Greenpeace campaigns against whaling, 1975-1982

1975 to: 1982
Country: International
Location Description: Group headquartered in Canada and United States, but actions took place globally
Goals:
a moratorium on commercial whaling and an end to the practice of whaling

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 033. Fraternization
- 171. Nonviolent interjection

Methods in 2nd segment:
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 033. Fraternization

Methods in 3rd segment:
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 033. Fraternization
- 036. Performances of plays and music

Methods in 4th segment:
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 033. Fraternization

Methods in 5th segment:
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 033. Fraternization

Methods in 6th segment:
• 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
• 010. Newspapers and journals
• 033. Fraternization

**Additional methods (Timing Unknown):**

• 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
• 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
• 171. Nonviolent interjection › between whaling vessels and whales

### Classifications

**Classification:**
Change

**Cluster:**
Environment

**Group characterization:**

• Journalists
• Politicians
• authors
• mostly young people

### Leaders, partners, allies, elites

**Leaders:**
Greenpeace leaders; Paul and Linda Spong

**Partners:**
Not known

**External allies:**
Not known

**Involvement of social elites:**
Governor of California Jerry Brown, U.S. Congressman Leo Ryan

### Joining/exiting order of social groups

**Groups in 1st Segment:**

• Greenpeace International
• Greenpeace San Francisco

**Groups in 2nd Segment:**

• Greenpeace Hawaii

**Groups in 3rd Segment:**
One of the biggest leaders in the early environmental movement was a group called Greenpeace. Greenpeace was formed in the early 1970s and to this day continues to play a major role in leading the movement for environmental change. One of Greenpeace’s first campaigns was the campaign to stop whaling, which began in 1973.

The two biggest leaders of Greenpeace’s anti-whaling campaign were Paul and Linda Spong, a married couple. In 1969 Paul was hired by the University of British Columbia to study the first captive Orcinusorca. The state of these whales concerned Paul so he and Linda began working to protect the whales. In 1973 Paul Spong, Bob Hunter, and others formed the “Stop Ahab Committee” and merged with Greenpeace. It took two years for the first anti-whaling voyage to be launched. In June of 1975, using John Cormack’s boat the Phyllis Cormack (renamed Greenpeace for the voyage), they found a Russian whaling vessel off the coast of California. One of the leaders of the campaign, Bob Hunter, hoped that this would be the media boost that the campaign needed.

Although there is no founding mission statement of Greenpeace, Bob Hunter wrote what has come to be known as “the Greenpeace Manifesto”, centered on the idea that the Earth is one and that Greenpeace would do whatever was necessary to protect it. As the unofficial spiritual leader of the group, Hunter would “zap” new members by placing his middle finger on their
forehead, an action meant to make the idea of revolution a little more fun and theatrical.

Greenpeace quickly spread around the world. The first office in the United States was in San Francisco. The Americans thought that the Canadians were talking too much and not actually doing anything. A group in Canada, led by Paul Watson, sympathized with the San Franciscans and even went so far as to start doing what they called “aggressive nonviolence”. Eventually the Canadian group was expelled from Greenpeace altogether. The campaign in San Francisco encountered some legal issues when applying for tax-exempt status. The local IRS did not believe that Greenpeace’s confrontational tactics constituted charity work. The lawyer for Greenpeace argued that they did in fact fit the traditional definition of charity work and ultimately they were granted tax-exempt status, although it happened quietly, presumably so as not to set a precedent. Between 1975 and 1977 Greenpeace focused on gaining publicity for the campaign. The group started a regular newsletter, entitled “The Greenpeace Chronicles”. In 1976 they published the first version of The Greenpeace Manifesto, entitled “The Greenpeace Declaration of Interdependence, 1976”.

In 1977 a Greenpeace boat left from Hawaii, the first voyage to not be organized by the headquarters in Vancouver. They found a Russian whaling vessel; however, there were no whales around to be protected. Instead, the Greenpeacers boarded the vessel and distributed leaflets in Russian to the crewmembers. An ABC Sports crew was on board and did an episode of their show “American Sportsman” on the incident. That same summer Greenpeace organized a benefit concert in San Francisco in which Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead and Maria Muldaur performed. One member of the Greenpeace campaign was of utmost importance. His name was Bob Taunt and he had a connection that could get him the coordinates of all of the Russian whaling vessels. Greenpeace used this to locate the Russian whaling vessels that they wanted to target. He had a lot of political pull as well, such as having Walter Cronkite’s home phone number, and being friends with California governor Jerry Brown and Congressman Leo Ryan. The support of these figures would prove very helpful for Greenpeace.

At this point the organization of Greenpeace was becoming increasingly institutionalized. Greenpeace had difficulty retaining leaders and there were mixed opinions as to how to best run the organization. There were factions and many tensions within the group. It got to the point that Greenpeace headquarters in Vancouver sued Greenpeace San Francisco for the rights to the name Greenpeace.

The Greenpeace campaign expanded far beyond the United States and Canada. Despite the fact that there was a lot of strife within the group, they ultimately achieved the majority of their goals. In 1982, after years of voting it down, The International Whaling Commission (IWC) placed an indefinite moratorium on commercial whaling. The moratorium went into effect in 1986.

Much of the reason why the IWC was finally able to pass the moratorium was because countries who did not participate in commercial whaling but who were concerned with the fate of the whales began joining the Commission in the late 1970s. It was due to this support that the moratorium finally passed. Many countries were obviously not happy about this moratorium and have since found loopholes in the moratorium to allow them to continue commercial whaling. Japan, Iceland, and Norway continue commercial whaling and Greenpeace continues to use nonviolent tactics to get them to stop.

**Research Notes**

**Influences:**
Influenced numerous other environmental movements throughout the world including the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society and the Mendocino Whale War. (2)

**Sources:**


Additional Notes:
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