

PART TWO

'If peace ... only had the music and pageantry of war, there'd be no more wars'.
Sophie Kerr (quoted in Larson & Micheels-Cyrus 1986:221).



Figure 29: Cartoon about SEFA blockades.

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Figure 30: Map showing Strahan, Queenstown and the Gordon-dam below-Franklin River in south-west Tasmania.

chapter six

The Franklin River Blockade, 1982-1983

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This first case study - of a blockade in Tasmania against the damming of the Franklin River - commences with a brief campaign history before giving a chronological account of my involvement in nonviolence training, upriver actions, arrest and trial. There follow observations about nonviolence, such as differences between the theory taught at training and the how nonviolence was practised, and observations about the role of artforms like music and banners in the blockade and surrounding campaign. Sources for this account include historical documents, a diary I wrote at the time, and relevant literature.

6.2 CAMPAIGN HISTORY

The Tasmanian Wilderness Society (TWS) was formed in 1976 to oppose the Gordon-below-Franklin hydroelectric scheme, which would inundate one of the few remaining temperate 'wilderness' areas in the world (Kendell & Buivids 1987:79). The proposed dam was the main plank in a \$1.3 billion scheme to encourage more heavy industry to Tasmania (Thornton et al 1997:81); it would supposedly also help reduce the highest unemployment rate in the country. TWS's extensive research queried the economic sense of this, claiming that this vast sum would create a mere 32 long-term jobs (Beatty, Perinotto & Tarlo n.d. p.1). TWS argued that Tasmania already had enough hydroelectricity to supply needs for the next two decades (TWS 1982b:1; Lambert c1984:206), while Bob Brown claims that "Had the dam gone ahead, the debt burden would have crippled Tasmania" (in Milsom 2000:35). The TWS argument was not just a "preservationist"¹ one as Hall (1992:146) puts it,- that they purely wanted to protect a wild river, regardless of the cost to the community. Taking a global conservation approach, they argued that many of the products of heavy industry – like the throw-

¹ Hall argues that the HEC were 'progressive' or 'wise use' conservationists (1992:146-147).

away cans produced by Comalco - were luxury items rather than necessities, and they showed that this industry was contributing little to the state's revenue and causing Tasmania to have the second highest *per capita* consumption of electricity in the world (Skinner 1981:253). It was time to draw the line on rampant consumerism, if its cost was decimating the last wild places. and a relatively rich country like Australia should set a good example (Fight for the Franklin (video recording) 2001).

Another reason for opposition to the dam was that an important cave system – Kuti-Kina - would be flooded by it. Kuta-Kina has great spiritual and cultural significance for Tasmanian Aboriginals (McQueen 1983:41-43), with ancient paintings comparable to those of south-west France and Spain. The caves house evidence that 30 000 years ago Aboriginals were the world's southernmost people who, with the formation of Bass Strait at the end of the Ice Age, then became the most isolated people on Earth, spending 500 generations without encountering another human group (Green c1984:219-227). The 1979 HEC report on the proposed dam gave only sixteen lines to Aboriginal people and their past (Green c1984:222). As we shall see in section 6.10.2.4, the dam opponents were not much more considerate of the traditional owners, using a term - 'wilderness' – that is offensive to many Aboriginal people (see Langton 1998).

The failed 1970s campaign to save Lake Pedder was an important precursor to the blockade, because it brought the Tasmanian environment to national significance, and created a broad network of activists. There was a sense of guilt that Pedder had been allowed to go ahead, and the network was critical of the Australian Conservation Foundation for its perceived inaction and lack of on-site protests over Lake Pedder; at its 1973 AGM radicals like Jack Munday were elected in a “dramatic episode in the evolution of the movement ... [where young activists] turned a polite old boys' network into a mass social movement that was prepared to challenge the most powerful interests in society to achieve its goals” (Hutton and Connors 1999:136). The FRB was a further part of this evolution, as it used on a larger scale the techniques of direct action initiated at Terania Creek in 1979 (see Cohen 1997:15-24; Foley 1999). TWS had sent people to observe *incognito* the Terania protests, and were disturbed by the lack of control and the absence of nonviolence training (Kendell & Buivids 1987:87), although arguably they saw only the worst of the campaigns (Cohen 1997:246). TWS was determined to have a more controlled blockade in Tasmania, with nonviolence far better articulated

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and trained for. Thus they sought the aid of *Groundswell*, the Australian nonviolence network (Nonviolence Training Project 2005:24; Runciman et al unpub. p. 6). *Groundswell's* input is described below in section 6.4.

In 1979 TWS leaked to the media the plans for the 100 metre high rock-filled dam (Milsom 2000:35), and held its first rally in Hobart with a few hundred people attending. In 1981 a referendum was held in Tasmania to decide where the dam should be located, but TWS was incensed that no option was available for people to vote for no dam in the area at all. TWS made the “harrowing decision” to urge people to vote informally, by writing ‘No Dams’ across their ballot paper (Milsom 2000:35). In a tribute to how powerful TWS’s influence had become, more than a third of voters wrote ‘No Dams’, in what Bob Brown claims was possibly “the biggest informal vote in Westminster history anywhere” (in Milsom 2000:35).

‘No Dams’ would now be written on ballot papers in by-elections around the country. But by August 1981 it became obvious to TWS that they were losing the battle in Tasmania, and unlikely to gain help from the federal Liberal Government despite its nominating the area for World Heritage listing, so TWS began secret preparations for a blockade. Press conferences in Hobart and Melbourne announced TWS’s blockade plans on the 26th of July 1982, and a vigil camp was established near Butler Island on the Franklin River on the 1st of September (Blockaders 1983:10). New Liberal premier Robin Gray announced that Tasmania would secede from the Commonwealth if the Federal Government intervened to stop the dam, and his government changed the *Police Offences Act* so that trespass was now an arrestable offence (Blockaders 1983:10). TWS started liaison with senior police officers; their discussions were “fruitful”, and a group was set up to continue liaison throughout the blockade to keep it peaceful and avoid bad publicity, and to protect blockaders (TWSa 1982:16-18). This was early evidence of TWS taking on classic elements of orthodox nonviolence, such as openness and willingness to talk constructively with opponents.

The three-month blockade began officially on the 14th of December, the same day that the World Heritage nomination was approved in Paris. Fifty-three people were arrested in actions at the damsite and a raft blockade on the Franklin, and simultaneous rallies throughout Australia involving more than six thousand people brought unprecedented

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media coverage (Blockaders 1983:11). Almost 3 000 people would eventually join the blockade, with 1272 demonstrators arrested and nearly 450 jailed (Kendall & Buivids 1987:100). Small and close knit affinity groups formed at *nonviolent action* (NVA) training (discussed in section 6.4) were the basis of much of the action, but the overall strategy was planned and implemented by TWS which conducted an extremely effective media campaign and coordinated diverse external support, raising a budget of over \$150 000 (Summy 1997:30). Members of the community minded children while parents went blockading, and advertising executives offered their services for free to help create a highly-professional campaign which conducted opinion polls and provided statistical evidence of opposition to the dam (Alexander in Green c1984:215).

Bob Brown was TWS's inspiring and charismatic figurehead, projecting an image of middle class respectability, arguing rationally but with enough passion to add a note of genuineness to his case (see Thompson 1984). When the federal ALP saw the immensity of support, it promised to stop the dam if elected at the upcoming election. Astute campaigners like Roger Green targeted appropriate electorates, hundreds did the doorknocking and leafleting, and the ALP was elected to power. After a High Court challenge by the Tasmanian government failed (see Blunden 1983:1), the dam was stopped, and the site rehabilitated (see Engisch 1984:5).

6.3 INITIAL INVOLVEMENT

After hitchhiking to Melbourne and staying with my elderly aunts, my friend Jeremy and I caught a ferry to Tasmania and tentatively approached the local branch of TWS in Devonport in the hope of finding out how to get down to the 'south-west'. At that stage we were unsure whether to commit, yet we were instantaneously thrust into a maelstrom of activity. It was obvious that we had walked into the centre of something very powerful. Despite everyone being volunteers, the organisation appeared extremely efficient, and there was unmistakable dedication to the cause. After being overwhelmed with information, we were offered a lift immediately, and left after being shunted to various houses. Jeremy's music was useful in breaking barriers and letting inhibitions fall, forming friendships, steeling ourselves and quelling our nervousness. Singing 'Puff the Magic Dragon' as we sped past spectacular ravines and under wild tree-clad peaks on a winding mountain road to the unknown was a memorable experience.

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On arrival in Strahan, a village on Macquarie Harbour (see Figure 30), we were, like many, disgruntled to find that we had to undergo a course in nonviolence before we would be allowed upstream to the Franklin. Some people had only a few days to spare, and to spend two of them doing training was incredibly frustrating. But this was a TWS directive, and since they controlled the only transport - a boat - which went to the blockade, there was no option but to settle into 'Greenie Acres', the Strahan campsite donated to the blockaders (see Figure 41).

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The campsite was a further step into the maelstrom. At an information tent at the entrance, our questions were answered and we were allocated a tent-site. At daily morning meetings for the whole camp, a great number of people gathered to thrash out matters from the mundane to the sublime, from what to do with fruit peel to issues of democracy and women's rights. In addition, there were numerous subgroups that met regularly, made up of longer-term activists.

In addition to the tactical and philosophical issues being debated, the practical issues of hygiene, feeding and accommodating everyone, and coordinating new arrivals were dealt with highly efficiently. There were conflicts and mutterings, but generally activities were carried out good humouredly and in high spirits. I felt not just part of a community of impassioned individuals joining together in common purpose, but part of a large-scale social experiment in communal living and cooperative work (see Figure 42). It was an extension of the communal living I had experienced in Queensland, but with a stronger emphasis on social change, and was thus more like the anarchism I had first learnt of from a fellow traveller in Broome, where personal action was seen within a political framework.

There were many colourful and inspiring characters, including a musician who dressed in a black suit even in the midday sun, and an independent state senator who dug toilets for the camp. I realised I was not alone in the new ideas I was assimilating and the conclusions I was forming after my year's 'walkabout'. One new friend in particular, Lee, I would work with for several years, at Roxby and on The Bike Ride, and we

visited the TWS headquarters in Strahan together. This was a hive of activity, with people helpful but stressed from having to answer every new blockader's nervous questions as well as bear the brunt of a communications nightmare stretching from the Nomadic Action Group (NAG) upriver to office 'greenies' in Hobart.² After viewing the blockade on the news at a less-than-friendly hotel, we returned to camp for an early night.

6.4 NONVIOLENT ACTION TRAINING

The NVA workshop over the next two days was an inspirational blur, with capable yet unobtrusive trainers from *Groundswell*. They included Peter Robertson, who had ridden across the Nullarbor to raise publicity for the Franklin, Karl-Eric Paasonen, Robert Burrowes³, Rob Blakers and Ian McLoughlan, and they had been preparing workshops for some months (Blockaders 1983:18-19). The participants included people from Launceston, Hobart, Melbourne, Sydney, even Perth, and were mainly in their early twenties. Some were much older, such as a Sydney grandmother in her late sixties. Many of us were initially sceptical, as the workshop began with a talk about consensus decision-making, and we questioned its relevance.

6.4.1 Holism, nonviolence theory

From the outset, we were given guidelines including respect for other people's opinions, and avoidance of personal attacks on people whose ideas we disagreed with. In my first experience with gender inclusive language, we were advised to use terms like 'spokesperson'. This too appeared a little absurd at first, but I gradually realised that it was all part of a holistic non-discriminatory social revolution.

We were given some of the history of nonviolence, like the resistance to the Kapp Putsch in 1920s Germany, and India's liberation from British rule⁴. This history was given in talks and in comprehensive literature (TWS 1982a) that had been based on the 'Resource Manual for a Living Revolution', by the Philadelphia-based *Movement for a New Society*, a Quaker group that worked for social change on many fronts, such as against the Vietnam war and later anti-nuclear blockades (Nonviolence Training Project

² 'Burnout' is discussed in section 13.3.2.5.

³ Both Paasonen and Burrowes were discussed in Chapter Four.

⁴ Both of these campaigns are mentioned in section 4.3.

2005:24-26). Theoretical aspects were explained, including *conversion* – persuading opponents to accept one’s views; *accommodation* – where opponents grant one’s demands without changing their own views; and *nonviolent coercion* – where the activists’ demands are achieved against the will of the opponent. Activists were encouraged to respect opponents, to attempt to gain their trust, to refrain from humiliating them, to develop empathy, goodwill and patience towards them, to make visible sacrifices for the cause, and in the long-term to carry out constructive work and develop viable alternatives. Nonviolent conversion, it was said, could result in support from unexpected quarters, for example from within the Liberal Party or Police Force.

We were encouraged to see the wider and long-term implications of our actions,- that our actions were primarily symbolic ones designed to generate publicity for the cause and to win over converts, rather than being warfare against the HEC to physically stop construction of the dam. Any violence by blockaders, argued the trainers, would turn the issue into one of law and order, diverting attention from the cogent arguments against the dam that TWS had developed. These were new ideas to me, that appeared to make sense.

6.4.2 Consensus decision-making and affinity groups

We were taught that consensus⁵ is an inclusive non-hierarchical process where everyone’s input was valid. Even one person could ‘block consensus’ if they felt strongly enough about an issue, and the group would then have to seek a solution amenable to all. Consensus involved close listening, good reflection skills, a willingness to cooperate, and a minimum of egoising and irrelevant speeches.

We were urged to put this theory immediately into practice, by making all our group decisions in this way, and were given imaginary scenarios to practise making a decision rapidly and in complex, stressful conditions. While not immediately seeing the worth of consensus, it was certainly ‘food for thought’. We soon had opportunities to use consensus in larger groups, at the daily camp meetings in Strahan (see Figure 43).

⁵ Consensus was introduced in section 4.6.6.2.

Affinity groups⁶, we were told, were an essential part of nonviolence. These groups were the cells of the larger movement, providing support for individuals and facilitating communication throughout the entire blockade. Only one person need attend the camp meeting, for example; this person could then relate news and decisions back to the affinity group, who would usually camp and act together. Members of the group were encouraged to 'share' frequently their feelings. Such 'sharings' also provided post-action support and outlets for stress, making participation in further actions more enticing. Formation of affinity groups was encouraged to happen through group bonding activities like games and trust exercises.

6.4.3 Role-plays, games, trust exercises

We were also given the opportunity to rehearse NVA through role-plays. These 'put us into the shoes' of our opponents, and helped us to understand the effects of our actions. For example, playing the part of a worker being yelled at and physically threatened by several angry conservationists enabled me to experience how such an action would probably lead to fear, anger and retaliation, escalating it into violence. Clearly, this effect would be worse with larger numbers. We were also warned that *agents provocateurs* might try to goad us into violence to discredit us, though I was a little sceptical about this. This naïvity would later be removed by revelations of widespread police surveillance and disruption of nonviolent protest organisations (see Kelly 2004).

In a trust exercise, an individual would stand in the middle of a circle of people, and lean backwards to the point of falling over. Before s/he hit the ground s/he would be caught by the others, leading to an expectation that the group would be around to support the individual, both physically and emotionally. Another exercise involved one person in a pair being guided around blindfolded for fifteen minutes; this developed trust in one's guide, and similar expectations of support. A similar exercise involved people lying supine and being passed overhead by a line of people. Not only did it create trust; the accompanying laughter helped bond the group together, as did games and physical activities (Figure 44). Other exercises were more cerebral, involving active

⁶ Affinity groups were defined in section 4.6.6.1.

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listening to enhance communication and decision-making, and to relate who we were and what we believed and felt, so that we came to know each other closely.

6.4.4 Unique educational experience

Despite our misgivings, the training was a unique experience, radically different to my previous learning experiences at school and university. It was at times confronting⁷, at others inspirational and liberating, so by the end of the process I felt I had passed through an initiation of sorts⁸. It was interactive, experiential and involved a variety of activities,- intellectual, physical and emotional. There was a minimum of lengthy lectures and hierarchy, and plenty of play, touch and humour. It occurred in a pleasant outdoor setting, in the midst of an exciting, largely anarchistic camp of activists, and was holistic, embodied and earth-oriented. It was part of my conversion to nonviolent activism. The under-examined role of education in social movements has been introduced in section 2.3.3, and related to conversion in section 4.6.2. This issue is further examined in section 13.2.6.

Nonviolence practitioners like Gandhi and King, and even violent revolutionaries like Che Guevara, have mentioned the need for love to be at the centre of activism (Nehru 1970:247; Sedgwick 1973; Kendell & Buivids 1987:109). Through this workshop we developed a strong bond of love and commitment to each other (see Gladewright in Blockaders 1983:45), which gave us (perhaps foolhardy) confidence as we were able at last to travel upriver.

6.5 UPRIVER CAMP

Amidst last-minute scenes of organisation within chaos (see Figure 45), we were loaded onto the boat the 'J-Lee-M', along with our packs, and supplies, letters and messages for people upriver, some of whom had 'gone wild' and hadn't returned to Strahan for some weeks. With fond farewells, singing and cheering we departed into the enormous harbour under a bleak sky, and Strahan quickly became but a speck on the landscape. Primeval forest seemed to stretch indefinitely, - thick, lush and mysterious. Apart from

⁷ Some found it threatening and invasive (see Plowman in Green c1984:249).

⁸ Two days was an adequate length. By the end of January, "the training took 3 days, and people were starting to complain a lot" (Karl-Eric Paasonen 2005, pers. comm., 2 February).

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the throb of the boat and increasingly awed voices, there was nothing but birdcalls to disturb our reverie. Civilisation was dropping far behind, and I felt the import on my life of this experience, as we left the harbour and wound upriver, deeper and deeper into the forest (see Figure 31).

At the upriver camp near Warner's Landing (see Figure 31), we found the same level of efficient organisation. We were allocated a campsite for our affinity group, in a glade of ferns and enormous moss-covered trees with all manner of lichen and delightful fungi on the damp leaf litter. Back near the jetty, where the kitchen and Communications Shack were, we were given a briefing by Ian Cohen, who despite only being in his early thirties already appeared like a tribal elder out of the Old Testament, with long hair and flowing beard. More information was disseminated via informal conversation and via notice boards, which also contained newspaper clippings from all over Australia, including Tasmania's 'Advocate' (nicknamed 'Aggravate') and the 'Mercury' ('Mockery'). The excitement and intellectual stimulation was such that I spent several sleepless nights.

There was so much activity that it was hard to work out what was happening, and what to do. The regular meetings were helpful, but they tended to be long, tiring, and even confusing. Many different issues were being dealt with, some of which seemed very peripheral. As well as the 'highs' of communal living, I was also now discovering some of the 'lows': the dramas, jealousies, and personality clashes that erupted as we attempted to live without walls and under trying conditions. Gaard (1998) has pointed to some of the more serious divisions in the green movement, both philosophical and political, and these were reflected within the blockade. We attempted to apply our training in nonviolence to resolve these conflicts, an approach which would later be refined by Fran Peavey (1986)⁹ and Katrina Shields (1993).

⁹ Peavey's work is further discussed in section 13.2.1.1.

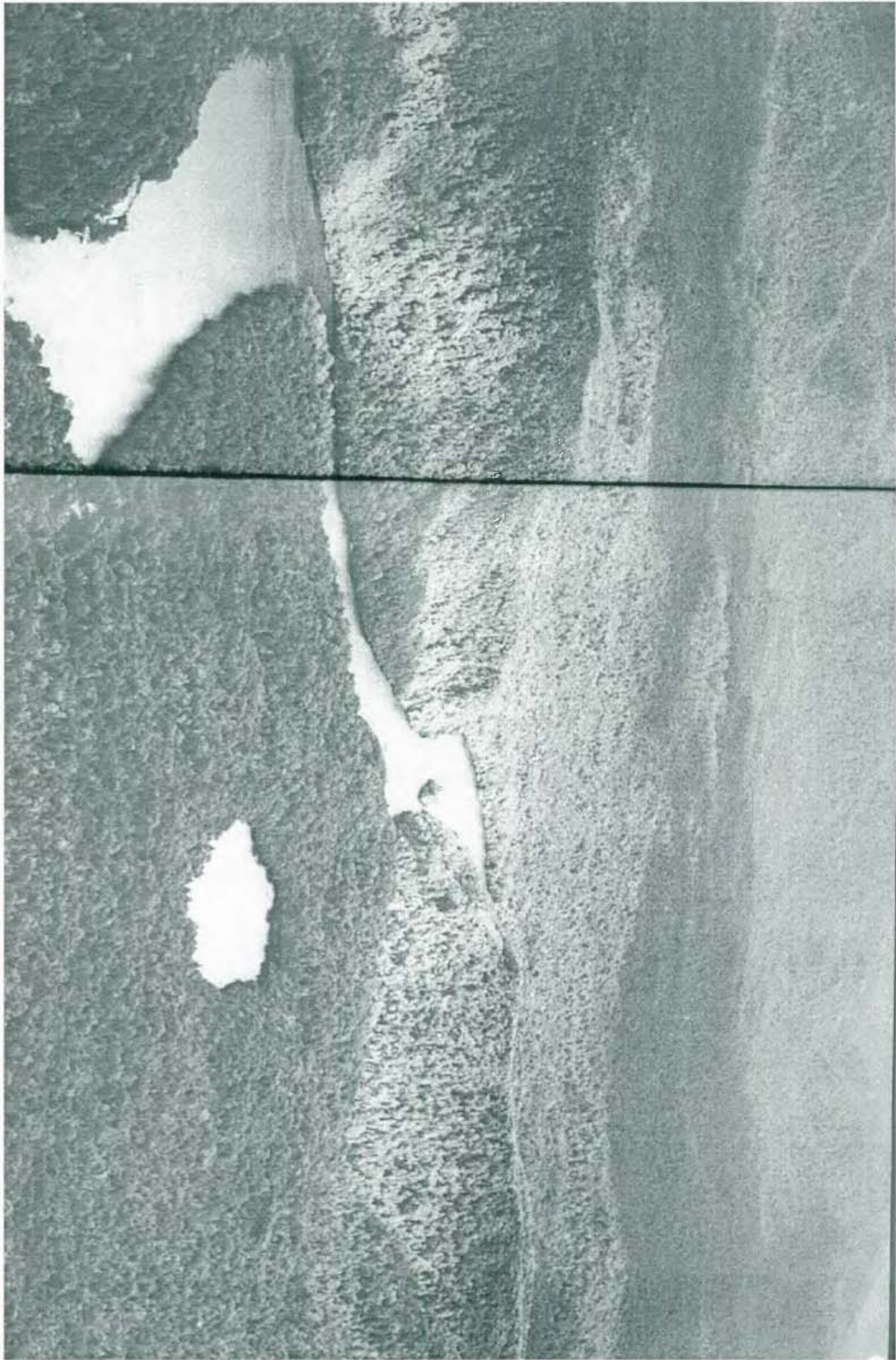


Figure 31: Aerial view of the awe-inspiring country, with HEC/police camp foreground left bank and Warner's Landing opposite.

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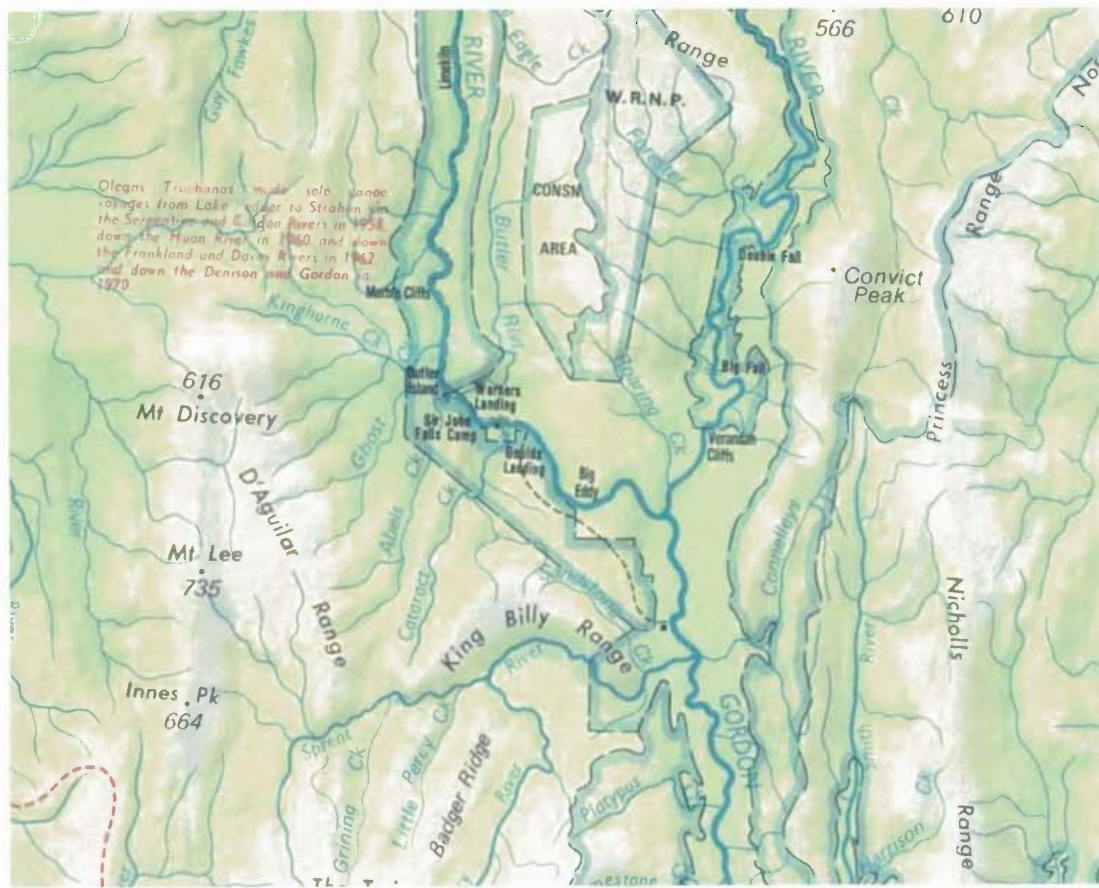


Figure 32: Map of area threatened by dam.

6.5.1 'Consensus' – The Song

Jeremy and I were annoyed by the lack of what we perceived as action, so we wrote a song entitled 'Consensus' with a chorus "Consensus, consensus, do we have consensus? We sit around on benches, trying to reach consensus". Although somewhat humorous, it vented our frustrations about several issues, from the lengthy meetings to a perceived obsession with hygiene. We performed the song to the camp one evening, where it was received well. Although I later played the song to a national TWS gathering in 1993, I have increasingly realised the value of consensus,¹⁰ and appreciated the need for hygiene, particularly with large camps, hostile authorities and unsympathetic media. Thus I would not write such a song today. Nevertheless, the experience taught me the value of self-expression and social comment through songwriting, and gave me experience in co-writing and public performance. It was also

¹⁰ These are discussed in sections 4.8.3, 6.10.2.3 and 11.2.

empowering when the song was included in the 'Franklin River Blockade Songbook' (Bock et al 1983:42-43).

6.5.2 Banners, theatre

Banners displaying a wide variety of messages were prominent in the media images of the blockade and the associated marches in towns around the country (see Figures 46 and 47). These were often beautiful, poetic, and professionally executed. Some blockaders began to use sails on their small boats, and these became festooned with slogans and symbols, like Earth First and No Dams (see Figure 33).



Figure 33: Sail used as banner.

No chance to espouse an environmental message was missed. The banners were created by many people, the most prolific being an itinerant artist Benny 'Bubbles' Zable, who had abandoned a promising career in the worlds of commercial and fine arts to play a large role in the movement of 'new settlers' to Nimbin, NSW (discussed in section 3.8), initiating visionary murals above shops in the then dying town¹¹. Zable lived at the

¹¹ These murals feature in many photographic and video images of the town, and have contributed to the mystique of the 'Rainbow Region', now a successful 'alternative' and tourist centre.

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Franklin river camp with no income, producing a stream of thought-provoking banners over more than two months, sharing his expertise and paints, materials, make-up, and sewing machines. He would often work until he was

so exhausted he couldn't even crawl into his sleeping bag. One morning he was found wrapped in the unpainted section of his banner, which read "IN WILDERNESS IS THE PRESERVATION OF THE WORLD" {Thoreau} (Cohen 1997:68).



Figure 34: Benny Zable performing in a raft on the river.

Zable also gave uncomplicated but eerily fascinating performances dressed in his now-familiar gas mask and black robes emblazoned with the sobering message: 'CONSUME, BE SILENT, DIE. I RELY ON YOUR APATHY'. In one performance he stood in a rubber raft, holding a banner and in danger of drowning under the weight of his equipment if the raft had capsized (see Figure 34). He comments:

My role is in environmental theatre, helping to communicate our message visually in a strong and clear way (in Kendell and Buivids 1987:115).

This communication created a climate of art-fuelled defiance and worked directly on those who saw the banners and performances, for example inspiring me to want to learn

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his crafts. It also impacted on those who saw it via the media who were attracted by the spectacle:

The colourful extravaganza of banners and flags which blazed across the world's media networks were, in great part, the result of Benny's labours. His banners festooned the communication barge, duckies [rafts] and the J-Lee-M. Most spectacular were his visual arts displays on Butler's Island. With any major event, Benny and a specialist crew would decorate the island with banners. When the first dozer arrived by barge it broke a line of yellow duckies and passed by a riot of colour which proclaimed life in the face of advancing destruction (Cohen 1997:67).

This is evidence of the importance of the arts in communicating images, mood and environmental messages, and in attracting media attention. An indication of the effectiveness of Zable is that virtually every book or documentary on the blockade features an image of him and some of his banners (eg Blockaders 1983; Kendell & Buivids 1987; Cohen 1997; Fight for the Franklin (video recording) 2001). The arts were important in achieving TWS' stated aims of generating public awareness and support (TWS 1982:3). This theme is expanded on below (eg in sections 6.11 and 13.2).



Figure 35: Arrestees refusing to walk and being dragged off.

6.6 ACTION

At a night-time meeting, Cohen called for volunteers to be trained as scouts. These should be people who had more than a few days to spare, who were fit, bush-wise, had a sense of direction and a 'level head', and were prepared to be arrested. The work involved going onto lands which the state government had declared off-limits, and which a number of policemen patrolled, with one in particular, nicknamed the 'Lone Ranger' (see Figure 36), being extremely zealous in arresting 'greenies'. We were warned to be extremely careful, as most of the scouts had already been arrested and gone to prison or agreed to punitive bail conditions in which they undertook not to return to the prohibited lands.



Figure 36: The 'Lone Ranger' and admirers.

Early the next morning, fifteen of us filed off nervously, packs filled with binoculars, cameras, water, sandwiches and ‘scroggin’¹². Some people were intending to get arrested, to add to the growing number of people gaining media attention and overloading the state’s police, legal and prison systems. After half an hour, we were disturbed from the dream-like state induced by walking silently through awe-inspiring forest by the sound of chainsaws up ahead, and an approaching helicopter. We threw ourselves to the ground and remained motionless, looking down, to avoid being spotted, as we had been earlier taught by a Vietnam veteran who had joined our camp¹³. This man had also offered to sabotage HEC equipment, but was persuaded to stay within the blockade’s nonviolence guidelines. His assistance was proof that accepting a wide variety of people into the campaign could be useful; inclusivity, a fundamental tenet of nonviolence, could be seen to work.

Next we came to a transect, a two-metre-wide gash through the forest, used for surveying. There was no attempt to go around trees of significance, and it was a gaping wound on the landscape, where the clash between the HEC’s ideology and the grandeur of nature could be clearly seen. We were all upset and angered. Some took photos, which, if they were not confiscated by police, would later be sent to newspapers or used in TWS publications or slide-shows, or simply passed around when people returned to their homes. The art of photography was thus another important tool in awareness-raising, via mainstream or alternative media, community events or more grassroots dissemination.

Shortly afterwards our party was surprised by several policeman dressed like HEC workers in flannelette shirts (with the infamous ‘Lone Ranger’ also wearing a three-cornered hat like a pirate’s); they had been lying quietly in wait. We had been advised earlier that one could legally avoid arrest by saying ‘I’m leaving’ and running away, provided that a policeman had not laid a hand on you and said you were under arrest. So I screamed that I was leaving and ran off with the ‘Lone Ranger’ in hot pursuit. I leaped over shrubs, ditches and massive fallen logs, darted around trees and across more

¹² Scroggin is a mix of dried fruit and nuts.

¹³ A side-effect of this and later actions, however, was a paranoia of helicopters that remained with me for some years.

transects, and hearing his pursuit fall away, dived behind a bush and into a muddy puddle. All was silent behind me. I slowly regained my breath.

I was feeling fortunate, when a comrade pelted through the scrub and dived almost on top of me. Right behind him came the 'Lone Ranger', who grabbed us both and placed us under arrest. As he escorted us to the river he congratulated me on my speed through the bush, but I was too angry to accept the compliment.

6.7 FIRST ARREST

I felt a welter of emotions as I was taken down a muddy clearing to a police boat. I was furious at my comrade, at the damage being done to the forest, and at my arresting officer for being part of the system that was doing this. I was annoyed at myself for being arrested, and thought that I would be unable to do anything further to prevent the carnage. I was filled with sadness for the fate of the forest, but unable to express it. Additionally, I was coming down from the adrenalin rush of breaking the law and running from police. Now I felt the consequences of my first arrest; I was fearful of the police, jail, the court system and the long-term social and career consequences, and was concerned at having defied the legal system I had been brought up to respect. Physically exhaustion, the wet, cold conditions and nicotine-withdrawal compounded my condition. My spirits were aroused however by the cheers and singing of our many supporters, who were paddling nearby in 'neutral' territory.

After the humiliating process of being photographed with my arresting officer for the later identification, I was taken onboard, and was again buoyed by being reunited with others from our party. Most had chosen to be arrested, though there were a few in the same 'boat' as me, so to speak. At a holding camp we waited for hours in the deepening gloom. We huddled close together to try to keep warm, keeping our spirits up as best we could with jokes, songs and stories, and sharing what little food and water remained as the police ignored our increasingly strident requests for legal aid and hot drinks to ward off hypothermia. One blockader, who had not been arrested but needed to return to Strahan urgently, added to their confusion by sneaking into the holding camp, and we frustrated their attempts to count us by milling about.

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Finally we were put on a launch for the long trip back to Strahan, arriving after dark. We were made to feel like heroes as we disembarked and walked down the jetty to the cheers of dozens of supporters held back by police. As with Gandhi's campaigns "a mark of deep shame became a badge of honour" (Brown 1997:197). We were pushed into crowded 'paddy wagons' for a further wait, which the glorious singing of our friends outside made bearable, until the vehicles took off at speed along the winding road to Queenstown.

This was but one of many incidents of self-suffering¹⁴ as blockaders endured police ill-treatment. On another occasion five people were admitted to hospital with hypothermia, nausea or bronchitis (McQueen 1983:49), after "24 hours without food or hot drinks, kept outside in cold, windy rainy conditions, transported downstream on the decks in a boat that shortly before had supposedly been unusable, and then driven on steep and winding roads for more than six hours to Hobart" (Blockaders 1983:83-88). At other times barges carrying bulldozers drove straight over blockaders' rafts (Figure 37) and over skindivers, breaking maritime laws and endangering life with police doing nothing.



Figure 37: Barge carrying D9 bulldozer driving over blockaders.

¹⁴ Self-suffering was discussed in section 4.8.4.

6.7.1 Court in Queenstown

On arrival we underwent the further humiliation of fingerprinting, followed by more waiting. At last, at around 10 pm we were brought in a group before a magistrate, who appeared angry at us, perhaps because he viewed us as willful lawbreakers, or perhaps because he had been dragged away from home at this late hour¹⁵. He gave us no chance to speak. The police evidence was given *en masse*, as though we were just a group and had no individualism. Almost all of us pleaded guilty, as we had been advised, through a volunteer lawyer, and after signing an undertaking not to return to HEC property, we were released. My first encounter with the judicial system had been revealing, showing how powerless one could be made to feel, on top of the initial incarceration, photographing and fingerprinting. As Biko (1979) wrote from the more repressive state of South Africa under *apartheid*, the police and judicial system are often used to humiliate individuals and destroy opposition to the state (see also Blockaders 1983:90-97). Arrests and their impacts on activists are further discussed in sections 7.4.3, 7.6.3, 8.7, and 10.4.5.

We waited quietly outside the courthouse for a ride back to Strahan, dazed and exhausted. The atmosphere was menacing, with locals scowling and muttering at us¹⁶, so it was a relief when vans arrived to take us back to the warm, by-now-familiar welcome of 'Greenie Acres', where I slept soundly under a borrowed blanket.

6.8 MUSIC AT THE BLOCKADE

I was determined to return upstream and work outside the restricted area, but had to wait for a space on the boat, so I joined several demonstrations in Strahan. What characterised these actions above all was the singing, which elevated the mood from a protest (which I previously associated with angry chanting, having witnessed labour movement marches in Sydney) to an extraordinary gathering where inhibitions were cast aside and people sang lustily. The singing produced a memorable atmosphere and

¹⁵ Courts were often hastily convened, using magistrates brought out of retirement, some ill-equipped for dealing with large numbers of nonviolent activists engaged in civil disobedience. Several major decisions were later overturned on appeal, and one magistrate disqualified from further proceedings involving protestors (McQueen 1983:50-53; Blockaders 1983:12). Many protestors refused to accept bail, and were taken to Risdon Gaol.

¹⁶ Suspected blockaders were violently attacked in Queenstown on several occasions (McQueen 1983:32).

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conveyed the impression that these were passionate but gentle people. Similarly, the singing when we were in the holding camp and ‘paddy wagons’ lifted our spirits and fortified us, and perhaps inspired others to act. As with banners, these are important uses of the arts, further discussed in section 6.11.

There were so many songs in the campaign that two volumes of the Franklin songbook were produced, with the second alone (Bock et al 1983) containing 104 original or adapted songs. Some were moving depictions of the river and people’s determination to save it, such as ‘The Mist on the River’. Others were defiant yet humorous, like ‘Lurk, Loiter, Hide and Secrete’. The music was not always political, with the magnificent baritone of Cameron - one of the first openly gay men I had met - singing ‘Those Were The Days, My Friends’ reaching across barriers. He also helped to break down my prejudices through the song ‘Festival of Light’, which laughs at the homophobia of the religious Right.

Some of us were outraged to find that one song we had enjoyed upriver was now banned by TWS. This was ‘Tonka Toys’ by Bullfrog Smith, which began thus:- “We wanna cut, we wanna kill, we wanna bulldoze that there hill, we don’t care who pays the bill, ‘cause we’re playing with our Tonka Toys” (in Bock et al 1983:85). It seemed a strange decision made by a distant hierarchy, and it conflicted with the egalitarian notions taught at training. It seemed that the TWS organisers were not bound by the same conventions of consensus as the blockaders. However, I soon found out that the song was considered antagonistic to the HEC workers, and was liable to inflame tense situations. I have gradually come to respect this decision. Later experiences such as the 2002 ‘Rally for Refugees’ (see Appendix 3), or ‘AIDEX’ (see Perkins 1991), where chanting led to violent police-crowd melées, confirmed for me the need to consider carefully our actions within crowds, if we are to prevent violence at protests (see also Scheingruber 2002).

6.9 BACK UPRIVER

Back upriver, I learnt skills that would prove useful in other campaigns, such as operating radios, and patching boats and manoeuvring them in dangerous circumstances. I then kayaked up to a remote outpost and for more than a week a Tasmanian hermit and I watched activities on the river and in the nearby forest, and

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broadcast news back to the Communications Shack. Communications were exemplary given the terrain and the absence of faxes, mobiles, satellite phones or the internet. Radio was transmitted via a secret repeater station hidden on a forested mountaintop, staffed 24 hours a day (Dimmick in *Blockaders* 1983:60; Darby 2002, online).

I spent much time on the river, usually with my face painted. This was a craze that added to the blockade's colour and sense of theatre, and seemed to connect us to indigenous cultures. I was so accustomed to wearing face-paint that when I waved to a newly-arrived friend, I could not understand why she did not recognise me.

I felt almost part of the river, paddling, swimming, drinking it, even watching a platypus play in its deep brown waters that were tranquil or swirled along the banks like Coca-Cola. I broke my bail conditions once, to join a group venturing in for a mass nude swim at St John's Falls, where blinding spray lit up by the midday sunlight cascaded in front of the darkness of deep rainforest.

I was at the juncture of the Gordon and Franklin Rivers, when a fellow paddler excitedly called out the news: an election had been called, Bob Hawke was to lead the ALP, and he had promised to stop the dam if elected! I was ecstatic. I felt a surge of confidence that we would win the struggle for the Franklin, and shortly thereafter I returned to Sydney to leaflet for the ALP.



Figure 38: Direct action - raft blockade of the river.

6.10 NONVIOLENCE OBSERVATIONS

6.10.1 Evolution

The evolution of Australian nonviolence is the first of the thesis' foci, and evidence of some evolution can already be seen in the *Blockade Handbook* (TWS 1982). Despite its largely orthodox nature, this literature shows important differences from some theoretical literature from overseas. For example, the agonising over *coercion* mentioned in section 4.7.1 is avoided with what seems the down-to-earth realisation that conversions alone would not be widespread or quick enough to bring the campaign success, and that public pressure needed to be brought to bear on the Tasmanian government. Similarly, Camara's reticence about breaking the law (in Salla et al 1995:153), and the reliance on 'witness' alone (Woito 1997:357-359) and small groups (Carter 1990:215), had been replaced by a commitment to direct action and mass civil disobedience. This included breaking the law, both as an act of conscience and as a way to gain media coverage.



Figure 38: Direct action - raft blockade of the river.

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The use of affinity groups and training was also new in Australian nonviolence. Amidst all the complaints about TWS's version of nonviolence (see below), rarely is the system of affinity groups singled out for criticism. Rather, the system provided support and confidence, and enhanced communication within the blockade. A vast amount of information was circulated on a grass-roots level, meaning it was not necessary to rely on particular individuals or large group meetings to access information. This in turn eased the stress on individuals such as Pam Waud and Cathy Plowman, who were over-worked conduits of information between Hobart, Strahan and upriver (see Green c1984:248-260). The distortion that often occurred to information, however, is evidence that our listening skills as a movement need to improve, an improvement which would also benefit the consensus process.

Affinity groups also enhanced the use of consensus, providing the opportunity to learn and practice it in small but not always homogenous groups. Finally, affinity groups helped contain any violence by ensuring that everyone was known and part of a group; tendencies by individuals or *agents provocateurs* towards sabotage or more violent activities were more likely to be spotted and dissuaded than if they had been floating in a mass of people. Affinity groups are further discussed in section 12.2.2.

6.10.2 Nonviolence problems

6.10.2.1 Hierarchy

Addressing the thesis' second focus, on the problems Australian nonviolence praxis has encountered, there is evidence of problems engendered by TWS' hierarchical structure, different philosophies and tactics within the campaign, consensus decision-making, and issues surrounding holism. Although the tight control TWS exercised over the blockade ensured it remained nonviolent and contributed to its short-term success, it also created long-term detrimental effects. The hierarchical nature of TWS clashed constantly with the egalitarian nature of NVA taught at the blockade (McQueen 1983:58). 'Strahan Support' worker Ross Stewart found that despite the talk of a new society, the creation of bureaucratic hierarchies was middle-class and far from revolutionary (and the ubiquitous hugging "fake and meaningless") (in Blockaders 1983:43-44). A common complaint among blockaders was the way nonviolence was enforced from above, despite how according to consensus philosophy we were all supposedly equal.

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Decisions like the ban on the song 'Tonka Toys' came down from above and were to be obeyed, despite most of us (especially upriver) having not been involved in the decision. Being new to the movement, and not being a paid member of TWS because I could not afford it, I did not feel I could challenge such rulings.

Conversely, it would have been impossible for every blockader to be involved in every decision, particularly given the size and transitory nature of the blockade, with some people only being involved for a few days. There was also the geographical fact that the campaign was being waged in a number of places at once; getting consensus on a matter from everyone involved would have been very difficult indeed. **Nevertheless, this was the beginning for me of a perception that those with the most power and resources in a campaign tend to be concentrated in urban offices, where they make decisions with little regard for the 'cannon fodder' - those engaging in direct action.**

6.10.2.2 Nomadic Action Group

The Nomadic Action Group (NAG) in particular had many problems with TWS and the trainers it had engaged. Having emerged from successful rainforest campaigns like Terania Creek, NAG was anarchic, counter-cultural and contemptuous of the perceived semi-religious processes of nonviolent action training...These 'cadres' were appropriately equipped and anointed by the new elite of high priests and priestesses: NVA trainers (Cohen 1997:65).

Others argue that "the overt [pagan] spirituality of those upriver served to aggravate the mutual distrust" (Runciman et al unpub., p. 7). NAG actively challenged some of the tenets of TWS nonviolence, deceiving police by giving them false information or creating 'phantom groups', and doing secretive actions like the one with which I was involved. It should be noted that the TWS hierarchy also used secrecy for eleven months when planning the blockade (Blockaders 1983:17), which led to over-dependence on a few individuals (Runciman et al unpub., p 9).

NAG also disobeyed TWS directives, by smuggling friends onto the J-Lee-M and by taking children upriver. They also engaged in chaining themselves to HEC equipment (Green 1984:293-295) or "stuffing potatoes in bulldozer exhausts, cutting water pipes, and hiding chainsaws" (Runciman et al unpub. p. 26) despite the opposition of key NVA trainer Robert Burrowes to this kind of action (Paasonen pers.comm. 8 February

2005). NAG believed these actions could still be regarded as nonviolent, and that they were absolutely necessary to prevent the most present threat: damage to the rainforest. Indeed, one NAG member, Alice Hungerford, argued that their brand of nonviolence was *principled* rather than *pragmatic* like TWS (in Runciman et al unpub., p. 7). Some TWS workers, such as Pam Waud, supported these lock-ons (Green c1984:259), showing there were divisions between TWS and the trainers.¹⁷

NAG was also bitter that the blockade was called off after the ALP win with no consultation with those upriver (a pattern that continued at later blockades), that TWS broke their promise to include Cohen's plea for a continued blockade in their next newsletter, and that NAG was criticised for not paying \$750 for food supplies lost when the police closed the camp, shortly before a deposit of \$100 000 matured, paying all campaign expenses and leaving TWS with a surplus (Cohen 1997: 79-80). Since I was involved in the blockade camps rather than the TWS offices, I was inclined to sympathise with NAG. We shall see in later chapters how this emergent schism grew, created problems at Roxby Downs, led to the formation of groups like the North East Forest Alliance, and ultimately resulted in new forms of nonviolent action.

6.10.2.3 Consensus

Some people found that consensus had advantages over voting, being empowering for quieter people and kept louder people in check (see Glade-Wright in Blockaders 1983:44). It was a process that was at times frustrating and difficult, but I certainly felt empowered by it, and exhilarated to be taking part in a social experiment that offered great opportunities for change. NAG, however, deplored the "time-consuming nuisance of group consensus" (Cohen 1997:98)¹⁸, as did media liaison Chris Harris, who argued that consensus often led to no decision or to the adoption of the lowest common denominator, that meetings were so long-winded that events overtook them or they caused communication breakdowns because organisers could not spare the time to attend them, and that critics of consensus were vilified (in Blockaders 1983:44-45). However, like another critic Cathie Plowman (see Green c1984:249-250), Harris

¹⁷ This schism between TWS and the nonviolence trainers is discussed in depth in Runciman et al (unpub.).

¹⁸ This is despite consensus having been used at Terania Creek (Hutton & Connors 1999:155). Hungerford argues that rejection of formal decision-making structures and procedures actually enhanced consensus (in Runciman et al unpub., p. 7).

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concedes that consensus prevented any dangerous actions being sanctioned. Nor do these critics suggest any alternatives. As Harris notes, one of the difficulties was that people were unpractised in the process, and although this created what could be considered teething problems, the blockade gave great impetus to consensus, and ensured that a good many people became practiced in the art. It would be further developed in later actions like Roxby, despite similar concerns being raised¹⁹.

6.10.2.4 Holism

While many saw a strong feminist influence on the blockade's methods (eg Browne in *Blockaders* 1983:50), others found it too much of a 'touchy-feely' process (Darby 2002, online). Some found that NVA was too all-embracing, and even some of the trainers felt that they had presented too simplistic or righteous a message (Robertson in *Blockaders* 1983:43). One trainer, Karl-Eric Paasonen, found it "a fascinating experience, but then shied clear of the groups afterwards because [he] found it too 'biblical'? 'american'? 'religious'?" (2004, pers.comm. 3 December). He also reacted against

the 'toolbox' approach: that there's a set of 'tools' that anyone can use, anytime, that is somehow culturally neutral. I found it to be a straightjacket (pers.comm. 2 Feb 2005).

The process drew from the Quaker-influenced anti-nuclear movement in the US, "which was oriented much more to process than results, pursuing a policy of exemplary action and communal empowerment" (Joppke 1997:375). NVA's aim was ultimately the complete transformation of society, while many people were at the Franklin primarily to stop a dam, and felt other issues were irrelevant distractions. This relates to the revolutionary versus reformism argument of section 4.7.2, and is analysed in section 12.3.2.

Yet where the blockade was not holistic there were obvious problems. For example, although there was some evidence of support for Aboriginal issues, there was little consultation by TWS with Tasmanian Aboriginals²⁰, some of whom I was privileged to observe in Strahan as they boarded the J-Lee-M to go upriver, in a group with a powerful presence. Michael Mansell (1990:103-104) complains that no Aboriginal

¹⁹ These are discussed in section 7.6.7.1.

²⁰ I had been surprised to hear that there were any Tasmanian Aboriginals at all, having believed the furphy that they died out with Truganinni.

sovereignty was acknowledged nor approval sought for the Franklin campaign, and that TWS' 1984 submission for a national park mentioned Aboriginals only with a tokenistic plan for managing sites - regarded in the past tense as having archaeological significance but not as having present-day spiritual importance for living Tasmanian Aboriginals. Furthermore, TWS' categorisation of wilderness as 'primitive country remote from the ambit of civilisation' denigrated the long Aboriginal occupation of such land, situating Aboriginals as primitive and white people as civilised (Mansell (1990:103-104). This is clear evidence of TWS continuing neo-colonialist attitudes and prioritising the environment ahead of social justice issues. These accusations of racism continued to haunt the movement up till Jabiluka.²¹ Similarly, the actions of TWS in only allowing conservative-looking people to be media spokespeople were discriminatory, alienating articulate, experienced blockaders such as Cohen, and leading to an antagonism to TWS still evident in his writings fifteen years later. I return to this issue in section 12.2.1.2.

6.10.3 Effectiveness

The Franklin campaign is an important case study as it was one of few actions where everyone had comprehensive nonviolence training, since TWS controlled the only access to the blockade site. It shows that with such training, nonviolence *can* be achieved on a massive scale, and can be very successful. Nonviolence created an atmosphere extremely conducive to conversion, of the community, mainland media, police, and even HEC workers (see below). The sheer numbers of those taking part and the minimum of violence are a tribute to the nonviolence trainers in particular, and enhanced the growth of the campaign into the national and international arena. This attracted high profile activists such as Professor David Bellamy, whose televised arrest was broadcast in thirty-two countries (Blockaders 1983:72), continuing this upward spiral of publicity. Politicians of all persuasions began to support the campaign, undoubtedly in part because it remained nonviolent and created an image of popular disaffection rather than violence and lawlessness. In turn, this may have influenced the landmark High Court decision to stop the dam. As in India (see Kumarappa in Powers and Vogeles 1997:152), nonviolence exposed state repression, as protesters underwent self-suffering rather than retaliate, and were "publicly perceived as heroes whereas their

²¹ They are discussed in sections 10.4.10.1 and 12.3.1.

opponents appeared to be intemperate and short-sighted” (Summy 1993:119). The campaign played an important role in the election of the ALP (Hay 1987:11; Summy 1997:31), where it remained for thirteen years, and there were significant legal and movement ramifications stemming from the ‘states rights’ precedent set by the High Court (see Coper 1983, 1988; Hutton & Connors 1999:163-165). The success also empowered the activists, many of whom went on to the Roxby Downs protests, and it pushed direct action, environmentalism and Bob Brown to the forefront of Australian political life.

The blockade could be regarded as “the perfect protest ... in which a large number of employed middle class people, on their holidays, ramble through the wilderness, doing as little damage as possible to people or property in a remote corner of Australia” (Runciman 1986:168). However, it opposed a powerful HEC, and the state “Government was against us, all three newspapers were against us as well as the unions and the business councils of Tasmania” (Bob Brown in Milsom 2000:35). Any violence by blockaders – such as the two plots to blow up the office of the HEC chief and to set fire to machinery which were narrowly averted (Darby 2002, online) - would have resulted in terrible front-page publicity, and more draconian action from the state. The blockade may have folded, through TWS pulling out or through police action, and the cause lost. Thus despite NVA’s shortcomings, nonviolence was a vital part of the blockade’s success.

6.10.3.1 Conversions

There was ample time for protestors to talk to police in small groups, and to attempt to win them over to our points of view, whether about the dam, nonviolent protest or issues like women’s rights or the decriminalisation of marijuana. Although many police were antagonistic when they first arrived, there were a number of remarkable about-faces, with police weeping with blockaders when a Huon pine perhaps 2000 years old was felled near Warners Landing (McQueen 1983:37).

Personal contact with us as diverse people coupled with the all-powerful backdrop of the Wilderness broke down their barriers to the extent that senior police had to round up younger members who stayed too long communicating with us in the late afternoon. We formed unlikely associations, even friendships (Cohen 1997:73).

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Blue lights flashing in the gathering dusk, it was a scene straight from *Clockwork Orange*, when three [policemen] got out of the car and, having been assured that there would be no photos, joined in the dancing which had just begun. The motley band of guitarists, violinist, flautist, banjo and tin whistle players set to, and for half an hour, a crazy, almost surreal scene of pure unforced hilarity ensued. But how could these boots fail to mince to pulp so many bare feet? (Barnwell in *Blockaders* 1983:42)

Some police began to wear 'No Dams' stickers inside their hats, others became TWS members (Waud in *Blockaders* 1983:48). Even the 'Lone Ranger' broke down in tears and admitted to being intensely lonely and alienated from his colleagues (Cohen 1997:73)! There was evidence that police fought amongst themselves (Ball cited in Runciman 1986:162), which suggests that attempts at conversion were causing divisions in our opponents.

Partial conversions also happened in jail with both inmates and the warders, with one blockader being handed through the bars a supportive poem (Bock et al 1983:78), and some magistrates showed "a remarkable change in attitude" (McQueen 1983:52). Conversion or at least communication also occurred with HEC workers, for example when they were unexpectedly confronted in a remote area by 70 year-old Claudia. Their initial anger dissipated, they offered her tea, and work stopped for the afternoon as they chatted (Cohen 1997:75-77). As HEC contractor Kevin Bailey notes "we became good friends with a lot of them ... These couple of girls were really friendly, just friendly nice people, doing what they think was right" (in Green 1984:296).

Although some have questioned whether conversions occur through nonviolent action (eg Weber 1993), there were clearly a number of partial conversions at the Franklin - many of them extraordinarily swift - and the pervasive aura of nonviolence was most certainly a factor here. Along with my own conversion to the efficacy of nonviolence, the blockade further radicalised me. I abandoned my belief in the objectivity of mainstream media as I saw its omissions, bias and distortions of actions I was in (see Runciman 1986:168-170); and I lost my illusions about the impartiality of the justice system, police, and government. On the other hand, the nonviolence philosophies of egalitarianism and self-actualisation, and the dedication, cooperation and hard work displayed by the campaigners gave me much hope for anarchism (see McQueen

1983:57-58). The experience would inspire me to study anarchism in my final two years at Sydney University in 1983 and 1984.

6.11 ARTS OBSERVATIONS

6.11.1 Music

We have already seen how music played important roles in encouraging, fortifying and creating solidarity, and as a vehicle to express our emotions in a deep and satisfying way. Like the games at training, it assisted in ‘breaking the ice’ amongst protestors, and this process extended outwards to media, police and HEC workers, creating an atmosphere²² suited to conversion. Songs written specifically about the river and the campaign featured in much of the media’s coverage (Fight for the Franklin (video recording) 2001). Ian Paulin’s ‘The Face of Things to Come’ (Bock et al 1983:8-9), for example, so affected James McQueen that he named his 1983 book about the blockade after a line in it. A benefit tour by *Redgum* helped spread the message, as did airplay of *Gordon Franklin and the Wilderness Ensemble’s* ‘Let the Franklin Flow’.

Another role of music was in calming people awaiting arrest, and in preventing tense situations from becoming violent, as when 40 protestors, confronted on ‘G-Day’²³ by 200 angry pro-dammers in Strahan, spontaneously formed a choir and sang non-threatening music, accompanied by a lone woman guitarist (Waud in *Blockaders* 1983:104-110; see Figure 48). The importance of avoiding injury to people and preventing bad publicity four days before the federal election cannot be underestimated.²⁴

Music played a stronger role at the Franklin than at any other action in which I would later be involved. Rather than a few people making music and the rest listening, most actions featured the majority of protestors joining in. There were often recognisable leaders such as the exuberant and talented Lisa Yeates (see Figure 3), but they were catalysts for mass singing rather than solo performers. A causal factor was the camaraderie inspired by the training and affinity group system, resulting in a semi-tribal

²² This atmosphere is discussed in section 13.2.2.

²³ Green Day - 1 March – was a day of state-wide action.

²⁴ Section 13.3.1.2 further discusses this.

atmosphere conducive to singing (see Stevens 1993)²⁵. Disciplined nonviolence thus had a strong impact on the musical nature of the action.²⁶



Figure 39: Blockaders awaiting arrest (including NAG's Jules Davison in wheelchair) sing, partly to quell their nerves.

6.11.2 Visual arts

As we saw in section 6.5.2, the media, which was used so well by TWS, was given a wide variety of visual symbols to focus on in their filming and photography. Banners read "Think Globally, Act Locally" – while one in the shape of a paintbrush said "Artists Love Wilderness: True" and "ARTS SUPPORT WORLD HERITAGE". The Land Rights flag was one symbol, indicative of the support for Aboriginal issues by some of the non-indigenous protestors. A more common symbol was the ubiquitous 'No Dams' logo on a green triangle (see Figure 33), reproduced on banners, sails, badges and then car stickers around the country. This was a simple but unifying symbol, whose design, as section 13.3.2.3 shows, would prove enduring. As mentioned earlier, photographs and video footage taken by the activists were used to great advantage in

²⁵ Bellamy describes the blockade as 'the most uplifting thing I have ever been part of' (in Darby 2002).

²⁶ Section 14. 2 further discusses this.

showing the unique beauty of the river to a national audience. As in the supposed difference between pictures and words, Dombrovkis's photograph of Rock Island Bend, used by TWS to urge people not to vote for a party that would allow it to be destroyed (ie the Liberals) may have been worth a thousand votes. In addition to Zable's performances, street-theatre was used widely. For example, in Hobart on G-Day a doorless cage with three prisoners was deposited outside the HEC building to signify the 1100 people arrested in protests to that day (Figure 40). Elsewhere people dressed as animals threatened by the dam, like platypuses. The TWS koala would later become a widespread phenomenon used for fundraising and as a recognisable protest symbol²⁷.



Figure 40: Street-theatre in centre of Hobart.

The arts thus played a significant role in the success of the Franklin River campaign. They expanded the scope for protest, from mere chanting and waving placards to one where people could engage in a range of meaningful practices. There were peaceful but challenging activities like banner-making - requiring thought, teamwork and skill. There was photography, which during tense actions or when 'trespassing', could be quite

²⁷ I have worn one in an Armidale march – it was hot work and not without incident – some young opponents were threatening and abusive.

nerve-wracking, particularly if film had to be smuggled past police. Music occurred both around campfires, and during large confrontations, and anyone could join in. The arts therefore increased the inclusivity of the campaign, a key element of nonviolence further discussed in section 13.3.2.4. The arts also helped impart the blockaders' message in a multi-media way, acting on many levels: aural, visual, emotional, intellectual, adding further texture to a diverse campaign²⁸. The arts aided nonviolence by creating community cohesion, confidence and well-being, which fed back cyclically into enhancing particularly the musical nature of the blockade. The joyful nature of groups of blockaders, despite being under arrest, can clearly be seen in Figures 49 and 50. Music thus had an important internal role in the campaign, in bonding, inspiring and encouraging. It also had external impacts (conversionary, preventing violence). The visual arts acted largely externally, through imparting messages and attracting media attention.

6.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter gave an emic account of the Franklin River blockade, from nonviolence training to civil disobedience and a court-case. It addressed the first focus of the thesis by describing elements new to Australian nonviolence, such as training and affinity groups, and by showing how the mass civil disobedience of the Franklin contrasted with some of the nonviolence literature from overseas. The chapter also raised some of the problems of Australian nonviolence praxis (the thesis' second focus), showing that there were inconsistencies between the nonviolence theory taught - egalitarian, inclusive, open - and the often hierarchical, secretive, exclusionary nature of TWS. Decisions were made in Hobart that disenfranchised people upriver, in a manner far from consensual. Some of this was largely unavoidable because of communications difficulties, but there was also an element of a hierarchy of urban organisers versus rural blockaders. Nevertheless, the campaign was extremely successful, with the fact that almost everyone was trained and in affinity groups making it a powerful case for disciplined nonviolence (thereby addressing the thesis' third focus). The method of that training also had important implications for adult education²⁹.

²⁸ How this process significantly aids conversion is discussed in section 13.2.1.1.

²⁹ Section 13.2.6 discusses emancipatory learning and social change.

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Art-forms such as music, banners, photography and theatre played important roles in group dynamics, in fortifying and inspiring activists, in initiating conversion and preventing violence (the thesis' fourth focus). Links between nonviolence praxis and the arts could also be seen (thesis focus number five), with the bonding caused by intensive training and action being linked to the rousing communal singing of the blockade, creating a loop in which nonviolence aided the arts and vice versa.

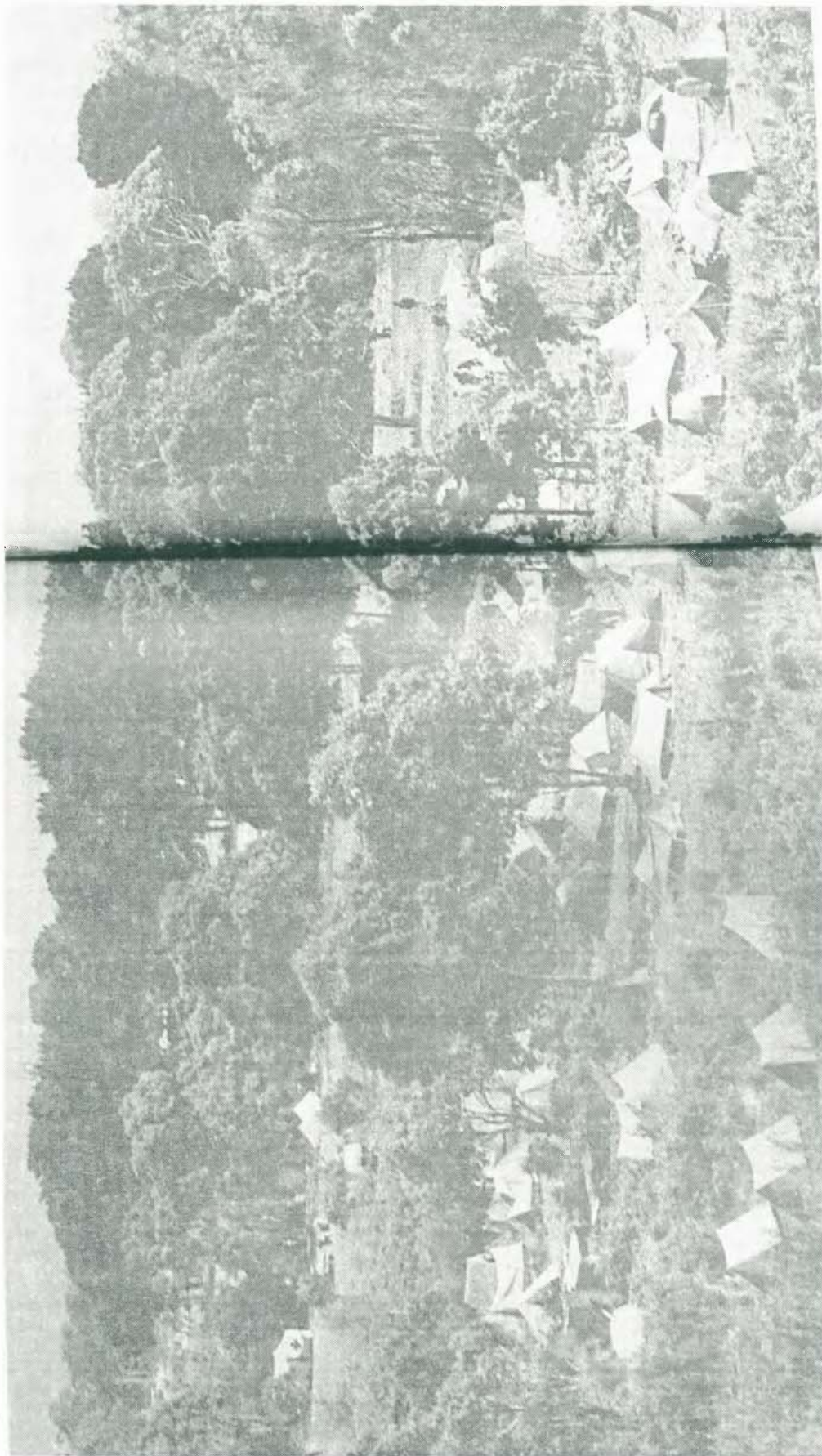


Figure 41: Some locals were converted or sympathetic, donating land for a camp.



Figure 42: Cooperative food tent.



Figure 43: Meeting using consensus decision-making



Figure 44: Games during NVA training.

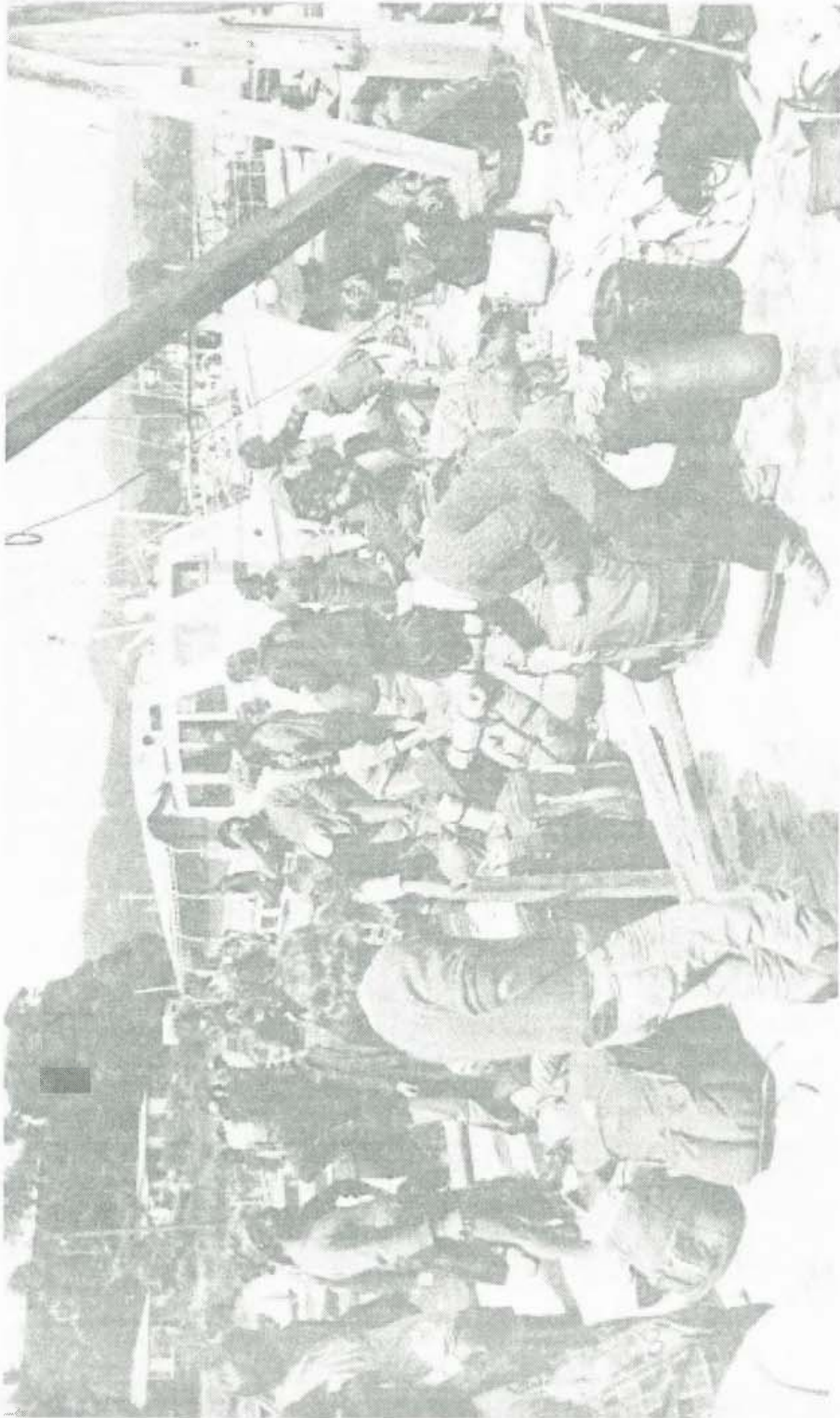
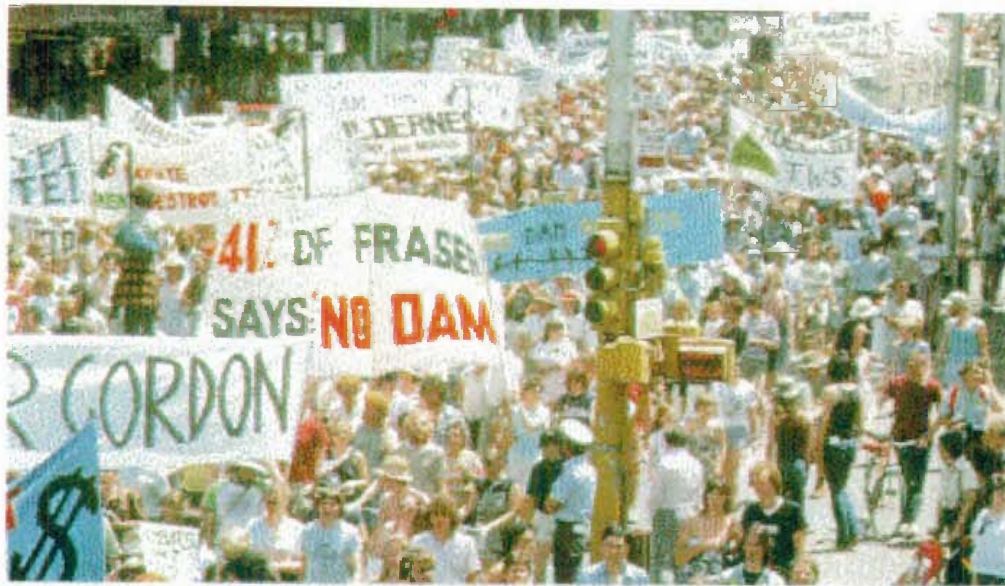


Figure 45: The boat which carried upriver people trained in NVA.

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Figures 46 and 47: Banners and flags at a rally and obscuring the Communications Shack at the river camp jetty.

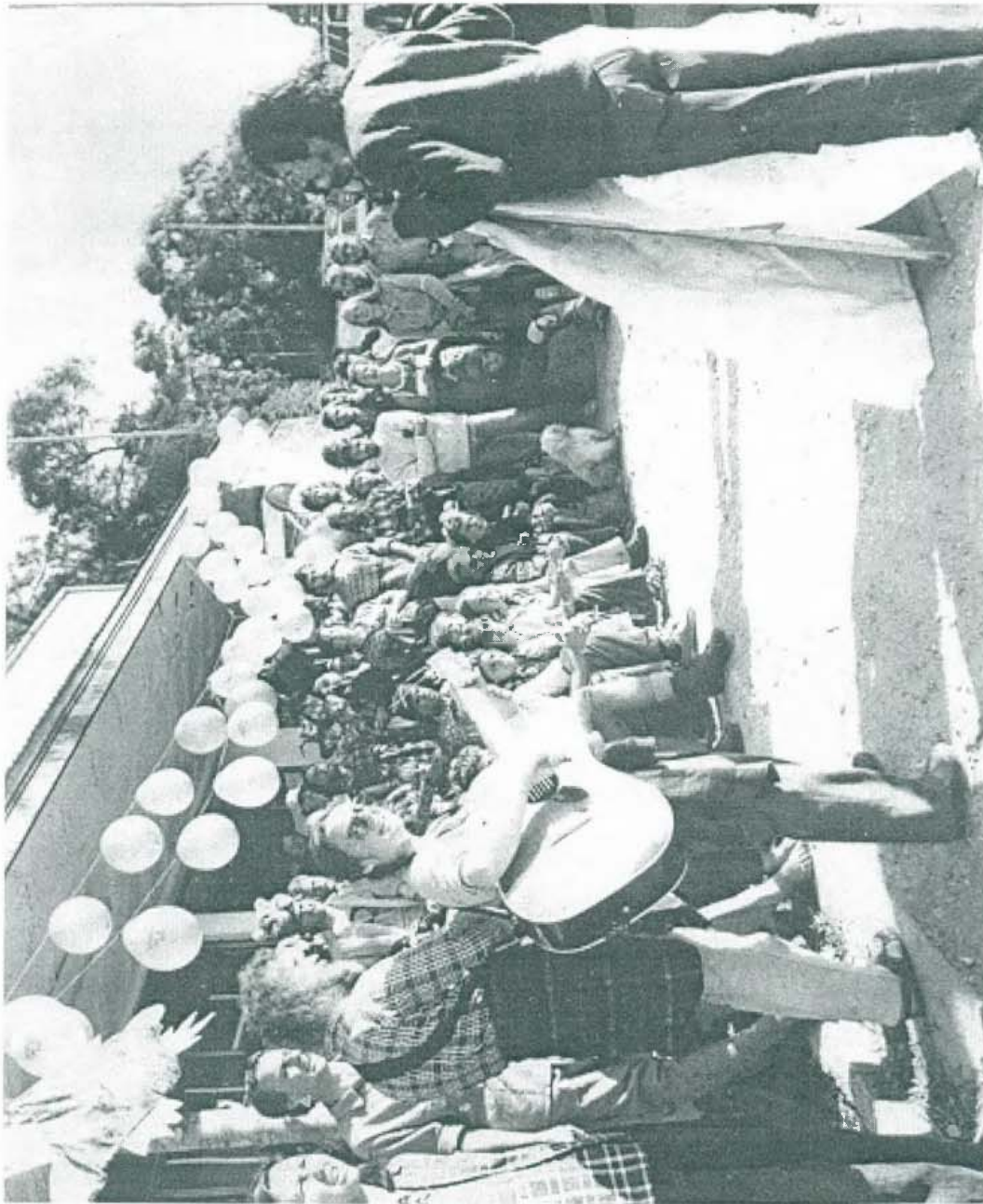


Figure 48: Guitarist and singers serenade angry pro-dammers outside 'Info Centre' in Strahan on G-Day.



Figure 49: Joyful arrestees enjoy music prior to trip downriver in police launch.



Figure 50: Arrestees at Strahan buoyed by supportive singing.