Australians campaign against nuclear power and uranium mining, 1974-1988

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Anti-Nuclear Power Movement (1960s-1980s)

Time period notes: *The exact ending date is not clear, but the campaign seemed to end sometime in the late 1980s*

1974
to:
1988

Country: Australia
Location City/State/Province: *Several Australian Cities*

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 015. Group lobbying
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 019. Wearing of symbols
- 037. Singing
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 015. Group lobbying
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 019. Wearing of symbols

- 037. Singing
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 097. Protest strike

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 015. Group lobbying
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 019. Wearing of symbols
- 037. Singing
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 4th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 015. Group lobbying
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 019. Wearing of symbols
- 037. Singing
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 5th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 015. Group lobbying
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 019. Wearing of symbols
- 037. Singing
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 6th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions

- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 015. Group lobbying
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 019. Wearing of symbols
- 037. Singing
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Classifications

Classification:
Change
Cluster:
Environment
Group characterization:

- Australian environmentalists

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:
Coalition for a Nuclear Free Australia
Partners:
Australian Conservation Foundation, Australia Party, Friends of the Earth, University Students, Movement Against Uranium Mining, Campaign Against Nuclear Energy, Uranium Moratorium
External allies:
Australian Labor Party, World Union for the Protection of Life
Involvement of social elites:
ALP took up the anti-nuclear cause in order to gain political support and subsequently became less anti-nuclear after gaining power.

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Australia Party
- Australian Conservation Foundation
- Campaign Against Nuclear Energy
- Friends of the Earth
- Movement Against Uranium Mining
- University Students

- Uranium Moratorium
- World Union for the Protection of Life

Groups in 2nd Segment:

- Coalition for a Nuclear Free Australia

Groups in 3rd Segment:

- Australian Labor Party

Groups in 4th Segment:
Groups in 5th Segment:
Groups in 6th Segment:
Additional notes on joining/exiting order:
After becoming a major political party in 1982, the Australian Labor Party began to limit its support of the anti-nuclear campaign, although it continued to advocate against the creation of more mines
Segment Length: *Approximately 2 years*

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:
Australian Government
Nonviolent responses of opponent:
Not Known
Campaigner violence:
Not Known
Repressive Violence:
Not Known

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:
3 points out of 6 points
Survival:
1 point out of 1 points
Growth:
3 points out of 3 points
Notes on outcomes:
The campaign was not successful in shutting down the 3 already-running uranium mines, but did prevent any further mines or nuclear projects from being started.

The organizations survived throughout the campaign.

The campaign grew from 7,000 to 350,000 people nationwide

After the United States dropped the first atomic weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the initial shock of the weapons' destructive power wore off, many countries became interested in developing electricity based off of the nuclear technology.

Along with the exciting new possibilities that always accompany new technology, nuclear fission carried with it a whole host of dangerous challenges as well.

In Australia, nuclear technology first appeared in the form of covert British nuclear weapons tests that took place at Maralinga, South Australia, and Monte Bello, Western Australia. Soon after these tests were approved by the Australian government, several uranium deposits were discovered, and the Australian Atomic Energy Commission (AAEC) was set up in order to oversee uranium mining in Australia, and to promote nuclear research within the country. Australia's uranium deposits were very rich, and contain an estimated 15-20% of the world's high-grade uranium.

Though opposition to the nuclear program tended to be weak in Australia, it was strongly influenced by the international "Ban the Bomb" movement. In 1964, several major Australian cities were the site of "Ban the Bomb" marches – protests condemning the nuclear testing programs at Maralinga and Monte Bello.

In 1969, the first major anti-nuclear success took place in Jervis Bay, New South Wales. The Australian government was seriously considering building a nuclear power plant at Jervis Bay and carefully studied the economic and environmental effects of their plan. However, South Coast Trades and Labour Council, the major unions in the area, announced that their workers would refuse to build the nuclear reactor. With the help of the World Union for Protection of Life, the Australian government was convinced in 1971 that the nuclear energy program was economically unfeasible (particularly given the nation's supply of cheaply mined coal). To this day, no other nuclear power plant has been seriously considered in Australia, and none are in existence on the continent.

However, this success was just the first entry for Australia into a major anti-nuclear energy campaign. 1974 was the first year for significant anti-nuclear action in the country. Prompted by the French nuclear testing program in the Pacific Ocean, several anti-nuclear groups began to organize. A Friends of the Earth group, whose specific goal was to prevent uranium mining, was formed, and several other groups, including the Australian Conservation Foundation, Australia Party, and various university students' groups, took up the cause in response. At first, they were powerless against the Australian government, which opened several new mining sites in 1975.

In 1976, the Australian Railways Union conducted the first major action of this new mass movement, carrying out a one day national railway strike, which prevented the movement of uranium throughout the country.

On October 28th, 1976, the Fox Report, more commonly known as the Ranger Inquiry, was released to the public. The controversial findings, which, though ambiguous and vague, seemed to endorse uranium mining and nuclear power plants, encouraged anti-nuclear groups to act swiftly and decisively. The Movement Against Uranium Mining (MAUM), Campaign Against Nuclear Energy (CANE), and the Uranium Moratorium were just three of the many groups founded in opposition to uranium mining in Australia.

"The formulation of an Australia-wide strategy against uranium mining has taken place through an interaction between local groups and national meetings. Local groups are essentially free to plan their campaigns as they wish, but most see coordination as valuable. National meetings of Friends of the Earth and later also Uranium Moratorium (incorporating groups such as Movement Against Uranium Mining) have been held up to 2 to 3 times per year. At these meetings, representatives from local groups discuss general priorities and make decisions. Local group suggestions and opinions are solicited before such meetings and the conclusions discussed locally afterwards. Although decisions of national meetings are not binding on local groups, most groups have followed the general emphases decided upon." (Martin)

?Within months, these groups, joined loosely under the umbrella organization Coalition for a Nuclear Free Australia (CNFA), organized marches through various major Australian cities, with a total of nearly 10,000 participants. In April 1977, Uranium Moratorium, one of the most effective groups, rallied 15,000 Melbourne residents to their cause. A petition circulated by the Moratorium collected more than 250,000 names, and 50,000 more Australians took to the streets in protest in August of that year.

In response, the Australian Labor Party (ALP), the major minority party in Australia at the time, added the moratorium measure to their party platform. The anti-nuclear movement quickly moved to support the ALP, and helped it secure majority party status.

Unfortunately, since the ALP was not tied to the CNFA, it was not bound to support their positions. In 1982, the ALP voted to revise its no-mine policy, instead choosing to advocate a one-mine policy. Two years later, the ALP retreated further, acting in support of a three-mine policy – the three mines that were already active in Australia. Thus, though the ALP would not endorse any effort to build new uranium mines, they would not act to shut down the mines already in operation.

The anti-nuclear protests continued throughout the 1980's, culminating every year in a Palm Sunday march. The march drew 100,000 participants in 1982, and reached 350,000 by 1985. Though these protests did very little in terms of new anti-nuclear policy in Australia, they did serve a very important function in Australian politics – they visibly prevented any more pro-nuclear policies from being enacted by the Australian government.

By the late 1980s, the political, social, and economic mood had swung firmly in the favor of the anti-nuclear movement. Though it was clear that the three already functioning mines would not be shut down, the falling price of uranium, coupled with the Chernobyl disaster, ensured that there would not be a strong effort to broaden Australia's nuclear program. CNFA drastically reduced its campaign, and faded into the background of Australian politics.

Research Notes

Influences:

: Influenced by international anti-nuclear movements, ("Ban the Bomb") (1)
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"Australia's Anti-Nuclear Movement: A Short History." Green Left Online. 29 Aug 1998. Green Left, 1 Mar 2010. <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1998/330/20531>.

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Martin, Brian. "The Australia Anti-Uranium Movement." 1982. 1 Mar 2010. <http://www.uow.edu.au/~bmartin/pubs/82alternatives.html>
Additional Notes:
For more information on the anti-nuclear movement see Bill Moyer. Doing Democracy: The MAP Model for Organizing Social Movements. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2001.
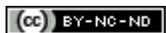
Edited by Max Rennebohm (01/04/2011)
Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:
Kelly Schoolmeester 01/03/2010

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