



Environmental Conflict in Australia

By

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to analyse the character of environmental conflict in Australia. To provide an empirical focus for this investigation, four case studies of environmental conflict have been chosen. These are the Great Barrier Reef, Fraser Island, the Franklin Dam, and Coronation Hill. In each of these studies an analysis is offered of the involvement of conservation groups, business and the state in the conflict. Particular emphasis is placed on the aims of each group of participants, the strategies they pursue and the claims that are made to achieve these objectives.

While each of the case studies is treated independently, an account of the historical evolution of the conflict between environmental protection and resource development will be given. For this reason the second chapter of the thesis traces the emergence of these attitudes in Australia with the purpose of providing the context in which the case studies may be located.

The theoretical framework that is developed is drawn from the insights and limitations of existing literature on the nature of environmental issues and the political action they mobilise. The tendency is for the literature to analyse environmental issues either as instances of environmental damage, or to concentrate on political mobilisation as a response to environmental awareness is of central importance. Underpinning the argument of this thesis is the notion that such a distinction inhibits the capacity to understand environmental conflict. The thesis argues that the emergence of environmental issues, and the subsequent conflicts, is the result of an awareness of environmental damage.

The thesis identifies a number of accounts that deal with environmental conflict through recognising the role of both environmental damage and awareness. These evaluations, however, have marginalised the importance of

political activity in shaping the contests that take place. The thesis aims to redress this deficiency by creating a framework of analysis that recognises the significance of each of these features in environmental conflict. It then seeks to demonstrate how this form of analysis enhances our understanding of a series of environmental conflicts in Australia.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Introduction



Since the 1960s, environmental conflicts in Australia have increased in size, frequency and intensity. There have, however, been very few detailed analyses of these conflicts and the thesis aims to go some way towards redressing this deficiency. Its purpose is to provide a theoretical and empirical account of environmental conflicts, one that focuses on the character of environmental groups, business and the state and the roles they undertake when they engage in these contests. Furthermore, the thesis seeks to illustrate that environmental conflicts are unique and that this is the result of the particular character of environmental issues.

The first chapter of the thesis argues that it is the character of environmental damage that is crucial in understanding environmental conflict. In particular, it suggests that there is a close relationship between industrial capitalism, its demand for economic growth, and environmental damage. The thesis also argues that while environmental damage creates conditions in which environmental conflicts may emerge, without an awareness of this damage mobilisation of environmental groups would not occur. Hence, it is the nexus between environmental damage and awareness that remains central to explanations for the origins of environmental conflict. In addition, the thesis points to the role that political issues play in the state's response to environmental issue. As a result, state reactions to the claims made by environmental or business groups is shaped by perceptions of the broader political implications of any particular government decision.

Chapter One establishes the significance of environmental damage and then reviews the literature that currently exists to explain environmental awareness. It investigates the strengths and weaknesses of a variety of accounts that, by virtue of their claim to be able to theorise issue politics, ought to

provide the analytical framework capable of discussing environmental issues and the conflicts they generate. The starting point for this analysis is an assessment of the traditional debate between pluralism and Marxism and the dichotomy constructed between structure and agency.

The analysis then turns to post-Marxism and its attempt to move beyond the pluralist/Marxist dichotomy. This is followed by an overview of the treatment of environmental issues in the new social movement and new values literature. One problem that is associated with these approaches to environmental issues is their failure to recognise the role played by environmental damage in creating the conditions in which conflict takes place. The first chapter assesses a number of arguments that recognise the impact of both environmental damage and awareness in their discussion of environmental issues. It is argued that the problem with these appraisals is their tendency to marginalise the importance of political activity in shaping the character of environmental conflict. The thesis aims to redress this deficiency by creating a framework of analysis that recognises the political nature of these contests. For this reason, the chapter concludes with a discussion of Australia's liberal democratic character and its significance in defining environmental conflict.

The aim of Chapter Two is to situate contemporary environmental conflicts within their historical context, by tracing the emergence of attitudes towards the Australian environment. A central focus in this chapter is the notion that two constructions of the environment's worth have developed in Australia since colonial possession. The first and dominant discourse associates the environment's value principally with its economic value, resulting in resource exploitation and environmental damage. By way of contrast, a second discourse has evolved that incorporates the notion of ecology into its conception of the environment and in doing so challenges assumptions regarding unlimited exploitation. In identifying the relationship between these

discourses, Chapter Two emphasises the idea that an awareness of ecological principles has been a response to environmental damage.

Chapters Three to Six discuss four case studies of environmental conflict in Australia. These are the contests over the Great Barrier Reef, Fraser Island, the Franklin River and Coronation Hill. With the first of these case studies beginning in the late 1960s, and the latest concluding in 1992, it is possible to consider the evolution of environmental conflict in Australia. The most outstanding feature in the historical development of environmental issues has been their growing significance. Environmental groups have generated increasing levels of popular support. As a result, both business and the state have come to take the claims of the environment movement, and the strategies required to deal with these claims, with a far greater degree of seriousness.

The case studies also provide the opportunity to analyse the particular character of each of these disputes. Considerable emphasis is placed on providing a detailed account of the politics of individual conflicts, with the aim of explaining the objectives, strategies and claims of those groups that have engaged in political mobilisation.

The choice of case studies is based on the authors view that, with the possible exception of the Great Barrier Reef, they represent the most significant instances of environmental conflict in the historical periods that the thesis covers. It is possible to argue that the campaign to protect Tasmania's Lake Pedder was of equal importance to that of the Great Barrier Reef. The extensive research already available on Lake Pedder, however, meant that the Great Barrier Reef represented a more appropriate case study.

The thesis discusses four instances where environmental groups were successful in achieving their particular objectives. There have been many

examples of environmental conflict where conservationists have failed.¹ The particular case studies were chosen because of the extensive nature of political mobilisation which allowed for the most thorough analysis of the relationship between the state, business and environmental groups. The argument of this thesis is that individual losses or victories for conservation groups makes no significant difference to the nature of this relationship. Hence, had environmentalists lost any of these campaigns, the conclusions of the thesis would not have been substantially different.

The final chapter draws together the theoretical claims made in the first chapter and the empirical evidence discussed in the case studies. Its concern is to find a characterisation of the role played by environmental groups, business and the state in environmental conflicts. It seeks to find an explanation for these activities, one that is associated with the particular character of environmental issues and their relationship to environmental damage and awareness.

¹ For a discussion of some examples see T. Bonthady 1993 Places Worth Keeping: Conservationists, Politics and Law Australia: Allen and Unwin.

Chapter One

Environmental Damage and Awareness : Defining a Context for Conflict



Introduction

Analysing the character of environmental conflict is a complex task. It involves an examination of what environmental problems are, as well as the processes through which these problems are identified and thereby become issues. Political conflicts arise when environmental issues activate mobilisation, which in turn facilitates counter-mobilisation and state intervention.

Most assessments of environmental issues tend to address either the conflicts that are generated, or the character of environmental problems themselves. Hence, there is a focus on the two themes of environmental awareness and environmental damage. This chapter proposes to outline the current literature that deals with these themes.

The argument developed in this thesis is that any analysis of environmental conflict is incomplete without recognition of the interrelationship between environmental damage and awareness. It is within this relationship, and its consequences, that the impetus for conflict may be found, as well as the forces that continue to shape conflict. The thesis also argues that the political context of liberal democracy has a lasting influence on the character of Australian environmental conflicts.

Environmental Damage

The first section of this chapter deals with the theme of environmental damage. It begins with a brief summary of explanations for the character and origins of environmental damage. This is followed by an account that traces the development of environmental damage through a consideration of

Western cultural attitudes to nature; the progression of scientific and industrial knowledge and attitudes; the rise of industrial capitalism and economic growth; and the impact of economic growth on ecological systems. Finally, it considers why the concept of ecology is important. Through this process, it becomes evident that the relationship between humanity and the natural environment has become problematic primarily because of the demands placed on the environment by resource exploitation, the outcome of which has been environmental damage. While clearly such explanations of environmental damage are fundamental in understanding the context in which environmental conflicts arise, it is argued that in isolation, environmental damage does not provide a sufficient explanatory framework for discussing environmental conflict.

There are many examples of environmental damage. Some are global in character, such as the depletion of the ozone layer, while others assume greater regional significance, for instance, the growth of toxic algae in water supplies. A typical array of contemporary environmental problems includes: overpopulation; food web disorders; industrial pollution of the air, water and land; climate changes due to pollution; soil erosion; extinction of species; loss and degradation of wilderness; growth in urban centres and urban decay; and the increasing scarcity of fossil fuels. The potential list is endless.

At its core, environmental damage is a consequence of the problematic relationship that has developed between human society and non-human nature. These difficulties tend to occur at the point where human society interacts with the environment. In particular, it relates to what is taken out of the environment for production, and the expulsion of wastes back into it. It is the reason the impact of these activities has led to environmental damage that will now be considered.

The Origins of Environmental Damage

Over the past three decades, environmental damage has been understood in a variety of ways. John Young's book, Post-Environmentalism, documents different phases in the identification and understanding of contemporary environmental problems. Young notes that during the first phase of increasing environmental awareness, emphasis was placed on identifying environmental problems. Of particular significance in the development of this theme was Rachel Carson's Silent Spring (1962), Paul Ehrlich's The Population Bomb (1968), and Edward Goldsmith's Blueprint for Survival (1972). Both Ehrlich and Goldsmith's work were typical of the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the population problem dominated debates on the environment. Many assumed that if zero population could be achieved then the impending environmental crisis would be avoided. A key theme in the arguments of this period was the belief that ignorance was the central problem that needed to be overcome in the battle against environmental problems.

In the early 1970s a new focus emerged in the debate. Barry Commoner's book The Closing Circle pre-empted a shift in focus away from considering the population question as central. Instead, inappropriate technology was identified as the most significant factor in creating environmental problems. Commoner argued that huge advancements in technology during the post-war era had left society unable to determine between technical decisions regarding means, and moral decisions relating to ends. It was in this confusion that the essence of the environmental crisis could be found.

John Young argues that the third round in the debate focused on the political circumstances of environmental issues. In essence, this perspective contended that it was the post-war objective of maintaining political stability through rises in affluence, rather than overcoming inequity, that was the principal explanation for the increase in environmental problems. Such an argument was applicable within nations and between nations, and thus

accounted for issues relating to the third world. Central to this perspective was the recognition of a relationship between the demand for economic growth, the increasing pressure this placed on the environment, and rising affluence that had the objective of political stability.¹

Identifying the most significant cause of environmental damage is outside the focus of this thesis. What the following discussion aims to provide is a historical survey of the way in which cultural and economic systems have created conditions of environmental damage.

Western Cultural Attitudes Towards Nature

The way attitudes have developed towards nature has had a significant impact on perceptions of the environment in contemporary society and assists in explaining the place of the environment within political and economic systems.

The Christian and Stoic traditions have played an important role in influencing attitudes towards the environment. Both Christianity and the Stoics established a dualism between "man" and nature.² The former based this dualism on man's special relationship with God, while the latter focused on man's unique ability to reason. In each tradition, man's superiority to the natural world was to provide a justification for its limitless exploitation.³

It should be noted that utilitarian conceptions of the natural world were tempered in particular manifestations of both the Stoic and Christian traditions. Stoics, such as Panaetius and Posidonius, were both reverent in their attitudes towards nature and sought to establish the interrelationship between man and the natural world.⁴ Similarly, St. Francis emphasised

¹ For further details see J. Young 1990 Post Environmentalism London: Belhaven Press, chapter one.

² In this context the use of man is intended as the philosophies developed most frequently referred to men rather than men and women.

³ S. Passmore 1989 Mans Responsibility For Nature London: Duckworth; L. White 1967 "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" Science Vol. 155 No. 3767.

⁴ C. Glacken 1973 Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought From Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century Berkeley: University of California Press p. 51-54.

communion with nature, considering that all living things were placed on earth for the purpose of God, rather than that of man.⁵ In spite of these alternative perspectives, the dominant view was one that emphasised the superiority of man to the natural world.

Developments in science and technology also shaped conceptions of nature. Of crucial importance was the movement from subsistence to collective farming. This occurred some time between the seventh and eighth century with the invention of new ploughing techniques.⁶ With the collectivisation of cultivation an important shift had occurred, as White explains:

...distribution of land was based no longer on the needs of a family but, rather, on the capacity of a power machine to till the earth. Formerly man had been a part of nature; now he was the exploiter of nature.⁷

From this time on, progression was made in power machinery, labour saving devices and automation. Each development can be seen as extending the perceived distance between man and the natural environment.

The Western tradition of science began in the eleventh century with the translation of Arabic and Greek scientific works into Latin. By the thirteenth century, Europe had taken leadership in this field, while at the same time the Christian tradition had moved away from a study of nature through art, to adopting a scientific form of inquiry.⁸ The close relationship between science and religion remained for the next three centuries as major scientists continued to explain their motivation in religious terms. Francis Bacon typified this approach in the sixteenth century. He justified the acquisition of scientific knowledge and its application through technical power by arguing that it would allow man to gain power over nature and would therefore allow

5 Ibid p. 214, 216.

6 White loc cit p. 1205; Young op cit p. 57.

7 White loc cit p. 1205.

8 Ibid p. 1204.

man to recover the position he had lost in the eyes of God through sin.⁹ At around the same time, Descartes was breaking from the idea that nature was created by God for man's use. Instead, he argued that it was the absolute right of man to do what he liked with the natural world because of his capacity to reason.¹⁰ In this sense, Descartes' view was more closely linked to the Stoic tradition which viewed man's superiority over nature in terms of reason.

It was midway through the nineteenth century that the fusion between scientific knowledge and technical power occurred. White argues that the main explanation for this development lies in the then recent democratic revolutions that had brought together the previously aristocratic study of science with the concern for technology of the industrialist class. These developments were to subsequently provide the basis for the rise of industrial capitalism.¹¹

The belief systems described thus far, along with concurrent developments in science and technology, have significantly affected the way in which the environment has been treated within Occidental cultural traditions. The core assumption of this perspective is that the primary objective of nature is to be used for the advancement of human wants and needs, with the justification for humanity's dominance over the nature constructed in terms of a unique relationship with God or the unique capacity to reason. Such attitudes are readily apparent in the development of economic and political structures and discourses that have emerged during the evolution of industrial capitalism.

The Rise of Industrial Capitalism and the Imperative of Economic Growth

Environmental damage predates and exists outside of industrial capitalism. Yet a crucial connection can be made between the rise of Western industrial capitalism and current environmental problems. While the development of exploitative attitudes towards nature constructed the

9 Young op cit p. 64.

10 Passmore op cit p. 211; Young op cit p. 64.

11 White loc cit p. 1204.

foundation upon which such treatment of the environment might be based, it is the character of industrial development and the decisive role played by the demands of economic growth, which are of central importance in shaping the character of environmental damage.

It was in the eras of mercantile, and then industrial capitalism, that economic growth came to dominate political and economic discourses and systems. During the mercantile phase of capitalist development, economic growth was based on colonial expansion and the exploitation of peasant surplus labour.¹² The creation of the mill in the eighteenth century marked the beginning of industrial capitalism and since then the focus on economic growth has remained unaltered. Adam Smith's The Wealth of Nations was published in 1776 and reflected this concern. As the cornerstone of philosophical interpretations of capitalism, The Wealth of Nations can be understood as entrenching this perspective, providing the precedent for economic growth as the main issue in classical economics.¹³

In the twentieth century the centrality of economic growth has not been altered. In spite of large fluctuations in many national economies during this period, as well as equally wide shifts in economic ideologies and philosophies, the importance of economic growth still remains predominant. Variations may occur at the level of how economic growth should be achieved and to what use it ought to be put. Nevertheless growth remains an assumed objective.

One of the salient features of industrial capitalism has been its capacity to deliver its objective of economic growth. Since 1820 there has been an ongoing expansion in industrial capitalist economies, except for late starters such as Italy and Japan. After World War Two this growth accelerated again, creating what

¹² D. Beaud 1984 A History of Capitalism, 1500-1980 translated by Tom Dickman and Amy Lefebvre, London: Macmillan p. 72.

¹³ J. Vaizey 1980 Capitalism and Socialism: A History of Industrial Growth London: Weidenfeld Nicolson p. 30.

is often referred to as the "Golden Age" of capitalism between 1950 and 1973. During this period growth rates averaged 4.9% of GDP, more than doubling growth levels between 1870-1950, which had been at 2.3% of GDP.¹⁴ Since 1973 there has been a marked slow down in growth which has been accompanied by rising levels of unemployment and inflation.¹⁵ Even with this comparative decline, economies have continued to grow, only at slower rates than during the period of the long boom. Thus, although between 1973 and 1981 levels of growth had dropped to 2.3% of GDP, the same level of growth that had existed between 1870-1950.¹⁶ Furthermore, as growth rates are proportionally measured against economic production of the previous year, a relative decline in increases from 4.9% to 2.3%, indicates an overall expansion of production. As a result, in spite of a relative decline, the global economy is still expanding.

Explanations for why economic growth has accompanied industrial capitalism identify the combination of the demands of the capitalist market and the consequences of industrial development.

Prior to capitalism, trading was based on subsistence, satisfaction being achieved through the realisation of definite wants. Through capitalism, exchange value, rather than satisfaction, came to determine the limits of the circulation process, one that operated through competition within the capitalist market. Success and failure related to the capacity to operate through this system in a way that maximised profits. Competitive market relationships have subsequently been developed based on increases in production, the aim of which has not been the satisfaction of needs, or even wants, but the accumulation of capital. Should a competitor fail to effectively accumulate capital, their market share is prone to be lost to other capitalists and their

¹⁴ A. Maddison 1982 Phases of Capitalist Development Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press p. 126.

¹⁵ Beaud op cit p. 195.

¹⁶ F. Green and B. Sutcliffe 1987 The Profit System Harmondsworth: Penguin p. 288.

survival threatened.¹⁷ Hence the objective of capitalism is capital accumulation and economic growth.

Under industrial capitalism, a number of features necessary for economic growth have expanded. These have included the discovery of new resources; population growth; increases in capital stocks through technical innovation; and the development of economies of scale and specialisation.¹⁸

While the demands of capitalism were important in explaining the character of such expansion, it can also be associated with the nature of industrial development. White has noted that the combination of science and technology saw significant leaps forward in industrial technology. As machines were introduced at a rapid pace into the production process, increases occurred in production capacity. Furthermore, such developments allowed for the discovery of new sources of energy and the advancement of new products.¹⁹

In the post-war era, expansion increased again. This has been attributed to simultaneous advances in both industrial production and world trade.²⁰ Of particular importance in these developments were: a surplus labour force; technological advancement that allowed for the development of modern equipment; cheap raw materials; and a stability in national and international relations.²¹ It has already been noted that growth has been more constrained since 1973. Yet it has continued to be a central objective in industrial capitalist nations.

Economic Growth and its Ecological Impact

Economic growth relies on increased economic activity which in turn is dependent on the use of more energy. The combination of greater energy use

¹⁷ Y.S. Brenner 1984 Capitalism, Competition and Economic Crisis: Structural Changes in Advanced Industrial Countries Washington DC, Brighton: Wheatsheaf Kapitan Szabo p. 39.

¹⁸ Maddison op cit p. 46- 66; Brenner op cit p. 37.

¹⁹ G. Smith, H. Steck and G. Surette 1974 Our Ecological Crisis: Its Biological, Economic and Political Dimension New York: Macmillan p. 78.

²⁰ Beaud op cit p. 188.

²¹ Ibid p. 192; Green and Sutcliffe op cit p. 288.

and subsequent increases in both production and consumption, makes it necessary to have greater contact between the environment's two primary meeting points. As Deleage explains, these are "the extraction of raw materials and their elimination in the form of waste".²² In the last two centuries, and particularly since the Second World War, the factors required for economic growth developed in such a way that greater economic activity has occurred. This has been the case for the quantity of natural resources used and as a result, human impact upon the environment has intensified with environmental damage increasing enormously.

The notion that economic growth is problematic stands in opposition to what, for over two centuries, has been accepted as economic and political sense. In the post-war era, political stability has been achieved primarily through rises in affluence. While equity issues still play an important role in political ideologies, it is more frequently argued that increasing the size of the economy is easier than distributing it in an equal fashion. The ecological perspective, however, challenges a number of assumptions held by this position. It argues that the ecological consequences of sustained growth threatens the biological systems upon which the human race is dependent for its own survival.

The Importance of Ecology

In contemporary society it is commonplace to acknowledge that increasing resource consumption has placed greater pressure on the natural environment. It is the significance that this is accorded and the means considered available to rectify environmental degradation, that is often hotly disputed.

In Catastrophe or Cornucopia, Stephen Cotgrove argues that there are two primary conceptions of the environment. The first of these is "the dominant paradigm", which reflects the construction of nature as it has emerged through the Western cultural tradition and is supported by contemporary political, economic, and social systems. A number of themes are central in this

²² J. Deleage 1989 "Eco-Marxist Critique of Political Economy" CNS No. 3. p. 17.

perspective. Importantly, it treats resources as potentially limitless, with humanity capable of overcoming any future problems that might arise through technological innovation, increased wealth, and political change.

According to Cotgrove, the ecological world view questions many of the assumptions maintained by the dominant paradigm, particularly in the way it conceives of economic growth and the environment. At its core, the ecological perspective challenges the assumption that nature is a limitless pool of resources; that humanity can control nature or the impact of human interaction with nature and the problems this creates; and finally it challenges any supposition based on the notion that the market provides the most effective way to find solutions to the environmental problem.²³

The position adopted by Smith et al is typical of an ecologically orientated critique of environmental damage. They argue that:

Most nations of the world have economic development as one of their main goals. To the degree that they are successful in this pursuit, then to that degree the threat to the environment is exacerbated.²⁴

From this perspective, environmental degradation is explained by the relationship between the character of economic growth and the ecological system. In the following section of this chapter the basis of this claim will be briefly examined by considering what ecology is and its points of tension with economic growth.

The notion of ecology is central in understanding what it is about economic growth that is problematic. Ecology is typically defined as a system, one that encompasses the many and complex interactions in the natural world. Two features of the ecological system are of primary importance when explaining its relationship to humanity. The first of these is the notion that the

²³ D. Hutton 1987 "What is Green Politics?" in D. Hutton (ed) Green Politics in Australia: Working Towards a Peaceful, Sustainable and Achievable Future Australia: Angus and Robertson p. 21-23.

²⁴ Smith et al op cit p. 73.

global ecological system is closed. This theme became popular at the time of the limits to growth debate when it became widely recognised that natural resources available for human use are finite.

In the 1970s, the concept of 'spaceship earth' was popularised because it provided an analogy for the globe as a self contained ecological system and was useful in clarifying the ramifications of limited resources. Smith et al explain:

The spaceship idea vividly conveys the concept of a closed economy in which the resources cannot be considered unlimited either for exploration or as a carrier for wastes. In this ship, then, man must find his place in a cyclical ecological system. Although continuous inputs of energy are necessary to maintain the system, there is no overall growth; instead there is a continuous reproduction of material that will be recycled and reused.²⁵

In this way, the spaceship analogy was able to assist with the conceptualisation of the finite nature of the ecological system.

The ecological perspective also challenges the view that by harnessing science and technology any environmental damage that has been created may be overcome. They argue that it is true that technological advances have increased the capacity of the human race to solve problems that have been created. Nevertheless, it is impossible to know whether a solution exists to any specific problem because of the natural environment's complexity and the limited or finite knowledge of science.

Contemporary forms of economic growth and the ecological system are incompatible. Economic growth relies on the extraction of increasing levels of resources and the elimination of wastes, while the ecological system remains limited in its capacity to absorb these demands. This fundamental environmental problem has existed since the beginning of industrial capitalism. It has, however, only been in the period since the Second World War, with the sudden increases in economic growth, that the problem has reached a level where a broader level of awareness has occurred. This

²⁵ Ibid p. 2-3.

movement from problem to issue is an important one in the context of my thesis.

Environmental Awareness

The second section of this chapter considers the theme of environmental awareness. It begins with an account of the traditional dichotomy between structure and agency that has shaped debates regarding issue politics and various explanations for the form and influence of political mobilisation. By drawing extensively on the work of Dunleavy and O'Leary, the strengths and limitations of pluralism and Marxism are reviewed. In each instance, the manner in which these theoretical frameworks conceptualise environmental issues will be discussed through an evaluation of particular examples.

An analysis is then made of those who have attempted to move beyond the pluralist/Marxist dichotomy. A number of analyses, which have been classified for simplicity as post-Marxist, are reviewed. These focus on the importance of discourse and discursive conditions in understanding political action and leads into the work of the new social movement theorists. What this literature emphasises is new values and new forms of political mobilisation, themes that are evaluated in the context of this thesis. Analytical frameworks that focus almost entirely on new values are then considered.

The argument contained in this section of the thesis is that while these various accounts of issue politics and political mobilisation add to our understanding of environmental conflicts, they fail to provide a sufficiently comprehensive framework that explains the origins and character of contests over the Australian environment.

Juxtaposing Pluralism and Marxism

Traditionally, issue politics have been viewed through two opposing analytical frameworks. Pluralism is the first of these and focuses on the role of agency in the political process. By way of contrast, Marxism emphasises the influence of the structures within which both agents and political action are

located. The objective of the following section is to consider what implications the debate between Marxism and pluralism has for environmental conflict.

Two themes dominate pluralism's approach to issue politics. These are its emphasis on the political significance of interest groups and a particular conceptualisation of the role of the state. Pluralism views society as comprising of conflicting interests. It is to these interests that political mobilisation is viewed to be responding, with an actor's interest identifiable through the policy options they support.²⁶ In contrast to Marxism, it is considered that there is no distortion of an actor's interest. Hence, any claims of false consciousness are rejected.

Because pluralism presents interests as crucial, the forums in which they are articulated or represented, such as elections and party politics, take on considerable analytical significance. In these instances, pluralism points to the control that citizens hold over politicians and subsequently public policy. Emphasis is therefore placed on the opportunities that actors have to influence the political process.²⁷

Dunleavy and O'Leary note that it is often assumed that pluralism constructs all interest groups as being equally influential. They argue that this is a misconception. Distinctions between groups are made on the basis of membership size, rate of mobilisation and intensity of members' preferences. In this respect, what distinguishes pluralism is the notion that the differences are a legitimate basis upon which public policy decisions ought to be made.²⁸

A second important aspect of pluralism is its representation of the state. This has been described by Dunleavy and O'Leary in the following way:

²⁶ P. Dunleavy and B. O'Leary 1987 Theories of the State: The Politics of Liberal Democracy Basingstoke, Hants: Macmillan Education p. 19 -21.

²⁷ Ibid p. 23, 32.

²⁸ Ibid p. 35-6.

Although they do not accord much importance to the idea of the state, pluralists are not blind to the existence of state organisations, nor to the conception of the state as a set of organisations which ... have monopoly of legitimate violence in a given territory.²⁹

According to Dunleavy and O'Leary, there are three main models of the relationship between the state and society within pluralism. The first of these is described as the weathervane model. Within this perspective the state is conceptualised as a cipher, one that passively processes external inputs, with outcomes reflecting the activities of interest groups in civil society. The second view is of the state as a neutral arbiter. This perspective rejects the cipher model on the basis that it is unable to account for those political decisions that are made in the 'public interest', but do not necessarily reflect interest group activities. In this model, the state is understood as either a bystander, a referee, or as actively intervening to promote fairness. The final model identified by Dunleavy and O'Leary is of the broker state. Here major policies reflect neither pressure groups nor the public interest. Instead, they are understood as resulting from state officials representing various societal interests from within the state apparatus.³⁰

One of the most commonly cited pluralist account of environmental issues is contained within an article by Anthony Downs entitled "Up and Down With Ecology - the 'Issue-attention Cycle'". Written in the early 1970s, Downs addresses shifts in public attitudes towards the environment, the environment's increased priority as a domestic political concern, and finally, the likelihood of this concern remaining. Downs contends that the key to these questions can be found in the dynamics of the 'issue-attention cycle'. According to Downs, issues capture the attention and imagination of the general public and then dwindle in significance as the problems associated with making effective changes become evident. In addition, an element of boredom

²⁹ Ibid p. 42-3.

³⁰ Ibid p. 43-47.

with particular issues can also contribute to declining public interest. Issues then return to a state of dormancy until something triggers their re-emergence on the political agenda.³¹

The catalyst for rising environmental concern lies in those forms of environmental degradation that are easily recognised. Downs argues that there are a number of features associated with the environment that mean it is likely to be more salient than other issues. He nevertheless views declining concern as inevitable due to recognition of the cost of change and the waning of intense public interest associated with the latter stages of the issue attention cycle.³²

Downs' argument sits comfortably with the pluralist conception of society and its focus on competition between groups and groups of issues. His analysis emphasises the attention span of the interest groups as the key to explaining why it is that an issue is placed on the political agenda. As this interest lessens, other issues become more attractive and interesting. For Downs, it is clearly the size and degree of enthusiasm displayed by interest groups that determines how environmental issues fare. The argument presented accords no central role for the state in the determination of how environmental issues are dealt with. Instead, his focus on interest groups suggests the weathervane model of the state where the political sphere reflects the concerns of interest groups.

The Marxist theoretical tradition provides a contrast to Downs and the pluralist position. Through its conceptualisation of the state, class and power within capitalist society, Marxism questions a number of central assumptions contained within pluralism. In particular, it is the relationship between classes, not interest groups, that is crucial for understanding societal conflict. The Marxist perspective contends that it is the exploitative relationship between the capitalist class, who own the means of production, and the working class,

³¹ A. Downs 1972 "Up and Down With Ecology - 'The Issue-attention Cycle'" The Public Interest 28 p. 38-41.

³² Ibid p. 39-50.

which relies on the exchange value of their labour, that forms the basis of conflict within capitalist society.

Although class based divisions have diminished as a focus of conflict in contemporary society, the relevance of a Marxist analysis persists through the notion that divisions within society, and an actor's capacity for representation, a socially structured basis. Hence, instead of making the Marxist analysis redundant, it has been broadened to encompass not only class, but gender, race and religion.

Sandbach has mapped out the connections that may be drawn between the general conclusions of a Marxist critique of society and its specific application to environmental problems. In particular, he argues that the typically Marxist conflict-accommodation model is applicable to environmental issues. This is a perspective that emphasises the themes of class, conflict and the way in which opposing interests are accommodated within a capitalist society. A class basis is recognised by Sandbach in environmental conflict. Unlike traditional Marxist accounts, however, the articulate middle and upper classes replace the working class as the main actors in conflicts relating to environmental issues. Conflict emerges because the objectives of environmental groups challenge the interests of capital.³³

What places environmental issues onto the political agenda are the shifting economic and social relations that have led to an intensified conflict between these classes. Sandbach cites a series of changes that have acted as a catalyst for heightened environmental activism. These include: the social conflict experienced during the Vietnam war; changes in production, in particular new technologies that have led to increasing environmental degradation which has meant that powerful interests have become less capable

³³ F. Sandbach 1980 Environment, Ideology and Policy Oxford: Basil Blackwell p. 35-36.

of evading their consequences; and the increase in leisure time and affluence, which has precipitated a greater contact with the environment.³⁴

There are a variety of arguments employed within Marxism to explain why it is that the capitalist class has managed to maintain its dominance over a prolonged period. One example is Offe's contention that the diversity of workers' interests, in opposition to a fundamental unity within capital, has led to its enhanced political power. There is also the view that the economic success of capitalism has facilitated the support of the working class for the system's maintenance. Another feature associated with the domination of the working class is the influence of the prevailing ideology.³⁵

According to Sandbach, Marxism provides three main ways that the ruling class may dominate, control and accommodate environmental concern. The first of these is the influence that the dominant ideology has had in constructing an unthreatening view of environmental issues. This, he argues, is particularly evident in the media and other forms of communication.³⁶ Secondly, capital's strength is associated with its ability to lobby effectively. It is argued that this is due to capital's structural position that advantages the capitalist class both politically and economically.³⁷ Thirdly, Sandbach identifies declining environmental concern with the way governments accommodate the demands of environmentalism.³⁸ The state is identified as playing an important role in minimalising the impact of those aspects of the environmental debate that challenge capital's class interests.

One of the most distinctive elements of Marxism is this focus on the role and nature of the capitalist state. Dunleavy and O'Leary identify a number of central conceptions of the capitalist state within classical and contemporary Marxism. The first of these is the notion that the state acts as an instrument of

34 Ibid.

35 Dunleavy and O'Leary op cit p. 231-233.

36 Sandbach op cit p. 37-9.

37 Ibid p. 40.

38 Ibid p. 40-41.

the capitalist class.³⁹ This view emphasises close affiliations between elites; contends that representative processes, such as parliament, are merely an ideological illusion; and argues that the state is ultimately unified, with any fragmentation designed to divide the working class.⁴⁰

By way of contrast, the arbiter model views the state as holding greater autonomy from capital, although this is always relative because in the last instance the economic requirements of capitalism will always prevail.⁴¹ This perspective allows more scope for the influence of pressure groups and elections in shaping state action, yet one that operates in "a distorted and class-biased way."⁴²

The third view of the state is the functionalist perspective. Here the state provides the means to co-ordinate the social organisation of the division of labour. The functionalist identifies the state as a part of a super-structure that responds to changes in the economic base. The objective of this relationship is to maintain the accumulation process.⁴³ In its contemporary manifestation, the functionalist view is commonly associated with the structuralist approach of Althusser. The argument Althusser popularised was that the state operates primarily to make society cohesive. This is achieved through the use of either the repressive or ideological state apparatuses that have the result of organising the dominant class and disorganising the subordinate class.⁴⁴

The above description is not intended as an exhaustive account of Marxism or Marxist theories of the state. Instead, it aims to draw out certain continuities in the Marxist approach that make it distinctive. The first of these is the overriding emphasis upon the inequality between social classes within society. In the contemporary era this has generally been broadened to involved

39 Dunleavy and O'Leary op cit p. 209.

40 Ibid p. 237-9.

41 Ibid p. 210, 243-4.

42 Ibid p. 243.

43 Ibid p. 210-1.

44 Ibid p. 255.

a series of cleavages within society extending to gender, race and religion. Moreover, there is the ongoing identification of the dominance of capital's interests within society. In conflicts that involve capital's interest, Marxism strongly identifies the state's role as, in some way or another, fostering the interests of the capitalist class. As the previous description of various Marxist conceptions of the state suggests, the precise manner in which the state operates in favour of capital, remains a contentious issue. Yet overall, the emphasis remains on outcomes that favour capital.

Allan Schnaiberg's book, The Environment: From Surplus to Scarcity, represents one Marxist approach to environmental problems and their emergence as political issues. Schnaiberg's analysis is centred on the construction of environmental problems as political issues. He is particularly concerned about the way in which the imperative of increasing production has precipitated bias within society, which lessens concern for environmental degradation. According to Schnaiberg, ecological disequilibrium has arisen because the expansion of production has not been limited by broader ecological constraints. Unlike the eco-doomsdayers that were predominant in the early 1970s, Schnaiberg is cautious not to predict the consequences of this imbalance. What he does state is that it cannot be known in advance what impact such productive practices will have.⁴⁵

Schnaiberg finds the causes of environmental problems in population growth, technical change and the expansion of both consumption and production. What remains fundamental in creating these conditions is the "...structure and dynamics of the treadmill of production expansion."⁴⁶ Schnaiberg argues that these production processes can be understood as reflecting the internal and international character of social inequality in

⁴⁵ A. Schnaiberg 1980 The Environment: From Surplus to Scarcity New York: Oxford University Books p. 412-3.

⁴⁶ Ibid p. 414.

income and power. It is the economic and political imperatives of capitalism that are associated with environmental problems.⁴⁷

Schnaiberg also places considerable emphasis on social responses to environmental problems; in particular, the way research into production and environmental protection is biased in favour of productive processes. He also notes the difficulties associated with environmental impact assessments and how these maintain the way the system is skewed to privilege production rather than preservation. It is recognised, however, that such a process of accommodation may offer the possibility of reforming current environmental practices.

The influence that Schnaiberg accords the environment movement is defined as follows:

The environment movement, in both its organised and public opinion dimension, is a product of past social intelligence *and* a contributor to current and future intelligence.⁴⁸

A link is made by Schnaiberg between the contemporary environment movement and its conservation and preservation predecessors. Yet an important distinction is maintained between the way that the old movement did not undermine the interests of monopoly capital, whereas the contemporary movement is increasingly concerned with productive processes and therefore challenges the interests of capital more directly.

In sum, the Marxist critique of environmental issues can be understood as stressing the link between the issue and society's underlying economic and social organisation. Furthermore, it focuses on the way in which the capitalist system operates to ensure that the interests of the capitalist class are maintained and attempts to marginalise the significance of environmental issues. Society is understood as a location of conflict between interests that are defined by an actor's class position. These do not take the traditional form of the division

⁴⁷ Ibid p. 414-418.

⁴⁸ Ibid p. 420-1.

between the working and capitalist class. Instead, it is the upper and middle classes that provide the challenge to capital. Reform is then conceptualised as a result of accommodating this conflict.

One of the most common criticisms of Marxism is that it fails to provide an explanation for how agency manages to make an impact on the social structure and political process. Alternatively, pluralism is criticised because it does not account for the way society is structured to create bias in the political process. Hence, the opposition between Marxism and pluralism has been based on an ongoing debate regarding the privileging of either structure or agency in explaining the political process and its outcomes. One theme developed in this thesis is the notion that both structure and agency shape environmental awareness and subsequent political conflicts. Neither perspective can sufficiently account for environmental conflict in isolation. Instead, it is the relationship between the two that is vital and requires further attention.

Post-Marxism

In his paper entitled "'Interests' in Political Analysis", Barry Hindess rejects both the Marxist and pluralist approach to political mobilisation. The Marxist notion that interests evolve out of an actor's class position is rejected by Hindess because it ignores the impact of political activities in the formulation and mobilisation of interests.⁴⁹ Pluralism's assumption that interests are simply a reflection of those issues people care about the most is also disputed.⁵⁰ Instead, Hindess contends that what it is necessary to consider is:

... the conditions in which political concerns and their interests are formed and the way in which their invocation may play a role in political life.⁵¹

⁴⁹ B. Hindess 1986 "'Interests' in Political Analysis" in J. Law (ed) Power Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge London: Routledge and Kegan Paul p. 113.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Hindess argues that interests provide reason for action and that what is important is the conditions in which an interest is identified and the means of recognition available. Accordingly, an account must be made of the conceptual and discursive conditions under which interests are formulated.⁵²

Hindess further argues that because interests are a product of assessment, an evaluation needs to be made of the forms of assessment available in their construction. It is therefore necessary to identify an actor's situation and how they might be affected by particular actions.⁵³ Limitations to political mobilisation have their location within this assessment process. What actors decide is evaluated at the level of assessment and determined by discursive conditions. Hindess considers a number of factors important in the assessment of interests, including: social location; forms of assessment; work of the individual; political parties; unions; and other agencies that support some form of assessment against another.⁵⁴ The assessment process is further limited by what discourses are available to actors.⁵⁵

By way of conclusion, Hindess reasserts his original proposition that the explanatory use of interests is a deficient one and succinctly summarises his own argument:

...it may be more important to concentrate on the discourses available to and employed by them [actors], and on the forms of assessment of conditions and of locating themselves and others in relation to them that those discourses provide.⁵⁶

The emphasis Hindess places on discourse and discursive conditions is very similar to that presented by Laclau and Mouffe in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. The central difference lies in Hindess's focus on 'interests', as opposed to Laclau and Mouffe's objective of providing an explanation for the origins of struggles against domination. As Laclau and Mouffe explain:

52 Ibid p. 117-119.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid p. 121-122.

55 Ibid p. 126-7.

56 Ibid p. 130.

Our central problem is to identify the discursive conditions for the emergence of collective action, directed towards struggling against inequalities and challenging relations of subordination.⁵⁷

Laclau and Mouffe argue that the contemporary working class has limited emancipatory potential due to the interrelationship between working class interests and the capitalist production process. Instead, they draw attention to the plurality of struggles against power.⁵⁸

According to Laclau and Mouffe, what creates conditions in which struggles against domination take place is not subordination itself, but the recognition that it is illegitimate. Within this context, discourses on democracy are viewed as particularly important because they have provided a discursive formulation capable of identifying the illegitimate character of many forms of subordination and hence transformed this subordination into sites of antagonism.⁵⁹

The criticism Laclau and Mouffe direct towards traditional Marxism is as follows:

From the point of view of a hegemonic politics, then, the crucial limitation of the traditional left perspective is that it attempts to determine a priori agents of change, levels of effectiveness in the field of the social, and privileged points and moments of rupture. All these obstacles came together into a common core, which is the refusal to abandon the assumption of a sutured society.⁶⁰

Laclau and Mouffe turn to the so-called new social movements as the agent of radical transformation.

Since the late 1960s a theoretical tradition has developed around what have been characterised as the new social movements. Laclau and Mouffe's work on these movements is fairly typical of the sorts of arguments that have been developed from within this analytical framework, a perspective that will

⁵⁷ E. Laclau and C. Mouffe 1989 Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics London, New York: Verso p. 153.

⁵⁸ Ibid p. 152, 156-7.

⁵⁹ Ibid p. 152-154.

⁶⁰ Ibid p. 178-9.

be discussed in greater detail later. For now, it will suffice to say that Laclau and Mouffe associate two primary conditions with the new social movements. The first of these is what they describe as "the transformation of social relations characteristic of the new hegemonic formation of the post-war period."⁶¹ Laclau and Mouffe argue that during the post-war era, modifications in the labour process, the form of the state, and the dominant mode of cultural diffusion, significantly altered society and the locations of antagonisms within it. The economic dimension of this shift has been the commodification of a series of areas within society that had previously been distanced from the accumulation process. Subordination has subsequently been extended beyond the selling of labour power to other social relations including culture, leisure time, sex and death.⁶²

The second feature of this change is "the effects of the displacement into new areas of social life of the egalitarian imagery constituted around the liberal democratic discourse."⁶³ According to Laclau and Mouffe, the expansion of the state, through labour accords and the welfare state, has relocated many areas of life, previously considered to be within the private domain, into the political sphere. It is these areas that have become the site (or potential site) of political conflict. New antagonisms have focused on issues including commodification, bureaucratisation and an increasingly homogenised social life, and it is these concerns that have crystallised into demands for autonomy.⁶⁴ What remains a strong theme throughout Laclau and Mouffe's analysis is the notion that it is the articulation of discourse, through the process of struggle, that is crucial in determining the character of struggle.⁶⁵

The emphasis that Hindess and Laclau and Mouffe place on discourse and discursive conditions is an important one, whether their theories focus on

61 Ibid p. 165.

62 Ibid p. 160-161.

63 Ibid p. 165.

64 Ibid p. 161-164.

65 Ibid p. 169.

interests or struggle. One strength of this approach is that it overarches the structure/agency dichotomy inherent within Marxist and pluralist debates. Unlike pluralism, the constraints that actors experience, due to their political location, are recognised. At the same time, this is not so much attributed to an economically determined class position, but rather the particular variety of conditions to which an actor is exposed. In contrast to Marxism, this allows greater flexibility for actors to redefine the context within which they operate. Interests and struggles reflect neither the actor's class position or what they care about the most. Instead they are the result of discursive conditions and available discourses.

When dealing with environmental issues this approach has a number of benefits. Firstly, an emphasis on discourse and discursive conditions assists in the explanation for rising concern over the environment and the importance of the new value basis that has developed through the environment movement. Secondly, it avoids the pluralist tendency to identify all groups as interest groups uninfluenced by any structural bias within the political sphere. In the accounts of both Hindess and Laclau and Mouffe, constraints in the availability of discourse are evident. At the same time, however, they are not viewed as all encompassing. Scope is consequently provided for change. For Hindess, this occurs in the formulation of interests, while for Laclau and Mouffe, it operates in alterations in the sites of struggle and antagonism. Both of these vary over time according to the particular discourses available and discursive conditions. Such flexibility within constraints is useful in explaining the rise of environmental awareness, as well as the problems faced by environmental groups.

In spite of the utility of this approach, it faces a number of problems. The analysis presented by Hindess places interests, as the catalyst for mobilisation, solely within the political sphere. For Laclau and Mouffe, the key to understanding struggle is found in discourse, which in the process of

formulation and articulation, reveals relations of domination. Neither of these accounts, however, considers whether there are factors external to discourse and discursive conditions that influences issue politics. Hence, they do not accord those problems, to which interest definition or political struggle represents a response, any role in shaping the character of politicisation.

A further limitation to Hindess's analysis is his focus on interest formulation and definition. There is nothing to suggest that discourse or discursive conditions construct a consistent basis for interest definition. Indeed, quite the opposite appears likely, with a variety of bases from which interest definition may emerge. Self and group interests may not correlate, similarly, economic and political interests may conflict. In addition, quality of life issues may cut across those boundaries that have traditionally determined interest definition. What Hindess does not provide is a way to evaluate these conflicting bases of interest definition.

A different, but parallel problem emerges in the work of Laclau and Mouffe. Although the plurality that exists in the sites of struggle is emphasised, Laclau and Mouffe then collapse all these new struggles into one category, that of the new social movements. Tension within and between groups is not examined and a degree of homogeneity between movements appears to be assumed. As a result, the actual meaning of diverse struggles is not investigated. As later discussion of the new social movement literature demonstrates, this is quite typical of this approach. In contrast to the work of Hindess and Laclau and Mouffe, this thesis emphasises the tensions within the environmental movement and discourses that are deployed.

The New Social Movement Literature

As it has already been mentioned, Laclau and Mouffe's analysis of struggle is situated within a wide ranging literature concerned with the new social movements. Many writers have contributed to this literature resulting in the development of diverse perspectives. Of particular significance is the work

done by Jean Cohen, Klaus Eder, Jurgen Habermas, Roderick Inglehart, Herbert Kitchelt, Alberto Melucci, Claus Offe and Alain Touraine.

At one level, the distinctions between these theorists are significant. For example, considerably different explanations exist for the causes of the new social movements. Claus Offe argues that inherent contradictions in capitalist societies have generated the state's expansion and its current inability to resolve important policy dilemmas. In his view, mobilisation by the new social movements is a response to the consequent broadening, deepening and irreversibility in conditions of social deprivation.⁶⁶ In contrast, Roderick Inglehart argues that the new social movements are a reaction to the rise in affluence in society that has led to a silent revolution in values, one that has seen a shift to "post-materialism". Alain Touraine provides yet another perspective. He asserts that it is the specific character of post-industrial society that has precipitated an expansion in the field of social conflicts and is therefore central in understanding the new social movements.⁶⁷

While each of these theorists can be identified with a different approach, they agree on the core theme that what is both distinctive and important about the new social movements is their articulation of particular values through new forms of mobilisation. These values are defined as a rejection of both the principle of economic growth and the obsession with materialism that has developed in contemporary industrial societies. Inglehart has described this process as a shift from materialist to post-materialist values, involving:

... a shift from overwhelming emphasis on material consumption and security toward greater concern with quality of life; and an increase in the political skills of Western publics that enables them to play a more active role in making important political decisions...⁶⁸

⁶⁶ C. Offe 1985 "New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics" Social Research Vol. 52 No. 4 Winter.

⁶⁷ A. Touraine 1985 "An Introduction to the Study of Social Movements" Social Research Vol. 52 No. 4 Winter p. 779.

⁶⁸ R. Inglehart 1977 The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics Princeton: Princeton University Press p. 363.

Hence, while the new social movements respond to many different issues, they remain united by their value basis. As Andersen explains:

Through the conception of value change, it is possible to account for the association between otherwise logically unconnected issues, such as environmentalism, demand for disarmament or new forms of political organization, and so on.⁶⁹

Jurgen Habermas's conception of lifeworld politics has been of central importance in assessing the relationship between new values and new political forms. According to Habermas, new social movements are resisting the expansion of the system (state and economy) into the domain of the lifeworld. Within the system, a rationality based on cognitive-instrumental knowledge operates.⁷⁰ Habermas argues that within contemporary industrial capitalism, scientific-technocratic legitimation has become dominant, placing decision making in the hands of a managerial elite who act on the basis of pragmatic instrumentality.⁷¹

The lifeworld is the arena of cultural reproduction, social integration and socialisation.⁷² It is also the location of communicative action, the process through which action is co-ordinated. This is achieved by drawing upon implicit agreement, either from known traditions or those assumptions contained within language and culture.⁷³ Alternatively, communicative action may be found in the operation of a separate form of rationality, one based on morals and aesthetics.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ J. Andersen 1990 "'Environmentalism', 'New Politics' and Industrialism: Some Theoretical Perspectives" Scandinavian Political Studies Vol. 13 No. 2 p. 104.

⁷⁰ T. Luke and S. White 1985 "Critical Theory, the Informational Revolution, and an Ecological Path to Modernity" in J. Forester (ed) Critical Theory and Public Life Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: MIT Press p. 28.

⁷¹ B. Agger 1985 "The Dialectic of Deindustrialization: An Essay in Advanced Capitalism" in J. Forester (ed) Critical Theory and Public Life Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: MIT Press p. 7.

⁷² M. Pusey 1987 Jurgen Habermas Chichester, London, New York: Ellis Horwood Limited, Tavistock Publications p. 106.

⁷³ P. Dews 1986 Jurgen Habermas: Autonomy and Solidarity Interviews London: Verso. p. 14; A. Arato and J. Cohen 1988 "Civil Society and Social Theory" Thesis Eleven No. 21 p. 42.

⁷⁴ Luke and White loc cit p. 28; Dews op cit p. 14.

Habermas contends that the conflicts in which the new social movements participate "arise along the seams between the system and lifeworld."⁷⁵ It is the pressure placed on the lifeworld by the expansion of the system that has created spheres of conflict and thus become the target of protest.⁷⁶ In essence, the new social movements represent a defence of the lifeworld. For Habermas, this explains why conflicts tend to be directed towards quality of life issues and the reassertion of the individual's participation within society.⁷⁷ The unifying principle of these groups is their rejection of the system's intrusion into the lifeworld.⁷⁸

A new social paradigm, one that challenges the dominant rationality in Western industrial societies, is considered to have developed through this process. Although many aspects of Habermas's critique are unique, the identification of a new rationality is widely held by the new social movement theorists. A logical link is then made between the new social movements' rejection of the state, as the primary location of this dominant rationality, and their adoption of non-institutional political forms.

Recent theories regarding the new social movements are important because of their focus on those forms of political mobilisation that are not easily placed within established categories of political analysis. In this regard, they redress the tendency to marginalise political action that is primarily located outside existing political institutions, or those which can not be understood in terms of class politics. In this sense, they can be seen as drawing attention to mobilisation in response to environmental issues, and providing a way to understand environmental awareness might be understood. A number of significant problems, however, are associated with the new social movement perspective.

⁷⁵ J. Habermas, 1987 The Theory of Communicative Action Volume 2 Boston: Beacon Press p. 395.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid p. 392, 395.

⁷⁸ Ibid p. 392.

One difficulty is the secondary importance that the new social movement theorists place on conflict. Inglehart is one theorist who does consider this theme. More specifically, he concentrates on the challenge that 'new politics' presents to the 'old politics'. The environment is specifically identified by Inglehart as one issue that is associated with the new politics. He contends that it is the qualitative importance of environmental issues, rather than the issues themselves, that are new. Hence Inglehart states:

Conservation of natural resources has been a subject of political controversy for many decades. But it is difficult to find a previous instance over major economic interests that is comparable in magnitude to the rejection of the proposed American supersonic transport...⁷⁹

The argument developed by Inglehart has much in common with Hindess and Laclau and Mouffe. In each of these accounts it is the changing interpretation of environmental issues that is the crucial variant to understanding subsequent conflict. Yet in spite of the emphasis placed on the way in which these movements challenge 'dominant paradigm politics', or alternatively in the case of Habermas and Offe, the expansion of the contemporary state, the actual dynamics of the conflict remain virtually untheorised.

Accounts of both the state and those who counter-mobilise in opposition to the new social movements, attracts scant attention in discussions of the new social movements. Even when they are taken into account, there is little useful analysis. For instance, Touraine considers mobilisers and counter mobilisers as a part of one overarching conflict, which contest for the control of society's main cultural patterns, defined by Touraine as *historicity*.⁸⁰ Counter-mobilisation in response to the new social movements could therefore be understood as protecting these existing cultural patterns. Offe presents the new

⁷⁹ Inglehart op cit p. 13.

⁸⁰ A. Touraine 1981 The Voice and the Eye An Analysis of Social Movements New York: Cambridge University Press p. 31-2; Touraine loc cit p. 774.

social movements as questioning the 'old paradigm' politics of the dominant rationality.⁸¹ Offe and Touraine are typical of the new social movement theorists who tend to identify the new social movements as challenging an already existing cultural, ideological, or political paradigm. This argument is useful because it recognises a core ideological unity within the opponents of mobilisation. Yet the dichotomy that this establishes between the new social movements (as challenging this old paradigm) and their opponents (who defend this old paradigm) does not reveal the diversity, tension and schism within the potential forces of opposition. Hence there is no basis to distinguish between the state, capital or labour, all of which are associated with this old paradigm politics. Nor does it explain why, in specific instances of conflict, some groups associated with the old paradigm politics mobilise, while others do not.

As has already been discussed, the nature of the state in capitalist society has been the focus of considerable debate. In a similar fashion to counter-mobilisation, the state has also been marginalised in discussions of the new social movements. In this sense Touraine's work represents a particularly extreme example. Touraine contrasts the state and political action with social action and the conflict for control over historicity. The new social movements are concerned with the struggle for historicity and the state is therefore attributed secondary status.⁸² While Touraine's discussion aims to establish the interrelated character of structure and agency, his thesis provides no means for analysing the relationship between the new social movements and the state.

⁸¹ C. Offe 1990 "Reflections on the Institutional Self - Transformation of Movement Politics: A Tentative Stage Model" in R. J. Dalton and M. Kuechler Challenging the Political Order New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies Cambridge: Polity Press p. 234.

⁸² Touraine op cit p. 106, p. 117; J. Cohen 1985 "Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements" (1981) Social Research Vol. 52 No. 4 Winter 1985 p. 698.

Offe's conception of the state is quite different from that of Touraine. It has already been mentioned that Offe considers the state to be of fundamental importance in creating the conditions within which the new social movements have emerged. Yet the nature of the ongoing relationship between the state and these movements remains ambiguous. Offe pays a great deal of attention to the possible development of alliances with particular political parties (or ideologies). However, these remain as a series of descriptive scenarios that do not enhance our understanding of the role adopted by the state in these circumstances. This is in contrast to other aspects of Offe's work that have been particularly concerned with the relationship between the state's character, forms of agency, and the political struggles in which they engage.

It would appear, therefore, that an extremely homogeneous account is provided by the new social movement theorists for the agents of conflict. No scope is provided for fragmentation within the state, sources of opposition to the new social movements, or even the movements themselves. As a result, the new social movement theorist's construction of environmental conflict remains partial, at best.

Another problem that may be identified with the kind of analysis presented by the new social movement literature is its emphasis on what these movements have in common, without sufficient investigation of those aspects of the movement's character that are unique. This is reinforced by a failure to address the impact that the character of specific issues has on the nature of conflict. For example, whether mobilisation in response to issues concerning the environment display any distinctive characteristics. The focus of the new social movement theorists remains on those values the movements hold in common, emphasising the manner in which the modern condition influences the nature of contemporary social movements. It is subsequently implied that all significant manifestations of the modern or post-industrial condition, as it relates to the new social movements, can be treated collectively. This thesis

argues that mobilisation in response to environmental issues has a particular character which influences the conflicts it precipitates and for this reason the specific nature of the issue is important.

The Environment and New Values

The particular nature of conflict over environmental values is a theme taken up in Tim O'Riordan's book Environmentalism. O'Riordan is specifically concerned with the rise of environmentalism in the United States and embarks on an analysis of the development of two quite different conceptions of nature.

The first understanding of nature that he identifies is eco-centrism. This is a world view that considers that a natural balance exists and that the impact of humanity distorts and threatens this balance. In essence it: "demands a code of behaviour that seeks permanence and stability based upon ecological principles of diversity and homeostasis."⁸³ According to O'Riordan, the origins of this perspective can be found in the philosophies of mid nineteenth century romantic transcendentalists who saw nature as a means to overcome the dichotomy between individualism and homogeneity. From this beginning biocentrism was developed by people such as Muir and Leopold, who contended that nature contained its own purpose, one that ought to be respected on an ethical basis.⁸⁴ Also developing from eco-centrism was a self-reliance stream of ecological thought, linking self-actualisation to a sense of collective responsibility, which could be achieved through small, self-sustaining communities. In this tradition, O'Riordan places philosophers such as Mumford, Roszak and Bookchin.

Second, O'Riordan identifies what he describes as the technocentric mode, a perspective that is placed in opposition to the ecocentric world view. This, it is argued, is based on the application of rational and value-free scientific and

⁸³ T. O'Riordan 1976 Environmentalism London: Pion p. 1.

⁸⁴ Ibid p. 3 - 4.

managerial techniques by a professional elite. The environment is understood as neutral and may be manipulated and managed by humanity through its control over science and technology.⁸⁵ The emphasis in the technocentric world view is on progress, rationality and control. It has led to the development of resource management, regulatory intervention, a focus on resource allocation techniques such as the cost-benefit analysis, and has remained optimistic regarding the ability of technology to intervene and manipulate the natural environment.⁸⁶

In a similar fashion to Inglehart, O'Riordan associates rising affluence with the political context in which environmentalism emerges. O'Riordan argues that as certain national goals have been achieved, for instance, national defence, health care, economic growth and employment, they are superseded by new concerns. Environmental quality is a third priority in this hierarchy of national goals⁸⁷ and this explains the appearance of environmental concerns on the policy agenda of advanced industrial societies. Environmentalism then seeks to rearrange these priorities to achieve a balance between government objectives of redistribution, quality of human existence and quality of ecological existence.

In some respects, O'Riordan's account of two conflicting value systems fills the gap created by Inglehart who fails to address the particular character of conflict in response to environmental issues. Nevertheless, O'Riordan's conception of a hierarchy of issues is problematic for a number of reasons. Most of the time, people are simultaneously concerned with a variety of issues which may or may not be hierarchically ordered. O'Riordan also fails to address the question of whether or not environmentalism is linked to the increased prevalence of environmental problems.

85 Ibid p. 1.

86 Ibid p. 11-17.

87 Ibid p. 19-20.

Summary

The discussion of issue politics is an attempt to explain the nature and meaning of conflict within society. As a result, it is possible to argue that each of the perspectives considered within this section of the thesis provide a theoretical framework that makes a claim to explaining environmental conflict. As a starting point for this discussion, the theoretical accounts of pluralism and Marxism were considered and then rejected because they construct structure and agency as a dichotomy. One consequence of this is an inability to deal with the impact of both these forces in shaping the nature of environmental conflict. Environmental awareness would thus be either purely a result of the actions of agents or the way in which society is structured.

Post-Marxism was then considered because of its attempts to move beyond the dichotomy dominating Marxist and pluralist accounts of issue politics. From this view, the importance of discourse and discursive conditions were seen as central in explaining rising environmental awareness and the origins of the new values articulated by the environment movement. The strength of this perspective was associated with its capacity to identify structural imperatives whilst empowering agents with the ability to redefine these structures. Nevertheless, problems were also found in this account. These revolved around the inability of post-Marxism to explain what shapes discourse and discursive conditions. Hence, the significance of forces that influence discourse were marginalised. Furthermore, the relationship between alternative discourses was not sufficiently addressed, limiting the capacity of the analysis to explain conflicting discourses.

A third perspective considered was the new social movement literature. The diversity of these views has been highlighted as well as their common core. The main point was that what is important about the new social movements is their articulation of particular values through new forms of mobilisation. The issues that the new social movements are seen as

responding to are viewed to be diverse. Nevertheless, their value basis provides a unifying force. It was argued that what is significant about these theories is the way in which they focus on those forms of political mobilisation often ignored in establishing categories of political analysis. Yet at the same time, this approach tends to reduce the importance of conflict and diversity in a fashion similar to post-Marxism.

The final perspective focused on new values. It was argued that while this approach helps explain aspects of the conflict in response to environmental issues, it does not provide an in depth account of the causes of value change.

One of the central problems dominating theoretical views that attempt to explain growing environmental awareness is the inability to provide an adequate method for discussing conflict. Conflict is typically defined as a challenge to the dominant order without seriously addressing other lines of cleavage. This is not to argue that the continuity between the new social movements is insignificant. Rather, that analysis needs to recognise divisions as well as cohesion.

A second difficulty is closely related to the way in which the question of environmentalism has been posed. In particular, the attempt to find a discourse or set of values that can be identified as 'the cause' of these movements. What is problematic with such an approach is that it leaves open the question of what 'caused' these causes, and consequently leads to an infinite string of possible causes of causes. Such an approach is inadequate for two reasons. The first is that a variety of conditions are identified as influencing environmental awareness. Hence, rather than search for causal relationships, this thesis aims to identify those forces that shape environmental conflict and what their relationship is to each other. Secondly, it completely ignores the significant role that environmental damage plays in creating conditions in which environmental awareness evolves. Here, the relationship between environmental awareness and damage becomes vital.

Rethinking Environmental Damage and Environmental Awareness

The final section of this chapter seeks to establish a theoretical framework capable of discussing environmental conflict in Australia. The argument contained in the previous two sections related to the need to understand environmental conflict as a consequence of both environmental damage and environmental awareness. This thesis contends that in isolation, neither of these themes provides sufficient tools for discussing environmental conflict. Instead, it is argued that a dynamic theory is required. In this respect it draws on Marx's notion of a dialectic and the view that while it is possible to separate environmental damage and awareness, they can only be understood if it is recognised that they are constantly interacting to reshape and redefine each other. In a similar vein to the conception of society that Marx put forward, environmental conflicts need to be analysed as historically specific instances of the interplay of these forces.

There have been a number of theoretical perspectives that have developed this kind of emphasis. One interesting example is the work of Lowe and Goyder. Lowe and Goyder begin with a historical account of environmental conflict. In their analysis, the focus is on the development of environmental groups in Britain. They begin with the organisation of the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society in 1865 and end with what they view as the peak of environmentalism in the 1970s.⁸⁸ The theme that Lowe and Goyder emphasise is the uneven and sporadic expansion of the environment movement. Their objective is to unravel this tendency.

Lowe and Goyder argue that it is the combination of value changes and an increased awareness of environmental damage that may be associated with the growth of the environmental movement. Like Inglehart, Lowe and Goyder

⁸⁸ P. Lowe and J. Goyder 1983 Environmental Groups in Politics London: Allen and Unwin p. 15-17.

note the correlation between swelling environmental concern and periods of sudden economic growth, arguing that:

We would suggest that environmental groups arose at these times as more and more people turned to count the mounting external cost of unbridled economic growth and sought to reassert non-materialist values.⁸⁹

An important distinction, however, can be made between Inglehart and Lowe and Goyder, as the latter also identify the rate of environmental change to be significant in itself. Again, this is associated with the consequences of boom periods of economic growth, they explain that:

Times of economic boom are associated with the restructuring of industry, the intensification of secondary production, the creation of new urban infrastructure and increased consumption, and therefore a magnification of perceived threats to the environment.⁹⁰

Here Lowe and Goyder note the paradox:

economic growth facilitates increased enjoyment and appreciation of the environment but is also a cause of environmental disruption.⁹¹

It is when this economic growth decreases that concern for economic security grows, whilst simultaneously environmental concern drops. While changes in the environment itself remains of fundamental importance in Lowe and Goyder's thesis, they maintain a strong emphasis on value change, asserting that:

Environmental pollution and degradation have a subjective as well as an objective measurement. Our perception of spoilage and hazards and the standards by which we assess them change over time. Conditions accepted by one generation may be rejected by another. On some counts, for example, the environment has notably improved over time.⁹²

Lowe and Goyder's work is clearly pointing to the relationship between environmental damage and awareness. Their argument is that it is possible to

⁸⁹ Ibid p. 25.

⁹⁰ Ibid p. 27.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid p. 30.

identify a link between an overall increase in environmental problems and the value change which represents a greater awareness of these problems. The consequences of this value change are wider than the initial recognition of environmental problems, resulting in new standards being broadly applied to what is environmentally acceptable. Hence they note that while living and working conditions of British people in the 1960s had improved substantially when compared to earlier periods of industrialisation, it was only in this new era of environmental awareness that such conditions of environmental damage were considered to be a problem.⁹³

Lowe and Goyder's thesis provides a useful starting point for an analysis that recognises the significance of both environmental damage and environmental awareness. There are, however, three main problems with their approach. The first is that while Lowe and Goyder note the impact of economic growth on the environment, there is a lack of detailed analysis of this relationship, especially the particular role that industrial capitalism plays in environmental degradation. Secondly, Lowe and Goyder do not sufficiently theorise the character of the consciousness raising to which their argument is directed. The reader is subsequently left wondering what the significance of environmental awareness might be. Finally, they do not provide a way to address the relationship between changing attitudes and existing political and economic systems. In each instance, it would appear that Lowe and Goyder have provided a useful descriptive survey of environmental damage and awareness, without providing a complete theoretical account.

Another more theoretically sophisticated account of current ecological changes, their origins and their relationship with human society is made by Carolyn Merchant. Like Lowe and Goyder, Merchant's argument is designed to explain a historically specific instance of ecological change and differing

⁹³ Ibid.

perceptions of the environment. In this case New England is the focus of study.

Merchant's central thesis involves an explanation for what she describes as ecological revolutions:

[These are] processes through which different societies change their relationship to nature. They arise from tensions between production and ecology and between production and reproduction. The results are new constructions of nature, both materially and in human consciousness.⁹⁴

According to Merchant, the result of these tensions is paradigms in conflict. In terms of the environment, this has brought into opposition two competing views of the environment. On the one hand there is a scientific world view that emerged in the seventeenth century. Within this perspective, nature is constructed as mechanistic, passive, manipulable and a resource for production. By way of contrast, the ecological paradigm views nature as active and dynamic, with the relationship between human and non-human nature as interactive.⁹⁵ Merchant considers that this perspective is "a particular twentieth century construction of nature relevant to the concerns of environmental historians."⁹⁶ She also emphasises that it has no more claim to an ultimate truth than any other perspective.⁹⁷ What Merchant is more interested in doing is finding an explanation for the rapid change in these world views as well as their interrelationship with the non-human world. Recast in the terminology adopted in this thesis, one could identify this as the relationship between environmental damage and environmental awareness.

The starting point for Merchant's argument is the nature of paradigms and methods for explaining why they change. In this analysis, Merchant considers the work of Thomas Kuhn, Marx and Engels. Kuhn's thesis on

⁹⁴ C. Merchant 1989 Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender and Science in New England Chapel Hill, London: University of North Carolina Press p. 23.

⁹⁵ Ibid p. 7-8, 23.

⁹⁶ Ibid p. 4.

⁹⁷ Ibid p. 8.

scientific paradigms is criticised because of its sole focus on their internal dynamics. While Merchant acknowledges that internal developments are important, she also contends that it is necessary

to incorporate an interpretation of social forces external to daily activities of scientific practitioners ... Internal developments in scientific theories are affected, at least indirectly, by social and economic circumstances. A view point that incorporates social, economic, and ecological changes is required for a more complete understanding of scientific change.⁹⁸

It is not surprising that Merchant later draws upon the work of Foucault in discussing paradigm changes, as this criticism of Kuhn reflects the debate that emerged between Foucault and Derrida regarding the importance of external forces in shaping discourses. Before discussing Merchant's work further, the details of this debate will be briefly discussed.

In Edward Said's article "Criticism Between Culture and System" the impact that internal and external forces have in shaping discourse is discussed in the context of an assessment of Foucault's and Derrida's broader arguments regarding the character of texts and discourse. As Said notes, the debate between Foucault and Derrida is drawn from two distinctive answers to "...the problem of knowledge, of *how* we know what we know".⁹⁹ The central opposition between Foucault and Derrida is the role they attribute to forces external to discourse.

According to Said, "Derrida is concerned only with reading a text, and that a text is nothing more than what is in it for the reader."¹⁰⁰ It is this focus on the internal dynamics of discourse that is central to the methodology defined by Derrida. The author of the text is marginalised as the meaning of the text is revealed through its reading and not the author's intent. For Derrida, ambiguities in the text are associated with its capacity to mean all things to all

98 Ibid p. 3.

99 E. Said 1983 The Word, the Text, and the Critic Great Britain: Vintage p. 182.

100 Ibid p. 183.

readers. As Said explains, "every meaning-possibility exists in a raw unresolved state."¹⁰¹

Said is critical of Derrida for failing to recognise forces external to discourse which shape it. Hence Said poses the question:

it is legitimate ... to ask what keeps the contract together, what makes it possible for a certain system of metaphysical ideas, as well as a whole structure of concepts, praxis, and ideologies derived from it, to maintain itself from Greek antiquity through the present. What forces keeps all these ideas glued together? What forces get them into the texts ... Are all these things matters of fortuitous coincidence, or is there in fact some relevant connection to be made, and seen, between instances of logocentrism and the agencies perpetuating it in time?¹⁰²

Both Derrida and Foucault see their task as "to make visible what is customarily invisible in a text, namely the various mysteries, rules and play of its discourse."¹⁰³ Unlike Derrida, however, Foucault recognises a role of forces that are external to the discourse, as well as the internal dynamics of the text itself. As Said explains:

for Foucault the text is important because it inhabits an element of power ... with a decisive claim on actuality, even though that power is invisible or implied. Derrida's criticism moves us *into* the text, Foucault's *in* and *out*.¹⁰⁴

Discourse is subsequently understood within a wider matrix of power relationships "whose textual form is a purposeful obscuring of power beneath textuality and knowledge."¹⁰⁵ According to Foucault, discourse attributes truth to the rationality of those who dominate society.¹⁰⁶ Controlled by institutions, discourse "governs the production of culture"¹⁰⁷ within society. Moreover, as Said explains "[t]he power of discourse is that it is at once the

101 Ibid p. 203.

102 Ibid p. 211.

103 Ibid p. 184.

104 Ibid p. 183.

105 Ibid p. 184.

106 Ibid p. 216.

107 Ibid p. 186.

object of struggle and the tool by which the struggle is conducted."¹⁰⁸ Hence, discourses are central in political conflicts, including those over the environment.

The attention paid to discourse by Said, Derrida and Foucault is important within the context of this thesis because these debates over the nature of discourse informs its analysis. In particular, this thesis draws on the notion that conflicts over the environment may be understood by considering the claims that various participants in environmental conflict make about the environment and the different rationalities that explain why an area should be preserved or exploited. In a similar fashion to Foucault, the assumption that is developed in this thesis is that forces external to the discourse employed within environmental conflicts do shape events. Hence, the importance of environmental damage, which it will be argued is the material consequence of an exploitative attitude to the environment.

Having identified a series of problems with an internal analysis of discourse, such as that of Kuhn, Merchant moves to the work of Marx and Engels. It is noted that Marx and Engels identified social revolution as a result of the contradiction between material forces of production and existing relations of production. While Merchant is critical of the economic determinism implicit in the Marxist base/superstructure relationship, she contends that the strength of this view lies in its dynamic conception of society and change.¹⁰⁹

In discussing changes in environmental paradigms, Merchant argues that there are a number of structural forces that may be identified as playing a prominent role. According to Merchant, the relationship between reproduction and production shapes the way in which human societies interact with the natural environment. It is the consequences of this interaction that

¹⁰⁸ Ibid p. 216.

¹⁰⁹ Merchant op cit p. 4.

can be seen as shaping the context in which consciousness, or awareness of an issue, may develop. According to Merchant, an ecological revolution involves change at all three levels at once:

They are initiated by widening tensions between the requirements of ecology and production in a given habitat and between production and reproduction. These dynamics in turn support transformations in consciousness and legitimating worldviews.¹¹⁰

The relationship between capitalist production and environmental damage was discussed in the opening section of this chapter. Merchant similarly notes that the move from subsistence to market economies has been fundamental in changing ecological habitats. She takes this one step further by arguing that the ecological consequences of alterations to a society's form of production will also make an impact on that society. Hence, both production and ecology are influencing each other.¹¹¹ Merchant contends that, "[i]f these changes are of sufficient magnitude, the society as a whole and its ecology may both be radically altered."¹¹²

Forms of reproduction are also viewed to play a role within this dynamic relationship between human society and its ecological context. Merchant asserts that reproduction is influenced by changes in production. For instance the ability to extract more resources may lead to a society being able to sustain an increased population, and in doing so changes in reproduction transform society.¹¹³ Again, the consequences of this will alter ecological systems as resources are used to support a larger human population. It is these changes in the relationship between production, reproduction and ecology that Merchant identifies as central in creating ecological revolutions. Following such changes a process of legitimation takes place:

110 Ibid p. 5.

111 Ibid p. 10-11, 13.

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid p. 18.

As society responds to change, inherent tensions in its legitimating worldview and forms of consciousness begin to widen. Some assumptions about nature are elaborated and developed to support and lead the new direction; others are rejected and become the ideas of subordinate groups.¹¹⁴

Consciousness is important within Merchant's argument because it is here that a significant component of change within an ecological revolution takes place. Merchant discusses these contests over consciousness in terms of power and links this to her initial discussion of paradigm changes:

Forms of consciousness are power structures. When one worldview is challenged and replaced by another during a scientific or ecological revolution, power over society, nature, and space is at stake.¹¹⁵

Merchant then draws on Foucault's contention that

the history of power over nature is a history of spaces, spatial metaphors (habitat, soil, landscape...), strategies of control, and modes of mapping, tabulation, recordation, classification, and order.¹¹⁶

Through this process of defining the natural world, power over nature is assumed. Merchant encapsulates the meaning of this point by referring to Foucault's discussion of Bentham's metaphor of the Panopticon, where control is exerted from an all seeing and controlling central tower. Through this process, management is achieved of social institutions as well as: "... nature, resources, national parks, wild rivers, endangered whales ... and indeed the whole earth itself through satellite surveillance."¹¹⁷ This is important because it establishes a vital connection between power conflicts and competing paradigms involving the environment's value. Hence it explains why these contests become political conflicts.

Merchant's argument is that changes in human production and reproduction impact on the ecological context which in turn reshapes human

114 Ibid p. 19.

115 Ibid p. 22.

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid p. 23

society. Both changes in consciousness and ecological revolutions occur when these alterations are extensive enough to require new forms of legitimation. The new paradigm challenges the old as it becomes increasingly obvious that our capacity to control the environment is limited and therefore the scientific perspective of nature limited.

What is not sufficiently developed in either Lowe and Goyder or Merchant's account of environmental and social change is the role of political institutions and political ideologies in the conflict between competing paradigms. Discussion of structures external to discourse, power, and the economic consequences and constraints of capitalism are clearly of vital importance in understanding the dynamics of environmental conflict and change. Nevertheless, what this theoretical framework does not address is the impact that the character of the political system has in creating conditions in which the conflict emerges, and the form this conflict takes. Thus the importance of politics remains insufficiently theorised in the work of Lowe and Goyder and Merchant.

A Comment on the Impact of Liberal Democracy

The central tenet of the following argument is the notion that within a liberal democratic polity, based on capitalism, both structural constraints as well as individual freedom play a role in shaping political decisions about the environment. Moreover, that conflict emerges because of the competing objectives that liberal democracy considers to be legitimate. Liberal democracy is a hotly contested area of political debate and this thesis will not directly engage with it.¹¹⁸ The concern of this thesis is the way in which the notion that Australia is a liberal democracy has impacted upon its political processes, especially in the context of environmental issues. More particularly, it examines how the philosophical roots of liberal and democratic thought place

¹¹⁸ For details see H. Emy and O. Hughes 1991 Australian Politics: Realities in Conflict 2nd edition, South Melbourne: Macmillan, chapter 14 "Another View of Liberal Democracy".

competing and conflicting pressures upon governments, influencing the way policies are developed and the sorts of factors that shape them.

Emy and Hughes argue that Australia is a liberal democracy, yet this does not mean that the two dimensions of Australia's political system sit comfortably with each other. Indeed, Emy and Hughes argue that the opposite is the case. To develop this theme, the key tenets of liberalism are compared to those of democracy. According to this view, while the terms of freedom and equality are assumed within both democratic and liberal discourses, the meaning that is attributed to such concepts is varied.

The focus of liberalism is to create a fair and economically rational society in which individuals are as free from constraints as possible in making economic choices. In sum:

mainstream liberalism conceptualises society as, basically, a productive association, and individuals as acquisitive creatures whose happiness depends on increasing their opportunities for consumption ... The core of this theory centres on the operation of the free market.¹¹⁹

Democracy similarly draws on the notions of freedom and choice, but is not centred on the market. Instead, these objectives are fulfilled through a citizen's participation in political life and the consequences that follow. As Emy and Hughes explain:

The other kind of theory ... recognises democracy as a substitute theory of social and political organisation. It conceptualises human beings as creatures with unique capacities for leading rational and moral ... lives. The purpose of society, of social life per se is to provide the essential environment in which these needs can be met, and the definitive species characteristics developed ... Organising all aspects of society on full democratic lines is thought to be a more important goal than the continual pursuit of economic development.¹²⁰

Liberalism views state intervention as undermining a citizen's freedom of choice within the market. By way of contrast, a concern for democratic theory

¹¹⁹ Ibid p. 237.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

is that interests are given political representation, which frequently leads to state involvement in a range of policy issues. Here the economic objectives of the capitalist system may conflict with the political imperatives of democracy.

Emy and Hughes argue that both perspectives have shaped Australian political institutions and informed the political process.¹²¹ A further complication is the influence of social democratic principles that has seen the state adopt a significant role in economic development.¹²² The argument in this thesis supports this contention. As the conflict between political and economic objectives is frequently evident in environmental conflict, the character of the conflict between liberalism and democracy shapes state response to environmental issues and provides at least one means for explaining variations in state responses to environmental issues. Hence a dynamic rather than a static view of the state and the political process is required. That is, one in which it is possible to identify two conflicting, yet equally legitimate, discourses that are essential in understanding the way the state responds to environmental conflict.

Conclusion

The remainder of this thesis considers the utility of the arguments discussed thus far. It is particularly concerned with identifying the significance of the relationship between environmental damage and awareness in shaping environmental conflict. Drawing upon Merchant's theoretical framework, the importance of capitalist production will be considered in creating conditions of environmental damage. Another point of focus will be Merchant's conception of competing paradigms and its capacity to explain the response of environmental groups, business and the state to environmental conflicts. A central aspect of this analysis will be to draw out the specific character and diversity of the discourses and rationales deployed during the conflicts

121 Ibid p. 232.

122 Ibid p. 230.

discussed. Of particular interest is the tension that emerges within state activity because of its liberal democratic character. The argument of this thesis is that the nature of a liberal democratic state ensues that governments will always be open to competing demands. Moreover, that policy responses to these competing demands typically reflects the anticipated political outcomes of the choices made by the state. This approach is identified as the 'politics is primary' paradigm.

Each of these themes is traced through an analysis of four case studies - the Great Barrier Reef, Fraser Island, the Franklin Dam and Kakadu. The purpose of the following chapter is to provide a historical survey of the attitudes to land in Australia. This provides the context into which the environmental conflicts discussed in the remainder of the thesis are located.

Chapter Two

Australian Attitudes to the Land: A Historical Overview

Introduction

In Australia, conflicts over the environment began in earnest during the mid to late 1960s. Creating the context within which these conflicts emerged was Australia's experience of environmental damage and awareness. What this chapter aims to do is consider the way current environmental conflicts have emerged from different conceptions of the land. It is argued that utilitarian and essentially exploitative attitudes towards the land have dominated the character of Australia's development and its political economy. In spite of this dominant perspective, however, other views, such as ecological concern and an aesthetic appreciation of the Australian environment, have also been evident. This chapter will briefly trace this history since European possession and consider how it established the foundations of the political conflict that emerged from the mid 1960s onwards.

The chapter will be divided into a number of sections. The first examines early Australian settlement and different views of the landscape that developed. In the second section, the maintenance of a utilitarian perception of the environment will be discussed. It will be argued that the particular character of capitalism in Australia has served to reinforce notions of the environment as a resource. Third, the theme of conservation in Australian history will be reviewed. The final theme to be discussed is the movement of environmental conflict onto the political agenda at the end of the 1960s. The objective will be to identify why this shift in the significance of environmental issues occurred and how damage and awareness shaped the context within which this took place.

Early Settlement and Different Views of the Landscape

A variety of perspectives influenced early European attitudes to the Australian environment. What these views entailed, their origins and their impact will be the focus of the following discussion.¹ Studies of early settler perceptions of the Australian landscape agree that a utilitarian and exploitative attitude was dominant. Nevertheless, other views of the land may also be identified. Some complemented the utilitarian approach; for example, the understanding of the environment as an object for scientific inquiry. Others, particularly the more aesthetically and ecologically orientated, challenged the dominant paradigm. These alternative views, however, were held by a minority and made little initial impact.²

An explanation for why themes of utility, exploitation and scientific value dominated initial European attitudes to the environment in Australia may be located in two main spheres. The first is in the impetus for Australia's possession; and secondly, in the interaction between the character of the Australian environment and the heritage of the people who came to settle there.

When Cook claimed Australia in 1770, it was as a part of a voyage of discovery that had been precipitated by enlightenment notions regarding the role that science had to play in man's acquisition of knowledge and hence mastery over nature.³ Impetus for Australia's possession followed and was closely associated with the demands of the industrial revolution in Britain.

¹ The focus of this thesis is on the consequences of European settlement and for this reason Aboriginal environmental practices, prior to this time, are not particularly relevant to the discussion.

² A. Gilbert 1982 "The State and Nature in Australia" Culture and Society No. 1; R. L. Heathcote 1972 "The Visions of Australia 1770-1970" in A. Rapoport (ed) Australia as a Human Setting Sydney: Angus and Robertson Education; K. Frawley 1987 "Exploring Some Australian Images of the Environment" Working Paper 1 Department of Geography and Oceanography University of New South Wales Australian Defence Force Academy.

³ J. M. Powell 1976 Environmental Management in Australia, 1788-1914: Guardians, Improvers and Profit: An Introductory Survey Melbourne: Oxford University Press p. 12-13; W. Lines 1991 Taming the Great South Land: A History of the Conquest of Nature in Australia North Sydney: Allen and Unwin p. 16-21.

Australia's settlement met the requirement of Britain's commercial and strategic interests as well as providing a solution to overcrowding in British jails, a problem directly associated with the consequences of British industrialisation.⁴ This context was central in constructing a view of the environment that revolved around its utility and capacity to extend scientific knowledge.⁵

There was a complex interaction between early European settlers in Australia and the land. One significant factor was the alien character of the Australian landscape to those who had been raised in Britain or Ireland. Reversal of the seasons along with unusual flora and fauna led to an image of the Australian environment as perverse.⁶ As far as most colonists were concerned, their new setting simply did not compare to the temperate British climate. The land was perceived as monotonous and uncivilised,⁷ and to the extent that areas did not conform to the desolate characterisation of the Australian landscape they were classified as 'unAustralian'.⁸ This is a view which George Seddon argues emerged from a preconceived idea of a suitable environment, hence creating what he has described as the central paradox of "a people whose cultural traditions and aspirations derive from a fundamentally different physical environment."⁹

⁴ Powell op cit p. 12-13; D. Clark 1975 "Australia: Victim or Partner of Britain Imperialism" in E. L. Wheelwright and K. Buckley Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism Volume One Sydney: Australia and New Zealand Book Company p. 51-52

⁵ For a discussion of the scientific view see Heathcote loc cit p. 84-85.

⁶ This was epitomised by the notion that the Australian environment represented a reversal of nature. Powell op cit p. 13; G. Seddon 1976 "The Evolution of Perceptual Attitudes" in G. Seddon and M. Davis (eds) Man and Landscape in Australia: Towards and Ecological Vision Papers from a symposium held at the Australian Academy of Science, Canberra, 30 May - 2 June 1974, Canberra: Australian Government Printing Service, p. 10; R. L. Heathcote 1976 "Early European Perceptions of the Australian Landscape: The First Hundred Years" in G. Seddon and M. Davis (eds) Man and Landscape in Australia: Towards and Ecological Vision Papers from a symposium held at the Australian Academy of Science, Canberra, 30 May - 2 June 1974, Canberra: Australian Government Printing Service, p. 31.

⁷ Heathcote loc cit p. 88; J. M. Powell op cit p. 14.

⁸ T. Griffiths 1992 Secrets of the Forest: Discovering History in Melbourne's Ash Range Australia: Allen and Unwin p. 4.

⁹ Seddon loc cit p. 11.

Geoffrey Bolton develops this argument further by considering the way in which an ideal view of the landscape had been constructed in Britain at the time of Australia's colonisation. According to Bolton, modern agrarian capitalism in Britain was compatible with the land's natural ecology.¹⁰ Better use of the land and responsibility for the improvement of natural resources, consequently coincided with economic gains.¹¹ The result was that utility and visual pleasure became linked to each other and in doing so established a view of the ideal landscape.¹²

Bolton draws a contrast to Australia where utilitarian views of the landscape were divorced from the environment's aesthetic qualities.¹³ His argument is that such a distinction emerged from having an ideal to which the Australian environment failed to compare and that this undermined the settlers' ability to recognise the values of the Australian landscape.¹⁴

Within this basic framework little scope was provided for an aesthetic or an ecological appreciation of the Australian environment that might temper exploitation. Nevertheless, even some who were most critical of Australia's 'dreariness' were to express concern over further decimation of an already unpleasant environment.¹⁵ There was also what Heathcote has described as a Romantic vision of Australia. This perspective extolled the lack of human intrusion¹⁶ into the Australian environment as a virtue and glorified the wildness of nature. Heathcote has described the romantic view in the following manner:

¹⁰ G. Bolton 1981 Spoils and Spoilers: Australians Make Their Environment 1788 -1980 Sydney: Allen and Unwin p. 13.

¹¹ Ibid p. 14-5.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid p. 13-15.

¹⁴ Ibid p. 15.

¹⁵ For an excellent example see Louisa Anne Meredith's description in G. Catalano 1985 An Intimate Australia: The Landscape and Recent Australian Art Sydney: Hale and Ironmonger p. 50.

¹⁶ Although this view was typically more sympathetic towards the aboriginal people, as a race, the indigenous population were still considered primitive, resulting in their occupation of the land being discounted.

This expressed itself as a sympathetic response to the Aborigines, and a delight in the 'uncivilized' nature of the landscape leading to an almost Arcadian attitude to the countryside or 'bush'.¹⁷

A different vision of the Australian landscape may also be found in the work of Charles Harpur, whose poetry, as Powell explains, "was distinguished by its acceptance of the harsh realities of the Australian scene as integral parts of the beauty of life itself."¹⁸

A limited awareness of conservation also emerged during this early stage of colonial development. In the main part, conservation was the result of concerns that were largely utilitarian in character.¹⁹ For example, some regulation of early forestry practices was attempted in response to the flooding hazards it had created.²⁰ These efforts, however, remained ad hoc and ineffective. Like the evolution of an aesthetic appreciation of the Australian environment, conservation measures remained marginal to normal practices.²¹

With aesthetic beauty and conservation remaining peripheral in attitudes towards the environment, a utilitarian and exploitative perspective was paramount.²² Heathcote supports this assessment when he states that, "For many officials and settlers the landscape had but one character - its potential for economic exploitation."²³ Indeed, for most settlers, the objective of simply surviving in an essentially alien environment necessitated a utilitarian perspective. These views were further consolidated when Australia became the destination of many impoverished victims of British industrialisation.²⁴ As Powell explains, the view of Australia that became prevalent in Britain,

17 Heathcote loc cit p. 87. For an example see Seddon loc cit p. 10-11.

18 J. M. Powell 1972 Images of Australia, 1788-1914 Melbourne: Monash University p. 5.

19 Powell Environmental Management p. 18.

20 Ibid p. 19-20; Bolton op cit p. 37-38.

21 G. Mosley 1988 "The Australian Conservation Movement" in R. L. Heathcote (ed) The Australian Experience: Essays in Australian Land Settlement and Resource Management Melbourne: Longman Cheshire p. 179.

22 Bolton op cit p. 15-16.

23 Heathcote loc cit p. 42. See also Powell Environmental Management p 15-18.

24 Powell Images of Australia p. 6.

changed the image of Botany Bay from a small and distant cess pool of depravity to a veritable Arcady in which a Golden Age of rural prosperity and individual dignity might be recaptured.²⁵

With such a view of Australia, it is not surprising that the Australian landscape continued to be perceived within a framework of utility.

Exploitation of the environment thus remained the dominating attitude. William Lines has provided a detailed exposition of initial settler commercial activity and its cruelty to the indigenous flora, fauna, sea life and the Aboriginal population. Through a discussion of settler activity, Lines illustrates the destructive results of the colonists' assurity in their superiority and right to use the land in way they saw fit.²⁶ Similarly, Mosley notes:

The fur seals of the Bass Strait islands, the bay Whales, the Huon pine of western Van Diemen's Land, and the red cedar of New South Wales were all exploited to the point of commercial extinction, as if it did not matter that the supply would end.²⁷

While these extreme examples illustrate the extent to which the exploitative and utilitarian perspective of the land led to its destruction, the longer term consequences were at least as significant. In sum, this was the establishment of the view that the Australian environment was a resource to be exploited, for survival or profit. The enlightenment ethos of reason, the alien character of the land and the dominance of utilitarian objectives, together formed an initial view of the Australian landscape that revolved around the need to transform and to civilise. As Alan Gilbert has described:

To many early settlers, bond and free alike, it seemed a monstrous place, and even those who adjusted very quickly valued Australia for its potential, not for its primitive reality. They took it for granted that their primary challenge would be to civilize its harsh nature, to dam its streams, to manicure its wild landscape, to Anglicize its very appearance by introducing exotic, green flora and familiar, useful animals.²⁸

25 Ibid.

26 Lines op cit chapters 3 and 4.

27 Mosley op cit p 178.

28 Gilbert loc cit p. 11.

At this early stage of Australia's history there was little basis upon which this assumption could be challenged.

Setting An Economic Context

Australia's experience of economic development evolved around the use of natural resources. The impact this had was to reinforce the utilitarian views of the environment upon which it was based. While the character of the Australian economy has altered since the early nineteenth century, the exploitation of natural resources has continued to play an important role. The following section of this chapter will briefly discuss the way in which the utilisation of natural resources has remained central to Australia's economy. In doing so, a fundamental link will be made between initial perceptions of the landscape and contemporary discourses on the Australian environment as a resource.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the utilitarian view of the Australian landscape was maintained and reinforced by the character of the colonies' economic development. Australia's economic development is typically dated to correlate with the rise of the pastoral industry in the 1820s.²⁹ The first pastoral boom occurred in the 1820s and 1830s and was based on the expansion in farming of Merino sheep. The unprocessed wool was then exported to British manufacturing industries.³⁰ The wool boom continued throughout the 1830s and was supported by the squatters geographical expansion which followed the 1836 Lands Act. In the 1840s, however, the boom collapsed as a result of a false optimism created in the 1830s and a decline in British demand.³¹

²⁹ F. Crowley "The Foundation Years, 1788-1821" In G. Greenwood (ed) Australia: A Social and Political History (this ed 1977) Australia: Angus and Robertson p. 2; R.M Hartwell "The Pastoral Ascendancy, 1820-1850" In G. Greenwood (ed) Australia: A Social and Political History (this ed 1977) Australia: Angus and Robertson p. 47.

³⁰ R. Maddock and I.W. McLean 1987 "The Australian Economy in the Very Long Run" in R. Maddock and I. W. McLean (eds) The Australian Economy in the Very Long Run Cambridge: Cambridge University Press p. 9.

³¹ Clark loc cit p. 54.

This early chapter in Australia's economic history is particularly revealing. While some debate has emerged over the relative significance of internal and external forces in shaping Australia's economy,³² there can be little doubt that it was very much influenced by British markets, as David Clark explains, "without British demand for our wool, without British labour and capital, there would have been no pastoral boom."³³ Australia's reliance upon, and inter-relationship with, the British economy is vital in understanding the form of capitalist development that followed. The economic spheres that Australia could most readily prosper in were those in which Britain was deficient. Rapid development of the Australian economy thus relied on the exploitation and export of natural resources. The initial boom and then decline of sheep farming was the first in a long series of phases of economic development that fitted into this broad framework. In each instance, the emphasis on resource development served to reinforce notions of the environment in terms of utility.

The extensive 'taking up' of Australian land by pastoralists saw the occupation of seventy million acres of land between 1830 and 1850.³⁴ By 1865, nearly all the land in Eastern Australia that could be used for economic purposes had been claimed.³⁵ Meanwhile, the discovery of gold in 1851 led to a relative decline in the economic significance of wool, as gold became the largest Australian export for the next twenty years.³⁶ The gold rush resulted in a massive influx of miners into Australia. Between 1851 and 1855 the Victorian population quadrupled³⁷ and in the ten years following 1851, Australia's population trebled.³⁸

32 Ibid. See the analysis of the Fitzpatrick and Butlin.

33 Ibid.

34 Hartwell loc cit p. 48.

35 Powell Environmental Management p. 22.

36 Maddock and McLean loc cit p. 55-56.

37 S. Roberts 1924 History of Australian Land Settlement 1788-1920 (this ed 1968) Australia: Macmillan p. 228.

38 R. Ward 1958 The Australian Legend Melbourne: Oxford University Press p. 104.

Gold brought with it additional wealth to the colonies,³⁹ stimulating an economic boom accompanied by an expansion of agriculture, building and construction.⁴⁰ It also allowed for an expansion of imports which was further fuelled by the rapid increases in population.⁴¹ In the boom period that the gold rush generated, links with Britain were consolidated with three quarters of imports and exports coming to and from this single source.⁴²

By the end of the 1860s gold had declined in significance and the wool industry once again assumed dominance in the Australian economy.⁴³ Although a manufacturing sector had begun to emerge, it was severely restricted by the limited local market. While agriculture had faced the same initial constraints, it did not have to compete with imports in the same way as manufacturing. Following the gold rush, agriculture had subsequently expanded with the increasing size of local markets and during the boom diversified into wheat, meat and dairy products.⁴⁴ The colonial states further supported this development through the financing of infrastructure.⁴⁵ The 1890s brought with it the first recession since the 1840s. Once again, the over extension of the wool industry was in part responsible. There was also the problem of low returns on infrastructure investment and the collapse of a speculative property boom. Discovery of gold, this time in Western Australia, yet again provided the basis of recovery.⁴⁶

In sum, Australia's economic development throughout the nineteenth century was based on the exploitation of natural resources. The particular character of this development relied on the international market, or more

39 I. D. McNaughton 1955 "Colonial Liberalism, 1851-1892" In G. Greenwood (ed) Australia: A Social and Political History (this ed 1977) Australia: Angus and Robertson p. 99.

40 Maddock and McLean loc cit p. 10.

41 Clark loc cit p 55.

42 Ibid p. 56.

43 Maddock and McLean loc cit p. 11; Clark loc cit p 58.

44 Maddock and McLean loc cit p. 11; Clark loc cit p. 55.

45 Maddock and McLean loc cit p. 11.

46 Ibid p. 62.

specifically, the requirements of Australia's major trading partner, Britain. It was also shaped by events within Australia itself, such as the discovery of gold in 1851. As Maddock and McLean state:

Economic development in the nineteenth century was ... based largely on the importation of labour (immigration) and capital (British savings) to exploit the natural resource endowment (agriculture and mineral) for the production of a number of resource-intensive commodities in which Australia had a comparative advantage. The symbiotic economic relationship was completed by strong British ability to supply Australia's input requirements.⁴⁷

There are many accounts of Australia's economic development since federation. World War One, the interwar period and depression, World War Two, the long boom and subsequent recession, have all generated various debates on the character of Australia's economy. Nevertheless, the continued, if changed, significance of Australia's natural resources, remains a constant theme. There can be little doubt that the manufacturing and service sectors of the Australian economy have become increasingly important throughout the twentieth century and has seen the diminished prominence of the resource industries. For instance, in the period between federation and 1981 the resource sector dropped from 30% of production to 12%.⁴⁸ Yet Australia's exports have continued to be dominated by resource industries. During the long boom international demand for Australian products remained in agriculture and mining. It was wool, wheat, meat, sugar, iron ore and bauxite/alumina that earned export dollars for Australia.⁴⁹ The 1960s, in particular, brought great expectations of a mining boom and Malcolm Fraser's solution to the 1970s recession revolved around the potential of Australia's mineral wealth. Hence, in spite of its comparative decline, Maddock and McLean claim that:

⁴⁷ Ibid p. 13.

⁴⁸ Ibid p. 20.

⁴⁹ Ibid p. 16.

Throughout the twentieth century Australia has thus remained largely dependent for its economic prosperity on the vagaries of world market demand for natural resource-intensive products and as the ability to expand the supply or improved quality of the natural resource base.⁵⁰

Following the Second World War, Australia's close links with British trade weakened, yet Australia's export market remains very much in the same mould as it developed in the nineteenth century. Such reliance on resources may at times be recognised as a structural problem within the economy, although it is also possible to argue that these trends simply reflect a comparative advantage in the resource sector. Irrespective of what position is adopted, it is clear that the view of the environment as exploitable natural resources has been perpetuated by the character of Australia's economic development. It has shaped contemporary views of the environment from within a utilitarian perspective.

Conservation

Accounts of the development of conservation principles in Australia widely concur, identifying extreme examples of environmental degradation following the 1850s gold rushes as providing the impetus for the first wave of conservation measures. The motivation behind these activities were essentially utilitarian, based on the view that if left unhindered, Australian resources would be decimated by over-exploitation and inappropriate practices. Furthermore, developments in science and technology played an important role in advocating better management practices.

Australian forests were the initial object of a growing concern for conserving natural resources. At settlement, trees were, as Bolton explains, "simply a nuisance to be cleared to make room for building or farming".⁵¹ Tom Griffiths has described the way that 'improving' the land in Melbourne's Ash Range was initially associated with clearing it of trees. In particular,

50 Ibid p. 26.

51 Bolton op cit p. 37.

Griffiths identifies the way that the Land Act of 1860 encouraged the establishment of the 'yeoman farmer' who recognised the tree as the major adversary to settlement. The use of ringbarking and fires are seen by Griffith as exemplifying this attitude that the trees were enemies.⁵² Griffiths also argues that the 1869 Lands Act was fundamental in reinforcing this perspective. In this legislation, improvements to the land (where improvements referred to residencies, enclosures, clearing, cultivation) was used by the government as a measure of commitment to the land and became the basis of continued eligibility for leases.⁵³

Timber, however, quickly became recognised as an economic asset to the colonies and an industry was born. Prior to the gold rushes, timber farming was primarily located near the coast of NSW. Improved shipping increased exports and a growing population saw local demand for timber rise.⁵⁴ Opening up of the land and the demand for timber by the mining industry all contributed to deforestation, with wasteful practices, such as ringbarking, becoming prevalent.⁵⁵ It was a reaction to the wasteful destruction of Australia's forests and the subsequent potential for over exploitation that acted as the catalyst for Australia's first conservation measures.⁵⁶

Australian responses to the exploitation of the forests were substantially influenced by the work of American scientist George Perkins Marsh and the scientific ideas his work represented. In Marsh's book, Man and Nature (1864) he challenged the dominant Christian and enlightenment ethic of 'mans' right to 'subdue and cultivate' the earth. Instead, Marsh identified the destructive character that contemporary exploitative practices were having on the natural world. Adopting an ecological perspective, Marsh viewed nature as a totality

52 Griffiths op cit p. 16-19.

53 Ibid p. 19.

54 Bolton op cit p. 38-39.

55 Ibid p. 43.

56 Catalano op cit p. 51.

within which the human race is located and was especially concerned about the consequences that the depletion of natural resources would have upon the ecological balance.⁵⁷ In one important respect, however, Marsh remained within the enlightenment tradition. Unlike his contemporary, John Muir who developed an aesthetic and ethical basis for conservation, Marsh was concerned with resource management and firmly held the belief that 'man' could make rational choices through the knowledge that science provided and by adopting this approach it was possible to rectify environmental problems.⁵⁸

Addressing issues that were current in Australia, Marsh's work was quickly picked up by the Australian press, politicians and was influential in public inquiries.⁵⁹ In South Australia and Victoria, the push by politicians and public servants to find appropriate management responses to forestry development was particularly strong and reflected the concerns outlined in Man and Nature. Prominent figures such as George Goyder, Baron von Mueller and John Ednie Brown, were all strong advocates of the conservation and resource management argued for by Marsh.⁶⁰ Committees were formed and an attempt was made to implement forestry practices that managed, rather than simply exploited.⁶¹ Directly and indirectly, the approach advocated by Marsh was influencing the development of conservation in Australia.

While the measures that were introduced were largely ineffective, they reflected a growing concern within the public domain for forms of conservation. Powell has argued that this conservation was distinctly utilitarian in character.⁶² The utilitarian objective of resource management, however, cannot be divorced from an awareness of ecological principles. The economics of a vibrant timber industry in the future may have been the

57 Powell Environmental Management p. 54-56.

58 Ibid p. 57.

59 Ibid p 60-64.

60 Ibid Chapter 5 "An Australian Awakening".

61 Mosley loc cit p. 180.

62 Powell Environmental Management p. 63.

guiding objective of conservation measures. Nevertheless, advocating restraint and management demonstrated an increasing awareness of the need to maintain an ecological balance and hence future policies were constructed in a manner that sought to achieve this aim. A shift had occurred, as Frawley puts it, from the 'exploitative pioneering' to a 'wise use utilitarian' approach towards Australian forests. As the timber industry itself began to identify its interests with the maintenance of a timber supply, it too came to support the better management of the resource upon which it relied.⁶³ In addition, Griffiths has noted the peculiar combination of aesthetic as well as economic loss that farmers had described when contemplating the consequences of clearing the forests to create their farms. Both the grandeur of the forests and the profits forestry would have brought them was lamented.⁶⁴

Concern for the forests roughly coincided with the establishment of the first national park in Australia. "The National Park", as it was known, was located south of Sydney and dedicated in 1879.⁶⁵ An initiative of Sir John Robertson, Australia's first national park was essentially a response to the demands of an increasingly urbanised population. Overcrowding, health and sanitation problems in the cities led to a recognition of the need for public recreation areas.⁶⁶ The park was also to provide the recently formed NSW Zoological Society with a location for its experiments in the acclimatisation of non-indigenous species.⁶⁷ Views on the park's initial objectives were diverse and are best summarised by Pettigrew and Lyons when they cite the trustees Deed of Grant:

⁶³ Frawley loc cit p. 25.

⁶⁴ Griffiths op cit p. 24.

⁶⁵ Frawley loc cit p. 10.

⁶⁶ C. Pettigrew and M. Lyons "Royal National Park: A History" Parks and Wildlife Vol. 2 No. 3-4 (Centenary Issue) p. 15; Mosley loc cit p. 179.

⁶⁷ Frawley loc cit p. 10; Pettigrew and Lyons loc cit p. 15.

"the exercise or encampment of naval and military forces" was one of the specific purposes for which the park might be used, along with "rifle butt or artillery range". More conventionally, the trustees could use portions of the park for "ornamental lawns and gardens ... zoological gardens ... a racecourse...cricket and other lawful games ... bathing places ... or any public amusements declares such by 'notification in the Government Gazette'".⁶⁸

The National Park was created for a variety of purposes. It fulfilled utilitarian designs in the provision of recreational facilities for an increasingly urbanised population. There was also the sense in which it promoted scientific inquiry through the establishment of botanic gardens and meeting the needs of the Zoological Society. Further scope remained open for the aesthetic appreciation of the environment. This was seen in both the creation of a British parklike character as well as the National Park's retention of areas hitherto untransformed. Hence, a wide amalgamation of views on the role and place of the environment were to be encapsulated in the formation and early use of The National Park.

Concurrent with the establishment of The National Park was a series of legislative measures that were introduced in the various states with the objective of protecting native flora and fauna. It should be noted, however, that such acts were initially designed to ensure the protection of introduced hunting game during the mating season and thus stock for later hunting.⁶⁹ Exemplifying this attitude was the NSW's Animals Protection Act of 1879 which had two purposes:

1. To encourage the importation and breeding of game not indigenous to the colony; and
2. To prevent the destruction of native game during the breeding season.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ As cited in Pettigrew and Lyons loc cit p. 22.

⁶⁹ Mosley loc cit p. 179.

⁷⁰ A. Strom 1979 "Some Events in Nature Conservation Over the Last Forty Years" Parks and Wildlife Vol. 2 No. 3-4 (Centenary Issue) p. 49.

From these questionable beginnings, conservationally orientated legislation was drawn up and by 1903, The Native Animals Protection Act had been passed in parliament. This act aimed to protect native animals and birds, thus signifying a marked shift from earlier legislation. Allan Strom argues that changing community attitudes were at the fore of these developments: "obviously there was a community concern ... which was being reflected in legislation".⁷¹

The origins of this community concern and its manifestation in legislation are complex and in part reflect the increasing awareness of conservation which had led to attempts for forestry management and the establishment of The National Park. As the domination of the squatter and agriculturalists' claim to unrestricted exploitation was challenged, an opening was made for new ways to approach the Australian environment.

The trend towards the protection of Australia's land and its flora and fauna were also associated with a rise in nationalism that occurred at the end of the nineteenth century as well as changing working and economic conditions. The wave of nationalism that emerged as Australia moved towards federation was significant in reshaping attitudes towards the Australian bush.⁷² As Catalano describes: "[O]ne expression it [nationalism] took was a delight in the heretofore dreary and monotonous vegetation of the continent".⁷³

While an aesthetic appreciation of the landscape occasionally contributed to conservation initiatives being undertaken by policy makers⁷⁴ it was far more clearly evident in the nationalistic sentiment that has been associated with developments in Australian art and literature at the turn of the century. The Heidelberg school of impressionists had begun characterising the Australian landscape in a way that captured and celebrated its qualities. In poetry, Henry

71 Ibid p. 50.

72 Mosley loc cit p. 180.

73 Catalano op cit p. 52.

74 See Mueller in Powell Environmental Management p. 115.

Kendall, Adam Lindsay Gordon and Banjo Patterson similarly all associated the Australian environment with a sense of national pride. Powell has thus described Gordon as not only reflecting a common attitude to the landscape, but as having "elevated the status of the Australian environment in the minds of his readers by increasing their interest in the landscape and assisting their identification with it".⁷⁵ The bush was taking on new significance which came to be embodied in the bush ethos and taken up by poets such as Banjo Patterson.⁷⁶ By publishing this work and the ideas associated with it, the Bulletin disseminated these notions to an increasingly broad readership.

Changing economic and working conditions also made an impact on attitudes towards the environment. As Strom points out, by the end of the nineteenth century the eight hour day and annual leave were being introduced along with the decline in Saturday work. One consequence was an increase in leisure time. At the same time, transport was becoming increasingly accessible. All of which meant that "more and more people were finding it possible to secure recreation and pastime at weekends in the countryside or at places a few hours train ride from the metropolis".⁷⁷ Recreation involving the Australian outdoors subsequently increased and was reflected in the rising public use of The National Park.⁷⁸ Once again it is possible to identify a broad range of motivations for these activities, including a significant increase in concern for the Australian environment and its conservation.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, attitudes to the Australian environment were transformed within a limited, but influential, group of the population. Nature preservation no longer relied on essentially utilitarian priorities. Instead, a greater emphasis came to be placed on the ecological and scientific character of the land. At the same time broader community attitudes

⁷⁵ Powell Environmental Management p. 101.

⁷⁶ Ibid chapter 7.

⁷⁷ Strom loc cit p. 47.

⁷⁸ Pettigrew and Lyons loc cit p. 23.

remained very much focused on the recreational or economic utility of the environment.⁷⁹

The first conservation group to be formed in Australia was the Wildlife Preservation Society which was established in 1909. Its earliest campaigns fought for the introduction of laws to improve the conservation of indigenous species and the establishment of fauna reserves.⁸⁰ Under the leadership of David Stead, this group evolved primarily from a growing scientific interest in Australian flora and fauna and its limited protection.⁸¹ The focus of this group, as Frawley has argued, was based on a scientific and ecological view of the Australian environment and it was particularly concerned with national park management.⁸²

Providing additional impetus to the growing interest in conservation was the formation of the Mountain Trails Club in 1914. This organisation was led by Myles Dunphy who was to become the leading conservation figure in Australia over the next fifty years. It was from these beginnings that a rapidly expanding bushwalking conservation movement emerged, one which may be closely linked with the contemporary environment movement. There are two principle reasons for this connection. First, there was the emphasis within the bushwalking conservation movement upon the promotion of conservation on ecological grounds, especially where the protection of wilderness areas was involved. Second, the group was highly politicised and retained this orientation until the mid 1960s when a further transformation of the conservation movement occurred.

Myles Dunphy, initially through the Mountain Trails Club and then later the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council, played a central role in promoting the concept recognised in contemporary debates as wilderness. An

79 Griffiths op cit p. 82.

80 Mosley loc cit p. 179.

81 Pettigrew and Lyons loc cit p. 24-26.

82 Frawley loc cit p. 12.

important catalyst for Dunphy's activities was the future of The National Park which, in the early 1900s, was still open to commercial activities.⁸³ Dunphy, and those associated with the early conservation movement, were concerned that unless parks were properly protected and remained free from roads, the quality of their wilderness areas would be undermined.⁸⁴ Drawing upon both the U.S. National Parks and Forestry Services, Dunphy constructed national park development schemes and promoted the notion of wilderness which he redefined as primitive areas.⁸⁵ Frawley has thus described the central objective of the movement in the following way:

[T]he movement identified as its major goal the identification and protection (through reservation) of what were termed as 'primitive areas'. These were natural, roadless areas, not subject to timber cutting, and in general possessing attractive scenic attributes.⁸⁶

Capturing the movement's general spirit was the phrase assumed early in its development: "You were not the first over the trail; leave the pleasant places along the way just as pleasant for those who follow you".⁸⁷ Hence, as Dunphy explains, a central concern was that these primitive areas could be enjoyed by future generations:

All the bushwalking clubs stood for the conservation of the bushland environment for people like themselves, and for the habitat of wildlife.⁸⁸

From its earliest days, the conservation movement was involved in political battles and it identified the state as an institution capable of protecting reserved areas as well as native flora and fauna. An ongoing conflict with The National Parks Trust, which was understood to be threatening the parks value by "alienating areas under their trust for commercial interests",⁸⁹ reinforced

83 Catalano op cit p 53.

84 Mosley loc cit p. 180.

85 Strom loc cit p. 52.

86 Frawley loc cit p. 13.

87 M. Dunphy 1979 "The Bushwalking Conservation Movement, 1914-1965" Parks and Wildlife Vol. 2 No. 3-4 (Centenary Issue) p. 56.

88 Ibid p. 64.

89 Pettigrew and Lyons loc cit p. 26.

the view that a politically accountable organisation ought to be responsible for both the national parks and wider conservation concerns.

Management of national parks remained an ongoing issue for conservation groups and in 1932 an umbrella organisation, the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council, was formed. Fronted by Dunphy, this organisation initiated many campaigns for the conservation of primitive areas and argued strongly for their control under a single body. Conservation groups also maintained pressure on governments for the legislative protection of many native species.⁹⁰ Between 1932 and 1959 sixteen new national parks and primitive areas were established in NSW.⁹¹ Alongside some failures, they were, as Gilbert attests, "[i]n the long run ... astonishingly effective, at least if the official establishment of National Parks is used as the measure of success."⁹²

There are two factors which help explain the success of the conservation movement at this time. Firstly, as Griffiths has explained, the declaration of National Parks can be understood as "a measure of a growing enthusiasm for nature."⁹³ This occurred not only within the conservation movement, but can be associated with a readily growing interest in nature as a source of recreation.⁹⁴

The second point is derived from the first. According to Gilbert, the conservation movement was able to use this increased interest in recreation to further conservation measures. Individually, recreational interests as well as traditional economic interests posed the greatest threat to wilderness area. Both wanted to transform nature, yet in different and conflicting ways. The conservation movement was able to use this conflict to serve its own purposes. What the conservation movement did was to focus the powerful recreational

90 Ibid p. 28; Catalano op cit p. 23.

91 Gilbert loc cit p. 22.

92 Ibid.

93 Griffiths op cit p. 82.

94 Ibid.

interests against those who wanted to economically exploit the land. Having had areas protected for recreational purposes, conservation organisations then lobbied for more extensive conservation measures. According to Gilbert, it was the unresolved tension between economic and recreational goals that provided 'wilderness' orientated people with the opportunity for effective pressure group activity.⁹⁵

A Period of Transition: the 1960s

By the end of the 1960s, the character of environmental issues in Australia had changed and for the first time large scale environmental campaigns were experienced. It was the threat that environmental damage posed to wilderness areas such as Lake Pedder and the Great Barrier Reef that provided the catalyst for this mobilisation. What was distinctive about this mobilisation was the way that it captured widespread public support, precipitating the growth of membership in conservation groups and reflecting a growing awareness of the environment. The themes of environmental damage and awareness are useful in explaining this newly found interest in environmental issues.

As specific instances of environmental damage, issues such as the Great Barrier Reef were not necessarily of any greater consequence than previous examples of incursions into Australia's wilderness. They did, however, occur within a broader context of environmental damage which may be linked to an enhanced awareness of these issues. The previous chapter argued that post-war economic growth accelerated the rate of global environmental damage. In turn, this precipitated greater environmental awareness in many industrialised nations as pollution and population growth were seen to threaten the planet's survival. A rapid increase in the deterioration of the global environment and an impending crisis became an issue that captured popular attention in Australia, creating a context within which specific environmental issues might be located.

⁹⁵ Gilbert loc cit p. 20-21.

Australia's reliance on primary production meant that increased industrialisation was particularly influential in the depletion of natural resources and the extension of resource development into new geographical areas and, at times, wilderness. While this reflected patterns of economic development and environmental damage that had persisted throughout Australian history, it assumed a distinctive character during the 1960s because of the new context in which environmental issues were taking place. For conservationists, it was no longer simply a question of increasing the size of national parks or providing legislation to protect natural flora and fauna. Each issue could be identified as a part of a wider problem and as a result, as a part of a wider conflict.

As John Young's book Post-Environmentalism suggests, the 1960s were an era in which new ways of viewing environmental issues emerged. It was in this period that the basis of conflict between competing paradigms became increasingly apparent with the opposition between a developmentalist and an ecological outlook being established. Previously this division had not been as evident with preservation being seen as moderating the extreme examples of environmental degradation rather than challenging resource development. The very existence of these increasingly acknowledged views fed into the significance that was accorded to environmental issues.⁹⁶ This shift has been characterised by Schnaiberg whose work establishes the way that the old environmental movement did not challenge the interests of capital, whereas the contemporary movement has posed such a challenge.⁹⁷

The changes that occurred within the environment movement in the 1960s can thus be understood within the context of environmental damage and

⁹⁶ For example, in 1970, Stephen Boyden, a Professorial Fellow and Head of the Human Biology group at ANU, argued that the central feature of environmental debates, wherever applied, was this conflict between ecology and development. See S. Boyden 1974 "Australia and the Environmental Crisis" in B. Dempsey The politics of Finding Out: Environmental Problems in Australia Melbourne: Cheshire p. 3.

⁹⁷ See chapter 1 of this thesis.

awareness. Heightened environmental degradation, both at a global level and within Australia, can be understood as providing conditions in which there was an increasing awareness of this damage. The interrelationship between these factors was pivotal in establishing greater politicisation of the environment within Australia.

The increased prevalence of both environmental damage and awareness was accompanied by a call for the state, especially at the federal level, to play a greater role in environmental issues. Before the 1960s the Australian state had paid little attention to environmental issues. Most interest in the environment focused on resource allocation rather than protective measures. State governments had some history in developing conservation measures. In the post-war era, however, any progression was circumscribed by the accumulation strategies adopted by the states. During this period, the states paid considerable attention to attracting foreign investment. Competing with the other states for this market, state governments sought to achieve the lowest level of regulation and by doing so provide the most attractive location for industry. This emphasis on attracting investment consequently acted as an impediment to constructing environmental regulation.⁹⁸ As a result, the states' record on environmental issues has traditionally been shaped by their attempts to negate the imposition of environmental standards.

The primary force influencing Commonwealth environmental activity was its lack of Constitutional powers. Within the Constitution, the only areas relating to the environment which fall within the Commonwealth's powers pertains to coastal waters, continental waters and the continental shelf. Even though the Commonwealth was not in competition for resource development in the same way as the state governments, its dominant concern regarding the

⁹⁸ J. Formby 1986 "Environmental Politics in Australia - Climbing the Down Escalator" in C. Park Environmental Politics: An International Review London, Sydney, Dover, New Hampshire: Croom Helm p. 188-190; S. Harris 1984 "State and Federal Objectives and Policies Towards Resource Development and Use" CRES Working Paper 1984 No. 10: Australian National University p. 10.

environment was its use as a resource rather than conservation. As a result, federal legislation dealing with the environment tended to involve the acceptable allocation and use of off-shore resources.⁹⁹

In spite of the Constitutional limits imposed on it, the post-war era did see an extension of Commonwealth influence in all areas relating to resource management. This was primarily due to the Commonwealth's accumulation of power after it gained control over income tax collection during the Second World War. Although federal government resource activity was unpredictable and limited, emerging through projects such as the Snowy Mountain scheme, it did establish some precedence for future involvement in environmental issues.¹⁰⁰

By the end of the 1960s, with an increasing awareness of environmental damage, there was an important change in the perception of the Commonwealth government's environmental responsibilities. The federal government was now understood to have a significant role in the regulation and protection of the environment. Hence, in response to the proposed flooding of Lake Pedder in Tasmania's South West, organisations such as the Lake Pedder Action Committee lobbied the federal government to take charge and intervene and oppose the state government's decision. Similarly, the establishment of two Senate Select Committees on air and water pollution represented a political response, by the federal government, to its increasing role in the environmental sphere.¹⁰¹ What this response represented was a recognition by the state of its role in environmental issues. Such activity was

⁹⁹ For further details on the legal dimension of Commonwealth involvement in Environmental policy see Formby op cit p. 189-90; M. Crommelin 1987 Commonwealth Involvement in Environmental Policy: Past, Present and Future Melbourne: Law School, University of Melbourne; E. Ward 1982 The Constitutional Basis for Commonwealth Involvement in Environmental Matters Canberra: Department of the Parliamentary Library; M. Bowman 1979 Australian Approaches to Environmental Management: The Response of State Planning Hobart: University of Tasmania, Environmental Law Reform Group.

¹⁰⁰ Bowman op cit p. 18.

¹⁰¹ Crommelin op cit p. 4-5.

reactive in character and represented an attempt by the State to respond to the demands of those concerned with environmental issues.

Conclusion

Located within the history of Australian attitudes to the environment there is a dominant exploitative perspective in opposition to an increasingly important and evolving ecological viewpoint. As the preceding chapter has argued, the relationship between environmental damage and awareness has been fundamental in the creation of a discourse that has challenged the utilitarian perspective. It was in the 1960s that this challenge was transformed into significant political mobilisation in response to environmental issues. The character of this mobilisation and the conflict that followed will be examined more closely in the following chapter which considers environmental conflict over the Great Barrier Reef.

Chapter Three

A New Era of Environmental Politics: The Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef Story

Conflict over the Great Barrier Reef's future began in 1967 when an application was made by D. F. Forbes, a cane grower, to mine Ellison Reef for limestone.¹ A group of conservation bodies made up of the Queensland Preservation Society (QPS), the Littoral Society and the newly formed Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), challenged the application for mining by lodging an objection with the Queensland Mining Warden.² These organisations were concerned about the damage that mining would do to Ellison Reef and the potential impact of pollution on the Great Barrier Reef as a whole. There was also the concern that such activity would set a precedent for future mineral exploitation of the entire Reef region.³

The Queensland Department of Mines responded to the pressure that publicity over Ellison Reef had generated by rejecting the application for mining and initiated a survey of the entire Reef with the objective of facilitating basic planning and regulation of the area.⁴ Harry Ladd, an American geologist, was subsequently commissioned by the Queensland government to undertake an examination of the Reef. After a survey which took under one month to complete, Ladd concluded that while the Reef required protection, this need not preclude exploitation.⁵ The Queensland government readily accepted Ladd's conclusions, supporting the notion of the controlled exploitation.

1 J. Wright 1977 The Coral Battleground Australia: Nelson p. 7.

2 D. Hill 1985 "The Great Barrier Reef Committee, 1922-82 Part II: The Last Three Decades" Historical Records of Australian Science 6, 2 December, p. 203.

3 Wright op cit p. 6.

4 Ibid p. 25.

5 H. Ladd 1967 Preliminary Report: Conservation and Controlled Exploration of the Great Barrier Reef Brisbane: Ladd p. 42.

From 1968 onwards, the Queensland government and a number of large oil companies announced their intention to have the Reef prospected for oil. Conservation groups were unsuccessful in challenging this development and in January 1969 tenders for drilling leases were called for under the *Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act, 1967*. Forty groups of oil companies responded.⁶

While conservation groups may not have had immediate success in influencing government policy, they did attract increasing popular interest and support. Aside from the direct damage that drilling would have on the Reef, conservationists also drew attention to the environmental devastation of an oil blow-out. In the wake of the 1969 Santa Barbara oil blow-out, and the extensive media coverage of the environmental degradation which had occurred in its aftermath, this approach proved particularly successful.⁷

Additional publicity regarding the Reef issue was created by the discovery that the Queensland Premier, Joh Bjelke-Peterson, held large share holdings in an exploration company with leases on the Great Barrier Reef. With a state election drawing near, focus was drawn to the Reef and conservationist's concerns received considerable attention. In spite of this bad publicity, however, the coalition Country-Liberal Party was returned to government. Following the election, the Minister for Mines, Ron Camm announced that oil drilling was planned for Repulse Bay. The company involved was Japex, a Japanese oil exploration company which operated under a "farm-out" agreement with Ampol Pty. Ltd. In August 1969, final approval was granted to Japex, with Camm reiterating that the company was to adhere to stringent safety measures.⁸

Conservation groups then moved their campaign to the federal sphere, calling upon the Commonwealth government to intervene. The Liberal Party

6 D.W. Connell 1971 "The Great Barrier Reef Conservation Issue" Search Vol. 2 No. 6 p. 189.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

Prime Minister, John Gorton, expressed concern over the drilling but indicated he would not intervene to stop the drilling because he was limited by constitutional constraints to Commonwealth powers. Meanwhile, Gough Whitlam, who was leading the opposition Australian Labor Party, argued that if his party was elected in the forthcoming federal election of October 1969, the Commonwealth would intervene to save the Reef. The Labor Party pointed to a recent High Court ruling which had found that the states had no rights or jurisdiction over territorial waters adjacent to their coastline or the sea-bed, thus establishing the Constitutional grounds for federal intervention.⁹

The trade union movement became involved in the conflict when, in late 1969, it became evident that drilling Repulse Bay was imminent. On January 6, 1970, the Australian Engineers Union threatened a blackban on the drilling vessel.¹⁰ This move proved to be decisive when on January 13, Ampol responded by announcing that drilling would be postponed and offered five thousand dollars to pay for an inquiry into the effects of oil drilling on the Reef.¹¹

Initially, the Bjelke-Petersen government had held its ground and contended that drilling ought to proceed immediately, despite union action. With Ampol's decision, however, the Queensland government had no real option other than to agree to a joint Commonwealth and State inquiry.¹² Of the six companies holding mining leases, only Japex remained undecided over whether it should suspend operations. After a number of manoeuvres to gain compensation, on February 14, Japex announced that it would defer drilling in Repulse Bay.¹³ The proposed inquiry was upgraded to a Royal Commission and sat for the first time on May 22, 1970. With the Commission's inquiry

⁹ Wright op cit p. 79.

¹⁰ Ibid p. 92.

¹¹ Ibid p. 110.

¹² Ibid p. 113.

¹³ Ibid p. 132.

under way, events slowed markedly as both industry and conservationists focused on presenting their cases to the Commission.

The Royal Commission took four years to complete its investigations. During this time, the Whitlam government was elected to federal parliament, but could not resolve the Great Barrier Reef issue until the findings of the Commission were released. Meanwhile, the newly elected Labor government introduced legislation which was to provide the legal precedent for Commonwealth control over the Reef. Under the *Sea and Submerged Lands Act, 1973*, the Commonwealth assumed sovereignty over territorial seas and the continental shelf which meant that it had control over the Reef. Areas that subsequently came under Commonwealth jurisdiction included mining and environmental safeguards.¹⁴ This legislation enabled the Commonwealth to override any state legislation that was inconsistent with its own, providing the forthcoming *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act, 1975* (Marine Park Act) legislative pre-eminence.¹⁵

The findings of the Royal Commission were released in November, 1974. At its core, the Commission opted for a position of compromise, designed to satisfy both conservation groups and oil companies. It did not offer protection to the entire region, nor did it give oil companies unrestricted access to drilling.¹⁶ With the introduction of the Marine Park Act the Commission's findings were swiftly superseded.

The Whitlam government's Marine Park Act was introduced on May 20, 1975 and came into operation on June 20 of that year. It became the centrepiece of all government activity regarding the Reef and constructed a framework for its administration with the provision of environmental protection. The

¹⁴ E. Ward 1982 *The Constitutional Basis for Commonwealth Involvement in Environmental Matters* Canberra: Department of the Parliamentary Library p. 10.

¹⁵ J. Formby 1986 "Environmental Politics in Australia - Climbing the Down Escalator" in C. Park (ed) *Environmental Politics: An International Review* London, Sydney, Dover, New Hampshire: Croomhelm p. 194-5.

¹⁶ B. Foster 1975 "Great Barrier Reef Revisited: An Appraisal of the Royal Commission Report" *The APEA Journal, 1975* p. 31.

Marine Park Act paid little heed to the recommendations of the Royal Commission's findings. Instead, it established a new body, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, to determine which areas, if any, would be available for oil drilling.¹⁷ In effect, the Marine Park Act indefinitely postponed any oil prospecting.

Conservation Groups

The Great Barrier Reef acted as a catalyst for political mobilisation by conservation groups. As one of the first large scale environmental campaigns in Australia, particular attention will be placed on explaining why it was, at this particular time, that political conflict over the environment emerged. A variety of factors contribute to this explanation. Firstly, it is possible to recognise a shift in popular attitudes to the environment. This can be explained in terms of the changing relationship between environmental damage and environmental awareness. Secondly, there was the manner in which the Great Barrier Reef, as an environmental issue, was consistent with the sorts of concerns that had been a focus in the historical development of the Australian conservation movement. Furthermore, it also conformed with broader public attitudes regarding what areas of the environment ought to be preserved. And finally, a link may be drawn between the capacity of the Great Barrier Reef campaign to attract popular support and a growing political culture of dissent within Australia.

Prior to the Great Barrier Reef conflict there had been no other major environmental campaigns in Australia. 1967 saw the beginnings of large scale mobilisation in response to issues relating to both the Great Barrier Reef and Lake Pedder.¹⁸ It was not coincidental that these campaigns occurred close

¹⁷ Australian Government, Commonwealth, 1978 Acts of the Parliament of the Commonwealth for Australia 1975 Canberra: Australian Government Printer p. 2680.

¹⁸ For an excellent account of the Lake Pedder conflict see K. McKenry 1972 "A Historical and Critical Analysis of the Controversy Concerning the Gordon River Power Scheme" in Australian Conservation Foundation Pedder Papers: Anatomy of a Decision Australia: Australian Conservation Foundation.

together. Rather, it suggests that substantive changes were emerging in popular attitudes to environmental issues. These changes were taking place at a global, national and regional level.

The preceding chapter noted the way that environmental awareness developed in the 1960s as a response to an increase in global environmental concern. Broad debates regarding environmental damage and the possibility of an impending catastrophe were vital in heightening public awareness of environmental issues. These were also pivotal in shaping responses to particular instances of environmental degradation, which were subsequently translated into Australian attitudes towards the environment and public responses to environmental risks. In the case of the Great Barrier Reef, two incidences of environmental damage outside the Australian context were fundamental in the construction of Australian responses to the Reef issue.¹⁹

The first occurred in 1967 when the tanker *Torrey Canyon* ran aground in the English Channel, which as Dorothy Hill explains, "the consequences to marine and shoreline life by oil and detergent reverberated in the world's press for some years."²⁰ The *Torrey Canyon* preceded the proposal to drill for oil on the Reef and provided an example which environmental groups could draw on to establish the ecological risks of oil drilling.²¹ Of even greater importance was the Santa Barbara oil blowout which occurred in 1969, at the height of the Great Barrier Reef campaign. The Santa Barbara blowout was widely publicised by the media throughout the world. Connell, among others writing on the Great Barrier Reef, has noted the importance of this event:

¹⁹ Tor Hundloe has also noted the relationship between a change in global attitudes to the environment, events in Australia and the conflict over the Reef. T. Hundloe 1985 "The Environment" in A. Patience (ed) *The Bjelke-Petersen Premiership: 1968-1983: Issues in Public Policy* Melbourne: Longman Cheshire.

²⁰ Hill loc cit p. 203.

²¹ Also see Connell loc cit p. 189 and Foster loc cit p. 30.

This incident produced a turning point in Barrier Reef conservation which would have been impossible to produce by any other means. Throughout the oil drilling controversy the incidence of dramatic and repeated spillages within the oil industry itself have influenced public opinion more than any of the efforts of conservationists.²²

Connell's depiction of the importance of the Santa Barbara blowout clearly illustrates the strength of the link between rising environmental awareness and examples of environmental damage.²³

Increasing global awareness of environmental issues combined with heightened national concern for the environment. This was reflected and reinforced by the changing character of the environment movement within Australia. Importantly, in 1965, the first Australian national environmental organisation was formed, the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF). The ACF was created in the tradition of preservation societies. At this time, the aims of the ACF reflected the conservative world view held by some of its more prominent members such as Malcolm Fraser and Sir Garfield Barwick. Their objective in forming the ACF was to create an organisation that was independent of government, broadly based within the community, and facilitated the development of expert knowledge through supporting a group of scientists who examined various aspects of environmental problems.²⁴ As John Warhurst explains:

[I]t was a "semi-scientific" body, whose leaders were established figures in the world of science, business and government. Its beginnings were small but privileged.²⁵

The ACF was formed within the tradition that considered public awareness and scientific research as the key principles in resolving environmental problems. Placing direct pressure on governments to change

²² Connell loc cit p. 189.

²³ This link is also made by Hill loc cit p. 30.

²⁴ B. Browning 1990 The Network: A Guide to Anti-Business Pressure Groups Australia: Canonbury Press p. 190.

²⁵ J. Warhurst 1993 "Interest Group Interaction With Government the Changing Styles of the Australian Conservation Foundation" Australian Political Studies Conference, Monash University, Melbourne, 29 September - 1 October 1993 p. 3.

policies was not included within the ACF's original agenda. Instead, it was anticipated that the data scientists collected would allow for better informed government decisions. In spite of its apolitical claims, elite networks operated allowing the ACF to influence and shape government policy, without any direct forms of lobbying. Warhurst has traced these links and argued:

The world of the ACF, 1963²⁶-1973, is a remarkable example of an interest group operating comfortably at the highest levels of the networks linking science, business and government.²⁷

In this way, the conservative membership of the ACF was able to pursue its aims within the existing system without constructing itself as a political organisation created to lobby government. Hence, it successfully maintained its own image as an apolitical vehicle for environmental information gathering and sharing.

Even though the ACF viewed itself as apolitical, it established an infrastructure through which local campaigns could become more broadly publicised and politicised. In effect, it gave the many and diverse conservation groups a national focus and in doing so made environmental issues a national rather than simply a state or regional concern.

The ACF's role in the Great Barrier Reef conflict reflected the limitations that an apolitical emphasis necessitated, as well as the organisation's capacity to act as a co-ordinating body at the national level. In the earliest stages of the Great Barrier Reef conflict, with the possible mining of Ellison Reef, the ACF and other concerned environmental groups pursued a strategy of influencing government policy by providing information. As the campaign became more politicised, a gap emerged between the Queensland based environmental groups and the ACF. Like the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council that had been fronted by Dunphy, the Queensland environmental groups held no

²⁶ The difference between the date given by Warhurst regarding the beginning of the ACF (1963) and the one referred to in this thesis (1965) is due to Warhurst dating the ACF's origins to Prince Philip's visit in 1963 when the idea of the ACF was first discussed. The ACF's first official meeting, however, was held in 1965.

²⁷ Warhurst loc cit p. 4.

qualms about adopting tactics which involved placing direct pressure on government.

In spite of the tension which arose between the ACF and other conservation groups, the ACF remained important in developing national awareness of the Great Barrier Reef and the threats to it. For example, in 1969 the ACF held a national symposium on the Great Barrier Reef which focused on the threats to the region.²⁸ The symposium was primarily designed as an information gathering exercise. Yet the very process through which this informed various levels of government about the precarious ecology of the region, was to have political ramifications, including the legitimization of claims that the Reef was in danger. Moreover, during the symposium, it was proposed that the Commonwealth and the Queensland government establish a joint advisory body,

to examine and report on all proposals for the development of the resources of the reef, to assess the needs for research, investigations and survey of the Great Barrier Reef, and to recommend ways of meeting those needs.²⁹

The ACF, by this very proposal, was indicating its view that the Reef was a national issue and the Commonwealth had a legitimate role to play in determining its future.

Regional awareness of the possible threats to the Great Barrier Reef was also important in explaining the issue's development. Pressure had been mounting since the early 1960s for an overall plan for the Reef region.³⁰ Initially this push came from scientists who were interested, and working, in the area. As the 1960s progressed, however, concern for the Reef's ecological integrity began to expand. In part, this can be explained as a result of growing national environmental awareness of environmental degradation. Hence, the formation of the first Queensland conservation group in 1963, the Wildlife

28 Hill loc cit p. 195.

29 Ibid p. 205.

30 Ibid p. 202.

Preservation Society of Queensland, can be explained as a part of this wider trend.

Increased attention, however, can also be traced to particular examples of environmental damage to the Reef. This can be dated to 1963 when the crown-of-thorns starfish plague was first identified. A number of accounts which follow the history of the Great Barrier Reef note how important this specific instance of environmental damage to the Reef was in stimulating public interest in the area.³¹ Events such as the proposed drilling of Ellison Reef also drew attention to the possibility of environmental damage in the region and acted as a catalyst for the popularisation of potential threats to the Reef. As a result, when the proposed oil mining emerged, the threat of environmental damage had already become highly politicised. Connell describes this relationship when describing the impact of the Ellison Reef case:

This case did not generate the high level of public interest which occurred with later issues but was important as the initial stage of snowballing built-up in public interest.³²

In sum, it can be argued that substantial shifts had occurred in the relationship between environmental damage and awareness preceding and during the Great Barrier Reef campaign which led to important change in community attitudes to the Reef. Occurring at the global, national and regional level, this was to provide much of the impetus for the issues popularity.

The Great Barrier Reef was an issue which focused on nature conservation. Although there is little comparison in terms of the size of the campaign and the interest it generated, an important link can be made between the Reef and earlier conservation campaigns. Hence, the same form of environmental damage that the previous chapter identified as a catalyst for environmental awareness since Australia's possession, was still shaping conservation campaigns in the 1960s.

31 Connell loc cit p. 191 and Foster loc cit p. 30.

32 Connell loc cit p. 188.

It would also appear that the Great Barrier Reef was consistent with the wider public's perception of what aspects of the environment should be protected. This was most evident in the ability of conservation groups to capture unprecedented popular support. For instance, on the same day that the Ladd Report was released, the Queensland Littoral Society was able to present the Queensland Parliament with a petition signed by over 10,000 people, calling for a moratorium on drilling and mining on the Reef.³³ Moreover, in a public opinion poll undertaken by the Wilderness Preservation Society in 1969, it was found that 91% of people interviewed were against the establishment of an oil industry on the Reef.³⁴ It is highly unlikely that this degree of support for Reef preservation could have been generated if the issue had not been consistent with popular views on environmental protection.

Part of an explanation for the degree of success enjoyed by conservationists in the Great Barrier Reef campaign can also be found in a growing political culture of dissent within Australia. While this was neither a precondition nor a direct catalyst for the Reef conflict, it provided conditions conducive to challenging government policy through political mobilisation outside of the party system.

The 1960s represents a period of cultural and political change within Australia. Political conservatism and consensual politics had dominated the parliamentary arena during the period of post-war reconstruction and the long boom.³⁵ As Jupp explains:

The major parties under Menzies, Calwell and McEwen were resistant to change and defined issues laid down in the mid 1940s, if not earlier.³⁶

³³ Ibid p. 189.

³⁴ Ibid p 190. It is important to recognise that there was some question as to the accuracy of this poll. This was primarily a consequence of the non-professional status of the interviewers. However the sample size of 1000 participants was viewed as going some way to counter possible bias. Moreover, whatever the difficulties associated with the data, the extremely high level of support for conservationists is still clearly evident.

³⁵ J. Jupp 1982 Party Politics: Australia 1960-1981 Sydney: Allen and Unwin p.19.

³⁶ Ibid p. 18.

From the late 1950s onwards, changes outside the parliamentary sphere began to occur in Australia's political culture. Expansion of higher education led to an increasing number of young people articulating new ideas. With the conservatism of the political parties, however, these views found no means of expression and thus social movements emerged as a way to articulate dissent. The result, as Jupp explains, was that:

In rough historical sequence between 1956 and 1972 there developed vigorous movements supporting liberal Marxism, opposing White Australia, opposing capital punishment, supporting aboriginal rights, opposing the Vietnam War, opposing conscription, supporting women's rights, supporting homosexual rights and opposing uranium mining.³⁷

The Great Barrier Reef emerged in the midst of this era when dissent was an important part of Australia's political culture. Not only did this create a context where political action outside parliamentary politics had a degree of legitimacy, it also led to a greater acceptability of ideas and values that challenged the dominant political order.

In sum, conflict over the Great Barrier Reef emerged as a response to a growing awareness of the possible threats to the Reef's ecological integrity. Such awareness was related to examples of environmental damage which had global, national and regional dimensions. The Reef issue was consistent with what conservationists and the public viewed as areas worthy of protection. While this allowed broad public support for the issue, a political culture of dissent legitimised political activity outside the parliamentary sphere.

The central aim of conservation groups throughout the Great Barrier Reef struggle was simple: to preserve the Reef and its natural eco-systems. Justification for preservation was couched in equally simplistic terms: that the Reef was a site of unique beauty and biological diversity, an area which, if spoiled, could never be recreated. It was on these merits that conservationists challenged the threat to the Reef that exploitation of its lime and oil posed.

³⁷ Ibid p. 19.

For Queensland conservation groups, protection of the Reef was not founded on a perception of the Reef as purely a source of human gratification, based on aesthetic, biological or economic merits. Rather, the area's ecology was viewed as the principal basis of its value. As an article in the *Australian* explained, "it was the first time such a case had been fought on the grounds that the reef was a natural phenomenon worth preserving."³⁸ Hence, it was not only the Reef's value to human society, aesthetically and scientifically, that provided the basis for the construction of the Reef's worth. It was its unique ecological existence, a notion not inherently related to any form of human utility. This combined with the view that humanity, as the threat to the natural environment, held responsibility for its survival, a perspective perhaps best expressed by Judith Wright's somewhat prosaic description of humanity's relationship with the reef:

We have its fate in our hands, and slowly but surely as the years go on, we are destroying those great "water gardens", lovely indeed as cherry-boughs in flower under their once-clear sea, but far more complex, far more alive, teeming with myriads of varied animal lives ... This is the story of the battle of a few people who loved it; the battle to save that thousand-mile stretch of incomparable beauty from the real destroyers - who are ourselves.³⁹

Within this perspective capitalist industrialisation was viewed as having played an important role in the threat to the Reef. Once again, as Wright explains:

But whatever may happen to the Great Barrier Reef, the battles he [the late John Busst] waged for it will remain to the credit, not just of John himself, but of all those who try as best they can to save something beautiful and alive from the wreckage of industrialisation and the profit.⁴⁰

In contrast to the Queensland conservation groups, the ACF considered that environmental protection of any area or species, including the Reef, was

38 O Thomson and G. Pascall "Evangelists on the Queensland Coast: The Littorals Just Want a Pleasant Land" *Australian* April, 27, 1970.

39 Wright op cit p. xiv.

40 Ibid p. 190.

ultimately connected to the long term benefits to human society. As a description of ACF policy explains:

The primary concern of the Foundation is that in a rapidly developing world the quality of our environment will be maintained by intelligent watchfulness which takes into account the community's many needs...

...What the Foundation is concerned with is, in fact, the conservation of man - that Australians should learn how to live in harmony with the environment. It firmly believes that true conservation is total conservation, summed up in the words "the wisest possible use, over a long term, for all our natural resources, applied for the *benefits of man*."⁴¹

Even within the Queensland conservation groups a variety of opinions were evident. For instance, there was disagreement over whether oil drilling would ever be acceptable, and if so when. For some, such as John Busst, oil drilling was totally unacceptable whatever the economic cost. Others, including Judith Wright, considered that "Our policy of preservation ... would be maintained until it were shown that no alternative sources of oil existed elsewhere".⁴² Yet another position was adopted by Des Connell, President of the Queensland Littoral Society, who stated that "we want to have oil drilling in the Reef terminated until truly effective means have been found to prevent the release of large oil slicks."⁴³

Possible strategies for preserving the Reef also created a basis for dissension which focused primarily on the conflict which arose between the Australian Conservation Foundation and Queensland based conservation groups. It has already been noted that at this time the ACF viewed itself essentially as an apolitical body. This brought it into conflict with groups like

⁴¹ Australian Conservation Foundation 1971 Policies of the Australian Conservation Foundation Melbourne: ACF. My italics.

⁴² O. Thomson and G. Pascall 1970 "Who Owns the Great Barrier Reef" Australian April 24, 1970.

⁴³ Wright op cit p. 523.

the QLF and the QPS which believed that a high public and political profile was important in achieving its objectives.⁴⁴

The basis on which cohesion was forged, particularly on the part of the Queensland conservation groups, was the immediate need to stop oil drilling. Solidarity within conservation groups were further consolidated by the uncompromising position adopted by the Queensland government⁴⁵ and its refusal to offer trade-off measures. Tor Hundloe has made the observation that movement of conservation groups into an effective political force "was helped by the fact that a common enemy was easy to identify, none other than Joh Bjelke-Petersen".⁴⁶

Although the primary reasoning behind the conservationists' attempt to save the Reef was not economic, economic arguments were used in defence of the Reef. For example, the permanent economic benefits of tourism compared to the short term revenue benefits provided by oil. Thus the Australian Engineers Union's written objection to the Queensland Premier (among other parliamentarians) regarding oil drilling on the Reef, was based in part on the economic aspects of the debate, stating:

Mining on the reef can be regarded as a continually wasting and depleting asset - an oil well contains only a limited amount of oil. Tourism, the other hand, is a continually increasing asset ... It is unintelligent and uneconomic to sacrifice the permanent tourist dollar to the quick mining dollar. It should also be borne in mind that all revenue from tourism stays in Australia, whereas revenue from oil is largely exported to the foreign country of the mining company concerned.⁴⁷

There was also the issue that oil production was capital intensive and hence there would be limited employment benefits.⁴⁸ These arguments, however, remained within a secondary sphere of debate. Instead, the emphasis of all

⁴⁴ For instance, see Wright op cit p. 41-2, 52.

⁴⁵ Hundloe loc cit p. 82.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ D. Parker 1969 "Union Acts on Oil Drilling and Mining - the Great Barrier Reef" A.E.U. Monthly Journal November 1969 p. 16.

⁴⁸ Connell loc cit p. 190.

groups involved, including the trade unions, was placed on the environmental implications of drilling the Reef.

Connell suggests that in their strategy conservationists

based their case on two basic principles: firstly, the acquisition of sound knowledge of matters affecting the Reef; secondly, as wide publicity of this information as possible, the major objective being to create a favourable social and political climate for the introduction of measures for Reef conservation.⁴⁹

The sort of work undertaken by the ACF, the Queensland Littoral Society's surveys of the region,⁵⁰ and the ongoing scientific interest in the area enabled conservationists to fulfil the information gathering dimension of the strategy. Furthermore, an emphasis on the collection of scientific data was consistent with the role that conservation groups had been playing for some time.

Where the Reef strategy extended into new territory was in the concerted efforts to politicise the issue. A highly successful bumper sticker campaign was central within this process. This was accompanied by the support and interest that the media maintained by regularly writing stories about the Reef and publishing media statements released by conservationists.⁵¹ The public was subsequently drawn into the debate, extending the conflict to those outside the existing membership of conservation groups. Increasing public support led to a growth in the official membership of conservation organisations, and the creation of new conservation groups including the 'Save the Barrier Reef Committee' in 1969. According to Connell, the majority of the members of this organisation were not drawn from existing conservation groups.⁵² Rather:

Many of them were disillusioned members of government political parties disturbed at the governmental attitude on Reef conservation. Others were simply members of the public.⁵³

49 Ibid.

50 Hill loc cit p. 203.

51 Connell loc cit p. 190.

52 Ibid; Hundloe loc cit p. 83.

53 Connell loc cit p. 190.

In sum, conservation groups managed an effective publicity campaign which drew upon, and built up, a consensus within the community that the Reef ought to be preserved.

Public concern for the Reef was also translated into the realm of electoral politics in Queensland. At a 1970 by-election in a semi-rural electorate, Albert, the previously dominating Country Party suffered a stunning defeat. Throughout the campaign both the Labor and Liberal candidates articulated conservation policies and opposed oil drilling on the Reef.⁵⁴ Although it is impossible to determine the precise impact of the Reef issue, the remarkable improvement of the Labor Party's primary vote from 20% to 43%, accompanied by the candidates strong conservation position, suggests some correlation between the electorate's disaffection with the Country Party's position towards the Reef issue and the election result.⁵⁵

It is difficult to quantify the significance of environmental groups in achieving the Great Barrier Reef's preservation. At the very least, the campaign that was mounted placed the issue onto the political agenda. Without this pressure there was no reason to expect oil drilling to have been challenged. In this respect, environmental groups were fundamental in creating a political context which eventually led to the prohibition of mining on the Reef. Furthermore, the issue was kept alive by the ongoing pressure that the campaign placed on both the major political parties in the federal sphere. As the Whitlam government's involvement was to prove decisive, it would appear that the specific strategy adopted by environmental groups was significant in shaping the outcome of the conflict.

The internal unity of the movement, in spite of ideological differences, was also of considerable importance in the campaign's success. By allowing scope for a variety of opinions, conservation groups were able to capture broad

⁵⁴ Ibid p. 191.

⁵⁵ Wright op cit p. 131.

popular support for the issue, as well as trade union participation. Again, it is difficult to gauge the precise impact of these forces on the outcome of the conflict. Nevertheless it is highly unlikely that Ampol would have postponed drilling, the Commonwealth government established a Royal Commission, or the Whitlam government construct the Marine Park Act, without the united pressure exerted by environmental groups.

The Reef campaign also shaped the future character of the environment movement in Australia. The success of the campaign can only have provided a sense of empowerment in the movement and supported the notion that mobilisation was worthwhile. Another consequence of the campaign can be identified in the changing character of the ACF which was to have significant ramifications for the nature of the environment movement in Australia.

By 1972 the character of the ACF had begun to alter. In part, this may be explained by changes in Australia's wider political climate. The reform program popularised by the ALP, under Whitlam's leadership, provided a political basis for a radical critique of environmental problems and their social origins. The ACF's conservatism was subsequently questioned. This combined with the ACF's failure to take a decisive political position in either the Lake Pedder or Great Barrier Reef issues, resulting in the organisation becoming the focus of considerable criticism.⁵⁶ Warhurst has noted that the ACF's role in the Reef conflict was not deemed completely ineffective, with its conservation proposals going some way to preserve the area. The failure of the organisation to take a decisive position of the question of Lake Pedder, however, was to highlight the ACF's impotence: "[i]t was the failure to prevent this [flooding] which revealed the limitations of ACF's approach to policy-making."⁵⁷ An apolitical national body was increasingly viewed as inappropriate.

⁵⁶ H. Wooten 1987 "Elections and Environmental Politics: The Search For Consensus" Habitat Vol. 15 No. 5 October p. 9.

⁵⁷ Warhurst loc cit p. 6.

Once Whitlam was elected, the need for the environment movement to be both progressive and political found support within the government. The newly appointed Minister for Environment, Moss Cass, publicly supported those members of the ACF who argued in favour of a more politically active role.⁵⁸ In the ACF elections of 1973, this changing emphasis became entrenched with the more radically minded members gaining control of leadership positions.⁵⁹

The change in the ACF's leadership had profound effects on both the strategies pursued by the ACF as well as the range of issues in which it participated. No longer identifying itself as apolitical, the ACF became directly involved in lobbying government and became active in political events. Warhurst has described this as a move from being an insider to oppositionist.⁶⁰ A change also occurred as the ACF broadened its agenda to include new issues. As Warhurst explains, the ACF became 'Green' in outlook, with an agenda encompassing "opposition to nuclear power, support for peace, disarmament and indigenous people."⁶¹ These changes to the ACF reflected the influence of the perceived inappropriateness of a conservative and apolitical organisation in a period of social and political change with issues like the Great Barrier Reef only serving to highlight the need for a more radical peak organisation.

The Bjelke-Petersen Government

Understanding the Bjelke-Petersen government's position in the Great Barrier Reef conflict relies on a number of factors. Firstly, there was the nature of the Queensland political economy and the accumulation strategy that had become dominant within Queensland at this time. Secondly, the character of Queensland political culture had repercussions for interest group access to the

⁵⁸ Browning op cit p. 191-7.

⁵⁹ These included the ACF head Secretariat Geoff Mosley and the four new Vice Presidents, Milo Dunphy, I. Bayly, Richard Jones and Frank Talbot. Browning op cit p. 199.

⁶⁰ Warhurst loc cit p. 7.

⁶¹ Ibid p. 8.

state. And finally, there was the antagonistic relationship between the Bjelke-Petersen government and Canberra. Together, these conditions explain the Bjelke-Petersen government's attitude to drilling the Great Barrier Reef; the relationship between conservation groups and the state; and finally the relationship between the Queensland and Commonwealth government.

Colin Hughes has argued that "Queensland politics are the politics of development."⁶² An explanation for this particular orientation can be found in the nature of economic development in Queensland. Up until the 1960s the Queensland economy was predominantly rural with a relatively weak manufacturing sector, and heavily reliant on capital from the eastern states.⁶³ As Scott et al explain, the result was that:

Queensland was seen to have a 'comparative advantage' in the primary sector, and government policies made a virtue out of necessity.⁶⁴

Views of the land that developed in Queensland were effected by the state's historical reliance on the primary sector. Emerging from within Queensland was what Margaret Cribb has described as rural fundamentalism, where primary production was considered "the natural occupation of mankind."⁶⁵ From this broad perspective came the idea "that all that is worthy and useful in morality, religion, societal values and the economy stems from the land and its usage."⁶⁶ The 1960s heralded a new phase for the Queensland economy. The impact of the long boom and rapid industrialisation experienced by many Western nations led to an increased global demand for many primary products, and hence the occasion to exploit the state's mineral resources.⁶⁷ While this

⁶² C. Hughes 1980 The Government of Queensland St Lucia: Queensland University Press p. 5.

⁶³ R. Stuart 1985 "Resource Development Policy: The Case of Queensland's Export Coal Industry" in A. Patience (ed) The Bjelke-Petersen Premiership 1968-1983: Issues in Public Policy Melbourne: Longman Cheshire p. 57.

⁶⁴ R. Scott, P. Coaldrake, B. Head and P. Reynolds 1986 "Queensland" in B. Galligan (ed) Australian State Politics Melbourne: Longman Cheshire p. 51.

⁶⁵ Cited in Scott et al loc cit p 51.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Stuart loc cit p. 58.

did see a change in the direction of the Queensland economy, the basic tenets of rural fundamentalism remained intact, simply expanding to include mining as another use of the land.

The economic strategy pursued by the Queensland government was directed towards establishing an export orientated mining industry and to facilitate this process by actively encouraging the image of Queensland as 'safe' for foreign capital.⁶⁸ A statement by Camm captures this sentiment and its underlying rationale: "...the only prosperous countries in the world today are those who have thrown their doors open to foreign capital."⁶⁹

Within this context it is easy to understand why the Queensland state government so readily supported drilling the Great Barrier Reef. Oil exploration was in line with the developmentalist orientation of the government, especially the Department of Mines. It also reflected the political power of the mining sector, which the Bjelke-Petersen government identified as a significant source of support. Furthermore, mining the Reef fitted neatly into the broader strategies being adopted towards the mining sector. By utilising the export potential of oil, the Queensland government considered that its economy would be strengthened in a manner independent of capital from the eastern states.

The nature of Queensland's political culture also shaped the Great Barrier Reef conflict, particularly in the relationship which developed between conservation groups and the Queensland government. Cribb and others have argued that the political culture in Queensland has been shaped by a high degree of conservatism which considers traditional values to be of greater worth than new ideals. The logic of this perspective is to identify dissenting perspectives as inherently inferior.⁷⁰ Such a view clearly has implications for

⁶⁸ J. Walker and K. Dickie 1985 "Johannes Bjelke-Petersen Premiership: A Political Profile" in A. Patience (ed) *The Bjelke-Petersen Premiership 1968-1983: Issues in Public Policy* Melbourne: Longman Cheshire p. 44.

⁶⁹ Stuart loc cit p. 59.

⁷⁰ Cited in Scott et al loc cit p. 52-53.



the receptiveness of the state to demands made by conservation groups in the Great Barrier Reef campaign. The arguments and ideologies of the environmentalists challenged the developmentalist orientation of the existing ideological framework and could therefore be legitimately dismissed as inferior.

Conservatism of this sort also had consequences for patterns of interest group access to the state, which was to impact on conservation groups. As Cribb has explained, interest groups that challenged the existing system of values, such as environmental groups, were simply excluded from the state's decision making processes.⁷¹ Access to the state relied primarily on establishing links with either party elites or the bureaucracy.⁷² Environmental groups had neither connection and were thus effectively marginalised from the political process at the state level. This left lobbying to occur at either the regional level, which was ultimately accountable to the state government, or the Commonwealth level, which was viewed as having no jurisdiction in environmental areas. Aside from the potential electoral impact of environmental groups, which until 1970 remained untested and even then comparatively weak, there was little reason for the Queensland government to seriously consider environmentalists' demands.

Political conflict over the Great Barrier Reef also developed between the Queensland and Commonwealth governments. This conflict had two main dimensions. The first remained focused on the Reef itself and involved conflicting attitudes towards both conservation and the way in which Australian resources should be developed. Secondly, there was the wider issue of states' rights which also influenced the antagonism between the federal and Queensland governments.

⁷¹ Ibid p. 53.

⁷² Scott et al loc cit p. 53.

During the initial phase of the Great Barrier Reef conflict, there was minimal conflict between the Commonwealth and Queensland. Whilst the L-CP was in power federally, the Commonwealth government was severely restricted in its capacity to intervene in the issue because of its attitude towards states' rights. This was particularly evident during Gorton's period as leader. Gorton assumed a fairly high public profile with regard to the Reef, arguing that it ought to be preserved, and making statements such as "In my view, the slightest danger (to the Barrier Reef) is too much danger".⁷³ Yet Gorton's capacity to challenge the Queensland government on constitutional grounds for control of the Reef was restricted by attacks both from within his own party⁷⁴ and from the states⁷⁵ over the Liberal Party's movement towards centralism under his leadership. When Gorton was replaced by McMahon there was no change to this view of states' rights.

The Whitlam government had a very different attitude to states' rights and this became part of a complex struggle between the Queensland and Whitlam governments. The debate over preserving the Reef became an arena of conflict not only concerning the environment, but the level of government at which such decisions should be made.

When the Whitlam government identified the Great Barrier Reef as a sphere in which it had a legitimate interest, the Queensland government reacted by constructing Commonwealth intervention as an infringement against the state's rights. Such a focus was a useful one for the Bjelke-Petersen government. Public attention was drawn away from the divisive issue of whether or not the Reef should be mined, to the question of the Commonwealth's right to interfere in Queensland politics, an issue which the government could expect significant popular support.

⁷³ Canberra Times January 27, 1970.

⁷⁴ O. Thomson and G. Pascall 1970 "Who Owns the Great Barrier Reef".

⁷⁵ Wright op cit p. 82.

With the objective of successfully mining the Reef in mind, the Queensland government adopted a strategy which disregarded any pressure placed on it to protect the Reef. This approach was assumed whether it was the Commonwealth government or conservation groups. Sources of support for the Queensland government, however, remained tenuous. In effect, it relied on its own popularity in the electorate and the continued support of the oil companies. When Ampol withdrew from its commitment to oil mining, the Queensland government was forced to withdraw from the position of no compromise that it had adopted.

The Whitlam Government

The Whitlam government's intervention in the Great Barrier Reef issue was shaped by a number of forces. Of central importance was a shared belief within the ALP that the Reef ought to be preserved. There were, however, two quite different rationales underlying this unified position. One of these perspectives was exemplified by Whitlam. While there can be no doubt that Whitlam held some concern for the environment, it was the Reef's relevance within a broader political context, that appears more important in establishing the objective of its preservation. Dominating this agenda was Whitlam's strategy of reform. In contrast to this position, there were some Ministers within the ALP at this time, namely Moss Cass and Tom Uren, who articulated a commitment to environmental issues because they viewed them to be significant in their own right. During the Great Barrier Reef conflict, these two different perceptions of the environment's significance coincided with conservation of the Reef emerging as a common objective.

Before its election in 1972, Labor policy demonstrated a limited commitment to environmental issues. For instance, a section of the 1972 party platform entitled, "Environment and Conservation" recognised extensive environmental degradation within Australia and proceeded with an implicit commitment to alter this situation. Nevertheless, only limited methods of

implementing change were identified. These included increasing research into environmental problems and establishing a nation wide network of national parks.⁷⁶ Environment questions were not even mentioned as a specific policy area in Whitlam's seminal 1972 Blacktown policy speech, although the environment was referred to within the context of other policy concerns such as land, water and forestry.⁷⁷ Both the party platform and the 1972 Blackburn speech typify the Whitlam government's attitude to the environment. While the environment was slowly being accepted as a part of the policy process, it was still accorded a fairly low priority in the Labor Party's program for change. Yet pressure was mounting from within the ALP to enhance the status of environmental issues.

Of particular importance in this process was the establishment of a separate Department of Environment and Conservation and the activities of Moss Cass, its minister until 1975.⁷⁸ Cass had a strong personal commitment to environmental issues. For instance, he has stated:

As a politician, I have become increasingly aware of the strength, both actual and potential, of the environment. As a citizen of Spaceship Earth I have also become increasingly aware of the strength of the case for environmental protection.⁷⁹

Awareness of environmental issues was translated into perceiving the environment as a primary concern in policy-making. Reid has described Cass as believing

⁷⁶ Australian Labor Party 1972 Labor's Way: A Summary of Information on the Policy of the Australian Labor Party Melbourne: ALP p. 14.

⁷⁷ E. G. Whitlam 1977 "1972 Labor Party Policy Speech" in E.G. Whitlam On Australia's Constitution Victoria: Widescope International Publishers.

⁷⁸ E. Papadakis 1990 "Environment Policy" in C. Jennett and R. Stewart Hawke and Australian Public Policy: Consensus and Restructuring Australia: Macmillan p. 340.

⁷⁹ M. Cass 1974 "Foreword" in R. Dempsey (ed) The Politics Of Finding Out: Environmental Problems in Australia Melbourne: Cheshire (unnumbered).

passionately and intensely that the Environment portfolio was from the long-term viewpoint of the Australian nation the most important portfolio in the Ministry and that the great and difficult problems Australia would be called upon to face in the future would have to be solved within an environmental context.⁸⁰

The importance that Cass placed upon environmental problems can be recognised in a speech that he made at a Ministerial Meeting of the OECD Environmental Committee in Paris, in which he posited the following argument:

The major trends of global concern, accelerating industrialisation, rapid population growth, widespread malnutrition, depletion of renewable and non-renewable resources, and a deteriorating environment, are all interrelated and will lead to global disaster.⁸¹

Similar arguments were canvassed by Tom Uren at a Zero Population Growth Seminar held in 1972. Uren's speech examined the interrelated problems of overpopulation and environmental degradation and placed them within the context of their implications for increased tension between states, and the subsequent need for disarmament.⁸² As Minister of the Department of Urban and Regional Development, Uren supported Cass in furthering the significance accorded to the environment by arguing in favour of an ecological world view.⁸³

The commitment of both Cass and Uren to addressing environmental issues ensured that pressure was maintained from within the government to develop progressive environmental measures. Furthermore, the establishment of the Department of Environment was extremely important. With the independence that a separate department allowed, Moss Cass was provided with the opportunity to develop policy initiatives which might have been impeded by a minister with multiple or contradictory responsibilities. In

⁸⁰ A. Reid 1976 The Whitlam Venture Melbourne: Hill of Content p. 266.

⁸¹ Australian Government Australian Government Digest Volume Two, Number Four, 1 October 1974-31 December 1974 Canberra: Australian Government Printer p. 1144.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ T. Uren 1974 "Bombs, Babies and Bulldozers" in R. Dempsey (ed) The Politics Of Finding Out: Environmental Problems in Australia Melbourne: Cheshire p. 233-4.

addition, the very presence of the Department of Environment symbolically enhanced the status of environment policy.

One of the most important developments in environmental policy during the Whitlam government was the introduction of Environmental Impact legislation at the end of 1974. The concept of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was initially introduced to Commonwealth policy by the Liberal- Country Party (L-CP) coalition in May 1972. It lacked a statutory basis, however, because it was included only as a part of the government's environment policy. What this embryonic EIA required was for projects initiated by the Commonwealth to include ministerial and departmental submissions accounting for their environmental impact. State assurance of environmental practices was also required of Commonwealth funded State projects⁸⁴.

When the ALP was elected it was determined to extend EIA policy. Initially this took place through increasing public input into the process and allowing greater access to Environmental Impact Statements (EIS). It also became mandatory for an EIS to be submitted with all state applications for Commonwealth assistance⁸⁵.

By legislating for the EIA a further advancement was being made. EIA legislation, *Environmental Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act* was passed through Parliament in late 1974 and came into operation in June 1975.⁸⁶ The legislation brought three main areas of environmental policy under official Commonwealth control. These included the accompaniment of EIAs with all projects initiated by the federal government, state projects funded by the

⁸⁴ R. J. Fowler 1982 Environmental Impact Assessment, Planning and Pollution Measures in Australia Canberra: Australian Government Printing Service p. 8.

⁸⁵ Ibid p. 9; G. Whitlam 1985 The Whitlam Government: 1972-1975 Australia, Penguin Books p. 535-6.

⁸⁶ Fowler op cit p. 15; M. Cass 1976 "Speech at the Ministerial Meeting of the OECD Environmental Committee, Paris" and reproduced in Australian Government Australian Government Digest Volume Two, Number Four, 1 October 1974-31 December 1974 Canberra: Australian Government Printer p. 276.

Commonwealth and all projects over which the Commonwealth had jurisdiction.⁸⁷

While there has been much debate about the character of the EIA, they were essentially constructed to gather information to ensure that the public and decision makers are aware of the environmental consequences of a proposed project.⁸⁸ By doing so, they integrated environmental issues into the normal concerns of decision makers and constructed a legal framework through which environmental concerns could be taken into consideration.

To a certain extent, the Whitlam government's decision to protect the Great Barrier Reef was a reflection of the government's increasing concern for conservation issues. Unlike the Bjelke-Petersen government, the Labor Party had some scope to develop a discourse of environmental protection and conservation, which members of cabinet, such as Cass and Uren, were committed to. This sentiment is explicitly expressed by Moss Cass in his introduction of the Marine Park Act to parliament:

Most simply, the Reef is a significant part of the world's heritage - a priceless heirloom which we must safeguard for future generations.⁸⁹

Other policy concerns, however, also shaped the government's response to the Great Barrier Reef. These can be found in the questions of states' rights and mineral development policy.

States' rights was a vital policy concern for Whitlam because it had implications for his government's reform program which was designed to provide opportunities for all citizens to improve their quality of life through equal access to government services and a commitment to overcome regional disparities by government involvement in urban and regional planning. It

⁸⁷ Fowler op cit p. 16. While projects initiated by states with funds from the loans council were included in the legislation's early form, this aspect of the legislation was dropped when the states responded negatively and it became evident that it had no hope of being passed through the coalition dominated Senate. Ibid p. 14.

⁸⁸ M. Bowman 1979 Australian Approaches to Environmental Management: The Response of State Planning p. 25; Cass "Speech at the Ministerial Meeting" p. 276.

⁸⁹ Australian Government op cit p. 279.

was this program which defined the goals and priorities of the government and was to be paid for by economic growth.⁹⁰

A significant restraint for the Whitlam government in implementing its reform package was the constitutional limitations to federal power. Reform was directed towards quality of life issues such as welfare, health, education, recreation and transport.⁹¹ At the time when Whitlam won office, all of these areas were financed by the federal government but remained state responsibilities when it came to the provision of services.⁹² Whitlam was convinced that if his government was to successfully implement its reformist policies it required greater control over these areas.⁹³ In the view of the states, this could only be achieved at the expense of their power and independence. The Queensland government rigorously resisted the Commonwealth government's attempts to extend its powers.⁹⁴ For both the federal and Bjelke-Petersen governments, the Great Barrier Reef was more than a conflict over whether or not oil drilling should occur. It was also a question of who had power in the decision making process.

Mineral development policies was one area where considerable conflict developed between the Whitlam and Bjelke-Petersen governments. Tension was primarily focused on the entrepreneurial style of the Bjelke-Petersen government in its attempts to attract foreign investment for minerals exploitation⁹⁵ and the nationalistic thrust of the Commonwealth's minerals policy under Rex Connor.

⁹⁰ For a discussion of this see C. Johnson 1989 The Labor Legacy: Curtin, Chifley, Whitlam, Hawke Sydney: Allen and Unwin chapters 5-7.

⁹¹ G. Whitlam 1975 "The Road to Reform - Labor in Government" Chifley Memorial Lecture, August 14, 1975 p. 7.

⁹² Whitlam 1985 op cit p. 711.

⁹³ Ibid p. 713.

⁹⁴ A. Patience 1985 "State Politics in Australia: Queensland and the Emerging Crisis in Australian Federalism" in A. Patience (ed) The Bjelke-Petersen Premiership 1968-1983: Issues in Public Policy Melbourne: Oxford University Press p. 13.

⁹⁵ D. Conroy 1985 "Federal-State Relations" in A. Patience (ed) The Bjelke-Petersen Premiership 1968-1983: Issues in Public Policy Melbourne: Longman Cheshire p. 269.

When Labor came to office it was faced with a minerals sector which had become increasingly owned and dominated by foreign capital. The Whitlam government responded by pursuing a greatly increased role for the government in the industry.⁹⁶ To overcome the problem of foreign ownership the ALP undertook two initiatives. First, to increase opportunities for Australia's share in the ownership and development of Australian mineral resources, and second to ensure that Australia's resources attracted a fair price in world markets.⁹⁷ The Bjelke-Petersen government's accumulation strategy undermined Labor's mineral development policy by adopting an 'open door' approach to foreign capital. Furthermore, it aimed to keep mineral development policy solely within the ambit of state responsibility, threatening Whitlam and Connor's attempt to achieve a more centralised decision making process.

The Great Barrier Reef provided an opportunity for the Whitlam government to pursue a number of objectives simultaneously. By intervening to preserve the Great Barrier Reef the government's status among those Australians who were concerned for the environment was enhanced. Moreover, the Great Barrier Reef provided a means for the Whitlam government to exert some degree of control over the Queensland government and pursue its agenda for centralised decision making. Finally, and emerging out of this second point, was that the Great Barrier Reef represented one way that the Whitlam government could further its plans for the minerals sector in Australia, by undermining the problematic approach of the Bjelke-Petersen government.

In essence, conservation concerns provided the opportunity for the Whitlam government to justify halting drilling on the Barrier Reef, yet its primary concern was control of resources and the most suitable form of their

⁹⁶ Whitlam op cit p. 239.

⁹⁷ G. Smith 1979 "Minerals and Energy" in A. Patience and B. Head From Whitlam to Fraser: Reform and Reaction in Australian Politics Melbourne: Longman Cheshire p. 236.

exploitation. It was thus no coincidence that the key piece of legislation utilised by the Commonwealth to establish its jurisdiction over the Reef, the *Seas and Submerged Lands Act, 1973*, was initially constructed to provide the Commonwealth powers to implement its plans regarding the oil industry and the Petroleum and Minerals Authority.⁹⁸

In spite of these links to other political objectives, the arguments adopted by the Whitlam government focused solely on Reef preservation, echoing the position of the conservationists regarding the need to protect an area that was of great national and international environmental value. In this sense, the ALP drew on support from the conservation movement to achieve a multifaceted end. In a similar vein to the Bjelke-Petersen government, Whitlam refused to accept that the Queensland government's claim to the region was legitimate. Instead, it found a constitutional mechanism that granted Commonwealth jurisdiction in the area. Having established a legal precedent for involvement, the federal government had no impediment to achieve its goals.

The Oil Industry

The oil industry had the clearly defined objective of exploring and mining the Great Barrier Reef for oil. In contrast to the conservationists, however, it pursued a low key campaign, one that focussed on the industry's capacity to drill the Reef without undermining environmental standards. There was no reason for the oil industry to anticipate the dispute that arose over the Great Barrier Reef. The Queensland government was the primary decision making body responsible for the Reef and had clearly articulated its support for drilling the reef. A number of circumstances had changed to make this project a site of conflict and thus demanded a new tack by the oil industry.

⁹⁸ Ibid p. 237. The *Seas and Submerged Lands Act* was introduced to claim exclusive federal sovereignty offshore where the PMA would operate.

First, the oil industry faced an interest group hostile to its objectives, one that had been successful in achieving popular and political support. Second, the threat of federal intervention loomed in the wake of Whitlam's announcement in the 1969 election campaign that he would, if necessary, intervene to halt drilling. Finally, and of great importance, was that a development project was being redefined as an environmental issue. Hence, previously unheard of questions were being raised about the Great Barrier Reef which constructed the proposed development in terms of an instance of environmental damage.

The oil industry responded to these new circumstances by arguing that the mining of the Great Barrier Reef presented no real threat to the environment. Thus they allowed conservation groups to dictate the terms of the conflict by presenting no opposition to the recasting of the issue as an environmental issue, rather than a question of development. Environmental damage was subsequently regarded as a legitimate focus of debate. This contrasted to Bjelke-Petersen's approach which had attempted to reconstruct the issue in terms of states' rights.

The oil industry's willingness to argue in the terms defined by environmental groups is illustrated in the Australian Petroleum Exploration Association (APEA) submission to the Royal Commission which claimed that it was unlikely that there would be any environmental problems occurring as a result of drilling the Reef.⁹⁹ As Bob Foster from BHP explained:

APEA tried to show that, while absolute security from oil spillage cannot be guaranteed (and probably never will), the chance of large scale accidental spillage from well blow out or equipment failure during production, is low and furthermore, in at least certain parts of the area under consideration, the chance of spilled oil actually reaching and stranding on a reef is also low ... APEA proposed ... at least in those areas of the GBRP remote from concentrations of coral reefs, drilling to be allowed under regulated conditions.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Foster loc cit p. 31.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid p. 31.

Furthermore, the APEA contended that the environmental standards adhered to by their industry were adequate.¹⁰¹ A statement by D. McGarry, chairman of the APEA, captures the oil industry's contention that exploitation did not mean environmental degradation: "It is our job to convince the critics that conservation is led by our industry and not fought by our industry."¹⁰²

In other circumstances this campaign might have been effective. Pressure, however, was maintained by the conservation lobby and gained additional force through the support of the trade unions. Ampol's response to this continued pressure was to defer drilling on Repulse Bay, an unusual strategy when it is compared to the unaccommodating approach typically associated with business in more recent environmental conflicts. There are a number of conditions that are important in explaining why Ampol withdrew from mining, including the company's vulnerability to union pressure. At the time when the dispute over the Reef emerged, Ampol was a relatively new company and fairly small, at least within the oil industry. Its activities comprised solely of the Barrier Reef venture and a major share holding in Western Australian Petroleum's highly productive Barrow Island oil field.¹⁰³ With all its interests resting in the petroleum industry, we can surmise that Ampol weighed the risk of antagonising a powerful union group and thereby jeopardising the already established benefits of the Barrow Island project, against the unknown oil potential of Repulse Bay.

Ampol was also concerned about its public profile and its image as an Australian company.¹⁰⁴ For this reason it was important for the company to establish itself as environmentally responsible. Accidents relating to the oil industry had captured global as well as Australia's attention. It was necessary for Ampol to distance itself from these criticisms by actively supporting a public

¹⁰¹ O. Thomson and G. Pascall 1970 "Who Owns the Great Barrier Reef".

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Jobson 1975 Jobson's Mining Year Book 1974/5 Sydney: Jobsons Financial Services p. 360.

¹⁰⁴ Australian Jan 15, 1970.

inquiry, it could project a responsible and environmentally concerned image. As the Canberra Times reported: "Mr Gorton lauded Ampol for having shown 'a national responsible attitude'".¹⁰⁵

Finally, in the late 1960s environmental issues were not as contentious, nor did they have the same political ramifications as more recent issues. There is no evidence to suggest that the prohibition of mining on the Great Barrier Reef was considered as establishing a precedent for future government intervention in resource issues. Instead, it emerges more as an aberration from normal pattern of resource development which had been dictated by the objective of economic growth. Hence, it posed no perceivable threat to the industry's power to make future investment decisions in the development of resources. As a result, Ampol's decision was made within the terms of this particular issue. The threat of conservation groups successfully gaining power over other resources questions was not immediately apparent and for this reason the campaign was not identified as a challenge to the political power of business. Ampol's decision can thus be seen within the more limited context of specific costs and benefits of proceeding with mining on the Great Barrier Reef. The antagonism that has frequently developed between business and the environment lobby in more recent conflicts was simply not evident.

There were other companies which had leases in the Barrier Reef region and like Ampol provided little resistance to the possible prohibition of oil drilling. One explanation for this is that at the time the Royal Commission was established, the Australian oil industry was experiencing expansion due to the national minerals boom. Although the industry was to face a fairly severe decline during the early to mid 1970s, exploration and expansion in the North West Shelf, an already proven reserve of oil and gas, was viewed with much optimism.¹⁰⁶ Like Queensland, the Western Australian government, under

¹⁰⁵ Canberra Times Jan 27, 1970.

¹⁰⁶ Jobson op cit p. 522.

the Premier Charles Court, was highly supportive of any form of minerals development.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, expansion of the North West Shelf was not complicated by either conservationists or an antagonistic Commonwealth government. Such a situation relegated the impetus to drill the Reef, with its capital and political risks, to a fairly low priority.

By the time that the Whitlam government passed the Marine Park Act in 1975, the minerals sector was involved in a heated battle with the federal Minister for Minerals and Energy, Rex Connor, over the government's interventionist approach to mining. The question then arises as to why the minerals sector did not include the Marine Park Act as a vehicle in its attack on Connor and the Whitlam government. A number of factors appear relevant here. Firstly, such a strategy could be interpreted by the general public as based on a disregard for the environment by the oil industry. This was particularly pertinent as the Act's justification was couched entirely in terms of a commitment to the environment. At this time the oil industry was sensitive to its poor reputation with regard to the environment and thus was unwilling to challenge the bill. An additional problem for the industry was that the Act attracted bi-partisan support,¹⁰⁸ and thus undermined the industry's ability to use the Marine Park Act as a political weapon. Consequently, it made economic and political sense for the oil industry to concentrate its efforts elsewhere.

Conclusion

The Great Barrier Reef conflict marked an important point of departure from previous environmental issues in Australia. The most immediate difference was the scale of the conservationists' campaign and the degree of public support for the claims made by environmental groups. This chapter has attempted to explain why this change took place and identify the character of

¹⁰⁷ O. Thomson 1970 "Three Men in the Middle" Australian April 22.

¹⁰⁸ New Legislation of the Australian Parliament 1975 "Barrier Reef Area Controlled Under New Marine Park Act" New Legislation of the Australian Parliament No. 15 p. 444.

the environment movement which subsequently emerged. It has also considered the nature of both industry and state responses to the new political circumstances that political mobilisation in response to the Great Barrier Reef created.

One theme developed within this thesis is the notion that the relationship between environmental damage and awareness is central in explaining environmental conflict. Conservationists' reaction to the Great Barrier Reef can be explained within this framework. What was pivotal was the changing relationship between environmental damage and awareness at a global, national and regional level. Not only did this provide the context within which the threat to the Great Barrier Reef's environment was recognised, it was also associated with the notion that the Reef was valuable and therefore ought to be protected. Familiarity with the type of issue that the Reef represented provided further impetus to environmental awareness, its similarity to previous issues shaping what conservation groups and the general public viewed to be an issue worth mobilising for.

The character of the Great Barrier Reef issue supports the contention that forms of production are important in explaining the origins of environmental damage. The threat to the Reef environment emerged from the accumulation strategy pursued by the Bjelke-Petersen government. According to Bjelke-Petersen, Queensland's economic growth relied on the expansion of the state's natural resource sector and hence the demand to drill the Reef for oil. Hence, the nexus between the nature of production and potential environmental damage.

The relationship between environmental damage and awareness assists in understanding the character of competing views regarding the importance of the environment. Three broad categories emerged during the Reef conflict. The first of these appears consistent with Merchant's definition of an ecological

paradigm, where an active and dynamic relationship is recognised between human and non-human nature.

Queensland conservation groups and the support they generated from the wider public, may be placed within this first category. The central catalyst for mobilisation was a new awareness of environmental damage and its manifestation in the potential threat to the Reef by oil drilling. Their claims and strategies were a consequence of an overriding concern for the environment and the goal of Reef conservation. It was the Reef's ecological value that these groups sought to protect. A similar position was adopted by a number of ministers in the Whitlam government, most notably, Cass and Uren, who articulated a justification for Reef preservation on the basis of its ecological value.

Placing the ACF within a paradigm is difficult. From Merchant's characterisation, the ACF ought to be located within the mechanistic paradigm because of its emphasis on human use of the environment. Yet the notion of ecological systems is also evident in the ACF's justification for preservation. If these views were taken in isolation, a case could be mounted for why, in terms of the themes developed within this thesis, the ACF should be situated within the ecological paradigm. After all, the ACF and Queensland conservation groups both developed environmental discourses involving human utility and ecological integrity, the primary distinction between them being one of emphasis. What placed the ACF outside the ecological paradigm was its conservative political philosophy which circumscribed the organisation's capacity to challenge government decisions. This occurred to the extent that its lack of opposition condoned the mechanistic paradigm's conception of the environment. For this reason, the ACF could be located in both paradigms, but does not sit comfortably within either.

Merchant's notion of a scientific world view, one in which nature is conceived of as a resource for production and human use describes a second

paradigm evident within the Reef conflict. For the Bjelke-Petersen government, the Reef's value was determined by its oil drilling potential and the way it could further an accumulation strategy based on foreign investment. Subsequent conflict and conservationists' claims about the Reef represented a threat to this strategy and the creation of a political context in which a popular challenge to the Queensland government's objectives emerged, as well as unwelcome Commonwealth intervention.

A third view, not sufficiently encompassed within Merchant's characterisation, was also evident in the Reef conflict. This may be associated with the perspectives of Whitlam and Connor and can also be recognised in the response of the oil industry to the Reef issue. In essence, this perspective focuses on balancing the political and economic ramifications of environmental issues rather than environmental problems in their own right. As a result, this paradigm may be characterised as responding to the politics which emerged out of the changing relationship between environmental damage and awareness. What it represents is an attempt to accommodate the newly developed claims articulated by the ecological paradigm with existing political and economic objectives. For this reason, it is a view that neither dismisses environmental concern nor elevates it to a prominent position. Instead, it presents the environment as one of many factors to be dealt within decision making processes, one in which the balance between various political forces remains paramount.

Whitlam and Connor's response to the Great Barrier Reef issue is representative of this third approach. Their view of the Reef's value primarily came from its importance within an accumulation strategy based on Australia's independence from foreign investment and the role of this strategy within a broader platform of social, political and economic change. Whitlam and Connor were not especially interested in possible environmental damage to the Reef, nor did they completely dismiss it. While it is true that Whitlam

identified the environment as a secondary concern, it was still an element to be considered within the policy process. Hence, scope existed within the federal government for individuals such as Cass and Uren to develop a discourse that was ecologically sensitive.

Industry's response to the Reef issue also appears to be located within this third category. Like Whitlam, the oil industry apparently perceived the significance of the Reef in terms of the political and economic context it had created. The right to drill the Reef was a peripheral issue. For instance, Ampol's main concern was the threat to its public image that the reef issue represented and its impact on the company's relationship with the trade unions.

From the preceding discussion it is clear that conflict over the Reef extended beyond its character as an environmental issue. Nevertheless, the Great Barrier Reef dispute was predicated on a conflict between paradigms. When conservation groups mobilised their claims of environmental worth and attempted to influence the political system, they challenged the priorities of the mechanistic paradigm. The Bjelke-Petersen government ignored these claims and the principles they represented and thus a contest emerged. At the core of this dispute was the opposing claims made by the ecological perspective, which perceived the Reef's unique ecological qualities as primary, and the view held by the Queensland government, that oil drilling would procure the greatest value from the Reef. At this level, the conflict was based on fundamentally irreconcilable evaluations of the Reef's worth.

The outcome of the Reef conflict was a result of both the contest between competing paradigms as well as the influence of other forces. Hence, it is important to recognise that environmental groups were successful in achieving their immediate aim of Reef preservation. Yet the role played by Whitlam and Connor in their pursuit of other objectives, completely unrelated

to environmental concern, should not be ignored. In this sense, environmentalists' victory appears more limited.

A central theme in this thesis is the notion that the relationship between environmental damage and awareness is dynamic. While the Reef issue was a consequence of this relationship, it also became a part of this process. The result was to redefine the character of Australian environmental politics. The experience of environmental damage and awareness that the Great Barrier Reef issue created was to shape future events by increasing political awareness of the issue and enhance perceptions of the environment's value. In addition, the campaign's success also buoyed the conservation movement's sense of empowerment and thus created an optimism regarding future campaigns and their potential for change. Finally, the conflict and its outcome supported the notion that environmental preservation was a legitimate goal, one which could be successfully achieved through the existing political processes.

Chapter Four

Sand Mining on Fraser Island: Consolidating Trends and New Antagonisms

The Fraser Island Story

Sand mining on Fraser Island, located off the coast of Queensland, became a contentious environmental issue in the early 1970s. The catalyst for conflict was two applications (covering 3,100 ha) for sand mining leases on the island. Three local conservation groups, the Hervey Bay Conservation Association and the Maryborough and Bundaberg branches of the Wilderness Society, challenged this proposal.¹ The result was the formation of the Fraser Island Defence Committee in early 1971 which subsequently changed its name to the Fraser Island Defence Organisation (FIDO). Two sand mining companies were involved in operations on Fraser Island, Queensland Titanium Mines (QTM) and Murphyores Minerals. The applications for sand mining that FIDO challenged had been made by Murphyores and were received by the Maryborough Mining Warden on January 4, 1971. When combined with six other leases already held by Murphyores and an additional four leases which were still being processed (and were finally granted on March 15, 1973), the total area encompassed by the leases was 12,164 ha.²

During a fourteen day hearing before the Maryborough Mining Warden, FIDO and 1,300 other objectors contested the leases and lost.³ In an attempt to placate the public feeling which had been generated in response to the Fraser Island issue, the Queensland government declared a 23,085 ha national park at

¹ J. Sinclair as cited in F. Williams 1983 A History of Fraser Island: Written in the Sand Australia: Jacaranda Press p. 166.

² A. Hicks and J. Hookey 1977 Fraser Island Environmental Inquiry Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printing p. 46.

³ J. Sinclair 1974 "A Leftover National Park? Fraser Island (FIDO)" Community No. 5 November p. 7.

the northern end of the island, to be increased to 32,400 ha in 1973.⁴ FIDO was dissatisfied with this action on two grounds. First, it remained short of the 40,500 ha originally promised by the government and second, the quality of the areas protected was criticised. As John Sinclair, president of FIDO, explained:

In short the Fraser Island National Park contains only those parts of Fraser Island not wanted by local developers, sandminers or timber interests.⁵

In July 1971, DM Minerals (a partnership had been formed between Murphyores and Dillinghams, which subsequently adopted the name DM Minerals) applied to increase its leases by a further 2,800 ha. The Queensland Cabinet quickly adopted the Mining Warden's recommendation to grant the application which was subsequently accepted by the Commonwealth government.⁶

QTM made a further applications for mining leases on Fraser Island in 1973. These covered another 6,000 ha, and included applications to subdivide the only two remaining freehold areas on Fraser Island.⁷ QTM's application went to the Mining Warden without any Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and in June came before the Mining Warden with FIDO's objection. Despite QTM presenting no evidence to demonstrate it could proceed without considerable environmental degradation, the Mining Warden recommended the lease. FIDO subsequently initiated an appeal to the Queensland Supreme Court for a writ of mandamus. When this appeal was unanimously rejected, FIDO brought its case to the High Court where the appeal was unanimously upheld.⁸

⁴ R. Fitzgerald 1984 From 1915 to the Early 1980s: A History of Queensland St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press p. 349-50; Sinclair loc cit p. 8.

⁵ Sinclair loc cit p. 8.

A similar point is made by Fitzgerald who has stated, "it conspicuously failed to protect any rainforest, lakes, surfing beach or coloured sands." Fitzgerald op cit p. 350.

⁶ Fitzgerald op cit p. 350.

⁷ Sinclair loc cit p. 8.

⁸ Sinclair op cit p. 166.

With the election of the Whitlam government at the end of 1972, and its expressed commitment to the environment, FIDO lobbied the Commonwealth government for export controls, legal aid and other programs to protect the island. During 1973 two important events occurred. First, in February, an ALP Cabinet decision (number 185) was made to make Environmental Impact Statements mandatory on proposals with environmental consequences when they involved the use of federal powers.⁹ The Australian sand mining industry was almost totally export orientated, and the federal government held the constitutional powers to grant export licences. As a result, sand mining came within the ambit of Commonwealth government powers and an EIS ought to have been required prior to the provision of new sand mining licences. Second, the Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate spent four days on a Fraser Island Safari which resulted in the ACF nominating the island for inclusion on the World Heritage list to be submitted in 1974.¹⁰

Controversial government activity regarding Fraser Island began in earnest in the latter half of 1974. In September, DM Minerals applied to the Minister for Minerals and Energy, Rex Connor, for an export licence for minerals extracted from Fraser Island. Importantly, this submission was made without an EIS. During November, as a part of a Queensland state election tour, Whitlam visited Fraser Island and agreed that mining should be permitted.¹¹ Then, on November 20, Connor wrote to Whitlam indicating his intention to approve export contracts. The following day the Prime Minister's Department passed this letter on to the Department of Environment, headed by Moss Cass. Cass's department replied to the letter on November 22 expressing its opposition to the application. On the 26th of November, Whitlam wrote to

⁹ B. Toohey 1975 "Connor Cut Down" Financial Review May 20.

¹⁰ Sinclair op cit p. 166.

¹¹ Australian Conservation Foundation 1975 Newsletter May.

Connor agreeing to support the export approval without any further reference to Cass.¹²

The action taken by Connor and Whitlam was in direct contravention to ALP policy established in 1973. Furthermore, at the time that these events were taking place, EIA legislation, directed towards making Labor policy law, was being debated in parliament. Export approval was in fact granted on December 13, 1974, two days after the EIA Bill was passed with bi-partisan support in the Senate. The Act, however, did not obtain the Governor General's consent until the 17th of December.¹³ Consequently, Connor and Whitlam's action was legal, but highly controversial as they ignored their own party's policy and an Act of Government being constructed by the ALP. Under the agreement, DM Minerals was granted approval to export 175,000 tonnes of heavy minerals between June 1, 1975 and the end of March 1978.¹⁴

Whitlam had also advised Connor that "we should ensure your decision and the reasons for it are given early and appropriate publicity."¹⁵ In fact, it was not until after the 29th of January, when the Queensland Trades and Labour Council (QTLC) passed a motion of opposition to the destruction of Fraser Island and applied a black ban to new mining, that DM Minerals claimed it had an export licence and made the government's action public. Furthermore, it was only when FIDO and the ACF informed Cass of this declaration, that he became aware that his department and its EIS procedure had been by-passed.¹⁶

Cass responded on March 26, 1975, by initiating an inquiry into the environmental aspects of Fraser Island.¹⁷ Whitlam, however, maintained that

¹² Toohey loc cit. There is some dispute over the claim that Cass's department replied to the letter, with Whitlam maintaining that no reply was ever received. While Whitlam's argument raises some questions regarding Cass's competence, they do not alter the fact that both Whitlam and Connor were aware of government policy, and legislative arrangements regarding the EIA, and chose to ignore them. For Whitlam's recollection of events see G. Whitlam 1985 The Whitlam Government Australia: Penguin Books p. 540-2.

¹³ Toohey loc cit; P. Samuel 1975 "Cass Angry Over Secret Mine Permit" Bulletin March 22.

¹⁴ Bulletin 1977 "Conservation: How Far Must Miners Go?" January 22.

¹⁵ Toohey loc cit.

¹⁶ Australian Conservation Foundation 1975 Newsletter March.

¹⁷ Bulletin loc cit.

export licences would be granted irrespective of the inquiry's conclusions. Whitlam supported this position by arguing that the government had to honour its commitments to DM Minerals.¹⁸

Environmental issues relating to sand mining had been a source of concern within the government for some time with the Labor Party's urban affairs committee passing a motion seeking information on all sand mining approvals in July 1974. Early in 1975, the committee met twice to specifically discuss the approval of the export permits and ways this could be avoided or reversed. On both occasions, Cass argued that it would be better to attempt to resolve the problem at the ministerial level. Finally, on April 22, the committee passed a motion which called for export permits for sand mining to be suspended pending the completion of the environmental inquiry.¹⁹

On the 13th of May a motion was passed in Caucus to require:

exports for sandmining on Fraser Island to be deferred while the Prime Minister, the Minister for Minerals and Energy and the Minister for environment consult the report on a means of implementing the Government's environmental impact statement policy in the matter of Fraser Island.²⁰

As the ministers were unable to find a compromise, on May 19, Cabinet was presented with two opposing submissions from Cass and Connor. It has been reported that towards the end of the debate it became apparent that Cass had the support of Cabinet. Connor then threatened to resign over the issue. At this point Whitlam put Connor's motion to Cabinet and it was carried on voices.²¹ Caucus looked as though it might over-rule Cabinet's decision. When a vote was tallied, however, the Connor/Whitlam position won by 42 votes to 41 on a recount.²² Tension continued to mount between Cass and Whitlam resulting

18 Australian Conservation Foundation 1975 Newsletter May.

19 H. Lunn 1975 "Into the Enchanted Valley" Australian 23 May.

20 Toohey loc cit.

21 P. Kelly 1975 "A Matter of Incredibility" Australian 22 May.

22 B. Bayly 1975 "Union Bans Sought on Sand-mining" Advertiser May 21.

in Cass being moved into the media portfolio during a Cabinet reshuffle in June.

The preliminary inquiry instigated by Cass opened on June 2, 1975. It spent five days on Fraser Island and three weeks sitting in Maryborough until the commission adjourned recommending a second inquiry with broadened terms of reference. The aim was to allow for a more comprehensive evaluation of the Fraser Island issue with all relevant information examined. While the inquiry was in progress, Connor limited DM Minerals to export from only two leases. This concession, however, was more apparent than real as the proven reserves in these leases exceeded the contracts written for export of the mineral sands.²³

The First Report into Fraser Island was released on December 13, 1975, recommending the deferral of all exports until the final report was released. The incoming Liberal-Country Party government, elected in December 1975, maintained the policy of restricting exports to the specified leases. The Commission of Inquiry's final report was released on October 25, 1976, and recommended that all mining and exports from the island should cease except for an insignificant area below the high water mark. The Fraser government complied and banned all mineral exports after December 31, 1976.²⁴ Furthermore, on November 18, 1976 Fraser Island became the first item to be included on the Interim Register of the National Estate by the Australian Heritage Commission, acting on the recommendation of the Fraser Island Environmental Inquiry.²⁵

The first line sand mining contractors were offered an *ex gratia* payment totalling \$5 million and \$10 million was provided to the Queensland government over a three and a half year period to offset regional unemployment resulting from the project's cancellation.²⁶ \$1 million was

²³ Bulletin loc cit.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Sinclair op cit p. 167.

²⁶ Ibid.

accepted by QTM and various contractors as compensation. DM Minerals, however, refused the \$4 million it was offered and demanded \$23 million in compensation for an expropriated asset. This allegation was denied by the Commonwealth government.²⁷

DM Minerals continued to dispute the Fraser government's decision, taking out two High Court writs challenging the EPA Act under which the Inquiry had been conducted. This attempt and further legal action adopted by DM Minerals to sue the Commonwealth government for compensation in the International Court of Justice failed.²⁸

Conservationists and Fraser Island

Fraser Island emerged as an issue of conflict while debates over the Great Barrier Reef's future were still occurring. Explaining why mobilisation occurred at this time can be associated with a number of themes developed in the previous chapter. The context of increasing global as well as national environmental awareness is as applicable to Fraser Island as the Great Barrier Reef, with the exception that specific instances of oil spillage were not important in this particular case. Nevertheless, the Reef issue both illustrated and reinforced the increase in regional awareness of environmental issues. This can be recognised as influencing public receptiveness to Fraser Island's preservation. Moreover, legitimacy had been given to conservation concerns. The serious manner in which political parties had responded to the Reef issue, culminating in the establishment of a Royal Commission, may be associated with the newly found significance that environmental issues appeared to have gained within Australian politics.

There are other ways in which conditions associated with the Reef campaign shaped responses to Fraser Island. Like the Great Barrier Reef, Fraser Island represented an area of ecological value threatened by resource

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Fitzgerald op cit p. 351.

development. It has been argued that continuity with prior environmental issues assisted the capacity of the Great Barrier Reef to generate support. A similar case may be made for Fraser Island. In this instance, however, an even stronger association may be made with past environmental issues due to Fraser Island's historical proximity to the Reef conflict.

Finally, the culture of political dissent did not subside between 1969 and 1971. While the federal sphere of politics had become more open to new ideas during this period, particularly with the concerns raised by Whitlam as leader of the opposition, the activity of social movements was maintained. Furthermore, at the state level, the conservatism of the Bjelke-Petersen government continued to marginalise protagonists with new ideas and in doing so retained conditions for social movement mobilisation.

In sum, the circumstances associated with the formation of political mobilisation in response to the possible sand mining of Fraser Island were not substantially different from those experienced at the outset of the Great Barrier Reef campaign. One important change was the progression of the Reef issue and the manner in which it had consolidated conditions of environmental awareness.

When FIDO was formed in 1971 it had two primary aims. First, to campaign against further intrusions into Fraser Island; and second, to have the Island recognised as a unique part of the world's heritage and thus protect it from the possibility of future attempts at development. These clearly defined objectives were based on the notion that Fraser Island was of environmental value and therefore ought to be preserved. It was the Island's aesthetic and scientific worth, based on it being the location of unique ecological systems, that provided the foundation of conservationists' arguments for its preservation.

At the centre of conservationists' claims for Fraser Island's preservation was the notion that the island maintained unique ecological systems that would be destroyed by sand mining. This sentiment is captured by John

Sinclair who described Fraser Island as "a unique part of the world heritage which can not be sacrificed for a very short term gain."²⁹ The most prevalent reason for the Island's preservation that emerged out of this conception was its scientific and aesthetic value. An example of this view is evident in Dr Bayly's (the then Vice President of the ACF) submission to the National Estate, which focused on the aesthetic and scientific importance of the lakes on Fraser Island:

Most of the Fraser Island lakes are highly unusual and of outstanding aesthetic importance and scientific interest, not only from the viewpoint of the Australian nation, but also in the world context.³⁰

Similarly, ACF Director Geoff Mosley argued,

that because of its outstanding landscape interest and beauty and value for recreation, Fraser Island is both a national and international asset.³¹

While debates focused on identifying and establishing Fraser Island's uniqueness, there was a second level of argument deployed. This was the idea that people were responsible for the protection of Fraser Island. It appears that this notion of responsibility was implicit in arguments for Fraser Island's preservation and it was assumed that having recognised the island's value, activities to ensure its protection should be undertaken. Dr Bayly provides one of the rare instances when this association was explicitly made; he states:

I should like to mention a final reason for their [Fraser Island Lakes] conservation ... I refer to what might be called the moral issue of our responsibility to posterity ...

Then, citing Leopold, Bayly argues that wilderness preservation comes from

the moral conviction that is right - that we owe it to ourselves and to the good of the earth that supports us to curb our avarice to the extent of leaving a few spots untouched and exploited.³²

The claims made by conservationists in the case of Fraser Island were linked to a particular strategy which sought to establish the area's ecological

²⁹ Sinclair loc cit p. 8.

³⁰ Australian Conservation Foundation 1974 Newsletter April.

³¹ Australian Conservation Foundation 1975 Newsletter October.

³² Australian Conservation Foundation April loc cit.

value. There is an important distinction to be made here between the Great Barrier Reef and Fraser Island campaigns. The ecological significance of the Great Barrier Reef was never effectively challenged throughout that campaign and its status as a unique area of environmental value was accepted by the majority of Australians. As a result, the primary concern in the conservationists' strategy was to publicise and politicise the issue so that the government would protect what was widely held as a national asset.

Fraser Island, by way of contrast, was not as well known and its ecological significance less widely recognised than the Reef. It was therefore far more important for conservationists to construct an argument for the value of the island's unique ecology. With the need to have the Island's environmental value legitimised, the push towards World Heritage status was a logical strategy. If it became widely acclaimed that the Island was worthy of World Heritage listing, then popular perception of its value was more likely to be achieved.

Conservationists' claims relating to the question of rehabilitation after mining were also associated with their strategy. Because of the ability of sand mining companies to argue that re-vegetation of Fraser Island was possible, it became vital for conservationists to emphasise the unique qualities of the Island and its ecological significance in its existing state. As Mosley explained:

Our main point is that the land once mined can never be returned to its natural condition - it is a physical impossibility. Mining destroys the natural condition forever.³³

Without this focus in their arguments, the case to exclude mining would have been severely weakened.

Both the ACF and FIDO assumed a highly political role in the conflict over the future of Fraser Island. For FIDO, this saw the use of the existing legal and legislative framework to challenge the sand mining companies and to facilitate public and political awareness of the Fraser Island issue. Simultaneously,

³³ Australian Conservation Foundation October loc cit.

public interest was used to help ensure that the legal and political system remained accountable for decisions made. The involvement of the ACF was characterised by its support for FIDO and importantly, it provided a forum for dealing with the issue at a national level, generating support from its national membership as well as drawing attention to the federal government's involvement in the issue.

Throughout FIDO's campaign it used the Mining Warden's court to pursue a strategy which encouraged popular and political awareness of the Fraser Island issue. One early example of this approach was FIDO's challenge to sand mining lease applications in 1971, which played an important role in the Queensland government's decision to grant National Park status to areas within Fraser Island. Although this did not fulfil FIDO's specific objectives of having the leases rejected, or make adequate provision for the national park, it did raise the public profile of the issue.³⁴

A further example of the effective use of the legal system began with another challenge over leases brought before the Mining Warden by FIDO in June 1974. At this hearing, Sinclair argued that the national "public interest" would be compromised by granting the sand mining leases.³⁵ When this argument was rejected by the Mining Warden, on the grounds that Sinclair only represented a section of the public,³⁶ an appeal was lodged with the Queensland Supreme Court. Failing yet again, the issue was brought to the High Court in May 1975. Not only did this lead to a writ of mandamus where the Warden was compelled to rehear the appeal, it also had the long term effect of creating a requirement for future applications to consider the public interest and its relationship to the environment.³⁷

³⁴ For a discussion of the use of the mining warden's court see T. Bonyhady 1993 Places Worth Keeping: Conservationists, Politics and Law Australia: Allen and Unwin, chapter 1.

³⁵ Australian Conservation Foundation 1974 Newsletter July.

³⁶ Sinclair op cit p. 166.

³⁷ Ibid p. 167.

Attracting the Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate to Fraser Island was another way in which FIDO used existing procedures to its advantage. By doing so it was successful in nominating Fraser Island for World Heritage Listing and drawing the ACF into the debate; and it once again focused public attention on the issue.

The dual strategy of combining public concern with the use of the legal/political system was highly effective in establishing legitimacy for the conservationists. It was also important in providing the issue with credibility at the national level. With strong local support for sand mining and the Queensland government's advocacy of development projects, national support was vital if FIDO was to be effective.

The particular emphasis that FIDO placed on the courts may be explained by the attitudes of John Sinclair, leader of FIDO. Sinclair, originally a supporter of the Queensland Country Party, did not support direct action and maintained the necessity for a balanced approach to environmental conflict. This attitude is captured in an interview held with Sinclair in 1977, where he stated:

Now we are looking for a way of resolving conflicts more satisfactorily. I don't regard sitting in front of bulldozers as a very profitable pastime... We are trying, instead, to develop a legal framework for resolving conflicts between the environment and industry.³⁸

Hence, while Sinclair was willing to challenge entrenched development interests in Queensland, it was the existing political institutions and structures that remained crucial to achieving change.

The changes that occurred in the ACF leadership during 1973 profoundly affected the character of its response to the question of Fraser Island. Unlike the position it adopted in the Great Barrier Reef conflict, the ACF pursued a highly political role in the Fraser Island debate. Not only did this involve criticising the nature of existing decision making processes, including the Queensland

³⁸ D. Clutterbuck 1977 "Self-made Environmentalist" New Scientist 27 October p. 233.

government's policy making and Whitlam's granting of export licenses, it also encompassed actively encouraging trade union green bans as well as attempts to make Fraser Island an issue in the 1975 federal election.

Initially, the ACF became active in the Fraser Island campaign following the area's nomination for World Heritage Listing in 1973. In these early stages of mobilisation, the ACF followed the lead of FIDO and John Sinclair. Criticisms were directed towards the Mining Warden's decision to grant new mining leases on Fraser Island during June 1974, with the ACF supporting Sinclair's evidence, that issuing the leases was against the public's interest.³⁹ The ACF then broadened its reproof to cast doubt on the system of decision making, stating:

The evidence presented to establish Mr. Sinclair's objections was unchallenged and unanswered during the three-day hearing. An examination of the warden's decision serves only to perplex a rational mind in search of some understanding of how the system of recommending mining leases works in Queensland.⁴⁰

When the part played by Connor and Whitlam over the granting of export licences began to unravel, the ACF assumed an important role in both publicising and criticising the government's clandestine activity. Through its newsletter, the ACF called public meetings to increase awareness and debate on the Fraser Island issue.⁴¹ It also urged its members to protest against sand mining to Whitlam, either by telegram or letter.⁴² Both the electronic and written media were used to publicise the issue and a film on Fraser Island was screened, leading 23,000 Victorians to sign a petition of protest.⁴³

The ACF actively sought to extend the conflict, calling upon the union movement to intervene and impose greens bans to exert pressure on both DM Minerals and the government. Geoff Mosley, then director of the ACF, stated:

³⁹ Australian Conservation Foundation July loc cit.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Australian Conservation Foundation 1975 Newsletter April.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Australian Conservation Foundation October loc cit.

If the Parliamentary Labor Party as a whole cannot adhere to its own environment policy, I regret that once again conservationists will have to rely on the union movement to see fair play in environmental justice.⁴⁴

The ACF also moved the debate into the electoral arena. During the 1975 election campaign, the ACF further politicised the Fraser Island question by calling upon conservationists to make it an electoral issue. Although retaining qualified support for the Labor Party, the ACF articulated dissatisfaction with the government's treatment of the Fraser Island issue.⁴⁵

Conservation groups were able to construct a broad base of support for their campaign to preserve Fraser Island, with the media, public opinion and the trade union movement all assisting in various ways. In a similar fashion to the Great Barrier Reef campaign, a number of articles were printed by the written media that were highly sympathetic towards conservationist's attempts to have Fraser Island protected and reflected the sorts of claims made by conservation groups about the Island. For example, at the height of the conflict, in May 1975, the Australian published an article by Hugh Lunn which concluded: "Nowhere is there anything to touch Fraser Island. To scar it would be sacrilege."⁴⁶

Popular support for sand mining was also relatively high. Figures from a Morgan Gallup poll taken in May 1975 discovered a national average of 36% of

⁴⁴ Bayly loc cit.

⁴⁵ Australian Conservation Foundation 1975 Newsletter November.

⁴⁶ Lunn loc cit. In October of that year, the Bulletin printed an article by David McNicoll called "Fraser Island Rape Must Stop". Again, the arguments presented echoed those articulated by conservation groups:

My summing up has to come from my own observations. And let me say that I have seen mining in most parts of Australia - the Isa, Mt Newman, Kambalda, Mura. I have seen our Australian earth burrowed into, spewed up, dragged over and blown heavenwards at various mines ... But all these mines are in places where the damage - ecological and aesthetically - is practically nil ... Fraser Island is something different. It is unique. If it is damaged, it may never recover. And no one knows how little damage may set off the forces of destruction ... It is not just Maryborough's business; this is the vital concern of all Australians.

D. McNicoll 1975 "Fraser Island Rape Must Stop" The Bulletin October 11.

the population supporting the operation, 37% against and 27% undecided. On a state basis, Queensland registered the highest level of opposition at 41%, whilst on a party basis, 57% of ALP supporters were against mining beach sands.⁴⁷ While these figures are nowhere near as high as the 91% who opposed oil drilling on the Great Barrier Reef, they do suggest that conservationists claims had found a considerable degree of support.

It has been argued that popular receptiveness to environmental issues relies on environmental awareness. Evidence suggests that at the height of the Fraser Island conflict, this awareness was particularly acute. During 1975 a report was released by the Department of the Environment which concluded that there had been an increase in environmental consciousness within the community at large, discovering that "the majority of people say that the environment must be considered, whatever the cost".⁴⁸ Furthermore, when informed that affluent lifestyles were connected with environmental problems, only 7% chose affluence over quality of life; 38% said "Limit economic development in order to save the environment from further damage";⁴⁹ and 53% wanted to "Concentrate on improving the quality of life as a whole, including the environment, even if it does mean a drop in the standard of living".⁵⁰ Quantifying the impact of these attitudes on the Fraser Island campaign is not possible. It is evident, however, that the campaign to preserve the area took place within the context of a growing awareness of the environment.

Another important source of support for conservationists came from the trade union movement. The unions were divided on the issue of Fraser Island with the union in control of most of DM Minerals' labour, the Australian

⁴⁷ Fitzgerald op cit p. 353; B. Hoad 1975 "Politicians Sell Out the Environment" The Bulletin October.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Workers Union (AWU), opposed to any sort of green bans.⁵¹ It was the Queensland Trades and Labour Council (QTLC) which imposed a black ban on further sand mining at Fraser Island on 29 January, 1975,⁵² arguing that it was opposed to the exploitation of resources except where an EIS and feasibility study, with both union and conservationist participation, had been undertaken.⁵³

The QTLC ban did lead to temporary delays⁵⁴ as members of the Transport Workers Union refused to handle the dispatch of bulldozers to the island.⁵⁵ AWU opposition to green bans, however, eroded the ability of other trade unions to maintain bans and eventually the Queensland Trades and Labor Council's (QTLC) decision was reversed and the bans lifted on 3 March, 1975.⁵⁶ Without the support of the AWU, as the major supplier of labour in the Fraser Island project, the bans could have virtually no impact. Once black banning had failed, the QTLC and the ACTU call on the Whitlam government to place a moratorium on sand mining until the EIS was completed and the implications of the report fully considered.⁵⁷

Margaret Cribb has suggested that support for conservationists by the union movement was half hearted, arguing, "when it came to the crunch little or no positive action was taken by them."⁵⁸ It is difficult, however, to identify an alternative strategy that the QTLC and the ACTU might have adopted. The only unions which could exert influence upon DM Minerals were the building unions which imposed bans on DM Minerals' sister company, Dillingham Constructions. They argued that until the Fraser Island EIS was finalised and

51 T. Maiden 1975 "Fraser Island Will Be Test of Union Support For Green Bans" National Times 21-26 April.

52 Australian Conservation Foundation 1975 Newsletter February.

53 J. Sheather 1975 "Behind the Fight for Fraser Island" The Modern Unionist June/July. p. 35.

54 M. Cribb 1975 "Political Chronicle: Queensland" Australian Journal of Politics and History Vol. XXI No. 3 December p. 107.

55 Fitzgerald op cit p. 351.

56 Cribb loc cit p. 108.

57 Sheather loc cit p. 37.

58 Cribb loc cit p. 108.

DM Minerals indicated their attitude to the findings and requirements of the report, the ban would continue.⁵⁹ As Cribb suggests, the direct impact of trade union activity upon halting sand mining Fraser Island was limited, hampered by the AWU's opposition to any forms of bans. Nevertheless, these actions continued to publicise the issue and maintained pressure on the Labor Party with its trade union base.

In 1975, when Cass announced the Fraser Island Environmental Inquiry, the cumulative effect of four years of conservationists' lobbying found success. The effectiveness of FIDO's and the ACF's submissions to the Inquiry are perhaps best identified in the way that the inquiry adopted the arguments made by conservationists for why Fraser Island should be preserved:

[I]t is the conclusion of the Commission that Fraser Island is of great environmental importance. It is of aesthetic, historic, scientific and social significance for the present community, and for future generations of Australians, as well as being of international environmental significance. It forms part of the National Estate ... and is worthy of being so recorded... The entry of Fraser Island on the Register of the National Estate would be a pointless and sterile exercise unless it serves as a means to the wider end of encouraging and conservation of the Island in the national interest.⁶⁰

Furthermore:

The overall impression of a wild, uncultivated island refuge will be destroyed forever by mining, together with most of those qualities of the Island's natural environment that make Fraser Island of special value... These qualities can never be restored after destruction by mining.⁶¹

In a similar fashion to the Great Barrier Reef conflict, conservation groups were vital in placing Fraser Island onto the political agenda; a move that ultimately led to the area's protection. Popular support combined with an

⁵⁹ Sheather loc cit p. 37. In addition, glaziers, belonging to the Federated Furnishing Trades Society, black banned a multi-million dollar Estate House being built by Dillingham Constructions in 1975, which prevented the completion of the building. When the building was handed back unfinished to the Australian Estates, another ban was imposed on the Shell Data Centre. The federal secretary of the society, Ken Carr, said the ban would remain until DM Minerals ceased mining Fraser Island. A. Stewart 1976 "Greenies Turn to Arbitration" Financial Review September.

⁶⁰ Hicks and Hookey op cit p. 67.

⁶¹ Ibid p. 111.

effective use of political structures to maintain pressure upon the government for action. While Whitlam resisted these attempts, the progression of events which led to the establishment of an inquiry and ultimately the Island's preservation, would not have occurred without the activity of conservation groups.

The influence of these groups, however, went beyond creating the political context in which sand mining Fraser Island was prohibited. It is clear that the arguments adopted by conservationists were persuasive in the Committee of Inquiry's consideration of the issue and ultimately its recommendations. Hence, the initial aim of having the unique qualities of Fraser Island recognised was highly successful. In this respect, the impact of conservation groups in the Fraser Island conflict was significant.

Fraser Island and Queensland Politics

At the core of the Bjelke-Petersen government's response to the Fraser Island issue was the objective of allowing sand mining to proceed. The Bjelke-Petersen government was strongly committed to developing its export industry through the use of foreign capital and Fraser Island provided an opportunity to pursue this development strategy. Illustrating the high level of the government's commitment to sand mining was the speed that Cabinet approved the Mining Warden's recommendation to grant lease applications to DM Minerals in 1971 in spite of opposition by FIDO. The Bjelke-Petersen government initially appeared willing to avoid controversy over the issue, but only to the extent that it did not undermine any potential development prospects. Hence, there was the decision to make parts of Fraser Island a National Park, but only those considered of no use for other purposes.⁶²

In contrast to its highly vocal role in the Great Barrier Reef debate, the Queensland government was uncharacteristically quiet through much of the

⁶² Sinclair loc cit p. 8. This position was adopted to the extent that the Bjelke-Petersen government refused to acquire a 160 acre freehold block located within the National Park which had residential value.

Fraser Island conflict. When the events surrounding the granting of export licences were disclosed, the Bjelke-Petersen government did not mount any political attack on the federal government for intervening in a state matter. As Margaret Cribb has noted:

In the battle of words, it was strange that so little was made of the fact that the granting or withholding of mining leases is a responsibility of the state mining wardens court and that much of the present extraction on Fraser Island is being done through leases previously granted by the Queensland government.⁶³

Considering the high degree of conflict that was evident between Whitlam and Bjelke-Petersen, the Queensland government's low profile on Fraser Island was unusual. The problem the Queensland government faced was that Whitlam intended to intervene in Queensland politics in a manner which was entirely consistent with Bjelke-Petersen's conception of Queensland's interests. To bring Fraser Island into the states' rights debate could only draw attention to this point and undermine the argument, long perpetuated by the Queensland government, that Commonwealth intervention threatened the interests of the Queensland people.

With the advent of the Fraser Island Inquiry, followed by the election of the Fraser government, the arguments of the Bjelke-Petersen government began to be articulated. While Queensland government departments which had responsibilities connected to Fraser Island (the Department of Mines, Forestry and Lands, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Coordinator-Generals Department) boycotted the inquiry,⁶⁴ indignation dominated responses to the Inquiry's outcome and the Fraser government's adoption of its recommendations. Bjelke-Petersen described it as "an irresponsible and incredible decision";⁶⁵ and Sir Bruce Small, state MP called the ban "criminal folly", arguing that:

⁶³ Cribb loc cit p. 108.

⁶⁴ T. Hundloe 1985 "The Environment" in A. Patience The Bjelke-Petersen Premiership 1968-1983: Issues in Public Policy Melbourne: Longman Cheshire p. 89.

⁶⁵ Fitzgerald op cit p. 353.

We have to get these minerals out of the ground while there is still a demand for them... We should be shipping these minerals away while the harvest is on and consolidating our strength as a nation.⁶⁶

The strategy adopted by the Bjelke-Petersen shifted over time, responding to changes in political circumstances. While Whitlam was pursuing what the Queensland government perceived to be its interests, there was no reason for Bjelke-Petersen to become actively involved. Once it became evident that the Fraser government would implement the recommendations of the inquiry, the Queensland government became an ardent participant in the issue. Initially this took the form of publicly announcing that if possible, it would avoid the export ban, with Ron Camm, Minister for Mines, writing to conservationists stating:

It is my intention to safeguard mineralized areas of Fraser Island for mining and necessary export at some future date when an export licence can be obtained. This view would prevail even if the leases were surrendered or forfeited.⁶⁷

Once this had failed, the Queensland government undertook activities to discredit the federal government in Maryborough which was achieved by delaying the \$10 million compensation payment provided by the Commonwealth to offset unemployment in the area. Bjelke-Petersen took three months to decide which projects would be funded, while Maryborough residents continued to blame conservationists and the federal government for their poor economic fortunes.⁶⁸

Political support for the Queensland government's position on the issue came from a number of sources. In Queensland the issue achieved a bipartisan approach with the Queensland Labor Party fully supported mining on Fraser Island. Deputy Labor leader, Jack Melloy, considered that environmental arguments were "all a lot of hooing and it did not matter if there was mining

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ J. Sinclair 1977 "Report on Fraser Island" Australian Conservation Foundation Newsletter April p. 1.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

because natural forces would repair the damage".⁶⁹ Even more contemptuous of the conservationists' arguments was Jack Egerton, President of the Queensland branch of the ALP, who in 1976 stated:

Personally, I would have liked to see them leave the island landscaped and planted with some exotic or useful trees, fruit trees, shade trees, with lakes and what have you of that kind. It would have been a great opportunity to get a tourist attraction at a low price.⁷⁰

Hundloe has noted there was no apparent distinction between the Queensland political parties when it came to their support for development.⁷¹ The Queensland ALP's response to the Fraser Island issue reflects this attitude. Yet the issue becomes more complex when it is remembered that this same party was tolerant of the claims made by conservationists in the debate over the Great Barrier Reef. To explain this different approach to conservation and development, it is necessary to trace the character of the ALP's electoral fortunes.

When the Great Barrier Reef and Fraser Island conflicts took place, the ALP had been out of office since 1957. This was in contrast to the dominance of the ALP in state politics prior to this period, holding office from 1915-29 and then 1932-57. Much of this success had rested on the Labor Party's affiliation with the right wing AWU which represented a considerable portion of the rurally employed workforce. In 1969, this alliance was severed by the AWU and hence the ALP was dominated by the remaining left wing unions.⁷²

It was at this time that the Great Barrier Reef conflict emerged. This coincided with significant shifts in federal Labor policy and a process of reform. While the states were not necessarily strong supporters of these changes, they could not remain uninfluenced. In the absence of the right wing AWU, a gap

69 Fitzgerald op cit p. 353.

70 Ibid p. 353.

71 Hundloe loc cit p. 82.

72 These events are document in M. Cribb 1975 "Queensland Politics" Current Affairs Bulletin 1 April.

subsequently emerged which allowed conservation to appear on the political agenda of the Queensland Labor Party. While this lasted for only a brief time it was long enough for the party to support Reef preservation.

By 1975, when the Fraser Island conflict was at its height, substantial changes had occurred within the ALP. Federally, the Party was in the midst of a crisis which would culminate in Whitlam's dismissal. The Queensland Labor Party was equally dishevelled. During the last state election at the end of 1974, the Labor Party had only been able to win eleven out of eighty-two seats. It was clear that without the support of the AWU, Labor's electoral chances in Queensland were close to none. Policies which alienated the AWU were clearly off Labor's political agenda.

The AWU was a strong supporter of sand mining Fraser Island. As a right-wing rurally based union⁷³ the AWU was opposed to any sort of green ban⁷⁴ which were closely associated with the left wing ideas of Jack Munday. Moreover, it was AWU members who would directly benefit from sand mining Fraser Island, with DM Minerals claiming that 120 new jobs would be created by the project. With the local Maryborough economy in decline and high levels of unemployment,⁷⁵ the claims of DM Minerals found a receptive audience in the local unions and the wider Maryborough community.

With the AWU advocating sand mining, the Queensland Labor Party's options were limited. Unless the ALP wanted to undermine its best hope of regaining any kind of electoral credibility, support for the AWU was logical. It would seem that the developmentalist orientation of both Labor and the AWU was consistent with the historical development of both organisations, with the Great Barrier Reef more an aberration than a new direction for the Queensland Labor Party.

⁷³ Cribb "Queensland Politics" p. 24.

⁷⁴ Maiden loc cit.

⁷⁵ Cribb "Political Chronicle" p. 108.

Support from the Labor Party and the AWU was consolidated by local political figures who advocated sand mining. An association was made between sand mining and jobs, leading to a high degree of popular support for sand mining in Maryborough. One example of this support was an anti-conservation rally which was held in mid 1975 and drew 1,200 supporters.⁷⁶ Undoubtedly, local politicians were tapping into this ground swell of support as well as their own views about the necessity of development projects for the region's economic survival. John Juss, secretary-manager of the Maryborough Hervey Bay and District Development Board, provides a good example of public and political attitudes within the Maryborough area towards Fraser Island:

Nobody wants to see miners rip the island apart. We have always had the emphasis on control.

The locals are in favor because, obviously, employment is a consideration...

...We favor the mining because it will open the island to the public. I harbor the feeling that some conservationists are actually fairly selfish people. They say they want to preserve the environment for all to enjoy, but in fact places like Fraser Island can't be enjoyed by everyone because everyone doesn't have the facilities to enjoy it.⁷⁷

The Queensland government's failure to achieve its objective of having Fraser Island sand mined was to have a significant impact on its management of Fraser Island. Having lost the sand mining issue, the Bjelke-Petersen government took steps to ensure that a similar fate would not be faced by the Fraser Island timber industry and in 1977 Queensland Cabinet granted twenty year extension to two Maryborough sawmills.⁷⁸ Environment policy was also influenced by the Queensland government's lasting ire in the aftermath of the Fraser Island dispute. Environmental administrative apparatus's which had

⁷⁶ H. Lunn 1975 "Moonbi's Bulldog" Australian 28 June.

⁷⁷ McNicoll loc cit. Similar attitudes were expressed by Liberal MLA for Maryborough, Mr Alison who was reportedly delighted that "sanity had prevailed" in response to the cabinet decision to allow export licences. Bayly loc cit.

⁷⁸ G. Borschmann, 1988 "The Rare Old Giants" Habitat December 1 1988 p. 6.

been constructed were dismantled, the Environmental Control Council was abolished; environmental impact procedures were weakened, and the government refused to nominate Queensland National Parks in the Register of the National Estate.⁷⁹ John Sinclair also fell victim to the Queensland government. In July of 1977, just after Sinclair served a writ for defamation against Bjelke-Petersen, the Queensland government abolished Sinclair's position within the public service⁸⁰ and he was transferred to Ipswich, more than three hundred kilometres from Fraser Island.⁸¹ Presumably the purpose of this action was to make Sinclair's political campaigning more difficult, as well as causing considerable personal inconvenience. All of these actions can be identified as a signal to both the Commonwealth government and conservationists, that environmental considerations would pay for the Fraser Island decision.

The Whitlam Government

The previous chapter argued that there were two different evaluations of the environment's significance operating within the Whitlam government. While in the case of the Great Barrier Reef, both of these led to a strategy based on Reef conservation, they came into conflict over Fraser Island's future. As far as some members of the Whitlam government were concerned, including Cass and Uren, the environment was of vital importance within all aspects of policy making. For others, like Whitlam, environmental issues did have a place within political decision making, however it was one qualified by the government's wider political objectives.

When DM Minerals applied to Connor for an export licence in 1974, these two perspectives began to assume a concrete form within the government, creating a conflict which was to dominate the Whitlam government's response

⁷⁹ Hundloe loc cit p. 90.

⁸⁰ Fitzgerald op cit p. 353.

⁸¹ A. Stewart 1982 "It Doesn't Pay For a Public Servant to Buck the Queensland Government" Canberra Times 21 May.

to the question of Fraser Island. While Whitlam and Connor strongly advocated the provision of licences, Cass and his supporters challenged the application. The central objective of this group was not simply to stop sand mining, but to ensure that prior to mining an EIA was undertaken.

Whitlam has argued that his decision to support the granting of export licences was based on the companies having "outlaid substantial funds on their project and had entered into negotiations for the ultimate exporting of the mineral sands",⁸² prior to any additional questioning regarding further environmental regulations having occurred. Furthermore, that "In issuing the mining leases the Queensland authorities had laid down stringent conditions to protect the environment".⁸³ Although these circumstances may have played some role in constructing Whitlam's position, it remains highly unlikely that they provided the central rationale behind the decision. In other circumstances, for instance during the conflict over the Great Barrier Reef, the decisions of previous governments and environmental safeguards, were not considered adequate. Moreover, the provision of export licences still involved a negation of the government's policy with respect to EIA processes and ignored the new legislation that the government had introduced and passed in parliament.

There was significantly more to Whitlam and Connor's position in the Fraser Island conflict than Whitlam has suggested. Importantly, sand mining on Fraser Island was consistent with Connor's objective of ensuring that Australian minerals attracted a fair price on the world market.⁸⁴ The mineral sands industry in Australia has two locations, on the east and western coasts. East coast producers sell a higher quality product than the west coast. At the time of the Fraser Island conflict, competition existed between the east and west coast producers over the minimum price for mineral sands.⁸⁵ By encouraging

82 Whitlam op cit p. 540.

83 Ibid.

84 See chapter 3.

85 J. Byrne 1975 "Beach Sands Industry Hits Hard Times" Australian Financial Review October 29.

the east coast mineral sands industry, through the development of Fraser Island, Connor was supporting a strategy which would have provided greater justification for a higher minimum price and hence buoyed the Australian mineral sands industry.

Whitlam had a strong personal and political commitment to Connor and his policy objectives, which partially explains his support for granting the export licences.⁸⁶ It was the December 1974 Queensland election,⁸⁷ however, which provides the best explanation for Whitlam's position in the Fraser Island conflict. Whitlam played a prominent role in this election. The election was not only an attempt to strengthen the position of the Queensland Labor Party,⁸⁸ it was also an opportunity for Whitlam to redress the declining support and morale of the Labor Party at a national level.

By the end of 1974, the Labor Party was experiencing a crisis on a number of fronts. Economically, the government was struggling with the dual problems of rising unemployment and inflation.⁸⁹ The impact of constraints on policy making, such as an inability to control the senate, was to create a sense of crisis for the government, where long-term planning and stability were undermined and the government's publicly perceived legitimacy was deteriorating.⁹⁰ The Queensland election provided the opportunity for Whitlam to reverse the declining popularity of the ALP, the impact that this trend was having on Whitlam's leadership, and importantly, confront the frustration that the Labor Party had experienced in attempting to implement its

⁸⁶ M. Sexton 1979 Illusions of Power: The Fate of a Reform Government Sydney: Allen and Unwin p. 93.

⁸⁷ A. Reid 1976 The Whitlam Venture Melbourne: Hill of Content p. 228.

⁸⁸ F. Daly 1977 From Curtin to Kerr South Melbourne, Victoria: Sunbooks p. 217.

⁸⁹ B. Catley and B. McFarlane 1981 Australian Capitalism in Boom and Depression Australia: Alternative Publishing Cooperative p. 119.

⁹⁰ These constraints included: Labor's inability to control the senate; the opposition's use of the High Court to challenge Labor programs and to have Bills referred to committees of inquiry; non-Labor state governments and private groups responding hostilely to Labor's initiatives; and a highly conservative bureaucracy. These are the conditions which led to the ill-fated loans affair in early 1975. Sexton op cit pp. 126-30, chapter 9.

program of reform due to the problems raised by Bjelke-Petersen, who had reacted aggressively to the federal government's initiatives.

Whitlam's intention to play a central role in the Queensland election is important in explaining his support for granting the Fraser Island export licences. Public opinion in Maryborough and the surrounding areas was strongly in favour of sand mining because of the economic and employment benefits it would bring. Hence, it was logical to support the sand mining companies' claims.⁹¹ The electoral outcome was dismal and ironically, in spite of Whitlam's insistence that Connor publicise the Fraser Island decision, it was never announced and any electoral benefits were lost.⁹² Ultimately, the secretive manner in which the decision was made only served to heighten internal disunity within the ALP and further erode the Party's popularity.

Cass challenged the granting of export licences because it negated his commitment to placing environmental standards at the fore of all policy questions, especially those directly affecting the environment. The EIA process enshrined this principle and according to Cass "[was] the most important piece of environmental legislation ever to be considered by parliament."⁹³ Cass considered that:

[t]he environmental effects of proposals would be elevated to a place alongside economic considerations as 'an integral part of the information upon which a decision is taken.'⁹⁴

Cass considered that attempts to by-pass the EIA process were problematic for a number of reasons. There the impropriety of ignoring a process that was both government policy as well as having been encapsulated within legislation.⁹⁵ Furthermore, Whitlam's action also represented a rejection of the principle

⁹¹ T. Maiden 1975 "Fraser Island Bulldozers Flatten Moss Cass and His Ground Rules" National Times 7-12 April.

⁹² Toohey loc cit.

⁹³ J. Formby 1987 The Australian Government's Experience With Environmental Impact Assessment CRES Working Paper No. 9 p. 1.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ While the fact that the Governor-General had not as yet ratified the legislation made Whitlam's action legal, it was hardly a legitimate position for the government to assume.

contained within the EIA, suggesting that the environment was not central in determining government policy.

Cass had considerable support for his position at the time of the Fraser Island conflict. Concern for the issue had been articulated by the ALP's Urban Affairs Committee as far back as July 1974, and consistent with Cass, the committee's aim was to suspend any new mining on Fraser Island until a full environmental study had been undertaken.⁹⁶ It was this committee that supported Cass and took the issue to Caucus when it became evident that the problem would not be resolved at the ministerial level.⁹⁷ Having entered this level of decision making, the Fraser Island issue became a symbol of both Connor and Whitlam's power. As two of the major power-brokers with the ALP, it was significant that the position of Connor and Whitlam was only narrowly endorsed, reflecting the degree of support environmental issues had achieved within the ALP.

Because Whitlam held the power to grant export licences and did just that, it was up to those who wanted the licences to be withdrawn to find a means to achieve this end. Cass took the initiative by bringing Fraser Island back into existing decision-making structures. The establishment of an inquiry was absolutely vital within this process. Such an inquiry was likely to require a detailed EIA prior to supporting the granting of export licences and while it was possible that the recommendations would be ignored, at the very least, Cass's claim that an EIA was required would have been legitimised.

Whitlam responded to Cass's dissent by attempting to have it marginalised. A strategy of this sort was undertaken from the outset as was evident in Whitlam's failure to fully involve Cass in the decision making process or to instigate an EIA on Cass's recommendation. It was also influential in Whitlam's dealings with Cass in Cabinet where he refused to

⁹⁶ Lunn "Into the Enchanted Valley".

⁹⁷ Ibid.

accept Cass's claims and pursued his own position by putting Connor's motion before Cabinet.

The way in which the question of Fraser Island created divisions within the ALP is instructive. It suggests that while the Whitlam government showed an unprecedented concern for environmental issues, this had two distinct locations within the party. In the conflict over Fraser Island tension arose between those who believed that the environment should have a high priority on the governments policy agenda and those who considered it to be only a secondary concern, relative to other issues. For Whitlam and Connor, other policy issues, which emerged out of the political context that Fraser Island created, took precedence.

The Fraser Government

Differences in government ideology and style tend to dominate comparisons between the Whitlam and Fraser years. The turn of phrase 'reform and reaction'⁹⁸ is often cited to characterise the contrast between the two governments. In general, this is an accurate depiction of the treatment of environment policy under Whitlam and Fraser with conservatism and Fraser's new federalism greatly slowing the rapid rate of change and reform that had been instigated under Whitlam. Within this context Fraser Island appears as an aberration, with the Fraser government acting to protect the area when Whitlam did not. Complicating the matter further is the way that the Fraser Island decision apparently contradicts the L-CP government's broad approach to environmental decision making as well as the Fraser government's new federalism.

On 14 December, 1975, Malcolm Fraser led the L-CP coalition to victory over the Labor Party following Whitlam's controversial dismissal. Two

⁹⁸ An example of this is the book by B. Head (ed) 1979 From Whitlam to Fraser: Reform and Reaction in Australian Politics Melbourne: Oxford University Press, which includes an introduction characterising the shift in policy making from Whitlam to Fraser as one of reform to reaction, as the book title suggests.

characteristics of the Fraser government assist in explaining the nature of environment policy at this time. The first of these was the broadly conservative attitude of Fraser himself. Philip Ayres has described Fraser's attitude to conservation and race in the following manner:

In a sense, in all these respects he was the true conservative, concerned for continuity and tradition, for conserving and vivifying the past-in-the-present.⁹⁹

From this perspective, any sudden change is generally bad and the Whitlam government's frenzy of reform, with its perceived consequences, supported such a view. It is therefore not surprising that few new policy measures for the environment were developed during the Fraser years.

A second, and possibly the most significant factor that shaped the Fraser government attitude to the creation of environment policy, was Fraser's commitment to new federalism. In stark contrast to the Whitlam government's perceived tendency towards centralism, Fraser advocated the objective of redistributing government power back to the states. The majority of policy initiatives undertaken by the Fraser government in pursuit of the new federalism were dominated by the aim of enhancing the states' financial independence, coupled with institutional changes directed towards re-establishing state power and co-operation between local, state and federal levels of government.¹⁰⁰ The following speech made by Fraser in 1976 provides an overview of what the concept of 'new federalism' entailed:

⁹⁹ P. Ayres 1987 Malcolm Fraser: A Biography Richmond, Victoria: William Heinemann p. 369.

¹⁰⁰ Liberal-Country Party 1976 The New Government Policies Canberra: Hoquara Limited p. 29-31.

The drift towards centralism created its own inefficiencies - particularly in the duplication of administrative agencies and the growth of a large central bureaucracy. Moreover, this drift ran completely counter to the kind of society where a real centralisation of power is required if peoples needs are to be met in ways most sensitive to those needs. So long as state and local government lack an adequate financial autonomy, there is a standing temptation for Commonwealth politicians to inappropriately impose their views in areas where local decisions would be more appropriate...

...We believe that effective government requires Commonwealth, state and local governments to take decisions appropriate to their own spheres, with matters properly concerning more than one government being decided by genuine consultation and co-operation.¹⁰¹

Fraser's conception of new federalism had a marked impact on environment policy. The attempt to reduce the Commonwealth government's role in a broad variety of areas made an enormous difference to the administrative and policy arrangements designed to deal with environmental issues. This approach was epitomised by the fortunes of the Department of Environment. Immediately after Fraser won office in 1975, the Department of Environment was amalgamated into the Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development. At this time, the new department had a staff of 2256 who were situated in 19 divisions. By mid 1976, staff had been cut by almost 25%, full time staff were reduced to 653 and only seven of the nineteen divisions remained. In November 1978 another amalgamation occurred and the environment was absorbed into the Department of Science and Environment. Two years later it was transferred once again, this time to the Department of Home Affairs.¹⁰² The reduction in autonomy, diversity, size and influence of the Department of Environment suggests the marginalisation of environment policy during the Fraser years.

¹⁰¹ M. Fraser 1986 "The Growth - and Deficiencies - of Central Power" Speech on the 75th Anniversary of Australian Federation, Melbourne University, 7, August 1976, in D.M White and D.A. Kemp 1986 Malcolm Fraser on Australia Melbourne: Hill of Content p. 155.

¹⁰² Formby op cit p. 17.

The effectiveness of the EIA process also diminished during Fraser's period in government. In particular, the government diminished the Act's relevance to the states, and because of opposition to the Act from within government and bureaucracy, it was weakened in relation to the Commonwealth.¹⁰³

Fraser's environmental record is not strong, yet his government was not entirely void of concern for the environment. Decisions such as prohibiting sand mining on Fraser Island, rejecting renewed attempts to explore the Great Barrier Reef for oil, and the declaration of Kakadu National Park in 1979, may be associated with some commitment to the environment. Another initiative undertaken by the Fraser government was the establishment of an Inquiry into Whales and Whaling in 1978.¹⁰⁴ Finally, Fraser did make a considerable contribution to environmental policy at the international level, with Australia becoming a signatory to a number of important international environmental treaties.¹⁰⁵

All of these measures suggest that the Fraser government considered it did have some role to play in the resolution of environmental issues. In the main part, this took the form of an involvement in international treaties which, unlike the EIA processes, did not undermine Fraser's commitment to states'

¹⁰³ Ibid p. 4. One example that Formby cites to support this argument is the Iwasaki Sangyo case. In this instance the Department of Environment, Housing, and Community advised Treasury that the requirements of the EIA were met, even though the Department's internal report stated that the draft EIS put forward by Iwasaki did not include enough information to allow a comprehensive review of the development's environmental impacts. It would therefore appear that the EIA process and the environmental standards it was originally designed to enshrine, were not considered a high priority within the Fraser government. Ibid p. 18.

¹⁰⁴ Although it is also worth noting that Fraser initially rejected a proposal by the anti-whaling lobby to have their case heard before government. It was only after pressure from Liberal Party backbencher, Neil Brown, as well as threats by the anti-whaling lobby to make whaling an election issue, that Fraser established the inquiry. While such a scenario questions the motives behind the establishment of the Committee of Inquiry into Whaling, it does demonstrate the Fraser government's sensitivity to being identified as opposing conservationist objectives. Ayres op cit p. 369-370; P. Weller 1989 Malcolm Fraser PM: A Study in Prime Ministerial Power in Australia Australia: Penguin Books p. 160-1.

¹⁰⁵ These included: the Washington Convention on Trade and Endangered Species; ratifying the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals and the Convention of Wetlands of International Importance; supported for the establishment in Australia of the World Wildlife Fund; and signed with Japan a joint agreement to protect migratory birds. Ayres op cit p. 371.

rights. Although some specific environmental issues were addressed by the Fraser government, overall it is possible to identify a decline in the significance of Commonwealth government machinery responsible for the environment.

Fraser's decision to endorse the recommendations made by the Fraser Island Environmental Inquiry conflicted with the principles embodied within new federalism and was uncharacteristic of Fraser's general approach to environmental issues. The constitutional power provided to the Commonwealth government under Section 51(i) regarding trade and commerce¹⁰⁶ gives the federal government the power to grant or deny export licences. This power was used to deny export licences and by making sand mining unprofitable, halt sand mining operations.

As the decision to provide mining leases is a state responsibility, the Fraser government intervened in an issue which under normal circumstances would have fallen within the states' jurisdiction. Importantly, the issue at stake was not the export licences themselves, but the environmental impact that sand mining had on Fraser Island. This was a significant distinction within Fraser's notion of new federalism. In general, Fraser contended that to use Commonwealth powers for a purpose that the constitution did not intend was to breach the constitution. It was this form of argument that Fraser adopted to explain why his government would not intervene in the case of the Franklin dam. In this instance he argued that the federal government should not use constitutional powers over external affairs to enforce its will upon the states.¹⁰⁷ Interventionist activity in the case of Fraser Island also contradicted the concept of decentralising decision making, a central tenet in the new federalism and no attempt was made to facilitate co-operation between the federal, state and local levels of government, an important aspect of the policy.

¹⁰⁶ E. Ward 1982 The Constitutional Basis for Commonwealth Involvement in Environmental Matters Canberra: Department of the Parliamentary Library p. 11.

¹⁰⁷ Weller op cit p. 303.

Acknowledging that the Fraser Island decision ran counter to the new federalist position of the Fraser government, an explanation needs to be found for the government's action. A precedent for the Fraser Island decision had already been constructed during the Whitlam government's period in office. The denial of export licences beyond the two held by DM Minerals had already been used to limit sand mining activities and thereby placate the environment lobby's concerns. Furthermore, the Fraser Island Environmental Inquiry had been established on the basis that federal powers were involved in the issue and thus EIA procedures were appropriate. Finally, the Fraser government had pre-empted the possibility of the decision not to grant export licences on environmental grounds by stating within its environment policy that it would, "Implement the provisions of the Environment Protection Act where sand mining is planned and minerals are to be exploited".¹⁰⁸ By making this a part of its policy, the government legitimised intervention on environmental grounds.

All of these factors provided justification for the Fraser government's actions, yet they do not explain why the decision was made. In answering this question an important insight is provided by Edwards who notes that the Fraser Island decision was announced within a week of the government deciding to allow the fulfilment of existing uranium contracts.¹⁰⁹ Hence it can be understood as a part of "a deliberate style of balancing a move likely to antagonise the left with one likely to win its approval".¹¹⁰ There is considerable evidence to substantiate this argument, particularly if the "left" is taken to include the environment movement.

By 1976 the benefits of sand mining to the Australian economy were very limited. Due to a contracting export market, new sand mining ventures and an increase in production would have only served to lower prices in an already

¹⁰⁸ Liberal-Country Party op cit p. 28.

¹⁰⁹ J. Edwards 1977 Life Wasn't Meant to be Easy Sydney: Mayhem p. 100-1.

¹¹⁰ Ibid p. 100.

saturated market.¹¹¹ In effect, sand mining Fraser Island would not have benefited the economy, and may have led to further problems for the industry as a whole. Hence there existed no economic basis for the Fraser government to support sand mining Fraser Island.

In contrast to sand mining, the L-CP was firmly committed to the development of the uranium industry. Its policy statement purported that "mining and export of uranium oxide for commercially viable deposits will be permitted".¹¹² In fact this understates the enthusiastic manner in which the Minister for Minerals and Energy, Doug Anthony, actively pursued the export potential of uranium and its economic benefits.¹¹³

Before the Fraser government could proceed with its pro-uranium position it had to await the findings of Ranger Uranium Inquiry established under the Whitlam government. The degree of the Fraser government's commitment to developing the uranium industry is described by Smith, who has argued that impending the outcome of the Ranger Inquiry, the government:

maintain[ed] the transparent pretence that a decision on whether or not to mine uranium awaited the evaluation of the reports and ensuing "public debate".¹¹⁴

The major obstacle for the Fraser government with regard to uranium mining was the environmental impact of such projects and the public's perception that the government could adequately control such matters. By acting in a manner which was considered environmentally responsible in the case of Fraser Island, the Fraser government constructed for itself a degree of environmental credibility which could then be used when it made statements pertaining to the regulation of environmental controls for uranium. In this

111 Byrne loc cit.

112 Liberal-Country Party op cit p.54.

113 Weller loc cit p. 359.

114 G. Smith 1979 "Minerals and Energy" in B. Head (ed) From Whitlam to Fraser: Reform and Reaction in Australian Politics Melbourne: Oxford University Press p. 246-7.

manner the Fraser government enhanced public acceptance of the notion that "strict safeguards" would be adhered to in uranium mining.¹¹⁵

The Fraser Island decision may also be understood as having electoral motives, not simply in terms of capturing the environment vote, but to ensure that those people concerned with environmental issues were not necessarily alienated by the coalition's environment policy. The effect of such an approach would be to deflate Labor's ability to make the environment an electoral issue. By making enough decisions in favour of the environment the government could be viewed, at least in a limited sense, as being environmentally responsible.

The Fraser government's approach to the issue of Fraser Island was an unusual one. What makes Fraser Island particularly interesting is that it demonstrates the willingness of Fraser to ignore his own 'New Federalist' policy approach. Shaping this response was the government's objective of uranium mining. Thus, in a similar fashion to the Whitlam government, environmental policy was reflecting concerns other than environmental preservation.

Sand Mining Companies

Business did not provide a collective response to the issue of Fraser Island. Instead, the particular objectives of the companies were reflected in two broad strategies and discourses. There was DM Minerals, which adopted an antagonistic position in response to both the establishment of the Fraser Island Environmental Inquiry and Fraser's decision to prohibit export licences. By way of contrast, QTM remained accommodating, accepting government decisions as they were proposed.

The company with the greatest interest in the sand mining of Fraser Island was DM Minerals whose twelve leases accounted for 12,000 ha. This compared

¹¹⁵ D. Lowe 1984 The Price of Power Australia: Macmillan p. 122.

to QTM which also held twelve leases, but only covered an area of 1,000 ha.¹¹⁶ DM Minerals avidly pursued the objective of sand mining Fraser Island throughout the conflict by adopting two main forms of argument. The first was based on the notion that the environmental impact of mining on the Island was relatively insignificant. As William Murphy explained in 1983:

In any assessment of mineral sand mining on Fraser Island, one fact emerges above all others - simply that less than two per cent of this huge island would ever have been affected by the industry.¹¹⁷

Murphy also argued that this claim had been further borne out by the rehabilitation of mined areas on Fraser Island, stating, "such is the regrowth of native vegetation in previously mined areas that any fears of environmental damage have well and truly been put to rest."¹¹⁸

While the assumption that Fraser Island's environmental integrity would not be destroyed by mining underpinned the arguments of DM Minerals, the company's primary point of attack was the legitimacy of government intervention. DM Minerals contended that it had received authority from the Commonwealth government to export minerals and had made investments on this basis.¹¹⁹ The subsequent prohibition of licences to these companies was therefore a denial of their rights.

Aside from providing evidence at the preliminary environmental inquiry, DM Minerals boycotted any further activity which in any way questioned the approval it had originally been granted for export licences. Having withdrawn from the environmental inquiry, it called upon the High Court to rule against the use of Commonwealth powers to reject export permits for environmental reasons. Furthermore, DM Minerals wanted an injunction to be placed on the inquiry pending the High Court's ruling. The High Court

¹¹⁶ Bulletin loc cit.

¹¹⁷ W. Murphy as cited in F. Williams 1983 A History of Fraser Island: Written in the Sand Australia: Jacaranda Press p. 168.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ N. Hunter 1977 "Fraser Island Dispute Bound For Courts" Courier Mail September 25.

initially ruled against the injunction and in mid 1976 found in favour of the Commonwealth's constitutional right to use its powers relating to export licences when environmental issues were concerned.¹²⁰

Once the Fraser Island Inquiry's findings were released, DM Minerals sought to undermine the process by enlisting AA Heath and Partners Pty Ltd to critique the Inquiry's report. The critique covered a broad range of areas considered faulty within the Report, varying from semantics, to its construction of the Island's uniqueness and the ability of the mining companies to rehabilitate mined areas of Fraser Island. AA Heath's report concluded that the Inquiry suffered from many weaknesses and distortions of ecological arguments, and found its terms of reference overly limited, focusing solely on sand mining.¹²¹ While AA Heath's Report was not accepted by those outside the sand mining industry, it was clearly an attempt to provide credibility to DM Mineral's claims that the government instigated environmental inquiry was inadequate.

DM Minerals also criticised the Fraser government's decision, describing it as a "bitter farce" and "a tragic mistake".¹²² When four million dollars was offered for compensation by the Commonwealth government, DM Minerals continued its attack by demanding \$23.9 million. The key reason for the refusal, outlined in Murphyores Holdings Ltd 1978 Annual Report, was as follows:

If the \$4 million was accepted as funds of the partnership it would repay only a portion of the loans advanced to the partnership and Murphyores would receive nothing to compensate it and its shareholders for exploration expenditure incurred prior to the foundation of the loss of its major asset which would have been a very substantial income basis for many years.¹²³

¹²⁰ G. McColl 1980 "The Mining Industry and the Natural Environment" Resources Policy June p.155.

¹²¹ A.A. Heath 1977 "Fraser Island Environmental Inquiry: A Critique of Ecological Aspects of the Report" Queensland Government Mining Journal Vol. 78 June p. 291.

¹²² Fitzgerald op cit p. 351.

¹²³ L. Boccabella 1979 "Fraser Island May Yet Be Mined" Australian Financial Review 12 March.

The claim made by Murphyoeres was questionable, as Barnett explains: "In truth the company may have voluntarily closed its operations soon after its forced closure because of falling prices".¹²⁴ Nevertheless, the company's argument that the denial of export licences represented an infringement on the company's rights,¹²⁵ did prove pervasive within the mining community at large. Importantly, the Australian Mining Industry Council supported DM Minerals position, arguing that the Fraser government's actions would damage Australia's international image.¹²⁶

DM Minerals ceased mining in December 1976,¹²⁷ and in January 1978, Dillingham's announced that it was going to close down all of its mineral sands operations in Australia because of the Fraser Island outcome, as well as a decision by the New South Wales government to ban sand mining in national parks after 1982.¹²⁸ The company then attempted to undermine Australia's international credibility. As P. Nixon, Acting Minister for Trade and Resources noted on 30 March 1979:

Dillinghams, instead of either responding to Australia's offer of compensation, or having recourse to the Australian courts has chosen to press its case through a wide ranging propaganda campaign principally in the US, aimed at denigrating Australia and the Australian Government.¹²⁹

It is significant that DM Minerals rejected the government's offer of compensation because the possibility of the company receiving the additional \$20 million it demanded was extremely unlikely. It is arguable that DM Minerals was making an ambit claim, one that significantly raised the threshold upon which compensation payments would be made. Yet the confrontationist approach of the company suggests that the political aim of maintaining its contention that the federal government's activities were

124 D. Barnett 1979 Minerals and Energy in Australia Australia: Cassell p. 257.

125 A. Gray "Strain Seen in Ban on Fraser Island Exports" Canberra Times 5 July.

126 McColl loc cit p. 157; W. Murphyoere op cit p. 168.

127 Fitzgerald op cit p. 353.

128 Barnett op cit p. 257.

129 McColl loc cit p.157.

illegitimate dominated DM Mineral's actions. Had economic concerns been the driving force behind the companies manoeuvres, then it would be more logical for the company to accept the compensation pay out, or demanded a realistic amount.

The actions of DM Minerals in the Fraser Island dispute reflect a departure from the position adopted by business in the Great Barrier Reef conflict. It has been argued that in the instance of the Great Barrier Reef, business essentially viewed environmental concern as an anomaly that was limited to that particular issue. By the conclusion of the Fraser Island conflict, the environment was being recognised as an issue that could significantly disrupt the ability of business to make resource decisions. The emphasis that DM Minerals placed on constructing the government's intervention as illegitimate, suggests that it was the power of mining companies to make such decisions that was at the centre of DM Minerals concerns.

The AMIC supported the claims of DM Minerals and appears to have been undergoing a transition in response to environmental issues at about the time of the Fraser Island conflict. While it did not play an overtly political role in this conflict, its claims regarding the impact of such a decision on Australia's international reputation as a resource producer did provide some indication of the position it would adopt in later campaigns.

QTM's actions were quite different to those of DM Minerals, testifying before the Fraser Island Environmental Inquiry and accepting the \$0.5 million offered in compensation.¹³⁰ A variety of reasons explain the contrasting approaches of QTM and DM Minerals. The most apparent was that QTM had a far more limited interest in Fraser Island and the whole issue was considered to be far less significant. Furthermore, QTM's environmental record was far more open to attack by both the government and environmental groups than DM Minerals had been. As the Australian Financial Review reported in 1979

¹³⁰ Barnett *op cit* p. 257.

"rehabilitation undertaken by Queensland Titanium Mines ... is, in some parts, nothing short of devastation".¹³¹ With its inability to argue that environmental standards were being met, it would seem that QTM was satisfied with accepting the Fraser Island Environmental Inquiry's recommendations and the compensation offered.

Conclusion

The dispute over sand mining on Fraser Island followed soon after the Great Barrier Reef conflict. In this chapter it has been argued that conditions similar to those experienced in the Reef conflict led conservation groups to mobilise in an attempt to have Fraser Island preserved. Arguments pertaining to the relationship between environmental damage and awareness are therefore equally applicable in explaining the conflict over Fraser Island.

There are, however, a number of important differences between the Reef and Fraser Island conflicts. The Great Barrier Reef was unique to the extent that there was widespread community recognition of the area's ecological significance prior to the political dispute emerging. Thus, conservationists were primarily concerned with publicising the possible damage to the Reef and finding a legitimate basis for the state to intervene and disallow drilling. In general terms, the Fraser Island conflict represented a reverse of this situation. By the time the dispute over Fraser Island was reaching its height at the end of 1974, the Commonwealth had already defined for itself a legitimate basis for intervention in environmental concerns. This was partly a result of the precedent established by the Great Barrier Reef. It was also a consequence of the policy and legislative measures introduced by Moss Cass. What remained to be secured was broader community recognition of the area's ecological integrity. Hence, the focus of the conservationists' campaign was to extend environmental awareness.

¹³¹ Boccabella loc cit.

The role of production and accumulation strategies were noted to be significant in determining the character of potential environmental damage in the Great Barrier Reef conflict. A corresponding argument can be made in the case of Fraser Island. At various stages of the conflict it is possible to recognise the role and significance of different economic strategies in shaping the pressure to exploit or preserve mineral sands on Fraser Island. In a similar fashion to the Great Barrier Reef, the impetus to exploit Fraser Island's mineral sands emerged out of the Queensland government's strategy for economic development. Initial Commonwealth support for sand mining has been explained, in part, by the way it fitted in with Connor's plans for the mining industry in Australia. Like the Bjelke-Petersen government, this evolved out of a particular economic strategy. Fraser's response to the Fraser Island dispute may similarly be explained. The relative decline of the mineral sands industry combined with the Fraser government's objective of establishing a uranium mining industry. Again, Australia's economic future was at the centre of these decisions. Each of these examples suggests the importance of production in creating the threat of environmental damage or the decline of that threat.

The previous chapter identified three broad categories which described value judgements regarding the environment's significance. These were also evident in the Fraser Island conflict. The alliance between conservationists and the Cass 'faction' within the ALP reproduced the ecological paradigm, arguing for Fraser Island's conservation on the basis that it exhibited a unique environment worthy of preservation. In direct opposition to this perspective was the view presented by the Queensland government and supported by a broad coalition including the Queensland ALP, local Maryborough politicians, the AWU and DM Minerals. This approach marginalised the environmental significance of Fraser Island, constructing the area's significance in terms of its potential for economic development. The ecological integrity of the region was

dismissed within this framework which assumed that the new eco-systems of rehabilitated areas were as good as the ones they replaced.

The third category also emerges in the case of Fraser Island. In sum, this view is not especially concerned with environmental issues in their own right, but rather the political conditions they create. Having already located Whitlam and Connor within this perspective, it is not difficult to explain the dramatic shift which led them to support conservationists' objectives in the Great Barrier Reef conflict and then ignore their own environmental requirements in the case of Fraser island. Quite different political and economic forces were in operation during the two disputes, leading to disparate responses to these issues. A similar argument has been made to explain the actions of the Fraser government. Here the possibility of uranium mining clearly out-weighed the inconsistency that the denial of export licences represented with regard to other environmental issues and policy objectives such as new federalism. QTM's response may also be understood within this framework. Unlike DM Minerals, QTM appears to have evaluated the political and economic ramifications of challenging the government's decision to halt sand mining and chose not to object.

The central conflict in the dispute over Fraser Island was essentially the same as it had been in the case of the Great Barrier Reef, revolving around opposition between those who perceived the Island as encompassing a unique ecological system and the view that the value of the mineral sands lay in its potential for mining and economic development. While this represented the core of the conflict, the third (politics as paramount) perspective played an important part as a heated debate emerged between Whitlam and those adhering to the ecological paradigm. Not only did this involve friction between Whitlam and conservation groups, but within the ALP itself. When Fraser decided to support conservationists' claims and the Fraser Island

environmental inquiry, the situation was reversed with the federal government facing an agitated DM Minerals.

The conflict over Fraser Island consolidated developments which had begun to emerge during the Great Barrier Reef dispute. Conservationists were successful in gaining public support for their claims and identified the state as the agent central to environmental protection. The Queensland government ignored these demands based on its own developmentalist ethos and thus the issue was taken into the national arena. Unlike the Reef, Whitlam was to ignore conservationists as he attempted to balance other political and economic priorities. The ALP, however, remained a source of support for conservationists as Cass put in place an environmental inquiry which ultimately created a context in which the Fraser government would protect Fraser island. Analysis of Fraser's motives has revealed that what provided the rationale behind this decision was the desire to establish sufficient credibility on the issue of environmental safeguards and thus offset fears regarding uranium mining. This is a particularly pertinent point when one considers that in the case of the Franklin dam, the topic of the next chapter, Fraser was unwilling to utilise similar powers to intervene in another environmental conflict.

Like the Great Barrier Reef, Fraser Island became a part of a process which involved the changing relationship between environmental damage and environmental awareness. The outcome of the conflict may have been principally associated with the Fraser government's objective of developing Australia's uranium mining industry, nevertheless, it was widely perceived as a victory for conservation groups. It should not be forgotten, however, that Fraser's dealing with the issue was partly predicated on the need for the government to be recognised as environmentally responsible. What this outcome led to was a consolidation of the trend towards the increasing importance of environmental issues on the policy agenda. It further

heightened conservationists' optimism regarding what could be achieved through the state and galvanised the notion that this represented a threat to developmentalist interests. Hence, Fraser Island played an important role in the evolving significance accorded to environmental issues in Australia.

Chapter Five

The Franklin Dam Controversy: The Conflict Widens

The Franklin Dam Story

The HEC's Report outlining Tasmania's future power options was tabled in the Tasmanian parliament on October 16, 1979, at a time when the state Labor Party was under the Premiership of Doug Lowe. A power scheme, based on the construction of a dam on the Gordon River, below its junction with the Franklin, was advocated by the HEC Report.¹ Conservationists responded by asserting that the Franklin scheme would seriously jeopardise a significant section of the south west wilderness area. It was from these two opposing perceptions of the future of Tasmania's south west that a vehement environmental conflict, spanning just over three years, had its origins.

Questions relating to HEC power and the environmental significance of Tasmania's south west had attracted increasing political attention since the controversy over the flooding of Lake Pedder in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A South West Advisory Committee was established in 1975 to inquire into the region, resulting in the enlargement of the South West National Park in the following year.² During this period the Cartland Committee was also formed. The Committee's purpose was to evaluate conflicting claims to the south west. Investigations into the south west were indicative of a shift in government attitudes to the power of the HEC, which had previously had the unchallenged right to determine sites for future electric power developments. This shift was confirmed when Lowe required more than one proposal to be included in the HEC's 1979 Report.³

¹ S. Simpson and W. Crawford 1983 "The Franklin decision: Four Turbulent Years" Mercury 2 July.

² D. Lowe 1984 The Price of Power Australia: Macmillan p. 64.

³ S. Bennett 1983 "The Fall of a Labor Government: Tasmania 1979-82" Labour History No. 45 November 1983 p. 84.

Extending this further, Lowe opened the energy debate to the public. A Co-ordination Committee, headed by Nick Evers (Director of Energy), was created to receive public comment on the HEC Report, as well as the opinion of government departments and authorities. Initially, a Joint House Parliamentary Select Committee was planned to evaluate the HEC Report and the advice that the Co-ordination Committee had received⁴. With the support of the Liberal Party opposition, the Legislative Council, a traditional ally of the HEC, refused to cooperate. Instead, on April 2, 1980, it formed a separate committee to investigate the issue⁵. Lowe responded by extending the role of the Co-ordination Committee, so that it would make its own decision in response to the HEC Report.⁶ On the 2nd of June, 1980, the Co-ordination Committee recommended the construction of a thermal power station and a dam on the Gordon-above-Olga in opposition to the HEC's Franklin scheme.⁷

While this process was occurring, the impact of the Franklin issue was felt in a by-election in the Tasmanian electorate of Denison. In this election, an Australian Democrat, Norm Sanders, was elected on a predominantly conservationist platform.⁸ Sanders had previously been Director of the Tasmanian Wilderness Society⁹ and made it clear that his primary consideration in entering parliament was conservation issues.¹⁰

Polarisation within the Tasmanian community became evident as both the TWS and the HEC rallied support. Meanwhile, the state Labor Cabinet followed the Co-ordination Committee's advice. On July 11, 1980 the Gordon-above-Olga scheme was recommended, with the Franklin to be incorporated within a Wild Rivers National Park.¹¹ Legislation for the Gordon-above-Olga

4 Lowe op cit p. 105.

5 R. Herr 1984 "Politics in Tasmania: Parties, States' Rights and Presidentialism" Current Affairs Bulletin Vol 60 No. 11 April p. 8; Simpson and Crawford loc cit.

6 Lowe op cit p. 105.

7 Coordination Committee on Future Power Development A Report to the Premier May p. 4.

8 Simpson and Crawford loc cit.

9 J. McQueen 1983 The Franklin: Not Just a River Australia: Penguin p. 24.

10 G. Borschmann 1982 "Trails of a reluctant MP" Age 15 May.

11 Lowe op cit p. 119.

scheme was debated in the House of Assembly on the 30th of November, and a bill authorising the \$611 million Olga proposal was passed by a vote of 15:13. The Legislative Council's Select Committee on power development, however, found in favour of the Franklin proposal. Between the 16th and 19th of December, the Legislative Council debated the issue, and by a vote of 13 to 5, decided to support the HEC scheme,¹² amending the relevant legislation.¹³

When parliament rose in 1980, the parliamentary deadlock between the two houses over the Franklin issue remained unresolved. This situation continued for the majority of the following year. Frustrated, the Lowe government proclaimed the Co-ordination Committee's recommended Wild Rivers National Park on April 30, 1981 and nominated the area for World Heritage Listing.¹⁴ Hence, placing the proposed location of the Franklin dam within a National Park and potentially a future World Heritage site. Harry Braid, chairman of the Upper House's Select Committee, maintained that this would not affect the energy debate.¹⁵

For the remainder of the year, protagonists both for and against the Franklin scheme continued to exert pressure on the government, with conservationists' campaigning against both the government's Olga option as well as the Franklin scheme. From the initial stages of the conflict between the House of Assembly and the Legislative Council, the possibility of a referendum was canvassed as a means to resolve the parliamentary deadlock. While Lowe maintained that neither an election nor referendum would be used to determine the outcome of the Franklin conflict, support for a referendum increased as no other solution emerged. On September 16, 1981, when it became apparent that numbers in Caucus would ensure a referendum, Lowe conceded.¹⁶

12 Simpson and Crawford loc cit.

13 Lowe op cit p. 141.

14 Simpson and Crawford loc cit; Age 5 Jan 1983.

15 Simpson and Crawford loc cit.

16 Ibid.

On November 10, 1981, the leader of the Liberal Party, Geoff Pearsall resigned and was replaced by Robin Gray. The following day, after a vote of no confidence, Lowe was replaced by Harry Holgate, a staunch supporter of the HEC. Lowe responded by calling for federal intervention, resigning from the ALP to sit on the cross benches, and was followed by Labor Party whip, Mary Willey. The Labor Party was consequently left without a majority in parliament.¹⁷

The referendum was held on the 12th of December, 1981. Lowe had initially made a commitment to provide a 'no dams' alternative, however, after pressure from the state executive, Lowe retreated and the only options given to the electorate were the Franklin and Olga schemes, with no alternative provided to electors opposing both proposals.¹⁸ Conservationists responded by mounting a campaign to encourage people to write "no dams" on their ballot papers, thereby posting an informal protest vote. Although the Franklin-below-Gordon scheme won the majority of votes, a very high informal vote was recorded with 33.25% of the ballot papers marked "no dams" in support of the conservationist campaign.¹⁹

Additional strength to conservationists' arguments for the Franklin came during February 1982, when ancient aboriginal dwellings around the Franklin and Lower Gordon Rivers were discovered. The contents of the caves dated back 20,000 years which meant they held information about some of the oldest human inhabitants in the world.²⁰

On the 29th of January 1982, under the combined influence of Holgate's leadership and the referendum results, the Tasmanian Labor Party changed its policy to supporting the Franklin scheme.²¹ When parliament resumed on

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ R. Chapman and G. Smith 1982 "Political Chronicle: Tasmania" Australian Journal of Politics and History Vol. 28 N.o 1 p. 107.

¹⁹ Simpson and Crawford loc cit.

²⁰ G. Bell 1982 "South-West Tasmania Be Dammed" Catalyst 6 April, 1982 p. 13.

²¹ Bennett loc cit p. 90.

March 26, Norm Sanders moved and won a motion of no confidence and the ALP lost its opportunity to legislate for the damming of the Franklin.²² An election was held on the 15th of May with the ALP easily defeated.²³

The incoming Gray government lost no time in legislating to allow for the HEC's power scheme to commence. Legislation was debated and passed during June 1982, with construction on the Franklin to begin immediately.²⁴ Conservationists altered the focus of their campaign from the state to the federal sphere. This move found some hope. At the ALP's 34th Biennial Conference, which was held in June 1982, a motion was passed opposing the Franklin dam. Fraser, although opposed to the dam in principle, remained unwilling to use federal powers to intervene. Instead, in January 1983, the Fraser government made a compensation bid of \$500 million to the Gray government, should it stop the dam, an offer Gray refused.²⁵

Over the summer of 1982-3, conservationists continued to expand their campaign by establishing a blockade on the Gordon at the proposed dam site. At this time, conservationists also began organising a campaign for the expected federal election. Only two months after these preparations, on the 3rd of February 1983, Fraser announced that the next election would take place on the 4th of March. With the ALP and Australian Democrats maintaining their opposition to the Franklin dam, conservationists campaigned for the election of a Labor government.²⁶

After the ALP's victory in the 1983 election, the new government introduced the World Heritage Properties Conservation Bill to protect the

²² Simpson and Crawford loc cit.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ B. Davis 1986 "Tasmania: the Political Economy of a Peripheral State" in B. Head The Politics of Development in Australia Sydney, London, Boston: Allen and Unwin p. 223.

²⁵ R. Alcock 1983 "Political Chronicle: Tasmania" Australian Journal of Politics and History Vol 29 No. 3 p. 505.

²⁶ J. Warhurst 1983 "Single Issue Politics: The Impact of Conservation and Anti-Abortion Groups" Current Affairs Bulletin Vol. 60 No. 2 July p. 22.

Franklin.²⁷ In response, the Tasmanian government challenged the legislation in the High Court. The basis for this challenge was that intervention would create an imbalance between state and federal powers. On the 1st of July 1983, by a ruling of four votes to three, the High Court found in favour of the Commonwealth.²⁸ The basis for its decision was that the Commonwealth had the constitutional power to intervene on the grounds of its external affairs and corporations power.²⁹ On July 20, 1983, negotiations between the Commonwealth and Tasmania led to an agreement of a \$270 million compensation package being offered to Tasmania. This was to be staggered over 10 years with \$24.3 million to be granted for the five years of work done on the Franklin site, an additional \$200 million over 10 years towards alternative power projects, and \$40 million to be provided for employment funding over the 1983-4 and 1984-5 financial years.³⁰

Conservationists

By the time of the Franklin campaign, the conservation movement was relatively well developed in Tasmania. The initial catalyst for political mobilisation of conservationists was the conflict over Lake Pedder which emerged in the 1960s as a response to the HEC's proposal to flood the Lake. Due to the Lake's unique eco-systems and beauty, considerable public and scientific dissent emerged when it became evident that the area was under threat.³¹ A number of groups formed in attempt to oppose the HEC proposal, including a political party, the United Tasmania Group (UTG) which was the

²⁷ M. Wilcox 1983 "Victory on the Franklin" Australian Conservation Foundation Newsletter Vol. 15 No. 7 August p. 4.

²⁸ Canberra Times 2 July 1983; R. Davis 1983 "Tasmania: Premiers and Parochial Politics" A. Parkin and J. Warhurst (eds) Machine Politics in the Australian Labor Party Sydney: Allen and Unwin p. 225.

²⁹ Canberra Times 2 July 1983.

³⁰ J. Warden 1984 "Political Chronicle: Tasmania" Australian Journal of Politics and History Vol. 30 No. 3. p. 418-19.

³¹ K. McKenry 1972 "A Historical and Critical Analysis of the Controversy Concerning the Gordon River Power Scheme" in Australian Conservation Foundation (ed) Pedder Papers: Anatomy of a Decision Australia: Australian Conservation Foundation p. 22-23.

first Green Party in the world.³² Not only was the need to flood Lake Pedder queried, but so was the power of the HEC within the decision making process.³³ Throughout the conflict, conservation groups lobbied both the state and federal governments, seeking measures to protect the environment with public support identified as important in retaining government attention.³⁴

Conservationists failed to stop the flooding of Lake Pedder. One result was to create a demand for a more radical approach to ecological issues, leading to the formation of the South West Tasmania Action Committee (SWTAC) in 1974.³⁵ SWTAC's emphasis lay in the intrinsic and non-human aspects of nature and was accompanied by an aggressive public image and media profile.³⁶ This approach drew limited support from the public, alienated it from more conservative conservation groups,³⁷ and created divisions between environmental groups with bickering over issues such as whether or not to extend the South West National Park weakening its effectiveness in influencing the political decision making process.³⁸ SWTAC was subsequently disbanded in 1976 to be superseded by the Tasmanian Wilderness Society (TWS) which was established to formalise the dominance of a less radical perspective.³⁹

The development of the conservation movement in Tasmania during the 1970s had a number of important effects on the Franklin campaign. Importantly, it provided a core of activists within the TWS who had experience in dealing with the political process and the techniques required to run both an

³² For details on the UTG see P. Walker 1989 "The United Tasmania Group: An Analysis of the World's First Green Party" in P. Hay, R. Eckersley, and G. Holloway (eds) Environmental Politics in Australia and New Zealand Hobart: Board of Environmental Studies.

³³ K. Kiernan 1981 "All over the bloody floor were stone tools and I had Never Noticed" in R. Green (ed) Battle for the Franklin Australia: Australian Conservation Foundation p. 88.

³⁴ McKenry loc cit p. 17.

³⁵ G. Easthope and G. Holloway 1989 "Wilderness as the Sacred: The Franklin River Campaign" in P. Hay, R. Eckersley, and G. Holloway (eds) Environmental Politics in Australia and New Zealand Hobart: Board of Environmental Studies p. 190.

³⁶ Ibid p. 191.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Kiernan loc cit p. 89-90.

³⁹ Pers. comm. B. Davis 25 February 1994.

organisation and a political campaign. Secondly, previous problems between conservation groups provided a heightened awareness of the need to ensure that links between various groups were maintained. Finally, by the time of the Franklin campaign the TWS had developed an organisational infrastructure capable of coping with a campaign as extensive as the Franklin.

The ACF became involved in the Franklin debate before it became a heated political issue, as early as 1978 declaring that the Franklin Lower Gordon campaign would be its focus in the following year. Not only did this decision pre-empt the publication of HEC's proposal to dam the Franklin, it also provided the basis for an alliance with TWS. By the time of the Franklin campaign, a firm alliance had been formed between the ACF and the TWS. In addition, the Tasmanian Conservation Trust played a crucial role in researching Tasmania's energy needs, ensuring that from the outset conservation groups were well informed on the issue.⁴⁰

At the core of the conservationists' rationale for challenging the HEC's Franklin scheme was the destructive impact that the dam would have on Tasmania's south west wilderness. The Franklin and other rivers which would have been flooded by the dam were considered an irreplaceable part of the south west.⁴¹ Of particular concern was the way the proposed HEC construction ran straight through the middle of the wilderness region. According to the TWS, wilderness by its very nature, must be remote and as a result, the impact of the project was considered to be much greater than the HEC acknowledged.⁴²

Since its formation in 1977, the TWS's primary objective was the protection of wilderness, a position clearly evident in the organisation's stated aims:

to promote the concept of wilderness;

⁴⁰ See for example C. Harwood and M. Hartley 1980 An Energy Efficient Future For Tasmania Hobart: Tasmanian Conservation Trust.

⁴¹ Tasmanian Wilderness Society 1982 Submission, Senate Select Committee on South West Tasmania Vol 1 Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer p. 21.

⁴² *Ibid* p. 23.

to prevent the destruction of wilderness;

to secure the future of wilderness;

and to promote the rights of wilderness⁴³

Definitions of wilderness vary, encompassing notions of primitiveness, remoteness, ecological diversity and how unique an area is considered to be.⁴⁴

In addition to these concepts is the notion of the 'wilderness experience'. An inherently difficult concept to define, the 'wilderness experience' relies on the impact of physical experience, emotive imagery and spirituality; as this quotation from the Canberra branch of the TWS suggests:

Wilderness is a subjective experience, and the emotions felt depend upon individual perception. Words alone are quite inadequate to describe this experience. Words may be defined with descriptions and theodites, but the wonder of a deep ravine, a wild mountain crag or a delicate rain-dewed orchid, words merely cut a faint image of the reality. Nevertheless, even this image is powerful enough to bring vicarious enjoyment to many people. The enormous popularity of wilderness documentaries, books and other forms of communications demonstrates that those who never visit the wilderness may also benefit from its existence.⁴⁵

Partly due to the difficulties associated with defining the meaning of wilderness, and also as a consequence of previous problems associated with unifying conservation groups in Tasmania, the TWS assumed a considerable degree of flexibility within its justifications for preserving wilderness. There was the more conservative perception of wilderness as a potentially useful resource for the future, a construction of wilderness as a resource for spiritual and physical recreation, and finally the radical view that wilderness has intrinsic worth, irrespective of the benefits it brings to humanity.⁴⁶ This final

⁴³ This reference comes from an unnumbered centre fold in H. Gee and J. Fenton (eds) 1978 The South West Book: A Tasmanian Wilderness.

⁴⁴ Tasmanian Wilderness Society op cit p. 11, 24-5; Australian Conservation Foundation 1981 "Submission" Senate Select Committee on South West Tasmania Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer p. 3703.

⁴⁵ Tasmanian Wilderness Society (Canberra Branch) 1982 "South West Tasmania - A National Asset" Senate Select Committee on South West Tasmania Vol 2 Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer p. 146-7.

⁴⁶ Easthope and Holloway loc cit p. 193.

view tended to dominate the TWS outlook. It was, however, not treated as irreconcilable with the first two attitudes, and all three perspectives were evident in TWS publicity.⁴⁷

The character of the Franklin campaign was shaped by the TWS's approach to wilderness and the impact that this had on the sorts of claims made for preserving the Franklin. As the previous quotation by the Canberra TWS suggested, the wilderness experience was central to people placing a value on wilderness areas. One result was that the TWS encouraged people, especially prominent personalities and politicians, to raft down, and experience the Franklin for themselves.⁴⁸

The Franklin, however, remained inaccessible to many Australians. These people were to be reached by visual imagery transmitted by films, television, books and television commercials.⁴⁹ The aim was to create an enhanced awareness of wilderness, extol its virtues, and thus provide motivation for mobilisation against the south west's degradation. The special role of the medium of film and television is described by Thompson:

⁴⁷ Ibid p. 194.

⁴⁸ B. Connolly 1981 The Fight For the Franklin: The Story of Australia's Last Wild River NSW, Victoria: Cassell Australia Ltd p. 20, 37.; P. Thompson 1984 Bob Brown of the Franklin River Sydney, London, Boston: Allen and Unwin p. 105.

⁴⁹ Publications such as A Wilderness Pictorial, a glossy booklet featuring the most scenic parts of the Franklin, were produced. A whole series of films and documentaries on the Franklin were also made. These included a variety of documentaries, one that was shown on the Seven network's "The World Around Us" series; another bought by channel Ten was sold to an international market, including Italy, France, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and the U.S. An ABC segment on the Franklin won first prize in the 1980 Wrest Point Hotel-Casino awards for tourism. Films included the Tasmanian Film Corporations first feature length film, "Maganinnie", which was jointly shown with the Tasmanian National Parks and Wildlife Service financed documentary on its proposed Wild Rivers National Park in July 1980. In addition television commercials were made to publicise the south west. P. Thompson 1981 Power In Tasmania Victoria: Australian Conservation Foundation p. 101-2; Thompson Bob Brown p. 101-2, 125.

Films played a decisive role in shaping the public's mind on the rivers issue. The arguments of the pro-development lobby could never match the grandeur of the wild river. The action and aesthetics of the wilderness films were the stuff of visual entertainment. ... Arguments and counter-arguments, economic forecasts and statistics, energy scenarios and projections all become a relative sideshow to the dominating role of film.⁵⁰

Visual imagery associated with the Franklin campaign was extremely important as it provided a means to portray the area's non-economic worth.

While conservationists drew support through their portrayal of the value of wilderness, they also entered into another level of debate, one which operated from within the existing economic rationality. Conservationists were aware of Tasmania's economic malaise and that the use of hydro-electric power was a deeply entrenched economic strategy (hydro-industrialisation). They subsequently focused on countering those arguments made by the HEC to which politicians and the public were most likely to be swayed. The first of these was employment created by the scheme. The TWS responded by noting Tasmania's existing employment problems and how the form of Tasmania's power industry did not provide any alleviation to these difficulties. Particular emphasis was placed on the capital intensive nature of Hydro schemes, which undermined arguments pertaining to employment opportunities. Conservationists also argued that the sorts of industry that the HEC wanted to attract were part of the cause of Tasmania's employment problems.⁵¹ Further questions were raised regarding the debt the dam would incur⁵² and the potential profitability of wilderness.⁵³ No reservations were held by conservationists in arguing for the preservation of the Franklin on these grounds, as is exemplified by the following statement by Brown:

⁵⁰ Thompson *Power* p. 102.

⁵¹ G. Baker 1982 "Deep Division in Dam Controversy" *Age* 7 June.

⁵² Tasmanian Wilderness Society *op cit* p. 37-38, 39, pointing to the HEC's existing debt of \$168 million and the 40% of its expenditure paid to service this.

⁵³ *Ibid* p. 33. This generated \$8,000,000 a year directly and \$8,000,000 a year indirectly to the economy

While the Franklin is basically an environmental issue, there is no doubt that even if the environment somehow or other was suddenly whisked away and wasn't part of the debate, it would be immoral not to continue fighting on economic and employment grounds because it's just wrong in every which way.⁵⁴

A second important point made by the conservation movement was that the Gordon below Franklin scheme was unnecessary in providing Tasmania's future power requirements. HEC forecasts for energy needs were considered to be inflated, based on past inaccuracies and the methods used to predict future needs.⁵⁵ Even if HEC forecasts were correct, argued the TWS, then this casts doubt on the viability of the Franklin scheme. The HEC had predicted that demand for electricity would grow by more than 30Mw a year up into the 1990s. As the Franklin scheme was to supply less than 150Mw per annum, demand would only be met for an additional five years.⁵⁶ Hence the position of the TWS was:

THE QUESTION IS: WHY NOT SAVE THE NATIONAL HERITAGE BY BRINGING IN THE NEXT POWER SCHEME, WHATEVER IT MIGHT BE, FORWARD FIVE YEARS.⁵⁷

The TWS argued that an energy efficiency program directed towards a saving of 15% in demand, would in itself provide as much electricity as the Gordon River dam at almost no cost.⁵⁸ For additional power needs a thermal scheme was advocated. An independent report by Shann Turnbull had found that a thermal station would cost substantially less to build than a hydro plant, and would provide cheaper energy in the long term.⁵⁹

A final argument adopted by the TWS was directed towards the negative economic impact and inequitable nature of HEC tariff structures. Within this regime, two thirds of electricity was being supplied to fourteen non-Tasmanian

54 P. Ormonde 1983 "The Franklin Dam Busters: Tribune Talks to Bob Brown" Tribune February 9 p. 16.

55 Tasmanian Wilderness Society op cit p. 43-47.

56 Ibid p. 38.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid p. 41

59 Ibid p. 53-54.

companies, which were only paying 35% of the cost and employed a small 6% of the workforce. According to the TWS, the cost of these subsidies was being relayed to the rest of the Tasmanian community, with the biggest industries only paying .96 cents per unit compared with householders who paid 2.6 cents and shopkeepers 12 cents per unit.⁶⁰ Thus the system was inequitable and created disincentives for the establishment of small business within the state, which was, as the TWS had argued, what the state's economy required.

Economic arguments were vital in the conservationists' campaign because they undermined the effectiveness of the HEC's capacity to attack conservationists on economic grounds, dispelling fears of the negative economic impact that preserving the Franklin might have had. The target of these arguments were the government (hence their appearance in TWS and ACF submissions to government inquiries), and those people whose concern for the Tasmanian economy might have dissuaded them from supporting the Franklin campaign.

The strategy adopted by conservationists in the Franklin campaign altered over time as political circumstances changed. In the initial period, many of the conservationists' activities were based on the Lowe government's sympathetic approach to south west conservation, and thus efforts were directed into lobbying the state government and maintaining popular interest in the issue to ensure that the government kept the dams issue a high priority. The capacity of the ACF and TWS to mobilise public support was vital in these efforts. Regular public meetings were held in Tasmania and on the mainland, and conservationists were highly successful in their efforts to mobilise people into action over the Franklin issue.⁶¹ For instance, on October 20, 1979, four days after the HEC outlined its report to parliament, 2,000 people marched through

⁶⁰ D. Hickie 1981 "In the Wilderness of Tasmanian Politics" National Times 15-21 November p. 27; Tasmanian Wilderness Society loc cit p. 40.

⁶¹ P. Thompson 1981 "Lowe Then Dug his own Political Grave" in R. Green (ed) Battle for the Franklin Australia: Australian Conservation Foundation p. 140.

Hobart,⁶² and on the sixth of June 1980, between 8,000 and 10,000 people turned out for another march⁶³ which was at least three times as large as any previous rally in Tasmania.⁶⁴ Public concern with the dams issue translated into growing support for the TWS with membership swelling between 1976 and 1981 from 400 to 3000 members.⁶⁵

Presenting an image of moderation was central to conservation groups in attracting widespread public support. In part, this was achieved by conservationists soliciting support from notable international personalities such as Ralph Nader.⁶⁶ Even more important was the role and leadership of Bob Brown who was careful to adopt an image of diplomacy.⁶⁷ Hickie has described Brown's role in the Franklin campaign in the following manner:

[T]he key to his gains is his commitment to moderation - appearing on TV in conservative suits and talking calmly, he has succeeded in dispelling fears that the conservationists are radicals and ratbags.⁶⁸

Moderation also became manifest in the TWS's capacity to negotiate within the existing political system. Here the TWS balanced the use of protest tactics and conciliation. While parliament became a centre of protest,⁶⁹ it also became the site of negotiations, with Brown accepting an invitation from Doug Lowe to put the 'no dams' case before cabinet during July 1980.⁷⁰

62 Simpson and Crawford loc cit.

63 Hickie loc cit p. 22.

64 Thompson Bob Brown p. 115.

65 Hickie loc cit p. 22.

66 Thompson Bob Brown p. 105; Mercury 26 November 1981.

67 Bob Brown's response to the Cartland Report is representative of this approach and is documented in Thompson Bob Brown. An example of the kind of position Brown adopted is evident in his response to the Lowe government's Gordon-above-Olga scheme. In this instance Brown, praised the government for not simply adopting the HEC's preferred option, whilst arguing that the project was have a tragic impact on the south west.

Thompson Bob Brown p. 89-90, 118.

68 Hickie loc cit p. 22.

69 For instance in the lead up to the debate on the dams issue, parliament house received 35,000 messages from throughout Australia, opposing the Franklin scheme and by July 1980, conservationists had 60,000 signatures on a petition opposing the HEC dam. Thompson Bob Brown p. 117; Mercury 3 July 1980.

70 Thompson Bob Brown p. 118.

The central obstacle for the conservationists' in lobbying the state government was a belief in hydro-industrialisation. This view held members of the Parliamentary Labor Party (PLP) (supported by the trade union controlled Executive Council of the Tasmanian Labor Party)⁷¹ and was dominant in the opposition Liberal Party.⁷² Moreover, the anti-Labor Legislative Council was a traditional ally of the HEC and unwilling to consider any proposals other than those fully endorsed by the HEC.⁷³ Against the influence of these forces, the conservationists aimed to ensure that their arguments continued to be heard by the Lowe government.

A variety of measures were adopted to achieve this end. A plethora of submissions were received by the Co-ordination (Evers) Committee opposing the HEC Lower Gordon proposal.⁷⁴ In the lead up to the presentation of the HEC Franklin scheme the TWS managed to gain the support of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) after Brown lobbied for the department to present an alternative proposal.⁷⁵ This strategy proved highly successful as the service released a report in November 1979, seeking the establishment of a Wild Rivers National Park within the area prescribed by the HEC for the Franklin dam.⁷⁶ Popular protest also maintained the Lowe government's awareness of the conservationists' position.

The demise of Lowe and the concurrent move towards a referendum to resolve the dams issue had significant repercussions on the manner in which conservationists ran their campaign. With a Premier sympathetic to the

⁷¹ R. Davis 1983 Eighty Years' Labor: The ALP in Tasmania, 1906-1983 Tasmania: Sassafras Books p. 107-108.

⁷² Davis "Tasmania: the Political Economy" p. 221.

⁷³ Davis op cit p. 109; Mercury 24 November 1981; Age 5 January 1983; Thompson Bob Brown p. 123-4. The ACF, recognising the Legislative Council's bias in favour of the HEC, unsuccessfully focused on attempting to ensure that its Select Committee into the Franklin was more open to views other than the HECs.

⁷⁴ For instance, the Tasmanian Conservation Trust published a major study entitle An Energy Efficient Future For Australia, which challenged HEC estimates, proposed an energy conservation program and offered alternatives to the Lower Gordon proposal.

Davis "Tasmania: the Political Economy" p. 220.

⁷⁵ Thompson Bob Brown p. 102.

⁷⁶ Davis "Tasmania: the Political Economy" p. 220; Mercury 24 November 1981.

conservationists' cause, there existed a focus to which the conservationists campaign could be directed. As Lowe's leadership and control of the parliamentary Labor Party eroded, conservationists lost this target.

The referendum posed a strategic problem for the TWS. Adopting a 'no dams' 'write on' campaign involved considerable risk within the historically conservative Tasmanian electorate.⁷⁷ By challenging the options provided by the government, the TWS was, in effect, questioning both the legitimacy of the political process and the HEC's right to determine the state's future power options. To justify such an approach, the TWS drew attention to the sources of power which had pressured Lowe into backing down from original commitment to a "no dams" option.⁷⁸ As a result, the undemocratic nature of having a referendum without a "no dams" option was constructed to be justification in itself for voting informally.

The referendum campaign was extensive with ACF and TWS funding totalling \$130,000. It involved media advertising, public meetings, doorknocking, rallies and market research to test ideas and issues.⁷⁹ The effectiveness of the campaign is well illustrated in the referendums outcome, which saw 47% of the vote go to the Franklin, 8% to the Olga, and an informal vote of 45% with a specific "no dams" vote of 33.25%.⁸⁰ While the protest vote was extensive, it failed to save the Franklin with Labor moving to support the dam and conservationists' efforts moved on to the 1982 state election.

In contrast to the referendum, the election campaign did not go well. With the two major parties supporting the Franklin dam, conservationists had

⁷⁷ R. Chapman, G. Smith, J. Warden, and B. Davis 1986 "Tasmania" in Australian State Politics Melbourne: Longman Cheshire p. 116.

⁷⁸ Thompson Bob Brown p. 135.

⁷⁹ D. Hill 1981 "Referendum on the Franklin" Australian Conservation Foundation Newsletter Vol 13 No 9 October p. 1; R. Milliken 1983 "The Greenies Sharpen their Political Teeth" National Times 16-22 January p. 3; P. Thompson 1981 "Lowe Then Dug his own Political Grave" in R. Green (ed) Battle for the Franklin Australia: Australian Conservation Foundation. p. 9; Thompson Bob Brown p. 136, 142.

⁸⁰ Simpson and Crawford loc cit. The original vote was actually 38% informal, Franklin 53% and the Olga 9%. Due to confusion over the way in which ballot papers were marked a recount was consequently undertaken. Thompson Bob Brown p. 145.

to rely on the Democrats, independent candidates, and anti-dammers in the Labor Party to provide a focus for support. Problems emerged as one Democrat candidate assumed a pro-dam position, while a decision to run seven Democrat candidates in the electorate of Bass, threatened Mary Willey's chance of re-election by limiting the number of Democrat preferences which would have otherwise flowed on to her.⁸¹ A further problem for the conservationists was a press campaign against the election of independents on the basis that it would lead to parliamentary instability and the need for another election.⁸² Another difficulty was a Supreme Court ruling, in the lead up to the state election, that political parties and interest groups could not spend in excess of \$1500 on each candidate in the election. Hence, the TWS's typical publicity campaign could not be utilised.⁸³ The results reflected these problems with many of the anti-dam ALP members losing their seats and conservationist independents faring poorly.⁸⁴ Only two candidates, Lowe and Sanders were successful,⁸⁵ with the Gray led Liberal Party winning the election easily.

As avenues within the state's political process became increasingly blocked, conservationists progressively turned towards the national stage. It was the election of Gray in the 1982 state election that signalled the point at which conservationists directed their efforts almost entirely on the national arena to fulfil their goal of saving the Franklin. A two-fold strategy was adopted by conservation groups. Firstly, detailed preparations for a blockade against HEC operations began. This was to play an essential role in attracting media interest in the issue and hence public awareness of the Franklin on the mainland. Secondly, conservationists mobilised to organise a campaign which would demonstrate to both the federal Liberal government and opposition

81 Thompson Bob Brown p. 152.

82 Ibid p. 153.

83 Ibid p. 151-152.

84 Ibid p. 153.

85 G. Smith 1982 "The Tasmanian House of Assembly Elections, 1982" Politics Vol. 17 No. 2 November p. 126.

Labor Party, the electoral influence that the conservationists were capable of mobilising.

Like so many aspects of the Franklin campaign, the blockade was organised in a highly professional manner.⁸⁶ On December 14, the same day that the south west was formally listed as World Heritage, the blockade began. Central to the aims of the Franklin blockade was to generate publicity and draw public and political attention to the future of the Franklin. Although a goal of the blockaders was to minimise damage done to the area,⁸⁷ it tended to assume a symbolic rather than actual character. Indeed, the ability of the conservationists to avoid violent confrontation was based on their orientation towards a political resolution of the issue, rather than relying on the obstacles created for HEC workers by direct action.

By the end of the blockade, which lasted almost three months, 2613 people were registered at the headquarters of the blockade in Strahan and 1272 people had been arrested.⁸⁸ Media response to the blockade was exceptionally good. As one observer from the Australian Financial Review noted: "Performances are screened nightly on all major television stations".⁸⁹ Nevertheless, conservationists were aware that interest in the blockade could not be continued indefinitely. As Thompson notes, by the end of January, a political breakthrough was required to shift the focus away from the blockade before people lost interest.⁹⁰ When Fraser announced a federal election on the 3rd of

⁸⁶ Extensive preparations were made to ensure that the physical needs of blockaders would be met. Importantly, workshops on non-violent action techniques conducted Australia wide for the blockaders. This high level of organisation was retained throughout the blockade with all participants undergoing training prior to becoming involved. Thompson Bob Brown p. 160; P. Ormonde 1983 "The "Greenies" Tackle the Greedies on the Franklin" Tribune February 2 p. 11.

⁸⁷ McQueen op cit p. 30.

⁸⁸ Thompson Bob Brown p. 173-174. The demographic distribution of blockaders was as follows: Tasmania: 900; Victoria: 650; NSW: 600; Canberra: 145; South Australia: 142; Queensland: 73; Western Australia: 56; Northern Territory: 3; Overseas: 67.

⁸⁹ Financial Review 10 February 1983.

⁹⁰ Thompson Bob Brown p. 173.

February, 1983, the political diversion conservationists required was granted, with the final action of the blockade undertaken on the first of March.⁹¹

In the lead up to the 1983 federal election, the strategy adopted by conservation groups was defined by the positions assumed by the two major political parties. The Fraser government, although in principle opposed to damming the Franklin, on the 9th December 1982, reaffirmed that it would not use federal power to intervene to save the river.⁹² Labor policy, by way of contrast, assured conservationists that if the ALP was elected, it would use federal powers to preserve the Franklin. Once again, conservationists had a political focus.

In many respects, the Flinders by-election acted as the first real test of the effectiveness of a "no dams" campaign in the federal sphere. The by-election was held on the 6th of December 1982, just prior to the blockade and hence was not influenced by the additional media attention this brought to the Franklin. Instead, the campaign relied on doorknocking and publicity brought by a 15,000 strong rally. The campaign in Flinders was an overwhelming success, with the words "no dams" written on approximately 30,000 votes or around 42% of ballot papers.⁹³

Following the Flinders by-election, fourteen conservation groups held a national summit in Melbourne over the 18th and 19th of December 1982 and the National South-West Coalition (NSWC) was formed.⁹⁴ At the core of the NSWC was the ACF and TWS, supported by a variety of well respected conservation organisations.⁹⁵ While at times the summit produced heated debate about tactics,⁹⁶ its eventual position was one of unity:

⁹¹ McQueen op cit p. 80.

⁹² Thompson Bob Brown p. 171.

⁹³ Ibid p. 161.

⁹⁴ D. Hill 1983 "Crunch is Coming on South West" Australian Conservation Foundation Newsletter Vol. 15 No. 1 February p. 1; Wilcox loc cit p. 1; Milliken loc cit p. 3.

⁹⁵ R. Milliken loc cit p. 3. Other conservation groups represented included the state conservation councils of Victoria, Queensland; South Australia and Western Australia; the National Parks Association of NSW; Royal Australian Institute of Architects; and the Royal

The meeting strongly condemns the [Fraser] Government's decision (not to intervene) on South-West Tasmania. With this decision, the Government has forfeited any claim to environmental responsibility ... (and) that unless the Commonwealth Government takes immediate effective action to stop the Gordon-below-Franklin dam the conservation movement will actively campaign against the Government at the next federal election.⁹⁷

As an organisational structure, the purpose of the NSWCC was to gain support from the 800 conservation groups Australia-wide⁹⁸ and to construct an electoral lobby capable of influencing the next federal election. One of the major strengths of the group was the large membership of existing conservation organisations. Alone, the TWS's 70 branches had a membership of 8,000 and the ACF 12,000 members, and when all groups involved with the NSWCC were taken into account, approximately 300,000 people were involved.⁹⁹

Political experience formed another important aspect of the NSWCC. Brown was to emphasise the significance of this point:

We are oldtimers in the political business ... We have been through one federal, two state elections and a referendum in Tasmania. We are very hard-nosed in this political business.¹⁰⁰

A broad base of support coupled with organisational experience generated the finances required for the campaign, which had a total cost of approximately \$400,000.¹⁰¹

Rather than stand its own candidates, which was considered too confusing,¹⁰² the NSWCC decided on supporting the ALP and Australian Democrats due to both parties' commitment to preserving the Franklin.¹⁰³ The next aspect of the NSWCC's strategy was to identify marginal coalition seats.

Australian Institute of Landscape Architects. As Milliken has noted, these were groups normally associated with respectability.

⁹⁶ Pers comm. B. Davis 25 February 1994.

⁹⁷ Hill "Crunch is Coming".

⁹⁸ Milliken loc cit p. 3.

⁹⁹ Warhurst loc cit p. 22.

¹⁰⁰ Thompson Bob Brown p. 175.

¹⁰¹ Milliken loc cit p. 4.

¹⁰² Ormonde "The Franklin Dam Busters" p. 8.

¹⁰³ Milliken loc cit p. 1.

Thirteen electorates were chosen¹⁰⁴ and an additional seven seats were to be given secondary attention. Each of the twenty seats could be won by the Labor Party with a swing of 3.8% or less.¹⁰⁵

The NSWC established the infrastructure required to organise and publicise the campaign. A market research company 'Spectrum' was employed, staffed campaign offices were set up in individual electorates, brochures and pamphlets were produced, people were organised to be outside polling booths handing out how to vote cards in the seats identified, and doorknocking was undertaken.¹⁰⁶ On February 4, the day after the election was announced, 20,000 people attended a rally in Hobart, representing the largest ever public rally in Tasmania's history and the biggest conservation gathering in Australia.¹⁰⁷

The ALP's victory in the March 1983 election has drawn attention to the question of how influential the NSWC was in determining the outcome of the election. Doug Anthony, who was deputy Prime Minister under Fraser and leader of the National Party at the time of the election, argued that the Franklin had a significant impact on the coalition's poor result in Victoria.¹⁰⁸ Former treasurer, John Howard noted that the Franklin issue influenced the voting choices of young Australians,¹⁰⁹ and John Warhurst has estimated that in the thirteen targeted electorates half a percent of the Labor Party vote can be attributed to the NSWC campaign.¹¹⁰

There is little doubt that the ALP would have won the federal election in 1983, whatever the precise impact of the Franklin issue. Focusing on the electoral impact of the dams issue misses much of the real and lasting influence of the NSWC. Essentially, the activities of the NSWC, in

¹⁰⁴ Five in NSW, five in Victoria, two in Queensland and one in South Australia.

¹⁰⁵ Thompson Bob Brown p. 176.

Due to the internal problems associated with the Tasmanian Labor Party, no seats in Tasmania were to be targeted.

¹⁰⁶ Warhurst loc cit p. 22; Ormonde "The Franklin Dam Busters" p. 8; Milliken loc cit p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ Thompson Bob Brown p. 175.

¹⁰⁸ Warhurst loc cit p. 26.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid p. 31.

combination with the blockade, ensured that the dams issue remained at the forefront of many voting Australians' minds, irrespective of whether or not it actually determined the way in which they voted. Thus the NSW kept the Franklin on the political agenda, making it difficult for the Hawke government, when elected, to back down on the issue. Furthermore, the degree of national support for stopping the Franklin dam presumably dismissed any concern the Hawke government might have had regarding a negative public reaction to Commonwealth intervention. It was these factors which were invaluable in ensuring that the Hawke government acted on its promise to introduce legislation opposing the dam and if necessary support the legislation in the High Court.

Once Hawke had won the election, the role of conservation groups altered dramatically. Government policy was no longer the target of a conservation campaign. Instead, ensuring a swift and effective implementation of this policy became their primary aim. Any fears that the conservation lobby might have held of a reversal of the government's plans to intervene on behalf of the Franklin were soon put at bay. Almost immediately after the Hawke government was elected, the World Heritage (Western Tasmanian Wilderness) Regulation was formulated to halt the Franklin dam and a High Court injunction initiated to allow for its implementation.¹¹¹

The Tasmanian government's challenge to this legislation loomed as a threat to the Franklin, and conservation groups greeted the High Courts' decision that the federal government could legitimately intervene to stop the dam with a degree of euphoria. Success in the Franklin campaign was given dual significance. It was viewed within the specific context of saving the Franklin, demonstrating the capacity that wilderness had to effectively mobilise

111 Wilcox loc cit p. 4.

previously unpoliticised sections of the population,¹¹² and provided the conservation movement with a sense of empowerment. As Green explains:

Friday 1st July marked a turning point for Australia ... A community movement, fuelled by idealism and the beauty of wilderness, had overcome one of Australia's most powerful Bureaucracies and the State Government that backed it.¹¹³

Enmeshed within this perspective was an optimism about the wider impact of the Franklin issue. Mobilisation over the Franklin was considered to have forced the federal government to adopt a position of responsibility towards the environment.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, the empowerment generated by the Franklin issue was perceived as a ready resource that the conservation movement would be able to draw upon in future decision making over the environment.¹¹⁵

The Lowe government and Tasmanian Politics

Conflict over the Franklin dam occurred in a period of extensive change within Tasmanian politics. While the TWS and its concern for the south west wilderness prompted debate over the proposed dam, the political turmoil that followed had as much to do with questions regarding the future of the Tasmanian ALP and the accumulation strategy of hydro-industrialisation, as it had to do with the environment.

At the outset of the debate, when Lowe appeared to be in control of the issue, his primary objective was directly related to an attempt to reshape Tasmania's political economy. The key to achieving this aim was an erosion of the HEC's economic and political power without fundamentally dividing the ALP. Lowe's particular political style, based on generating consensus and public participation in decision making, also shaped the way that he dealt with the issue. While environmental concern did play a role in Lowe's dealings

112 Ibid p. 5.

113 R. Green 1983 "After the Deluge Battle Lies Ahead" Australian Conservation Foundation Newsletter Vol 15 No 7 August 1983 p. 4.

114 Ibid.

115 Ibid p. 5.

with the Franklin dam, it cannot be disentangled from other political and economic issues. As events developed, divisions within the ALP began to eclipse Lowe's original objective and political survival became primary.

The Franklin issue held the possibility of altering two features of Tasmania's political economy that were considered by Lowe to be fundamental to the state's future. These included the role of hydro-industrialisation and the importance of the environment in a reinvigorated Tasmanian economy. The significance of these issues is explained by Lowe in a paper presented in 1979, just prior to the release of the HEC's Franklin proposal. Included in this paper is a critique of hydro-industrialisation, where Lowe argued that while the "pattern of industrial development in Tasmania in the past has been based on the provision of cheap and plentiful electric power"¹¹⁶ this could no longer be the case:

[T]he scope no longer exists for relying as we did in the past on encouraging bulk usage by electricity intensive industries regardless of their contribution to employment in the state.¹¹⁷

Lowe's rationale for challenging the role of hydro-industrialisation emerged out of its continued dominance as an economic strategy in Tasmania and his belief that it would not be successful in the future.¹¹⁸ Historically, hydro-industrialisation was a strategy developed by Tasmanian governments to overcome a number of problems inherent within the state's economy, including isolation from mainland Australia and a small population base, which among other factors, had created disincentives for industrialisation.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ D. Lowe 1979 "Directions For Future Development in Tasmania" Public Policy Paper 12 University of Tasmania, Department of Political Science p. 7.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ For an in depth discussion see D. Lowe 1984 The Price of Power.

¹¹⁹ For a discussion of Tasmania's political economy see B. Davis 1981 "The Economic Development of Tasmania: A Current Perspective" in R.L. Mathews (ed) Regional Disparities and Economic Development Canberra: ANU Press p. 178-9; Davis "Tasmania: the Political Economy" p. 212; K. Crowley 1989 "Accommodating Industry In Tasmania: Eco-Political Factors Behind the Electrona Silicon Smelter Dispute" in P. Hay, R. Eckersley, and G. Holloway (eds) Environmental Politics in Australia and New Zealand Hobart: Board of Environmental Studies. p. 48.

Based on Tasmania's rich potential for hydro-electricity, hydro-industrialisation attracted industry to the state by the sale of cheap energy to bulk users, thus offsetting other impediments for establishing a competitive industry. Drawn by a cheap supply of electricity, high energy using, capital intensive industry came to dominate the Tasmanian economy and employment within the state became reliant on the construction of new hydro-electric plants.¹²⁰ Under hydro-industrialisation, the HEC became Tasmania's largest employer and the creation of hydro-electric works the mainstay of the Tasmanian economy. This long term commitment formed, for politician and public alike, a dominant ideology for economic development.

It was not until the conflict over the flooding of Lake Pedder in the late 1960s, that any challenge was posed to hydro-industrialisation as a development strategy.¹²¹ Conservationists, in their attempt to save Lake Pedder, raised questions regarding the political power of the HEC, its dominance in the political process and the benefits of hydro-industrialisation as an accumulation strategy. During the 1970s, hydro-industrialisation came under further scrutiny. Influenced by the reformist Whitlam government and a broader recognition by some members of the Tasmanian ALP of the need to modernise, pressure began to mount for economic and social reform.¹²²

Reports such as the federally instigated , Inquiry into the Structure of Industry and the Employment Situation in Tasmania, released in 1977, confirmed the need for economic change. The Report, undertaken by Sir Bede Callaghan, investigated the structure of industry in Tasmania and its relationship to employment. A number of influential findings were made by the Callaghan Report. Not only did it identify Tasmania's economic difficulties,

¹²⁰ Davis "The Economic Development of Tasmania" p. 181.

¹²¹ R. Herr and B. Davis 1982 "The Tasmanian Parliament, Accountability and the Hydro-Electric Commission: the Franklin Dam Controversy" in J. Nethercote (ed) Parliamentary Scrutiny of Administration: Prospects and Problems in the 1980s Sydney: Hale and Iremonger p. 274.

¹²² Davis op cit p. 101

placing them in a position of prominence on the political agenda of the Tasmanian government,¹²³ it also questioned the capacity of hydro-industrialisation to overcome these problems. As Callaghan stated:

The strategy of encouraging large power-using industries to develop in the state has provided a specialised industrial base. The result has been to approach the limits of hydro-electric power potential and create enclaves of capital-intensive units of production which, although they have considerable direct employment effects and provide revenue to the State, sometimes have lower indirect economic effect on the State (for example, industries which export their products and import most of their material inputs.¹²⁴

In addition to Lowe's critical view of hydro-industrialisation, he also considered HEC proposals that demanded further incursions into the south west wilderness as problematic. In essence, this perspective was based on Lowe's view of the significance of the environment in Tasmania's future. For Lowe there was a clear nexus between reinvigorating the Tasmanian economy, the decline in the role of the HEC, and the increasing predominance of the environment within strategies for Tasmania's future. According to Lowe, changes in both international and Australian markets meant that Tasmania required structural adjustment to survive.¹²⁵ The aim was to identify mainland markets in which Tasmania had an advantage and then foster the appropriate industries. Within this broad framework, many of the traditional aspects of the Tasmanian economy were recognised, including its natural resource base and hydro-electric capacity. One new and increasingly important area was tourism and Lowe emphasised the significance of wilderness to this industry, arguing:

¹²³ Davis "The Economic Development of Tasmania" p. 183.

¹²⁴ B. Callaghan 1977 Inquiry Into the Structure of Industry and the Employment Situation in Tasmania Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service p. 96.

¹²⁵ Lowe loc cit p. .2.

The Government must ensure that the development of other industries does not despoil our heritage and thus reduce the attractiveness to the tourist market as well as to Tasmanians themselves. One unique tourist use that we have is our wilderness ... The management of the South West Wilderness is a responsibility which the Government must shoulder and our recent decisions have demonstrated a willingness to do so and a determination to ensure that direct economic exploitation cannot take place without regard to the consequences for the environment in that extensive section of Tasmania.¹²⁶

These arguments appear to underpin the claims made by Lowe on the Franklin scheme. Wilderness, along with a reduction in HEC power, was vital in Tasmania's future economy. It is therefore possible to identify the manner in which conservationists' claims were consistent with Lowe's view of the future of Tasmania's economy. With the fate of the south west as the focus of environmental concern and debate, these issues became inextricably linked to the power and objectives of the HEC which had development plans for the area. Environmental reform was therefore a part of the Lowe government's objective of curtailing the role of the HEC.

A number of political circumstances meant that a direct challenge to the HEC was problematic. Of particular importance was residual support for hydro-industrialisation within the Tasmanian Labor Party and the manner in which Lowe's political power relied on party consensus.

At the time when the Franklin conflict emerged, the Tasmanian Labor Party had enjoyed long term political prevalence, holding the majority of seats in the Tasmanian House of Assembly between the years 1934 and 1981, for all but three years (1969-1972). This success rested on the apparent effectiveness of hydro-industrialisation, a close relationship between the HEC and successive Labor Premiers, and a political system tending towards political conservatism which subsequently left these relationships unquestioned. Part of the ALP's electoral effectiveness also resided in its ability to take advantage of the Hare-Clark electoral system. The influence of Hare-Clark on Tasmanian politics has

126 Ibid p. 6.

been wide ranging. Of particular importance in this context is the way Hare-Clark encouraged voting based on individuals. Conservatism followed as candidates attempted to represent as broad a variety of regional interests as possible, as well as attracting support of the most powerful entrenched interests within their electoral boundaries.¹²⁷ Entrenching this trend was the Legislative Council whose members are typically unaffiliated with either of the political parties and are similarly associated with the specific demands of their region.¹²⁸ As a result of this political environment, members of parliament typically pursued uncontroversial positions to avoid debate and thus created disincentives for reform.¹²⁹

Labor took advantage of this system by providing strong party leadership and effectively balancing the demands of various regional interests.¹³⁰ The fortunes of the ALP came to be associated with the success of hydro-industrialisation's rhetoric and remained unchallenged as conservatism, regionalism and the interests of many communities relying on large HEC supported industries, retained public and political support for the HEC.

A series of changes occurred within Tasmania during the 1970s which altered the relationship between the HEC and ALP. The Lake Pedder conflict provided an initial challenge to hydro-industrialisation and HEC power, with economic difficulties leading to a re-evaluation of the state's traditional economic strategies. It was from within the Labor Party, as the government and policy formulator, that these trends, and the stresses and strains they created, became manifest.

¹²⁷ D. O'Connell 1983 "Proportional Representation and Intra-Party Competition in Tasmania and the Republic of Ireland" *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* Vol. 21 No. 1 March p.46-7; R. Herr and C. Woollard 1980 "Lobbying, Legitimacy and Brokerage Politics in the Tasmanian Parliament" in Weller, P and Jaensch, D. (eds) *Responsible Government in Australia* Australia: Drummond p. 131.

¹²⁸ Chapman et al loc cit p. 121-122.

¹²⁹ Davis op cit p. 186; Chapman et al loc cit p. 116-7.

¹³⁰ Herr "Politics in Tasmania" p. 4.

Young Labor activists, influenced by the Whitlam government's reform program, successfully lobbied for the removal of Eric Reece and the disempowerment of older members of the party.¹³¹ The change of Premiers from Reece to Bill Neilson marked only the beginning of instability for the Tasmanian Labor Party as federal intervention, due to Labor's particularly poor Tasmanian result in the 1975 Federal election, led to a considerable weakening of the Right in the Party.¹³² With the subsequent increase in the Left's power came conflict between progressive and more traditional attitudes.

Neilson's leadership became an early victim of the increasing divisiveness within the ALP. As a member of the Right of the party, Neilson was plagued with factional attacks and finally resigned. Support for the new Premier, Doug Lowe, was based on his identification with a consensus style of politics and an acceptability to the various factions within the ALP.¹³³ The 1979 record electoral victory for Labor suggested that the ALP had found a successful means of dealing with the changes in the nature of its organisational structure and character.

Lowe's dealing with the Franklin issue represented an interplay of the various forces operating within Tasmanian politics at this time. The HEC's proposed Franklin dam provided an opportunity to pursue the objective of reducing the political power of the HEC and raising the profile of the environment. This view had considerable support from those within the Labor Party who had a reformist orientation. It also had support from the wider public. There were, however, significant constraints to this objective. The HEC remained powerful and had the support of influential elements

¹³¹ In 1975, a rule change was successfully instigated which made all party candidates turning 65 during their term in parliament, ineligible to stand at the next election. Davis "Tasmania: Premiers" p. 191; Lowe op cit p. 51; Herr "Politics in Tasmania" p. 5.

¹³² Herr "Politics in Tasmania" p. 5. This pressure had led to the expulsion of Brian Harradine, the Right-wing secretary of the Tasmanian Trades and Labor Council (TTLC), and the concurrent disaffiliation of a number of Right wing trade unions, thus substantially weakening the right of the party.

¹³³ Ibid p. 6.

within the ALP, as well as the Legislative Council. Lowe's dependence on a consensus style of politics meant that he could not afford to alienate supporters of the HEC that were located within his party.

The strategy adopted by Lowe reflected the influence of this political context. Emphasis was placed on increasing government control over the HEC whilst simultaneously elevating the importance of environmental concerns. At the same time, however, no direct criticism of the HEC was articulated. To this end, a series of measures had been undertaken prior to the release of the HEC's report in October 1979. For instance, there was the formation of government bodies to investigate the south west and energy issues. As spheres of policy traditionally undertaken by the HEC, such initiatives significantly diminished HEC power without direct confrontation.¹³⁴ Similarly, an attempt was made to gain increased government control over the HEC by the Premiers Department assuming ministerial responsibility for the Commission.¹³⁵ And importantly, there was Lowe's requirement for the HEC to provide more than one option in its 1979 Report to parliament.

Following the HEC's Report being tabled in parliament this approach was continued. Lowe ensured that information contained within the Report was available to the public¹³⁶ and created the Co-ordination Committee to facilitate comment and debate. Through these measures Lowe was opening the HEC up to public scrutiny. A more direct challenge was posed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service which released a report recommending that a Wild Rivers National Park be established in the area that the HEC had designated for its hydro-scheme.¹³⁷ In spite of this more conflictual position, the overall emphasis was placed on the erosion of HEC power without direct hostility.

¹³⁴ Lowe op cit p. 92; Herr and Davis loc cit p. 101.

¹³⁵ Lowe op cit p. 91.

¹³⁶ Lowe ordered a newspaper version of the HEC Report as the original document was 1700 pages long and cost \$ 350 to purchase. Davis "Tasmania: the Political Economy" p. 220.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

During these early stages of debate on the Franklin dam, Lowe distanced the government from any particular position on the HEC's proposal, allowing the Coordination Committee to evaluate the various opinions that emerged. Any challenge to HEC power in the decision making process could therefore be associated with expert and public opinion, rather than the government.

Once the Gordon-above-Olga scheme was recommended by the Committee and accepted by the government, Lowe began to articulate reasons for the government's position. These took a number of forms. Of particular concern was the economic and power implications of adopting an alternative to the Gordon-below-Franklin. Here the central argument was that the Gordon above Olga would not be detrimental to the Tasmanian economy, especially the state's employment prospects. According to Lowe, more jobs would be created by the alternative scheme. It was also contended that the power saved as a result of the energy conservation strategy, released in July 1980, would compensate for the difference in generating capacity of the two schemes.¹³⁸

Economic and energy concerns were presented as necessary prerequisites to be achieved prior to conservation being deemed a feasible option. Having dealt with these questions, the objective of preserving the Franklin could be fulfilled. In a similar fashion to the arguments of conservationists, the basis for this position was the unique qualities of the area. As this statement by Lowe indicates:

As a matter of policy, Government does not favour the flooding of the Franklin River but rather, in keeping with its policy of conservation of the South-West wilderness, sees it as essential to preserve the unique area.¹³⁹

It is worth noting that arguments regarding the HEC's power or the relative merit of hydro-industrialisation did not play a major role in Lowe's public representation of the issue and this remained the case until Lowe lost his

¹³⁸ Lowe op cit p. 117.

¹³⁹ Ibid p. 122.

position as Premier. Hence, while these claims undermined HEC objectives, they did not pose a direct challenge thereby making it more difficult for the HEC to respond to the Lowe government's claims. Also of considerable importance was the way that avoiding the adoption of an antagonistic posture with respect to hydro-industrialisation controlled a possible schism within the ALP.

Lowe's support for the Gordon-above-Olga scheme epitomised his consensus approach. The Olga appeared to have something for everyone. For conservationists, it preserved the Franklin. For those concerned with economic arguments, the scheme made sense in terms of employment strategies and would provide sufficient power. Finally, for those conservative elements in the Labor Party, who still supported a strategy of hydro-industrialisation, the Olga should have appeared a reasonable compromise, as it retained a major hydro project.

If it was not for the actions of the Legislative Council, the Olga might have succeeded. As an action of consensus politics, the Gordon-above-Olga scheme appeared effective within the party. Although neither conservationists or HEC supporters considered it adequate, while Lowe and the Labor government retained its publicly perceived legitimacy within the broader public, the possibility of creating support for a consensus approach appeared likely. With the advent of the parliamentary deadlock, forced by the Legislative Council's unfaltering support for the Franklin-below-Gordon proposal, the government lost its capacity to dictate decisions to the public. Lowe's ability to implement consensus politics was hence forth seriously impaired.

Political survival increasingly began to dominate the Lowe government's activity as the deadlock continued. The Franklin issue still required a solution and Lowe's influence over his party and public opinion deteriorated. Initially Lowe resisted the idea of a referendum, arguing that it undermined the

government's mandate to make policy on major issues.¹⁴⁰ By June, however, members of the PLP were growing increasingly concerned, an atmosphere reflected in Holgate's challenge to Lowe's leadership on June 30.¹⁴¹ Lowe won this initial challenge, but at the State Council in July he was continually defeated on policy matters including the Caucus decision to support the Olga scheme.¹⁴² Lowe maintained that the union dominated Council could not determine his policy position. Nevertheless, this continued pressure saw Lowe finally concede to the idea of a referendum in September.¹⁴³

In an attempt to make the referendum representative of popular views, Lowe decided that a 'no dams' option ought to be included and made his position public.¹⁴⁴ Cabinet, however, rejected this decision¹⁴⁵ The Premier then came under attack from Cabinet, the union movement, and the ALP administration which reminded Caucus that the State Council had to decide between one of the two power schemes.¹⁴⁶ Once defeated on the referendum issue, Lowe's leadership was undermined and when Holgate instigated a second leadership challenge on the 11th on November, the vote of no confidence was passed.¹⁴⁷

When Holgate took over as Premier, he maintained the government's support for the Olga scheme. At the fore of all of Holgate's actions was maintaining his own political power. To achieve this, the new Premier was aware that at the very least, a decisive position on the dams issue needed to be established. This approach became manifest in his claim that a dam (either the

140 Ibid p. 144.

141 Ibid p. 145.

142 Ibid; Bennett loc cit p. 86; Davis "Tasmania: Premiers" p. 193.

143 Lowe loc cit p. 152.

144 Ibid.

145 Ibid p. 154.

146 Smith loc cit p. 106.

147 Herr "Politics in Tasmania" p. 8.

Franklin or the Olga) would be built, whatever the outcome of the referendum and the anticipated informal vote.¹⁴⁸

Support for the Olga remained couched in terms of economic, energy and conservation benefits to the state. As Holgate explained:

It will continue Tasmania's programme of Hydro Electric development with all the resulting employment and economic benefits, and it will save the Franklin River, to be forever enshrined as a National Park of world significance.¹⁴⁹

It is clear from this statement, that unlike Lowe, Holgate articulated public support for hydro-industrialisation as a basis for economic development. The strategy which emerged was based on Holgate's attempt to regain lost support for the Labor Party by signalling his desire to re-establish a close relationship with the HEC. An important objective of this approach also included dissipating the conflictual relationship which had developed between the two houses of Parliament, a prime source of the government's problems.

The Legislative Council and its objective of maintaining the power of the HEC played a crucial role in shaping the Franklin conflict. In contrast to the move towards reform in Tasmania during the 1970s, the Legislative Council had remained a highly conservative supporter of hydro-industrialisation, resisting attempts to make the Commission more accountable. For instance, in 1979, when Lowe had proposed to bring the HEC under some form of ministerial control, members of the Legislative Council had responded by reasserting the positive role the HEC had played in Tasmania's development.¹⁵⁰ Typifying the Legislative Council's attitude is the following comment made by Mr. Mac Le Fevre:

I cannot see any justification for changing the control of the HEC ... I think we must admire Mr Reece's unswerving support for the HEC over a great number of years and through many difficult times.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ W. Crawford 1981 "Gordon Dam Not the Only Answer, Says Ministers" Examiner 11 December.

¹⁴⁹ H. Holgate 1981 "The Premier Speaks" Radio 7HT Broadcast, transcript, 6 December.

¹⁵⁰ Thompson Power p. 79.

¹⁵¹ Ibid p. 80.

The Legislative Council maintained this position for the duration of the Franklin dam debate, establishing its own inquiry which endorsed the HEC Franklin proposal. It was on this basis that the Legislative Council subsequently denied the passage of the Lowe government's Olga Bill by amending the proposed legislation to provide for the Franklin, rather than the Olga scheme. With bi-partisan support for the Franklin emerging from the referendum, the contest was resolved in the Legislative Council and the HEC's favour.

Throughout the Franklin controversy, the Liberal Party assumed a position of support for the HEC and the Franklin dam. Its main aim during this period appears to have been to take political advantage of Labor's internal crises and divisions. The Franklin appeared as a means to political power, whilst the legitimacy of the Lowe government crumbled. It also provided an opportunity for the Liberals to facilitate a closer relationship to the HEC, which had historically been the domain of the ALP.

The Liberal Party justified its approach to the Franklin by equating industrial development with hydro-industrialisation. This is evident in the following statement by John Beswick, MHA and Opposition spokesperson on Forests, Mines and Water Resources:

By not taking advantage of the energy potential of the lower Gordon and Franklin, Tasmania would be turning its back on industrial growth and condemning the next generation to very limited employment opportunities. It would also be committing all its citizens to paying more for their domestic power as the more expensive alternative sources of energy were adopted.¹⁵²

Environmental arguments were also deployed by the Liberals who claimed that alternative sources of energy, including coal or possibly nuclear power, were less clean than hydro-electricity.¹⁵³

¹⁵² J. Beswick 1981 "Liberal Voice" Radio 7HT, 7QT and 7LA Broadcast, transcript, 5 December.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

Unlike Labor and its internal divisions, the Liberal Party succeeded in maintaining a united public commitment to the Franklin dam.¹⁵⁴ Gray's electoral victory in 1982 has been attributed to this apparent consensus:

Gray's success can be seen most clearly in the unity that was achieved over the South-West question, for no Liberal broke ranks to publicly oppose dams in the area.¹⁵⁵

With bi-partisan, as well as the Legislative Council support for the Franklin dam, legislation was passed and construction on the dam began. Two threats confronted this strategy. The first was the ongoing conservation campaign which continued to attract popular support. Gray's response to this first problem was to dismiss conservationists, especially those from the mainland, marginalising them in the following manner:

Only one isolated group, determined to get its minority way through misinformation, and if need be violence, has to come to terms with the reality of the situation in this state.¹⁵⁶

And second, there was the possibility of federal intervention, should the Labor Party win government. Arguments and strategies came to focus on marginal character of conservationists and the illegitimacy of federal intervention, with Gray arguing:

It's not a matter for the Federal government or for Dr Brown ... and his cronies who seem hell-bent on thwarting the wishes of the electorate.¹⁵⁷

In spite of his apparent support for the Franklin, Gray's position on the issue had shifted over the years in response to changing political circumstances. Prior to his appointment as Liberal Party leader Gray was uncommitted in his attitude the Franklin.¹⁵⁸ By way of contrast, in the lead up to the state election campaign and in the period which followed, Gray stridently supported the Franklin scheme for the reasons already mentioned. At the National Press

154 Smith loc cit p. 122.

155 Bennett loc cit p. 91.

156 Mercury October 14 1982.

157 Ibid.

158 Examiner 25 June 1982.

Club in October 1982, he had claimed that under no circumstances would the dam project be terminated,¹⁵⁹ and at another time urged the World Heritage Council not to accept the federal government's nomination for the south west National Park.¹⁶⁰ In the lead up to the federal election, with the possibility of intervention should Labor win government, Gray remained adamant that the dam would be built.¹⁶¹

When Hawke won office in 1983 and introduced legislation to halt the Franklin dam, Gray challenged this intervention in the High Court, because it represented an infringement against the state's rights. Gray further argued that the dam was crucial for Tasmania's economic development.¹⁶² As the High Court deliberations neared their end, the rhetoric altered substantially. There was no longer a pretence that a dam would be build irrespective of circumstances. Instead, compensation and alternative employment projects became the focus of debate. As this statement by Gray suggests:

The Government's primary concern, should the dam be stopped, is to find alternative work as quickly as possible for the men now employed on the scheme.¹⁶³

Indeed it is quite plausible, as one newspaper article suggested, that the Liberals would be quite content to lose, so long as sufficient compensation was paid, especially as this was the position assumed by Gray in October 1981.¹⁶⁴ Gray's firm commitment to the Franklin scheme had initially been constructed in response to the political necessity of presenting a unified public image. The High Court ruling provided a means for the issue to finally be resolved, with Tasmania placed in what might be construed as a 'win-win' situation. Either it could continue with the dam as previously anticipated, with the support of a High Court ruling, or it would be compensated for the loss of the dam. With

159 B. Primsall 1982 "No Deals To Stop Dam, Says Gray" Mercury 27 October.

160 Examiner 2 November 1982.

161 S. Downes 1983 "Gray and that Dam" Interview with Robin Gray Age 16 February.

162 Mercury 8 April 1983 and Examiner 8 April 1983.

163 Examiner 25 June 1983.

164 Examiner 25 June 1983.

these outcomes in mind, Gray's major concern was ensuring that the loss of the dam to Tasmania was perceived by the High Court to be as great as possible.

Federal Politics: From Fraser to Hawke

Fraser's approach to the Franklin emerges as a response to a number of contradictory objectives. At the core of this conflict was a desire to balance states' rights against the preservation of a valuable wilderness area, both issues of concern for the federal government. In addition, there were further pressures brought to bear on the government, based primarily on Fraser's declining popularity, a sense of economic crisis, as well as divisions and tensions within his own party. The dominant feature of Fraser's response to the Franklin issue was the conflict that these pressures created.

Evidence suggests that Fraser wanted to preserve the Franklin, an objective based on the value he placed on wilderness conservation.¹⁶⁵ This is consistent with Fraser's earlier involvement with the ACF. It was also a position supported by other members of the Liberal Party. Importantly, the Minister for Home Affairs and Environment, Tom McVeigh, supported the preservation of the south west, and likewise, Peter Reith went into the Flinders by-election (December 1982) with an anti-dam platform and won.¹⁶⁶ Widespread public concern for the Franklin can only have consolidated this support. Both the establishment of a Senate Select Committee to investigate the question of the south west and the proposal to have the area placed on the World Heritage list were actions indicating Fraser's intention to provide avenues which might allow the Franklin to be saved.¹⁶⁷ They also identified the Franklin as a federal issue. Nevertheless, Fraser was unwilling to directly intervene in the issue without the support of the state government.

¹⁶⁵ R. Green 1981 "Malcolm Fraser: Clearly the State Government Has Responsibility" in R. Green (ed) Battle for the Franklin Australia: Australian Conservation Foundation p. 191

¹⁶⁶ Ibid p. 195-6.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid p. 192-4.

Epitomising Fraser's approach was the offer of \$500 million compensation, made in January 1983. The federal government did not want the dam built, and was willing to pay for it financially, but not at the expense of states' rights. Justification for not intervening was subsequently constructed in terms of states' rights. Brian Galligan has argued that Fraser's position was at least partially" rooted in a classic liberal appreciation of federalism as an institutional system for protecting rights and liberties."¹⁶⁸ At various stages throughout the debate on the Franklin, Fraser maintained this position. For instance, while clearly concerned about the process which had led to there being an absence of a 'no dams' option during the referendum, Fraser stated that it was a matter for the state government and not a federal issue.¹⁶⁹

After the Liberal Party won the Tasmanian election in 1982, there was increasing pressure for the federal Liberal Party to support the dam. Fraser responded by maintaining that the issue of whether or not a dam would be built was

entirely a matter for the State Government. Robin Gray made it very clear before the State election and I would have thought that as a result of the State election it is very clear that the people of Tasmania as a whole have made their view very clear.¹⁷⁰

The previous chapter noted how Fraser was willing to ignore his ideological position on states' rights in the case of Fraser Island. A distinctive contrast may be made with the Franklin conflict where Fraser refused to intervene, justifying this in terms of states' rights. While it is accurate to describe Fraser Island as an anomaly, particular conditions explain why Fraser was unwilling to dismiss the ideology of states' rights during the Franklin debate. In the main part, these were based on Fraser's political vulnerability in the period following the 1980 federal election. Fraser had only just won this

¹⁶⁸ B. Galligan 1983 "The *Dams* Case: A Political Analysis" in M. Sornarajah (ed) The South West Dam Dispute: The Legal and Political Issues Hobart: University of Tasmania p. 111.

¹⁶⁹ Green loc cit p. 192.

¹⁷⁰ Cited in Ibid p. 193.

election and since that time his government had been beset with a number of problems, in particular, the worst international downturn since the depression, drought in rural Australia, and a wages explosion which had created heightened inflation and unemployment. While the Fraser government could only be identified as responsible for creating conditions in which the third of these problems emerged, the wider climate of economic crisis severely undermined the popularity of the Liberal Party and its leaders, especially Fraser as Prime Minister. Fraser's response was to undertake budgetary expansion to counter the recession.¹⁷¹ These measures did nothing to increase the Liberal Party's popularity as the electorate interpreted them as an attempt to buy their vote for the next election. At the same time these measures further alienated radical liberals within the Liberal Party that had gained substantial influence in the period following the 1980 election.¹⁷² This perspective demanded free market policies and the adoption of interventionist tactics to stop a recession, and exacerbated divisions within the party.¹⁷³

With Fraser's leadership vulnerable to pressures both internal and external to the party, his capacity to act on the Franklin issue was extremely limited. To take no action could be expected to contribute to his dwindling popularity, as well as antagonising those within his own party who considered that the Franklin dam ought not to be built. Thus it was important to be seen to be doing something. At the same time, however, federal intervention in a state issue would further accentuate existing tensions within the Liberal Party, alienating strong supporters of states' rights, including the National Party as coalition partner. In December 1982, when Cabinet narrowly decided against the use of federal powers to intervene to save the Franklin, Fraser was not in a

171 P. Kelly 1992 The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s Australia: Allen and Unwin p

51.

172 Ibid p. 38.

173 Ibid p. 51.

strong enough position to force the issue further. An offer of considerable compensation was a last resort.

It was not until the election of the Gray government and the concurrent shift of conservationists' efforts to the federal sphere, that the national ALP adopted a definitive position on the Franklin issue. As early as the referendum, however, it was evident that the national ALP was dissatisfied with the state's effort to resolve the issue, deciding against supporting either proposals in the dams referendum.¹⁷⁴ It was at the Party's Conference held in July 1982, that debate on the Franklin took place. The outcome was to adopt an anti-dams policy after a vote of 54 to 45.¹⁷⁵ While the anti-dams policy gained a majority vote, it was by no means uncontested, with the then leader of the opposition, Bill Hayden, opposing the no dams position, supported by the Tasmanian delegation to the conference.¹⁷⁶

While Hayden did not support a no dams position, too much should not be read into his position. The conference took place in a period of political turmoil for Hayden. His leadership was under attack due to a lack of popularity, culminating in a narrowly defeated leadership challenge by Hawke. It was at this time that Hayden reversed his position on nuclear warships and supported the change in ALP policy on uranium, in opposition to the position of his left wing faction within the Party. In sum, Hayden was beset with problems and was inconsistent in his dealings with a series of policy issues. Explanations for why he opposed the no dams position might involve Hawke's support for the anti-dam position or an attempt to retain some hold over Tasmanian seats which would almost certainly be lost in the next federal election if the ALP adopted an anti-dams position. The difficulty in identifying Hayden's rationale is further complicated by the reversal of his attitude following the policy decision, after which he became a strong advocate of the

174 Thompson Bob Brown p. 138.

175 Galligan loc cit p. 109

176 Ibid.

anti-dam position, to the extent that an article published in February 1983 referred to "Hayden's strong personal stand on the issue".¹⁷⁷

While some ambiguity surrounds Hayden's position on the dams issue, Hawke's position did not falter. Initially supporting Labor's anti-dam position at the 1982 Conference, he continually reiterated his support for the conservationist's view that the Franklin must be saved. Both in his final speech during the election campaign and on election night, Hawke reaffirmed Labor's commitment to stopping the dam.¹⁷⁸

A number of factors are helpful in explaining Hawke's position on the dams issue. The first may be associated with an increasing concern within the ALP over the environment. While the Franklin is typically (and quite accurately) depicted as pivotal within this process, the ALP's environmental policy pre-dated this particular issue. As previous chapters have argued, Labor, under Whitlam had some, albeit limited, commitment to the environment. Papadakis has also made this point, noting that ALP platforms throughout the 1970s took on board an increasingly broad range of environmental issues, from the impact of new technologies, to uranium mining and the integration of environmental and economic concerns. Moreover, by the 1980s, these platforms had become "even more comprehensive ... reflect[ing] most of the themes raised by environmental groups both in Australia and in other countries."¹⁷⁹ Opposition to the Franklin dam was consistent with this trend which saw Labor taking account of the environment in the policy process.

Another important factor was the popularity of the anti-dams position on mainland Australia. Just prior to the ALP's conference, in a June by-election, 41% of voters participated in a "No Dams" write in, in the ACT.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, there could be no escaping the capacity of conservation groups to mobilise

¹⁷⁷ Ormonde "The "Greenies"" p. 3.

¹⁷⁸ Galligan loc cit p. 111.

¹⁷⁹ E. Papadakis 1993 Politics and the Environment: The Australian Experience Australia: Allen and Unwin p. 189.

¹⁸⁰ Galligan loc cit p 110.

public support in their favour. Labor was desperate for an electoral victory and the Franklin represented relatively uncontentious means, at least within potential Labor supporters, for gaining extra support. This became increasingly evident as 1982 progressed, with a number of opinion polls showing considerable public support for conservationists and federal intervention to stop the dam.¹⁸¹ The Flinders by-election confirmed this trend by replicating the ACT election, with 40% of voters writing "No Dams" on their ballot papers.¹⁸² Electorally, the anti-dams policy was simply good sense. Although such a stance would alienate much of the Tasmanian electorate, recent turmoil within the state ALP, due to the Franklin issue, meant that Labor had little chance of winning these five seats anyway.¹⁸³ Furthermore, it was likely to gain support from swinging voters in marginal Victoria and New South Wales seats by adopting an anti-dam position.

For Fraser, states' rights had posed a significant impediment to intervening to stop the damming of the Franklin. The case was quite the reverse for Hawke whose views on federalism were based on a belief in the expansion of centralised power, supported by the notion that "we are one nation and not just a collection of 6 1/2 states."¹⁸⁴ and,

I believe the logical implications of this analysis is that Australians would be better served by the elimination of the second tier of government - that is the States - which no longer serve their original purpose and act as a positive impediment to achieving good government in our current community. This would give us, like the great majority of other countries, one Parliament with powers available to the government to match the responsibilities upon it of protecting and advancing the interests of Australian citizens.¹⁸⁵

181 E. Papadakis 1990 "Environmental Policy" in C. Jennett and R. Stewart Hawke and Australian Public Policy: Consensus and Restructuring Australia: Macmillan p. 343.

182 Galligan loc cit p. 110.

183 Ibid p. 111.

184 R. Hawke 1981 "We Are One Nation and Not Just a Collection of 6 1/2 States" in R. Green (ed) Battle for the Franklin Australia: Australian Conservation Foundation p. 287

185 R. Hawke 1979 The Resolution of Conflict Boyder Lectures Sydney, Australian Broadcasting Commission p. 18-19 as cited in Galligan loc cit p. 111.

Within this political context it was logical for Hawke to support federal intervention in the dams issue, and once elected as leader of the opposition, Hawke argued if Labor was elected, the federal government would intervene to preserve the Franklin. By doing so, Hawke captured the environmental vote, with the NSWC urging a vote for Labor, on the basis that it would save the Franklin.¹⁸⁶ Having won the election, the new Hawke government legislated for the protection of the south west, maintaining its position in the High Court challenge and bargaining with Gray over compensation.

The HEC and its supporters

As it was indicated earlier in this chapter, conflict over the Franklin had as much to do with the development strategy of hydro-industrialisation and HEC power, as it had to do with the environment. This shaped HEC objectives, which supported the construction of the Franklin dam and by doing so attempted to arrest the attack on its political power which had been taking place since the mid 1970s.

The power of the HEC has been well documented.¹⁸⁷ In sum, the dominance of hydro-industrialisation had placed the HEC in a unique and indeed privileged position. Since the 1950s it had been granted over half of Tasmania's loans funds, a measure justified by the need to attract bulk power consuming industries into the state. Furthermore, prior to the Franklin, the HEC's capacity to determine power schemes was never questioned by parliament, or by opening up the process to either public scrutiny or an independent assessment of Tasmania's power requirements.¹⁸⁸ The control that the HEC had over information and its capacity to influence labour (as the largest employer in the state) and industrial development was perpetuated by influential figures within the HEC, such as Sir Allan Knight (HEC

¹⁸⁶ G. Mosely 1983 "Vote Labor and Democrat to Save the South West" Australian Conservation Foundation Newsletter Vol. 15 No. 2 February/march 1983.

¹⁸⁷ See G.M. Bates 1983 "The Aftermath of Lake Pedder" in M. Sornarajah (ed) The South West Dam Dispute: The Legal and Political Issues Hobart: University of Tasmania.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid* p 14-15; Herr and Davis loc cit p. 270; Crowley loc cit p. 50; Thompson Power p. 31.

Commissioner 1946-1977), adopting a prominent role in the policy process and establishing contacts with economically important sectors of industry.¹⁸⁹ It was this control over power decisions that the Franklin conflict challenged and thus the HEC's primary objective was to have the dam built as both real and symbolic evidence of this control.

The HEC adopted a number of arguments to justify the damming of the Franklin. At the fore of these claims was the notion that no other scheme "will meet the full range of the forecast after 1990."¹⁹⁰ It was also considered that all other schemes would cost a great deal more and that these costs would be passed on to general and industrial consumers.¹⁹¹ Employment benefits to the state were considered to be greatly enhanced by the Franklin scheme.¹⁹² Finally, there was the environmental question. According to the HEC, access to the Gordon above Olga scheme would provide a greater threat to the South West National Park than the Franklin. Moreover, the Franklin would also provide better recreational and tourist potential.¹⁹³ In any case, according to the HEC, the Franklin dam would only affect 1% of the area that the Cartland Committee had outlined as south west Tasmania. Nor did it affect any of the existing state reserves and finally "Present direct wilderness use is negligible particularly when compared with other more scenic areas of wilderness elsewhere in the state."¹⁹⁴

The HEC adopted a strategy based on constructing itself as apolitical, arguing that its role was to provide factual evidence. This view is summarised in the following statement:

189 Crowley loc cit p. 50.

190 Hydro-Electric Commission 1980 A Report By the Hydro-Electric Commission on the Effect of Power Development of a Decision Not to Use the Hydro Potential of the Franklin River Legislative Council Committee p. 2.

191 Ibid p. 2-3.

192 R. J. Ashton 1979 "Foreword by the Commissioner" Cross Currents No. 54 October p. 16.

193 Hydro-Electric Commission op cit p. 3.

194 Ashton loc cit p 18.

For the past two years there has been vigorous public debate on the subject of future power development culminating in a referendum.

The Commission has taken no part in the political aspects of the debate nor does it intend to do so. However, it has continually been prepared to provide relevant factual information and to explain and argue the reasons why it recommended that the Gordon below Franklin hydro scheme should be approved by Parliament as Tasmania's next power development.¹⁹⁵

Such a posture was viewed to be politically necessary for the HEC in its attempt to retain an image of independence. During the 1972 election, in which the UTG had campaigned to save Lake Pedder from being flooded, the HEC had actively supported the government's scheme.¹⁹⁶ Direct involvement in the election had drawn considerable criticism to the HEC resulting in it attempting to establish some distance between itself and the government.¹⁹⁷ In addition, recent years had seen the Labor government introduce measures to curtail HEC power. No doubt, overstepping the boundary of political involvement was avoided by the HEC, at least partly because it might justify further constraints being placed on its power.

Nevertheless, the HEC did continue to lobby government by acting in the role that it had assumed of providing 'facts'. At first, when Lowe had not undertaken a definitive position in the power debate, efforts were directed to the government and the House of Representatives. At this stage of the debate, the HEC reiterated its support for the Franklin and identified problems with the Olga scheme. Once Lowe had made a decision to support the Gordon above Olga, the HEC shifted its efforts to influence the Legislative Council. In a HEC press release on the 11th of July, 1980 it was stated that "the decision reached by the Government was not one which in any circumstance could have been made by the Commission."¹⁹⁸ The statement acknowledged parliament's rather than the government's, authority in determining HEC policy. Thus it

¹⁹⁵ Hydro-Electric Commission 1981 Cross Currents No. 63 December p. 6.

¹⁹⁶ Bates loc cit p. 15.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid p. 15 ; Thompson Power p. 27.

¹⁹⁸ Lowe op cit p. 127.

argued that the HEC had a legitimate role in attempting to influence the position adopted by the Legislative Council.¹⁹⁹ According to Lowe, the HEC also attempted to influence the decision of the Legislative Council's Select Committee into future energy options.²⁰⁰ Not only through submissions, but also in secret negotiations.²⁰¹ Once the HEC had established the Legislative Council as a parliamentary ally, its primary activity was to lobby to maintain this support.

With the HEC perceiving itself as having a politically restricted role in the Franklin debate, the activities of pro-dam pressure groups became vital. One group that was particularly close to the HEC was HEAT (Hydro-Employees Action Team). HEAT had its origins in a meeting of approximately thirty HEC workers on the 6th of June, which protested against a TWS rally of between 8,000 to 10,000 people that was being held on that day.²⁰² HEAT was formed with the aim of supporting the HEC's Franklin scheme because it would protect jobs and provide Tasmania with the most efficient supply of power. Like the HEC, it contended that the government's proposed Gordon-above-Olga was inferior on economic, social and environmental grounds.²⁰³

The relationship between the HEC and HEAT was necessarily a close one. Although it is difficult to gauge precisely what level of consultation operated, the continued existence of HEAT implied HEC support. This may have taken the form, as some sources claim, of HEC Commissioner, Russell Ashton informally sanctioning the group.²⁰⁴ Sponsorship, however, need not have been that explicit. It is a HEC staff regulation that all officers of the Commission, making public comment on the HEC's activities, requires the

199 Ibid.
200 Ibid p. 129.
201 Ibid p. 128.
202 Thompson Power p. 93.
203 Mercury 6 June 1981.
204 Thompson Power p 94.

Commissioner's approval.²⁰⁵ Hence, the HEC was authorised to stop HEAT's activities, and thus, at the very least, was sanctioning HEAT by not intervening.

HEAT claimed to represent Hydro workers and all unions in the HEC,²⁰⁶ and identified itself as a grass-roots response to the conservation movement.

As Brian Hoyle, convenor of HEAT explains:

The formation of HEAT was a reaction to the recent so called 'conservationist' rally at which a number of imported pseudo experts excelled even the local variety of self appointed gurus in spewing forth a mixture of absurdity, juvenile irresponsibility and downright dishonesty.²⁰⁷

In contrast to the conservation movement, Hoyle considered HEAT to have been "careful to present an honest and factual argument from the outset and had achieved a reputation of honesty and accuracy."²⁰⁸ It pursued this objective by opening up an information centre in Hobart,²⁰⁹ the provision of information to HEC workers and launching an advertising campaign.²¹⁰

HEAT undertook the very role that the HEC, as a government instrumentality, could not. HEAT's extremely close links to the HEC have led Thompson to claim that the continued activities of HEAT were an indication of the Hydro's power, as "[n]o Commonwealth or State government has ever previously tolerated a political action lobby by a group of public servants."²¹¹ Nonetheless, there was a perceived distance between HEAT and the government, which allowed it to mobilise and make claims which would not have been tolerated had they been made by the HEC. One notable example was when Hoyle compared Bob Brown to Joseph Goebels.²¹² While not as outrageous, HEAT's advertising campaign was arguably excessive in the nature of its criticisms of conservationists, with slogans such as "TASMANIANS

205 Bates loc cit p. 16.

206 Thompson Power p 93.

207 Cited in *ibid.*

208 Mercury 6 June 1981.

209 Mercury 26 November 1981.

210 Thompson Power p. 93.

211 *Ibid* p. 94.

212 Mercury 28 June 1980.

DON'T WANT A WILDERNESS TAX IMPOSED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PRIVILEGED FEW."²¹³ Ultimately, it was HEAT's capacity to criticise government that held it apart from the HEC, assuming the explicitly political role that the HEC, for its survival, had rejected. The following statement by Hoyle encapsulates the willingness of HEAT to criticise where the HEC could not:

Government has put forward a scheme (the Gordon above Olga) which is unbuildable by a workforce which is unwilling ... and we all know what an unwilling workforce can turn out ...we are not employees of the Government ... the government are employees of us ... we pay their salaries, they don't pay ours. We are not restricted in any way in attacking the government.²¹⁴

While HEAT still remained active, another group, the Association of Consumers of Electricity (ACE) was formed on the 30th of July 1980. It was an elitist organisation from the start, with its first meeting an invitation only affair.²¹⁵ Within its membership, ACE had a notable array of former, highly influential, political leaders. These included former Premiers Eric Reece, Angus Bethune, and deputy Premier Roy Fagan.²¹⁶ ACE was critical of both conservationists and the government. The position of ACE was made clear in an interview with Eric Reece on Nationwide:

The Government's decision is for the privilege of these people to float rubber rafts down the Franklin. And don't let them tell you its going to flood or kill all the Huon pine trees. Why, I've got Huon pines growing in my back garden. These people will make you believe that everything that's out there is going to be crucified by the HEC.²¹⁷

The formation of ACE was based on the objective of changing the policy of the Parliamentary Labor Party.²¹⁸ Once the Lowe government had decided to support the Olga scheme, ACE argued that the government had not made a

213 Mercury 9 July 1980.

214 Bates loc cit p. 16.

215 Advocate 1 August 1980.

216 Lowe loc cit p. 128; Thompson Power p. 95.

217 Thompson Power p. 95.

218 Advocate 1 August 1980.

rational decision on the dams issue, rather it had been "scared into incompetence by conservationists"²¹⁹ and shifted its emphasis to the Legislative Council, placing pressure on it to support the Franklin dam proposal.²²⁰

Following the election of the Gray government and its commitment to building the Franklin dam, the political role of HEAT and ACE appeared to have ended. When conservationists moved their campaign to the federal level, a new group, the Organisation for Tasmanian Development (OTD) was formed. As Bates claims, OTD was in effect "HEAT reincarnated".²²¹ The main difference a wider membership with support broadening to encompass the new Premier and the majority of the trade union movement.²²² The OTD was to remain an avid supporter of Gray and the HEC throughout the remainder of the conflict, apparently representing Tasmanian interests against federal intervention.

Traditionally, business and labour have not played an overtly political role in Tasmania. The primary reason for this was that close links between the HEC, big business and the union movement had meant that the Hydro was perceived as representing the political interests of both groups. Hydro-industrialisation directly served the interests of the industrially powerful sectors of the economy, with large companies such as EZ, Electrona Carbide, APPM, Comalco and Tempco²²³ attracted to the state by the lure of cheap bulk power. While this continued to be made available, there existed no reason to lobby government directly. The Tasmanian trade union movement similarly has a history of supporting hydro-industrialisation, based on an assumption about the HEC's role in providing employment opportunities. While these alliances were reproduced in the Franklin conflict, the limits to the HEC's

219 Mercury 23 November 1981.

220 Mercury 2 August 1980.

221 Bates loc cit p. 17.

222 Ibid.

223 Thompson Power p. 23.

political role meant that business and labour were required to take a more active part in lobbying on behalf of the HEC.

Business organised by forming a working party comprising of 13 bulk consumers which, at the prompting of the Tasmanian Chamber of Industries (TCI), mobilised to gain support for the Franklin dam project. The group adopted a strategy which firstly focused on influencing public opinion in favour of hydro-industrialisation and the HEC's Franklin option; and secondly, lobbying Tasmanian parliament.²²⁴ The TCI attempted to generate support for the HEC from the outset of the debate, when in October 1979, its official publication, TCI Service Bulletin, had stated that "The Chamber commends the HEC for its reasoned report and we strongly support its conclusions".²²⁵ The primary basis for the TCI's position was its evaluation of the economic implications of various power schemes. It argued that not constructing the Franklin dam would create disincentives for investing in the state because of the increasing costs in power that would follow:

The issue is economically perilous because it signals to potential investors within and without Australia that the Government, and perhaps the Parliament presiding over the worst economy in the country, is still prepared to throw common sense out the window.²²⁶

Furthermore, the TCI made it quite clear that it would be active in advancing the HEC's proposal: "As the representatives of industry, the Chamber intends to play a major role in this debate".²²⁷ As well as publicly commenting on developments in the Franklin issue in the lead up to the referendum, the TCI undertook an extensive advertising campaign which supported the Franklin dam. Its arguments replicated those of all HEC supporters, pointing to the

²²⁴ Lowe op cit p. 110.

²²⁵ Thompson Power p. 98.

²²⁶ Tasmanian Chamber Industries 1981 TCI Service Bulletin February 1981.

²²⁷ Thompson Power p. 98.

scheme's benefits, not only in terms of cost-effectiveness, economic growth and jobs, but also on environmental grounds.²²⁸

With the exception of the Federated Engine Drivers and Fireman's Association and the Amalgamated Metal Workers and Shipwright's Unions (AMWSU),²²⁹ the trade union movement accepted the HEC's argument that the Franklin was a necessary prerequisite for reasonable employment conditions.²³⁰ Although not entirely indistinguishable, the trade union movement had considerable overlapping membership with HEAT.²³¹ The impact this had on the ALP was particularly significant. At the State Council Conference over the 5th and 6th of July 1980, a motion was put to authorise the Franklin scheme. This motion was only narrowly defeated by 37 votes to 35, with a motion requesting the government to give fullest weighting to the HEC proposals being accepted in its place.²³² Already the union dominated State Council was demonstrating a much greater commitment to the HEC's Franklin scheme than its PLP counterpart, a precursor for increased conflict between the trade union movement and the PLP over the Franklin issue. The trade union movement was prominent in eroding support for Lowe's leadership by maintaining its support for the Franklin scheme. Throughout the Franklin conflict, the trade union movement remained a strong advocate for HEC objectives, by supporting groups such as HEAT and OTD, and by placing pressure on the PLP to change from its Olga position.

The HEC had most to gain from supporting forms of political mobilisation which could be distinguished from the Commission. Not only did this give the HEC's proposal an image of wide public concern, it also protected the HEC from claims of undermining the democratic political process by pressuring, through

²²⁸ See for example the advertisement in the *Mercury* 7 December 1981.

²²⁹ For example the Amalgamated Workers and Shipwrights Union called for an independent inquiry into Tasmania's future power options as it was not satisfied with the HEC's scheme. *Examiner* 31 March 1980.

²³⁰ Thompson *Power* p. 91-2.

²³¹ Lowe op cit p. 112.

²³² Davis op cit p. 108.

political mobilisation, rather than acting in its legitimate role as a provider of information to parliament.

Conclusion

Conflict over the HEC's proposal to dam the Franklin River stands out in Australian environmental history because of the degree of political mobilisation and conflict it generated, both at the state level and nationally. Conflict at the state level was far more complex than its national counterpart. For mainland Australians, the issue revolved almost entirely around the environmental dimension of the debate. Within the Tasmanian context matters were complicated by questions regarding hydro-industrialisation's relevance as a development strategy, the political power of the HEC, and the intricacies of Tasmanian politics. What is striking at both the federal and state level is the extent to which the Franklin dispute generated popular concern and the levels of environmental awareness this implies.

According to the argument in this thesis, an explanation for such an extension of environmental awareness can be found in the experience of environmental damage, particularly when it assumes a familiar form. The flooding of Lake Pedder provided this example and played a crucial role in shaping the Franklin conflict through its input into the formation of TWS, the heightened awareness of the value of wilderness that it created, and the way that environmental damage to the Lake led conservationists to view hydro-industrialisation as a threat to wilderness.

During the Franklin campaign the Tasmanian conservation movement was complemented by the activities of the ACF. As previous chapters suggest, in the period prior to the Franklin conflict, environmental awareness had evolved in response to specific instances of threatened environmental damage, such as the Great Barrier Reef and Fraser Island. What the Franklin provided was the catalyst required to yet again channel these new values into mobilisation and hence lead to them becoming politically significant. Here the

role of the media and the conservationists' use of wilderness imagery was crucial as its portrayal allowed a broad cross-section of the Australian community to place a value on the south west wilderness and in doing so provided the basis for political mobilisation.

While the relationship between environmental damage and awareness was vital in creating conditions for mobilisation in Tasmania, the role of hydro-industrialisation was also central. Hence, in a similar fashion to the other case studies considered in this thesis, production and accumulation strategies were essential in defining the character of the Franklin conflict. In this context hydro-industrialisation had dual significance. The first relates to hydro-industrialisation as a cause of environmental damage. By seeking to develop the south west, the HEC and its hydro-electric schemes created instances of environmental damage and was thus fundamental in producing conditions in which conflict would emerge.

The demise of hydro-industrialisation was also influential in the Franklin dam dispute. While conflict over an instance of environmental damage was of primary importance, so too was Lowe's assessment that hydro-industrialisation was no longer a useful accumulation strategy and that the Franklin provided an opportunity to undermine the HEC's power. Conservationists' capitalised on this growing scepticism regarding hydro-industrialisation. They were also aware that their capacity to generate support partly relied on gaining widespread recognition that Tasmania's employment and power requirements would not deteriorate as a result of saving the Franklin. Hydro-industrialisation subsequently became a pivotal issue. It also exacerbated the conflict, as the Franklin became more than simply an issue of environmental protection, but had significant ramifications for the future direction of production within Tasmania. Hence the HEC and its supporters were not only mobilising to dam the Franklin, but to maintain hydro-industrialisation as an economic strategy. Likewise, many opponents of the Franklin dam, such as

Lowe, felt strongly about the issue at least partly because of its economic significance. As a result the intensity of the conflict reflected the importance of the decision's economic as well as environmental implications.

By linking their campaign to the health of the Tasmanian economy, conservationists kept the objectives of the Franklin conflict within the boundaries of the existing economic framework. These limits were further reinforced by the way that the current political system was identified as the primary vehicle to achieve change. In sum, most conservationists did not identify the Franklin campaign with a challenge to the liberal democratic organisation of Tasmania's economic and political life.²³³ Hence, although extra-parliamentary tactics were adopted, the outcome that was sought was essentially reformist in character. The place of the environment within the political and economic order needed to be altered, but there was no suggestion that this required radical change. As a result, the strategy adopted by conservation groups was to target whatever level or sphere of government that appeared most capable of achieving their ends.

In a similar fashion to both the Great Barrier Reef and Fraser Island, the Franklin debate did involve two conflicting paradigms regarding the environment's significance and the values which could be ascribed to the region. Again, the objectives and claims of conservationists sit comfortably within the ecological paradigm. It was the value of wilderness that was the primary concern of environmental activists as they mobilised to save the Franklin. In a manner reminiscent of the Barrier Reef conflict, a variety of arguments were developed to ascribe wilderness with value. These were not only limited to the intrinsic worth of wilderness, but were also associated with the benefits that wilderness brought to human society. What set these values

²³³ Although it should be noted that there were some radical elements of the campaign that saw the Franklin in these terms. See A. Salleh 1984 "Whither the Green Machine? The No Dams Campaign Revealed the Possibilities for a New Politics" Australian Society May 1. The majority of campaigners, and the official publicity of the campaign, did not dwell on this point.

outside the mechanistic paradigm was a rejection of the notion that the economic worth of wilderness took precedence over other values.

In opposition to the ecological paradigm was the view of the HEC and its supporters. Within this perspective, electrical power and the creation of jobs through hydro-industrialisation was of primary importance, with economic priorities remaining the central concern, resulting in the predominance of these issues in the publicity campaigns and public comment of the HEC, HEAT, ACE and the TCI. Both business and labour typically associated their objectives with those of hydro-industrialisation and thus remained supporters of the HEC throughout the controversy. While the environment attracted some comment, this was founded on the notion that environmentalists were over-reacting and that the impact of the Franklin dam would not be as extensive as they claimed. Notions regarding the need for wilderness to be remote were virtually ignored, with an emphasis placed on the Franklin's aesthetic value which was deemed less worthy than other regions in Tasmania. The campaign reflected an unwavering commitment to hydro-industrialisation as an economic strategy and a belief that the objectives it enshrined, such as employment and cheap electrical power, were inherently superior to a concern for wilderness.

The political sphere remained the focus of mobilisation both for and against the Franklin dam. Previous chapters have identified a paradigm in which politics is paramount. This was also evident within the conflict over the Franklin and represented the coming together of various political and economic demands. It was this perspective which dominated Lowe and the Tasmanian Labor government's actions in the early stages of the debate. Lowe's response to the Franklin was based on a variety of political and economic objectives that were compatible with aspects of the ecologically motivated goals of the conservation movement. Not only did the Franklin provide an opportunity to erode the HEC's political power, wilderness was also

a vital aspect of Lowe's vision for a revitalised Tasmanian economy. As the broader problems of hydro-industrialisation combined with an immediate threat to the environment, a double opportunity was provided to pursue these aims with support generated by the conservation movement.

While these objectives were initially evident, as soon as Lowe was faced with a political crisis, survival became a dominant concern. To retain political power and remain as Premier, wider political objectives took precedence. Hence the back down on the referendum took place. Other political actors, including Holgate, Gray, Hayden, Fraser and Hawke, were all far more concerned with the political context in which they were placed, than the specific concerns that the Franklin issue raised. For both Holgate and Gray, this meant accommodating the HEC's demands as a way to maximise their capacity to retain political power. At the federal level, a similar process took place. Both of the major parties opposed the building of the dam. Different responses to the issue reflected the political pressures each of the parties faced. For Fraser this meant failing to intervene because of his own political vulnerability and an ideological commitment to states' rights. For Hawke, the reverse was the case, with popularity and centralism dominating his actions and providing a legitimate basis for intervention.

The Franklin is frequently cited as a watershed in Australian environmental politics. Supporting this claim was the size and intensity of mobilisation that the issue produced, as well as the degree to which it influenced Tasmanian politics. The Franklin conflict may also be viewed as a part of the evolving relationship between environmental damage and awareness. Conservation groups continued to enjoy the popularity that was evident in the Great Barrier Reef and Fraser Island campaigns which, for the first time, was channelled into an effective use of the electoral system. The Franklin campaign also suggests that conservationists were developing an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the political processes they were

challenging and used this knowledge to their advantage. Finally, arguments for wilderness preservation were continuing to be defined in a manner that was becoming increasingly accessible to the wider population. In part, this suggests that conservationists were becoming more skilled in presenting their message, hence the success of the strategy of utilising the wilderness experience. It may also be associated with increasing levels of environmental awareness within Australia, resulting in receptiveness to the notion that wilderness is valuable.

The success of conservationists in the Franklin campaign reinforced the idea that developmentalist interests could not ignore the claims of the environmental groups. The capacity of environmental issues to generate popular mobilisation meant that conflict, or finding methods to accommodate conservationist concerns, was to become a central part of any business strategy that involved notable environmental damage. A similar lesson appears to have been learnt by the state as the consequences of discounting the potential political strength of the environment movement became increasingly evident. Hence, while a broad variety of political and economic forces influenced the outcome of the Franklin dam conflict, its ramifications were important in influencing the character of subsequent environmental disputes.

Chapter Six

Conflict Over Coronation Hill and the Conservation Zone

The Coronation Hill Story

The history of Kakadu National Park dates back to the 1960s when approximately 500 square kilometres of the Woolwong Aboriginal Reserve was declared a wildlife sanctuary.¹ It was not until 1977, however, following recommendations by the Fox Commission (Ranger Inquiry) that Kakadu National Park was declared. In the early 1980s the Kakadu region was placed on the Register of the National Estate and in 1981, Kakadu Stage I was inscribed on the World Heritage List.² Plans made to extend the park came to fruition after the Hawke government's electoral victory in 1983 and in 1984 Kakadu Stage II was declared.³

It was in June 1986 that the foundation for the conflict over Coronation Hill was laid. The Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service (ANPWS) had revised its original plan for Kakadu National Park and in this process proposed the prohibition of mining outside existing leases within the park. Criticism followed with the Northern Territory government, the mining industry and notable members of the federal government, including Hawke, Gareth Evans (Minister for Resources and Energy) and Peter Walsh (Minister for Finance), all taking issue with the new plan.⁴

Mining was eventually banned in Kakadu National Park Stages I and II, but not before extensive conflict had taken place. Initially the government

¹ C. Lloyd 1989 "The Politics of Kakadu" in P. Hay, R. Eckersley, and G. Holloway (eds) Environmental Politics in Australia and New Zealand Hobart: Board of Environmental Studies p. 103.

² Resource Assessment Commission 1991 Kakadu Conservation Zone Draft Report Volume 1, January 1991 Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service p. 229.

³ Lloyd loc cit p. 106; Commonwealth of Australia 1988 The Potential of the Kakadu National Park Region Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts, November 1988, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service p. 6.

⁴ Lloyd loc cit p 108.

suggested that it would support moves to allow mining in Stages I and II of the park and delayed Stage II's nomination for World Heritage listing in order to allow the mineral prospects of the area to be assessed.⁵ Responding to public pressure and the threat of a backbench revolt the government reversed its position, supporting a ban on mining and endorsing the ANPWS proposal to nominate Stage II of Kakadu National Park for World Heritage Listing.⁶

Both the Northern Territory government and Peko Wallsend, a mining company with significant interests in the region, attempted to pressure the government into adopting its original position.⁷ The Northern Territory government went so far as to send a representative to Paris to oppose the World Heritage listing of Stage II.⁸ Geopeko (the exploration branch of Peko Wallsend) simply started drilling in defiance of the federal government's policy.⁹ A series of legal battles, initiated by claims made from both the NT government and Peko Wallsend, led the federal government to legislate for a ban of mining in Kakadu Stages I and II during late November 1986.¹⁰

By mid December, the federal government had changed its position yet again, this time to a position of compromise. While mining remained prohibited in Kakadu Stage II and the area finally achieved World Heritage listing in December 1987, a decision was made to retain a Conservation Zone (CZ) in the proposed Kakadu National Park Stage III. The term 'Conservation Zone' was a confusing misnomer. What it actually designated was an area covering 35% of Kakadu Stage III (2252 sq km) within which a five year mining

⁵ K. Legge 1986 "Kakadu: Evans Wanted to Stall Listing" National Times on Sunday 21 September.

⁶ M. O'Callaghan 1986 "Peko Boss Puts Kakadu Plea to PM" Sydney Morning Herald 16 September; Resource Assessment Commission 1991 Kakadu Conservation Zone Final Report Volume 1, April, 1991 Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service p. 380.

⁷ See M. Seccombes 1986 "PM Warns Peko on Kakadu" Australian 11-12 October; P. Gill and R. Eccleston 1986 "Government Backs Off on Kakadu Mining Stand" Age 10 October; M. O'Callaghan 1986 "Peko Defies Ban on Kakadu Work" Sydney Morning Herald 10 October.

⁸ M. Forbes 1986 "Kakadu: Plan to Ban New Mining" National Times on Sunday 23 November.

⁹ Sydney Morning Herald 13 November 1986.

¹⁰ M. O'Callaghan 1986 "Govt Moves to Ban Kakadu Mining" Sydney Morning Herald 27 November.

exploration and assessment program would take place before future park expansions were undertaken.¹¹ Importantly, projects that were to proceed within the CZ had to establish that they were of 'major economic significance'.¹²

Kakadu Stage III (4479 sq km) was declared in June 1987 and included the CZ. It is the debate over the CZ to which this case study turns. Subsequent conflict over Kakadu National Park Stage III focused on the size and use of the CZ. During November 1988 a Senate Report entitled Potential for the Kakadu National Park Region recommended that any mining proposal with the potential to pollute the South Alligator River be prohibited because it posed a threat to the entire eco-system encompassed within the park. Of particular concern to conservationists was a proposed mine at Coronation Hill which was located near the South Alligator River where a possibility existed for water contaminated with cyanide to leak from the mine's tailings dam.¹³

The mining company at the fore of the debate over Coronation Hill was Coronation Hill Joint Venture (CHJV), which was formed between BHP Gold, Pioneer Minerals and Norgold. Its interests lay in the mining of gold, platinum and palladium deposits located within Coronation Hill and the CZ. BHP remained central in the early stages of the conflict as it held gold and uranium mining leases within the region. During February 1988 conservationists protested against further mining developments by challenging the legality of BHP's leases and drawing attention to the threat such activity posed to Kakadu National Park. The Federal Government ignored the protests and renewed BHP's Licence for exploration at the El Shenara mine and Coronation Hill in December 1988. This action was widely interpreted as indicating government support for further mining in the region. An EIS for Coronation Hill was subsequently released by BHP during

11 Lloyd loc cit p. 115.

12 Commonwealth of Australia op cit p. 75.

13 Ibid see chapter 3.

July 1989¹⁴ and presented to Graham Richardson (as Minister for the Environment) on July 27, 1989.¹⁵ Public response to the EIS was less than favourable as both a consultant's report and a group of CSIRO scientists opposed the mine because of the ecological threat it posed.¹⁶

Throughout 1989 various groups mobilised in an attempt to make mining in the region more difficult. In April, the Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) placed Kakadu National Park, a number of former pastoral leases, and the CZ, on the register of the National Estate.¹⁷ Then, during September, the Northern Lands Council acting for the Jawoyn Aboriginal people, asked the federal government to Heritage list Coronation Hill.¹⁸ Hence, when cabinet came to debate the Coronation Hill mine and the CZ at the end of 1989, a wide variety of interests were actively involved in making claims about the issue. Mining companies and the Northern Territory government were seeking to mine the area, conservation groups and associated government agencies (especially the Australian Heritage Commission) were attempting to have the area preserved as National Estate with the ultimate aim of the region being World Heritage listed, and Aboriginal people had also placed a claim on the region.

With an election looming some time in early 1990, the government was in a difficult position if it wanted to avoid alienating either of the politically significant lobby groups that the mining companies and the conservationists represented. There was also the politically sensitive question of Aboriginal rights. The situation was made even more difficult as both the mining lobby and conservation groups constructed the decision over Coronation Hill as a test case for the government. While the mining industry argued that the

14 Resource Assessment Commission Final Report Volume 1 p 380.

15 P. Gill 1989 "Concessions Made to Coronation Hill" Australian Financial Review 28 July.

16 P. Bailey 1989 "Scientists Oppose Mine" Sydney Morning Herald 26 August; Age 29 October 1989.

17 Resource Assessment Commission Final Report Volume 1 p. 380.

18 L. Taylor 1989 "Heritage Bid Hits Mine Plan" Australian 20 September.

government's decision would serve as an indication of its commitment to economic development,¹⁹ environmental groups asserted that Coronation Hill would demonstrate whether or not conservation was an important aspect of the government's political agenda.²⁰

Faced with these various pressures, the government delayed the decision through yet another compromise measure which involved a reduction in the size of the CZ, leaving only Coronation Hill and El Sherana open for exploration, whilst the rest of the CZ was absorbed into Kakadu National Park III. This reduced the size of the CZ (more appropriately renamed 'Exploration Zone') to 47 sq km which would be subjected to a combined EIS.²¹ On October 5 this was formalised with the Resource Assessment Commission (RAC) being given the task of assessing the issue.²² In April 1990 the newly re-elected Hawke government gave the RAC, headed by Commissioner Justice Stewart (also the Commissioner in charge of the broader RAC process), its terms of reference with the Report to be published one year later.²³ Mining would thus be deferred as the RAC conducted inquiries into the area's environmental and heritage values, as well as its national economic significance.²⁴

With the establishment of the RAC, interested parties focused on putting forward their submissions to the Inquiry. The only group that did not participate in this process was the Wilderness Society which argued that public opinion was the key to having the government protect Kakadu.²⁵ In April 1991

¹⁹ G. James 1989 "Balderstone's Last Stand on the Environment" Australian 20 April.

²⁰ R. Ledger 1989 "Kakadu's Coronation Hill '*the one that got away*'" Conservation News Vol. 21 No. 8, September 1989 p. 1. A similar contention was made in the ACF's submission to the Coronation Hill Inquiry where the decision was identified as a test case for the potential of the RAC and to "demonstrate the value of this approach to making decisions about the use of natural resources." M. Krockenberger (Australian Conservation Foundation) 1990 Resource Assessment Commission: Submission to the Kakadu Inquiry Submission No: 90/097 p. 2.

²¹ S. Houweling and L. Taylor 1989 "Stalemate on Kakadu Mine Plans" Australian 28 September; J. Lambert "Kakadu: Tough Decisions" Wilderness News No. 108 Vol. 10 No. 9 November 1989 p. 12.

²² Resource Assessment Commission Final Report Volume 1 p. 381.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ R. Peake 1989 "BHP Sees Betrayal of Trust in Kakadu Deal" Age 7 October.

²⁵ Lambert loc cit p. 12.

the RAC's Kakadu Conservation Zone Final Report was released. Rather than provide the government with a specific course of action, it presented a list of options. These varied from a complete prohibition of mining at Coronation Hill and the CZ to supporting mining in the entire region.²⁶ According to the RAC, it was the government's responsibility to decide which approach was appropriate.²⁷

The general message of the RAC was relatively clear. Neither conservationists' demands for protection, nor the mining industry's arguments for access to Coronation Hill, were considered particularly persuasive. Aboriginal claims to the area, however, were more significant. It was Aboriginal interests and the Jawoyn claims to the area that the RAC Inquiry found more convincing.²⁸ The Final Report drew on Justice Stewart's Report to the Minister For Aboriginal Affairs on the Kakadu Conservation Zone. This had identified the Jawoyn Aboriginal people, as traditional occupants of the CZ, as having a legitimate reason to call for the area to be protected under the *Northern Territory Sacred Sites Act, 1989*, on the basis that it was a sacred site.²⁹ Thus Jawoyn claims for mining to be precluded in the region were given additional weighting in the RAC Report.

Subsequent Cabinet debate on the issue took place within a context of leadership challenges and the continuing lobbying of environmental, Aboriginal and mining interests. The day before Cabinet was due to consider the issue, Hawke pre-empted the decision by publicly stating that the Jawoyn had a legitimate claim to their cultural beliefs and the significance they associated with Coronation Hill. While some conflict lingered in the debate that followed, Hawke used his position as leader of the Labor Party and Prime

²⁶ Resource Assessment Commission Final Report Volume 1 p. xvii-viii.

²⁷ Ibid p. vii.

²⁸ Resource Assessment Commission Final Report Volume 1 chapter 7.

²⁹ Justice D. G. Stewart 1991 Report to the Minister For Aboriginal Affairs on the Kakadu Conservation Zone Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service "Summary".

Minister to ensure that Cabinet would decide to protect Coronation Hill and the CZ.

The Hawke government

The federal government's response to the issue of the CZ and Coronation Hill was dominated by conflicting views regarding how significant the environment ought to be in the government's decision making. With an election looming it was particularly important for the ALP to find a satisfactory resolution to the issue. Questions relating to Hawke's leadership of the ALP further complicated the politics of Kakadu.

The political context in which the problem of Coronation Hill emerged was dominated by the political style and objectives of Graham Richardson. Richardson moved into the environment portfolio after the previous minister, Barry Cohen, failed to gain preselection in the lead up to the 1987 election. The period in which Richardson was Minister for the Environment was distinguished by two factors. The first was the adoption of an electoral and political strategy based on forging a close relationship between the ALP and the environment movement. And secondly, there was an attempt to create a policy framework capable of resolving the contest between environmental protection and resource development. A central feature of this strategy was the construction of a discourse emphasising consensus rather than conflict in issues involving natural resources.

The relationship between the ALP and the environment movement predated Richardson's time in the environment portfolio. Since the conservation movement's support for the ALP in the 1983 election, an uneasy association had been developing. To a degree greater than previous governments, Labor, under Hawke, remained keenly aware of the growing electoral significance of the environmental lobby and the need to maintain a reasonable working relationship with high profile conservation groups. There was not, however, always an equally strong commitment to changes in environment policy. Elim

Papadakis has captured the attitude of the Labor Party at this time, describing it as:

...a period of transition for the Labor Party. The party sided with the conservation movement over the Franklin Dam dispute but was unable to respond to the rise in expectations of a more decisive environmental policy.³⁰

Public opinion had led the ALP to support the environment movement in the Franklin conflict, but overall this failed to be translated into any substantive changes in environmental policy making. In fact, a number of consequences of the Franklin campaign acted as impediments for similar government action in following years. Of particular note was the size of the compensation pay out that the federal government had awarded to the Tasmanian government. Treasury and the Department of Finance argued that similar conflicts with the states could not be financially sustained and therefore ought to be avoided.³¹ Furthermore, while the electoral impact of the Franklin campaign was to increase the government's vote, it was obvious that the Labor Party's failure to win a Tasmanian seat in the 1983 election could also be directly related to its position in the Franklin dispute.³² Hence, the possibility of a dispute taking place in an area where the electoral consequences were significant created a disincentive for government initiatives.

Throughout Cohen's period as Minister for the Environment these limitations were paramount. Influential members of the Labor government were not particularly interested in environment policy and Cohen, as a junior minister, was unable to make significant changes or establish any significant policy initiatives. Consolidating this inertia was the Accord, its emphasis on economic issues and the significance it placed on the government's

³⁰ E. Papadakis 1990 "Environmental Policy" in C. Jennett and R. Stewart (eds) Consensus and Restructuring: Hawke and Australian Public Policy Melbourne: Macmillan p. 346.

³¹ B.W. Davis 1992 "Federal-State Tensions in Australian Environmental Management: The World Heritage Issue" in K. Walker (ed) Australian Environmental Policy Australia: New South Wales University Press p. 222.

³² J. Formby 1987 The Australian Government's Experience With Environmental Impact Assessment CRES Working Paper No. 9. p. 23.

relationship with business and trade unions. Such a focus marginalised both environmental issues and the conservation lobby.³³

It was in the lead up to the 1987 federal election that the tactics which would dominate Richardson's future approach to the environment began to take shape. The election was predicted to be a close one. As a prominent ALP strategist, Richardson's prognosis that the conservation vote might be somewhere between 1 and 2%, resulted in considerable effort being directed to eliciting the support of the environment lobby.³⁴ A trade off subsequently occurred between the ALP, the ACF and the TWS with conservation groups granting electoral support if the ALP provided:

Unilateral nomination of the Wet Tropical Forests and the commitment to use Commonwealth powers to stop the degradation of this area... [and an] Injunction to stop illegal logging and forestry operations in Tasmania.³⁵

Environmental issues and the conservation movement were re-established as priorities on the ALP's political agenda.

Following the 1987 election and Richardson's move to the environment portfolio, the political and electoral strategy of creating an alliance between the environment movement and the ALP was extended. The ALP's electoral promises were honoured and Richardson sought out the support of prominent leaders in the environment movement.³⁶

The impact of the relationship that Richardson developed with conservationists was significant, consolidating a source of support vital for Labor's electoral fortunes. At the same time, however, it created tensions within the ALP. As Paul Kelly explains, internal divisions became evident

³³ J. Formby 1986 Trends in Australian Environmental Policy: Problems Ahead for the Environment CRES Working Paper 1986/37 p. 1.

³⁴ P. Chubb 1987 "Labor's Green Vote" Time June p. 44.

³⁵ T. Doyle 1991 "The Green Elite and the 1987 Election" Chain Reaction No. 63-64 p. 29.

³⁶ In particular, Bob Brown, Peter Garrett (a Green Party Senate candidate and popular lead singer of the band Midnight Oil) and Phillip Toyne (ACF Director). He also appointed Simon Balderstone, a close friend of Toyne's, as a senior adviser. P. Kelly 1993 The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s Australia: Allen and Unwin p. 527.

"...over both the technical aspect and the political value of the environmental vote to the ALP."³⁷ It was in the wake of the Helsham Inquiry, which had found in favour of logging interests in Tasmania's forests only to be overturned by Richardson, that the manifestation of these divisions in Cabinet became significant.³⁸ Opposition to Richardson came from the four economic Ministers in Cabinet, Kerin, Walsh, Button and Dawkins, as well as Foreign Affairs Minister, Evans. Kelly describes the attitude of these ministers:

They believed the compromises were too pro-green; they feared that Labor's economic credentials were being damaged; and they disputed the electoral weight Richardson gave to the Green vote.³⁹

Both Hawke and Keating, however, retained support for Richardson.⁴⁰ Hence, while Richardson's agenda remained in place, it was by no means unanimously accepted within the ALP.

The primary concern of the economic ministers was the threat that Richardson's strategy posed to redressing particular economic problems, undermining measures that were being adopted to deal with Australia's economic decline, rising unemployment and a deterioration in the nation's balance of payments. One vital aspect of the Hawke government's plan for achieving economic recovery was the expansion of the commodity export sector. The government believed that by expanding an area of the economy in which Australia had an international comparative advantage, it would be able to go some way to addressing the nation's external debt. A central component of this strategy was a movement away from protection, signalled in the May 1988 economic statement with its proposed reduction of tariffs.⁴¹ The possibility that attempts to court the Green movement might negate the

37 Ibid p. 529.

38 Ibid p. 529-30.

39 Ibid p. 530.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid p. 666-7.

potential development of commodity exports was a primary concern of these ministers.⁴²

Conflict in Cabinet followed as debate emerged over the priority that ought to be given to the competing concerns of environmental protection and resource development. Coronation Hill came to embody this basic conflict; both within Cabinet as well as in the conflicting claims made by the environment movement and the mining industry. For the Hawke government the task of choosing between the economic benefits associated with an expanding commodity market and the support of the Green vote was problematic. To vindicate environmental protection was understood to undermine Australia's economic well-being, whilst favouring resource development was expected to lead to a decrease in public support for the ALP and the possibility of electoral defeat. It was in this context that a series of policy measures were developed with the objective of redefining environmental and developmental goals in such a way that the conflict was defused. Within this process attempts to construct a discourse of consensus became a focal point.

McEachern has argued that Richardson's approach to environmental issues was based on an attempt to defuse their potential political damage.⁴³ At the core of this perspective was the belief that consensus could be found in the midst of existing conflicts:

⁴² It is worth noting that the salience of these views was sufficient to see such a strategy enshrined within the Labor government's March 1991 industry statement Building a Competitive Australia. T. Duncan 1993 "New Ways to Kill the Goose: Sectoral Clashes After Protectionism" in C. James, C. Jones and A. Norton (eds) A Defence of Economic Rationalism Sydney: Allen and Unwin p. 106.

⁴³ D. McEachern 1991 Business Mates: The Power and Politics of the Hawke Era Sydney: Prentice Hall p. 124.

...it is still possible that once this work on sustainable development has been completed we will have sufficient guidelines for the environment movement and development lobby to know what is ahead of them and, hopefully, even work together...I cling to the belief that there is a formula, as yet not reached...which will allow some sort of reasonable marriage between the two.⁴⁴

The starting point for these processes was the concept of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD).

ESD drew upon international debates regarding sustainable development. These date back to the UN Stockholm Conference in 1972 and were propelled to the fore of international debates on the environment by the Brundtland Report in 1987. Here sustainable development was defined as a process which "...meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".⁴⁵ ESD was the Australian formulation of this concept, defined by Hawke in the following manner:

The Australian Government recognises the fundamental link between growth and the environment. It recognises that environmental aspects are an integral part of economic decisions. It is committed to the principle of ecologically sustainable development...[where] Ecologically sustainable development means growth that does not jeopardise the future productive base. Renewable resources are managed so that they are not permanently depleted.⁴⁶

ESD was directed towards finding an acceptable relationship between environmental preservation and resource development and generated a high degree of support from within Cabinet as a whole. It achieved this end through a process of definition, one that did not place environmental and developmental objectives in opposition to each other. Within the government's ESD rhetoric, environmental protection and economic development were a part of one strategy. Based on its apparent capacity to

⁴⁴ G. Richardson 1990 "Where There is a Will There is a Way" Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration No. 62 October p. 16.

⁴⁵ Commonwealth of Australia 1991 Ecologically Sustainable Development Working Groups - Executive Summaries August 1991, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service p. v.

⁴⁶ B. Hawke 1989 Our Country Our Future Statement on the Environment, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service p. 4.

enshrine the interests of both resource developers and environmentalists, ESD gained support from both the environmental and economic ministries.

One of the first concrete examples of ESD in practice was the Resource Assessment Commission (RAC). The RAC was an initiative that emerged from John Kerin's Department of Primary Industries and Energy. Kerin identified the formulation of RAC to be a response to his "...frustration with endless public inquiries, particularly the experience of the Helsham Inquiry ... *and the question, concept, or puzzle of public resource use.*"⁴⁷ According to Kerin, sufficient information and the subsequent ability to make a rational decision in response to resource issues held the key to resolving these debates.⁴⁸ For Kerin, decisions over resources and the environment ought be made through "[h]ard work ... [and] comprehensive policy making, taking all factors into consideration."⁴⁹ Importantly, such an approach implied the inclusion of resource development. It was from this initiative by Kerin that Richardson's objective of bringing together the environment and development began to take a definitive shape.

Announced at the end of 1988 and established in 1989, the central objectives of the RAC were defined in terms of information collection, conflict resolution and popular participation in the field of resource conflicts. As Clive Hamilton explains:

The Resource Assessment Commission was established by the Federal Government in 1989 to help resolve broad resource use and environmental conflicts. The Commission is required to take into account a whole range of values that might be attached to a resource including environmental, cultural, social, industrial, economic and other values. The Commission relies heavily on public hearings and submissions from interested parties.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ J. Kerin 1990 "Making Decisions We Can Live With" Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration No. 62 October p. 20.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ C. Hamilton 1991 "Preface" in B. Boer, D. Craig, J. Handmer, H. Ross The Potential Role of Mediation in the Resource Assessment Commission Inquiry Process Discussion Paper No. 1 January 1991 p. iii.

The RAC's role in providing the federal government with advice "...on the options for resolving such complex and contentious natural resource-use issues [that] was seen as the Commission's main task."⁵¹ It was anticipated that the RAC would provide the basis upon which a rational approach to conflicts between resource developers and the environment would be found. By adopting a decision making framework that focused on industry or resource wide questions, it was hoped that the RAC would avoid the emotive character of individual conflicts between resource development and environmental protection. The inquiries were to be established by Cabinet with all interested participants allowed to present their case.⁵² Hence, any claims that certain lobby groups had privileged access to the decision making process would be avoided.

The Hawke government's decision to refer the issue of Coronation Hill and the CZ to the RAC involved a complex variety of forces, which revolved around the government's inability to decide between developmental and environmental priorities.

When BHP Gold released its EIS in 1989, the Hawke government was faced with making a decision over Coronation Hill and the CZ. The EIS had argued that mining at Coronation Hill did not threaten the integrity of the environment. Criticisms, however, had been directed towards BHP's EIS, most notably in a CSIRO Report.⁵³ Questions had also been raised regarding the environmental impact of other mines in the area for which Coronation Hill would be considered to have established a precedent. It was this point that Richardson focused on, arguing that the decision at Coronation Hill ought to be

⁵¹ Resource Assessment Commission 1992 "Methods For Analysing Development and Conservation Issues: The Resource Assessment Commission's Experience" Research Paper No. 7 December p. 10.

⁵² For a discussion of the RAC's role see Resource Assessment Commission "Methods For Analysing" chapter 1 and N. Economou 1992 "Reconciling the Irreconcilable? The Resource Assessment Commission, Resources Policy and the Environment" Australian Journal of Public Administration Vol. 51 No. 4 December p. 466-468.

⁵³ Bailey loc cit.

deferred until an assessment of the wider region and other proposals had been undertaken.⁵⁴ He contended that the issue ought to be taken to the RAC to be evaluated. Meanwhile the size of the CZ should be significantly reduced with most of the area absorbed into the existing National Park because of its importance to the Kakadu region. Richardson's argument also referred directly to rising environmental awareness. He claimed that community values had changed since the government had originally devised its policy in 1986. Accordingly, Cabinet needed to re-evaluate how appropriate its previous policy was in this new context.⁵⁵ Hence, scope was left open for the changes that Richardson was advocating.

What made Richardson's argument particularly persuasive was the view that Labor required the support of the environment movement to have any hope of winning the forthcoming federal election.⁵⁶ 1989 had proved to be a difficult year for the ALP, as economic conditions continued to deteriorate. As a result, its electoral chances were not viewed to be high, the government's primary advantage being divisions within the Opposition.⁵⁷ Richardson argued that if the government condoned mining at Kakadu it would forfeit Green support and as a result, possibly the election.

Kakadu was identified as particularly important in the maintenance of an alliance with the environment movement. The area had been constructed by conservationists' as sacred and was identified by the broader population in these terms. If Labor agreed to mining it would have undermined its image as the party of environmental protection.⁵⁸ Inspired by the fortunes of the Tasmanian ALP which had recently managed to win government with only 34.7% of the primary vote and Green preferences, it was believed that the

⁵⁴ L. Taylor and S. Houweling 1989 "Cabinet Move to Delay Mine in Kakadu" Australian 22 September.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Kelly op cit p 536.

⁵⁷ J. Warhurst 1990 "Australian Politics, July 1987 - February 1990" in C. Bean, I. McAllister and J. Warhurst (eds) Greening of Australian Politics Australia: Longman Cheshire Melbourne.

⁵⁸ Kelly op cit p. 538.

federal Labor Party could adopt a similar strategy and enhance its capacity to win the election.⁵⁹

Cabinet was ultimately swayed by these arguments but not before considerable debate had taken place. The focus of this conflict was an alternative proposal presented by Peter Cook, then Minister for Resources, and supported by the other economic ministers.⁶⁰ Cook's argument was based on the Cabinet decision made in 1986 and sought to grant BHP immediate approval to mine Coronation Hill because it had fulfilled the government's requirement of a satisfactory EIS. He also argued that the existing boundaries of the CZ should remain in place.⁶¹

Hawke did not finalise his position on Coronation Hill until the day before the Cabinet debate. This followed a phone discussion in which Toyne reportedly convinced the Prime Minister that Kakadu was the 'litmus test' of the government's commitment to the environment,⁶² as Richardson had suggested. Having reached a decision, Hawke assumed an uncompromising position in Cabinet, making effective opposition virtually impossible and Cabinet acquiesced.⁶³ The question of the CZ and Coronation Hill was to be assessed by the Resource Assessment Commission.

While the specific issue of Coronation Hill and the CZ was only of limited significance in the 1990 election, the ALP's electoral campaign and its outcome were extremely important in shaping future government responses to the problem. The ALP's strategy of targeting the minor parties proved to be particularly successful with two thirds of these votes flowing on to Labor.⁶⁴ As

⁵⁹ Ibid p. 537, 539.

⁶⁰ Supporting Cook were the other economic ministers, Button, Walsh and Dawkins. At the time of the Cabinet discussions Kerin was absent but would later articulate his support for Cook's position.

⁶¹ A. Ramsey 1989 "How the Ambush of BHP Took Place" Sydney Morning Herald September 30; Kelly op cit p. 539.

⁶² Kelly op cit p. 538.

⁶³ Ibid p. 539.

⁶⁴ Ibid and E. Papadakis 1990 "Minor Parties, the Environment and the New Politics" in C. Bean, I. McAllister and J. Warhurst (eds) Greening of Australian Politics Australia: Longman Cheshire Melbourne p. 43.

a substantial component of the minor party vote was 'Green', Labor's success suggested that it had been more effective than the Coalition in capturing the image of environmental concern. Such an image was generated during the campaign itself with criticisms of the Coalition's policy and a typical array of electoral inducements.⁶⁵ Yet the symbolic significance of Labor's policy on Kakadu was also to make an impact. When arguing for why preferences should flow to Labor, the following argument was presented: "The choice for Democrats and Greens is crystal clear. A Liberal-National government would mine Kakadu".⁶⁶

The fact that Labor had not precluded mining in Kakadu appeared forgotten by both Labor and environment groups, with the TWS and the ACF justifying their decisions to direct preferences to the Labor in part on the ALP's policy on Kakadu.⁶⁷ Yet the fiction that the government had already acted to prohibit mining in Kakadu (rather than the reality of deferring the decision until the outcome of the RAC) significantly increased the likelihood that protection would eventually happen. With the outcome of the 1990 election suggesting that the political importance of the environmental vote had not been overstated, favourable conditions had been created for the preservation of Coronation Hill and the CZ.

While the rhetoric of the 1990 election suggested that the issue of mining Coronation Hill and the CZ had been resolved, the RAC's proceedings were in fact only just getting under way. The terms of reference to the inquiry were straight forward: to consider the CZ's environmental and cultural value; assess the impact of mining on those values and on the value of Kakadu National

⁶⁵ For example, a \$400,000 natural environmental education package. J. Warhurst 1990 "The National Campaign" in C. Bean, I. McAllister and J. Warhurst (eds) Greening of Australian Politics Australia: Longman Cheshire Melbourne p. 31.

⁶⁶ Kelly op cit p 578.

⁶⁷ Papadakis "Minor Parties" p. 53.

Park; evaluate the national economic potential of mining in the CZ; and consider how Aboriginal interests would be affected by mining.⁶⁸

The RAC considered 199 submissions in its deliberations before writing its Final Report.⁶⁹ Considerable emphasis was placed on its envisaged role as a neutral arbiter and as an assessor of information which would provide the basis of a rational decision. Value judgements remained outside the RAC's scope and were identified to be the responsibility of government.⁷⁰ As a result, the role of the RAC was inherently limited:

The aim of this report is to better inform government,[sic] decision making, but that decision making remains the province of government which will still have to make difficult decisions.⁷¹

Within this kind of framework it is not surprising that the RAC chose to present the government with a list of options rather than an absolute position.⁷²

The Final Report made it quite clear that it supported neither mining nor environmentalists' claims. In terms of the environmental impact of a mine at Coronation Hill, it was argued that it was not significant, although, unavoidable if mining were to proceed.⁷³ It was further contended that a mine would lessen the ecological integrity of the park and require the entire Kakadu region to be re-nominated for World Heritage Listing.⁷⁴ These issues, however, did not lead the RAC to consider that mining ought to be prohibited. Rather, its argument appeared to support the mining lobby stating "... the evidence suggests that a single mine, properly managed and monitored, would have a

⁶⁸ Resource Assessment Commission Draft Report Volume 1 p. 2.

⁶⁹ Resource Assessment Commission Final Report Volume 1 p. 279.

⁷⁰ *Ibid* p. vii.

⁷¹ Resource Assessment Commission Draft Report Volume 1 p. vii.

⁷² Resource Assessment Commission Final Report Volume 1 p. xvii-xviii.

⁷³ P. Kelly 1991 "Hawke in a No-win Situation" Australian 8 May; B. Galligan and G. Lynch 1992 "Integrating Conservation and Development: Australia's Resource Assessment Commission and the Testing Case of Coronation Hill" Federalism Research Centre Discussion Papers No. 14 March 1992 p. 17-18.

⁷⁴ Kelly *loc cit*; L. Taylor 1991 "Get the Hint: Don't Mine the Hill" Australian 8 May.

small geographically limited direct impact on the known biological resources of the Conservation Zone."⁷⁵

Yet mining industry claims were received with a similar lack of enthusiasm. The primary justification for the mine, that it was in the national economic interest, was not considered to be overly persuasive. While it was acknowledged by the RAC that some wealth would be generated by the mine, the mining industry's central claim, that to prohibit mining would undermine investor confidence in Australia, was dismissed.⁷⁶ Hence, as Galligan and Lynch have argued, according to the RAC: "...if economic development and protection of the environment were the only issues, there was not a great lot at stake in the decision, at least in substantive terms."⁷⁷

Although environmental and mining concerns had provided the focus for the initial conflict over Coronation Hill and the CZ's future, the RAC Inquiry treated these as though they had been superseded by the question of Aboriginal title. It was the beliefs of the Jawoyn people and the opposition of their elders to mining that proved most convincing to the RAC.⁷⁸ The reason for this was Justice Stewart's conviction that the RAC's terms of reference, and the weight that the government had placed on Jawoyn interests, did not demand the Inquiry to make a value judgement. Rather, it simply required an evaluation of the effect that a mine would have on the Jawoyn people.⁷⁹ This view was further supported by Stewart's Report to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs on the Kakadu Conservation Zone, May 1991 that defined the Jawoyn question over land title as one of interpreting the application of laws that were already in place and therefore required no value judgement regarding Aboriginal culture. The report clearly explains that the issue was whether or not, under the terms of the *Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Protection Act*

⁷⁵ Resource Assessment Commission Final Report Volume 1 p xxi.

⁷⁶ Taylor loc cit.

⁷⁷ Galligan and Lynch loc cit p. 18.

⁷⁸ Resource Assessment Commission Final Report Volume 1 p. xxii.

⁷⁹ Ibid. This theme is clearly evident throughout chapter seven of the Report.

1984, the CZ was "of particular significance to Aboriginals in accordance with Aboriginal tradition."⁸⁰ It was from within these terms that Stewart had no difficulty in identifying an affirmative position.

As Cabinet discussion of Coronation Hill drew nearer, there was only one aspect of the issue that seemed assured; there could be no more delays; this time the government would have to make a decision on the area's future. Ultimately Cabinet was to support the RAC's option 'A', which disallowed mining at Coronation Hill and in the CZ. Justification for this position was based on the notion that to allow the mine to proceed represented an infringement of Jawoyn rights based on the cultural claim they had to the land. Why the government chose to support Aboriginal demands above both the arguments of the mining industry and environmentalists requires some explanation.

Hawke's contention was that:

The Government's decision is based on the overwhelming evidence that the effect of mining on the Jawoyn people, and to a lesser extent on the environment, outweighs any economic benefit to Australia by the proposed mine.⁸¹

In many respects Hawke's statement is accurate. Based solely on the information provided by the RAC, it was entirely rational for the government to adopt this position. Yet this explanation is limited primarily because it denies the politics of the conflict. As Paul Kelly was to comment just prior to Cabinet debates on the issue:

Coronation Hill has become a great symbol and test for miners, Greenies, Aborigines and the Commission [RAC] itself - far beyond the probably marginal value of the mine.⁸²

Kelly's reference to the symbolic significance of the issue is vital in explaining why Hawke chose to prohibit mining and do so on the basis that it undermined Aboriginal culture, rather than emphasising the environmental

⁸⁰ Stewart op cit p. xi.

⁸¹ M. Grattan, R. Peake and S. Mann 1991 "Kakadu: Hawke Gets His Way" Age 19 June.

⁸² Kelly loc cit.

threat. As the remainder of this chapter demonstrates, the conflict between environmental groups and the mining industry had become particularly acute with the rising popularity of the environment movement. The claims made by environmental groups, the mining industry and some government representatives had generated a discourse in which Coronation Hill symbolised this conflict. The choice that the government made had subsequently been constructed as determining whether a developmentalist or environmental discourse dominated government decision making. It was precisely this choice of privileging one discourse above another that the Hawke government had been attempting to avoid throughout the debate on Coronation Hill and in environmental policy in general. The whole purpose of institutional arrangements such as the RAC had always been orientated towards achieving Richardson's notion of a 'marriage' between development and environmentalism and not for them to be constructed as diametrically opposed alternatives. Hence, the objective was the creation of a consensus orientated discourse. The RAC process and the political context it had created appeared to have led the government into the opposite direction.

There can be no doubt that Hawke was under considerable pressure to prohibit mining. Not only had the 1990 election made the government aware of the political strength of the environment movement, during the campaign it had effectively stated it would not allow mining in Kakadu. While governments regularly break election promises, to do so in this context would have destroyed the ALP's relationship with the environment movement. Within this context, the March 1991 Industry Statement, Building a Competitive Australia, had contradictory ramifications. On the one hand it consolidated the government's commitment to the pursuit of an economic strategy based on the expansion of commodity exports. On the other, the Industry statement's proposal for Resource Security Legislation had accentuated the government's sensitivity to claims regarding its

environmental record. Resource Security Legislation aimed to guarantee access for the timber industry to approved forestry projects valued at more than \$100 million⁸³ This had angered environmentalists, not only because it threatened increased industry access to environmentally sensitive areas, but also because it contradicted Hawke's assurances that legislation of this sort would not be implemented.⁸⁴ Hence, the industry statement had left the Hawke government's relationship with environmentalists extremely vulnerable; to allow mining Kakadu might have signalled its end.

The primary advantage of the strategy of defending Aboriginal rights was that it could satisfy the demands of environmentalists without explicitly expressing support. While the mining industry was outraged by the decision, there were important limits to which it could be constructed as the government acting on behalf of environmental interests. Scope for the mining industry to argue that the government was advocating environmental concerns, above its economic agenda, were subsequently undermined. In doing so the contention that the government was embracing an environmentalist discourse, one that would set a precedent for the future, was avoided. Further legitimising Hawke's decision was the claim that he was acting on the advice of the RAC.

Internal Labor Party politics also played an important role in defining the position that the Hawke government assumed. In particular, Keating's first leadership challenge had occurred. The events surrounding this challenge have been well documented elsewhere.⁸⁵ It will suffice to say that following the 1990 election pressure began to mount for Hawke to step down from the leadership of the ALP, something he refused to do. On the day that Cabinet met to discuss its position on Kakadu, Keating unsuccessfully challenged

⁸³ For a discussion of Resource Security Legislation see B. Jolly 1992 "'Seeing the Trees From the Wood' Resource Security and Commonwealth Environment Policy" Australian Political Studies Association Conference, Australian National University 30 September - 2 October 1992.

⁸⁴ *Age* 9 March 1991.

⁸⁵ Kelly op cit chapter 33.

Hawke's leadership. What is particularly important in the context of this thesis is that a vital part of Hawke's support came from the Left of the party. The Left opposed mining at Coronation Hill. Amongst its members were Gerry Hand, who had previously been Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and introduced the Jawoyn dimension to the Kakadu debate; and his successor, Robert Tickner, a strong advocate for Jawoyn claims in the region.⁸⁶ Hawke's reliance on the Left for his leadership of the party made the prohibition of mining at Coronation Hill entirely consistent with other political interests.

Having won the leadership battle, Hawke went to Cabinet to debate the issue of Coronation Hill and the CZ. As divisive as ever, it could be predicted that Cabinet would be split on the issue. Kerin, Hawke's new Treasurer, had already indicated that he would support mining.⁸⁷ Rather than risking prolonged debate which might further erode perceptions of Hawke's capacity to lead, the Prime Minister took a decisive position and pre-empted Cabinet's decision by publicly supporting the right of the Jawoyn to believe in Bula, clearly indicating his support for the RAC's approach to the issue of Aboriginal land title. While the centre left supported mining, it was unable to argue forcefully without undermining the Prime Minister's leadership, an act which would have signalled another period of political instability for the government. As a result, the outcome was a foregone conclusion, as this appraisal of the situation by Richardson suggests:

... against the background of the leadership challenge and Hawke's anti-mining remarks the previous day, Cabinet had no choice but to give the prime minister 'a win' on the issue.⁸⁸

The conflict finally ended with a failed attempt by a number of Caucus backbenchers, reportedly Keating supporters, to challenge the Cabinet decision. Cabinet solidarity and the continuing support of the Left, however, ensured

⁸⁶ Galligan and Lynch loc cit p. 21.

⁸⁷ M. Grattan 1991 "Mining Policy a Keen Test of the Leadership" *Age* 15 June.

⁸⁸ Galligan and Lynch loc cit p 22.

that this failed and debate over Coronation Hill and the CZ came to a conclusion.⁸⁹

Conservationists

The objective of preserving the integrity of Kakadu National Park was central in the conservationists' campaign to prohibit mining in the CZ and at Coronation Hill. Throughout the 1980s, conservation groups had mobilised in a effort to extend existing National Parks, including Kakadu. Attempts to protect the CZ and Coronation Hill were a continuation of this process. Involvement in the campaign, however, extended beyond this immediate objective. It was also a part of a broader struggle to define the discourse in which environmental debates were taking place. Definitions of multiple land use and Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD), as well as the mining industry's access to resources located within National Parks, were all important stakes in the Kakadu conflict.

The influence of the Franklin campaign in the 1983 federal election had created for environmentalists a sense of optimism in their capacity to shape policy during the Hawke Labor government's period in office. While Hawke honoured his commitment and saved the Franklin, Labor's first electoral term was generally disappointing for the environment movement. One result of this disappointment was the shift of conservationists' support to the Democrats in the 1984 election, based on the Democrats' environment policy being considered more progressive.⁹⁰ Unlike the sense of empowerment that followed conservationists efforts in the 1983 election, their 1984 campaign had only limited success. In part, this may be associated with the ground swell of support that emerged at this time for the peace movement, resulting in resources and media attention focusing on the Nuclear Disarmament Party

⁸⁹ G. Milne and T. Parkinson 1991 "Hawke Survives Caucus Revolt" Australian 21 June.

⁹⁰ Particularly with regard to its position on uranium mining and World Heritage Listing of the Daintree Rain Forest. H. Wooten 1987 "Elections and Environmental Politics: The Search For Consensus" Habitat Vol. 15 No. 5 p. 10.

(NDP) which ran candidates in the election.⁹¹ Another difficulty was that the environment movement lacked a major issue which could mobilise support. Uranium might have generated such interest, however it was the peace movement, rather than the environment movement, whose popularity benefited from this concern.

These circumstances, accompanied by Cohen's inconsequential period as Minister for the Environment,⁹² left the environment movement looking for ways of gaining greater input into government decision making. One method to achieve this was the creation of a closer relationship with the government. It was on this basis that the ACF appointed Phillip Toyne as its Director in 1986. As Warhurst explains:

He was chosen to lead the ACF because the Council perceived a need for the personal contacts with senior Commonwealth government leaders of the type which he had shown an ability to develop. The image of the ACF within government needed to be highlighted. This Toyne proceeded to do.⁹³

Toyne believed that change would be implemented by using existing political structures, rather than operating outside the system⁹⁴ and he worked hard to achieve this end by establishing a close relationship with the federal government.⁹⁵

Toyne's desire to create an effective relationship with the Labor government reflected a broader trend within both the ACF and the Wilderness Society at this time. This inclination led to the collective endorsement of both the ALP and the Democrats during the 1987 election in what was known as the 'vote for the forests' campaign.⁹⁶ The period that followed saw a further

⁹¹ For further details see Papadakis op cit p. 181-2 and V. Burgman 1993 Power and Protest Sydney: Allen and Unwin p. 216.

⁹² E. Papadakis 1990 "Environmental Policy".

⁹³ J. Warhurst 1993 "Interest Group Interaction With Government the Changing Styles of the Australian Conservation Foundation" Australian Political Studies Conference, Monash University, Melbourne, 29 September - 1 October 1993 p. 11.

⁹⁴ M. Ricketson 1990 "Dedicated, Rational, and Green" Time May 1990.

⁹⁵ Warhurst loc cit p. 11; T. Doyle 1991 "The Green Elite and the 1987 Election"; Kelly op cit p. 257 and M. Ricketson 1990 "Dedicated, Rational, and Green".

⁹⁶ T. Doyle 1991 "The Green Elite and the 1987 Election" p. 29.

consolidation of the relationship between the environment movement and the ALP, based on the commitment of both the ACF and TWS to finding ways of influencing government policy. It was also assisted by Graham Richardson's move to the Environment portfolio.

Richardson played a vital role in facilitating the political alliance between the ALP and the environment movement by fostering contacts with prominent environmentalists and offering the movement a legitimate role in decision making processes.⁹⁷ The creation of policy measures, including the RAC and ESD working parties,⁹⁸ were to have a profound effect on the character of the environment movement. The Kakadu RAC was the first inquiry of its kind to be undertaken and created divisions between conservation groups as a conflict emerged over the appropriate response to such forums. When Cabinet announced its decision to defer mining until the RAC had assessed the issue, both the ACF and the Environment Centre Northern Territory (ECNT) articulated qualified support. The ACF described the decision as a victory,⁹⁹ although Toyne remained only "cautiously optimistic" about the RAC's capacity to deal with the issue.¹⁰⁰ It was argued that participation in the RAC Inquiry was crucial if adequate representation of the environmental perspective was to be ensured. The primary reservation was that sufficient weight would not be placed on conservation claims in the region. More specifically, they might be used simply as a basis for bargaining with resource developers.¹⁰¹

The Wilderness Society took a very different position. It had already pulled out of the ESD working parties because they did not sufficiently address

⁹⁷ Kelly op cit p. 527.

⁹⁸ Another notable example was Our Country Our Future the Hawke government's 1989 environment policy.

⁹⁹ R. Humphries 1989 "ACF Applauds Kakadu Decision" Conservation News November p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ T. Sawenko 1990 "Conservation on the RAC" Habitat Australia December Vol. 18 No. 6 p. 29.

¹⁰¹ Ibid p. 29.

problems associated with Australia's unsustainable lifestyle. It argued that the RAC simply could not be relied upon and that the Kakadu decision was not a victory, but a 'stay of execution'. Instead, public opinion remained the key to a successful outcome. As Lambert explains:

Our task is to escalate our efforts for full protection of the area, so that by the time the Resource Assessment Commission produces its advice to government in a year from now, public opinion is so strong that the exploration must disappear.¹⁰²

Tensions subsequently arose between the ACF and Wilderness Society over participation in the RAC process. The Wilderness Society considered that it had thus far run "a most successful media campaign"¹⁰³ by ensuring that Kakadu was a topic in every newspaper, radio and television program it could find. As a result, the 1990 election would provide the perfect vehicle through which pressure could be placed upon the government to ensure that Coronation Hill and the CZ would be preserved. Hence, a campaign of a similar kind to the Franklin dam was envisaged, with popular mobilisation pressuring the government to protect Kakadu. It was argued that by agreeing to participate in the RAC process, the ACF had undermined this strategy by giving its support, and therefore legitimacy, to the government's existing processes. To make matters worse, the Wilderness Society had not been consulted. Rather than joining the ACF, a decision was made within the Wilderness Society to remain outside the RAC process and thereby ensure that external pressure on the government was continued.¹⁰⁴

The Wilderness Society's opposition to the RAC was not only framed in terms of effective strategies. The RAC process itself was considered an inappropriate mechanism for resolving environmental problems, primarily because of the manner in which it attempted to value wilderness in monetary terms. Resources implied use in the accumulation of wealth. The Wilderness

¹⁰² Lambert loc cit p. 12.

¹⁰³ Wilderness News No. 116 Oct/Nov 1990.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Society argued that it was simply not possible to place a value on the environment and wilderness on this premise. Instead, Norm Sanders' notion that the RAC should be the Environmental Assessment Commission was seen to provide a more satisfactory emphasis.¹⁰⁵

The conflict between the ACF and the Wilderness Society was based on competing views on the best strategy for environmental groups to achieve their aims. Conservationists were faced with a number of imperatives. The most obvious was to prohibit mining in Kakadu. There were, however, other important agendas that were built into the achievement of this objective. These primarily related to the symbolic significance that Kakadu had acquired for both the environment movement and the mining lobby. The outcome of the conflict was viewed not only in terms of mining at Kakadu, but extended to the mining industry's access to National Parks throughout Australia.

Another important aspect of this contest was to influence the way that the government constructed policy processes dealing with the conflict between the environment and resource development. A central feature of this contest was the attempt by environmental groups to define the meaning of the discourse that the federal government had adopted in the debate over Kakadu. Two basic strategies were developed by conservationists to pursue this objective. The Wilderness Society chose to directly challenge the terms of the debate by questioning the appropriateness of a 'Resource' rather than 'Environmental' Assessment Commission. Hence, they were questioning the construction of a discourse which defined the environment's value within the terms of human use. By choosing not to participate, the Wilderness Society presumably hoped that the legitimacy of the RAC would be undermined and the government would be forced to change the Inquiry's name and its current emphasis on resources. Thus the Wilderness Society placed itself outside the RAC process as a means to challenge it.

¹⁰⁵ Eds "Its No to the RAC" Wilderness News No. 115 Vol. 11 No. 7 September 1990 p. 13.

The decision by the Wilderness Society not to participate in the RAC saw it marginalised within the Kakadu conflict. While groups focussed their attention on the presentation of submissions, media coverage was reduced until the release of the RAC's Draft and Final Report. With the weight that was placed on the outcome of the RAC Inquiry, very little attention was given to other forms of political lobbying. The decision by the ACF to participate in the RAC was of considerable importance. This weakened public interest in the Wilderness Society's activities, maintained the legitimacy of the RAC processes and thus rendered the Wilderness Society's campaign insignificant.

The ACF pursued a strategy which sought to define the terms of the discourse by influencing the particular direction that the RAC process took. This was clearly apparent in its submission to the RAC, which not only provided arguments for the protection of Kakadu, but also constructed them in such a way that they would have a lasting effect on the character and form of environmental debates and associated policy processes.

One of the most contested terms in the environmental debate was ESD. Within the mining industry, the notion of sustainability had come to be equated with greater access to land. The argument was that in a sector which used non-renewable resources, sustainability could only mean the discovery of new resources at the rate they were extracted. Consequently, the claim of the mining industry for greater access to land for exploration conflicted with the environment movement's objective of maintaining eco-system integrity and diversity in National Parks. For this reason it was important for environmentalists to construct ESD in a form consistent with its own objectives.

The ACF's submission to the Kakadu RAC was representative of this approach. ESD was defined as "a new analytical framework designed to ensure that in future economic activity will not destroy the foundations on which that

activity ultimately depends."¹⁰⁶ Hence, in contrast to the mining industry's claims, sustainability was being constructed as a limitation to resource exploitation, one in which the future of a resource was determined by its best use within the local, national and international context.¹⁰⁷ Having made a claim regarding the meaning of ESD, the ACF developed the concept to support protection of Coronation Hill. According to the RAC, the resources associated with Coronation Hill and the CZ included: the economic potential of mineral deposits, both discovered and undiscovered at Coronation Hill; the cultural and natural heritage values of the CZ and Kakadu National Park; and the ecosystems within Kakadu National Park to which the CZ was connected.¹⁰⁸ The ACF asserted that when all the resources of the CZ were taken into account, the area's environmental and cultural value outweighed the economic significance of mining. Hence, the principles of ESD, when applied to the issue of Coronation Hill, required that mining be precluded:

..the environmental and cultural values of the Conservation Zone are its most important resource, that these values would be compromised by mining activities in the Zone, and that therefore neither Coronation Hill, nor any other potential mine, should be allowed.¹⁰⁹

As the government was committed to ESD, it logically followed that mining should be prohibited. In this way, the ACF was both constructing a definition for ESD, as well as using this definition to explain why the CZ and Coronation Hill ought to be protected.

Forming a second important aspect of the ACF's submission to the Kakadu RAC was an attempt to define the notion of multiple land use. In defining the meaning of multiple land use, the mining industry had argued that because mining only used a small area that could frequently be

106 Krockenberger op cit p. 8.

107 Ibid p. 20.

108 Ibid p. 21.

109 Ibid p. 2. This theme was consistently reasserted throughout chapter two of the submission.

rehabilitated, it was entirely compatible with the maintenance of environmental standards.¹¹⁰ The ACF's RAC submission ignored this conception of multiple land use and in the context of Coronation Hill made the opposite argument. It contended that multiple land use, by definition, precluded mining because it threatened the region's environmental and cultural value.¹¹¹ It was therefore possible to use land for a number of cultural, environmental and tourist purposes; but to mine the area meant that these other purposes would be forfeited. Hence, the RAC had to choose between mining Coronation Hill or maintaining the areas ecological and cultural integrity. This reconstruction of the term multiple land use was a simple one, but vital if environmentalists were to argue effectively against mining in areas of environmental value.

The ACF then turned to argue its case for why environmental protection ought to take precedence over mining at Coronation Hill and in the CZ. According to the ACF, the environmental and cultural values of Kakadu had already been well established, achieving "universal acclaim",¹¹² an assertion based on Kakadu's World Heritage Listing,¹¹³ for which it was noted that "Kakadu's world heritage status is associated with exceptional natural *and* cultural properties, and it was accorded world heritage listing on *all six* criteria."¹¹⁴ Concern for the impact of the Coronation Hill mine on the Jawoyn people, particularly their opposition to the mine, simply added to the ACF's argument.¹¹⁵

The ACF's submission to the RAC was representative of the way that environmental groups presented the value of Coronation Hill throughout the

¹¹⁰ D. McEachern (undated) "Defending Environmental Damage: The Mining Industry Response to Environmental Criticism" (Draft Only) p. 11-15.

¹¹¹ Krockenberger op cit p. 7.

¹¹² Ibid p. 21.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid p. 23.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 16. A decision to proceed with the Coronation Hill mine, or any other mining in the sickness country would have unacceptable negative consequences for the Jawoyn Aboriginal People and their preferred development options would be foreclosed.

debate on whether or not it ought to be mined. As the ACF submission suggests, the environmental merit of Kakadu had already been accepted by the federal government, resulting in the area's successful nomination on the World Heritage list.¹¹⁶ Hence, by the time that Coronation Hill became a topic of political dispute, its values had been well established. As the following statement by Lambert suggests:

To those who understand ecological principles, it is clear that if the South Alligator River valley in the heart of Kakadu National Park is not protected, then wetlands of international significance and world heritage sites downstream of a potential threat are not secure.¹¹⁷

Moreover, the view that Kakadu was of ecological importance extended beyond environmental groups into the broader community.¹¹⁸ The prominent theme throughout these accounts of Coronation Hill and the CZ's value was that to mine the region would be to undermine the ecological integrity of Kakadu National Park.¹¹⁹ Within the ACF submission to the RAC, this view of the environmental value of Coronation Hill was portrayed as unassailable.

By way of contrast, the economic significance of the mine was questionable. Basing its argument on the RAC's terms of reference, the ACF challenged the notion that a mine at Coronation Hill was of national economic significance.¹²⁰ According to the ACF, the economic importance of the mine to the nation had not been demonstrated.¹²¹ Nor were the regional benefits of mining considered important.¹²² Instead, developing environmentally

¹¹⁶ For another example of this point see K. Browne 1990 "Lean, Green ... and Keen" Wilderness News No. 115 Vol. 11 No. 7, September p. 11; P. Jessen 1989 "King of the Hill" Chain Reaction Autumn 1989, No. 57 p. 22.

¹¹⁷ Lambert loc cit p. 12.

¹¹⁸ Kelly op cit p. 538. The considerable value that Australians placed on protection of Coronation Hill appears to have been further supported by a consultants report written for the Coronation Hill RAC Inquiry which found that "...Australians are willing to pay substantial amounts to avoid the possible environmental effects of mining on the Conservation Zone and Kakadu National Park." Resource Assessment Commission Draft Report Volume 1 p. 211.

¹¹⁹ See for example Lambert loc cit p. 12; Jessen loc cit p. 22; Browne loc cit p. 11; J. Weepers and R. Salter 1991 "Kakadu" Wilderness News Vol. 122 July/August p. 11.

¹²⁰ Resource Assessment Commission Draft Report Volume 1 p. 2.

¹²¹ Krockenberger op cit chapter 4 p 71-80.

¹²² Ibid p. 15.

responsible economic activities was identified to be more beneficial to the regional economy, especially in terms of the tourist industry¹²³ and jobs for the Aboriginal community.¹²⁴ Hence, when the RAC was faced with a choice between the cultural and environmental qualities of Coronation Hill and the CZ, as opposed to the benefits from mining, the ACF argued it had to find in favour of the former.

Environmental groups responded in a relatively uniform manner to both the Draft and Final RAC Inquiry Reports. The essence of these responses was the political imperative of maintaining pressure on the government to prohibit mining. The strategy adopted was to interpret the RAC's findings to be consistent with environmentalists' claims that the area should be protected. Any aspect of the RAC's findings that did not comply with this perspective tended to be identified as inconsistent with the remainder of the Report.

The Wilderness Society, the ACF and the Environment Council of the Northern Territory, all claimed that there could be no doubt that the Report had demonstrated that the cultural and environmental value of the Park outweighed the economic advantages of mining.¹²⁵ They also acclaimed the sensitive fashion in which the Report had dealt with the question of Jawoyn culture and the RAC's acceptance that Jawoyn claims were valid.¹²⁶ The fact that the Draft Report was particularly reticent in its identification of the area's environmental value, and the significant threat that mining posed to the region's ecology, was dealt with in various ways.

The ACF's response was to ignore it by claiming that: "The draft RAC report ... establishes the conservation value of the proposed mine beyond a

123 Ibid p. 17-18.

124 Ibid p. 15-16.

125 Wilderness Society 1991 "Kakadu - Still a Political Decision" Wilderness News No. 119 March; Australian Conservation Foundation 1991 "Coronation Hill - the Government's Dilemma" Conservation News April; R. Ledger 1991 "Draft Report Out But No Joy For the Kakadu Dunnart" Recent March 1991.

126 Wilderness Society loc cit; Australian Conservation Foundation loc cit; Ledger "Draft Report Out".

doubt."¹²⁷ Both the Wilderness Society and the ECNT, however, argued that failing to emphasise the environmental worth of the area represented an inconsistency within the Report itself. They asserted that the Draft Report established the serious nature of the environmental effect of the mine, but that this was not reflected in its conclusion.¹²⁸

By presenting the RAC's findings as supporting those of environmental groups, it was possible to associate any government action that supported mining as weakening to the pressure exerted by the mining lobby. As the following statement by the ACF suggests:

...it would be difficult to ignore such findings and allow the project to go ahead. But powerful mining interests are demanding resource security. They want guaranteed access to National Parks and they see Coronation Hill as a test case.¹²⁹

The only rational response for the government was to oppose mining.¹³⁰

The Cabinet decision to prohibit mining was greeted with enthusiasm by conservationists. Toyne argued that "Australia had ... gained by the respect shown to the environment and Aboriginal culture."¹³¹ He also asserted that it demonstrated a recognition by government that neither Aboriginal culture nor the environment could be traded "...for the unreasonable demands of developers."¹³² According to Toyne, the decision had given credibility to the RAC process:

¹²⁷ Australian Conservation Foundation 1991 "Coronation Hill - the Government's Dilemma"

¹²⁸ Ledger "Draft Report Out "; Wilderness Society loc cit. More specifically the Wilderness Society argued that this was because the Draft RAC did not sufficiently account for the importance of the Conservation Zone within the entire park region. The Wilderness Society also argued that the Draft Report was willing to make decisions with limited ecological information. It therefore failed to adequately account for unknown risks. As Richard Ledger from the ECNT asserted, placing the Kakadu National Park at any risk "...is paramount to ecological vandalism." Ledger "Draft Report Out " p. 2.

¹²⁹ Australian Conservation Foundation loc cit.

¹³⁰ See Weepers and Salter loc cit p. 11-12

¹³¹ G. Milne, T. Parkinson and J. Cooper 1991 "Hawke Wins on Mine Ban" Australian 19 June.

¹³² Ibid.

... which was able to provide advice to the government that the economic benefits of the mine were modest and had been exaggerated by the industry; that the Aboriginal concerns were deep and based on long-standing religious belief; and that the mine would be inconsistent with internationally-accepted concepts of National Parks and World Heritage areas.¹³³

Such comments reasserted that the government had indeed followed the rational advice of the RAC.

The conclusion of the Kakadu debate and the protection of the CZ and Coronation Hill saw conservationists' achieve the first of their objectives. In terms of the wider debate, however, the outcome was highly ambiguous as the government avoided making a decision in the terms constructed by either environmental or mining groups. Instead, Aboriginal rights and existing government policy were identified as the primary rationalisation for Cabinet's decision to prohibit mining. In this sense, the campaign which had been engaged in to define the character of environmental discourses appeared to have been neither won nor lost.

The Mining Industry

The role of the mining lobby in the conflict over Kakadu was highly political, gaining considerable media attention as a result of public and political mobilisation. Central to the mining industry's objectives was to mine within the CZ and at Coronation Hill. Also of considerable importance was the precedence that such a decision was believed to set. Like conservationists, the mining lobby was engaged in a conflict over the terms used in the debate regarding the environment and land use.

As far as business was concerned, the 1980s had seen a substantial rise in the power of the conservation movement. The capacity of business to influence policy processes created by government was considered vital in reasserting the power of business. An important aspect of this strategy was to define concepts adopted by government, such as ESD and multiple land use, in

133 P. Toyne 1991 "Conservation Versus Development" Conservation News July 1991.

a manner consistent with business interests. The strategies and claims made by the mining industry during the conflict over the CZ and Coronation Hill reflected these objectives.

Business responses to environmental issues remained ad hoc throughout the 1970s. While the challenges environmental groups posed to business were taken seriously, they were typically treated as a negotiable obstacle which could be overcome if approached sensibly.¹³⁴ The 1980s marked a shift in business attitudes towards environmental groups. As environmental issues emerged with greater regularity on the political agenda, mobilisation began to take place through business organisations and some attempts were made to facilitate business participation in government initiatives within the environmental field. For instance, business undertook a central role in the formulation of the federal government's National Conservation Strategy for Australia (NCSA) in 1981.¹³⁵ It was no longer simply individual companies reacting to individual environmental issues. This trend towards increasing business interest in environmental issues was consolidated by the environment lobby's success in the Franklin campaign. Business believed it simply could not allow the environment movement to dictate which resource development projects should take place.

As Doug McEachern has noted in Business Mates,¹³⁶ business is by no means united in its response to environmental issues. This was clearly apparent in the different strategies undertaken by individual business representatives, industry groups and peak organisations in the period following the Franklin campaign, to reassert business power. These varied

¹³⁴ This characterised the type of response of business to the Great Barrier Reef and Fraser Island.

¹³⁵ For a discussion of the business involvement in the National Conservation Strategy for Australia see D. McEachern 1992 "Australian Environmental Policy: 1981-1991" unpublished seminar p 3-9. Industry representation in this forum was extensive, with the AMIC, the Australian Forest Development Institute, the CAI and the NFF all taking part the NCSA steering committee.

¹³⁶ McEachern op cit p. 109-116.

from Hugh Morgan's antagonistic rhetoric regarding the socialist peril embodied within the environment movement, to the Business Council of Australia (BCA) and the Australian Mining Industry Council's (AMIC) active participation in the ESD and RAC processes, involving negotiations with both government and environmental groups. Irrespective of these differences, a unity of objectives emerged in business's attempt to capture the terms of the environmental debate and define it in a manner consistent with its interests.

For the mining industry this took the form of an attempt to construct a policy climate in which mining projects would not be undermined by claims of environmental worth. According to the mining industry, it was the overly influential role of the environment movement, Aboriginal groups and pastoral interests which had biased government decision making and created unjustifiable impediments to the mining industry's access to land.¹³⁷ The AMIC argued for a more balanced approach to land use issues and a discourse developed which aimed to ensure that economic concerns were not marginalised in government decision making and policy processes. Hence it was argued that:

All land use decisions should be based on a balanced assessment of the effect on the economy, environment and social values so mining is not excluded as a land use anywhere without government making an informed decision.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ For example Hugh Morgan argued that

The fundamental fact of life which we, as an industry, have to address, is that over the last fifteen years we have been out spent and outwitted, by our opponents in the environment movement.

Morgan goes on to cite the reduction of access to land from 90% to less than 77% in the past twenty years. According to Morgan, this situation is of primary importance to the mining industry and demanded immediate attention. H. Morgan 1989 "Mining and Political Power" Quadrant July, p. 15. A similar theme is evident in the Australian Mining Federation 1988 "The Balance Between Conservation and Development" Mining Review August.

¹³⁸ Australian Mining Federation loc cit p. 22. Similar views are expressed by Laclun McIntosh, Executive Director of the AMIC in 1989 during an interview with Wilderness News. In Wilderness News Vol. 10 No. 3 1989 p. 9.

It supported this claim by drawing attention to Australia's economic vulnerability and arguing that the nation could ill-afford to 'lock-up' its mineral wealth, contending that the success of the mining industry was central to the economic fortunes of Australia.¹³⁹ One logical outcome of this argument was for the mining industry to demand access to National Parks for exploration and mining.¹⁴⁰

Thus, while the AMIC presented an image based on compromise and a willingness to negotiate, it was demanding greater access to land based on the notion that it was in the Australian public's interest. Such a view directly challenged the claims made by the environment movement which had argued against multiple land use (in the form proposed by the mining lobby) and considered conservation, rather than mineral exploration, to be in the public interest. A crucial aspect of this strategy involved an attempt to shift public opinion by engaging in a media campaign that publicised these themes. Hence, a pro-active approach was adopted by the mining industry, one aimed at undermining the environment movement's capacity to generate support by asserting some control over the environmental agenda. It was within this context that the conflict over Kakadu took place.

The government's decision to refer the issue of Coronation Hill to the RAC was not well received, as the following remark by Joe Fisher (manager of the original Coronation Hill mine) suggests:

The decision on Coronation Hill and the Conservation Zone in an already oversized park will have a far reaching effect on the economy. You cannot produce resource development and export by the stroke of a pen, but the government has demonstrated that you can stop it in that easy way.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ B. Hare 1987 "Mining In National Parks" *Habitat* Volume 15 No. 1 p. 2; Australian Mining Industry Council 1989 *What Mining Means to Australia* Canberra: Australian Mining Industry Council p. 16-18

¹⁴⁰ Hare loc cit p. 2.

¹⁴¹ J. Fisher 1990 "The Kakadu Conservation Zone: A Lesson For the Future" *Johnny Greens Journal* August p. 12.

Criticisms were rife from prominent members of the mining industry including Sir Arvi Parbo (chairman of BHP and Western Mining), Hugh Morgan (Director of Western Mining) and Laclaun McIntosh (Director of AMIC). In a manner typical of Hugh Morgan's brash style of politics, he claimed that the Coronation Hill decision was a victory for socialism in disguise and contended that it would result in disinvestment in Australia.¹⁴² McIntosh similarly emphasised the effect of the government's decision on investor confidence and that the result would be to deny Australia the benefits of up to 7 billion dollars in export income.¹⁴³

Parbo also criticised the delay. Not only was the decision itself seen as problematic, but also the processes from which it emerged:

After this decision what assurance can we have that we can develop (a mine) even if we are successful in finding ore and defining a project and going through the environmental approval procedures which you have to go through - you just can't believe it.¹⁴⁴

There was also the question of access to the government and Prime Minister. This came to the fore after Parbo had been unable to speak to Hawke in the days leading up to the Kakadu decision, whilst ACF Director, Phillip Toyne, had.¹⁴⁵ Hence, the political influence of the environment movement, relative to the mining lobby, was highlighted as a matter of concern. Not only did this reflect a problem faced by the mining industry, it was also of vital importance in maintaining the industry's claim regarding bias in the political process towards the environment movement.

While the mining industry was highly critical of the government's decision to refer the Coronation Hill decision to the RAC Inquiry, it did not

¹⁴² M. Grattan 1989 "Mining Chief Attacks Kakadu Move" Age 9 October.

¹⁴³ Peake loc cit.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Media attention was drawn to a report that while Phillip Toyne had been privileged to a ninety minute phone call with Hawke on the eve of the Kakadu decision, the Prime Minister had failed to return a call from Sir Arvi. The furore was quickly resolved when it became evident that Parbo had not asked Hawke to return the phone call. R. Dunn and P. Gill 1989 "PM, Sir Arvi in Angry Exchange" Australian Financial Review 10 October; M. Cockburn 1989 "Sir Arvi Concedes to Hawke But Not to Govt" Sydney Morning Herald 10 October.

hesitate to participate in the process. Indeed, the industry's response to the RAC inquiry was extensive. Various themes were developed by the mining industry in its submissions to the RAC. Particular emphasis was placed on developing a discourse identifying the importance of resource developments, like Coronation Hill, to Australia's national interest. There was also an attempt to define resource development and environmental protection as compatible objectives. Aboriginal issues were discussed in the submissions, but these played a relatively minor role in the claims made by the mining industry. Other important themes in the submissions included a critique of the political process and the disproportionate power enjoyed by the environment lobby in shaping government decisions.

A recurrent theme throughout the mining industry's submissions to the RAC was the economic significance of the Coronation Hill mine. At times the costs outlaid by CHJV (including exploration of the region and the preparation of an EIS) and the benefits of the mine to the Northern Territory economy were used to support this claim.¹⁴⁶ In response to the RAC's terms of reference, however, it was the national economic benefits of Coronation Hill that typically remained the primary focus of the mining industry submissions.

According to CHJV, direct benefits from the mine would add at least \$500 million to Australia's export and production revenue. Particular emphasis was also placed on the role of gold mining in Australia and the significance of

¹⁴⁶ J. L. McIntosh (Australian Mining Industry Council) 1990 Resource Assessment Commission: Submission to the Kakadu Inquiry Submission No.: KA 90/050 p.11; Coronation Hill Joint Venture 1990 Submission to Resource Assessment Commission Kakadu Conservation Inquiry (pamphlet, no publication details) p. 37-39; R. F. Crowe (NT Confederation of Industry and Commerce Inc) 1990 Resource Assessment Commission: Submission to the Kakadu Inquiry Submission No.: KA 90/018 p. 2. It was because of these benefits that the Northern Territory government threw its support behind the mining industry. Overall, the Northern Territory government was only a minor actor in the debate over the future of Coronation Hill and the CZ. While the proposed mine was located within the Northern Territory, it was within the federal government's jurisdiction and hence Territory government had little power over the outcome of the decision. Nevertheless, strongly supported the claims of the mining industry. Its primary concern was the regional economic benefits that the mine would bring, but it also drew attention to the resources importance to the Australian economy as a whole. B. Coulter (Northern Territory Government) 1990 Submission to Resource Assessment Commission Kakadu Conservation Inquiry Submission No.: 90/074.

medium sized ventures such as Coronation Hill to this industry.¹⁴⁷ The AMIC pointed to the benefits arising from the mining industry which contributed 10% to Australia's GDP and accounted for 50% of commodity and merchandise exports.¹⁴⁸ It was argued that if Australia was to manage its economic difficulties, it required a healthy mining sector and efficient land use. While the economic benefits of any one project might be insignificant, within the context of the Australian economy:

...the accumulated cost, in terms of reduced national income and living standards, of individual bans on resource use projects escalate sharply.¹⁴⁹

As a result, making mineral resources inaccessible to mining companies ('locking up' resources) threatened Australia's standard of living.¹⁵⁰ Within these claims it is possible to identify the construction of a discourse which equated the national interest with the development of resources such as Coronation Hill. Hence, the mining industry contested the contention made by conservationist groups that environmental preservation, by way of a prohibition of mining, was in the national interest.

The mining industry further challenged the claims of the environment movement by offering an alternative conception of sustainable development. Like the environment movement, the AMIC developed the concept of sustainable development in such a way that it supported its particular objectives. This was achieved by distancing the term from its ecological meaning. Instead, sustainable development was defined as relying on achieving the renewability of resources and in the context of mining, this meant the ability to find new sources of mineral wealth as old sources were consumed. To achieve this end, the AMIC argued that the widest possible area

¹⁴⁷ Coronation Hill Joint Venture op cit p. 35-36.

¹⁴⁸ McIntosh op cit p. 8.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid p. 34.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid p.10, 35.

in Australia was needed to be available for exploration. In sum it advanced the notion that "no access, no exploration, no new sources."¹⁵¹

CHJV also drew attention to the theme of sustainable development. It favoured a definition that optimised both economic growth and environmental protection, as "[t]he two goals are not incompatible."¹⁵² According to the CHJV, the government was concerned about the type of growth it wanted rather than growth in general, and that the Coronation Hill project was compatible with the principles that the government had identified.¹⁵³

The AMIC similarly developed the theme that mining and the maintenance of Coronation Hill's environmental integrity were compatible objectives and hence, drawing on the concept of multiple land use, argued:

In some cases land use conflicts arise because the use of the land for one activity may be perceived to diminish the value of the land for other activities. However, depending on the size under consideration, both conservation and mining, and other economic activities for that matter may be compatible. Mining does not involve extensive use of land and even for the relatively small land area on which mining activity takes place, other land use options, including tourism and recreation are not necessarily precluded once mining operations cease. In most cases it is possible to adopt management strategies including revegetation and fauna protection to minimise the longer term alteration of the environment.¹⁵⁴

This focus on sustainable development was an important aspect of the mining industry's strategy as it provided a means to challenge claims made by environmental groups regarding Coronation Hill's environmental worth and the view that the region's value was linked to it remaining free from development. Some within the mining industry, such as Northern Territory Chamber of Mines, persisted in dismissing conservationists' arguments about

151 Ibid p. 7.

152 Coronation Hill Joint Venture op cit p. 16.

153 Ibid p. 16-17.

154 McIntosh op cit p. 38.

the ecological significance of the area by describing it as both a 'pittance'¹⁵⁵ and a 'pimple of land'.¹⁵⁶ Notions of sustainable development and multiple land use, however, provided scope for a more sophisticated and moderate discourse, one based on the notion that environmental protection and mining were compatible. CHJV argued that the area had already been worked and mined for fifty years and that:

There is no evidence that half a century of grazing and mining along the South Alligator has harmed in any way the Kakadu wetlands, part of which is downstream of the South Alligator valley.¹⁵⁷

Drawing on aspects of the conservationists claims, CHJV focused on the contention that it was the location of Coronation Hill and the CZ within the Kakadu wetlands that made the areas significant.¹⁵⁸ Earlier mining incursions at Coronation Hill had not affected Kakadu and future mining could therefore be undertaken without a detrimental affect. The principal problem was whether or not the South Alligator River could be protected, to which it was subsequently argued that water would not be released from the system and therefore the project was environmentally sound.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, the mine site itself was to be less than 1 sq km and that in the planning of the project, the Joint Ventures had made it their first priority to ensure adequate protection, management and rehabilitation of the environment.¹⁶⁰

Questions pertaining to Aborigines attracted less attention than environmental issues in business submissions to the Kakadu RAC Inquiry. A mixture of attitudes to Aboriginal issues emerged, dominated by a focus on the conflict within the Jawoyn over their attitude to mining, the credibility of

¹⁵⁵ M. Gamble (Northern Territory Chamber of Mines Inc) 1990 Submission to Resource Assessment Commission Kakadu Conservation Inquiry Submission No: 90/043, p. 1 letter 1.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid p. 2; letter 1.

¹⁵⁷ Coronation Hill Joint Venture op cit p. 10.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid p. 13.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid p. 13-15.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid p. 28-32. On this basis the stockpile was to be constructed in such a manner that it would blend in with the landscape with no leakage of mine water ensuring a minimisation of the environmental impact.

claims made regarding Bula, and the potential benefits Aboriginal people would accrue from the development. Emphasis was typically placed on the potential employment and financial opportunities to the Aboriginal people that the mine represented and the earlier agreements with the Jawoyn to work the area.¹⁶¹ Serious doubts were also expressed over the significance of the sickness country, with the implication that the Bula myth was too far fetched to be believed by the Jawoyn.¹⁶²

It was further argued that the level of decision making that was considered best suited to dealing with the issue was the Northern Territory, rather than the federal government.¹⁶³ This is not surprising as the Northern Territory government was strongly committed to the development of mining.¹⁶⁴

The submissions frequently expressed concern regarding the various aspects of the political process associated with the Kakadu RAC. According to the AMIC, the mining industry had originally supported the RAC because it was viewed as furthering principles that were vital in the evaluation of resource projects, including their predicability, consistency, efficiency and transparency.¹⁶⁵ The Kakadu RAC had undermined these objectives. In particular, it was argued that the decision to refer the issue to the RAC represented yet another example of a lack of predicability and inconsistency in the government's approach.¹⁶⁶ Moreover the RAC's initial intention had been to resolve broad policy questions and that it was this form of inquiry that the industry supported. The Kakadu RAC Inquiry, however, was dealing with a specific policy issue. According to the AMIC, it was virtually impossible for an individual resource development project to achieve support when there was any doubt regarding its environmental consequences and hence, in the case of

¹⁶¹ Ibid p. 26, 32, 35-36.

¹⁶² Ibid p. 25-26.

¹⁶³ Ibid p. 26.

¹⁶⁴ McIntosh op cit p. 28.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid p. 12; for more details on each of these see p. 32-33. By transparency it was meant the openness of the political process.

¹⁶⁶ Coronation Hill Joint Venture op cit p. 12.

the Kakadu RAC, the process established by the government was biased against the mining industry.¹⁶⁷ It was further claimed by the AMIC that government intervention was unnecessary in issues such as Coronation Hill as it was the companies themselves that held the expertise to assess the merits of specific projects.¹⁶⁸ Government intervention, by way of the RAC's involvement, could only complicate the issue, resulting in a movement of capital away from Australia, undermining investor confidence and disrupting the market.¹⁶⁹

A final point taken up in a number of business submissions to the RAC was the degree of influence exerted by the environment lobby in the government's response to Kakadu. It was a number of smaller industry groups and individuals¹⁷⁰ that drew attention to this issue. For these groups, the government's response to the issue of Coronation Hill was politically motivated, aimed at appeasing the overly powerful environment lobby. These arguments tended to explicitly articulate concerns implicit within more mainstream mining industry submissions to the RAC.¹⁷¹

An emphasis on problems within the political process and the influence of the environment movement served to highlight questions regarding the RAC's legitimacy. This provided a forum to articulate concerns held by the mining industry. It may also be interpreted as strategic in character, leaving the process open to criticism, should the mining industry be prohibited from mining Coronation Hill.

Newmont Mining (manager of Coronation Hill Joint Venture following its merger with BHP Gold) treated the RAC Inquiry's findings in a similar

167 McIntosh op cit p. 12.

168 Ibid p. 14.

169 Ibid p. 12-14.

170 For example, one individual submission of this sort was made by Joe Fisher. See W. J. Fisher, (WJ and EE Fisher Pty Ltd) 1990 Resource Assessment Commission: Submission to the Kakadu Inquiry Submission No.: KA 90/028.

171 Gamble op cit p. 1, letter 1; M. Bell (CRA Training and Administrative Services) 1990 Submission to Resource Assessment Commission Kakadu Conservation Inquiry Submission No: 90/065 p. 4-5.

manner to environment groups. It argued that the inquiry supported the mining industry's position in the debate, as the following news release states:

The Coronation Hill Joint Ventures are delighted that the Resources Assessment Commission (RAC) Draft Report on Resources Uses in the Kakadu Conservation Zone concluded that there were not environmental impediments to the development of the Gold (sic) Platinum and Palladium Mine at Coronation Hill in the Northern Territory. The Joint Venturers consider that the Draft Report vindicates the position that they have consistently taken on this manner.¹⁷²

The problem for the mining industry was that the Report had given greater weight than expected to Aboriginal concerns and had found that the mine was of marginal economic significance.

Newmont dealt with the Jawoyn question by attempting to discount them, arguing that the "RAC's findings on Aboriginal matters ... [are] extraordinary"¹⁷³ and dismissed arguments that the Jawoyn were opposed to mining.¹⁷⁴ In what can only be interpreted as an attempt to diminish the significance of the Bula myth, a later News Release discussed "how Aborigines strengthen land claims by the 'elaboration' of sites and customs".¹⁷⁵ Finally, there was considerable emphasis on the ability of the mining company to accommodate Aboriginal concerns.¹⁷⁶

Efforts were also directed towards establishing the economic significance of the mine. Here the claims reiterated those made in the submissions with particular emphasis placed on the wider ramifications of prohibiting mining. John Quinn, managing director of Newmont Australia, stated that "Australia cannot afford to dismiss this significant project as the RAC has done."¹⁷⁷ This view was based on a predicted reduction of investor confidence in Australia due to "a major loss of confidence in the ability of government to make

172 Newmont Australia News Release "Coronation Hill Report Welcomed" 8 February 1991.

173 Ibid.

174 Ibid.

175 Newmont Australia News Release 1991 "Coronation Hill Hearing Crucial" 7 April 1991.

176 Ibid; Newmont Australia News Release "Coronation Hill Report Welcomed".

177 Newmont Australia Press Release 1991 "Coronation Hill Highly Profitable" 7 March.

rational resource use decisions."¹⁷⁸ In a similar fashion to the environment movement, the mining industry associated its objectives with rational decision making. To preclude mining, therefore, could only be interpreted to be the result of the government giving way to the "... exaggerated, alarmist political campaigns by green lobby groups."¹⁷⁹

When the federal government announced that it would ban the Coronation Hill mine, Newcrest's (Newmont had changed its name) response was to describe the decision as a 'national disgrace' claiming it to be "... a low-watermark in the Government's attitude towards investment and economic recovery in Australia."¹⁸⁰ The company reiterated concern about the way in which the government had altered the rules of the policy process.¹⁸¹ These claims were supported by BCA President and BHP chairman, Brian Loton:

The inconsistencies which abound show we still have not decided whether economic development is our number one priority or whether something else may be more important.¹⁸²

According to Loton the capacity of the Australian economy to recover from its current malaise relied, to a large degree, on government decisions. Coronation Hill undermined the strength of the recovery. It is worth noting, however, that discussions of massive disinvestment were eased by the mining industry. Once the decision not to mine Coronation Hill was made, this shift in position was logical as the mining industry could ill afford to further accentuate what was perceived to be a climate conducive to a lack of investor confidence.

The outcome of the Kakadu RAC was as ambiguous for the mining industry as it had been for conservation groups. The government's decision suggested qualified support for the environment movement, even though it

178 Newmont Australia News Release 1991 "Coronation Hill Hearing Crucial".

179 Ibid.

180 Milne, Parkinson and Cooper loc cit.

181 Grattan, Peake and Mann loc cit.

182 Australian 21 June 1991.

had been couched in terms of the Aboriginal dimension of the debate. Regardless of how the decision was interpreted, the mining industry seemed to have been unable to convince the Hawke government of its arguments. In this sense, the immediate objective of mining Coronation Hill and the broader aim of shaping the discourse surrounding the environmental debate, appeared to have failed. The government, however, was far from providing unconditional support to the environment movement.

Conclusion

Conflict over Coronation Hill and the CZ differed in a number of ways from the other case studies discussed in this thesis. Central to these differences was the state's increased involvement in environment policy; in particular, the construction of institutional processes designed to find a rational and consensus-orientated solution to the conflict which had emerged between resource exploitation and environmental protection. Both the mining industry and environmental groups responded by attempting to redefine the policy framework in a way that was consistent with their own objectives. A 'rational' response to the issue simply became an acclamation of each group's desired outcome.

For the mining industry this took the form of developing a discourse that defined the terms 'multiple land use' and 'sustainable development' in such a way that they necessitated mining rather than excluded it. It also drew on the logic of economic development and its association with the 'national interest'. Australia simply could not afford to prohibit ventures such as Coronation Hill. Finally, an attempt was made by the mining industry to define resource development and environmental protection as congruent objectives.

The strategy adopted by environmental groups was similar to that of the mining lobby. It too was concerned with the conflict over the terms of the environmental debate and emphasised the incompatibility of mining and the maintenance of Coronation Hill's environmental and cultural integrity.

While the environment movement remained unified in its objectives, a conflict emerged over the best strategy to achieve these goals, with divisions evolving between the Wilderness Society and the ACF over whether or not participation in the RAC was the most appropriate, or effective, form of involvement in the dispute. The Wilderness Society attempted to influence these processes and the terms of the discourse by acting from outside the RAC Inquiry, whereas the ACF sought to shape the debate through direct participation. Nevertheless, they remained unified in their aim of ensuring that environmental concerns were granted adequate representation and that the mining lobby did not monopolise the debates on land use, environmental protection and resource exploitation.

The relationship between environmental damage and awareness assumed a particular form in the debate over Coronation Hill and the CZ. Like the other case studies discussed in this thesis it was a specific issue, the perceived threat to Kakadu, that precipitated mobilisation of environmental groups. A history of potential and actual environmental damage to the region further heightened awareness of the area's value. Conceptions of Kakadu's environmental worth dated back to the 1960s and had more recently found formal recognition in the region's World Heritage listing. This converged with a significant rise in environmental awareness during the second half of the 1980s. It was in this period that levels of environmental awareness reached new heights, with the magnitude of environmental problems capturing popular attention. As Paul Kelly explains:

The global issues were the warming of the earth due to the greenhouse effect, damage to the earth's protective ozone layer, the depletion of forests and expansion of deserts, the pollution of rivers and oceans, the extinction of animals and plants, acid rain, and soil degradation. Above all was the fear that the combination of economic progress and population growth would bring famine, pollution and social collapse.¹⁸³

183 Kelly op cit p. 524.

The most readily identifiable evidence of the growth in this concern was the rising membership of the ACF. Having increased substantially between 1978 and 1982 (roughly coinciding with the Franklin campaign) ACF membership appeared to have reached a plateau of around 11,000 during the mid 1980s. Then, in 1988, there was another substantial rise to 14,000 members, which peaking at 22,000 in 1990.¹⁸⁴ The environment movement was able to draw on this growth in environmental awareness to gain both political recognition of its wider agenda as well as channelling this newly found influence into government responses to the specific issues such as Coronation Hill. In particular, a sudden rise in environmental awareness can be associated with the environment movement's capacity to forge a close relationship with the Hawke Labor government in the latter half of the 1980s, with Graham Richardson initiating increased government responsiveness to the claims of environment groups. With a government keenly aware of the electoral significance of the environmental vote, the environment movement was able to ensure that its claims regarding Coronation Hill were not ignored, particularly in the wake of the 1990 election.

While the environment movement reaped the benefits of expanding environmental awareness, the state and business had to find ways of dealing with this new political situation. The Hawke government responded by shifting away from playing a principally reactive role in environmental policy. Previously, governments had entered into conflicts over the environment after they had become the site of competing claims and interests. The Hawke government's establishment of processes such as the RAC indicated a move towards developing pro-active policy measures and identified the need for a more general and comprehensive approach to environmental issues. The

¹⁸⁴ Papadakis op cit p. 152. Membership of the Wilderness Society experienced similar growth. It reached a peak of around 7,000 members in 1983 at the height of the Franklin campaign. Numbers subsequently dropped to around 5,000 members for much of the 1980s. Then, in 1987, there was a substantive increase to 7,000 members which had risen 16,000 by 1991. Ibid p. 150.

resolution of environmental conflicts became a leading concern of the government, resulting in the development of a discourse which emphasised resolving environmental issues through rational and consensually orientated decision making processes.

Industry also faced new circumstances, making it increasingly important to compete with the claims of environmental groups. For the mining industry this had led to a pro-active campaign directed towards challenging environmental groups by seeking access to land, including national parks. A key component of this strategy was to construct a discourse in which economic concerns were not marginalised in government decision making, particularly when claims of environmental protection were being articulated. The establishment of what was hoped would be rational processes of decision making became one means to pursue their ends, especially when it was hoped that a 'rational' approach could be defined in such a way that it supported economic development. Nevertheless, these processes also posed a threat. If environment groups managed to eclipse the RAC and consolidate the influence it had appeared to be gaining in the government's decision making, then the political power of the mining industry, and its right to determine where development projects were to be located, would be threatened.

The character of Australian production, and the accumulation strategy pursued by the Hawke government, were to play an important role in defining the nature of the conflict over Coronation Hill and the CZ. It has been argued throughout this thesis that Australia's economic development has largely been based on the richness of the country's natural resources, including its mineral wealth. It was from this broad context that the impetus to mine Coronation Hill originated and hence the creation of an instance of potential environmental damage.

The accumulation strategy assumed by the Hawke government during the late 1980s and early 1990s ought to have consolidated government support for

projects like Coronation Hill. In its attempts to reinvigorate the Australian economy, the government aimed to expand its commodity market and in doing so enhance the nation's export prospects in an economic sector where Australia was viewed to have a comparative advantage. A mine such as Coronation Hill was entirely consistent with this development strategy. It was this point that created the problem with which the government struggled. While Richardson doggedly pursued the environment vote and hence supported environmental protection of Kakadu, the economic ministers within Cabinet were unlikely to be swayed by anything other than approving the mine. Hence the character of production not only created conditions in which an instance of environmental damage emerged, but was also vital in shaping the conflict which subsequently took place, both in the expectations of the mining industry to have access to Coronation Hill and contests within Cabinet over the issue.

Within the conflict over Coronation Hill and the CZ it is possible to recognise a number of competing paradigms. The claims and objectives of environmental groups remained comfortably within the ecological paradigm. The value of Coronation Hill was conceived around its significance within Kakadu National Park as a whole and drew extensively from concerns for ecosystem integrity; this is a dominant feature within the ecological paradigm. The notion that Kakadu was valuable was considered beyond question and this principle was broadly accepted by the public. What was required was to establish that the rationality of environmental protection outweighed the economics of mining. It was at this point that a conflict emerged between the ACF and the Wilderness Society. The ACF accepted the framework established by the RAC, and sought to achieve the preservation of Coronation Hill by accepting the RAC's definition of the environment as a resource and claiming that it was more valuable protected than mined. By way of contrast, the Wilderness Society rejected the definition of the environment as a resource,

based on the argument that it was too closely associated with notions of human utility, particularly economic utility. To be involved in the RAC was to enter into the discourse that would subsequently undermine the principle that the environment was of intrinsic value.

In spite of the Wilderness Society's concern, it was the rationality of environmental protection, not an economic conception of the environment's worth, that remained the key theme in conservationists' claims. Associated with environmental groups activities throughout the Coronation Hill conflict was an increasing confidence in the persuasiveness of the ecological paradigm which was evolving as a result of increased environmental awareness. While the Hawke government had not reached a consensus that supported this perspective, greater community awareness of environmental issues, the concurrent increase in the value that was being placed on environmental protection, and a willingness by the public to translate this into the realm of electoral politics, made it increasingly likely that the government would take claims made by environmentalists seriously. Hence, the environment movement had partly achieved its aim of defining the terms of the environmental debate in a manner consistent with its own concerns. Policy processes such as the RAC, which gave formal recognition to claims associated with the ecological paradigm, albeit of a limited nature, can be understood as playing some role in transforming the institutional mechanisms of the state in a way that recognised the legitimacy of this view.

The growing strength of the ecological paradigm consolidated the perceived need to reassert the dominance of the 'developmentalist' paradigm. As a result, the mining industry did not view the Coronation Hill conflict simply in terms of maintaining the status quo with regard to the environment movement's influence. Instead, it sought to regain lost ground by extending its claims. Coronation Hill was conceived to be of vital significance to Australia's economic future because it symbolised the government's commitment to the

economy. The possibility of massive disinvestment was considerable should the government prohibit mining, as it would provide a clear indication of the government's future policy options. While these claims can be interpreted as a strategy to win on the particular issue of Coronation Hill, the mining industry's attempt to redefine terms such as ESD, multiple land use and the direction of the RAC process, suggests a wider agenda. What it sought to re-establish was the rationality of the developmentalist paradigm and use these debates over semantics, as well as the specific issue of Coronation Hill, to achieve this end.

The federal government was located in the midst of these claims and its actions suggest the existence of a 'politics as primary' paradigm. It would appear that the Hawke government recognised the legitimacy in the claims made by both environmental groups and the mining industry. It is also evident that it did not want to alienate either group. The response of the Hawke government to the conflict emerges as an attempt to deal with these political circumstances in a fashion reminiscent of the consensus style of politics which had developed in the Accord between the ACTU, government and, for a short while, business¹⁸⁵. The concern of Hawke and Richardson, in establishing processes such as the RAC, was an attempt to deal with the conflict between competing groups. Resolution of environmental problems was not the primary concern within this context. Rather, it was dealing with the political ramifications of mobilisation by both business and environmental groups, that was the central objective of the government. Within such calculations, the retention of political power appears to be central to both Hawke and his government. Such a view does not entirely dismiss Hawke's claim that he acted to preserve Coronation Hill because it was the right thing to do. Instead, it emphasises the political convenience of such activity.

185 Economou loc cit.

The government's decision to stress that it was principally Aboriginal rights, rather than environmental protection, which guided Cabinet's decision, confirms this approach. The Aboriginal issue provided the government with a way out of a problem that had troubled it for years. Whilst it was true a decision to prohibit mining would not be well greeted by the mining industry, nevertheless, the character of the decision allowed the government to avoid much of the negative ramifications of making a decision on environmental grounds. Thus, the political and electoral fallout could be minimised. It may therefore be argued that the government was essentially responding to its most immediate political imperative, the retention of government. What this required was the apparent accommodation of both paradigms, by siding with neither, a position the Hawke government appeared to achieved.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion: Environmental Conflict in Australia

Understanding the character of environmental damage is an integral part of discussing environmental conflict. The first chapter of this thesis argued that environmental damage emerges from the political, economic and cultural conditions that exist in industrialised capitalist societies.¹ A correlation was drawn between the rate of production and the degree of environmental damage caused by both the extraction of materials from the natural environment and the expulsion of wastes back into it.² The greater the level of economic growth, the more impact this had on the natural environment in the form of environmental damage. Given that economic growth is required to achieve political and economic stability in contemporary industrial societies, a structural imperative was found for environmental degradation. These objectives were also linked to cultural assumptions that justified exploitation and damage to the environment on the basis that nature primarily exists for human utilisation.

In Australia, environmental damage has taken a variety of forms. The focus of the case studies, however, reflects the dominance of natural resource development issues in Australian environmental debates.³ An explanation for this preponderance lies in the significant role that natural resource exploitation has played in Australia's economic development and the support

¹ This is not to suggest that it does not occur in other types of societies. Rather, a link may be made between the particular political, economic and cultural forms of industrial capitalism and environmental damage.

² There are some forms of economic activity which fall outside such a relationship, nevertheless, they are predominantly of this character.

³ T. Bonyhady 1993 Places Worth Keeping: Conservationists, Politics and Law Australia: Allen and Unwin p. ix. As Bonyhady suggests, this is not to argue that other issues, such as pollution, have not made an impact. Rather, that the issue of resource extraction has been more dominant.

this strategy has been given by both business and the Australian state.⁴ As chapter two argued, this economic strategy is related to a utilitarian conception of the environment that constructs nature's value principally in terms of its potential for natural resource exploitation. It was from within this economic, political and cultural framework that the dominant form of Australia's environmental damage originated.

Each of the case studies discussed in this thesis has demonstrated the importance of environmental damage in creating conditions of conflict. They also illustrate the significance of Australia's economic character in generating instances of potential environmental damage. The catalyst for conflict, in all four case studies, was a proposal for some form of resource development that was subsequently associated with a threat to the environment. Whether it was oil drilling, the building of a dam, or mining, each represented the exploitation of natural resources in such a way that would create environmental damage. Nevertheless, the argument of this thesis is that while damage is a necessary pre-condition for environmental conflict, its explanatory potential is limited. What is also required is an awareness of environmental damage, or a value being placed on maintaining the ecological integrity of the existing environment. Otherwise there is no reason for the political mobilisation of environmental groups.

The first chapter noted that the dichotomy between structure and agency is an important theme in the analysis of issue politics. A cursory glance at the conflicts discussed in this thesis reinforces such a view. There can be no doubt that political mobilisation by environmental groups was of fundamental importance in placing each of the issues onto the political agenda. The capacity to attract popular support and generate political interest was also pivotal in

⁴ For a discussion of the character of Australian state intervention see N.G. Butlin, A. Barnard and J.J. Pincus 1982 Government and Capitalism: Public and Private Choice in Twentieth Century Australia Sydney: Allen and Unwin especially part 2 "Economic Management"; S. Bell 1993 Australian Manufacturing and the State: The Politics of Industry Policy in the Post-war Era Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

their success. Not only did mobilisation by environmental groups influence the outcome of these conflicts, it also played a role in redefining the politics of environmental debates in Australia. Illustrating this point is the difference between government responses to the issues of the Great Barrier Reef and Coronation Hill, especially the development of policy processes designed to deal with conflicts between resource development and environmental preservation. Although these changes may be interpreted as ways to accommodate the claims of environmental groups, they also represent a real alteration in the significance accorded to environmental issues.

Individuals within the state apparatus also made a difference to the way the environment was treated within the political sphere. Cass and Uren, for instance, challenged the dominance of unqualified economic growth as a government objective and supported environmental protection. The independence of these two ministers, and the lasting impact they had through the development of EIA processes, demonstrates the capacity of individual state representatives to influence political outcomes. Hence, although EIA's have become the focus of some criticism, environmental groups have been able to use them as a mechanism to advance their objectives. Fraser Island and Coronation Hill are two notable examples discussed in this thesis.⁵ Thus it is important to recognise the role of individuals within the state and the influence of forms of mobilisation external to the state in policy formation and state action.

Having identified the importance of agency in environmental conflict, analysis is incomplete without recognition of the structural constraints that have defined the scope of those changes that have occurred in government policy and state activity. Of particular note is the significance that governments

⁵ This is not to question the validity of the criticisms that have been made by various writers including Bonyhady and Formby. Rather it is to recognise that the EIA processes have created an avenue which at times may be used to pursue environmental objectives. Bonyhady *op cit* p. 36; J. Formby 1987 "The Australian Government's Experience with Environmental Impact Assessment" CRES Working Paper 1987/9.

continue to accord to the imperative of economic growth. Hence, accumulation strategies remain a central priority in state action. Illustrating just how significant these strategies have been in determining state responses to environmental protection is the contrast between the Whitlam government's response to the Great Barrier Reef and Fraser Island issues. In the first instance, environmental protection was consistent with the government's objective of fostering Australian capital in the resources industry. During this contest the Whitlam government became a strong advocate for environmental protection. By way of contrast, the debate over Fraser Island witnessed environmental concerns undermining aspects of the government's objectives in the resource sector. This resulted in both Whitlam and Connor ignoring government policy in order to support a resource development. Even when the government has acted in a manner inconsistent with its economic strategy, such as Coronation Hill, the significance of economic growth has not been questioned. Thus, in this instance the dispute was over the importance of this particular project to the Australian economy. Economic growth, however, remained a principle government objective.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that an ideological commitment to capitalist economic structures provides a limit to state action and its willingness to act on the claims of conservationists. Hence, while it was acceptable to challenge particular development projects on environmental grounds, it was not legitimate to question economic growth as the framework of economic organisation. To this extent, the change in attitudes that environmental groups have brought to the issues discussed in this thesis, remained within a political and economic context committed to economic growth. This thesis, therefore, has identified the significance of both structure and agency in Australian environmental conflicts.

A discussion of post-Marxism revealed an attempt to move beyond the structure/agency dichotomy by focusing on the significance of discourse and

discursive conditions. The notion that discourse availability shapes the way that the environment is perceived and valued is supported in chapter two. Not only is this approach useful in identifying the origins of an exploitative attitude to the Australian environment, it is also vital in explaining challenges to this perspective. In the period following colonial possession of Australia, the dominant discourse emphasised the alien character of nature and as a result the environment's value was defined primarily in terms of productive use. Throughout this period, however, a second discourse was evident, one that evolved from the utilitarian objectives of environmental management and recreation. By demanding a greater awareness of Australia's ecology, this provided discursive conditions that fostered a greater value being placed on the natural environment, prefiguring the rise of the modern environment movement. The component of this discourse that had a lasting influence on the environment movement was the notion of ecology and its contention that exploiting the environment had repercussions that should not be ignored. It is therefore possible to recognise the way that a discourse has evolved that challenges the dominant view of the environment as a resource open to untempered exploitation.

A discourse of environmental value was drawn upon throughout the debates discussed in the case studies. As people mobilised to preserve the Great Barrier Reef, Fraser Island, the Franklin River and Coronation Hill, they did so within a discursive framework which placed value on those areas of the environment that had not been subjected to industrial development. The claims that were made about the value of this 'wilderness' were then used to justify its protection. Without such a discourse of environmental value there would have been no basis for mobilisation.

Post-Marxism's focus on discourse is clearly a useful way to discuss environmental awareness in Australia. Nevertheless, such an approach is limited by its inability to explain the conditions in which these discourses arise

and the conflict that subsequently follows. The thesis emphasises the connection between the evolution of a discourse of environmental awareness and instances of environmental damage. It contends that there are material consequences of a discourse that defines the environment's value primarily in terms of its economic utility to humanity. These are evident in increasing levels of environmental exploitation and hence environmental damage. As each of the case studies demonstrated, it is possible to link the demand for environmental protection with some conception of environmental damage. What post-Marxism misses, by focusing solely on those discursive circumstances in which damage is recognised, is the significance of the material conditions of damage. These are conditions outside of the discursive realm and play a vital role in the evolution of environmental awareness.

It is at this point that a connection can be made between the particular character of environmental issues and the forms of mobilisation they generate. When environmental groups mobilise it is logical that at least some of their demands will be related to concerns specific to environmental issues, especially environmental damage. Counter-mobilisation is similarly affected by the particular nature of environmental issues. Chapter one established that the causes of environmental damage and industrial capitalism are closely related. When environmental groups address the problem of environmental damage, they challenge aspects of industrial capitalism and, consequently, both business and the state which associate their interests with these economic structures. Counter-mobilisation could therefore be expected to reflect the threat that business and the state associate with demands to substantially reduce environmental damage. Post-Marxism, by focusing entirely on discursive conditions, misses the role played by environmental damage in shaping the activity of environmental groups, business and the state.

The thesis also raises questions regarding the literature that focuses on new social movements and new values in environmental conflicts. The case

studies supports the emphasis that new social movement theorists place on political movements, such as the environment movement, that operate outside the institutional framework of the state. Yet to do so without sufficient consideration of the differences between various movements is considered problematic. As it has been argued, the particular character of environmental issues, especially their relationship to environmental damage, is vital in understanding the origins and nature of environmental groups. For this reason the environment movement requires specific analysis, even if it does have some things in common with other political movements.

Another difficulty with the new social movement literature is that it provides little scope to discuss diversity and schism within the environment movement. The case studies establish that there is no distinct or easily defined set of values associated with the environment movement. While radical departures from existing utilitarian conceptions of the environment are widely articulated, they are frequently intertwined with a view of the environment as a source of scientific inquiry and recreation. For some, this is linked to a challenge to the capitalist system, for others it is a process of reforming existing political institutions. What unifies the environment movements is the need for environmental protection in a given instance. The reasons for desiring environmental protection and the values placed on the environment are drawn from a tradition that has long constructed the environment's value outside of its economic utility. Hence, while it may be new to express environmental concern through strategies of mass mobilisation, the values that are being articulated are well established. Contrary to the new social movement and new value theorists, this suggests difficulties with conceptions of the environment movement as new.

The first chapter of this thesis suggested that the theories posited by either Lowe and Goyder or Merchant, provided the most useful method of discussing environmental conflict. This was principally because they incorporated the

impact of both environmental damage and awareness. According to Lowe and Goyder's analysis, conditions associated with economic growth are central in explaining both environmental damage and awareness in terms of their theoretical frameworks. In a similar manner, Merchant identifies alterations in the character of production as vital in explaining the transformation of attitudes towards the environment. She contends that when forms of production are modified, non-human nature is affected. Economic growth and concurrent developments in technology and industry are examples of these changes that have challenged existing perceptions of the world and resulted in the formulation of new paradigms.

As chapter two established, developments in Australia's production, since possession, have had an enormous impact on the continent's ecology. The introduction of new species such as sheep, the extensive taking up of the land by pastoralists, and the impact of mining and the gold rushes, all significantly influenced Australia's environment. As Merchant's argument suggests, the consequences of this activity led to a new evaluation of the environment's value, creating a shift towards an ecological understanding of the effects of resource exploitation. Simultaneously, in a process similar to the one described by Lowe and Goyder, popular appreciation of the environment evolved in response to particular consequences of economic growth and industrial development. These included environmental degradation and the population's greater mobility due to technological developments in transport and greater leisure time that increased access to the Australian countryside. The combined effect of these conditions was to facilitate a growth in an aesthetic appreciation of the Australian environment.

An emphasis on the economic development of natural resources and a concern for the environment continued into the twentieth century. The consequence was an increase in environmental damage and, as chapter three explains in relation to the Great Barrier Reef, an expanding awareness of the

environment within Australia. During the 1970s and 1980s environmental damage and awareness increased, accompanied by a discourse that made sense of this evolving concern. In part, this drew from Milo Dunphy's bushwalking tradition and the notion of leaving 'wild' places unaltered. It was also a response to industrial development and the damage it caused to the unspoiled Australian environment. This particular form of the discourse reflected both of these themes as it came to place particular value on those areas that had not been exploited by industrial capitalism and argued that their worth lay in leaving them untouched. It is here that the basis for the ecological paradigm, and its growing significance in the Australian context, may be found.

According to Merchant, conflict emerges as new paradigms challenge the old. In the contemporary era, it is the 'new' ecological paradigm which is challenging the 'old' scientific world view. The mechanistic paradigm constructs nature as "passive and manipulable"⁶ waiting for human use before it is considered valuable. By way of contrast, the ecological paradigm understands nature as an historical actor. It is "an active complex that participates in change over time and responds to human-induced change."⁷ What Merchant is suggesting is a distinction based on an anthropocentric view of the environment as opposed to an ecocentric perspective. The following discussion argues that while the notion of paradigms in conflict is a useful one, the particular character of the world views discussed in this thesis are far more complex than Merchant's characterisation implies.

To begin with, the case studies suggest three, not two, broadly defined paradigms. The first constructs the environment's value principally in terms of its relationship to economic growth. It is from within this mechanistic and dominant paradigm that proponents of resource development may be found. Conflict emerges as a second, ecological perspective challenges the rationale of

⁶ C. Merchant 1989 *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender and Science in New England* Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press p. 7.

⁷ Ibid p. 8.

natural resource development. This is a view that associates the environment with other conceptions of worth, including intrinsic value. A final perspective, completely absent in Merchant's conceptualisation, identifies the significance of the environment principally in terms of its relationship to other economic and political objectives.

Merchant's ecological paradigm is one that emphasises nature as a system and a process. While such a world view is related to the ideas put forward by the environmental groups discussed in this thesis, it does not portray the full diversity of views that have been articulated. Robert Boardman has noted the tendency to over generalise when discussing environmentalism and argues:

Supporters and critics alike ... have traditionally somewhat overstated the degree of common ideological ground present in environmental advocacy. There is a considerable amount of diversity.⁸

Boardman goes on to note the way in which these ideologies vary from conservation philosophy to deep ecology.⁹ This thesis supports Boardman's view and argues for a more detailed assessment of the content of these paradigms.

Within the case studies it is possible to recognise that which Merchant defines as the ecological paradigm, a world view based on an ecocentric conception of the environment's worth. Yet this did not operate in isolation. Equally important was a justification for preservation based on human utility. According to Merchant's framework, this valuation ought to be placed within the mechanistic paradigm, where human use determines the environment's value. Within the Australian context, however, both of these perspectives of the environment's value came together and provided the basis for mobilisation to protect the environment. This challenges the anthropocentric/ecocentric dichotomy constructed within Merchant's

⁸ R. Boardman 1992 "Introduction" in R. Boardman (ed) Canadian Environmental Policy: Ecosystems, Politics and Process Toronto, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press p. xiii.

⁹ Ibid.

paradigms. While these views emerge as different valuations of the environment's worth, environmental groups have not typically treated them as mutually exclusive or identified only one particular conception as the legitimate challenge to the political order. Instead, both views have provided ways to ascribe the environment with a non-economic worth and thus a rationale for mobilisation.

For example, two distinctly different justifications for environmental protection emerged in the conflict over the Great Barrier Reef. These were articulated by the then highly conservative ACF on the one hand, and the more radically orientated Queensland conservation groups on the other. Both recognised the Reef to be of value, principally in scientific and aesthetic terms. For the ACF, protection of the Reef was based on the notion that finding the environment's best possible use was important because it benefited human society. In contrast to the ACF's position, Queensland conservation groups began developing the notion that the Reef had value in its own right. Predicated on the area's aesthetic beauty and ecological significance, these arguments appear as precursors to notions of intrinsic value that were to become popular in the latter half of the 1970s.

The differences between the ACF and Queensland environmental groups are significant because they represent two streams of thought within the Australian environment movement. While the ACF lost its conservative character, the view that the environment should be protected because of its importance to human society has remained a constant theme in Australian environmental debates. Similarly, arguments that emphasise the environment's intrinsic worth have also continually re-occurred. What these perspectives have in common is a construction of the environment's value that is distanced from notions of economic worth.

Queensland environment groups did, however, draw on economic arguments to support the prohibition of mining, suggesting the need to

distinguish between justifications for wilderness preservation that deploy economic arguments, and those which support preservation principally on economic grounds. An example of the latter is the tourist industry, which values wilderness because of its capacity to attract tourists, and therefore to generate economic wealth. Economic arguments, however, may be deployed for other reasons. For many potential mobilisers, environmental protection does not necessarily require the abolition of capitalism. Hence the case for environmental protection can be made through an evaluation of the economic costs of not developing compared to the environmental benefits of preservation. This is different from constructing the environment's value primarily in economic terms because a variety of non-economic values, such as the environment's intrinsic worth, or its potential spiritual and physical recreation, are the principal factors in the assessment process. By drawing on a variety of rationales for environmental protection, including economic arguments, conservationists were simply enhancing their capacity to capture widespread community support.

Fraser Island remains singular within this thesis because of the unified approach adopted by conservationists in their rationale for preservation. FIDO's position, which was supported by both the ACF and the Queensland Trades and Labor Council, was based on the unique character of Fraser Island's environment. The primary concern of conservationists did not centre on the capacity of the mining industry to recreate an aesthetically pleasant environment, what mattered was that the ecology would be altered. Such a perspective suggests a discourse of intrinsic worth, as the ecological integrity of the region was understood to be important, regardless of its relationship to human enjoyment or use. No distinction, however, was made between notions of Fraser Island's intrinsic worth and the environment's aesthetic and scientific value to human society. Hence, the one discourse encompassed a

rationale for environmental protection based on both the Island's intrinsic ecological value as well as the benefits it brought to humanity.

During the Franklin campaign the objective of protecting the Tasmania's south west stemmed from the widely held belief that all wilderness was valuable and that the south west was considered both a wilderness and uniquely valuable. In constructing the worth of wilderness it was presented as a resource for the future, a location of spiritual and physical recreation, and finally as being intrinsically valuable. These rationales for preservation converged when they became manifest in political claims, a point illustrated by the concept of the 'wilderness experience'. For many mobilisers it was the physical and spiritual recreation experienced in the south west that was important in identifying the area's intrinsic value. Hence, both conceptions of the environment's value were important in providing a rationale for mobilisation.

Economic arguments played a particularly important role in the Franklin conflict. It has been argued that conservation groups often need to construct the economic consequences of environmental protection to be of little significance when compared to the costs of environmental degradation. In the Franklin dispute, this was achieved by arguing that the dam represented poor resource management and was economically unviable. This rationale for protection proved to be highly influential and helps explain the breadth of community support for conservationists, with the economic logic of hydro-industrialisation becoming an important aspect of the debate. Thus, while environmental groups distanced their evaluation of wilderness from economic utility, they did not hesitate to criticise the Franklin development on economic grounds.

Mobilisation to preserve Coronation Hill was unique in a number of significant ways. The most obvious was the lack of widespread popular political activities, such as rallies or extensive publicity that were associated

with earlier conflicts. Another important change was the shift from focusing on an isolated development project to constructing the issue as establishing a precedent for future decisions. In making this connection, both environmental groups and business were attempting to define the character of future political discourses involving the environment.

In constructing their argument for why environmental protection should take priority in the particular instance of Coronation Hill, environmental groups initially drew on the popularly accepted notion that Kakadu National Park was sacred and had intrinsic value. The area's World Heritage status reinforced this view. The focus of political debates became whether or not the area's intrinsic value outweighed its economic worth. This was because the concept of intrinsic value had become accepted within the political process as a legitimate basis upon which the area's value could be constructed.

Conflict emerged between the ACF and the Wilderness Society over how to respond to the RAC. For the Wilderness Society, involvement in the RAC was problematic because it defined the environment as a resource. It was argued that this undermined the notion of intrinsic value, by conceiving the environment's worth solely within terms of human, particularly economic, utility. Environmental protection, according to the Wilderness Society, should not be pursued on any basis other than the environment's intrinsic value.

The ACF's response to the RAC was quite different. While notions of intrinsic worth underpinned the ACF's valuation of Coronation Hill and wilderness in general, this was not viewed as inherently inconsistent with the area's value being constructed as a resource. Such a perspective is reminiscent of the earlier campaigns discussed in this thesis. For the ACF, the RAC provided an opportunity to challenge the mining industry's campaign which had aimed to define terms such as sustainable development and multiple land use. This also reflected a greater flexibility in terms of the discourse that the ACF was willing to deploy to justify wilderness preservation. If it was

necessary to define the environment as a resource and engage in a conflict over its relative value when compared to the economic potential of the area, then the ACF was willing to adopt this position.

Over the period discussed in the case studies there is a remarkable degree of continuity in the justification for wilderness preservation propounded by the environment movement. These perspectives have remained constant in spite of the enormous growth in the movement and the increasing scope of its political influence. With this broad characterisation in mind, it would appear that the significance of the ecological paradigm has increased. This evolution has been evident in the growing acceptance that the environment has value outside its contribution to the economy. The thesis suggests that over time, attitudes to the Australian environment have evolved in a manner consistent with what Merchant envisaged her ecological paradigm to encompass. Yet instead of taking the form of an exclusively ecocentric view of the environment's value, the Australian experience has been flexible enough to encompass justifications for preservation based on human utility. There is nothing to suggest that the capacity of this paradigm to challenge entrenched conceptions of the environment's worth is any less than the paradigm constructed by Merchant. By recognising the contribution of both strands of thought, it is possible to convey the diversity of perspectives that are located within the environment movement.

The case studies demonstrate that the way environmental groups perceive political action and the state has an impact on the form of mobilisation undertaken. The Barrier Reef conflict suggested that divisions between conservation groups, over competing strategies, were to play an important role in shaping the character of mobilisation that was to emerge. Tension soon developed between the conservative ACF and the more radical Queensland conservation groups. Activists, such as Judith Wright, linked the demands of industrial capitalism with pressures placed on the environment. Rather than

leading to a call for the end of capitalism, the principal theme that emerged was the notion of human responsibility. Human activity had created the threat to the Reef, human society was therefore responsible for protecting it. These groups challenged the capacity of the state to respond in an effective manner to the issue, a view based on the relationship between threats to the Reef and the state's commitment to industrial capitalism. The response of Queensland conservation groups was to attempt to mobilise popular concern and thereby place pressure on the state. By acting in this way it was hoped that a social and political climate conducive to introducing measures for the Reef's preservation could be achieved.

The ACF held a different perception of its role in society. As a conservative and avowedly apolitical organisation, the ACF rejected any overtly political action and distanced itself from calls to alter the political, economic or social system. Instead, it believed that community attitudes and scientific knowledge held the key to changing government responses to environmental issues. A strategy that involved intervention in the affairs of government institutions was therefore inappropriate.

In both the Fraser Island and Franklin dam conflicts, conservationists pursued similar strategies to that of the Queensland conservation groups in the Reef conflict. While conservationists in the Fraser Island dispute did not articulate a radical critique of industrial capitalism, they adopted a distinctly political stance. Existing political processes were the principal target of FIDO's action, with public interest used to open the political system up to conservationist's claims. The same focus emerged in the Franklin conflict. Again, the state was identified as the vehicle to achieve change with popular mobilisation vital in forcing governments to respond to conservationist demands.

Coronation Hill saw divisions emerge between environmental groups. While these were partly predicated on conflicting principles, they also reflected

different interpretations of the capacity of governments to address environmental issues. The Wilderness Society considered that processes, such as the RAC, were ineffectual and that popular pressure was more useful in assuring government responsiveness. For the ACF, the RAC offered a process that would allow it direct influence in this, among other, conflicts, ensuring that the environmental voice would be heard.

One consistent theme throughout the case studies is a recognition of the legitimacy of Australia's political institutions and political processes. While a radical critique of industrial capitalism and its concurrent political structures are one dimension of the arguments constructed by environmental groups, it is to the state that environmental groups turn to achieve reform. Direct lobbying of government, legal challenges and participation within government established policy processes, all point to a widely held acceptance of the state's capacity to make an impact in the environmental arena. Even when considerable scepticism has been expressed regarding government policy and priorities, it has been to mechanisms within the existing political system that environmental groups have turned in an attempt to make governments more receptive. In particular, the ability of popular dissent to be harnessed and expressed through the electoral process. The belief that the existing political system may be used to further environmentalists' objectives has been reinforced by the effectiveness of these strategies in particular campaigns.

As Merchant's characterisation of paradigms suggests, the growth and evolution of an ecological paradigm has provided a challenge to the currently dominant world view, one she has defined as the mechanistic paradigm. Within the mechanistic paradigm, matter is dead and inert and "[n]ature is passive and manipulable."¹⁰ According to Merchant, it is this view which has

10 Merchant op cit p. 7.

dominated industrial society and has been entrenched within a market based economy.¹¹

Within Australia, a dominant paradigm, based on the exploitation of nature, is clearly evident. Environmental conflict has emerged because the claims made by the environment movement have contested the ascendancy of this rationality, particularly the assumption that the economic potential of development is inherently more valuable than an area's ecological worth. It is this contest that is evident in each of the case studies, whether it was oil drilling on the Great Barrier Reef, mining Fraser Island or Kakadu, or the damming of the Franklin.

There are, however, a number of problems with Merchant's conception of the mechanistic paradigm. According to Merchant, the Australian state and business are both situated within the mechanistic paradigm due to their commitment to the dominant economic, political and social order. What this framework fails to provide is a means to discuss the different roles undertaken by the business and the state in these environmental conflicts. The argument of this thesis is that while capital and the state share a commitment to the maintenance of industrial capitalism, this does not necessarily translate into a common response to environmental conflict.

The starting point for this assertion is the extensive literature written in the neo-Marxist and neo-pluralist tradition.¹² This contends that because of the vital role business plays in ensuring that the conditions of capitalism are perpetuated, it has a privileged position within a capitalist society. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the capitalist state simply acts as an instrument of capital. The case studies strongly support this notion. There is

¹¹ Ibid p. 24-5

¹² The list is extensive. Within the neo-pluralist tradition are the theoretical perspectives of C. Lindblom and D. Vogel. From the neo-Marxist perspective there are prominent theorists including R. Miliband, N. Poulantzas, J. O'Connor, F. Block, and C. Offe. For a brief overview of these perspectives see B. Head and S. Bell 1994 "Understanding the Modern State Explanatory Approaches" in S. Bell and B. Head (eds) State and Economy and Public Policy in Australia Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

no doubt that in particular instances the state and business have held common objectives and pursued similar strategies. One example is the shared position of the Queensland government and DM Minerals in response to sand mining Fraser Island. Yet, as the case studies demonstrate, there is also frequently a gap between state and business objectives, strategies, and rationalities for action in environmental conflicts. There are a number of examples discussed in this thesis including the Whitlam government's support for environmental groups during the Great Barrier Reef conflict, Fraser's rejection of the claims made by sand mining companies in the Fraser Island dispute, and the Hawke government's position in both the Franklin dam and Coronation Hill conflicts. Not only does this suggest that business and the state need to be analysed as distinctive categories, it also makes evident the need to discuss the relationship between business and the state.

What remains crucial to understanding business responses to environmental conflicts is the way that individual companies perceive their interests and what they consider to be the best means to achieve these interests. As a result, individual fractions of capital can be expected to react in different ways to environmental conflicts, depending on how they interpret their interests to be affected. Hence, capital is not unified either in its interests or actions. Thus, while it is possible to identify the class interests of business, such as the continuation of an economic and political climate in which capital accumulation may take place, there are important differences between individual fractions of capital. Hence, it is important not to assume individual contests over the environment necessarily involve a threat to the class interests of capital. It is frequently the specific interests of a company that are at stake. In essence, this is the individual company's capacity to compete for capital accumulation.

When oil companies reacted to the Great Barrier Reef dispute, they did so individually with a low key campaign, focusing on the claim that oil drilling

did not necessarily mean environmental standards would be undermined. It was quite evident that Ampol was not especially concerned with the issue, leading to other considerations, such as relations with the trade union movement and the company's public profile, dominating its actions. The oil companies made no real attempt at collective mobilisation because of the lack of importance that was associated with the issue. Any political activity might be engaged in was left to the Bjelke-Petersen government. In sum, prohibition of drilling the Reef for oil was considered to have a limited impact on the interests of the companies involved and for this reason, the response of business lacked urgency or resolve.

Unlike the oil companies during the Reef conflict, DM Minerals took the Fraser Island issue seriously and responded to the establishment of the Fraser Island Inquiry, as well as Fraser's decision to prohibit the granting of export licences, in an antagonistic and highly political manner. The contrast with QTM is marked as it acquiesced to the very same government demands that DM Minerals so defiantly rejected. An explanation for these different responses lies in the particular interests of the companies in question. Not only did DM Minerals have a much larger stake in the sand mining of Fraser Island, QTM was vulnerable to claims of environmental irresponsibility. For these reasons, it was logical for DM Minerals, and not QTM, to mobilise and pursue the issue further.

DM Minerals' response to the issue was influenced by both its need to counter claims deployed by environmental groups, as well as the political circumstances in which the conflict was situated. The company argued that the environmental impact of sand mining Fraser Island was insignificant and ignored any suggestion that destroying the area's World Heritage qualities was a sufficient basis to reject the development project. It also questioned the legitimacy of a government decision which could (and subsequently did) lead to the withdrawal of export licences that had already granted by the Whitlam

government. What this allowed DM Minerals to do was to reconstruct the issue in its own terms, rather than those defined by environmental groups. It was in this way that the issue shifted from a question pertaining to environmental protection to the right of companies to mine. It was on this basis that the AMIC was drawn into the debate. Hence, the issue had become one of more than simply the interests of an individual company in conflict with environmental groups. Its ramifications had been broadened to involve the interests of the mining industry as a whole.

The role of business in the Franklin conflict was quite different to either the Reef or Fraser Island issues, primarily because of the relationship between Tasmanian industry and the HEC. With the HEC advocating the interests of those companies that would be adversely affected by the building of the Franklin dam, there was little need for business to mobilise. Whilst business did act through the TCI, its main concern remained confined to those activities that would undermine the HEC's capacity to claim that it was apolitical. The outstanding feature of the Franklin conflict was the willingness of business to allow the HEC to act on its behalf. What this suggests is that when business does mobilise politically, it does so because state advocacy of its interests are perceived to be inadequate. In the case of environmental conflicts, this occurs when the state appears to be in danger of being influenced by environmental objectives.

The extent of the mining industry's response to Coronation Hill suggests just how seriously it had come to view environmental issues in the latter half of the 1980s. From the outset of this conflict, the discourse adopted by the mining industry was defined in terms of the rights of mining companies to have access to land. In this instance, the collective threat posed by the environment movement was perceived to outweigh any individual differences between mining companies. The conflict had clearly shifted to one

involving the collective interests of the mining industry, one that involved a challenge to its right to exploit land.

Making matters even more difficult for the mining industry was the political context in which the contest took place. Unlike previous campaigns, business lacked a focus within the state to support its claims. While the Northern Territory government supported the mining industry, it was peripheral in the debate due to its limited political power.¹³ Despite support from Labor's economic ministers, Cabinet remained unreliable because of the political direction taken by the Hawke government, and its vindication of environmental groups. For this reason, it was particularly important for the mining industry to act collectively and mobilise politically, a situation that was further reinforced by the development of policy processes, such as the RAC, which also demanded formal business representation.

Business mobilised both individually and collectively to the conflicts discussed in the case studies. When mobilising individually, a link could be found between the conditions created by a specific environmental conflict and how it affected the particular company's interests. By contrast, collective mobilisation was founded on a shared interest in the development of a particular sector of Australia's natural resources. It is this process of individual and collective interest definition, the perceived challenge posed to these interests by environmental groups, and the role of the state, that shapes the way business responded to environmental conflicts.

Another conclusion that may be drawn from business responses to the environmental conflicts discussed in the case studies is the notion that Australian business has become increasingly concerned with the challenge embodied within the ecological paradigm. The case studies suggest that the degree to which the mechanistic paradigm (specifically the right to exploit the

¹³ Hence, in the context of this thesis, the Northern Territory government has been categorised as supporting business rather than a significant political agent in its own right.

natural environment) is perceived to be threatened, influenced the intensity and character of business responses to each of the conflicts. When little or no challenge was recognised, such as the Reef conflict, the individual interests of companies dominated. As the influence of the ecological paradigm increased, it was accompanied by a greater propensity for business to engage in collective action. Hence, by the time of Coronation Hill, business perceptions of environmental conflicts had altered enormously. It is possible to argue that during the Coronation Hill dispute, the mining industry constructed the conflict principally in terms of a contest between paradigms, one in which the industry's access to the environment was being set up in opposition to the ecological paradigm and a conception of environmental worth that precluded such activity. The class interests of capital, therefore, were perceived to be threatened by the conflict. This resulted in the mining industry placing considerable emphasis on recapturing the terms of the environmental debate, an activity that could be interpreted as an attempt to re-establish the status of the dominant paradigm. In spite of the way that the mining industry interpreted the issue's significance, capital as a class did not mobilise in response to Coronation Hill. In accordance with the previous case studies, most businesses were not involved in the conflict, presumably because their interests were not significantly implicated. As collective mobilisation remained limited to the mining sector it is possible to argue that while business viewed its interests to be increasingly challenged by the ecological paradigm, it was insufficient to generate a class response.

A final aspect of business responses to environmental conflict that was identified in the case studies was the dynamic relationship between the state and business. What was striking about this was the degree to which business was willing, wherever possible, to allow the state to mobilise on its behalf. It was only when the state failed to provide effective support for business claims that its political mobilisation became intense. In these instances, the state

became the focus of business activity and emphasis was placed on the need to apply pressure on the state in order to regain its support and ensure that the political process was not skewed in favour of environmentalists.

The political character of environmental conflict is a recurrent theme in this thesis. As each of the case studies demonstrates, both business and environment groups identified the government as a legitimate decision maker in environmental disputes. This resulted in the state becoming the focus of their competing claims and thus situated at the centre of political activity. Merchant's theoretical framework, however, does not include a specific conception of the state and subsequently misses much of what is vital in an account of environmental conflict. According to this thesis, environmental conflicts are political because, as Merchant suggests, they involve a contest for power. The role of the Australian state is crucial because it is both a focus for political mobilisation and an active participant in such conflicts.

The role assumed by the state in the case studies is consistent with the assertion that a principle objective of the state is to perpetuate conditions for capital accumulation. This was evident in the state's ongoing commitment to economic growth. It is also recognisable in state responses to environmental issues which have usually been compatible with particular accumulation strategies. In the Great Barrier Reef and Fraser Island disputes, state and federal government action was directly linked to a particular economic strategy. Similarly, tensions within Tasmanian politics over the Franklin dam represented uncertainty over the state's economic future and the role that ought to be accorded to hydro-industrialisation.

In some instances, however, state responses to environmental issues can not be understood in terms of economic objectives or accumulation strategies. Federal intervention in the Franklin dam and Coronation Hill disputes are two notable examples. There is nothing to suggest that the Hawke government's decision to protect the Franklin River was predicated on economic concerns.

Moreover, intervention in Coronation Hill actually contravened an economic strategy being pursued by the Hawke government at this time. Neither of these examples represented a rejection of economic growth, nor did they translate into policy outcomes that undermined the continuation of conditions for capital accumulation in Australia. What they do suggest, however, is that economic principles and the constraints of the capitalist order are not the only forces that influence state responses to environmental issues.

It is at this point that the influence of the Australian state's commitment to democracy becomes evident. Throughout the case studies it is possible to recognise the belief that democratic governments act in a manner that is representative of popularly held views. Hence, each conflict provides an example of at least one level of government responding to, and subsequently providing some form of representation for, environmental groups in the political sphere. At times it is impossible to disentangle these activities from the pursuit of a particular accumulation strategy, such as in the Whitlam government's advocacy of protecting the Great Barrier Reef or Fraser's prohibition of export licences to sand mine Fraser Island. In these instances, the state's political objective of democracy and its economic concern for growth combined to provide a clearly delineated policy option of environmental protection.

It is when environmental protection does not support the economic objectives of the state that its democratic character has been most evident in environmental conflicts. The case studies suggest that it is the democratic practice of elections that has been vitally important in creating an intersection between the claims of environmental groups and state action. Hence, it is when the views of environmental groups hold the potential to influence electoral behaviour, to the extent that they may effect election outcomes, that governments have been most receptive to their claims. For example, during the Franklin campaign, Labor's support for conservationists was partially

premised on the electoral benefits such a policy would produce. Perhaps even more significant is the association that can be made between the electorate's clearly articulated support for the protection of the south west wilderness and the Hawke government's willingness to honour its promise of intervention following the election. Coronation Hill illustrates another aspect of the relationship between electoral politics and democratic practices. In this instance, Richardson's recognition of the environmental vote's political significance led the government to act in a manner which was contrary to the accumulation strategy it was pursuing.

Thus far, state responses to environmental conflicts have been constructed as involving the pursuit of either economic or political objectives. Alternatively, they have been considered as resulting from the coincidence of economic and political goals. In fact, as the case studies illustrate, political struggles are far more complex. During each of the conflicts a broad variety of political and economic forces combined to shape state activity. Hence, state action cannot be associated with only one political agenda, but a complex matrix of concerns.

Complicating matters further were divisions within the state. Like business, certain core ideological assumptions provide the state with a degree of unity. As it has already been argued, in Australia this revolves around a commitment to liberal democratic political and economic institutions. For the most part, however, divisions dominate state activity. These may be associated with competing interpretations of the most effective way to create conditions for capital accumulation. There also exists considerable scope for schism to develop within the state in response to a wide variety of issues which do not have a direct impact on the broader economic and political climate. Ideological divisions between the Liberal and Labor parties are one highly visible example of these differences that may evolve within the parameters of liberal democracy. Tension between state and federal levels of government, within

the bureaucracy, or in the political parties themselves, are all examples of this fragmentation that have been evident in this thesis.

Analysis of environmental conflicts must consequently provide the scope to discuss diverse and competing state objectives. Therefore, the thesis aims to explain the dynamic role of the state in environmental conflict through the construction of a paradigm in which the political complexity of government decision making is recognised as the dominant force. For simplicity's sake this was termed as the "politics as primary" paradigm. Therefore an analysis of the particular conditions in which state activity takes place is considered to be of paramount importance.

Each of the case studies supports this contention by identifying a series of competing forces interacting to shape state activity, including tensions between various fractions of the state. During the conflict over the Great Barrier Reef, both the Queensland and the federal governments were pursuing a number of objectives which influenced their response to the issue. For the Bjelke-Petersen government, this involved its antagonistic attitude to any Commonwealth intervention in state affairs, complemented by an accumulation strategy based on attracting foreign investment through the development of natural resources. These objectives were situated within a context where resource based economic development was the primary concern of the government, a rationale firmly located within ideas associated with the dominant exploitative paradigm.

For the Whitlam Labor government a number of rationales were evident for preserving the Reef. The views of ministers like Cass and Uren were primarily concerned about the Reef's ecological integrity. These were also supported by Whitlam's emphasis on reform which had led him to a greater awareness of environmental issues. Equally important, however, was Whitlam's support for Rex Connor's objective of establishing an Australian owned mineral industry. Furthering such an approach was Whitlam's agenda

regarding states' rights and the way that the Reef issue provided justification for intervention into Queensland affairs.

State responses to subsequent conflicts display a similar diversity of competing objectives. During debate over Fraser Island, this was readily apparent in the contest that emerged between Cass and Whitlam over the provision of export licences. It was also evident in the contradiction that emerged between Fraser's 'new federalism' and the decision to prohibit export licences. In this instance, the link between the Fraser Island decision and Fraser's objective of developing the uranium industry remains pivotal in explaining the outcome of the conflict.

The dispute over the Franklin dam demonstrates how an environmental issue can become the location for another struggle. In this particular case study, it was the future of hydro-industrialisation that was crucial in explaining state responses. While the issue involved the environment, Tasmanian government representatives and the HEC responded to the issue in a manner based primarily on competing interpretations of the HEC's political and economic role in the future. The Franklin conflict also illustrates the way political survival may come to dominate the activity of agents within the state. Particularly following Lowe's demise, it is possible to interpret the Labor party's response to the Franklin issue almost entirely in terms of its desire to remain in government. Similarly, Robin Gray was more preoccupied with winning government than any particular outcome based on either the environment or the role of the HEC.

Unlike the Franklin dam conflict, where Hawke could act in an electorally popular way without undermining any other policy concerns, Coronation Hill represents an example of a contest between the economic and electoral concerns of the state. By the time of the Kakadu conflict, environmental issues had shifted from the periphery of political debates and become a major concern for the Hawke government, primarily because of the association made between

electoral success and the Green vote. Simultaneously, however, Australia was facing significant economic difficulties, resulting in pressure to privilege economic priorities above other issues. Again it is possible to identify the way competing state objectives influenced government responses to an environmental issue. Accentuating this situation further was the way environmental groups and the mining industry constructed the issue as establishing a precedent for future conflicts between resource and environmental objectives. The consequence of this tension was government inertia and an inability to resolve the issue. Ultimately, the government chose not to make a decision based on the competing environmental and mining objectives and redefined the issue in terms of the Aboriginal question, leaving state objectives unresolved.

Another feature of state responses to environmental issues that may be drawn from the case studies is the tendency to focus on reconciling conflict between opposing groups, rather than directly addressing environmental problems themselves. It has already been argued that because the state is necessarily committed to industrial capitalism and economic growth, its objectives are partly responsible for the problem of environmental damage. Addressing environmental damage therefore threatens conditions associated with the state's survival and for this reason remains outside the scope of likely government activity. A much simpler solution is to attempt to deal with the conflict between competing parties.

Up until the late 1980s, this took the form of the state, or various state agencies, advocating the position of one or other group involved in the conflict depending on the political and economic significance that the state accorded to them and the role they played in the state's electoral and accumulation strategies. For instance, the Whitlam government's support for environmental groups in the Reef conflict was at least partly based on their popularity and the lack of political power wielded (in this instance) by the oil

companies. Likewise, the perceived economic importance of sand mining companies in the debate over Fraser Island shaped Whitlam's actions in this instance. A similar situation can be identified in the Lowe government's qualified support for environmental groups and the Gray government's advocacy of HEC interests. In these instances the state can be understood as attempting to resolve the conflict by furthering the claims of one group over another rather than addressing the issue of environmental damage.

During Richardson's period as Minister for the Environment there was an effort to move away from state intervention based on the advocacy of a particular group's interests in environmental conflict. Instead, an attempt was made to resolve environmental conflict through the development of consensus orientated policy mechanisms. The RAC, for instance, was formed with this objective in mind. For the Hawke government such an approach appeared as a rational solution to a conflict ridden policy area.

The account of the Coronation Hill dispute provided in this thesis suggests that this consensus orientation was not effective. Both business and environmental groups constructed the outcome of the RAC as representing future choices between the environment and development. Consensus became impossible as neither of the groups was willing to accept the long term implications of any compromise. This construction of the issue placed the government in an extremely difficult position because it was being required to privilege either its economic objectives (by supporting mining) or its political role (by supporting the electorally popular act of protecting Coronation Hill and Kakadu). Governments committed to liberal democracy are poorly equipped to make this choice. By elevating one option above the other, the legitimacy of the notion that Australia is both liberal and democratic, and that these aspects of the polity are entirely compatible, would be undermined. In the conflict over Kakadu, the government responded to this problem by altering the focus of the issue to one of Aboriginal culture. This obviated the need to choose

between economic and political priorities. Thus, this thesis supports the notion that the Australian state's self perception as both liberal and democratic was crucial in shaping its responses to environmental conflict.

Earlier discussion of environmental groups and business focussed on competing paradigms. Within this framework, the state's role is ambiguous. In part, this is because the state is both an active participant in the conflict between development and environmental concerns, as well as being perceived as a legitimate arbiter of competing perspectives. The ideological framework of liberal democracy reinforces this role with the state's political character embodying the representation of competing views, whilst its economic objectives simultaneously supports the dominant paradigm of industrial capitalism. For this reason the state frequently acts in a contradictory manner as it attempts to reconcile these conflicting claims. As it has been unable to resolve the issue of environmental damage, the state has responded differently to each issue depending on its particular economic and political context as well as the political and economic significance of the groups involved. It is this role that the 'politics as primary' paradigm attempts to characterise.

Industrial capitalism, when coupled with democratic institutional structures, has demonstrated enormous flexibility and the ability to respond to a wide range of issues. While it is still possible to identify a range of contradictions within capitalism, it is equally possible to recognise the capacity of the Australian state to reshape itself in such a way that a workable compromise is found. One example of this process is the manner in which working class demands have been constructed in such a way that they do not threaten the operation of existing political and economic arrangements. The question that arises is whether or not this sort of strategy is available to the Australian state in dealing with environmental issues. To date, attempts to achieve such an outcome have failed. Moreover, the character of

environmental issues and their apparent incompatibility with industrial capitalism, suggests that compromise measures will remain difficult to find.

Conclusion

The relationship between environmental damage and awareness has been identified as vital in defining the character of environmental conflict in Australia. Environmental groups have mobilised in response to environmental damage. Business has counter mobilised to protect its interests because industrial capitalism is a fundamental cause of this damage. Furthermore, the state's reliance upon industrial capitalism has created structural constraints, limiting its response to these issues as it attempts to balance the demands of its liberal democratic nature. Individual issues may have been resolved in favour of environmental groups, yet the tension between these competing objectives remains.

Through the case studies it is possible to recognise a growing strength in the ecological paradigm as it has made an increasing impact on Australian political institutions, parties and processes. The ecological revolution that Merchant predicts, however, does not seem likely in the near future. Change appears inevitable, which is Merchant's point, but what necessitates this change remains uncertain. An optimistic outlook would expect political institutions to recognise the potential of future environmental damage and respond accordingly. On the other hand, a more pessimist outlook would argue that to date it has only been in response to examples of environmental damage, or the immediate threat of environmental damage, that change has been necessitated.

Environmental conflict is the process through which an ecological paradigm has challenged the dominance of resource development, with business and the state responding in various ways depending on their particular political and economic interests. The thesis has covered four case studies, each of which focused on the interplay of a number of different paradigms that embody complex and diverse discourses. It has attempted to

understand the significance of individual conflicts and their outcomes as well as the overall changes in attitudes to the environment in Australia. The thesis contends that environmental conflicts are political contests in which outcomes can only be understood as the result of the interplay of a variety of competing forces. In particular, these have been identified as the character of the ecological paradigm, the challenge it poses to the dominant paradigm of industrial capitalism and competing state objectives enshrined within the concept of liberal democracy. Environmental conflicts involve all of these forces which interact in a dynamic fashion, hence demanding the analysis of specific instances of conflict, as well as understanding these conflicts in relation to each other.

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