

The Dictator Watch

Guide to

Social and Environmental

ACTIVISM

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Social and Environmental Activism

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FORWARD

There is a famous quote by Margaret Mead, which has been a rallying cry for social and environmental activists for many years:

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

I disagree with this statement. While it has served as a motivator for many individual activists, to keep them going when times proved difficult - when no one would understand reason, or when they were the subjects of repression - it is based on a flawed understanding of change. The change that Ms. Mead describes is not real change, and the reason for this is that it can revert. Real, enduring change, the type of change for which activists should strive, is evolutionary change, meaning that there is no possibility, at all, that it can change back.

Even the greatest successes that activists have achieved, including that ethnic and racial minorities, and women, should not be subjected to discrimination, and that humanity must desist from destroying the planet’s natural ecology, are fragile (and incomplete!). Were groups who are opposed to these advances able to obtain power to such a degree (as they continually strive to do), that they could influence the attitudes of coming generations, such advances could be reversed. Indeed, given enough time, even a return to legalized slavery is not out of the question. (Legalized slavery, in a variety of forms, still persists in many societies around the world.)

Real change requires more than a few committed individuals; it requires a critical mass of the entire human population, so positive attitudes and values are passed from generation to generation with no possibility that they can ever be lost. Of course, this is not to say that such attitudes and values are not first developed and propagated by individuals or small groups. But what generally happens is that once the values become more widespread, and legitimized somewhat in the society’s legal structure, then the cause is dropped. It is believed that change has been successfully accomplished. However, this is not the case. A critical mass has not been achieved, and a significant opposition still resists the advance. In other words, the effort has been suspended before the battle has truly been won.

Humanity, right now, is at a turning point. As a species we are evolving rapidly, and this has been enabled by widespread literacy, which itself has enabled the extension of education, in all manner of subjects, to everyone. One consequence of this is that we want to be equal. Indeed, we now understand that we have the *right* to be equal. Since we are all able to learn, and since we are all essentially the same (we are humans), we have concluded that we should all have the same opportunities in life. Therefore, social structures that prevent this, which guarantee that

certain groups receive advantages, are viewed as historically obsolete. They must be eliminated. Differences in life condition, if they exist at all, should be tied to personal merit, not birth.

Another consequence is that we recognize that nature - all the species of the natural world - also have rights, and that we must work to ensure that they, such species and their rights, foremost among the latter the right to survive, are preserved. In other words, we, as the de-facto stewards of the planet, must design and implement an overall social structure that guarantees that we, and other species, enjoy conditions through which we both can continue to evolve.

Unfortunately, we are also following another, destructive route, which is threatening the entire planet's natural balance and which has also legitimized social dictatorship and inequality. Virtually all the social institutions that we have invented and that form our social structure, including spiritual, governmental, educational, economic, and communications institutions, directly or tacitly support this route.

This is the change that we must accomplish: a complete revision of our entire social structure, beginning with our underlying values and extending to our network of social institutions, including the relationships between such institutions and individuals. As should be obvious, we will not get there through the efforts of only a few individuals. We are all responsible for the course that we take; we all must choose.

Which way will we go: to the perpetuation of life and the evolution of new life, or to extinction and death?

You decide.

(Closing note: When individuals or small activist groups save lives, of humans or other species, they have of course accomplished real change. But in almost all cases the system that put these lives in jeopardy remains in place, and could easily be activated again. What we are seeking is real, *systemic* change. Also, individuals and small groups lead evolutionary processes, but evolution itself is not accomplished until their advances become the norm.)

1. INTRODUCTION

The problems that exist around the world are now so manifold that one hardly knows where to begin. (See Chapter 3 - for the sake of brevity I will desist from peppering the text with the hundreds of examples that could easily be inserted.) And all the while such established problems fester or are confronted with only half-hearted resolve and little, if any, success, new difficulties continue to arise. Viewed this way we have reached a situation that is out of control. Indeed, one could ask the question: why do anything? Our situation is hopeless. We might as well give up.

One can regain a belief in the possibility of success, that we can be the masters of our destiny, by recognizing that all the problems that exist, all the problems that we create, are tied to a specific set of underlying causes. Indeed, these causes are actually the root problems. Everything we experience and fight against, all the different manifestations of discrimination, conflict and destruction, are merely symptoms of these underlying problems, and for such symptoms to disappear the problems themselves must be solved.

It is not the purpose of this book to conduct a full examination of our underlying problems. (Such an analysis is given in the work, [*Freedom From Form.*](#)) But one unifying issue can be addressed here. All the surface problems that we create reflect a single commonality: power that is abused. We are trapped in a situation that has been described as Natural Law, or “Might is Right.” Under this system the mighty believe that, given their strength, they have the right to behave in any way that they choose. They have yet to learn that power does not imply or infer right.

Of course, it is not as if this, the risk of abuse of power, has not been recognized by societies throughout through the ages. In response we have developed systems of checks and balances, systems that are used to limit the accumulation, and abuse, of great power.

In the modern context the starting point of such a system is to create a strong government, a democratic government, which then protects us from abuse from other social institutions, such as religions and corporations (and also conquest from other nations). The separation of church and state is a basic social check and balance. (This is because if the two were to collude, their power would be absolute.) As to corporations, the government, supposedly, protects us from their abuses, through regulation and the enforcement thereof.

We then have checks and balances within the government itself, to protect us from it. For instance, most democracies divide their governments into three parts: executive, legislative and judicial. They *separate* government power, to limit the power of any one part and,

counter-intuitively, to provide each part with sufficient power to offset the other two should they attempt to collude. (It is a very fine balance.)

In the United States, there is a further check and balance built into the structure of having both federal and state governments. Neither has all the power and they tend to offset each other.

Lastly, there is the check from the people themselves, through the power of the vote and, if all else fails, through the power of rebellion.

Unfortunately, in the present day, and this imposing edifice notwithstanding, one of our underlying problems is that the system of checks and balances has in many important ways failed. Corporations collude with governments, so in many cases we are not protected from them. And the media, which functions as an independent check on the government, and also to an extent on corporations, turns out to have no effective check on itself. Its security shield of “freedom of the press,” which does have tremendous value, since it guarantees the survival of its ability to criticize other institutions, also serves to protect it from all criticism of itself.

In addition, in many societies (in particular non-democratic societies) such checks and balances do not exist at all; or through corruption, or poor design, they are inoperative.

What is one to do when the system - of checks and balances - that protects us from the overall social system, fails? The answer is that the solution lies with you. We are now at the final level, the check that is provided by the individual. It is the only one left. You must exercise your innate power to transform the system. You must act - we can introduce the concept of “activism” here - to bring about positive social change.

You should not be intimidated by the word “activism,” though. Activism is as simple as casting a vote, such as against a politician who uses negative campaign advertising. Another example of activism is choosing not to buy a product that is advertised using fear, guilt, sex, or the idea that if you buy it you will be cool. The next level of activism is simply to follow up these “acts” with letters, to the politician and the company, explaining your decision: that it is an insult to you for them even to think that you can be influenced in these ways.

Of course, activism continues from here. It gets more and more active, as the balance of this book will describe.

To close the introduction, I'll make two simple points:

1. You have probably heard of the saying: “*if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem.*” In today's world, where there are so many problems, including problems to

which you, personally, contribute, this really is true. If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem.

2. This is your world, and this is your life. The world needs your help. It needs to be changed for the better. And you are the only one who can do it. But this is not a negative responsibility, something that is unpleasant and which you might want to avoid. It should be fun. This is your life, and you want your life to be fun. You want to be happy. So have fun, change the world for the better, and be happy, really happy, at your tremendous accomplishment, as a result.

2. OPPOSITION 101

Knowledge is power.

Information is knowledge.

Read, learn, act.

If not you, who?

If not now, when?

The power of our institutions is now too great, and this is cause for the utmost concern. For example, all governments are imperfect, and abuse their power, and hence their policies, practices and laws are imperfect as well. And in modern society, with their greatly increased power - you need only think of modern weaponry, and techniques of information control and surveillance - these imperfections have been magnified.

This is the justification for many activist responses. Someone has to fight these imperfections. We have to fight to protect our personal freedom, and we can never forget that this is more important than protecting the power of the state (and the other institutions).

Consider the response of civil disobedience. This occurs when activists take a stand against an unjust law, or the unjust application of a law. In such cases activists feel compelled to challenge the law, and many people often get arrested as a result. Indeed, to accomplish change people have to get arrested; the law is too rigid to allow it otherwise. One of the best examples of this is the civil rights movement, which clearly demonstrated that in an inflexible and intolerant society, nothing will change if change is not demanded, with this sacrifice.

What we now accept as so obviously right as to be self-evident, such as African Americans being allowed to ride public buses or to eat in any restaurant, only a few years ago was not. And we would never have gotten to this point if some people, particularly the very first, including Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King, had not had the courage to get arrested (and worse) for their beliefs.

The prerequisite of activism is that you must know your cause; specifically, what problem is your concern, why it is your concern, and how it needs to be addressed. You must understand why you are being an activist! This is the only way to ensure that your efforts support a worthwhile cause, that you have not been misled to join some trendy mob, and that your work is not going to waste or causing unintended consequences. Few cases are clear-cut, and the future is very difficult to predict. You do not want to align yourself with a group against one tyranny, only to see the successors turn into tyrants as well. It is essential that your activism be based on understanding, not ignorance. Activism is a type of rebellion, and it is subject to the pitfalls of being false or misdirected.

False rebellion is rebellion meant only to achieve power, but which is presented as a fight for social justice. With victory, the rebels renounce their stated aims and instead become the next group of dictators. For instance, many of the individuals who fought colonial powers around the world, particularly in the decades following World War II, were false rebels. When their nations achieved independence they consolidated their power, often by using force against their former allies, and then established autocracies.

Misdirected rebellion, on the other hand, occurs when rebels undermine their ethical foundation by engaging in terrorism or by colluding with criminals. Examples of this include the rebel groups in Columbia that attack civilians and that are involved in the narcotics trade.

In addition, activism means being active! It means doing things, not being a spectator to the actions of others. Supporting a cause, even with financial contributions, is good, but it is not enough. You must become involved; you must do things yourself.

The main focus of activism should be on costs, on who incurs, and who pays, social and environmental costs. The basic rule of life is that actions have consequences. This can be restated as actions incur costs (and benefits). In a just social system, the people or institutions that incur costs should pay them (or not incur them!), but under our current system this is regularly not the case.

Suppose a corporation destroys a natural habitat, and then declares bankruptcy when faced with litigation over this action. The corporation then fires its rank and file employees, with no or limited compensation, but gives its executives generous severance payments. The firings in turn have destructive effects on the welfare, both physical and psychological, of the families of the employees, and on all the members, and small businesses, of the local community.

As this demonstrates, the costs extend far beyond the initial effect of environmental damage, they are in fact multiplied many times over, but the corporation is able to escape from its responsibility completely. Indeed, the departing executives may well profit handsomely.

So, who pays these costs? They were incurred, so someone has to pay them. The answer is: we all do, through having a degraded society and environment, and through the taxation requirements of government bailouts.

For modern activism to be effective, it must fight more than the recognizable, or surface, problem, in this case the environmental harm. It must fight, and change, the system that enables the burden of this destruction to be avoided by those who create it, through a process that often leads to additional, collateral damage.

Institutions regularly engage in actions that generate enormous costs, and they do this with impunity, knowing that they will not be held to account. The following are a few examples. I leave it to you to consider fully their consequences: the costs that result.

1. Corporations exist solely to earn profits. Hence:

- Corporation A, let's call it Nike, relocates a plant to a developing country to lower its labor costs, and to avoid having to satisfy modern job standards. In the process, it fires all of its local employees.
- Corporation B, let's call it Wal-Mart, recognizing that with proper conditioning consumers will concentrate on price to the exclusion of any other product characteristic, supports the conditioning through advertising and then constructs major outlets in any communities where local officials can be persuaded to change zoning laws and give them access to land. All smaller, traditional stores become price non-competitive. Community sprawl, with greatly increased road traffic, and the destruction of local natural habitat from derivative developments, erupts around the outlets.
- Corporation C, let's call it Unocal, unwilling to accept the evolved competitiveness of the oil and gas industry, looks for niche opportunities in countries ruled by dictatorial regimes, that other companies have shunned, and where no costs have to be born; where the regime, let's call it the military dictatorship in Burma, will plunder the environment, including clear-cutting pristine rain forests; will engage in ethnic cleansing - call it what it is, mass murder - along a pipeline route; and will provide slave labor, such as for access roads for the pipeline, as required.

2. Governments that threaten or engage in military conquest: to suppress democratic desires (China's threatened invasion of Taiwan); to deny the human rights of a religious or ethnic group (Israel's apartheid treatment of the Palestinians); or to ensure that the dominant political party retains power, and also to divert attention from their failings (the Bush Administration's invasion of Iraq).

3. The extremist splinters of Islam, including those resident in Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Pakistan, Palestine, the Philippines, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, which, ignoring that Islam is a tolerant religion, actually go so far as to subvert their faith, to bring dishonor upon it (and their nations), by using it to justify terrorist acts.

4. Various and manifold media, which with a bias or outright lies report on social disputes so as to create additional controversy, to increase their sales and also the possibility that new, *newsworthy* events, involving the deaths of many, many people, will occur.

As these examples show, there is no credible restraint against modern social institutions. They blindly pursue their needs, without regard to the consequences. (In their view, the end justifies the means.) Only activism, the voluntary rejection of and opposition to such institutional behavior, by large numbers of individuals, offers any hope at all.

Also, the above examples demonstrate one cold, hard fact about the modern social system: we can no longer believe anything that any institution says (or any photo or video clip), without at least one independent confirmation. They believe it is their right to lie to us, and they base this right solely on the justification that to do so is in their best interests. There is no consideration of the means. It is only the end - their end - that counts. In this case, both the means and the end are unethical. (This is also an example of “doublethink.” Institutions believe they are obliged to lie to us; but, conversely, we must always be truthful with them.)

In addition to the hurdle of marshaling activism, of instigating real opposition, there is the practical issue of measuring these costs. How do you measure the costs of habitat destruction, or media hate mongering? This is the loophole that the institutions have used to escape responsibility. And, it is particularly problematic with regard to the real but intangible costs that they regularly incur, such as their negative effects on personal psychology and the derivative consequences of this on community welfare and harmony.

However, the problem of creating methods and standards of social accounting is beginning to be addressed. Measurement systems for such costs are being researched and developed. Indeed, with activist pressure they could even be made the subject of research by the corporate world, which already has experience with accounting for intangibles, through the valuation techniques that have been developed for such things as brands and trademarks. Social costs could be researched through the IASB, or International Accounting Standards Board, then incorporated into GAAP, or generally accepted accounting principles, and then propagated around the world through such institutions as the WTO, or World Trade Organization.

It is not going to be easy, though. For example, consider the just mentioned psychological costs. One way to estimate them would be to calculate the total amount spent on psychologists and psychiatrists, on the entire mental health care industry, including all its drugs. This is a sum that can be approximated. Of course, such a figure would still be too low: much mental illness goes untreated. (On the other hand, some psychological costs result from individual behavior, not institutional.) Then there is the question of how to allocate it among the various social

institutions, and how to get them to pay. It is rather farfetched as well to imagine, at least at the present time, that the WTO would assist in such a process.

As another example, of research that has already been done, it has been estimated that the vast forest fires in Indonesia in 1997, and the haze that these fires produced, had an economic cost of \$4.4 billion. (Source: United Nations Economy and Environment Programme for Southeast Asia) The fires were predominantly caused by illegal forest clear-cutting by rubber and other plantations, and this clear-cutting was tacitly approved by the then Indonesian dictatorship. (Suharto was the dictator at the time, and although the nation has now made its first steps toward becoming a democracy, such burning continues on an annual basis.) The estimate includes timber destruction, lost agricultural production, the loss of forest benefits for traditional local communities, including food, water and medicinal plants, and an estimated contribution to global warming. It does not include the lives of some three hundred people who died in a plane crash in Sumatra and other haze-related accidents. And, after all, how does one value a human life, or the lives of all the animals killed in the fires? Nor does it include the decline in the quality of life, for all the people and species that had to live in the haze-ridden region.

Because of these problems, with checks and balances, and cost measurement and collection, institutions and their executives have been able to escape accountability and blame. You could say that the consequence for them is that they have *limited liability*. The ultimate goal of activism, then, is to get institutions and their executives to behave ethically. They must be made to accept blame and responsibility for their misdeeds. They should be encouraged not to incur these costs, but if they do, they must be forced to pay them.

3. ACTIVIST CAUSES

The issue then becomes, what activism should you undertake? Which causes should you support? And this, for once, is an easy question. You should support, and work for, any cause in which you believe: for anything that you think is wrong and needs to be fixed.

However, you can also think of this systematically, i.e., you can prioritize your activism, such as by first attempting to reverse the misdeeds that have the greatest costs. You can also specialize by institution, focusing on the misdeeds of governments, or corporations, or the media, etc. (all the while remembering that many misdeeds have multiple institutional sources).

The most important activist causes, or groups of causes, are as follows:

Environmental activism

- Corporate responsibility
- Population activism: Equality of the sexes, starting with the right of young girls to get an education; family planning education and the availability of birth control; etc.
- Habitat protection: Wilderness areas – no resource extraction and no new roads, pipelines, electrical towers or dams; specific habitats – bioregions, forests, wetlands, reefs, oceans; toxic and hazardous wastes, and waste disposal in general including pollution prevention and cleanup; non-sustainable resource exploitation; anti-nuclear – both energy and weapons; global warming and ozone depletion; expanding the use of solar and other low impact sources of energy; etc.
- Species protection: Threatened and endangered species, including primates, tigers, elephants, rhinos, cranes, owls, snakes, amphibians, whales, sharks, sea turtles, etc.; species rehabilitation centers, such as for orangutans, chimpanzees and gibbons which formerly were kept as pets; animal rights and liberation – against vivisection and the wearing of fur, pro-veganism; etc.

Political activism

- Corporate responsibility
- Democracy activism: (Note: this list is not complete.)
 - South and East Asia: Burma, Cambodia, China (including Hong Kong, Taiwan and Tibet), Indonesia (including Aceh and West Papua), Laos, Malaysia, North Korea, Pakistan, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam;

- Africa: Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Congo (Kinshasa), Code d'Ivoire, Egypt, Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, Liberia, Libya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Western Sahara, Zimbabwe;
 - Middle East and Central Asia: Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Yemen;
 - Europe: Belarus, Russia (including Chechnya), Serbia, Turkey;
 - Americas: Columbia, Cuba, Haiti, United States, Venezuela.
- Human and civil rights activism, including opposition to all forms of discrimination
 - Protection of indigenous cultures
 - Environmental justice: Opposition to the perpetration of environmental crimes against poor and disadvantaged groups, including locating dumps in ghettos and on indigenous people's lands; the destruction of such lands, and villages, for dams and pipelines; the theft of genetic material ("biopiracy"), etc. The existence of environmental justice movements reflects the fact that "*the costs and payoffs of environmental disaster are seldom, if ever, distributed in an equitable manner.*" (Letter to the editor, Ronnie Cabral, *Earth First! Journal*, November-December 1999, page 28)
 - Anti-war
 - Against arms proliferation; for increased gun control
 - Relief for political prisoners
 - Refugee assistance
 - Poverty reduction
 - Personal privacy and related issues, including institutional surveillance of the public
 - Opposition to the abuses of the police
 - Campaign funding reform

Corporate activism

- Corporate responsibility
- Corporate structure and legal framework issues

- Supranational activism (“globalization” activism): Elimination of corporate control of, and the furtherance of corporate agendas by, the WTO, IMF, World Bank, and other organizations devoted to “free trade” and economic development
- Board of Directors responsibility
- Investor responsibility and ethical investment
- Consumer protection
- Biotech and genetic engineering activism: Identification, labeling, safety testing, government regulation, and liability issues; no patenting of life; opposition to biotech drugs, health products, growth hormones, pesticides and herbicides, seeds and food products, trees and other plants, and fish and other animals; DNA privacy issues and opposition to DNA insurance, employment and pregnancy screening; and the halt of transgenic organ transplants (“xenotransplantation”), gene therapy, cloning and eugenics.

Media activism

- Corporate responsibility
- Impartial media access; no media blackouts or “greenwash”
- Objective reporting
- Opposition to violence in films and on television
- Advertising activism, including the elimination of corporate advertising in schools
- Consumer protection

In summary, this is quite a smorgasbord of causes, and they can all be divided, many times over, into more clearly defined activist targets, such as the protection of a specific habitat. For instance, Maxxam Corp., and its subsidiary, Pacific Lumber, in its quest to pay off leveraged buyout debt, has been trying for years to cut down the Headwaters Forest in Northern California. The Headwaters Forest is one of the last remnants of the Northwest old-growth forest, and some of its trees are up to two thousand years old (and still growing!). They are among the oldest and largest life forms on earth, but Maxxam and Pacific Lumber want to cut them down, to pay off debt incurred to make their executives rich. Thanks to the efforts of activists, specifically, of a group called Earth First!, as in, *we have to think of the earth first!*, they have been prevented from doing this, and a large part of the forest – but not all of it – has now been protected. (This was only accomplished through the payment of *greenmail*, though. Maxxam was able to extort from the citizens of California a sum of four hundred and eighty million dollars in exchange for the forest. In addition, during the activist campaign, one

member of Earth First!, David “Gypsy” Chain, was crushed to death by a felled tree – the logger who cut it went unpunished; and another member lived in a tree, in its uppermost branches, for two years.)

Also, you should not limit yourself to being active for only one cause, even if it is – by default – your cause; e.g., you are from Burma. By spreading your effort around and working in a number of areas you can: help on many different fronts; get a better view of the deeper linkages and problems which underlie almost all activist concerns; and, you will guard against the emotional effects of the unrequited effort for those causes whose resolution takes years to accomplish. You will guard against becoming pessimistic, cynical, and burned out.

4. INSTITUTIONAL TACTICS AGAINST ACTIVISTS

Social institutions use a variety of tactics to shape and dominate the general public. They also have a number of specialized tactics that they use against anyone who resists.

Institutions, particularly governments and corporations, but with the clear allegiance and connivance of the media, the mass or corporate media, do their best to ridicule and demonize activists. For the first, activists are portrayed as the lunatic fringe, as radicals. But in response to this, we should consider how the definition of “radical” has changed. Thirty years ago supporting the earth - defending the environment - was considered radical: now it is accepted not only as normal, but necessary. The radicals of thirty years ago were actually visionaries. Further, activists are ignored; censored out of the public consciousness. For example, there is a media blackout in the United States on the extent to which genetic engineering is being used, particularly in food products; the possible health consequences of this; and activist attempts to get such concerns addressed. Finally, if activists succeed in getting their voices heard, against all institutional attempts to smother them, they are demonized. The public is told that activists are terrorists, and this is a use of volatility, of branding someone an enemy. But activists are not terrorists! Being terrorized means living in fear. Who, precisely, are the activists causing to live in a state of fear, such as when they protest the logging of old growth forests? Is it the timber company executives? Such executives may have a fear, that their bank accounts will not swell to match their greed, but this is not the fear of terror, which is the fear for one’s life.

“Activists are treated unfairly by the press more often than any other group of people, except people of color, the poor and asylum seekers. The reasons are not hard to divine: we challenge powerful, vested interests, we are prepared to break the law and, above all, we can be discussed collectively without any fear of libel, as we do not belong to incorporated organisations. So, for example, the ‘New York Times’ could claim that ‘eco-terrorist’ tree-sitters booby-trapped buildings, attacked guards with catapults and crossbows and dug pitfall traps full of metal stakes, safe in the knowledge that, as long as no one was named, no one could sue, even though the whole story is bullshit. But, if it makes the same allegations about security guards [who attack activists], it would get its pants sued off by the company.”

- *How To Spin The Media, Before It Spins You, Part II*, George Monbiot, *Earth First! Journal*, December - January 1999, page 11

(This also shows why there are so many environmental justice crimes.)

Activists are also regularly accused of hypocrisy, and in doing so the media make use of an ingenious argument. They call us hypocrites, for such things as taking public transport to actions, or for using the Internet. The underlying idea is that you can’t criticize the system if

you are part of it or if you use it some way. But, other than through being a hermit, it is impossible not to be part of the system or to use some aspects of it, at least in a small way.

This is a very clever trap:

- You cannot criticize something if you are part of it, since
- By being part of it you must effectively endorse it, so
- How can you endorse something and criticize it at the same time? That's hypocritical!

This is spurious. Hypocrisy is saying one thing, but doing another. As activists, we stand up for our beliefs. But the media profess to search for the truth. By using such fallacious logic, they demonstrate their real character. (They are the ones who are the hypocrites.)

Also, we are forced to join the system. We have been entrapped. Our participation is not voluntary. Hence, we damn well can criticize it, and also seek to escape from it, change it, or shut it down!

Ridiculing and demonizing activists is a social defense tactic, akin to the spreading of the suspicion that we are meant to feel about solitary individuals, those people who are not part of "our group." Unfortunately, it is also very effective. Activists have been stereotyped, and through this, marginalized. What the world needs, more than anything, is more activists. Our activism can only succeed to the extent that our numbers increase, which means we must confront this tactic. This book, for instance, is one such attempt, to educate people that activism is the logical response to modern social conditions and the need to be ethical and to have a fulfilling purpose in life. I want to encourage many more people to get involved: to read, to learn, and to act.

Institutions use a variety of other tactics against activists, and the public in general, in their efforts to quell dissent. The first of these is that they prize conformity. There is little tolerance inside any institution for internal dissent, for people who seek to shape the organization to be more in line with its stated role as a service provider. This is especially the case with *whistleblowers*, with people who go public with clear, even criminal, examples of institutional wrongdoing. For example, in police forces everywhere there is an unspoken code that you do not inform on bad cops, on police who are themselves criminals. Many police become aware of such individuals, but they do not bring them to justice. The code of silence is stronger than their oath to uphold the law.

The same patterns exist inside corporations. A general motivation in business is to achieve market control, and one consequence of this is that companies invariably become inflexible and rigid. They are opposed to change (to losing their control), and this regularly leads to an

internal culture of intolerance and negativity. Corporations are intolerant of employees who express dissent, ranging from simply pushing for new job opportunities all the way through to being a whistleblower that publicizes company misdeeds. For the former, the corporate system is so inflexible that if you push against it in any way you will be in trouble. Employees are carefully channeled. (This is - or was - known as *manpower planning*.) Ambition is allowed, even encouraged, but only within the boundaries that are set for you.

But this applies to more than just trying to transcend your place; it also has significant ethical implications. If you are asked to do something unethical, e.g., to discharge pollution from a company factory, you have to do it. You have no effective recourse or appeal. (The ethical system inside a company is a variation of natural law.) If you go over your boss to object, you will likely doom your career prospects with the company, and you could easily be fired as a troublemaker.

Regarding whistleblowers, who are real troublemakers (at least to the companies), they are punished immediately, and this helps instill a climate of fear to suppress any further rebellion. Also, not only are the dissenters expelled, they are denied any form of recommendation, which they will need to secure new employment. In this way the corporate system truly is “a system.” Though competitors, different companies work together to dispel from their system any individuals who rebel against it. Together, they purify their staffs as an additional means to enforce submission.

Furthermore, all of this is being implemented through advanced techniques of surveillance. The employees of many companies must now wear special ID tags, which track their location at all times. And, every word that you speak on the phone at work, and every key that you strike on your computer, is subject to recording and review. Modern corporations, like all authoritarian organizations, are developing their own secret police, really, “thought police,” since through such surveillance they are able to track, minute-by-minute, what you think and do.

Corporations actually seek to quell all dissent, including external, and in this regard they are very successful. Corporations appropriate, they co-opt, all potential and actual sources of rebellion. In general terms, each new generation is conditioned more intensively than the last. In addition, the few real rebels, such as our modern poets, the rock and rollers, and rappers, are turned into corporate spokespeople. It seems that no one (or very few) can refuse the paycheck and stay true to their principles. They say: “*Gee. For that much money I can do what I want, and buy what I want, for the rest of my life. And it’s so nice to be popular! Where do I sign?*” Those people who could make a difference, don’t. They are bought out: it is high-stakes prostitution, pure and simple.

As this suggests, institutions engage in many forms of propaganda. They use public relations and institutional advertising to present a positive image of themselves to the world, even though this may be misleading or even completely false. For instance, the worst dictatorships, as well as the corporations that commit the most heinous environmental crimes, hire public relations firms and advertising agencies, and spend huge sums, to try to persuade us that they are actually responsible social citizens. (The latter is called *media greenwash*.) But talk, even expensive talk, is cheap, and in such cases very often lies.

Another aspect of their propaganda is that they gloss over problems, the specific ones which they create, and the more general problems of the world to which they make important but indirect contributions. They seek to divert us from discussing these problems, including their role in them, and the existence of solutions to them. They seek to divert us from any course of action that would require them to change.

In this context, they attempt to control, manipulate and if possible keep secret information about themselves. For example, if you want information about the U.S. government, you must file a request under the Freedom of Information Act, which is not an easy task, and which in any case does not ensure compliance: that you will get the information you seek.

Finally, if all else fails, institutions use the tactic of repression. Regarding political dissent, opponents are charged with dubious crimes, or imprisoned solely on the basis of “suspicion,” and then tortured to confess and to implicate others. Also, people not in custody are harassed, and attacked, and if need be, killed.

In addition, although the description of this last tactic used as an example government repression, it is by no means limited to politics. Physical force is used by other institutions as well, including corporations and schools, such as when they call in the police to deal with rebellious employees and students. And, of course, religions throughout the ages (and in the present day) have not been above advocating and imposing a little force to get their way.

(Institutional repression of activists is covered more extensively in the Activism and the Law chapter.)

5. ACTIVIST TACTICS □ GENERAL ISSUES

As for activist tactics, for *our* tactics, they all have a common, and simple, starting point, which is ethics. Activism is no good if it does not rise above the ethics of those it seeks to change, if its means are not as ethically supportable as its ends. In the course of your activism, for whatever cause, you must never forget this. When considering any new tactic, or application of a tactic, you must first evaluate if it is ethical.

Also, it is important to recognize that this issue will be presented to you in many different ways. For example, the choice of what you should do may be phrased as what is right versus what is effective, with some extremists in your group arguing that you *have* to be effective. You must resist this, and such individuals. Being right is necessary; it cannot be sacrificed, even if it *appears* to limit your effectiveness in a particular situation. (For further guidance, see the Activist Ethics chapter.)

Some activism is individual, such as the aforementioned casting of a vote, or refusal to buy a product that is advertised using negative influences. However, much of it is organized. A critical decision you are faced with when you decide to get active is whether to do it on your own or with some group or groups. On your own, you are free to do what you want. On the other hand, groups, with their strength in numbers, are often much more effective. And, you want to be effective; your goal is to effect change. The problem is, as a member of a group you will rarely have control, or perhaps even a say, over its actions. You could easily be at the mercy of the group leaders' agendas, and whatever actions the group takes, you will be identified with them.

Because of this, you should be very careful about the people with whom you associate. And, if in the course of your activism you find yourself in serious disagreement with a group, or its leaders, then by all means leave the group. Go it alone until you find other like-minded individuals, and then form your own group! (These are called *affinity groups*.) Similarly, in claiming responsibility for an action, if you plan to identify your group you must first consider the consequences of this on its other members.

This actually raises a major issue regarding the effectiveness of activism, which is that groups regularly splinter and multiply. As a result, they encounter difficulty in organizing and cooperating together, and achieving unity in their struggle. In addition, the targets of such activist causes, which rarely exhibit internal discord themselves (at least publicly), as a defensive response also attempt to bring about such disunity. They are very adept at turning activists against each other, using variations of the tactic of divide and conquer.

Indeed, the most effective activist groups are rarely so institutional; they recognize the pitfalls of social pyramids. Earth First!, for instance, can more properly be called an affiliation (or movement). There is a central body - the *Earth First! Journal* - but it is not domineering or dictatorial. Anyone can contribute (or volunteer). The occurrence of internal disputes is accepted as normal, and thought best resolved through consensus and compromise.

As for specific tactics, activists act, therefore, they all involve action. As with financial contributions, group membership alone is insufficient. In addition, the keys to success in any activist venture are to *be creative*, particularly when seeking to overcome institutional defenses, and to *have fun*. Activism is fun. Marching in a demonstration is a blast. The people are great, and you are doing something important, really doing something of consequence with your life.

Also, we can recall that the predicate of activism is that you have to know what to be active about: whom you should target. This is actually one of the main areas in which modern activists are poorly coordinated. For instance, there is no database, on the Internet or elsewhere, of companies and their misdeeds, sorted by the type of misdeed and the location of the company, including its address and phone number and the names of its executives.

We are surely lacking in the information that we require to be effective. What has happened is that such a directory exists, but it is piecemeal. People involved in a particular cause put their own list together, but it is not distributed widely. (Although it may be available on the Internet, the general public does not know about it.) As an example of this, a group called the IRRC, the Investor Responsibility Research Center, in Washington, D.C., publishes a list of companies that are active in Burma. This list is sold, by subscription, to investment funds that want to be principled, but some copies do make their way to Burma activists.

The problem with this approach is that while activists committed to a particular cause do learn who the culprits are, this information is not distributed widely, not even within the general activist community. But we do not only want to target specific causes, we want to energize everyone, the entire population, to become significantly more active, first by increasing their awareness and then by gaining their involvement. For example, this is the only way to spark a truly widespread consumer boycott.

Another general issue, then, is that the current activist community needs to collect and disseminate this information, on unethical companies and their practices. It has to be made easily accessible, and then widely publicized.

Lastly, you must recognize that before you can legitimately ask others to change, you must first examine your own behavior, and then modify it where appropriate. Otherwise, you are a hypocrite. This in turn raises a second issue, or perspective, on whom - or what - we need to be

active about. Regarding our consumption, there are many ethical challenges implicit in the choices that we now have to make. For instance, the choice of synthetic over leather, as for clothing, shoes and accessories, can be restated as technology versus dead animals. In other words, both have costs. You will have to decide for yourself what choices to make, but is there any basis that you can use to minimize your negative effects?

Should you consume fish, given that the oceans of the world have been greatly over-fished? Or should you eat shrimp, even though in the tropics, their main source, the construction of shrimp farms has caused massive destruction of mangroves? Or should you eat beef, knowing that in many countries increasing the size of cattle ranches, to satisfy increasing demand for meat, has led to great deforestation? Indeed, should you consume any sensate organisms at all? Doesn't their right to survive also imply a derivative right not to be killed by humans?

Then there is the question of "natural resources" in general, the exploitation of the environment for the production of virtually everything that we use. Were the resources extracted sustainably, as in ensuring the perpetuation of biodiversity, and was any habitat reclamation that was required actually accomplished?

There are many other questions as well. How do you avoid eating pesticides and other carcinogens, and also genetically modified food? For the latter, more and more foods are being altered using "transgenics." Genes are inserted, actually substituted - some original genes are lost in the process - to enhance some aspect of the food, such as its resistance to insects or its shelf life. But the consequences of transgenics are largely unknown. Monsanto, which is one of the largest suppliers of seeds for genetically modified crops, says that the risks are small, but should we believe them? Research has shown that many risks do in fact exist, such as of us absorbing some of these *alien* genes, but in most cases we are uncertain of their magnitude. Monsanto, in effect, is telling us to take a bet, for a short-term gain, and their profit, and to ignore any long-term consequences. But we have heard this (and are still suffering from it) many times before.

(Monsanto is also ignoring what is called the Precautionary Principle. This is otherwise known as common sense, that you should consider your consequences, *all* of your consequences, before you act: that you should look before you leap.)

As we can see, there is a lot more to ethical consumption than simply buying recycled goods. The biggest problem, of course, is that we do not have access to the information that we need to make these choices. Few products are labeled as to their contents, or production inputs, including where they came from and what environmental and social costs were incurred in the process. For example, for vegetables such as corn and soybeans, none of the products that use genetically modified versions are so labeled (e.g., Kellogg's Corn Flakes), and Monsanto and

other suppliers are fighting the imposition of such a requirement with all of their resources. (This is a variation of the institutional tactic of secrecy.) Monsanto is even giving away the patents to its genetically modified rice, to speed its usage, and it has greatly increased its budget for “consumer education” (i.e., the brainwashing that genetic engineering is safe). And then, you have to consider a complex product such as a car: how can we ever identify its inputs and calculate their impact?

To understand and control our consumption there are two basic activist approaches that we can use. The first is to confront the suppliers, the companies involved; and the second is to confront the consumers, in other words, us.

For the companies, such production input determination and labeling issues are actually an extension of the earlier described problem of calculating social costs. They are in fact the specific issues that must be considered to accomplish such a calculation. Companies must be encouraged, and if they will not do so willingly, forced, to track all of their inputs, including not only their financial costs (which are already measured), but their social and environmental costs as well.

And, the latter must be identified on the products themselves, to give us the basis that we need to make our choices. In other words, we need to develop a system of social accounting which measures the real costs of production inputs, and which also collects other relevant information, including:

- Were they sustainably extracted?
- Was there any environmental damage that accompanied the extraction?
- Are they recyclable, or “one use only”?
- If they are recyclable, did this actually occur? Were the inputs used to make the product recycled from a prior use?
- To what extent are global stores of the production inputs being depleted?
- And, what were the working conditions of the employees involved in all of the stages of the production process? Did such conditions meet a civilized standard?

Most companies, of course, will be loathed to collect and provide this information, so the burden again shifts to us. And here, we must force the companies to meet their responsibilities by patronizing only those that do, such as “green” merchants. Through doing this, we should be able to drive the others to accommodate us as well. (The label “organic” applies to foods that have not been sourced from factory farms - “animal concentration camps,” and that have

been produced without the use of genetic engineering in any form, and also pesticides, herbicides, chemical and sewage sludge fertilizers, growth hormones, antibiotics, animal by-products which are used as animal feed - this was the cause of mad-cow disease, irradiation, artificial colors and flavors, and preservatives.)

For your own consumption, to the extent that you can you should simplify your life. Consume as little technology as possible; work towards achieving self-sufficiency; and buy only green and organic. Also, to the extent that you are willing, become a vegan or a vegetarian.

Actually, you should assume the responsibility for your consumption to a far greater extent than this, and the way to do it is to prepare a *Consumption Analysis and Budget*. For the analysis, you want to identify everything that you buy, use and consume, and their underlying components and ingredients, including the materials, production facilities, energy and labor that were required. One approach to this is to cross-reference two sets of categories: how much you consume of different classes of goods and services; and in the different major areas of your life. The latter includes

- (1) consumption for your basic existence (at home), including by other people, such as family members, who are dependent on you or with whom you are closely associated;
- (2) for your employment (at work); and
- (3) for any other activities that you pursue: what you do for enjoyment and additional education (at play).

The different classes of goods and services include:

- Premises: list all the structures and facilities that you use, including your house or apartment, at work, for travel, and for other activities including dining, shopping, entertainment and education. What types of materials were used in their construction, and what were the sources of these materials?
- Water: how much water do you use, and from what sources?
- Transport: how many miles do you travel, on foot, by bicycle, and in different types of motorized vehicles, both public and private?
- Energy: how much energy do you consume, directly and indirectly, for such premises, transport and activities? What are the sources of this energy: petroleum and natural gas, including jet fuel; coal; nuclear; hydro; alternative sources such as solar energy and wind power; and the burning of wood?

- Food: What is your overall caloric consumption? How much of what you eat do you grow versus buy; is consumed at home versus in a restaurant; is organic and fresh versus factory produced and frozen or processed; and is a meat or some other animal product?
- Other products: what is your general level of consumption and materialism? How much clothing do you have, and “gear”?
- Waste management: how much waste and garbage do you produce; how much is recycled; and how do you dispose of the rest?

Regarding the budget, you want to make a plan to reduce your consumption, particularly of non-sustainable resources. Your overall goal is to have the least possible impact. Also, you want to eliminate from your consumption all unethical items, including such things as nuclear power; genetically-engineered products; products made using other undesirable technologies; goods the research or production of which involved animal exploitation, or any endangered species; animal products in general; and goods which were produced with child or other exploited labor.

One other way to consider this is that your consumption reflects your degree of social conformity. You can use your budget to calculate your *Conformity Index*, what percentage of your spending is consistent with modern, consumerist/materialist, social norms. In other words, you can evaluate the extent to which you support such social conventions, versus the degree to which you are a real nonconformist.

6. THIRTEEN TYPES OF ACTIVISM

The following are the standard types or methods of modern activism:

1. Volunteer: Volunteer on your own or with interested groups to assist disadvantaged and underprivileged people, and threatened species and habitats. In an international context, volunteer to work in refugee camps, at local schools and medical care clinics, or for some other NGO (non-governmental organization). There is a huge network of volunteer organizations around the world, and once you are part of it, once you start volunteering, it is easy to find new and fascinating opportunities.

2. Grassroots activism: Found or join community, student or other groups and then engage in “tabling,” where you set up a table at some social event and hand out literature and talk about your cause. In addition, such events are often supplemented with, or designed around, activist speakers and performances and exhibitions by activist artists.

The objective of grassroots activism is to increase the publicity of, and most importantly the support for, your cause. You particularly want to engage the interest and if possible the involvement of members of the different groups that are being negatively affected. Your goal is to organize them, to pull them out of their complacency and defeatism, and to assist them in their opposition.

For activism to be effective, we must organize large-scale movements to express discontent and to demand change, movements of such a size that they cannot be ignored. But to do this, we will have to find ways to unify the disparate sources of rebellion that exist, including environmentalists, workers, students, ethnic and indigenous rights activists, religious groups, and even the disaffected individuals who listen to gangsta rap and hard core rock. Further, we must solicit the concern of those individuals who one day will suffer the most, if we are unable to solve our problems: schoolchildren. (They must be recruited as well, to help protect the world they are destined to inherit.)

Activists also must recognize that only one thing, historically, has led to large-scale rebellion: the deaths of a great number of people. Rebellion has never been instigated by the destruction of nature (although the taking of land has been a contributing factor in some popular movements). This is a reflection of human chauvinism, that we only get upset when bad things happen to us. For example, this is one of the reasons why the debate over genetic engineering is finally starting to gain some prominence: it involves a threat to people. (The history of the twentieth century included a number of significant victories against government repression, but far fewer against environmental destruction.)

Lastly, there is the problem that activism is usually *reactive*. We assume, because we are ethical, that other people are as well; that they have a conscience and are not wholly dominated by personal selfishness. Then, when they demonstrate that they are so dominated, we have to react. To be effective we must build large-scale movements, and we must anticipate this: we must be *proactive*, and *unpredictable*.

3. Letter writing and petitions: Send letters and petitions to the heads of the organizations which are the target of your activism, and also to your elected representatives in Congress, the heads of appropriate government departments and agencies, and the White House. You can also organize email campaigns, but these are considered to be less effective. Bulk emails are regarded as spam, as something that can be ignored, but letters almost always generate a response. Indeed, such responses are regularly well thought out, even though the signature will almost always be stamped. (The point is, you have attracted the attention of someone at the organization: someone has been compelled to respond to your argument.)

4. Direct lobbying: Lobby local government officials and, if you can arrange it, take a trip to Washington, D.C. Doing this reveals the real (or at least the remaining) power of a democracy. You can simply walk into the Senate or House office buildings, and request meetings, on the spot, with your senators and congress people. Of course, you will probably end up meeting with their legislative or policy aides, but these are the people who create the documents, and originate the policies, that the elected officials sign off on anyway. Inform the aides of your concerns, and ask them to support your positions. (And, if they will not, ask them in strong, direct and well-reasoned terms, why not!)

Anyone can do this. You should not worry about being out of place. This is your right - they have to listen to you - that's what a representative democracy is all about. This type of lobbying is easy, and it's fun! (And for too long it has been the province only of institutional special interests, mostly corporate interests, seeking to make their arguments *on the inside*. Activists need to counter this: we need to be on the inside, too.)

If you are unable to make such a trip, then just use the phone. Call up your representatives and others as well. If you identify yourself as a member of an activist group, the chances are good that one of the aides will take your call. (If they do not, or if they are out, then leave a message.)

5. Litigation: This is a straightforward tactic, albeit one that is usually used only when other methods fail. With the assistance of sympathetic attorneys, and legal-aid groups, who will often work free - there are some good lawyers! - the law is enforced against the institutions. Lawsuits are filed against institutions and their executives, and sometimes, a few times at least, justice does prevail.

Indeed, precedents have been set of companies being held liable in domestic courts for their international actions, particularly their actions in foreign autocracies where there is no legal recourse. For instance, Unocal was sued in U.S. courts over its actions in Burma (it settled out of court). This trend is closing one of the most important loopholes for transnational corporations. (This is similar to the closing of the loophole for dictators, as evidenced by Spain's extradition request for the Chilean dictator Pinochet. Because of this development, the dictators of the world, and their co-conspirators, are falling into a trap. They cannot leave home, for fear of imprisonment. And, when their nations achieve democracy, they will be subject to imprisonment there as well. One can even foresee the day when corporate executives - not just their companies - will themselves be held responsible for the crimes against humanity which such regimes commit.)

A similar prospective use of litigation is against advertising. Advertising is predatory, culpable abuse, and this has already been demonstrated, in a number of courts, with the tobacco industry, which is finally being forced to pay the enormous social costs of its brainwashing. It is now up to us, as activists, to extend this precedent to all of the sources of advertising that use the techniques of behavioral manipulation. The question is: where should we begin?

The obvious starting point is with the advertisers that brainwash children, and there are many example of this: of weekend morning television programming; predatory websites; the corporations that advertise in schools; and the makers of violent films and computer games. (The Federal Trade Commission has revealed that the last set of companies intentionally targeted their advertisements at children, even though the children were not of sufficient age to be allowed to view the films or buy the games.)

These companies must be forced to stop their practices, and to pay compensation for what they have already done. And, this culpability must extend to the broadcasters and publishers of the ads, and to their creators as well (including the actors and actresses).

The victory with the tobacco industry was decisive. Given the awards that have been granted, it has spread fear throughout the entire advertising industry. But it is only a first step, in bringing the industry to account and forcing it to change.

Unfortunately, there is one other issue with litigation that must be mentioned, which is its regular use by institutions *against* activists. Litigation is used aggressively and immediately to shut down activist efforts. Institutions do not have to worry about hiring external counsel: they already have their own lawyers, in-house. As an example of current trends, corporations now make extensive use of SLAPP suits, or Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation, to prevent public activism, and undermine our democracy.

6. Consumer boycotts: For a company that is engaged in unethical activities, organize a boycott of its products and services. This is one of the strongest tactics that we have, and it is risk free. You cannot be forced to buy such a company's goods.

Planning a boycott is conceptually simple: your goal is to organize as wide a coalition as possible, so you can generate thousands of complaints to the offending company. You should contact all groups that have a reason to censure the company, including reasons other than your own. Following such a recruitment effort, the standard practice is to arrange a conference call with representatives from the various groups. For example, the strategy of the Free Burma Coalition (now reconstituted as the United States Campaign for Burma), which conducted dozens of successful boycotts against companies doing business in Burma, was as follows:

- The lead group sends a letter to the top executives of the company, describing their grievances and announcing the boycott, accompanied by a cease and desist demand.
- If the company fails to respond, or responds in an unacceptable manner, an *action alert* is emailed to all the members of all the groups participating in the boycott coalition (and posted to other email lists and websites as well), requesting that they email the company. A sample complaint letter is provided.
- If the company still does not respond, this is followed with a call-in action, a day when everyone is asked to telephone the company (using its toll free numbers), including its head office, branch locations and stores.
- Lastly, demonstrations are organized at high-profile company facilities and events. (For additional information on demos, see section 10 below.)

As the Burma campaign illustrated, there are few companies that can resist such concerted pressure.

7. Selective purchasing ordinances: Through some organization that has great purchasing power, such as your university or municipality (town, city or state), work to enact a law that forbids the organization from doing business with any company, or companies, to which you are opposed. For instance, these ordinances, when enacted in the 1980s against companies doing business in South Africa, were instrumental in bringing about the end of apartheid.

They have also had a strong impact for democracy activism in Burma, forcing some companies to stop supporting the dictatorship, and leading others to forego commercial relationships with it. However, such ordinances were challenged by a business trade group, the National Foreign Trade Council. (We saw that corporations exhibit great unity against activists, and also that they readily engage in litigation!) The NFTC argued that the Burma ordinances (specifically,

Massachusetts' Burma purchasing law) constituted foreign policy, and that only the federal government, which in the present day is beholden to business (i.e., elected officials are beholden, for their campaign funding), has the right to create and enforce such policy.

In the summer of 1999, a U.S. Appellate Court accepted their argument, and this is proof that our social checks no longer work. It says that no group of individuals, at least under the auspices of any governmental organization, at any level other than national, can organize to follow an ethical imperative regarding the behavior of any other country. This is an issue of great importance: these corporations want to take away our right of freedom of association regarding a crucial area of our existence, how we express our ethics through what we buy. In one action, they are attempting to restrict greatly the limits of human freedom.

The Massachusetts Attorney General appealed the case to the Supreme Court, which agreed to hear it. (The Court hears less than five percent of the cases submitted for its review.) The request for the appeal was accompanied by a grassroots campaign, which solicited the support of a large number of congressional representatives and dozens of activist organizations.

In June 2000, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the Burma purchasing ordinance in the State of Massachusetts was unconstitutional. The state had enacted a law that effectively precluded companies that do business in Burma from winning state contracts. The law was intended to take an ethical stance: *"if your company supports the military dictatorship in Burma, which engages in widespread repression, slave labor and murder, we do not want to do business with you."*

The Supreme Court overturned the law. It viewed the case as an issue between states' rights and federal government rights, over who can set foreign policy. It ignored the issue of individual rights, the Constitution's *Bill of Rights*, including the right to speak out against unethical government purchasing, and also to have one's elected representatives do so as well.

Strictly speaking, the Massachusetts law was rejected because it was in conflict with the United States' own sanctions against Burma (if you believe the rationale presented by the Court). The U.S. was not speaking with *one* voice. However, the story is more complex than this. The Massachusetts law was enacted before the federal government imposed sanctions, and further: it had teeth. The sanctions (passed in 1997) were much weaker. They were designed to suit corporate interests, particularly those of Unocal, the American oil company that has a large investment in Burma, since they (and other companies) were not required to divest their current operations, only not to engage in new projects.

The Massachusetts law was principled. The government sanctions were crafted to give the *appearance* of being principled.

The ruling, although seemingly narrow, had a broad impact. It undercut all government procurement ordinances that had a specific ethical motivation, such as to forbid the purchasing of goods made using child or sweatshop labor, or products made from rainforest hardwoods. Had the ruling been issued in the 1980s, it would have invalidated the aforementioned selective purchasing ordinances that helped bring about the end of apartheid in South Africa.

Courts normally punish unethical behavior. It is rare indeed that they reject the desire and restrict the ability of individuals, and local governments, to do right.

The NFTC was triumphant. They called the ruling “*a victory for the U.S. Constitution.*” They received vindication from the nation’s highest court of the ethical standard that underlies corporate behavior, which is: *if we don’t do it, someone else will.* Corporate executives and spokespeople say, if we don’t exploit the oil and fund the dictatorship, someone else will. If we don’t use child or slave labor, someone else will. If we don’t destroy the environment for profit, someone else will. And if we don’t brainwash the general public, someone else will.

The Supreme Court is mistaken, though, in its belief that it had the final say. You cannot legislate, including via judicial interpretation, against human will and reason. When a nation does it, it is called dictatorship. And for the Court, its decision inevitably created resistance. The people of Massachusetts, through their representatives, made a decision to behave ethically in a very specific way. The Supreme Court cannot force them to do otherwise: to behave unethically. If it attempts to do so, it is being autocratic, and the people *will* find other ways to fulfill their decision to do right. The positive motivation of life is a greater force than any such efforts to contain it. (One can recall the fate of prior Court rulings, *for* slavery and segregation.)

In July 2003, the United States passed a new law, the Burma Freedom and Democracy Act, which prohibits the importation of goods from Burma. The consequences of this law are that, excepting the few companies that remain able to do business in Burma under the grandfather clause in the first Burma bill (largely oil companies, including Unocal, Halliburton and Caltex), the country is now off limits to both U.S. industry and importers.

Also, selective purchasing ordinances are not dead. New laws are being written which conform to the Supreme Court’s ruling, and which preserve the public’s fundamental rights of freedom of association and expression, including through what we buy.

8. Ethical investing: In a manner akin to selective purchasing ordinances, if you are part of an organization that has an investment portfolio, such as a pension plan or university endowment, try to get investment guidelines implemented that forbid the purchase of the stocks and bonds of unethical companies. (These are known as “negative screens.” There are also positive

screens, where investors identify ethical companies for support.) The types of guidelines that have been implemented so far preclude investments in companies which:

- conduct business with dictatorships and other repressive regimes
- destroy the environment
- manufacture weapons
- produce tobacco and alcohol products
- own casinos
- practice discrimination
- source goods from sweatshop factories
- produce violent media

One expects that these guidelines will someday also be extended to all of the purveyors of mass consumerism, those companies that seek the *McDomination* of the world, particularly to the firms that strive to brainwash children.

9. Economic sanctions: Following through on the lobbying point above, in the case of nations that actively repress their citizens, encourage the U.S. government to impose economic sanctions against them. There are different types of sanctions, including the prohibition of investment in such nations, both of new investment and also retroactive bans, where companies which currently are active are required to suspend or divest their operations (activists would now like to see the U.S. enact a retroactive ban against Burma); and also such things as bans on arms sales and other forms of military assistance, the importation of goods from the country (e.g., the new Burma law), etc.

10. Demonstrate: This is the core expression of activism, where you protest against companies and other organizations (or groups) that are engaged in unethical activities. There are many different types of demos, and they normally take place at organization offices or other facilities. Demos include marches, strikes, sit-ins, sleep-ins, teach-ins, street theater (such as anti-nuclear die-ins), and, in extremely serious circumstances, e.g., to protest murder, hunger strikes. (Gandhi did it, and the Burmese democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and animal rights activist Barry Horne, among many others; so can you.)

There are even virtual sit-ins now, where large groups of people access, at one time, the computer servers of obnoxious websites (as of unethical corporations), causing them to crash.

A further distinction can be drawn regarding the purpose of the demonstrations. In most cases it is to *protest*, but in others it is to *shut down*. Marches in Washington, D.C. are generally the former; demonstrations at meetings of the WTO, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are regularly the latter.

Another important issue with demos is that they should not be wholly negative. Criticism is not the only point. You want to encourage the organization and its employees to change, to stop what they are doing. And, when you do this, the use of reason, rather than emotion, is usually much more successful.

It is worth remembering that change cannot be imposed from without. It requires movement within the target organization as well. You want to encourage reform, to encourage the institution to develop a culture of ethics. For example, every organization should have not only a “mission statement,” as in “*we want to make a lot of money,*” but also a code of acceptable behavior, which states: “*but in this effort we will not engage in the following acts ...*”

This code should enumerate all of the publics and environments that are affected by the institution, and it should be updated periodically. And, it should be distributed to every employee and also to all such publics. Furthermore, this code should be enforced by a senior management compliance officer, who reports directly to the institution’s Board of Directors.

11. Civil disobedience, “monkey wrenching,” and other “direct action”: For the more hard-core, the more committed, among you. This is where activists directly intervene in a situation and attempt to halt destruction on the spot. Examples include:

- Blockading the construction of new roads in roadless areas, pulling out survey stakes, and disabling bulldozers being used to build such roads, or new pipelines, dams, etc.
- *Locking down* across roads to exploitative facilities, or across railroad tracks or to ships, to stop unethical shipments.
- Reclaiming the streets in town centers, to protest unwarranted development and the resultant degradation of our quality of life.
- Sitting in trees, to prevent them from being cut down.
- Hanging banners from institutional facilities, denouncing the institution’s misdeeds.
- *Pieing* institutional leaders, for the same purpose.
- Product dumping, at organization offices and outlets, to protest unethical trade and commercial practices.

- *Redesigning* billboards, so they present a more accurate message, an education rather than brainwashing. (This is called “subvertising.”)
- Tearing up fields of genetically engineered crops.
- Hacking unethical websites.
- Cutting fishing long-lines and driftnets, which *vacuum* the sea.
- Liberating animals, saving them from torture and slaughter.

You should expect to be arrested (or at least pursued) if you do something like this, and it is essential that you find out what this is likely to entail *before* you engage in the action. The application of the law varies widely. In many cases you will be let off, or only required to pay a small fine, but in other, repressive, jurisdictions, you could be subjected to a lengthy jail sentence.

Also, please understand that I am not giving a blanket approval of direct action, which can range from trespass and simple vandalism through to the extensive destruction of property, and which in many cases is unjustifiable (e.g., “Black Bloc” vandalism at institutional meeting protests). However, direct action is used legitimately and with effect in many struggles around the world. For example, villagers in rural areas regularly protest unwanted developments by destroying the equipment and vehicles of the developers, of such things as garbage dumps, polluting mines, and dams. It happens, and the villagers, who often number in the thousands, feel completely justified in their actions. To them, it is a matter of self-defense.

Furthermore, sometimes a threat is enough. For instance, in the far north of Thailand, powerful businessmen - with government connections (Thailand is an extremely corrupt society), planned to move power plant equipment across the border to a Burmese town that is controlled by drug lords. The equipment was to be used to build a generating plant that would have been fueled with dirty coal. The plant would have spread severe air pollution throughout the region (and provided electricity for narcotics factories). A large group of local Thai villagers rallied and prevented the convoy of trucks carrying the equipment from crossing into Burma, with the threat that if the convoy tried they would destroy the trucks. There was a standstill that lasted weeks but the threat worked. The trucks withdrew and the power plant was never built.

Direct action is a dramatic event, and it reflects a deep issue underlying our society: who has the power, and when does this change. Power lies with the people, with the general public. In a political dictatorship, then, where some group has grabbed power, the people have the right to rise up against them, including through the tactics of direct action and perhaps even armed rebellion, if the dictators are waging war against them. (In Burma, numerous groups are fighting the military junta that rules the country.)

In a representative democracy, though, the people transfer their power to government officials through a vote. But this is not the end of the story. A contract is created. The officials have a *fiduciary* responsibility, a legal obligation, to serve in the best interests of the public. Problems arise when the officials break this obligation, e.g., when they take bribes from companies that intend to exploit the people in some way. If there is not an effective recourse, if the judicial system is biased or corrupt as well, if the people have effectively been *sold out*, then they have the right to reclaim their power. (The preferred choice of course is that the government officials not be corrupt.)

This also reflects another issue with democracy. Even without the element of corruption, in any society there are likely to be competing groups and interests. In an issue over which there is a conflict, and that affects numerous levels of society, such as a local community, a region and the entire nation, whose voice should decide? For example, with a proposed dam the local community that would be affected by it would almost certainly be opposed to it. But the region could desire it for the water it would provide, and the nation for the electricity that would be produced. (Of course, environmentalists at all levels would likely oppose the project.)

So, what course should be taken? As a principle, those people who are most affected by the decision should have the final say. (In many cases this would be the smallest group.) Otherwise, such democracy is actually a form of dictatorship. In this example, then, unless the local community's interests are fully satisfied and their concerns fully addressed, they should be able to veto the dam, or, if this option is not given to them, to act in such a way that they prevent its construction.

(For further perspectives on the ethics and consequences of such tactics, see the Activist Ethics and Activism and the Law chapters.)

12. Agitate: If in your travels you visit peoples - cultures - that are being exploited, you should encourage them to defend themselves.

13. Make a career of your activism: Seek employment in an activist or volunteer group. Get a job with an NGO (or start your own), which is a new type of social institution, of recent evolution, which seeks to function as a new social check, and also to provide services to those groups that have been ignored, which are not deemed important enough by the powers that be. A specific area that still needs a lot of work, and therefore where there should be a lot of growth and opportunity in the future, is in the international coordination of activism, to offset international institutional collusion.

7. ACTIVISM AND THE MEDIA

As was just discussed, in your career as an activist you should be prepared for the consequences. You must anticipate your need for, and arrange beforehand, publicity for your actions, and any assistance that you will require, including for support personnel, and particularly for legal representation (and perhaps even diplomatic support), if you might be arrested.

As a proviso, though, you should remember that the media are social institutions (and diplomats are government representatives). Even worse, most media outlets are now subsidiaries of major corporations. And, as corporations, they will generally have an implicit if not direct opposition to your attempts to accomplish social change. Furthermore, corporations attempt to increase their market power and if possible obtain market monopolies. This is accomplished via acquisition, which in the media industry involves the purchase of competing newspapers, magazines, publishing companies, movie studios, radio stations, television stations and networks, cable and satellite networks, and Internet companies; and also via other tactics, such as price wars, to destroy weaker threats. (A related example is Microsoft's packaging of its various software products with *Windows*, to eliminate its competitors.)

Such market consolidation trends have been underway for many years, with the result that all forms of public media with widespread distribution are now concentrated in a very few hands. Companies including News Corp., Time Warner, Disney, Viacom, General Electric, AT&T, and Microsoft have essentially divided up the world of information, and obtained unprecedented power.

This in turn is having significant effects in the areas of information access and censorship, because the media control what we see and hear. We see *what they want us to see*. For example, when you watch TV you might think that you are seeing the "real world," but this is rarely the case. TV is not an open forum. Many people would like airtime to present their views, or art, or to provide education, but they are not allowed on. TV access is almost entirely limited to the representatives of institutions, and the views that you get are those of the institutions. Individuals are excluded. What you see on TV is regularly a very distorted view of reality, or not reality at all, but some *unreal* fantasy constructed to meet an institutional end. (Because of this, watching TV is unlikely to widen or expand your perspective. Rather, it distorts it, and it also restricts it, and your life, if you use it - the time you spend watching TV and what you see on it - as an excuse not to go out into the world.)

As a result of the vast media industry consolidation, much of what you are *allowed* to see conforms to the wishes of a very few people, such as Rupert Murdoch, the owner of News Corp.

It is critical to understand that if the media do not show or publish something, the public - you and I - will not know that it exists.

Another type of censorship is the media's refusal to publish views that are critical of themselves or of their partners or clients. For instance, the last British governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, wrote a book about the transition there to Chinese rule, which was highly critical of the mainland communists. This book was sold to Harper Collins, the largest publishing house in the world, and formerly independent. But it has now been acquired by News Corp., and Rupert Murdoch, anxious not to disturb his extensive array of commercial interests with the Chinese dictators, had the contract terminated.

Even worse, *The Times* of London, one of the oldest and most prestigious newspapers in the world, truly one of the last bastions of objectivity in the face of overpowering commercial pressure, has also been acquired by Murdoch. It refused to report on the dispute between HarperCollins and Patten, and now the objectivity of its coverage of China, and anyone else with whom Murdoch has dealings, is suspect.

(Patten did get his book published, by the way, but then he was a senior representative of a major social institution.)

This type of censorship, which is called "editorial censorship," or the purposeful non-publication of critical or non-conformist views, or forms of artistic expression, also exists at the level of media distribution, which has itself been subject to the same trend of industry consolidation. You might even call it secondary censorship. An artist or writer might have his or her work published, but that does not mean that you are going to hear about it, or be able to buy it in the stores.

All of this has profound consequences for activists. In many cases the media are not our allies; they are the enemy. What we really need is Free Media, to which anyone can publish, and fortunately, and primarily through the Internet, such media is evolving. Excellent examples include Indymedia (www.indymedia.org), which now has over one hundred and fifty affiliated websites in some eighty countries; and Protest Net (www.protest.net), to which anyone can post notices of demonstrations and other activist actions, anywhere in the world. These are just two of the many alternatives that now exist. There are all manner of independent news websites and email lists, and publications. However, it is still the case that to reach a large audience, the mass media has by far the best distribution, so in a metaphorical sense we are confronted with the need to sleep with the devil.

Activism requires publicity. Indeed, an action can be regarded as effective, in an intermediate fashion (ultimate effectiveness is in achieving your end - in correcting the misdeed or problem),

if you obtain a lot of publicity for it. This is measured by how many people you reach, and the manner, positive or not, and focused and convincing or not, in which your message is relayed. It is essential to invite the press, both television and print, including free media (this would generally be after the fact for many forms of direct action); to give them any information that they need to understand the action, by way of a press release and other materials; and to encourage them to cover it and your message in a positive way.

This is actually the other major benefit of direct action. Not only may you stop the misdeed in its tracks, you will certainly attract media attention. In fact, it can be argued that the only effective way to get the public's attention is through civil disobedience: to break unjust laws. The public has been brainwashed very effectively. It has been told to ignore social problems, even the most severe and obvious. People need to be jerked out of their complacency, and direct action, the efforts of individuals who are not complacent and who will make a stand, is quite possibly the only way to accomplish this.

As to your message, you obviously want to describe the institution and its misdeeds, the costs that have been incurred, and the corrective action that is required. However, you also want to focus on the institution's executives. This is because a gaping loophole exists: institutional executives are able to escape personal responsibility. They hide behind the institution's large, impersonal facade. They are cloaked in anonymity, and never held to account.

This loophole must be closed! Make an integral or even primary part of your message identification of the executives in charge. Point them out as the unethical cowards that they are. They may retain their positions following such a public identification, but not their prestige and reputation.

Publicity is also essential because it increases the chances that during the action you will not be attacked and, if you are arrested, that you will be treated fairly and let off quickly without charge. In this regard, having a TV cameraperson on-site is greatly to be preferred. The police, and any institutional thugs who are present, will be much more reserved if they know they are being filmed. Indeed, you should supplement the press with your own cameras: equip as many of your own people as you can.

To close the chapter, I want to return to the idea of pinning blame where it is due.

*“The earth is not dying. It is being killed.
And those who are killing it have names and addresses.”*

- Utah Phillips

The first step in correcting a wrong is to identify the culprit □ the real culprit. For corporations, this in turn requires an understanding of how executives escape responsibility for the behavior of their companies.

Corporations in general are large and faceless; it is very difficult to find anyone specific to blame. The underlying reason for this is as follows. When a company engages in an unethical action, such as polluting the environment, the actual employees who do it, who open a valve to allow the discharge of waste into a river, or the atmosphere, do not feel as if they, personally, are responsible. To them, they are simply following orders from above. (The anonymity of such an employee is like that of a soldier shooting into an unarmed crowd, or of a lab scientist torturing an animal, splitting a gene, or working on a weapon of mass destruction.) Furthermore, this failure to accept responsibility continues. Their bosses feel the same. And this goes on all the way up to the executives, who themselves believe that they are not to blame, since they are merely following the leadership of the Chief Executive Officer. But the CEO also is not to blame, as he is subject to the Board of ! Directors, which in turn must report to the shareholders, the owners of the company, which is the world of financial institutions, meaning “Wall Street.” But Wall Street responds: “*Hey! It’s not us. We just apportion investment capital to the most successful companies. We have no impact at all on their day-to-day operations.*”

In this way, no one in or associated with a company feels a sense of responsibility. They have all been compelled to act the way they have. They have not had a choice. (It is a form of determinism.) And this is the identical logic that is used to justify military atrocities. More generally, it is the process by which groups of people degenerate into mobs and do horrible things □ things which, as individuals, they would never consider.

As activists, we need to end this anonymity. We need to remove the veil or turn over the rock, so to speak. We need to pin the blame on the people who ultimately are responsible.

There are many ways to accomplish this identification. In grassroots tabling, letter writing, petitions, lobbying and demonstrations (and demo press releases), such individuals must be named. Even more, they must be pilloried. Everyone must know who they are, and their reputations must be ruined. We want to make them pariahs, make them understand, clearly, that they *personally* are responsible.

For example, in demonstrations, don’t carry a sign saying, “*Unocal engages in ethnic cleansing in Burma.*” Enlarge a photo of the company’s CEO (or owner □ you can get one in the company’s annual report), and use the slogan, “*Roger Beach, [now former] CEO of Unocal, engages in ethnic cleansing in Burma.*” Or show a photo of a polluted river, with the caption, “*Thank you, Mr. _____, CEO of ABC Corp., for destroying our river!*”

Another idea is to get a group of activists, each with an enlarged photo of a member of the company's Board of Directors, and have a banner saying "*Board of Dictators!*" (This would be particularly suitable for companies that are active in Burma, China, etc.) Also, what all of this recalls is the basic activist premise: Be Creative!

8. ADVANCED ACTIVIST ISSUES

These, then, are the tactics or methods of activism, and as you can see there are a lot at our disposal. All that we really require is more people, more activists, for their implementation. But, is this really the case? Perhaps it gets even more complicated than this. These are the basics of activism, but there are some advanced issues as well - issues that we will have to consider if we are to achieve our goals.

The first of these, which is of supreme importance, given the degree of resistance that people and institutions usually have to change, to becoming more ethical, is the subject of nonviolence. Said another way, when does activism become open rebellion? We are attempting to construct a better social order, and this means confronting minor, localized and containable problems, to ones that extend worldwide and which cause vast destruction; and also problems that make minor impositions on our freedom, all the way through to those which are responsible for full blown repression and extermination. At some point activism is not enough. Armed rebellion becomes necessary. (An exposition of this subject, including of where the transition takes place, is given in the Activist Ethics chapter.) Further, another way to look at this is to consider our goal. Is it reform, or revolution, or evolution, and if the last what, precisely, is required for social evolution to occur?

Also, there is the issue, mentioned earlier, of the violence that is directed at activists themselves.

“Always the same trend emerges: where environmentalists are effective in bringing world attention to an issue, they are met with increased violence. Government authorities either turn a blind eye or actively participate by labeling the protester ‘violent’ to sanction the use of violence against them.”

- Extract of the review by Cindy Baxter of the book, *Green Backlash, The Global Subversion of the Environmental Movement*, Andrew Rowell, *Earth First! Journal*, June-July 1999, page 32

How should activists respond to this? Should you accept violence against your person? Isn't this appeasement, and “unnatural”? It is not only Dr. Martin Luther King and Gypsy Chain (see Chapter 3) who have died in the fight for social justice and environmental conservation. There have been many other cases:

- Karen Silkwood was murdered after reporting safety violations at a Kerr-McGee nuclear plant in Oklahoma.
- Dian Fossey was murdered while working to save the highland gorillas of Central Africa.

- Chico Mendes and now Dorothy Strang were murdered trying to protect the Amazon rainforest.
- Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni 8 were executed by the former Nigerian dictatorship.
- Indigenous rights activists Terence Freitas, Ingrid Washinawatok, and Lahe'ena'e Gay were murdered while helping Columbia's U'wa tribe defend their homelands from exploitation by Occidental Petroleum.
- And, of course, many, many other individuals, from all manner of cultures, have been killed in similar struggles. (The issue of violence against activists is reviewed in more detail in the Activism and the Law chapter.)

Lastly, we must never forget that we want to change, not only protest. We therefore need to expend a lot of thought and energy on “exit strategies” and “follow-through,” the precise series of steps by which social and environmental harms will be reversed and then not allowed to recur. For instance, it is not enough to support the fight to change a dictatorship to a democracy; there are a number of practical issues that have to be considered as well. These include: the rapid installation of a peace-keeping force, to halt the commission of atrocities in the residual disorder; the resolution of conflicts between different competing or adversarial groups within the nation; the holding of elections, which requires independent oversight and verification, and the guarantee of safety for the voters; and the drafting of a constitution and a body of law guaranteeing personal freedoms, and enabling government structures and political parties and processes.

Then there is the question of the dictators: what do you do with them (and their cronies, and the current corrupt infrastructure including government officials and the army and the police)? Should you kill them outright, as in Romania, or via a trial, as at Nuremberg; imprison them and confiscate their assets; put them in internal exile □ restrict their movements; or banish them from the country?

These are crucial decisions, and they also lead to some of the most difficult judgments of all. If you treat the dictators leniently, they may go more easily, but this is not justice. They have not paid the consequences of their actions, and it increases the likelihood that they, or their children, will return to power. Alternatively, if you pursue the objective that they must be held accountable, they will fight that much stronger to stay in power, quite possibly by increasing their repression. (A recent example of this was seen with the Serbian dictator Milosevic, and his ethnic cleansing of Kosovo Albanians.)

Similarly, if you want to change modern society, where corporations and the media have gained such great power, how do you alter their structure, or people's relationship to them, to

achieve this change? In summary, our overall goal, as activists, is to propagate a new set of values, based on reason, such that the world attains a real equilibrium. But, again, how do we change the system's set of values, and even if we can design such a process, and implement such a change, what new set of values should we have as our goal?

9. ACTIVISM AND THE LAW

(Note: This chapter is strongly critical of the police, which some readers may find objectionable. To such readers I must emphasize that the police, in many nations around the world, are a state sanctioned armed gang of criminals. In society after society the police rape, rob and murder with impunity. Good police officers are among the most admirable of people; these type of police, and there are a multitude of them, are the most despicable.)

I have already described how certain activist movements, such as the civil rights movement, required civil disobedience to achieve success. More generally, there is a risk of arrest with any form of direct action (and even simple protest). This chapter will explore the role of the law and the police in a society, including how they both inevitably become inflexible and intolerant, and the consequences this has for activists seeking positive social change.

The surface reason why you will be subject to arrest when pursuing direct action tactics is that you will almost certainly contravene some local law, such as one against trespassing. But, more deeply, and far more importantly, you will be arrested because in any society, either modern or traditional, the police serve only those who are in power. You are against institutions that abuse their power, but the police do not care about that. They are for the institutions – they function as private security guards for them – and against you. They do not enforce the laws, rather, they enforce the *social order*. Indeed, an extreme tendency of the process of social conditioning to which we all are subjected is that in certain societies, including totalitarian and police states, the established order, the controlling institutions, are completely above criticism. You must be highly sensitive and alert to anything that you cannot criticize, on punishment of the law, since this is an assault on your last defense, the foundation of activism, which is your right of self-expression.

(A common message of social conditioning is that we are taught to accept authority without question, if not revere it – for example, in China. This predisposes us not to be critical, particularly of the sources of authority that are meant to be uncriticizable, such as the President, or police – or religion.)

Even in a democracy, the evolution of the legal system is never accomplished with ease. In general this process – the creation of a just set of laws, and also the impartial enforcement thereof – occurs as follows:

- The people elect representatives, to form the government.
- That government passes laws.

- The people choose whether or not to follow the laws, i.e., they decide if the government truly has represented their interests.
- In cases where people disagree strongly with the laws, they break them.
- If enough people do this (or support those who do), the laws, and the judicial system, are not democratic. They do not represent the will of the people. In an intelligent and tolerant society, the representatives change the laws. In repressive and intolerant societies, they use the laws to control the public, particularly dissident and nonconformist individuals.

Governments, including supposedly democratic governments, regularly refuse to abide by the majority's interests (there are a few circumstances where such behavior is appropriate, i.e., when the majority's wishes are unethical). For instance, the United States government will not:

- end the exploitation and destruction of the nation's remaining natural environments,
- require the labeling of genetically modified food and other products,
- and legalize the use of marijuana,

even though a majority of the public supports such moves. The reasons for this obstinacy include: the protection of government power; government collusion with other institutions; and the preservation of a means of legal repression. In addition, in many countries popularly elected officials attempt to transform themselves into dictators, by ignoring the public's wishes, and their own election promises, and by working to destroy their nation's democratic institutions.

When activists oppose such behavior, this inevitably brings them into conflict with the police, and the police, in general, respond with either (or both) selective or overly enthusiastic application of the law. The law is regularly used to quell dissent, and a variety of provisions are typically brought to bear. In the U.S. these include the ordinances on the payment of income tax and the ownership of guns. If the government wants to get you, it will audit your taxes and find something wrong, or, as with the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas, it will use your possession of firearms as the excuse.

As an activist, you can also expect a lot of questions from the police. And lying to them, as they are well aware, is a crime. Because of this, they will interrogate you intensively, not to gather information, but to get you to commit in such a way that they can later say that you lied. Therefore, you should refuse to talk to the police. (In most cases you are only required to provide your name and address, and many activists, particularly following mass arrests at large protests, even refuse to give this.)

Probably the most common means of police repression, though, involves the selective enforcement of laws against illicit drugs. Furthermore, this practice serves a dual function since it is also used to create a common enemy (which all autocratic states require, as a means to misdirect the general public from its own repression). The following outline describes the practice:

Oppression 101

1. Set legal standards, such as for the use of mind-altering substances, that young people, particularly young men, by their very nature – ignorance, tendency towards experimentation and risk-taking, and high susceptibility to peer pressure – will break in large numbers.
2. Target enforcement of the laws at selected groups, such as minorities. Also, premeditatively ignore other groups, notably the sons and daughters of the wealthy.
3. Arrest, convict and incarcerate many young men from the former groups. Under common social standards, such incarceration, however brief, constitutes lifelong punishment. Such individuals are expelled from normal society – most importantly – from normal employment opportunities. (Individuals who are convicted of felonies also lose the right to vote.)
4. As more young men are caught, and as a significant number of them continue to engage in the same, and related, activities since, among other reasons, they now have no other employment options, use this cycle to justify larger and larger spending on the police and on penal systems.
5. Use the former to catch more “criminals.” It is important to understand that the police need criminals. It’s their job. If there are not enough around, their tendency will always be to create them by, with their political allies, enacting laws over things that people regularly do. Indeed, when the police (and the courts) falsely or wrongfully imprison so many people, they know they are creating not only a criminal class, but also an *enemy class*. And, they want this, since it justifies their continued existence: to control what they themselves have created. (Note: *Everyone’s* a criminal now. There are so many laws that everyone, if only unwittingly, is guilty of something. Furthermore, no matter how small the infraction, the police can use it to invade, and destroy, your life.)
6. When crime becomes widespread, blame it on the minorities and wonder why more money is spent on law enforcement than education and what can be done about it.

7. Answer: legalize drugs, and use education about their ills to reduce the experimentation, and education about social influences to assist young people in their defense against peer pressure.

The existence of this complex and arcane form is the reason why it is impossible, in the United States today, to have a serious discussion about drugs and their effects on individuals and society. However, we will never solve the problem of rampant drug abuse, and the derivative problems that this causes, until we do.

Also, I want to make it clear that this is *not* an apology for criminal behavior. As we have seen, fighting form and expressing will is possible, and essential. I am not making an argument for modern determinists, who think that such young men are victims, and further that crime is acceptable: that it is an acceptable form of rebellion for the disadvantaged and the underprivileged. Real rebels do not engage in criminal activities, the types of criminal activities that injure other people. (Civil disobedience and noncompliance with unjust laws, though, particularly in authoritarian environments, is another matter.)

As Oppression 101 demonstrates, society is not above using a little force to repress its critics and malcontents, and will even engage in crime, break its own rules, if necessary. (It is important to recognize that laws are written and enforced largely for the benefit of the upper classes, particularly for the owners of property.)

I would further say that in a society that is rigidly conformist, there will always be a counter-culture. And in a society that oppresses, there will always be rebels. And some members of these groups will use drugs and they will commit crimes. But, although such individuals share the blame, because of the responsibility that derives from their will, the fundamental problem is not with them. The core problem is the structure of the society, particularly its direction by and for the elite, and its inflexibility and intolerance.

To return to activists, police are “taught” to think of unarmed, non-violent protesters as enemies of the state, on whom violence on their part is fully justified.

“Incorrectly labeling people as communists, terrorists and fascists justifies a different response to that of a mere protester. They can be deemed a threat to national security, where protesters can not. It can also vindicate violence, harassment and surveillance of them by the state as has happened with the anti-nuclear movement.”

- excerpt from *Green Backlash*, Andrew Rowell, as reviewed in the *Earth First! Journal*, June-July 1999, page 32

Police in a society are granted the greatest power of all: the license to kill members of that society. This is arguably the most profound relationship of trust that a society creates, and it exists for good reason. Police officers must enforce the law against the most unethical of people. They test their intelligence and exhibit great courage – to the point of risking their life – to do so. One of our most fundamental ethics is: if you can do something to help, you should. Good police officers do help, and to the greatest extent possible.

In many societies, though, this trust is completely misplaced. Indeed, as noted above, in dozens of nations, if not the majority, the police are a state sanctioned armed gang.

There is a very thin line between an *officer in blue* and a Nazi brownshirt or stormtrooper. The police in modern societies must continually guard against exhibiting the behavior of the police in such places as Burma and China. For example, U.S. police have been trained, along with the military, to suppress a popular uprising. This is effectively planning for a military coup.

The police response to activism varies by country. In Burma and China, it is harsh to the point of summarily executing dissidents. In the United Kingdom, though, it is relatively tolerant. Indeed, the vast majority of the police there are unarmed. It is interesting that in the U.K. some activists argue that media publicity of actions should not be courted. They refuse to play the media's game. Instead, they act, and the media are forced to come to them. In the United States, though, publicity is almost always sought, not only to air the activists' concerns but as a defense against police repression. The tactics that U.S. police use have more in common with their counterparts in Burma and China than with the police in the U.K. and Western Europe.

“A key characteristic of a police state is that the police punish without judicial process as a means to instill fear through intimidation.”

- letter to the editor, Michael Van Brockhoven, *Earth First! Journal*, December-January 2000, page 26

Under this definition, the United States, regarding its treatment of activists, is a police state.

U.S. activists must actually confront two sets of police: the local authorities, and the FBI. Local police compile dossiers on activists, and use intimidation at actions to the point of assault, including applying pepper spray and gel to the eyes of non-violent protesters, and torturing them with pain holds. (This was on view to the world in the response of the Seattle police to the non-violent activists at the 1999 WTO meeting.) Further, they prosecute misdemeanors (and concocted felonies) against activists, while ignoring the felonies of the activist targets, and

also the crimes perpetrated against the activists themselves. For instance, the local sheriff in Humboldt County, California, refused to prosecute the logger, Arlington Ammons, who killed Gypsy Chain, even though he had earlier threatened the group of activists of which Chain was a member. (This threat was taped, and could easily have been introduced as evidence.) Needless to say, he also did not prosecute Charles Hurwitz, Ammons employer. These individuals got away with murder. Instead, the sheriff tried to bring manslaughter charges against Chain's fellow activists. (As background, the group was protesting illegal logging practices, and the timber company's license was revoked for these violations shortly after Chain's death.)

The tactics of the FBI build on this and, of course, they work with the local police as well. In its suppression of activism the FBI makes great use of counterintelligence programs, or COINTELPRO. These programs were developed to counter foreign threats, and then were applied to domestic groups as well. In the 1960s and early 70s, they were applied to groups which engaged in armed resistance, but also to groups which simply disagreed with government policy (e.g., the Vietnam War). And this redirection of COINTELPRO meant that any group that opposed the government, via any tactic including only the use of freedom of speech, was perceived the enemy.

There was a reaction to this, particularly in light of such events as the killings at Kent State University, and COINTELPRO against internal dissidents was scaled back. But such efforts are now being revived, for example, against environmentalists, who are branded as "eco-terrorists." Government anti-terrorism budgets are high, and they have to be spent. (If they are not, the funding may be lost in the next budget.) If there are not enough real enemies around, the tendency will always exist to create them.

FBI tactics which are applied against activists include the use of infiltrators and *agent provocateurs*; disinformation campaigns and psychological warfare, including forged correspondence and pamphlets, threatening phone calls, etc.; and harassment through the legal system. For the last, the FBI makes extensive use of grand jury subpoenas, which in a number of cases have been issued on spurious or fabricated evidence. When an activist faces a grand jury, he or she cannot have a lawyer present, or refuse to answer questions. The Fifth Amendment does not apply in a grand jury hearing. Failure to answer any question can lead to a charge of contempt and eighteen months imprisonment. (For guidance on how to respond to police inquiries and harassment, see *Know Your Rights* and *Your Right to Protest* from the National Lawyers Guild – www.nlg.org, and then click on *Resources*.)

The power and sophistication of the police effort that is directed at activists greatly complicates the task of social reform, and it also raises significant internal security issues for activist

movements. To be effective we must not only document and protest social and environmental wrongs; we also must defend against surveillance, harassment, assault, grand jury subpoenas and false arrest. Fortunately, we have right on our side, and this is sufficient, if not to counter all oppression, at least to preserve one's motivation.

What all of this makes clear is that we can never forget that as a social objective there should be as few police as possible. Our goal is to create a harmonious society, such that only a small number of police are required.

Obviously, we are not going to get rid of the police overnight. It may take many decades, even a century or more. And, the biggest hurdle in reducing their numbers is going to be ourselves, but *not* our criminal elements. Society is addicted to having police. They make it easy for us to ignore our underlying problems. As a first step, though, we must take away their power to intimidate. We must reject their unethical means to a supposedly ethical end. Police should not have "qualified immunity," whereby they cannot be sued, personally, for their abuse. Also, another idea that should be considered is that any police officer found guilty of criminal behavior, any criminal behavior, should automatically be subjected to double the normal penalty for the crime.

In addition, the question remains, if there were no police tomorrow, what would happen? It might be terrible, a disintegration into anarchy, but what would come out of it? Many societies, even today, function without police (e.g., rural areas in lesser-developed countries, which generally have only a minimal police presence). This isn't to say that they don't have crime, or justice. The question is, under which system is there less, and more?

My basic point, though, in this entire argument, is that every time we take a step away from our goals, (1) we should recognize it; (2) we should ask if it is really necessary – we should demand a well-supported explanation for the move, including why there are no better options and how and when it will be reversed; and (3) we should then, at most, take only half a step.

For instance, the following trend is also evident in the evolution of most democracies:

- An entrenched dictatorship is defeated, and a new democracy is established.
- New laws are drafted, to make things better!
- The laws are then enforced, which requires the creation of a new internal security apparatus and the hiring of many new police.
- Over time the laws are enforced more rigidly. The democracy becomes bureaucratic. It is impersonal and inflexible; there is no room for compromise.

- For some laws, their rational tenor expires. But the laws never, or very rarely, do. They are not repealed. And, the security apparatus, including the number of police, is never cut back. Instead, it is redirected to where it is *not* needed.

The moral of this story is as follows: society should be very selective in the laws that it enacts, and it should be very, very careful about enabling armed security forces.

10. INTRODUCTION TO CHAOS THEORY

(Note: The mathematical field known as chaos theory studies, among other things, *global system change*. The theory is now being applied to the physical sciences and also to human behavior, both individual and social.)

There are two different types of change. The first is *continuous*, and this is change within a system, to a part or parts of a system. Such change is equivalent to *development*. The second type of change is *discontinuous*, and this involves the transformation of a system as a whole. Such global system change is distinct from development. It constitutes *evolution*.

The change of a social system from dictatorship to democracy can never be accomplished continuously. The reason for this is that dictatorship is too strong. Through the inheritance of political and economic power it perpetuates itself. It is a system in equilibrium. For change of such a system to occur, a break is required. The equilibrium must be disrupted. Such a break is termed a *phase transition*, and it is characterized by *chaos*.

One example of discontinuous social change was East Timor. The shift there to democracy required chaos in the form of armed rebellion. However, even this was not enough. Change in East Timor only occurred through the disruption that developed in Indonesia as a whole. In effect, East Timor was a part of a larger system, and its freedom, its break from this larger system, was dependent on events in it.

A system is in equilibrium if it has established a measure of stability. The system either is at rest, or it is following a periodic cycle. However, if energy is applied to it, it is forced to adapt. If possible, it absorbs the additional energy without altering its fundamental structure. Or, if it is unable to do this, it creates a more complex form of order to accommodate it. In the science of chaos, it has been shown that such developments in order often occur via *bifurcations*.

If the energy addition is sufficiently great, the system can no longer absorb it in an orderly fashion. A threshold is passed, and turbulence - chaos - ensues. But it has also been shown that such chaos itself is not truly chaotic, not truly random. Patterns are embedded in the turbulence, and these may eventually surface, giving rise to a completely new type of organization, a new evolutionary form. (Order leads to disorder, and then back to order. Also, these patterns are referred to as *strange attractors*, and they are so-named because it is considered odd that there would be any underlying order in a state of chaos.)

System stability is a continuum. Some system equilibriums are stronger than others. For a weak equilibrium, a small amount of energy - a slight trigger - can lead to turbulence and disruption. For a strong one, great energy, in the form of one major trigger, or many distinct

minor ones, is required to initiate a change. (Smaller disturbances may push such a system out of alignment, but not all the way into chaos. Without additional disruption one would expect it to return to its equilibrium.)

Developments in system complexity occur sporadically and unpredictably. For an increase in energy sufficient to lead to a complete system change, one action must follow another, action after action, faster and faster, until a threshold is reached, turbulence ensues, and the phase transition is accomplished.

There are many unknowns associated with chaos, the first of which is the amount of energy required to initiate the phase transition, the beginning of turbulence. Secondly, chaos itself is □ of course - unpredictable. Once turbulence starts you cannot know where it will go next, or how long it will last. Because of this, it cannot be controlled. (It can only be experienced.) Indeed, chaos is the opposite of control, hence it involves risk. You cannot predict what the consequences of it will be. Further, while the theory has shown that new forms of order are embedded in the turbulence (such non-randomness would seem to imply a measure of control), there are many possible outcomes once the energy addition is dissipated (the underlying order serves only as a guide). As with water which ceases to boil when you stop heating it, the outcome could be a reversion to the prior state of affairs. The onset of chaos does not ensure evolution. Or, the chaos could be so great that the system which is subject to it fails to adapt, and dies, so again there is no evolution; instead, there is extermination and extinction. (This is evident with the many different species which are now going extinct in response to the environmental chaos created by humans.) And lastly, a real new order, a new form, might evolve.

Chaos and violence

Chaos in a social context is considered to be synonymous with violence, but this does not have to be the case. Widespread non-violent civil disobedience, the voluntary rejection and “opting-out” of a social system, is a form of chaos.

In this scenario the chaos occurs in individual brains, as they undergo a phase transition and rewire themselves to think in a new way. It is possible; it only requires education, that violence is not the solution, that peace is preferable to war, and cooperation to competition.

Having said that, though, the likelihood that such education can become widespread, rapidly, even in a generation or two, is slim. The general state of human development that prevails around the world precludes this. In culture after culture, violence is viewed as the solution, and competition is the norm.

The phase transition to defeat each specific form of dictatorship will require its own specific form of chaos. And, unfortunately, but we cannot avoid this fact, in the struggle against certain types of dictatorship, the chaos will involve violence. Global social systems of which violence is truly an integral part will require violent chaos to overthrow them.

Consider the system of extreme Islam, which is based on the call of Islamic Jihad. The Prophet Mohammed himself declared the first Islamic Holy War, against all those who persecuted him in his birthplace, the city of Mecca. This call survived the defeat of the Meccans, by Mohammed and the people of what came to be known as Medina, and it has been taken up by today's extreme wing of Islam, which infers the act of persecution to all non-Muslims. Extreme Islam incorporates a call to violence, which cannot be renounced by its followers, since the call came directly from God - from Allah - via the Prophet.

The chaos necessary to defeat extreme Islam will involve violence, but, and this chance is minute, perhaps only the violence on the part of the extremists themselves. For this to happen, the rest of the Muslims of the world will have to renounce the extremists, and cut their funding, and pressure them out of the faith, at the same time redefining the faith, by ending the call for Jihad.

As another example, consider the chaos required to defeat a military dictatorship, one which uses violence but which does not have such a religious underpinning. In this case it is theoretically possible that all, or a critical mass, of the dictator's soldiers could be convinced to lay down their arms.

This is not very probable, though, as the specific example of Burma demonstrates. It is extremely doubtful, for a variety of reasons, that the army of Burma would lay down its weapons and end its repression of the Burmese people. Far more likely is the possibility that some soldiers would turn their guns on the dictators - the generals - to lead the way to democracy. Barring that, the generals and the army will have to be defeated in combat.

However, to give one example where the chaos of the transition away from dictatorship will be non-violent, there is the prospective defeat of media and advertising brainwashing. There is no need to attack program executives and advertising copywriters, just to turn off the TV.

In summary, chaos is not equivalent to violence, but there is a substantial overlap, particularly involving the change of global systems which are based on violence. Such a system will not yield unless confronted by a greater force, and the current situation, given our state of development as a species, is that such a force must itself be violent.

Chaos analysis questionnaire

(Note: The following analysis can be applied to any form and specific example of dictatorship.)

1. System

- What are the boundaries and general characteristics of the system that is subject to the dictatorship? What system requires global system change?
- Is there a larger system of which the dictatorial system forms a part, for which the defeat of the dictatorship is dependent on change in it?
- Are there any other global systems that influence the dictatorship, which through their actions increase or reduce its stability?

2. Equilibrium

- How strong is the dictatorship; what is the stability of its system equilibrium?
- What specific forces - power structures - maintain the equilibrium and give it its strength, both within the dictatorial system itself and within such other global systems? What attributes, policies, practices and conditions contribute to its stability?

3. Change

- If change requires a period of chaos and a phase transition, what are the different types of energy additions through which such chaos can be generated, and how much energy (how much chaos) is needed?
- What are the sources of such energy: the different groups, both internal and external, which are in opposition to the system's own power structures?
- What specific steps or triggers could exert pressure on the system's supporting power structures such that they break, and the overall system fails and chaos ensues?
- If chaos is created, what is required to ensure that a phase transition to democracy occurs, rather than a reversion to another form of dictatorship?

4. Prognosis

- What is the likelihood that such steps will be taken?
- What is the likelihood that the dictatorship will be defeated?
- What are the other possible outcomes, including a probability assessment for each?

11. SOCIAL EVOLUTION AND CHAOS

Social change, seemingly, can occur in a number of ways, the first of which is via reform. The idea of reform is that we seek to solve our problems *one by one*, and using conventional means. Such means are by definition ethical, as they entail *working within the system*. There is a real question, though, if reform can ever achieve anything, since it requires the system to change itself. Reformers are regularly co-opted by the system, such that they become complicit with it, or they are diverted from their goals. And even when real reform does appear to take hold, and this inevitably takes a very long period of time, the risk is always present that it will revert, as when the leaders of the system change. (With reform it is also regularly the case that a battle is won, at the cost of losing its associated war. In addition, I do not mean to infer that all people who strive for reform are co-opted, or diverted. For instance, many government employees *are* public servants, and use their best efforts to fight off the untoward pressure of political interests.)

Secondly, we can seek to accomplish change via revolution, to use force to overthrow the *entire* current system and replace it with something new. With revolution the goal is to accomplish change *now*, i.e., fast, and in this effort any means, no matter how extreme, are considered justifiable. Revolutionaries are impatient, and they regularly are motivated by anger and engage in great violence. Therefore, it is no surprise that such revolutions never succeed. Even if the old order is torn down, the new form quickly reverts to it, as with one dictatorship following another, and perhaps entailing even greater repression.

The third option also seeks global change, but this time with a foundation in reason, not anger, and also with an understanding of the role that chaos plays in evolutionary processes. Further, it is recognized that some time will be required, and that violent means are unethical. Therefore, the advocates of such a strategy, including many different types of social and environmental activists, pursue not only conventional means but also “radical” ones, such as non-violent civil disobedience and direct action. Violence against people and other forms of life is considered to be justifiable only in instances of self-defense, as for the victims of aggression in a war, and also only when it does not involve non-combatants or the use of torture.

A few examples should suffice to clarify these distinctions. Opponents of poverty frequently attempt to work within the system, but their efforts regularly are subverted. The leaders of the system have their own agendas, and design responses that appease the poor without confronting their underlying problems, and as a result nothing changes. If anything, inequalities increase.

For revolution, two examples where change clearly was not accomplished occurred with the Bolsheviks in Russia and the Maoists in China. The goals of both were ethical: the end of

feudalism and imperialism. But their means were not; they used such things as purges, torture and mass murder. (In many such situations the goal is not even social change. The revolutionaries are really false rebels. Their only goal is to obtain power themselves, and they marshal support for this by misleading their followers: by presenting their fight as one for social justice.)

An alternative example, though, exists with the American “revolution,” as it did lead to a new form of order, democracy. The means of the American Revolution were ethical, to the extent that any war can be, particularly regarding such things as the treatment of prisoners and the general public. (In an ethical war prisoners are treated humanely, and the lives of non-combatants are not put at risk, as through the use of landmines and terrorism.) Of course, the evolutionary process in the U.S., even now, is not yet complete. Such events as the Civil War and the Civil Rights movement, and today’s protests of the incestuous relationship between government and corporations, were - and are - later stages in our quest for real equality, the equality that democracy is meant to achieve.

What these examples infer is that the ethical basis of the means that are used to trigger chaos are incorporated into it. Anger and hate may be more “effective” at creating social turbulence, but they retain a primary role in any subsequent order that arises from it. The practical reason for this is that if chaos is fueled by violence, this normally leads to massive social disruption, and hence great barriers to establishing a new democratic order. But if chaos is fueled by reason and activism, to force changes in government practices and social values and conventions, with such changes thought out in advance, to the extent that they can be, a new and better order likely can be formed.

A further barrier, though, remains: what if one side in a chaotic situation is violent and another is not, as, for example, with police who react violently to non-violent demonstrators? The latter retain the right to defend themselves, but to the extent that they lower themselves and use the tactics of the state, they degrade their ethical position and reduce the probability that a better social order can be formed.

The main consequence of all of this is that with chaos one must be alert and ready. It may be uncontrollable and unpredictable, but its negative consequences, such as the number of people who will die in a civil war, can be limited if one is prepared to confront such consequences the instant they arise (and where possible seek to prevent them). Further, as the energy subsides and the turbulence dies down, one must be ready to direct and shape the formation of the next social order. For instance, for a dictatorship that falls through chaos, activists and rebels must be prepared to begin implementing democratic institutions at the first opportunity (beginning with the installation of an independent security apparatus, such as a peace-keeping force, to halt the perpetration of atrocities in the residual disorder).

Regarding the energy needed to instigate chaos, one can only keep pushing until the requirement, whatever it might be, is met. But, as steps can be planned, and orchestrated into overall campaigns, it may be possible to accelerate the onset of turbulence, perhaps greatly.

In addition, the goals of our social evolution include to change dictatorship into democracy, and inequality into equality. However, we also want to change our attitudes and behavior toward other forms of life. Will two periods of chaos be necessary to accomplish this?

Humans are self-centered, as are all other species. Because of this numerous social developments have occurred, as a means to stop humans from being killed, which likely will prove evolutionary. But there has been no change, no real change as yet, in our behavior towards other life. This characteristic of our form is not yet evolving. Reason tells us that it should, that all life has rights and should be treated as equal, and insofar as reason guides our actions we should evolve in this way as well. In theory, then, one could envision successive periods of chaos, the first to bring about real equality between people, and the second to create equality with all other life. However, such an eventuality is actually rather farfetched. The trigger behind our need to evolve is not escalating conflict between people (we do not need to evolve greater means of aggression); instead, it is the earth's ecological disaster. It is our behavior towards nature that is both decimating other life and creating an untenable social structure. Therefore, the resolution of the chaos to come will require not only equality and peace between people; it actually begins with the achievement of equality and peace between people and all other forms of life.

Finally, one might also inquire: what does all of the foregoing imply for activism and activists?

1. Reform will not work: it will not be sufficient to bring about the change that we desire.
2. Neither will the extreme measures of revolution. Revolutionary developments always revert, and they also regularly take a form that is worse than that which they replace.
3. Chaos must be instigated for social evolution to occur. However, it is essential here that a subtle distinction be addressed. In arguing for the onset of chaos it would appear that I am recommending the use of volatility, which previously I have excoriated as a tool of social form. The difference is that the tactics of radical activism do not constitute form. There is no manipulation to achieve a hidden agenda. And, while the activist consensus against modern corporate behavior could be construed as the creation of a common enemy, this is not form, if it really is the enemy. Unifying against the Nazis did not serve as a negative means by which the Allies' identity could be defined; rather, it was a *necessary* response to an extremely dangerous threat. Modern corporate behavior also is an extremely dangerous threat, and the issues, goals and tactics of activists reflect this. We do not

obfuscate. We are up-front, and clear. And we are willing to consider dissenting opinions. We are not form; rather, we are education, the education necessary to defeat it.

4. A distinction should also be drawn between partial and complete chaos. For example, the chaos that is now evident throughout human society, in the form of such things as localized conflicts and even civil wars, is only partial. However, if only as a result of environmental degradation, it is inevitable that it will spread. In addition, a second critical factor is that the social manipulation and dictatorship that has now become common, worldwide, is effectively forcing us into a smaller and smaller box. But life breaks free in these circumstances. It finds a way. Hence, one would expect some sort of mass escape: from modern social form. (This will probably begin in only one or a few locations, but then quickly spread everywhere else.)

For nature, many ecosystems and species are under assault, and the chaos they are experiencing is already total. They are being wiped off the face of the earth. Still, such destruction is itself often localized. But this too will change. The earth is an ecology. Disrupt one part of it and, if only slightly, you disrupt all of it. But if enough parts are disrupted, and destroyed, the entire life-sustaining structure will break down.

The goal of direct action environmental activists is to cause the first, social chaos, to forestall the possibility of the second, environmental extermination.

5. Chaos requires strong steps, so such steps will have to be taken. We need more than widespread grassroots organization. We need acts, if only to serve as symbols for such organization. Further, we should not be complicit with the dictatorial forces in modern, and traditional, society.

In addition, we must recognize that the system of domination by humanity over all other species is exceedingly strong. We do not see such life as having *any* rights. Instead, nature is viewed with indifference, or disdain, and also regularly as something which must be conquered, with force. Therefore, one expects that the trigger or triggers that will be required to disrupt this system will themselves have to be extremely powerful.

6. Such steps, though, must be ethical. Violence against individuals should never be used except in defense of oneself or one's family. In rare cases, though, property destruction is justifiable, and the foremost of these cases is when it is necessary to prevent the torture or murder of life. Destruction of property is also justifiable if it is property that has been stolen from you (you are entitled to destroy your own property), or if it is property that is used in other unethical and criminal actions.

7. When we have the social order reeling, and close to chaos, we must not relent. Rather, we should hit it until it is down, and then kick it to keep it down. Action must follow action to ensure that enough energy is added and the current system is swept away. For instance, dictatorships must be destroyed, with the dictators imprisoned or expelled, and their personal and family assets seized and nationalized. (One can argue that the chaos that developed recently in Indonesia was insufficient to accomplish real change. The dictator Suharto, and his family members and cronies, appear unlikely to face justice. They will never be punished for the murders for which they were responsible, and they likely will retain most of their wealth. The changes there therefore cannot be considered to be evolutionary, and the country may well revert to another dictatorship, just as the Suharto dictatorship followed the Sukarno dictatorship, which in turn followed the colonial dictatorship of the Dutch.)
8. In the steps leading up to chaos, and in the turbulence that follows its onset, activists will face violence and repression, and some individuals will be injured and even killed.

To confront modern corporate behavior with effect, the number of radical activists is going to have to increase dramatically. Large demonstrations at every institutional meeting, and hundreds of direct action affinity groups, are required. And, of course, the police will overreact to this. They will respond to protests, civil disobedience and property destruction with harassment, illegal detention and extreme prejudice. This is what they are paid, and ordered, to do. They are a security mechanism for the state and corporate interests, and their primary means are repression. Anyone who opposes the system is, perforce, the enemy. Even more, they want to do it. They love their power, and believe the only way to prove that they have it is to use it.

How violent will the social chaos generated by radical activism become? One hopes that the violence will be less severe than the level commonly seen in war, but there is no way to know for sure. Given the standard response of dictators to dissent, we should expect the worst. However, just because the consequences of nonviolent activism may include violence, this does not invalidate it as an approach. Great violence is also regularly the consequence of complacency, and denial, and inaction.

It is also worth noting that the United States security forces, the military and the police, should they choose to use their full capability against the American people, are invincible. If the public ever demands change, and they decide to support those who are in power, we will not stand a chance.

Some people will say that activists should not court such a response, and that only reform should be attempted. This is absurd. It will accomplish nothing. Activists must act. And, as the

police react with violence, and we are imprisoned, injured and killed, we must not let up or lose courage. We must redouble our efforts, and recruit new activists, even as the police violence against us escalates. There is no alternative. We will have to see it through.

One also hopes that the general public, the non-activist masses, those who believe the police and large institutions serve their interests, not realizing that they really are prisoners of them, will awaken. This is not an impossibility. Members of the general public, particularly children and young adults, are not so degraded that they cannot understand that activists would not make such sacrifices without need: if critical problems did not exist. They could awaken and understand who is right, and that mass media portrayals of us are lies. It is even conceivable that they would join the effort, if only by using their residual influence to protest the level of police and institutional abuse that is directed at us.

9. And lastly, or rather, to begin, we must educate this same general public to care about other people as much as themselves, and to care for other life as much as human. Only when people do this, when they understand that it is the only “reasonable” response to the conditions of our existence, will we truly evolve.

12. ACTIVIST ETHICS

The final issue to examine in more detail is that of ethics: what is acceptable activist behavior and what is not, and why? Ethics must be considered in any activist endeavor, but they are of the greatest importance in those situations that demand the strongest tactics, in other words, civil disobedience, direct action and agitation. Said another way, where does activism end and rebellion begin? What are the most extreme steps (or means) that we can justifiably take?

(Note: this analysis is an extension of the discussion in Section 11 of Chapter 6.)

To begin, civil disobedience is acceptable in many circumstances, and it actually enjoys something of a historical tradition. American revolutionaries helped set this example, as in the Boston Tea Party, and we can emulate them. Indeed, in dictatorial countries you are civilly disobedient merely through expressing your own opinions and your right to freedom of assembly.

In more democratically developed countries, though, the issue is never this clear. Each case where you are tempted to civil disobedience must be considered on its own merits. But, in general, those actions that a substantial portion of the public supports are, *prima facie*, justifiable. Law also evolves, but sometimes it has to be helped - even pushed - along.

Of course, all of the consequences must be considered. If the civil disobedience injures other people, particularly if it physically injures them, then it is almost certainly unjustifiable. Financial injury, though, particularly if it is not suffered by a person, but rather by an institutional entity, is a different matter.

As a case example of this, consider trespass, such as the lock-down by activists of a company logging road to an old growth forest, a forest that via influence peddling the government has given to the company for free. In this case the company may feel that it *owns* the forest, and that it is suffering an injury if it can't cut the trees down *right now*. However, I, for one, would consider such trespass, such civil disobedience, justifiable, and I am certain that many other people would think this way as well. (This has been proven by the public support given to Earth First! actions in the Pacific Northwest and elsewhere. Indeed, even the mass media has at times supported these types of actions, such as with CNN's coverage of Julia Butterfly Hill's Headwaters Forest treesit, and through the favorable representation of the Earth First! character in the *Jurassic Park* sequel, *The Lost World*.)

As an analysis of such direct action, the ethical end is to protect forests, and other wild habitats, and other forms of life that are exploited by humans. The justifications for this are that the social system has broken down, the rule of law is false - it is fundamentally and insupportably

unfair □ only for the wealthy and institutional few; and that nature and life must be defended from such a system, and from torture and extermination. The ethical means, then, include trespass, and, in certain cases, property destruction and animal liberation. The unethical means, which are *never* used, are violence against individuals.

But, what about the earlier question of violence directed against activists? Aren't you entitled to defend yourself?

“Accepting violence against one’s person is a form of condoning it.”

- Ramona Africa

It is interesting that the struggle for gay rights really began at the Stonewall riots in 1969 in New York City’s Greenwich Village, when gays fought against police harassment and abuse. This uprising initiated, and served as a symbol of, their resistance to the discrimination to which they were (and still are) subjected.

There is a significant debate in the activist community over this issue. Some activists argue that civil disobedience should always be non-violent; that you do not fight back when you get a police boot to your head. This group is effectively arguing for an unethical means to an ethical end: not defending yourself (in this sole case unethical is not also unacceptable), to limit escalating the violence, and also to avoid giving the police and the media a reason to label activists as revolutionaries, rioters and terrorists. The opposing side says, basically: *“If someone kicks me in the head, I fight back.”*

Since, as was demonstrated with the Civil Rights movement, non-violent civil disobedience can achieve significant gains, the tactic of not fighting back should be preserved. However, no one who practices self-defense should be maligned, as this is his or her right. Also, another option, for activists who will not submit to assault, is to pursue other tactics.

The next type of situation, that of agitation, has similar ethical issues. By agitation, I mean such things as encouraging indigenous groups to defend their homelands against corporate exploitation that has been permitted by distant, central governments. For instance, much of northeast Cambodia, which is known as Rattanakiri Province, is pristine rainforest occupied by such fauna as tigers, and also the Kreung people. (They are a minority group in Cambodia; the majority are Khmers.) But the central government in the capital Phnom Penh, run by Hun Sen, who though the head of an “elected” government is essentially a dictator, sold logging rights to the province to an Indonesian timber company. (This occurred while Suharto was still dictator of Indonesia.) Agitation in this instance means encouraging the Kreung to defend themselves, to destroy the bulldozers making logging roads, and also the chainsaws and the sawmills, on *their* land.

(Note: last year Hun Sen sold logging rights in Mondulakiri Province, south along the Vietnam border from Rattanakiri, to a Chinese company. Mondulakiri is also a highland area with great cultural diversity. The local people are fighting the destruction of their ancestral forest, including with direct action tactics.)

In this case the ethical end is the protection of homelands and forests, and the wildlife and indigenous cultures that occupy them. The justification is that the sale of exploitation “rights,” from dictator to dictator, was illegal - it was the act of an illegal regime - and also that it did not reflect the desires of the local people. The ethical means are the destruction of the timber company’s equipment. Unethical means would include killing the actual loggers, or the majority Khmers. (The loggers are Khmers as well.)

The underlying problem in such circumstances is: how can activists deal with the fact that in the time that it will take to implement sustainable development worldwide, an untold number of primary habitats, and the cultures and species that inhabit them, will be destroyed? What do you do in the time that it takes for society finally to realize that a one thousand year old tree has a superior right to that of a timber company executive who wants to cut it down to make a profit? In other words, when, if ever, is violence justifiable?

Said another way, in perhaps its most direct statement, would it have been justifiable to kill Hitler in 1938?

I would argue that violence against another person is never justifiable, except in self-defense. The risks of the *slippery slope*, of resorting to the tactics of the enemy, and thence becoming the enemy, are too great. It is essential always to remember that we are trying to construct a civil society. We are trying to evolve from our present situation where violence is regularly viewed as the solution. Activists must stay on the high ground. Our ends are ethical. Our means must be ethical as well.

In this specific regard, though, in 1938 Jewish and Roma people would have been completely justified in killing Hitler, and by 1941 this would have extended to virtually everyone. (In 1938, large-scale imprisonment of Jews began. But prior to this, in 1933, Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany and ordered a boycott of Jewish businesses, with the result that many Jews were assaulted. Also, this was the year that the first concentration camp, at Dachau, was opened. Even earlier, in 1923, Hitler attempted a putsch, and more than 1,000 shops were looted in Berlin in anti-Semitic rioting. A case can be made that Hitler would have been a legitimate target as early as this.)

But, to return to the present day, the need to be ethical is why so many activists practice non-violence. However, it is also important to understand that, for the most fervent of activists,

this non-violence relates only to people (and other living things). The destruction of property to save other life is viewed as defensible. Of course, company spokespeople regularly refer to such activists as environmental and animal rights “terrorists,” but this is wrong: they are not terrorists. They do not create terror in the hearts of humans. Rather, they seek to end the terror felt by other species that are under the domination of the unethical members of our species. Such company representatives are just attempting to create fear and to cloud the issue. They fight what is right, rather than correct their own wrongs.

Even with these arguments, though, it is important to say one more time that property destruction should only be considered in extreme circumstances. It is a last choice tactic, when there are no other means left to stop the imminent destruction of life.

To continue the discussion, and to make the transition from activism to rebellion, it is also important to recognize that the conditions in Western societies, even with their many reprehensible ills, are nothing compared to the circumstances of millions of people, actually more than two billion, in autocratic nations around the world. Many of these people have to rebel; their circumstances, and the need for self and family preservation, demand it. For example, if you are a member of the Mon or Karen people in eastern Burma, and your government is intent on eradicating you to consolidate its control and to *sanitize* a pipeline route, you have to fight back. You have no choice. Passive resistance will not work. (This holds for all the people of Burma.)

In such circumstances the ethical end is the survival of self, and family, and the protection of livelihood and culture. The justification, once again, is that the government is illegal. It was not elected. Rather, it is a collection of military criminals. The people therefore are compelled to defend themselves and their culture, and in this fight almost anything is appropriate. It is, after all, a war. The only unethical means include to attack non-combatants (this implies that the battle should be fought *without* the use of land mines), and to employ torture. Further, associated environmental damage should be reduced to the greatest extent possible.

Now, through all of this we can see that we have moved from a society which, although it has serious problems, retains some order, to one where the social institutions have changed their allegiance completely and actively campaign against the people, and which is characterized by great disorder. And, somewhere along the way, we must broach the issue of vigilantism. This is because when the system of law, of society itself, breaks down to such an extent that people (and institutions) cannot be held accountable for their actions, their victims are justified in taking the law into their own hands. This is a return to our traditional approach to justice: to natural law. “Human Law” will not defend you, so you have to do it yourself.

It is at this point that it is important to discuss the problem of anger. The challenge of activism is to see that it derives from reason, not emotion. However, the latter can be far stronger: obsession regularly exceeds commitment. The quickest way to bring about change is to use volatility, to replace fear not with courage but with anger. And through this you will accomplish a change, a revolution, but it *will* revert. And in the end you will have accomplished nothing, nothing at all, and caused great harm in the process.

Given the severity of what we are up against, and the seriousness of our responsibility - which is nothing less than the defense of the earth - what can we do? As appealing as it might be to some, you do not shoot timber company executives (or property developers, fur farm owners or laboratory scientists). But, for companies that persist in their reckless destruction, of the environment, of other species, and of the future of humanity, then virtually anything else, including civil disobedience, direct action and agitation, is justifiable.

“In a society where money is power and elections are just a facade to maintain corporate control, direct action at the point of production is one of the most effective places we can work.”

- *Timber Wars*, by Judi Bari, an Earth First! Activist who was critically injured when her car was bombed, to stop her coordination of the defense of the Headwaters Forest.

13. SOCIAL GOALS

“This raises the question, what measure should we use as our guide: what should be our goal? Some people have argued that the goal is the maximization of happiness. Society, particularly the media, regularly acts as if the goal is the avoidance of boredom. Another measure, though, which is not unrelated to the first, is the preservation and creation of value.

Over the last 3.5 billion years all manner of life forms and natural habitats have evolved on our planet. Similarly, in the last two hundred thousand years - the period of time since Homo sapiens evolved as a separate species - an extraordinary array of distinct human cultures have been established. This diversity represents what is truly unique and beautiful about the Earth: it constitutes the real value of our world.

Every time a species dies out, every time a natural habitat is cut down, every time a traditional human culture is “assimilated” by the modern world, part of this value is irrevocably lost.

This concept of value can also be used to evaluate any actions that humans consider, as individuals and through groups. If such actions preserve environmental and cultural diversity, and establish the conditions in which they can continue to thrive, then they are acceptable. However, if the actions reduce the diversity and the potential for further development, even if only through indirect consequences, then they are not.”

- Dictator Watch Manifesto

Earlier I listed a great number of specific activist causes, in which you might choose to become involved. But this still raises the question of our overall goal. If we are to change our society to escape from its present destructive path, what is the alternative? And, how are we to measure our progress?

The issue with development, or progress, is development or progress towards what? Are we working to create a stable society where human needs are fully satisfied, and is our system sustainable and not causing environmental harm? Under the current system, development, as in the idea of a nation’s development, is seen in purely commercial terms, really, in how much money corporations, i.e., “developers,” are making. There is little consideration given to - or calculation of - the cultural and environmental damage that is being caused. Indeed, land development means, it is the same thing as, irreversible land destruction: to pave it over and put up some type of building.

Real development, the type of development that should be our goal, is social or cultural development: the achievement of our social goals. And what are our social goals? The following is a prospective list:

- Voluntary control of our breeding, to reduce the pressures from overpopulation.
- The protection of all natural habitats, with minimal human impact thereon, and as natural resources are needed for industry and agriculture, the minimal, least impact, and sustainable extraction there from.
- Human happiness, through the satisfaction of our needs as individuals.
- An ethical society, where people care for others as well as for themselves.
- The construction of a social infrastructure that guarantees all people access to quality education, health care, housing, transportation and basic utilities.
- The preservation of cultural history and traditions, including such things as languages, arts and crafts, and environmental knowledge.
- Opportunity equality.
- Within reasonable tolerances, wealth equality.
- A meritocracy.
- No intolerance or discrimination; rather, a celebration of diversity.
- A level society, where the disadvantaged are given support and assistance.
- A level society, which does not sink to the lowest common denominator, but rather in which individuals strive to achieve personal creativity, excellence and sophistication.
- A highly productive society, with a great store of wealth, thereby minimizing work requirements and maximizing the time available for leisure and personal development.
- A stable society; one at peace, in equilibrium, and undergoing a natural process of evolution with minimal disruption and unrest.

Are these the goals to which modern society is leading us? If so, it is by a very roundabout route. And are these the goals by which we measure the success of our development and progress? I don't think so.

Also, as a final measure, it is essential that we recognize that for real development to occur, we have to be able to minimize the effects of chance. We have to eliminate the social forms that lead one individual to be a beggar on the streets of India, and another a multimillionaire in Silicon Valley (or Bangalore!). Even in the greatest cases of merit, chance still plays a significant if not dominant role. In a fair and just society, this would not be the case.