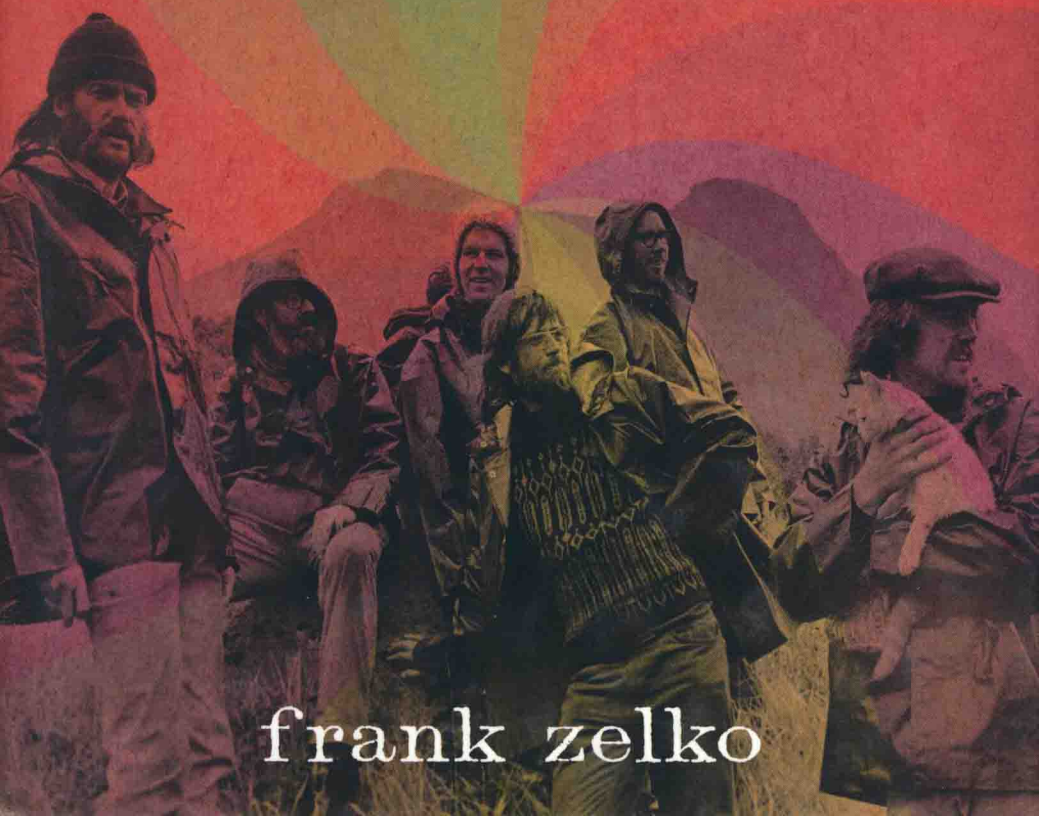


MAKE IT A **GREEN PEACE!**

the rise of countercultural
environmentalism



frank zelko

Make It a Green Peace!

The Rise of Countercultural Environmentalism

FRANK ZELKO



OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research,
scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide.

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press
in the UK and certain other countries.

Published in the United States of America by
Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

© Oxford University Press 2013

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the
prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted by law,
by license, or under terms agreed with the appropriate reproduction rights organization.
Inquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent
to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the address above.

You must not circulate this work in any other form,
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Zelko, Frank S.

Make it a green peace! : the rise of countercultural
environmentalism / Frank Zelko.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-19-994708-9

1. Greenpeace International—History.
2. Environmental protection—Political aspects.
3. Antinuclear movement—History.
4. Environmentalism—History.
5. Counterculture—History. I. Title.

TD169.Z45 2013

333.72—dc23 2012042260

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper

For Ana and Stefan

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

You know a project has taken too long when several of the people who deserve the most thanks did not live to see the final product. This book could not have been written without the enthusiastic and cheerful cooperation of numerous former Greenpeace activists, many of whom not only allowed me to interview them and pore over various documents in their basements and attics but also extended their warm hospitality, including food and drink and sometimes even a place to sleep. My cosmic gratitude goes out to the late Dorothy Stowe, Ben Metcalfe, Jim and Marie Bohlen, Bob Hunter, and David McTaggart. An earthly but no less heartfelt thank you to Patrick Moore, Paul Watson, Rod Marining, Rex Weyler, Robert O. Taunt III, Steve Sawyer, Kelly Rigg, David Tussman, Michael M'Gonigle, and numerous others who were willing to share their past with me, either through conversation, personal papers, or both.

The Greenpeace offices in Washington, DC, Seattle, San Francisco, Toronto, and Hamburg, in addition to the Greenpeace International office in Amsterdam were kind enough to provide me with access to their archives and libraries. I would also like to thank the archivists and librarians who helped me find useful materials at the City of Vancouver Archives, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Archives Canada in Ottawa, the Commonwealth Collection at the University of Bradford, and the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College.

Researching an organization whose archives and former members are scattered across several continents and located in some of the world's more expensive cities was possible only through generous financial support at various stages of the project. I am exceedingly grateful to the following institutions for their vital assistance: the Fulbright Program, the Aspen Institute Non-profit Sector Research Fund, the German Academic Exchange Service, the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC, the University of Queensland New Faculty Research Fund, the Max Planck Institute for History in Göttingen, the Gerda

Henkel Foundation, the Lattie F. Coor Faculty Development Award at the University of Vermont, and the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society at Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich.

Some sections of the book have appeared elsewhere in different form. I am grateful to the following editors and the publishers for allowing me to share my analysis and arguments in articles and for permitting me to republish them here: *Society and Animals* (Brill, 2012); *BC Studies: The British Columbian Quarterly* (2004); and *Historians and Nature: Comparative Approaches to Environmental History*, edited by Ursula Lehmkuhl and Hermann Wellenreuther and published in 2006 by Berg (an imprint of Bloomsbury). Many thanks as well to Greenpeace for granting me permission to reprint numerous photographs from their vast photo archive.

Several of my valued colleagues read either all or part of the manuscript at various stages and offered insightful criticism and suggestions. My thanks to Karl Brooks, Kurk Dorsey, Arn Keeling, Kristine Kern, Kieko Matteson, Christof Mauch, Karen Oslund, Adam Rome, Carl Strikwerda, James Turner, Graeme Wynn, and especially Donald Worster. Don was a brilliant and generous mentor during my days as a doctoral student at the University of Kansas, and he remains an inspirational colleague and friend. His scholarship inspired my initial interest in environmental history and is responsible for much of what I have subsequently learned. I am also grateful for the friendship and intellectual stimulation of numerous fellow graduate students who came to Lawrence to work with Don, including Jay Antle, Kevin Armitage, Lisa Brady, Kip Curtis, Sterling Evans, Michael French, Nancy Jackson, Matthew Logan, Neil Maher, Bruce Stadfeld McIvor, James Pritchard, Amy Schwartz, and Paul Sutter. Susan Ferber of Oxford University Press has been an exemplary editor, cutting and polishing a sprawling manuscript into a tighter, more focused, and much-improved book. I am also immensely grateful to Graham Burnett for sharing his superb book on whale science while it was still in manuscript form. Many thanks as well to Maribel Novo for transcribing numerous interviews and for many years of intercontinental friendship.

As a result of a somewhat peripatetic lifestyle, I have lived in four different countries while researching, writing, rewriting, and editing this book. Such an unmoored existence has its challenges. That the experience has been rewarding is due to the friendship, good company, and kindness of numerous people. As a long-term victim of alphabetical discrimination, I thank them here in reverse alphabetical order: Renee Worringer, Amani Whitfield, Kathy Truax, Olaf Tarmas, Ken Tanzer, Lisa Steffen, Felice Stadler, Christabelle Sethna, Nadine Requardt, Uwe Reising, Amanda Rees, Janette Philp, Rusty Monhollon, Abby McGowan, Kelly McCullough, David Massell, Laurie Kutner, Adrian Ivakhiv, Terrance Hayes, Katja Hartmann, Geoff Ginn, Andrew Gentes, Sean Field,

Sarah Ferber, Nina Ehresmann, Charles Closmann, David Christian, Kathy Carolin, Andrew Bonnell, Gesa Becher, and Jodi Bailey.

Eddie Zelko has frequently ridden to the rescue when uncooperative computers have threatened to derail my life. Over the years he has offered just the right blend of brotherly patience, good cheer, and skepticism. Like me, Eddie is the beneficiary of my parents' hard-won middle-class life in the Melbourne suburbs. War, political upheaval, and poverty denied them the benefits of an extensive formal education. Their lives were shaped instead by the rigors of emigration and factory jobs, which in turn made possible a fulsome education for their sons. Whether I have made the most of my parents' toil is perhaps disputable. However, my gratitude, respect, and love for them are not. I dedicate this book to Ana and Stefan Zelko.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ix

Introduction 3

1. Speak Truth to Power	10
2. The Enemies of Anarchy	33
3. The Canadian Crucible	53
4. Don't Make a Wave	78
5. Not a Protester in the Usual Sense	110
6. Mururoa, Mon Amour	131
7. Armless Buddhas vs. Carnivorous Nazis	161
8. The Reenchanted Whale	181
9. Stop Ahab	195
10. On Thin Ice	231
11. Blood and Death and Sex	249
12. The Paradox of Power: The Birth of Greenpeace International	275
Conclusion	315

Notes 323

Bibliography 357

Index 375

Make It a Green Peace!

Introduction

Most of us probably don't know how it feels to unexpectedly have our head clamped in the jaws of a live killer whale. Not an angry or hungry killer whale, but a friendly killer whale in an aquarium. Bob Hunter, Vancouver's most famous hippie intellectual and one of the founders of Greenpeace, knew what it felt like. It happened to him in 1974 while he was visiting the Vancouver Aquarium at the behest of a whale scientist who was hoping to convince Greenpeace to mount a campaign against whaling. The experience changed his life: "I had been through marathon t-group therapy sessions and emotionally exhausting workshops with the great Gestalt therapist Fritz Perls, but neither experience had been so far out of the framework of my understanding that it left me as shaken as I was now." Hunter quit his job, divorced his wife, and devoted his life to saving "the serene superbeings in the sea," those exquisitely adapted creatures that "had mastered nature by becoming one with the tides and the temperatures long before man had even learned to scramble from the shelter of the caves."¹ Hunter's cetacean-inspired epiphany fired him with fierce conviction: the abominable practice of whaling had to end. This was not a view shared by all environmentalists.

In the early 1970s, the U.S. Congress House Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation held a series of hearings on the subject of marine mammal protection. Among those who testified were representatives of America's oldest and most established wilderness protection groups, such as the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, and the National Wildlife Federation. Although it was important to ensure that the world's populations of whales and seals remained as healthy as possible, these organizations argued, they did not support a policy of absolute protection. As long as the survival of the species was ensured, they believed, it was legitimate to use its "surplus" members for the benefit of people. In his testimony before the subcommittee, Thomas Kimball of the National Wildlife Federation employed phrases such as "renewable resources," "stewardship," and "professional wildlife management." The "harvesting of surplus wildlife populations," his organization maintained, was an "important management tool if the continuing long-range well being of an animal population is the ultimate objective."²

Bob Hunter would have none of this. A few years after these hearings, he and his fellow Greenpeaceers came across a fleet of Soviet whaling boats off the coast of California. They leaped into several motorized inflatable dinghies and skimmed across the open ocean, zipping between whalers' harpoons and fleeing pods of sperm whales, in effect acting as human shields for the defenseless giants. Not long after that, these same individuals were scrambling across ice floes off the coast of Newfoundland, throwing their bodies over harp seal pups to save them from club-wielding seal hunters. Whaling and sealing, these ardent activists insisted, were not merely issues of wildlife conservation or resource stewardship. Rather, they were ecologically destructive and morally reprehensible acts that represented humanity's ignorance and thoughtless cruelty toward other sentient life-forms.

How should we understand these activists, whose impassioned antics under the Greenpeace banner challenged the heretofore staid conservation-oriented discourse of wildlife protection—and the standard repertoire of environmentalism in general—and supplanted them with a form of nonviolent protest and countercultural holism that has influenced environmentalism ever since? Hunter had felt the firm clamp of orca teeth on the back of his skull, but even this dramatic experience cannot fully explain his commitment.³ What else inspired him and his fellow activists to take such drastic, self-imperiling actions to protect other species? How did they come to hold such uncompromising views? In an effort to answer such questions, this book explores the complex roots of Greenpeace, tracing the development of the organization from its emergence amid the various protest movements of the 1950s and 1960s to the end of its volatile, dramatic, and at times quirky first decade in 1980.

Since the beginning of the 1970s, no single organization has done more than Greenpeace to bolster and reshape environmental protest around the world. Its founders were the first environmentalists to adopt the Gandhian nonviolent protest strategies employed by the peace and civil rights movements. They combined this with the Quaker notion of "bearing witness"—the idea that a crime or atrocity can be challenged by observing it and reporting it to others—and hitched it to a media strategy heavily influenced by Marshall McLuhan, the Canadian communications scholar who developed such enduring concepts and aphorisms as "the global village" and "the medium is the message." In addition, Greenpeace's founders were self-conscious internationalists, a stance motivated both by a form of postnationalist romanticism that envisioned a world without borders and by the ecological imperative that nature did not recognize the artificial boundaries of nation-states.

Greenpeace also made environmentalism look cool. Its vivid and confrontational protest style resonated with the antiwar demonstrators of the 1960s and 1970s, while its iconic imagery and links with popular musicians challenged

older stereotypes that associated environmentalism with middle-aged Sierra Club hikers in corduroys and cardigans. The new Greenpeace-inspired environmentalists wore tie-dyed T-shirts and long hair, smoked dope and dropped acid, and fomented a consciousness revolution that sought nothing less than a radical change in Western culture. For better or worse, this hip, edgy, occasionally somewhat flaky image continued to linger long after Greenpeace had largely abandoned its more eccentric countercultural traits. The fact that Greenpeace became for many people a kind of synecdoche of environmentalism, therefore, means that in some quarters environmentalism continues to be tainted by its association with the sixties counterculture.

By the early 1980s, Greenpeace had grown into an international environmental powerhouse centered in Europe, with a complex hierarchical—some might say “corporate”—structure and branch offices in numerous countries. Today, it is one of the planet’s most recognized environmental groups. Its logo is almost as familiar as those of Coca-Cola and McDonald’s.⁴ Its present-day activities involve a variety of campaigns, from lobbying governments and intergovernmental agencies, such as the International Whaling Commission, to sponsoring the production of new technologies, like environmentally friendly refrigerators and automobiles. While its prominence and influence are undeniable, the institution that Greenpeace has become is not necessarily what its founders had in mind. Throughout its early history, there were moments when Greenpeace could have taken different paths. Some might have led to its demise, while others may have allowed it to develop as more of a grassroots social movement. Despite its unpredictable evolution and the internecine struggles that gave rise to its present form, it has retained the direct-action style that first set it apart in the 1970s and imbued its activists with unique *élan*.

Drawing on a wide-ranging set of sources, from newspaper articles, meeting minutes, internal correspondence, and numerous interviews with former Greenpeaceers, to philosophical writings, manifestos, and personal accounts by prominent and lesser-known thinkers, including Bob Hunter, this book investigates the diverse ideologies and outlooks that gave Greenpeace its distinct character from its founding forward. How did its origins shape the path the organization took? To what extent has it lived up to the vision and ideals of its founders? And how have its multifaceted origins proved both inspiring and problematic in its evolution and present incarnation?

By situating Greenpeace within the context of the postwar peace movement and the sixties counterculture and examining its spectacular rise on the world scene through simultaneously quixotic and muscular media-savvy campaigns, this book seeks to provide a much deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the organization’s brand of radical, direct-action environmentalism than other scholarly and journalistic works. Previous studies of Greenpeace can

be broken down into several broad categories: members' memoirs and autobiographies, which seem to be something of a cottage industry among former participants and provide an indication of the unique role that Greenpeace has occupied in the environmental movement;⁵ official and semi-official organizational histories;⁶ media studies that analyze Greenpeace's skillful use of mass communications and these campaigns' effects, in turn, on the organization itself;⁷ and sociological analyses of Greenpeace's strategies and structure.⁸ There are also several journalistic accounts that describe how Greenpeace functions and some of the more prominent campaigns in which it has been involved.⁹ As far as historical scholarship is concerned, there is an almost inexplicable incongruity between the minor consideration given the organization in the historiography of environmentalism and the significant role it has played in shaping environmental activism in the United States and abroad for the past four decades.¹⁰

The dearth of serious historical scholarship on Greenpeace means that certain important elements in the history of environmentalism have received little attention. Most prominent among these is the influence of the twentieth-century peace movement. Chapter 1, therefore, explores the "peace" half of Greenpeace through the lives of two of the organization's founding couples, Irving and Dorothy Stowe from Rhode Island and Jim and Marie Bohlen from Pennsylvania. The Stowes and Bohlens had strong connections with various pacifist and antiwar organizations, particularly those inspired by Quakers. These groups foreshadowed Greenpeace's protest tactics and strategies; in fact, Greenpeace's first campaign closely mimicked Quaker-organized antinuclear protests from the 1950s.

Chapters 2 and 3 introduce the protest culture that the Stowes and Bohlens found when they moved to Canada in the late 1960s to escape, in their eyes, the clutches of U.S. militarism. Much to their surprise, the city in which they settled—Vancouver—was simmering with alternative politics and grassroots activism, from antiwar groups to antipollution organizations. The Stowes and Bohlens, seasoned activists in their forties and fifties, brought to local peace and ecology movements the tactics and values they had learned from decades of activism. In turn, they found themselves interacting with younger activists—Canadians and Americans—whose ideas and lifestyles presented interesting challenges and opportunities. Many of these individuals would play a key role in the emergence of Greenpeace, chief among them Bob Hunter. Hunter was only in his late twenties but had already published three books—one novel and two ambitious works of cultural criticism—and was a columnist for the *Vancouver Sun*. A critical examination of Hunter's texts and columns reveals a fertile mind with a penchant for grand theory. Apart from his considerable role in shaping Greenpeace's innovative and controversial media strategies, Hunter did more than anyone to inject Greenpeace with the spirit and values of the sixties counter-culture and holistic ecology.

Chapter 4 narrates and examines Greenpeace's first campaign—an attempt to disrupt an underground nuclear explosion by sailing into the testing area, a remote region of the Aleutian Islands southwest of Alaska. The maiden voyage was important in forging Greenpeace's identity and revealed fundamental tensions among the group's many founders. The most obvious of these was the split between the older generation of peace movement protestors who were inclined toward a sober and respectable form of scientific rationalism and a group of younger activists who embraced various countercultural beliefs and values. The participants labeled this dichotomy the “mechanics versus the mystics,” and it would remain a fundamental cleavage within the organization throughout the 1970s. The Aleutian voyage also inspired the birth of one of Greenpeace's core myths—the idea that they were the “warriors of the rainbow,” a reference to a Native American prophecy that foretold the coming of a band of earth warriors who would save the world from environmental destruction.

From 1972 to 1974, Greenpeace directed its attention toward French nuclear testing in the South Pacific, a campaign taken up in chapters 5 and 6. Ben Metcalfe and David McTaggart, the two most prominent figures during this period of Greenpeace's history, were in many respects completely unrepresentative of the nascent organization's internal culture. Metcalfe was a wily and cynical journalist who felt that the manipulation of public opinion by elites offered the only hope for substantive social and political change. Despite this—or perhaps because of it—he proved to be a more than adequate exponent of “mind bombing,” a media theory that Bob Hunter had derived from Marshall McLuhan. McTaggart was a conservative forty-year-old resort developer with no prior connection to either the peace movement or the counterculture. Yet he successfully sailed his little ketch all the way from New Zealand to the test site near Tahiti twice, in the process proving to be a considerable headache to the French military. He went on to play a major role in the formation and running of Greenpeace International.

The South Pacific campaign represented an early attempt at global environmental activism. It required coordinating activists in several countries and led to the establishment of the first Greenpeace group outside Canada—in New Zealand. While McTaggart was taking on the French Navy, other Greenpeacers were organizing protests in New York, London, and Paris, before eventually setting up camp at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, the UN's first major conference on international environmental issues. Thus the South Pacific campaign marked Greenpeace's entry into the arena that political scientist Paul Wapner has called “world civic politics”: a level of politics where the promotion of broad cultural sensibilities represents a mechanism of authority that is able to shape human behavior.¹¹

In 1975, Greenpeace underwent a dramatic change in its campaign focus, philosophy, and membership base. Until then, it could best be described as an

antinuclear group with an environmental emphasis. By deciding to mount a direct-action campaign against whaling, however, the organization embraced a biocentric philosophy that challenged the widespread idea that humans were the supreme beings on the face of the planet. They vividly illustrated their commitment to this notion by placing their bodies between pods of fleeing whales and the explosive harpoons of the Soviet whaling fleet. In the process, the activists captured a series of stunning images that would make them renowned throughout the world, giving them entrée into the world's most lucrative environmental "market"—the United States.

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 explore this spectacular and timely entrance into the antiwhaling movement. In addition to offering a historical account of changing attitudes toward whales, this section explores the rather surprising and bizarre connections between cetacean research, Cold War bioscience, neuroscience, and sixties counterculture. Greenpeace and other antiwhaling activists based their opposition to whaling on the controversial notion that whales and dolphins represented a form of higher intelligence, a "mind in the waters," to use the title of a famous book on the subject.¹² However, by arguing that all whales deserved to be saved because of their supreme intelligence, Greenpeace was unwittingly invoking the great-chain-of-being worldview that ranked a species' worth according to whether it possessed traits humans value: intelligence, advanced communication skills, and a theory of mind. Such a view was at odds with the ethics of holistic ecology and biocentrism, in which nature has an intrinsic value independent of humans. The tension between this great-chain-of-being approach and Greenpeace's professed biocentrism would become particularly evident when various Native American tribes—the inspiration behind Greenpeace's "warriors of the rainbow" image—demanded that they be allowed to continue their "traditional" practice of hunting whales.

In 1976, with new Greenpeace branches springing up throughout North America, the organization's attention shifted from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Once again, its goal was to protect marine mammals, this time the adorable harp seal pups born each winter on ice floes off the coast of Newfoundland and Quebec. Chapters 10 and 11 focus on this campaign, an early example of the kind of imbroglio that environmentalists have become entangled in countless times over the past few decades, in which their interest in saving a species or preserving a habitat conflicts with the needs of local working people for whom that species or habitat constitutes a resource. The antisealing protests attracted a substantial number of animal rights activists to Greenpeace. From an animal rights perspective, there can be no question of compromise when it comes to the killing of whales or seals—abolition is the only goal worth pursuing. Therefore, those within Greenpeace who were willing to take a more pragmatic, ecological approach to sealing found that they had almost as much trouble with some of their

own supporters as they did with the sealers. Despite these problems, Greenpeace's leaders—Bob Hunter in particular—made a concerted effort to work with the mostly impoverished Newfoundlanders who constituted the sealing industry's labor force. The fact that they failed was due as much to the intransigence of the sealers and their supporters within the Canadian government as to Greenpeace's own shortcomings. At the same time, the questionable actions of some of its activists forced Greenpeace to define the acceptable boundaries of its direct-action approach.

By 1978, Greenpeace was beginning to experience severe growing pains. The original Vancouver group, who considered themselves the leaders of the rapidly expanding, loosely controlled organization, was facing a mountain of debt from several years of nonstop campaigning. Meanwhile, the various American offices, particularly the relatively wealthy San Francisco branch, began to chafe at what they perceived as Vancouver's authoritarian leadership. The controversial antisealing campaign had caused a significant decline in Canadian donations to the Vancouver group, forcing them to rely on the San Francisco office to underwrite their operations. When Vancouver tried to tighten its control over the various Greenpeace branches worldwide, they met considerable resistance from the Americans. The result was an acrimonious legal battle in which the Vancouver branch of Greenpeace sued its brethren in San Francisco. The nascent European groups, led by Vancouver native David McTaggart, took advantage of the opportunity to consolidate their power. The final chapter describes the complex series of deals that gave rise to the European offices' emergence as the leaders of Greenpeace, and the shift of power from the Pacific coast of North America to the countries bordering the North Sea. One result was that Amsterdam, Hamburg, and London replaced Vancouver and San Francisco as Greenpeace's most important offices, which has continued to the present day. Another was McTaggart's attempt to strip the new organization of some of the more flamboyant countercultural tendencies it had inherited from the Vancouver hippies, an effort that was only partially successful.

The Greenpeace story is worth telling merely for its abundant drama, pathos, and absurd moments of comic relief. Beyond that, it provides many insights into environmentalism, social movements, and the history of protest in the twentieth century. Greenpeace never became the revolutionary, world-changing movement that its idealistic founders hoped it would; yet, there is no doubt that it has successfully and enduringly highlighted environmental problems in ways that no other group has managed. In the process, it revealed some of the cracks and fissures in the broad structural constraints—such as global capitalism and the mechanistic and instrumental view of nature—that influence peoples' thoughts and actions in the modern world. As some of the organization's founders quipped during their more sanguine moments, this was quite an achievement for a bunch of peaceniks and hippies from a medium-sized city on the west coast of Canada.