have seen women of colour speak out in meetings about their experiences of not feeling that they fit in with the group, of having their concerns marginalized because these concerns are not shared by middle-class white activists. Usually these concerns are ignored. Many activists are so eager to talk about capitalism, war, and environmental destruction, that they don't have time to think about concerns such as everyday experiences of racism or homophobic abuse, or the difficulty for a mother of finding childcare so that she can get to meetings. Those who try to point out oppression or elitism within our own movement are ignored because we fear that these concerns will derail the discussion from the big, sexy issues that we want to talk about. There is also a fear that if we criticize our own group, we will lose confidence in ourselves and become weaker. And we find it hard to hear someone say that they experience our behaviour as being oppressive – after all, we know that we're nice people, and we don't want to oppress anyone!

Just as we are always ready to criticize governments, corporations, and international institutions, and see this criticism as being a necessary step towards taking action to create a better world, we must also be willing to accept criticism of our own movement. We want to change the world, but we must also be willing to change ourselves for the better, and we must be ready to listen to those who can help us to do this. This means being ready to listen to those who experience oppression within activist circles.

We all know that our movement is difficult for many people to get involved in, for many reasons – jobs, kids, social groups, age, access issues, geographical location... We may not be able to solve all these problems, but we should at least be able to admit that they exist, and look for strategies to overcome them. Otherwise we risk becoming irrelevant and outdated; yet another group which had high ideals, but which ultimately became rigid and oppressive, and had to be overthrown.

## **My, how we have (not) grown**

We are almost 6 months into organising an exciting action camp about the most deadly issue facing humanity. We have tried to network extensively both in and beyond activist circles. We ought to have more than fifty people turn up in the capital city of our green and pleasant land. This wasn't a one-off blip caused by 22 grown men trying to kick a pig bladder between some white sticks. Numbers have been static (or even down) at the last few monthly meetings.

There are both “internal” and “external” reasons for any movement's success or failure. So far, there doesn't seem to have been significant state repression, which is a bit insulting really. (Though who knows, maybe the land group is *entirely* made up of Tsarist spies.)\*

### Problems

**Victims of Geography:** If there were a pre-existing movement, it would be a great idea to move monthly meetings from city to city. Even without that movement, it was the brave and correct decision to try to kick-start one. But it hasn't worked; Why haven't local activist communities gotten more involved? Where is Jane Public?

**Climate Change is a dark, dark cloud.** As an friend observed, “there's no smell of victory.” This isn't anti-GM crop campaigning, anti-roads protests, street parties or carnivals against capital.

**Lack of Location, Lack of Location, Lack of Location.** It's hard to get inspired about an event which seems just to be a themed Earth First! Summer Gathering with sketchy location. Now we have a venue, workshops and activists should flock to us (?)

**Offices** mean bureaucracies, and budgets and self-perpetuating fund-raising. They can also mean filing systems, returned phone calls, a strategic vision that can be easily conveyed.

**Meeting is Murder.** Some people like meetings, no joshing. Others don't. I mean, who wants to give up a weekend a month to sit in long meetings in hot and uncomfortable locations? The size of the gatherings isn't a perfect indication of how much activity is going on for the camp.

**The minutes of the gatherings** have not always been easy to read, not always summarised. It is easy, if you miss a meeting or two, to lose the thread and stop wanting to give up time and weekends in coming.

We still have, to some extent, ‘**Ghettos**’ of language, dress, and places where we meet. Newcomers have been getting scared off by cliqueness, or by seeing sensible proposals/questions rudely shot down.

We are largely organising via our established **friendship networks**, while giving the same old rhetoric of inclusivity and outreach. We should be a bit more honest about the barriers that this can cause between us and ‘Joe Public’.

### Consequences-

- Good ideas cannot be implemented, are left on the back-burner.
- More work per person, leading to stress and burnout, which is contagious.
- We look too busy to our friends for them to think that climate campaigning is an attractive prospect.
- Fewer people come to the camp. Few people outside the usual suspects will have any identification with the camp beyond posters and leaflets.

### Chapter 12: Solutions

What should we do? I haven't got a



## **What happens to people in our movement?**

Some musings, based on eight years working in and around the UK radical direct action movement<sup>1</sup>, on what actually seems to happen when we try to recruit and retain involved people, and what this means for climate camp strategy.

### **1. How/when do people get into the 'movement'?**

We tend to have short bursts of growth followed by periods (often longer) of stagnation – most people came in via (and because of):

- road (and related) protest camps, because they were places where you could turn up, start doing things and instantly be accepted and, indeed, find yourself running the show three weeks later. These were specific campaigns in and about a specific place with big local emotional attachment (all the eighteen-year-olds stopping bulldozers at Blackwood were there because the road was going through the woods they played in as kids...). And it was sexy (climbing harnesses...).

- GM campaigning, because it is a general interest issue with lots of publicity and an external momentum. Organising at the time provided a continuum of interest and action from boycotting GM via leafletting supermarkets to night-time crop-pulling with local groups providing an access point. And it was sexy (night-time gardening...).

- Reclaim the Streets, because there was an element of openness (though this was already more cliquey than previous examples), and these were public mass actions where it was possible to turn up and take part in an event then get involved in organising the next one. And it was sexy...

- anti-war, because it was a mass movement with external momentum and a continuum of involvement, from going on one march to Brian Haw moving to Parliament Square or smashing B52 bombers. There were loads of local groups organizing openly, and forming coalitions between more mainstream and radical subgroups. The external pressure meant lots of energy for organizing mass protests/actions on a short timescale. This was mostly less sexy, though blockading airbases had its moments, and anyone who was there when the gate came down at Fairford might disagree.

Obviously not everyone came in through these specific campaigns, and some came from completely different directions such as animal rights, but a quick straw poll of most groups will find that a large majority cut their teeth in one of the above areas (locally other campaigns were also important recruiters, such as peat in Yorkshire, but the pattern is the same). In between these periods, we stagnate – people drift away or burn out, a few drift in, cliques form or harden, tactics grow stale, we rest on our laurels or try self-starting campaigns that don't really take off. We are currently in such a period (have been for about two and

---

<sup>1</sup> I use this description for convenience sake – you know who I'm talking about, don't read too much into it...

half years since proper anti-war actions ended) and the climate camp is an attempt to get out of it.

## 2. Exposure to ideas

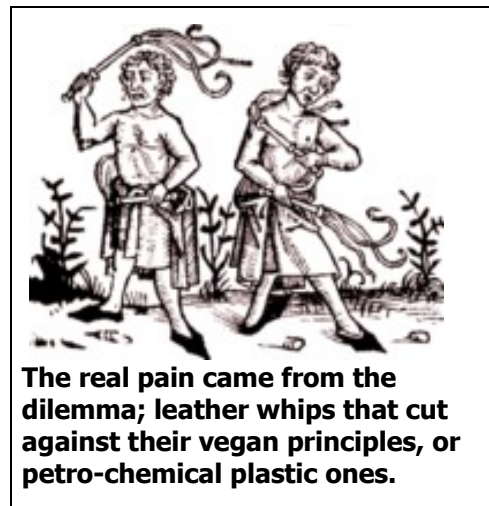
Once people have some contact, they are drawn in by propaganda. Schneus, Corporate Watch, Undercurrents, Indymedia, Chomsky, rants and random publications of all sorts. Gatherings such as Anarchist Bookfair and EF! summer gathering also play a role in this, if they're working properly. Obviously, the propaganda only works if it's comprehensible, accessible both stylistically and in terms of making connections with things people already know, and not alienating – i.e. draws its lines in places where the reader identifies on the right side rather than thinking 'the person who wrote this is criticising me'.

## 3. Our message and behaviour

We partly function like an evangelising religion. We don't actually reach out to people in the mainstream by making ourselves acceptable to them – we exist outside it and that is the main reason people get involved – they are looking for something different, something that requires them to behave in new ways and change things they took for granted. A continuous path to this new way of living is useful (see above) but creating a shorter/easier path by moving closer to the mainstream isn't necessarily of benefit.

When I compare us to an evangelizing religion, I'm thinking of the early Christians converting the English in the sixth and seventh centuries AD: barefoot missionaries tramping the countryside preaching, driven by a fire of knowing they are right and visibly enduring hardship and practicing eccentricity, which draws thousands for the spectacle, hundreds to be baptized and only a few to actually take up the cross and go out on their own missions. But for those few active converts, it's partly/largely the hardship and eccentricity (and the difference from their previous constrained existence) which make it attractive.

We are vanguardists, often without realising it. Where the mainstream adopts what was once our radical position, we move on to a more radical position, because for us the position that began as radical was only ever one step on a longer road. Fairtrade coffee and organic veg are going mainstream, so we scarcely even mention them any more – we move on – 'Is it local?' We maintain our distance because we're motivated by a vision of perfection rather than a specific short-term goal, but the part of that vision we articulate can only be a certain distance from where we actually are before we start looking like loonies even to ourselves.



Another way of putting this is to say that we ARE radicals and idealists and that's nothing to be ashamed of, but we can't in practice on a day-to-day organizing level expect mainstream people to either see where we're coming from or to join in in large numbers – we are a self-selecting minority by definition.

Our practical effect partly comes through saying the things Friends of the Earth, New Economics Foundation etc. can't say because they have to talk to politicians for a living. Eventually FoE and NEF (or occasionally someone unexpected like the Women's Institute) start saying something similar, because we've opened the political space, then we start saying the more radical next thing. That's the model, anyway - it only occasionally works in practice and obviously things never reach an actual conclusion.

## 4. Barriers and strengths (or, as Marc's figurative language might prefer it, 'fences aren't just to keep people out, they also give you somewhere to lock your bike')

We're not 9-to-5 friendly. That's partly because 9-to-5 is part of the world we want to change. The vast

majority who join us leave their 9-to-5 behind along the way, in most cases without regrets or without really noticing – or they came in young enough that they never really had one and can see no reason to take it up.

Friendship groups – are a problem, but they're also the reason most of us manage to stay here at all. Living on £7,000/year or less is easy if all your mates do it too, but bloody hard when they're all on £20,000. Defending yourself every time you say what you think is great for expanding the movement, but bloody tiring – after a while you just keep your mouth shut, or end up hanging out with the people who more or less agree with you.

Some of the things that set us obviously apart are themselves political – when did you last see a woman with hairy legs on public display who wasn't a hippy/activist?

We lack money, and this is definitely a two-edged sword. The methods we have work, but take a lot of getting used to – we do do things mostly without needing offices and hotels and salaries - but this does alienate people who are used to the usual way of doing things, and things do often take more time. The alternative – doing things the mainstream way but without funding - would only be open to people with serious disposable income as well as time (I think this is how the suffragettes ran, for the most part, and probably the main cause of their failure to attack the substantial issues in most women's lives). But our current method alienates the time-poor, which isn't just those with 9-to-5s, as well as the merely conventional.

Meetings is Murder, as Marc has it: though (again) our process is also political (and is the mainstream any better at process? In mainstream voluntary groups I have experience of, it's definitely much, much worse) We try to learn from our mistakes – everyone keeps saying how much better the climate camp process has been than Dissent, though there are still too many meetings. Established small groups can work with very few (I know Corporate Watch runs on about two 1-hour and one 3-hour meeting a month, and used to have less), but is there a way around them for large new groups? Whatever, formal processes for including new people are an absolute must and something we still neglect.

## **5. Real problems**

Cliqueyness – this largely comes from laziness (especially with language) and lack of respect for the fact that one is in a public space. Because the people you're working with are also your mates, it doesn't mean you can behave in meetings (or on site during an event) as if you're hanging out with your mates. This is difficult, because it means being more formal than comes naturally to most of us. On top of this, the fact is that most of us lack social skills and find it hard to approach and relate to new people. During the process of getting involved, peer-pressure towards a radical lifestyle can be extremely off-putting; 'what do you mean you're not vegan/shop at supermarkets/own a house?' – helping people to change their lives is one thing, but alienating people for not fitting a new set of norms isn't going to help us.

Lunch-outism – this is fairly endemic in voluntary groups, but we do have a culture in which it's often considered okay to let things slide – you get frozen out eventually if you keep doing it, but there are no immediate consequences and the freezing out isn't visible to anyone who's just arrived.

Burnout – the flip-side of lunch-outism. Sometimes the same individual is involved. Some people doing too much and others doing too little makes it hard to tell how much is expected. And it's a damaging disease – each time you burn out you come back slightly different. Activist trauma support group are doing some interesting stuff on this.

Skankiness – sometimes this is really a major issue, even for those of us who've been involved for a while. I was shocked at the state of the London meeting venue and I wonder how many people didn't actually make the meeting because of the venue. This certainly wasn't a good one for outreach. We probably can't reach the people to whom the very fact of compost toilets and being expected to sleep on the floor are major barriers, but we should be able to make sure our spaces are clean, safe and welcoming.

## 6. Who is able to join?

Between the above problems, we're basically limited to recruiting students or those in a similar time-rich situation and people who actively want to change their lives so are willing and able to put time in – this automatically excludes most parents and 9-to-5ers. Other factors mean we require, if not necessarily education, at least a degree of articulacy and literacy, and that we exclude most people over sixty (by outrageousness, skankiness and cliqueness as well as physical demands – sleeping on floors etc.) and similarly most from non white/western cultures – I heard a story recently about someone a few years ago who'd been working really hard on outreach and got one Sikh guy to turn up to a meeting, only to have him walk straight out when there was an icebreaker that required physical contact. In my personal view, the sheer breadth of issues required to be acceptable to every set of cultural norms makes it effectively impossible, so it's hard to know what to do here. And you can always sit out icebreakers – I do.

As ever, the exceptions prove the rule.

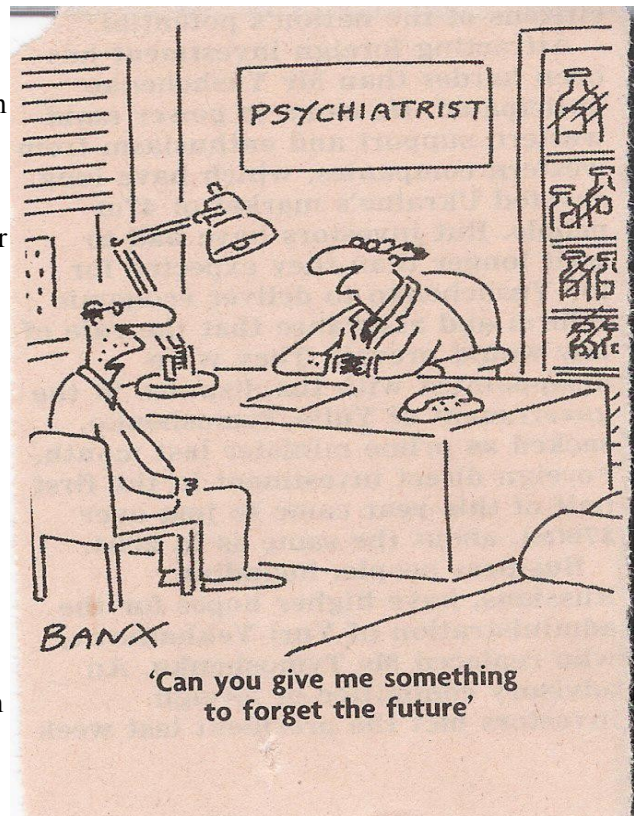
## 7. What does all this mean for the Climate Camp?

The conclusion this leads to is that things aren't too bad as far as the camp goes – it hasn't been great but at the time of writing (late July) the signs are good and there is a buzz growing – the usual suspects and quite a lot of the usual suspects' distant mates who haven't done anything for years are mobilising, at least in Oxford, plus a few new people. HOWEVER – if the site is skanky, if it's badly hit by the cops so the actions are a damp squib and if we fail to follow up, we'll come out worse than we went in.

We need to help people set up affinity groups (and please can we come up with a better name for them... action groups?... ) This means formally and actively getting experienced groups to help inexperienced in order for them to be empowered.

Outcomes – of the possible desirable outcomes being discussed at the Talamh meeting, on the above evidence a road-show would be a waste of time. Much more useful would be a co-ordinated network of local groups aiming to take local action from leafleting to digger-diving (really, keeping a spectrum from accessible to sexy) and communicating with each other what they've done. This certainly means a co-ordinated website and probably an office (cf. Genetic Engineering Network – though we'll need to be more sustained) Permanent camps might be another possibility, though they'd have to be targeted where they can do practical stuff (i.e. somewhere with an active climate criminal to target) because camps without frequent/regular actions die. Done properly, such camps would also form public, accessible alternative energy/low impact living demonstrations.

But have we got the energy? I know I haven't. So we need a last push at the camp before we burn out, to run Corporate Watch's old recruitment strategy – 'You want in? Great – here's the resources, you run the thing...' It worked for me...



***This article came about as a result of conversations between two climate camp activists, but shouldn't be taken as any kind of formal analysis, let alone a manifesto, and anyway, neither of us agrees with all of it.***