The Detractor's Convention

Identifying the future of community-based campaigning

A primer on the future of campaigning
in a connected and globalised world.

Prepared for the '*Detractor's Convention*',
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Contents

This has been prepared as a discussion paper for the 'detractor's convention' being held at Pantglas. The purpose of the paper is to outline a number of issues to assist the discussion by those attending the weekend.

The views expressed here are those of Paul Mobbs, and should not be taken to bind or constrain the discussion or exploration of issues during the weekend or afterwards.

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1. Introduction

This pamphlet is all about managing change. Change can be problematic. The way to make change less problematic is to understand it, and through understanding take what you can from it to assist and reinforce your own position. This process of characterising the effects of societal change on an organisation, and then creating responses to this, can create divisions. The differing ideas and approaches on responding change are especially likely to create divisions within large organisations. Divisions can then go on to affect how people operate, and distract them from the real objectives they commonly hold.

This paper has been written within the context of my experiences within Friends of the Earth (FoE), and how that organisation has characterised and responded to change. Specifically, how recent divisions between the national and local levels of the organisations have led to conflict. But it is also informed by my professional work with organisations a disparate as local education departments and other large non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as WWF, Greenpeace, local authorities and, for lack of any other convenient label, the '*Internet community*'.

Those who are familiar with my previous work in relation to FoE will see elements of my previous writing on organisational and campaign structures. But in my own perception I don't thing this is strictly a reiteration of previous ideas since my position has moved on. This is not only because the trends affecting organisations like FoE, that I identified in 1994, have developed further. But the potential for division have grown as those trends impact on the national and local structures of all campaign groups.

As people bound up within the local/national divide we have to resolve this issue - even if our national level associates decide not to. To ignore the issue will only store up conflicts that will distract from the objectives of our campaigns, or it will provide the opposition with opportunities to divide us. More fundamentally, we could waste our energies trying the fight the people who are, technically, 'on our side'.

2. 'Detractor' - pejorative label or badge of honour?

I started working with FoE during 1986/1987 in Oxfordshire. In 1989, I helped establish the Banbury FoE group. In 1994 I was elected as the FoE Ltd Board member for the South Central (Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Hampshire) Region,

and then in 1997 I was appointed to also sit on the Board of Friends of the Earth Trust. This, together with my travels around the country to see other Friends of the Earth local groups, gives an interesting viewpoint on the organisation in general. I think, to my knowledge, I was identified as the first 'detractor'. Others have been identified as 'problems' before - for example members of Brighton and Hove FoE during the mid-90s - but the use of this term has a specific basis and objective. But should we consider the label of 'detractor' a pejorative slur on our expression of concern about the direction the organisation is taking. Or, like a badge of honour, should we play on the use of the label to identify and open-up the structural problems that have led to these internal conflicts in the first place.

I was first called a 'detractor' during my period on the Board of FoE. When discussion issues I always sought to define key terms and assumptions before taking the decision I was being asked by staff to make. I also wrote papers on particular issues, especially relating to the changing nature of campaigning at the local level, for consideration by the Board. This sometimes caused problems. Then one day a new label emerged - I was called, 'a detractor'. As usual I sought to define this term. The most clear definition I have had to date is that I disagreed with the 'established' position within the organisation. It is important to note that the *established position of the organisation* is that held by the senior staff within Friends of the Earth, not necessarily the organisation as a whole. This is particularly important because this polarising of the national and local movements is, in my view, a key element in the future of social, environmental and political campaigning in the UK.

I left the Board of FoE in 1998, but have kept in close contact with the activities of the Board and the organisation. It is clear that over the last eighteen months the label of 'detractor' has grown to encompass other active members of the FoE organisation who differ from the accepted line.

FoE is by no means the only home of this type of dissent. There have also been tensions in other organisations with local groups such as Greenpeace and WWF. We are also seeing the growth of a whole range of decentralised and disparate - but highly effective - groups working on a range of issues. What we are seeing is that increased communication between the lower levels of organisation is leading to the uncontrolled development of autonomy within sections of the organisation. This autonomy is not in the sense of severance from the main organisation (although it could lead to that if ignored). It is in the sense of the development and ownership of tactics and ideas that assist the development and execution of campaigns.

This is, in my view, the practical expression of the force of decentralisation that is changing the nature of community-level

campaigning. It is the important factor that will govern the future of campaigning. It should therefore be given priority consideration by all campaigners and campaign organisations.

3. Globalisation and connectivity

Commentators often talk of the '*post-industrial*' world, and even of '*neo-colonialism*'. What we can characterise this as is:

- The increasing level of trade and human activity that is controlled by multi-national corporations, and the effects this has on economic, social and environmental policy;

- The increasing power of the multi-nationals as a 'block' within global and national policy-making;

- The trend towards the liberalisation of markets, and even of the regulations governing those markets, that has an impact on the regulation of everything from employment to environmental pollution;

- The decreasing power of small business, community organisation, individuals and even national governments within this global '*new world order*'.

This change in how human society organises itself has had many effects on ordinary people. At it's beneficial end, it possible to show that this system has developed better communications - such as the Internet - and more secure trade between countries. But at the other end of the scale this same system has led to damaging developments to traditional social systems. Increasing job insecurity as nation is forced to compete against nation. More fundamentally, the power of national and local governments is diminishing as this *new world order*, through bodies such as the World Trade Organisation, seeks to give powers to supra-national entities over national and local ones.

The move towards more globalised systems of organisation is being fostered by both the left, centre and right in politics, who all advocate the development of free-trade. Although in recent years there has been some movement by politicians to restrict the bad side of globalisation by building in 'quality standards', in practice the new global economic system has control over an ever greater proportion of our lives.

This move towards a more globalised system, because it effects power relationships in society, has an important impact on how individuals influence change. This effect is not all one-way though. For example, while you national

government has less power in the face of the World Trade organisation, individuals through the new media - such as the Internet - have the power to combine at a level that has never existed before.

It is this fundamental change in the power relationships, at the local, national and international level, that create problems and opportunities. But more than that, it is also redefining the relationship within the national and local campaign organisations. This is the question which must be addressed is we are together going to use the beneficial aspects of this change, and work to limit the adverse effects.

3.1. Control and the new media

The interchange between individuals has, in recorded history, been one of the main avenues for creating change. A few hundred years ago individuals could only speak to each other. This required contact, and so limiting contact between people frustrated change. Although the moveable-type printing press was developed in 1476, it did not actually assist in the development of change for some time because shortly after its creation governments responded with censorship. It also took time because states did not develop free education for the general public until the last few centuries. Over history, change in society has always required the weight of numbers as a means of demonstrating power. That is not so much the vase today. In the Twentieth Century, with the development of censorship free spoken and written communications, the opportunities for lobbying and creating change has grown. In the Twenty-First Century we could conceivably see the end of the mass-movement in social change as the power of the new media give individuals to ability to take *decentralised* or *distributed* action.

The role of new media to this development is central. The 'new media' are a collection of communications technologies that have developed over the last fifteen years that give many more people to ability to communicate, exchange ideas and organise. In general they can be summed up as:

- Improved telecommunications - not only in terms of the availability of telephones, but also fax machines, and the lower costs of these communications;

- Enlarged mass-media - which in turn requires more information to feed it, and hence creates more opportunities for information to be spread;

- Word processing - the ability to store, compose and exchange documents on a scale and quality not comparable with manual typewriting or printing;

- The Internet - enabling truly global communications, not just point-to-point

through email, but also as a mass-media through the World-Wide-Web.

As these media have only developed recently their use is restricted to a certain sector of society. Their effect is therefore limited. But as these media become an accepted part of everyday life their significance to the process of change in society will grow. It is important that the potential, and the flaws of these media are identified by campaigners, and that the process of campaigning changes to accept their use.

3.2. The rise of corporate control

In the new global market, capital is the important commodity - the individual is no longer needed. Whole groups in society are being disenfranchised in the global economy. As Vandana Shiva points out, today we have developing world situations at the heart of developed world cities. These situations will continue to expand as globalisation seeks to globalise the labour market.

In the globalised economy we don't need the unemployed people to work in a country any more because we can employ others cheaper in one or more countries elsewhere. We don't need the poorer people in a country to consume any more because there are plenty of richer people in other countries to sell the products to. We don't need people to take pleasure from their local environment because there are plenty of people around the globe who are prepared to pay to come to new tourist developments. Of course there will be those who are not happy with this, but that doesn't matter because the multinational corporations will be more than happy to sell ever more advanced surveillance technologies, and to actually help spy on activists. And should things get out-of-hand there are many people willing to supply everything from riot control equipment to private prisons as a remedy to dissent. Even if people try to complain about this whole process, it won't matter. All the media from books and newspapers to television and Internet service providers are now owned by multinational corporations who will make sure that such disturbing messages never reach a wide audience.

We also have to realise the political element to corporate control. Corporations are able to fund political organisations - both in the sense of party politics, and also the 'think tanks' and seminars that identify the important issues government must deal with. As a more insidious level, the development of corporate control over the conventional media also means that the dissemination of information on certain issues can be restricted. This issue has been starkly demonstrated recently in relation to those corporations, for example News International and their subsidiary Harper-Collins, who have strong links to the Chinese government. The media is one important element of

control, but in a world where corporations can also dominate the products that people buy control can also be exerted. For example the Wal-Mart superstores are one of the largest booksellers in the USA, and so any book which Wal-Mart would not sell can be difficult to publish.

This is the '*brave new world*' of the global economy. It is a fact that at the national level we are so tied into this system that it is not possible to break-out whilst accepting this state of affairs as valid. We must move outside of the system in order to not only see the problem, but also to demonstrate the true nature of that system to those within it.

3.3. The weakening of representative politics

The European Commission (EC), representing 15 of the most powerful European states, has, on the basis of scientific uncertainty, banned the import of hormone-treated beef from the USA. The USA has appealed to the World Trade Organisation and, with the help of the WTO, are now proceeding to take action against the EC for restriction of trade. This is a stark example of the way that, despite all their posturing about their power, governments across the globe has sold their sovereignty to big business.

At the national level the role of government, whilst still essential, is becoming less important in the minds of ordinary people. '*Government*', in terms of civil administration, continues to operate as ever. However, party politics has become devalued. Not only by the seeming ineffectiveness of parties of all colours to tackle the complex problems of modern society, but also as the range of opinions represented by mainstream politics diminishes to the lowest common denominator. For the last decade national government have been elected on a minority of the votes cast.

In the UK, as local government has seen it's powers taken away, and more government Quangos have taken important responsibilities over, it's standing has diminished. In most areas of the country councillors are not only elected on a minority of the electorate, but sometimes less than ten percent of the electorate.

With the corresponding demise of part politics we have seen the growth in recent years of single issue campaigns. Party politics often views these new groups with concern, and often describe their 'undemocratic nature' (whilst failing to amplify the undemocratic nature of their own minority position). In my view the significance of this change is not so much the choice for expression of popular concern, it is also a reflection on the changing nature of society and it's ability to manage change. It is also an expression of the economic position of

those involved. Those on average incomes are much more likely to engage in lobbying than those on low incomes, even those on the lowest incomes are often are subject to the greatest level of economic, social and environmental depravation.

3.4. The benefits and limitations of connectivity

As noted above, the fact that a lot of the support and equipment in relation to the new media are based upon the activities of multi-national corporations - be it the software writers like Microsoft or hardware manufacturers and operators such as BT or Panasonic - creates bounds to the use of the new media. This can be summarised as:

- Barriers to access - the main barrier is the ability to get hold of the equipment, although additional barriers can be access to quality phone lines or stable power supplies, and I'm particularly concerned about the ability of ethnic minorities to access the new media in their traditional language;

- Barriers to use - generally there are no barriers to use with the new media, although it may be as corporate influence grows that attempts will be made to control what is communicated;

- Cost barriers - this was initially a problem, but as the new media become more common prices are dropping;

- Skills barriers - this is still a major problem, and as the equipment becomes more complex this could potentially become and even bigger problem as poorer people try and fit new operating systems onto older machinery;

- Barriers to exchange - this is not just literal in the sense of using

- Consciousness barriers - I discuss the idea of 'consciousness' as a force in communities later, but in general people can limit their access to the new media by their fear or disavowal of it;

- Transference barrier - people must be able to take information obtained through the new media and use it to create change in their everyday lives, and the principal barrier to this is the fact that much of the information presented can be incomplete, irrelevant or out-of-date.

In my view the large campaign organisation have a central role to play in addressing many of these problems. This is because they have the economic and organisational resources to address issues such as the provision of up-to-date information, training and skills. However, it is my experience that the opposite is taking place. Those organisations such as FoE which have local groups networks are limiting training to the that which supports their campaign agenda. It is rare to find groups organising training or education on the basis of

providing generic skills. Again, this can partly be seen in the context of these organisations becoming more competitive for a perceived 'market' of supporters. Also, the increased emphasis on 'branding' and 'message' can override the supplying of generic skills training if those people will not necessarily then follow your agenda.

In summary, the new, globalised media have provided great opportunities for people to communicate and organise for change. However, the strength of this distributed and decentralised system of communication also supports the negative aspects of globalisation. Therefore, we have to appreciate that our use of the new media has to have regard to the limitation this system may impose upon us. But, there can also be opportunities within this system for us to exploit, such as the increased accessibility it can give to corporations and decision-makers.

4. The problems of neo-liberalism

4.1. Neo-liberalism and the global free-trade consensus

I flag up the issue of neo-liberalism because it raises particular questions about the inter-relationship of government, party politics and the globalised business culture. Party politics in many Western countries is becoming increasingly focussed on a narrow set of concerns based around the economy, and some issues of social justice and political representation. This realignment has seen a merging of the policies of the centre and centre-left parties over the past ten years. The position of the parties of the right and left has also realigned because of this, in some instances (such as the UK or Austria) becoming more hard-lined. Of course, little of these changes have anything to do with the needs of the everyday person. Instead the emphasis is put on providing the 'conditions for economic growth', through the vehicle of the globalised economy, in order to solve traditional economic and social problems.

This new philosophy of neo-liberalism is promoted in the UK by Tony Blair's political guru Anthony Giddens (a professor at the London School of Economics). He is the author of the definitive statement on Tony Blair's vision of the 'new' socialist utopia - *The Third Way*. There is a more left-wing branch of neo-liberalism that calls itself '*communitarianism*', but this has received very little exposure because of the dominance of *The Third Way* in centre-left politics. But the core of the neo-liberal theories on economic policy is the maintenance of free-trade and the global marketplace. This despite that fact this can be damaging to national economies because of the power global corporations hold. Also, in terms of international agreements, the global

marketplace actually supports and encourages the types of unsustainable development which the UN has notionally sought to tackle through the UN Conference on Environment and Development (the Rio '*Earth Summit*', etc.).

It's also important to realise the effect that future global trade agreements could have on local democracy. Neo-liberal administrations have been promoting instruments such as the *Multi-lateral Agreement on Investment*. However these new trade agreements, administered through the World Trade organisation, will extend the powers of multi-national corporations from the national into the local context. This could mean that pollution regulators and even local government could be subject to action should they annoy an obdurate multi-national.

4.2. Democracy overload

In many ways the control of information, and the lack of consultation and political accountability, has restricted the development of more sustainable communities. New Labour has trumpeted it's proposals to modernise local government, and while on the face of it these proposals are an improvement, in practice I believe they will lead to 'democracy overload'.

The aim of a democratic society should be to involve its citizens in decision which affect their lives, and enable decisions to be taken at the lowest possible level. Labour's modernisation proposals fail on both these counts. While greater access to information will be given, the development of more streamlined '*cabinet local government*' will mean that important decisions currently taken by committees in public will be taken by a small group of officers and leading councillors in private. This also means that while we get to elect councillors more regularly, fewer of them will be involved in everyday decisions. And while me may have more directly elected mayors and local referenda on important issues, the scope for local government to create change will still be tightly controlled by top-down guidelines such as planning guidance and regional economic strategies.

We also have to recognise the increasing role for big business in local, regional and national government. Tony Blair has always stressed the need for government to relate to business. However, recent experience shows that this primarily means multi-national corporations and the larger national corporations through the guise of industry lobby groups. This is reinforced by the 'revolving door' between the civil services and corporations, or the appointment of business representatives in leading positions on decision making bodies (for example, the new *Regional Development Agencies*). We seriously must pose the question as to what role the business community have to play in national and local democracy, and the balance of power that exists between members

of the public and these profit-making organisations.

If we were to only campaign within 'the usual channels' the new growth in regional government, and consultation procedures, will severely stretch the resources of all campaign organisations, nationally, and especially locally. It is important that we not only find a critique of neo-liberalism, that contrasts its reasonable theory with its unreasonable practical reality. But we must also find a way to work through the increasingly business oriented system of national and local democracy that

5. The changing role of campaigning

The new media are changing the role of campaigning. Not necessarily for the better. Whilst email and the Internet give direct access to quality information in some instances, the expanded mass-media are working more towards the lowest common denominator in order to compete. For many organisations that means to get there message across they must become performing seals - often acting in the way the media expect them to rather than as they wish.

If we are going to develop the positive aspects of the new media we have to adapt campaigning to accept these changes, rather than having the changes define the bounds within which campaigning takes place.

5.1. Large organisations

Large national organisations, in order to become 'more professional', are becoming increasingly centralised. This is not only because competing in the media takes a lot of financial resources. The need to co-ordinate and regulate communications with the mass-media mean that they are increasingly using their organisational machines as a control mechanism to stop people going 'off-message'. This is creating tensions between ordinary people (who perhaps are not even part of the organisation) and the larger campaign organisations.

At its lowest level, the tension is between those people with problems who perceive that the organisation should be able to give them help, but only provide vapid and formulaic advice. For those actually involved at the local level as part of these organisations the options are:

- To be completely cut off from the decision making process, and to just obey orders - which is fine in organisations dealing with external or intangible issues bit not for those that have localised aspects (Greenpeace, WWF,

Oxfam, BUAV, Red Cross, etc);

- To be consulted about issues, but the main decisions are still made by the national organisation and any local work must not compromise national priorities (wildlife trusts, RSPB, CPRE, etc);

- To ignore national priorities and work at the local level, albeit with the threat of exclusion (FoE, Green Party, CTC, etc.)

In practice none of these options is completely satisfactory in that none of them acknowledge the strength of working in partnership. The need of the national organisation to give priority to its own agenda will always override any local interest.

The main challenge from the new media is two-fold:

- Firstly it weakens their ability to control their organisation as people within the organisation exchange and communicate without the control of 'gatekeeping' of the head office. This can lead to new ideas, tactics or campaigns being created. Perhaps more significantly new information can be found and circulated that tests the assumptions in national policy. The response to this can sometimes be to seek to re-establish control, which is counter-productive.

- Secondly, the increase in media-access means that the message of the organisation merges into a background noise of similar or competing messages. This can mean that these organisations, despite their membership or economic power, can have less 'media profile' than much smaller groups who use tactics or approaches that grab the media. The response to this is to become more media-friendly (performing seals, as noted above) which not only reduces important arguments to sound bites, but it also inflicts self-censorship on contentious issues.

5.2. Small organisations

Small organisations have completely different priorities. Small organisations working at the national level cannot compete equally for media coverage and sponsorship. So the tension between the work of activists locally and the national co-ordinators need not exist (although sometimes it does) because image is not so crucial. Also, the more direct nature of contact between members of the organisation creates much better working relationships, and a common sharing of ideas and goals. Locally based organisations come in a variety of organisational forms, but often the more flexible the organisational structure the more imaginative and adaptable is the work of that organisation.

The benefit of the new media to small organisation is that it gives them disproportionate access to the public compared to their size. But the most significant aspect is the ability for disparate groups of people, who perhaps would never have been able to work together before, to work together on issues of common concern. This is partly why the concept of the mass-organisation is facing a strong challenge from the new media. You no longer have to rally all your supporters in one place to show your strength. More practically, you don't need a huge supporter base in order to have access to communications and the national media. The new media have led to the development of a new form of high-tech company, focussed on information and intellectual commerce, that can operate with few staff while making millions in profits. Likewise small campaign groups can use this same organisation benefits of the new media to run complex and high-profile campaigns nationally or even globally.

There is no longer any significant advantage that a large organisation has over a well-organised and well-run small organisation. This poses a threat to the role of the large campaign groups, particularly those that have local groups spread around the country. Unless these large organisations are able to adapt to the change created by the new media, and are able to develop more inclusive and partnership based methods of working they will fail. In future large organisation will constantly risk the desertion of their most valuable active supporters - those who are able to operate effectively with minimal supervision.

6. Future opportunities for community-level campaigns

Providing we can handle the problems the new media creates, most small campaign groups and even individual campaigners should be able to extract some value from what the new media have to offer. That said, where does it take us.

6.1. Solidarity and resistance

Perhaps the greatest restriction small campaigns face is information collection and developing new ideas and tactics. The ability for disparate groups of people to share information means that solidarity can be developed between like-minded people across a large area. One of the principal aims of small groups using the new media must therefore be to identify networks of like-minded souls they can join. As they become more experienced, they can also work to set up their own networks that meet specific needs.

Solidarity is a dependent trait. But once solidarity has been established its counter-side can develop - resistance. The ability to share information and develop solidarity can create the ability to take concerted action. This not only means co-ordinating across a wide area to have greater effect. But also the ability for enabling support for one group taking action in support of the common cause. In this way the value of the resistance that one small group can present to a common problem - be that a government, corporation or general issues - is multiplied many times over.

6.2. Independence and subsidiarity

One of the main reasons large corporation can do what they do is the access to resources they have. Perhaps two of the greatest these organisation are able to purchase are up-to-date information, and the skill to use it. The new media allow both these commodities to be shared between many people. This enables two important trends:

- Firstly, independence. If you can share experience and information with others, or exchange work, you are able to work more independently. The ability to carry less baggage to support your work means that you can be more responsive to issues, and able to react to change better.

- Secondly, having the ability to decide how to work, and more importantly what strategy to adopt, means that decisions can be made to suit local need. While you may have a generalised position at the national level, the ability for people to take resources and adapt them for local use creates a practical application of the subsidiarity principle.

Perhaps more than the idea of developing solidarity, it is the development if independence and subsidiarity that threatens large organisations. The strength that large organisations have is they set themselves up as the font of all knowledge to local people. If that is challenged, through the sharing of information and experience cheaply and efficiently, their god-like position is also challenged. Large organisation must therefore adapt themselves to the way that they hold, use and distribute information and specialist knowledge if they are to maintain their central position.

6.3. Accountability

This perhaps is the benefit to campaigners, both within organisation, and against the corporations and decision-makers. It is also the threat to them.

As more information is available about corporations and decision-makers, their

role is subject to increasing scrutiny. Properly managed, the pressure of scrutiny can lead to change. But the same principles apply to the groups that are seeking to create that change. Communicating over the new media makes the role of these groups more public. But it also means that every mistake they make is amplified and copied - for example Greenpeace's effective media campaigned on Brent Spar, that backfired when their albeit minor sampling mistake was discovered.

In many ways then the new media represent a double-edged sword for campaign groups. But in general terms I think the price of care and diligence in your own work is worth paying for the accountability it gives.

7. In conclusion - evangelising the new consciousness

In essence, where the argument in this paper is going is that we must have paradigm shirt - a shift in the pattern of organisation of both large and small campaign groups. For want of a label the general term of '*free range activism*' has evolved. The idea that in future campaigning will be unrestricted, organic and locally controlled.

The overriding emphasis from government to local authorities, in relation to any major problem, is gradual change. Each action is carefully weighed as it is taken. This is obviously incompatible with the management of change in a manner to secure a more sustainable system of human existence within the timescales recent research suggests is required (twenty to thirty years). For policy makers to promote gradual change in the face of the problems that confront modern society is an abdication of responsibility - equivalent to Nero fiddling while Rome burned. The need for politicians to limit the pace of change, in the face of opposition from the global economic and industrial lobby groups, is a demonstration of the lack of power and sovereignty they claim to have.

The ability to assimilate, adapt, and where possible influence the process of change in society is what defines power. Action in itself does not necessarily do that. Historically community-based groups always had to aim for a large membership, with a centralised command structure, in order to have control over the process of change. Corporate lobby groups realise their power through better targeting of the process of change, using elements of the defined power structures - such as laws and institutions - to use their resources more efficiently. We can do the same thing - as Saul Alinsky put it, the art of political jujitsu. That requires that as individuals we spend more time working on our own skills, education and resources. We have to develop our own abilities to target those areas of the societal power structure that will influence the process

of change.

The change created by the new media is inevitable - it's here. This change also represents a response to the structural change caused by the transition of society from the *Industrial Age* into the *Information Age*. As part of this old notions are breaking down:

- mass movements are no longer valid in a society where more equal access to communication through the new media is becoming more prevalent;

- as the power of ordinary politicians in the face of the global economic system diminishes, and as regulators increasingly become challenged by the power of the industrial lobbies, ordinary lobbying processes are becoming ever more ineffective;

- as the power of corporations begins to dominate both national and global political processes, even large organisation representing a variety of public interest causes will be unable to compete in the media marketplace without giving up their independence to these corporations (i.e., strings attached sponsorship or communications);

- as tensions between competing socio-political philosophies increase, especially between the neo-liberal centre of politics and the right, the process of political change is losing focus on the small and everyday problems in favour of larger-scale and often ideologically-driven solutions;

- the deference and respect given to traditional institutions - in particular party politics, government and the scientific establishment - people have lost confidence in the programmes and policies of those we once considered our 'leaders'.

Under the old mass-politics system campaigning was just a matter of numbers, or getting to the right decision-makers. Today the globalised marketplace, global media and increasingly globalised government not only make affecting the decision-making process difficult, but it also means that even the largest campaign group is swamped by the 'noise' generated through the modern media. The way to avoid the media-babble is to cut it out; this means going direct to the community or area concerned and helping/assisting them to take action themselves. The large campaign groups cannot hope to do this because they have neither the resources nor the expertise. However, they do have a role in using their economic and organisational resources to help train and equip those who can undertake that work. Through the dissemination of skills and information, I believe the larger organisations can make and important contribution.

We have to change the paradigm of community action and campaigning to work within the confines this new world order places upon us, and to seek ways out

of the dead-end system we find ourselves within. This is not simple, and most importantly it requires that we change also. It is this resistance to personal change that is restricting the ability of larger campaign organisation to adapt to new challenges.

The important issue in relation to the change in consciousness is crossing of the barriers that are erected by conventional philosophies. These barriers are diverse, but fundamentally are restrictive on the individual, or force some sort of self-censorship onto the individual's actions. For example the fear of criticism, the fear of the state, the fear of the law or the fear of failure, are all impediments to change. They are all restrictions to the individual or the community moving from the consciousness of '*I can't*' to the consciousness of '*I can*'. Accepting the change in consciousness is the first step - for only by being able to accept the need for change within you own outlook to life will you be able to take responsibility for things around you. If you still have in the back of your mind the notion that in the end someone will give you the answer, and/or do the work for you, you will not be able to commit to the process of change. More importantly you will not be able to move beyond the self-depreciating, self-censoring concepts that are an essential part of traditional political philosophy. What we are seeking is to harness the same force that creates entrepreneurs, politicians or heroes. But we harness that force to solve problems in people's immediate lives.

It doesn't really matter how you personally make this transition, so long as it works for you. We have to move away from the idea of merely 'lobbying' towards taking an active and personal role in defining the need for change in relation to particular issues you have concern about. What's important is that by accepting the need to change the way of working, you accept the shift in consciousness that must go with that in order to make your work truly effective. Once you accept that you can do something yourself, even if you cannot do this action yourself but only by sharing with others, then you cease to place limits on the possibilities for action. When you cease to place limits, all options become conceivable, and you can become more flexible, and deploy more and varied form of action to apply to particular situations as needs dictate.

As society has become more complicated many people have withdrawn into the safe confines of their everyday lives. In the process they often become the victims of change rather than the participants or creators of it. Worse still, many people view the process of change, politics or development as something that they have no part in because they have no power - which in essence is a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you retreat from change, and presume that you have no part to play in influencing it, then you will remain a slave to your circumstances. Traditionally political philosophies have provided a way out of this by promising relief, freedom or release from this position on the condition that you commit to

that philosophy. Then, at a later date, people find that the change promised is not delivered because it's unachievable.

From the point for view of free range action, we have to turn this process on its head. The people develop their own models for managing change, and implement them within their own sphere of influence. The greater problem is therefore not a matter of dealing with large-scale centralised processes, but implementing change on the large scale by enabling diverse activity at the lowest level. This will of course mean that there will be no 'standards' or 'national agendas'. But, if people seek to change their surroundings with a common purpose in mind, the process of change will be diverse but the end-points should be broadly similar.

The plain fact is that participation requires - on both sides - not only the ability to listen, but the ability to transfer powers, decision-making responsibilities and trust to those you are inviting to participate in the process. Without this transference there can be no true consideration of the individual. Any process that requires the representation of many minority views will always be subservient to the dominant political ideology of the authority in charge. The need of government, corporations, schools and even the media to have overall control through a small group of 'representative' officials means that the process always falls short of the practical necessities for participation. The scope for implementing the sort of changes that actually benefit people is therefore limited.

In conclusion, we must, to use a rather odd term, evangelise the process of change. We must take the opportunities that the new media present and use them to feedback on the increasingly perverse and corrupt system of global governance and global corporations that has developed them. We have to take back what is our - our lives - and then use them for the benefit of everyone in our community by harnessing change. Ultimately were all heading towards sustainability, but there will be no single route. We have to recognise this diversity. In particular, we have to resolve the different aspirations of large and small campaign groups. But of the two, the larger campaign groups have the greatest change to make because they are under threat from the forces that are empowering smaller groups.

Further reading

Note, the important texts have their titles in **bold**.

- **Rules for Radicals - A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals**. Saul D. Alinsky (1971). Vintage. 1989. 0 679 72113 4 (this is only available if you order it from the USA!)

- *Green Backlash - Global Subversion of the Environment Movement.* Andrew Rowell. Routledge. 1996. 0 415 12828 5

- **Global Spin - The Corporate Assault on Environmentalism**. Sharon Beder. Green Books. 1997. 1 870098 67 6

- **Politics and the Environment - from Theory to Practice**. Connelly and Smith. Routledge. 1999. 0 415 15068 X

- **Profit Over People - neo-liberalism and the global order**. Noam Chomsky. Seven Stories Press. 1999. 1 888363 82 7

- *Big Brother - Britain's Web of Surveillance and the New Technological Order.* Simon Davies. Pan. 1996. 0 330 33556 1

- *The Reinvention of Politics - Rethinking Modernity in the Global Social Order.* Ulrich Beck. Polity Press. 1997. 0 7456 1758 1

- *This Land is Our Land.* Marion Shoard. Gaia Classics. 1997. 1 856 75064 7

- *The Protest Business - Mobilising Campaign Groups.* Jordan and Maloney. Manchester University Press. 1997. 0 7190 4371 9

- **The Third Way - The Renewal of Social Democracy**. Anthony Giddens. Polity Press. 1998. 0 7456 2267 4

- *Communitarianism - A New Agenda for Politics and Citizenship.* Henry Tam. MacMillan Press. 1998. 0 333 67483 9

- *The End of Science - Facing the Limits of Knowledge in the Twilight of the Scientific Age.* John Horgan. Abacus. 1998. 0 349 10926 5

- *Agenda 21, United Nations Conference on Environment and Development Final Document.* UNCED. Regency Press. 1992. 0 9520469 0 3

- *Modern Local Government In Touch with the People.* Cm4014. HMSO/TSO. 1998. 0 10 140142 6

- *A Better Quality of Life - a Sustainable Development Strategy for the UK.* Cm4345. HMSO/TSO. 1999. 0 10 143452 9