

## The Art(s) of Nonviolence

relating to percentages of conversation space occupied by women and men. This recording was played to a national TWS meeting in Tasmania in 1993. These uses of the arts help build a sustainable movement by emphasising the importance of respectful, egalitarian processes and strong, well-bonded affinity groups.

### 13.3.2.3 Networking, building movement

A number of art-forms help protestors identify sympathisers, thereby creating large informal networks. Such arts include music, architecture, badges, bumper stickers and fashion – the latter including clothing, hairstyles, tattoos and body-piercings. As discussed in section 12.2.1.2, such new networks have become recognised as significant subcultures. Examples include the ‘hippies’ who made dramatic adjustments to their lives and created parallel institutions like intentional communities (see Dearling & Hanley 2000), and the later ‘ferals’, - “a subculture that fed an entire regional movement of social and cultural renewal” (Hawley, 2003:23). In a cyclic process, from these communities have arisen many protests, such as Mt Nardi and Chaelundi.

The use of symbols on these stickers, banners, badges and badges is important in this regard, as these are often readily identifiable symbols with powerful connotations. The triangle with ‘No Dams’ (see Figure 119) that was used in the Franklin campaign became so identified with success that it was recycled repeatedly by TWS (Figures 138 and 139).

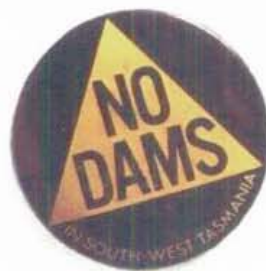


Figure 119: ‘No dams’ badge.

## The Art(s) of Nonviolence

Some of these symbols<sup>16</sup> have further meanings within them, such as the peace symbol (Figure 140, top left), which is formed from the letters CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament), or the land rights flag (Figure 140, second row right), which symbolises the strength and hope of the sun, the blackness of skin, and the red of the soil and the blood that was shed since 1788 (Newbury 1999:37; see also Chisolm & Smith 1990:226-7). Other symbols include animals and trees to demonstrate a move away from anthropocentricity (Figures 141 to 143).

### 13.3.2.4 Inclusivity

Live music is one of the most basic of the arts in that at its simplest it requires nothing more than the human voice or hands to clap. Because it requires little equipment and anyone can join in, it is an example of the inclusivity advocated by nonviolence theories.

Since, as well as music, there is a huge variety of art-forms available - such as the preparations for and performance of the street-theatre at Jabiluka - activists have a diverse range of activities in which they can engage, employing creativity, teamwork and different skills. They may engage in different activities at different levels of intensity – from starring roles to making banners and *papier maché* puppets (see Figures 120 and 121) - and still be part of the protest. This provides a range of options for potential activists, who might be frightened off if they saw ‘locking-on’ or making speeches as the only options. Such inclusivity helps the movement to grow in size.



Figure 120: Jabiluka puppet judge.

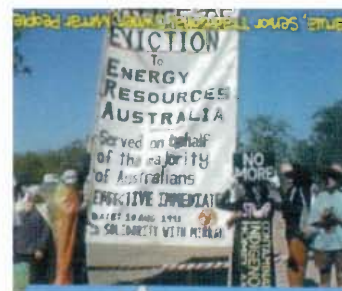


Figure 121: Jabiluka eviction notice.

---

<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to note the circular nature of many of them, which is possibly related to the ecologically-focussed, global and holistic nature of the movement.

13.3.2.5 Avoiding burnout

Section 4.8.4 detailed some of the objections to Gandhi's advocacy of self-suffering, that have been raised, particularly by feminists. However, the case studies have shown that suffering has nevertheless been part of many blockades, arrests and court-cases. W.A. forest activists Lee and Maddock's (2000) account details the sacrifices blockaders have made with regard to losing property, vehicles, licences, money, social security, and employment. This is "partly strategic – it is difficult to punish someone who has nothing-but it is also suffering" (200:166).

Many activists, including myself, suffered from physical and mental health problems, with one activist who played a full-time<sup>17</sup> but unpaid role in coordinating the 1997 Timbarra actions telling me he had turned to heavy substance abuse in Sydney afterwards, as he struggled to recover from the stress ('Tom' 2005, pers. comm. 21 May). This stress-related 'burnout' (see Shields 1993:119-153) causes the movement to lose valuable personnel. It is therefore important to recognise the role that the arts can play in preventing unnecessary suffering and burnout. We have seen above that the arts bring both balance and diversity to activism, providing a wide variety of avenues through which to protest, self-express and release emotional tension. This balance and diversity means that there are opportunities for activists to shift roles rather than working only in one area, for example from highly stressful organisational roles to more relaxing - even therapeutic - work such as puppet-making, drumming or banner-painting.

13.3.2.6 Egalitarian, non-hierarchical, open

Creating art-forms also works best when done in an egalitarian, non-hierarchical manner within groups of a manageable size. This also accords well with nonviolence guidelines, which favour non-hierarchical group structures, radically democratic decision-making forms, and networks of affinity groups. These relatively-small egalitarian groups foster creativity, as was evidenced at Jabiluka. There, the puppet show creators used an informal

---

<sup>17</sup> In this context, 'full-time' means that virtually every waking hour is spent at the blockade, working on the campaign, or being with fellow blockaders.

## The Art(s) of Nonviolence

but highly efficient and enjoyable process to create a successful satire, despite makeshift conditions, minimal resources and imminent arrests.

Again according with nonviolence guidelines, artists favour openness rather than the secrecy of hierarchical or militaristic groups. In fact, they seek out audiences for theatre and other art-forms; there is no point in creating political artworks without an audience in mind. Graffiti (see Figure 122) is an exception in that it is usually done in secret, but it too aims to reach a wide audience.

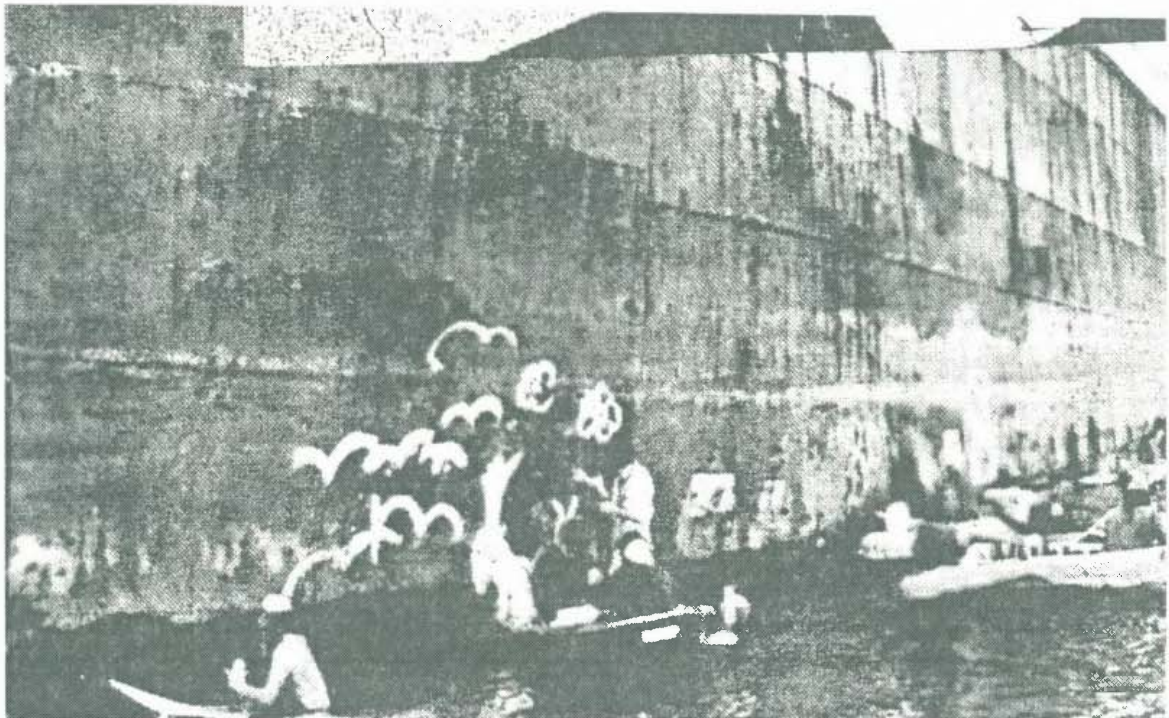


Figure 122: Graffitists paint mural on ship carrying rainforest timber into Australia.

### 13.3.2.7 Recording protests: information dissemination, court-cases, movement learning, nonviolence training, historical purposes.

The recordings of protests mentioned in section 13.2.9 in the context of media, are also used for a variety of other purposes, such as grassroots information-sharing, movement learning, historical purposes, academic research, and for personal records, healing and empowerment. Some writings are fictionalised into novels as Derek Hansen did with

## The Art(s) of Nonviolence

'Blockade' (1998) or I did with 'Horizontal Lightning' about the Penan rainforest blockades (Branagan 1994). Others are turned into radio-plays, poems, cartoons, or songs such as Penelope Swales' 'Black Carrie' - about a NEFA activist, and Judy Small's 'Women of Greenham Common'.

Recording actions can also be useful in court-cases. As the section about my court-case at Jabiluka showed, video footage (taken by police!) at Jabiluka clearly shows a gate being opened by police rather than torn down by protestors as a policeman had alleged. This footage showed that that policeman was an unreliable witness, and it successfully cast doubt upon the prosecution's case.

Such footage can also be useful in nonviolence training, by showing what would-be protestors may face (see Figure 123). This enables them to better prepare in order to remain nonviolent under the most extreme of circumstances. It can also show audiences that the violence they have heard about on the mass media may be caused by the police and not the protestors. This can result in emancipatory learning, radicalising audiences.

Before moving on to the final section of benefits afforded by the arts, it is worth noting that the benefits to movement development are again corroborated by David Curtis' findings:

The arts can aid engagement and participation by a broad cross-section of the community, can strengthen a community's abilities to promote inclusion, and can provide powerful vehicles for community mobilisation, empowerment, and information transfer (Curtis 2005:2).



Figure 123: Action photographs can show new activists what may occur at protests.

### 13.3.3 TACTICAL/STRATEGIC

#### 13.3.3.1 Diversionary

Art creates dilemmas for police, as they are more reluctant to disturb a popular artistic performance than a traditional demonstration. In my experience, police are less likely to arrest a clown than an angry demonstrator, even if they are both ‘trespassing’, because the costume and performance reduces the activist’s threat. Such activists seem to float through lines of police as if invisible, while others are being hauled off to custody.<sup>18</sup> If they *are* arrested, public sympathies may rest with the clown, or at least remain neutral and questioning rather than automatically supportive of the police. Thus the arts (and their associated status) are useful in adding to the confusion experienced by authorities (see also

---

<sup>18</sup> Nude protests have often occurred, from Nazi-occupied Holland (Miller 1979:17) to - according to Cheryl-Ann Potgieter of the University of Pretoria - South Africa in the 1990s (2003, pers. comm., 11 December). Such a protest adds to the confusion of (usually predominantly male) police.

Rawicz-Oledzka 1991:57), and in diverting police attention away from some activists. This has tactical advantages in allowing the activists to move to areas of the blockade where they are most needed, and to be part of a blockade for longer before they are arrested. Magnified by dozens of such activists, these tactical benefits are considerable, advancing the short-term strategic objectives of the blockade.

As evidenced by the NEFA blockades, a related element is the use of sport as a diversionary tactic, adding to the air of chaos that authorities confront, and occupying blockading spaces with a playful but vigorous and physical element. Sport also has a conversionary element, as it often appeals to the predominantly-male and working-class police and workers, and provides some common ground to initiate dialogue.

### 13.3.3.2 Multiple foci

Creating multiple foci of attention through the arts can also be a tactical tool of nonviolence. Having a single focus at a blockade, such as a mob shaking a gate, is centralised, confrontational and easy for police and army personnel<sup>19</sup> to control. Multiple foci – for example, the clusters of musicians, street-theatre, and sculpture at Jabiluka - decentralises the action, making it less confrontational as well as harder to control (see Figure 124). However, such diversification of tactics also makes the protest more complex, and thus harder for the mass media – inclined to simplification - to report. Therefore, we can see again the importance of writing and recording for mainstream media, and creating new media outlets.

The use of the arts in creating multiple foci of protest - at actions, in the wider community, and amongst unaligned artists - addresses key tenets of nonviolence relating to decentralisation and grassroots activism rather than change through seizing power and reforming from top down.

---

<sup>19</sup> The army was used against protesters at the Nurrungar military base in South Australia in 1984.

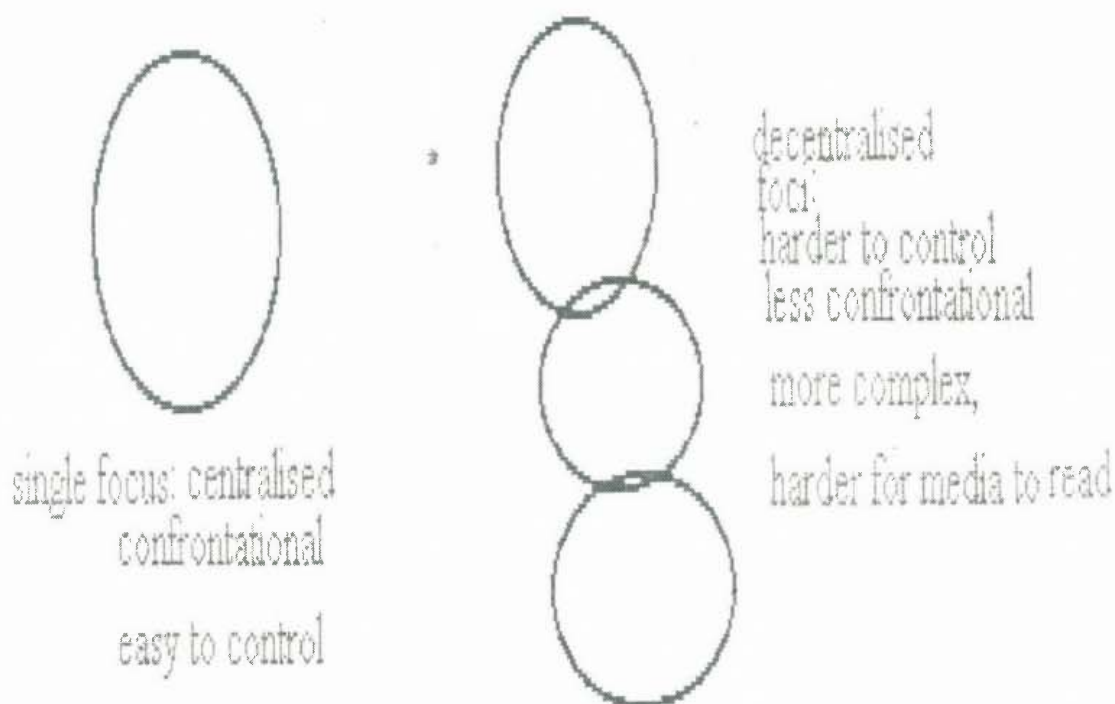


Figure 124: Shows how multiple foci of artistic activism has tactical advantages, and adds to an action's complexity.

#### 13.4 CONCLUSION

The use of the arts by activists is a widespread and effective tool of nonviolence and social change in Australia. Many different art-forms are used, and they have various and often multiple functions, aiding conversion/education, holism, movement development and sustainability, and tactical objectives. Artistic activism creates innovative nonviolent protests that engage audiences and attract media attention through characteristics such as novelty, creativity and humour (see Figures 144 and 145). The arts have an ability to aid efficient and effective communication, to impact holistically on a number of levels, to educate and persuade, and, ultimately, to convert. These benefits, along with the ability of art-forms such as music to prevent violence, inspire, fortify, bond, include and encourage activists, and otherwise aid their group dynamics, enables movements to spread widely and rapidly, and erodes the numbers and power of opponents. Journalistic activism, using art-forms such as film-making and writing, further spreads the ideas, sounds, images, ideals and emotions of protesters to wide audiences via the mass media and flourishing



## The Art(s) of Nonviolence

independent media. New communication and recording technologies enabled the NEFA blockaders, CANC bike riders and Jabiluka campaigners to promulgate and better control our media image, while the internet aided the Jabiluka campaigners to post our own stories and images on websites and via emails as alternatives to the corporate media.

As we have seen in this chapter, artistic activism accords with key tenets of nonviolence, such as conversion, holism, inclusivity, parallel institutions, avoidance of violence, egalitarian group dynamics, openness, multiple foci and decentralisation. The arts thus contribute significantly to nonviolent practice (see Figure 146).

Physicist and Greens politician Fritjof Capra has observed that capitalism's overemphasis on rational, masculine attitudes and values is being challenged by a more holistic, *cultural* transformation:

... leading to the emergence of a new vision of reality that will require a fundamental change in our thoughts, perceptions and values (Capra 1990:16).

In Australia, attitudes to the environment have changed greatly over the last few decades. These changes are slowly translating upwards from individual and community level, evidenced, for example, by the proliferation of recycling (see Peatling 2004:5), or the successful Franklin, NEFA and Jabiluka campaigns detailed herein. At a national level, despite the intransigence of many corporations and governments, groups such as TWS, Landcare, Greening Australia, intentional communities, permaculturalists, and organic food cooperatives are struggling in different ways to end land-clearing, old-growth logging and unsustainable monocultural practices. Enormous marches for peace and for reconciliation have demonstrated a growing support for what were once fringe issues. These grassroots changes have undoubtedly been influenced by the conversionary/educative use of the arts in the Australian eco-pax movement (Figures 125 to 127 provide models of how this may occur). As Scalmer notes, although the artistic *dissent events* he describes are seldom acknowledged as important, they are "at the root of democratic advance, social movement mobilisation and theoretical renewal" (2000:176).

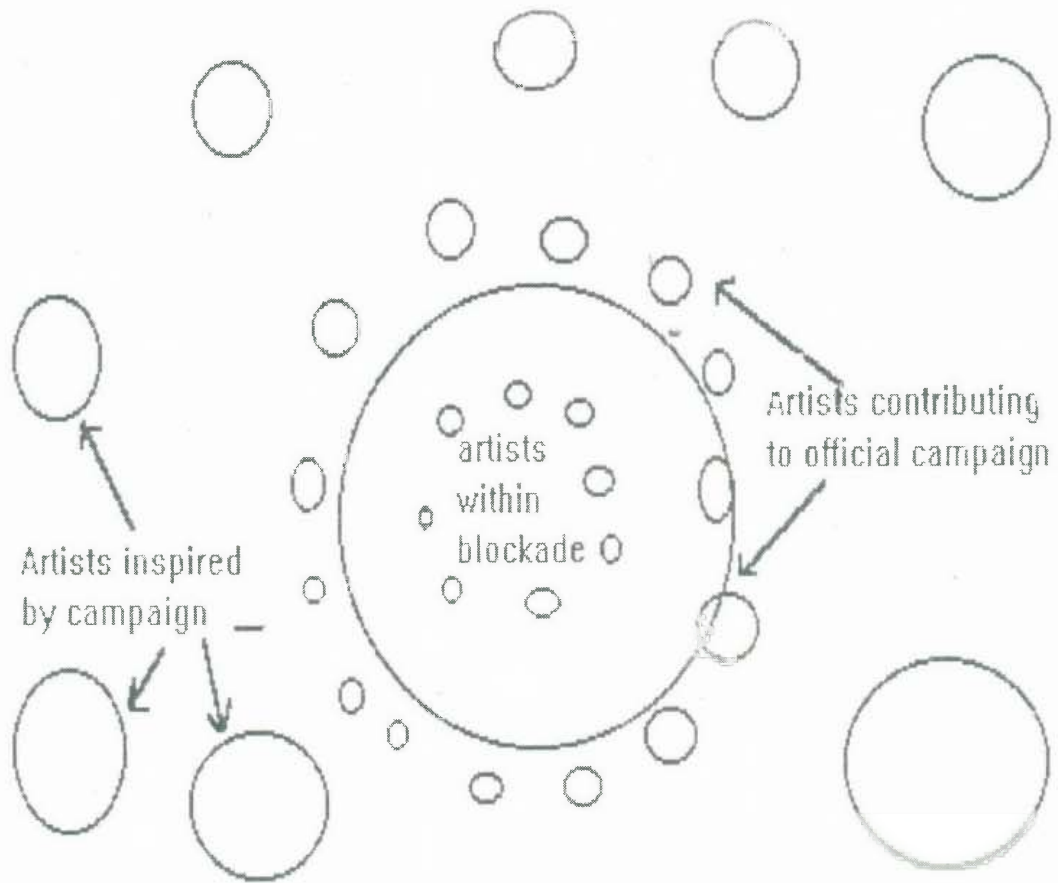


Figure 125: Artists (activist and otherwise) influencing public opinion.

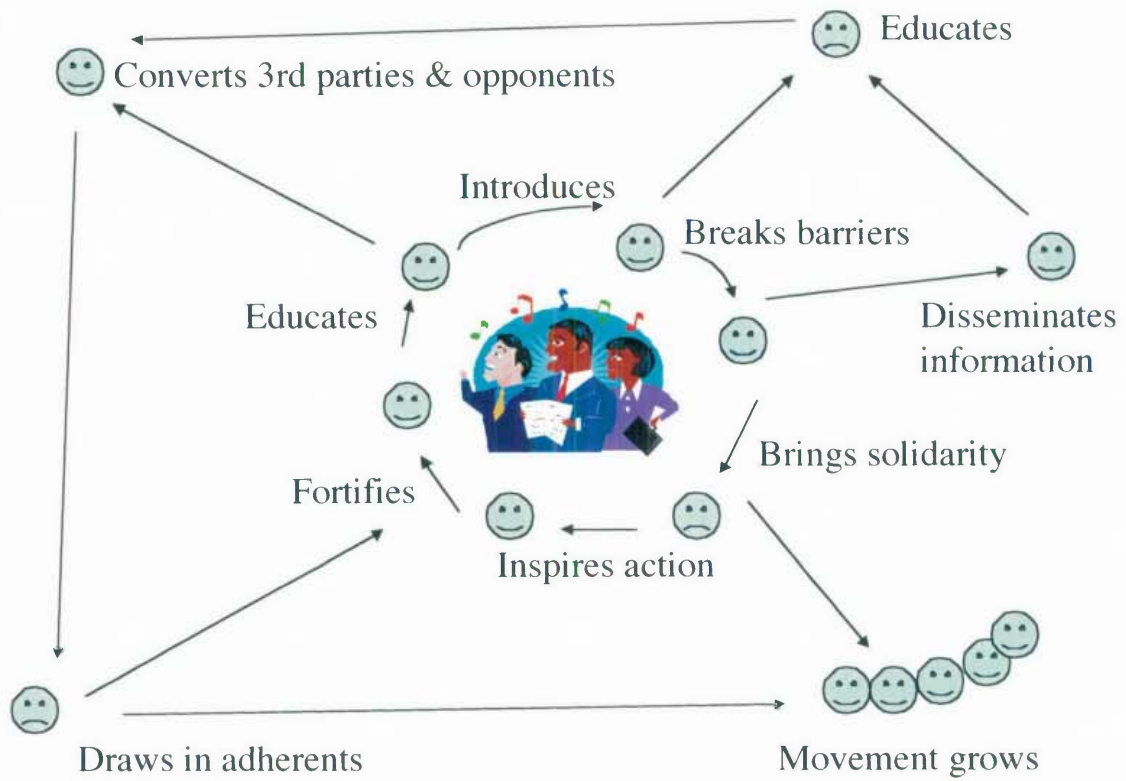


Figure 126: Model suggesting how arts work within and outside movement.

The Art(s) of Nonviolence

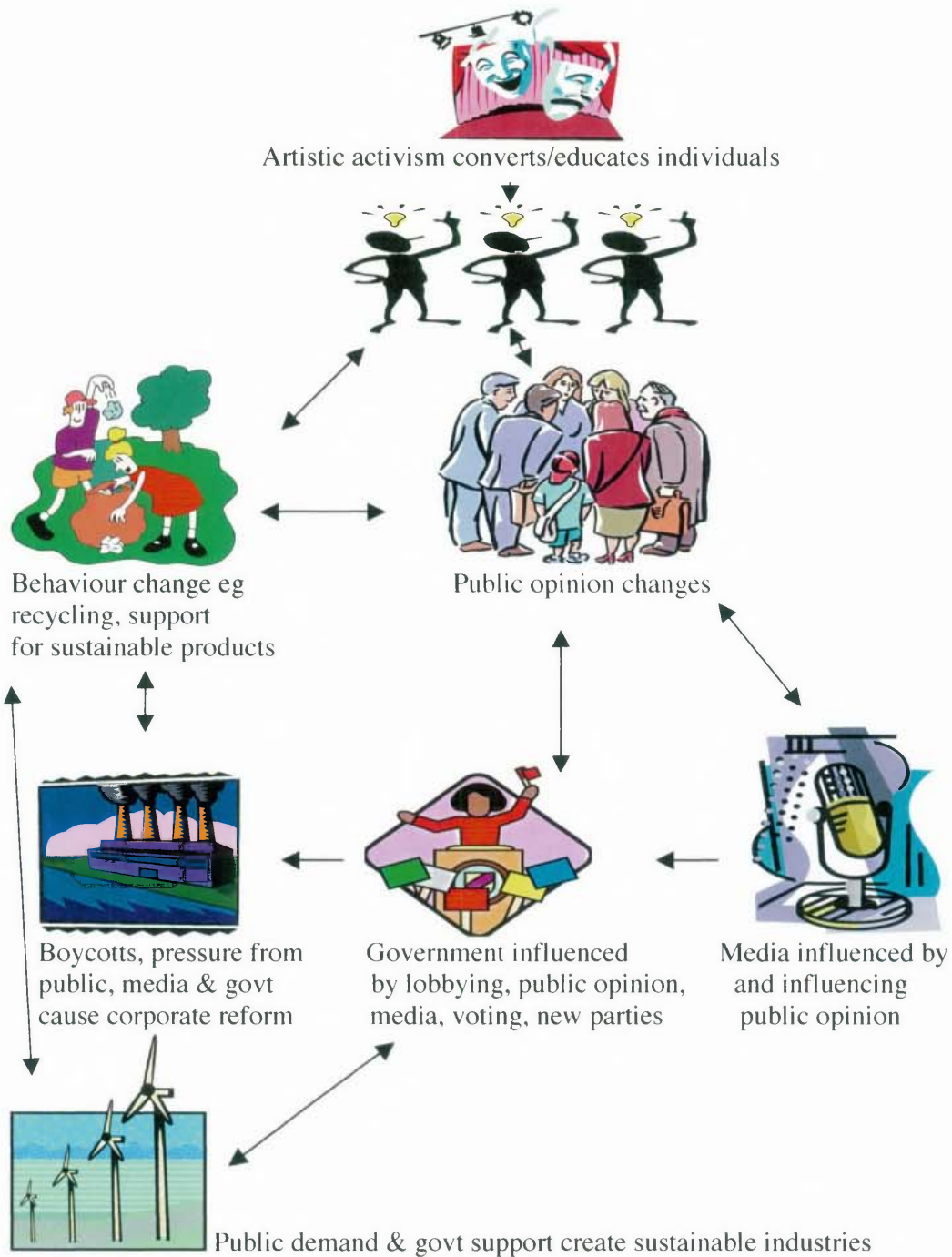


Figure 127: Shows how artistic activism contributes to environmental sustainability.

The Art(s) of Nonviolence

Some protesters buried themselves in the sand to prevent the movement of heavy machinery, and had to be dug out by the police before they could be arrested.

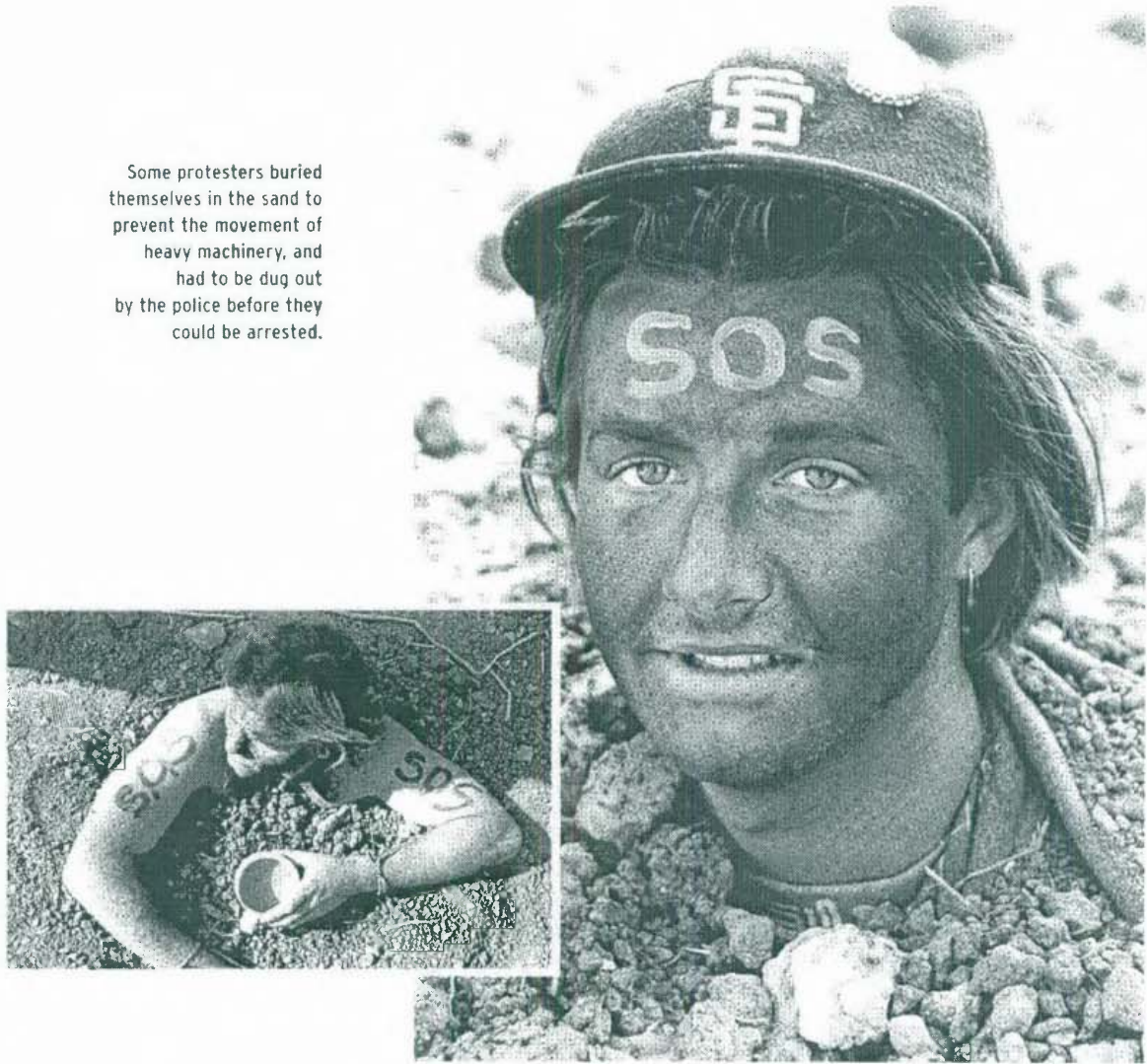


Figure 128: Buried protesters, Look-At-Me-Now Headland protest, early 1990s.



# Anti-war protest on the march

'We have to keep trying to make a positive statement'

By CATHERINE SUDHOLZ

ANTI-WAR sentiment continues to grow among Armidale residents in the lead-up to a march later this month, to protest war against Iraq.

Last week, some locals opposed to war in Iraq, met to paint banners and signs to be used in the march, which will start from Central Park at 10am on Saturday, February 15, and end with a rally in the Mall.

Armidale Peace Group member, Frances Letters, said individuals and people from all sorts of organisations were becoming involved in the protest against a war in Iraq.

She said the protest was a way for the local community to voice its opinion on the developing situation involving Iraq.

"We have to do something to stop this, so we've come together to organise a march on Saturday, February 15, which will be a day of global protest," Ms Letters said.

Kathleen Bleechmore said she believed that by showing their protest, they would be able to make an impact.

"I think you have to keep try-

ing to make a positive statement," Mrs Bleechmore said.

"The bigger the message they receive the better, otherwise they take it to mean that it's okay," she said.

Ms Letters, who was also an activist during the Vietnam War and the anti-apartheid movement, said actions back then were an example of how things could be changed.

"It shows what a person can do," she said.

"I think that a lot of people feel as if they'd like to do something but are not sure how they can, at least this way you can do something.

"And from the response that we're getting, it's not just one group in the community, it's so widespread. People on the land are even prepared to protest because of wheat sales to Iraq.

"There are so many reasons for opposing this war."

Vigils will be held in the Mall each Saturday morning in the lead up to the main anti-war march on February 15.

People are also invited meet this Sunday, February 9, at 167 Markham Street to sign a petition and paint banners for the march



Figure 129: Shows how the act of banner-painting can be a focus of media attention prior to a rally. The main quote also demonstrates the attempt to present positive messages.

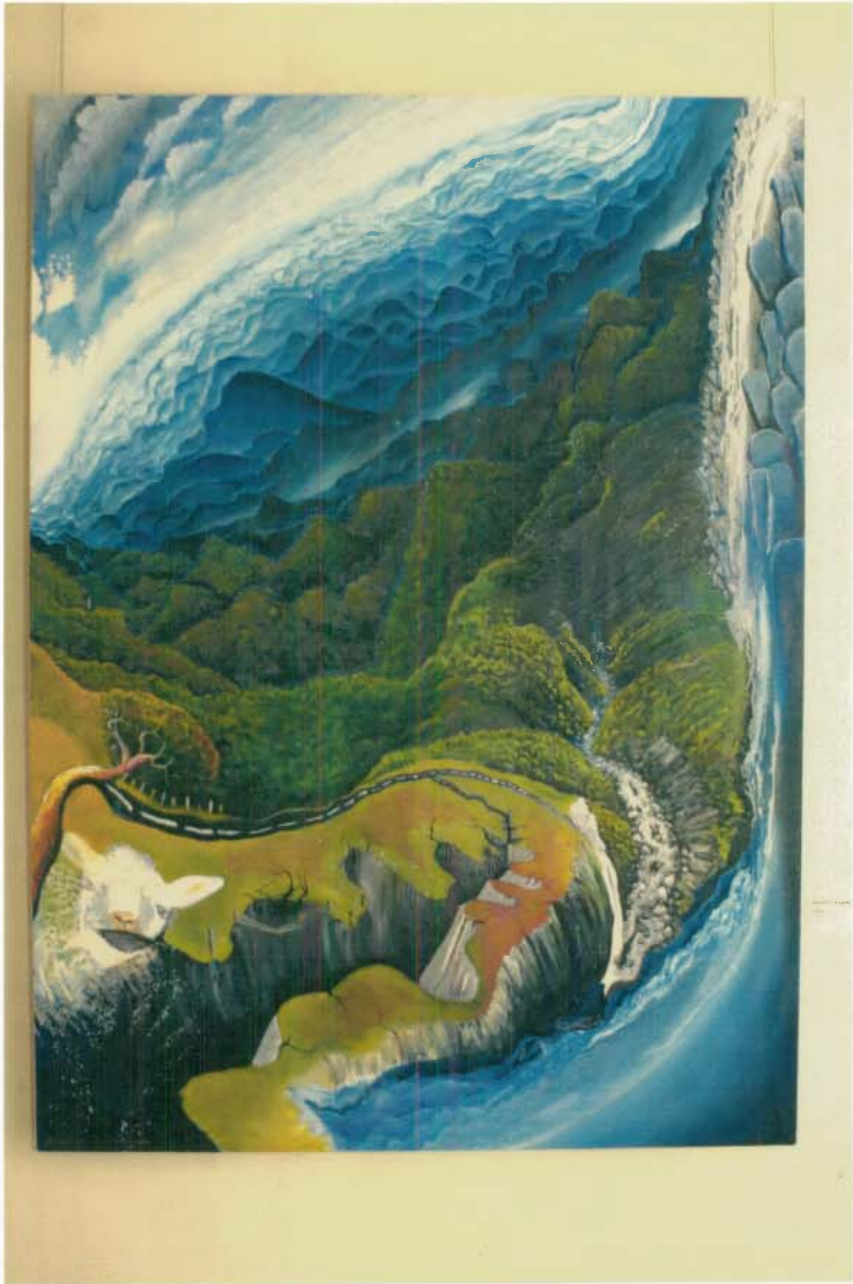


Figure 130: My painting of sheep eroding New England region.

**ON A MISSION:** (above) Protesters took to the streets of Armidale on Friday, voicing their opposition to proposed changes to the industrial relations system by the Federal Government. (above right) Marty Branagan and his John Howard puppet performing at the rally

# Workers unite in rally

By PETER BARRETT

MORE THAN 600 people rallied in Armidale on Friday to oppose the Federal Government's proposed changes to the industrial relations system.

The protest was the first combined union rally ever held in Armidale, and attracted nurses, teachers, University of New England employees, Armidale Dumaresq Council workers, shearers and tradespeople to name a few.

The rally commenced on Friday morning with a meeting at the Armidale City Bowling Club.

The auditorium was overflowing with people viewing the Sky Channel Unions NSW link up broadcast from Sydney Town Hall.

The 45-minute telecast evoked vocal responses and clapping from the audience, as it condemned the Government's proposed changes.

"The sheer number of people that attended the rally reflects the amount of feeling that there is in the community," said the representative of the combined unions, Rhonda Forrest.

"The feeling of opposition to these changes is huge and that was reflected by the 600 people."

*Unions NSW's case gave the news item their headline.*

Next on the combined union's agenda is a picnic and protest for all employees and

would remove unfair dismissal protection for millions of workers, freeze and reduce the minimum wage, remove basic conditions such as penalty rates and make it harder for workers to negotiate.

Following the meeting the group marched to the Mail where Marty Branagan performed with a life-size John Howard doll.

Former UNE academic Graham Maddox presented an historical perspective of people power.

**Improve your health with Spiritual Healing**

- Balance your energy & improve your emotional, mental, spiritual & physical health
- Explore your core beliefs and get to know yourself better

*My work is gentle & supportive to other healing methods*

To make an enquiry (appointment call)

**Merrin Cameron, Spiritual Healer**  
RN, BA, Adv. Cert.  
in Spiritual Healing, Kinesiology, Reiki  
Ph: 0425 234 475  
email: mpj@rocketmail.com

Figure 131: John Howard puppet at 2005 rally against Howard government's changes to industrial relations laws. Photos of rally and theatre expand size of newspaper coverage. Author at right.





Figure 132: Bulga cartoons by Ray Nowland. Note deliberate encouragement of good humour and calmness through cartooning.



*Roxby Downs will benefit SA as a hole!*

Figure 133: Ross Bateman cartoon about Roxby Downs, featuring one-time premier David Tonkin, c1984.

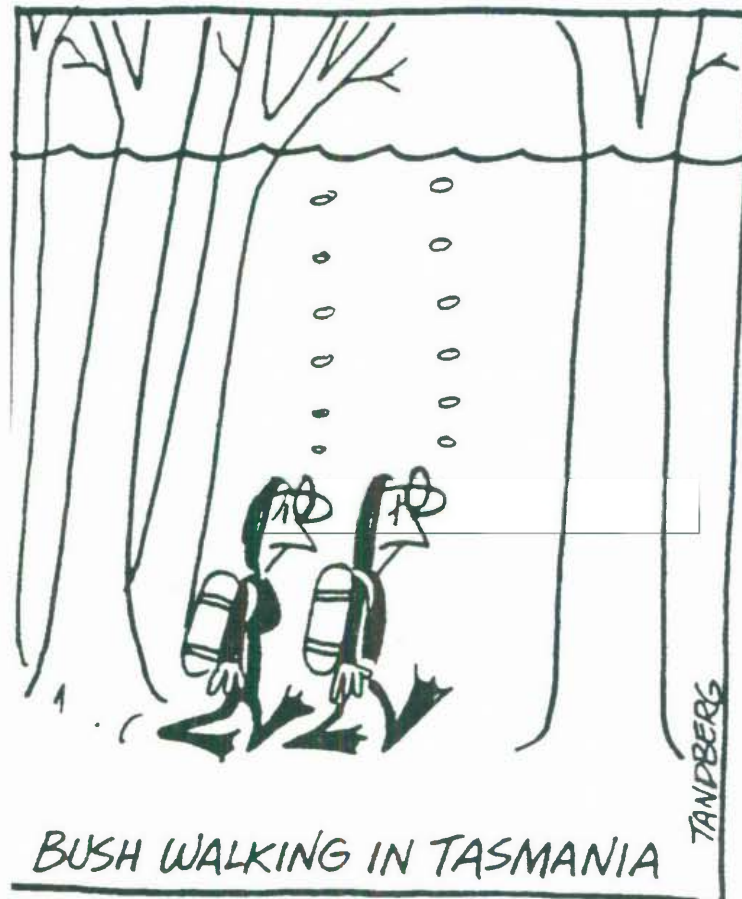


Figure 134: Ron Tandberg cartoon about the Franklin issue.



Figure 135: Patrick Cook cartoon about the Franklin issue.

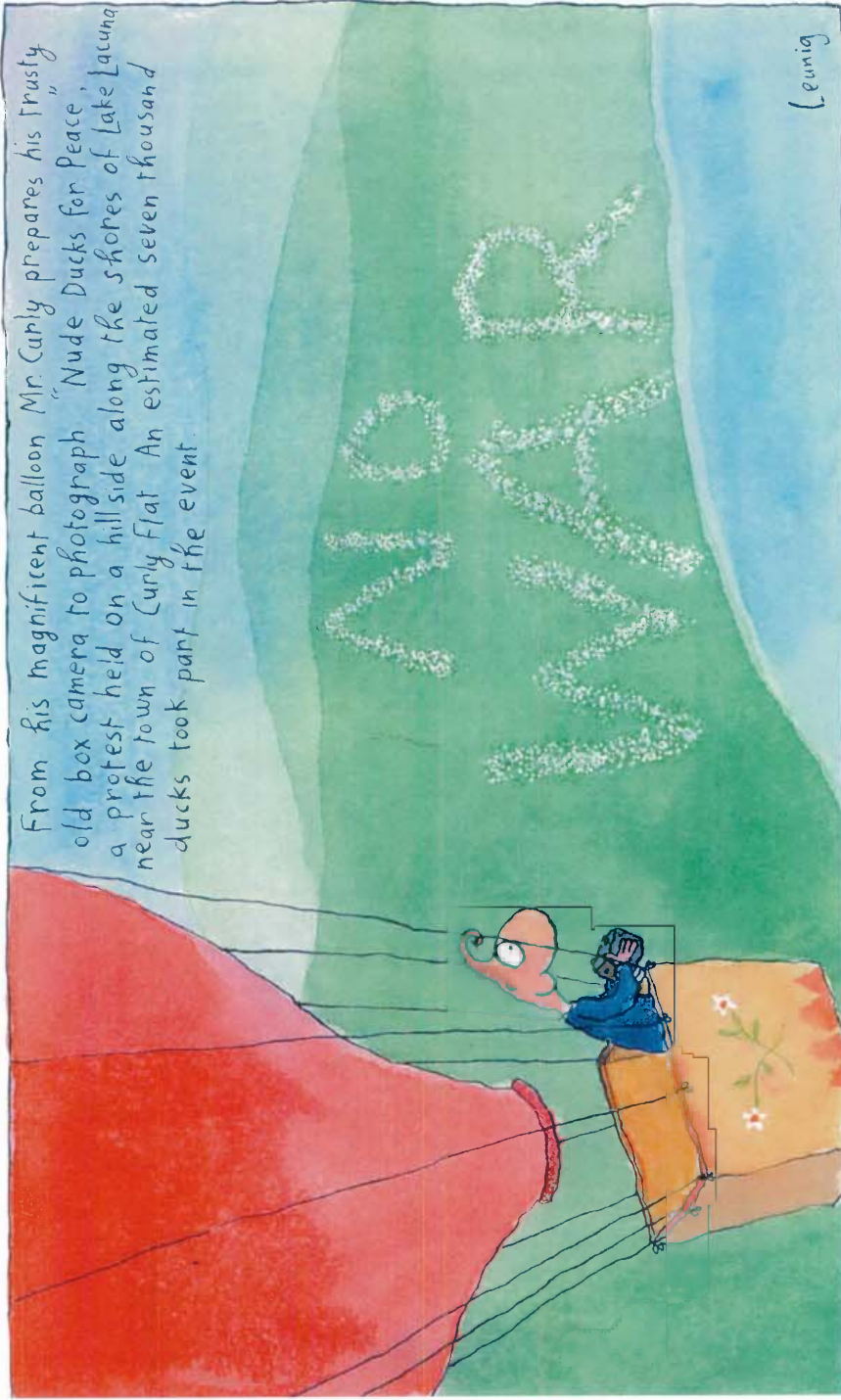


Figure 136: No war cartoon by Michael Leunig.



Figure 137: Post-modern appropriation and subversion by Micah Wright of WWII poster, circulated widely by email.



Figure 138: 'No mines' placard recycles 'No dams' symbol.



Figure 139: TWS' 'No Dams' green triangle becomes 'No Resource Security'.

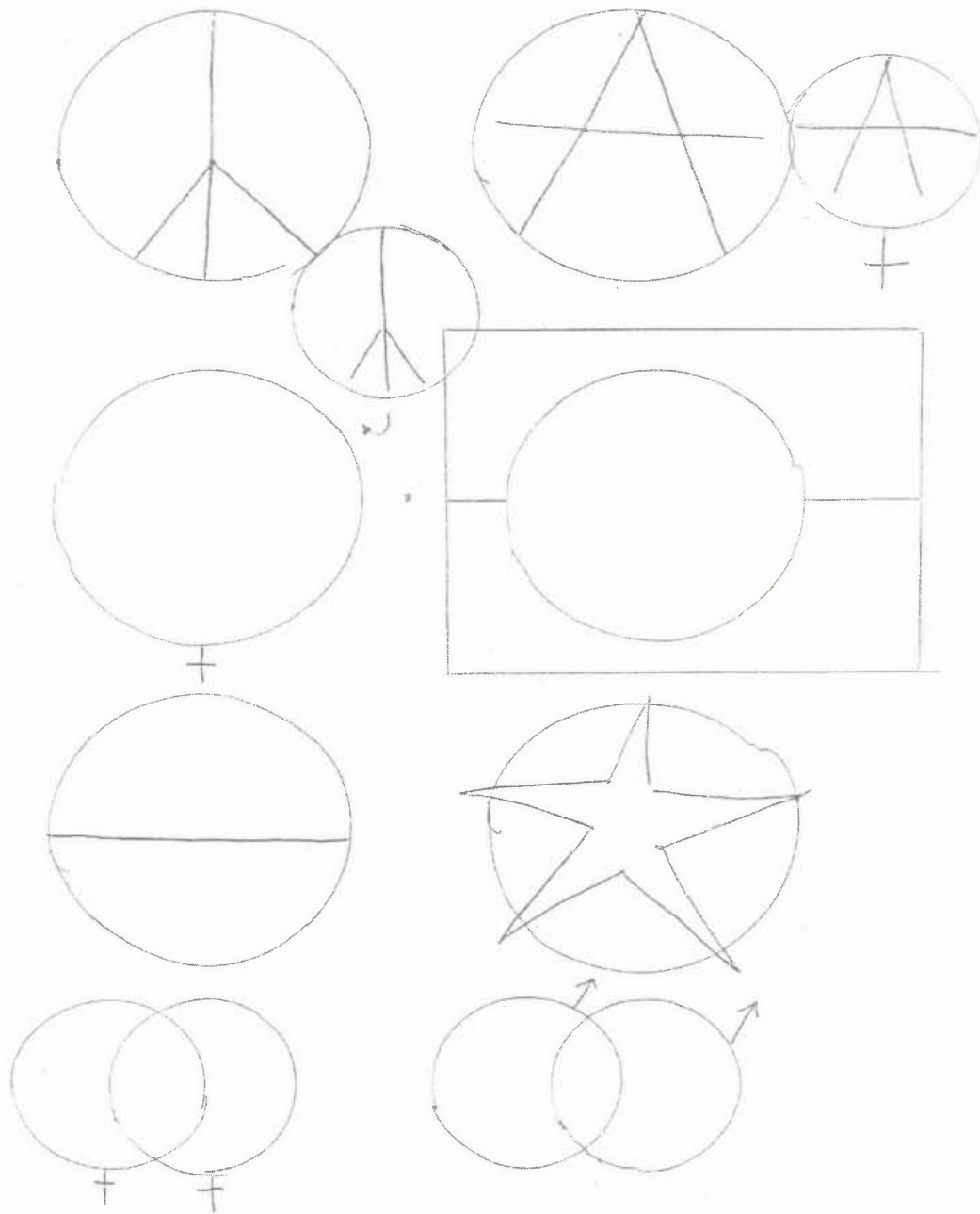


Figure 140: Symbols used in the eco-pax movement. From top left: Peace, Sydney peace Squadron, anarchism, anarch-feminism, feminism, Aboriginal land rights, ecology, wicca, lesbianism, gay rights.



The Art(s) of Nonviolence

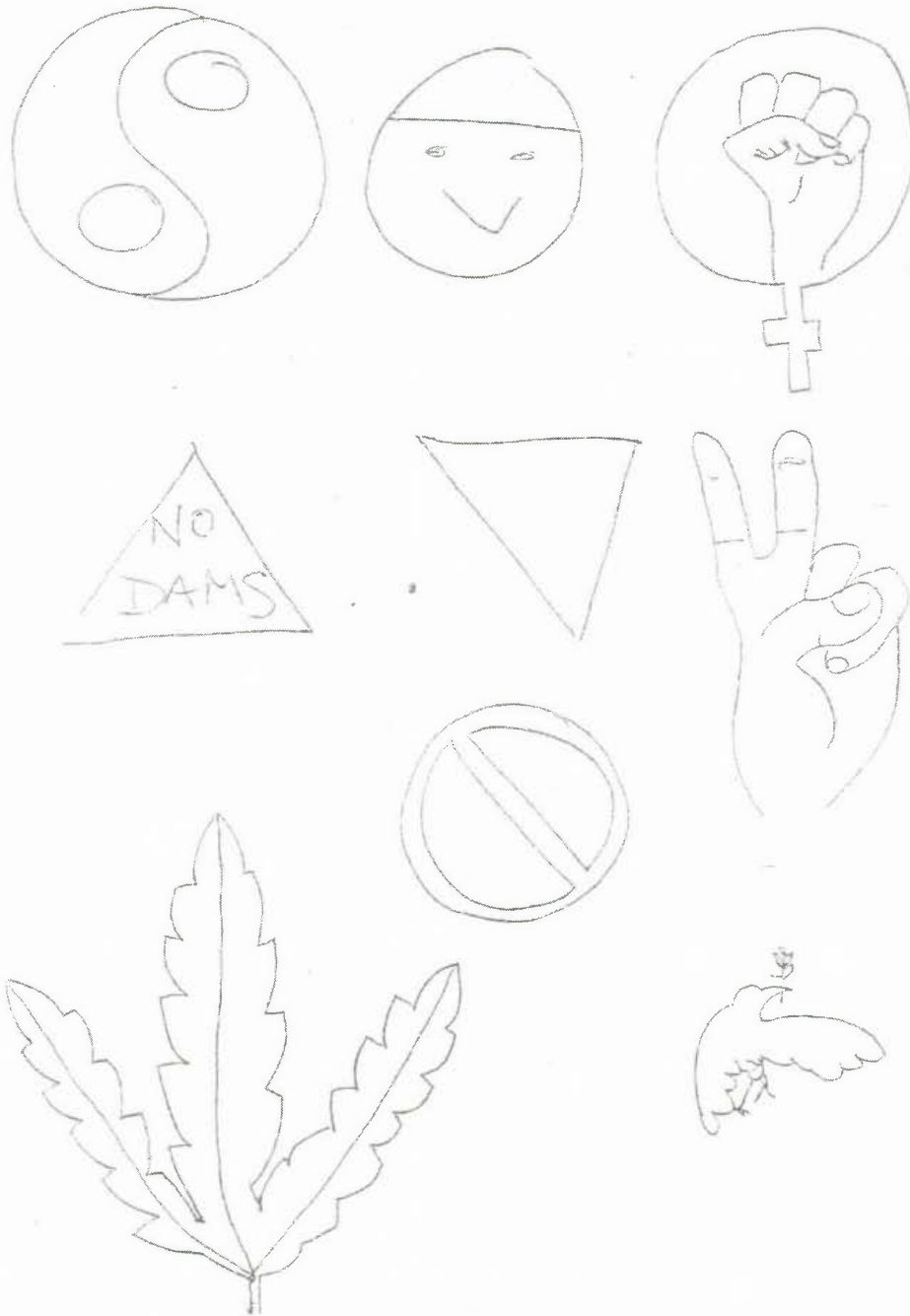


Figure 141: More symbols used in movement. From top left Yin yang, ecstasy, radical feminism, no dams, gay rights peace hand sign, no (uranium etc), legalise marijuana, the dove of peace.



Figure 142: Peace and anti-logging badges.



Figure 143: The Wilderness Society badges.

# A message from Dr. Con Creet



Bare Earth Society ... seeking "a world free of organic matter".

Picture by STEVE SEWERT



By DAVID MCKNIGHT  
Fifty members of the pro-logging "Bare Earth Society" yesterday "welcomed" to Sydney a ship carrying rainforest timber from ~~Seymour~~. Society members with placards reading "Trees are dirty" and "Ashphalt is forever" called for "a world free of organic matter". The demonstration with a dif-

serious but satirical aim of protesting against the import of ~~Asian~~ timber. The protest also highlighted the trial of leaders of the ~~Peary~~ forest dwellers in ~~SE~~ who are charged with burning bridges built by logging companies. Led by three saxophonists, drummers and a tuba player, the society welcomed the timber ship

Special Branch officers and Maritime Services Board officials. The president of the Bare Earth Society, Dr Con Creet (Alistair Doole), then attacked forestry as the home of "creepy, crawly, slithering insects" and celebrated the logging of 16 hectares of forest during the ~~few minutes~~ for which he spoke. Society members then pro-

Figure 144: Sydney Rainforest Action group satire achieves prominent coverage in *Sydney Morning Herald*.



Figure 145: The 'Big Turd' toured NSW, aroused much comment and aided the successful Look-At-Me-Now Headland campaign.

## The Art(s) of Nonviolence



### Shared properties of principled nonviolence and the arts:

- Inclusive
- Oblique rather than confrontational
- Decentralised
- Egalitarian, non-hierarchical
- Open rather than secretive
- Persuasive rather than coercive

Figure 146: Shared properties of principled nonviolence and the arts.