

CHAPTER NINE:The general philosophy of the Rainforest Action NetworkINTRODUCTION

Since it was founded in 1985, the Rainforest Action Network (RAN) has been working to protect the rapidly disappearing tropical rainforests and the human rights of those living in and around them. Yet, at the same time, it had been clear from its beginning that the salvation of the planet's rainforests had always been considered a *symbol*, or a *model*, for a much broader and significant whole-encompassing planetary change: namely, the transition to the post-industrial society. At the same time, we saw that the focus on rainforests was first a strategic one, as there was more financial support for this issue than for other planetary issues. We have also mentioned that it was while in the Southwest--through meeting some of the traditionalists who came to Hopiland to talk about their problems with Hopi elders--that Randy Hayes became aware of the catastrophic dimensions of the rainforests destruction, and the plight of the indigenous people who live in them.

This section will address the reasons--or reasoning--for the focus on the rainforests *themselves*, among the host of other environmental mega-problems of our time. The environmental aspects of rainforest issue can be grounded in a broader socio-economic and spiritual planetary context which is the basic philosophical foundation of RAN and what makes it a truly *planetary* organization.

The term "*rainforests*" itself, in the present usage as a one-word noun, appears to be a good starting point for this discussion, as it has been recently coined by the people involved in the movement to save them (including Randy Hayes and RAN) to

suggest an inherently *political ecological* category. Tropical rainforests are found within the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn in a belt that girdles the Earth between 23 1/2 degrees north, and 23 1/2 south of equator. That belt crosses through the heart of South America, Africa, northern Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines to name a few. Tropical rainforests flourish only in those regions where the average monthly temperature remains close to 80 degrees Fahrenheit throughout the year.

Even though these forests do receive great amounts of rain (three to six meters annually), so that sun, rain and humidity combine in them to make a natural "hothouse" for nurturing a great diversity of life,¹ that is not their essential characteristic. That description is rather relative only to the more exclusively ecological characteristic "rain forests"--used as a two-word noun.

The present usage of the term "rainforests", is an attempt to label inter-regional similarities that exist independent of ecological classification such as its being a home to indigenous people and other forest dwellers, expanding agricultural frontiers, development and debt, overpopulation, economies dependent on raw material exports, high biodiversity, ecological limitation of agriculture, etc. (Heinzman, 1990). The very labeling of these political ecological factors and their connections is part of the emerging world view to save them and to preserve all life in the planet.

This movement focuses upon many forested habitats, *all of them imperiled*, most of them subtropical to tropical closed- canopy, broad-leafed, semi-deciduous or evergreen, seasonal wet/dry or moist forest--all of them more wet than dry.²

Why Rainforests? Ecological Aspects

I definitely believe that the destruction of the world's rainforest is one of the most important global ecological issues of our time because the rainforest is a part of the life support systems of the planet. If we lose the rainforest, we lose that capacity to absorb carbon dioxide to produce oxygen, the genetic diversity, all of that is tied in and interwoven.

When our great grandparents were born, says Randy Hayes, there were 16 million square kilometers of rainforest. There are now about 9 million square kilometers³, reflecting a progressive pattern of man-created deforestation and destruction (by, for example, actions such as selective harvesting of valuable hardwoods) that can be traced back to the XVI century but that accelerated to an alarming degree of clear-cutting only during and after the 1950s (Tucker, 1990).⁴

According to the National Academy of Sciences, each year at least 50 million acres of rainforest- an area the size of Nevada- disappears forever. If the destruction of the tropical rainforests proceeds at its current rate of over 150 acres per minute, these forests *will be gone*⁵ before the year 2050--within the span of a single human lifetime.⁶

Tropical rainforests are old growth forests, a non renewable resource. Yet the planet's ability to produce oxygen is affected not only by the scope of the massive deforestation that results from the destruction of the rainforests but also by the *manner* in which this destruction is carried out. Burning, for example, adds considerably to a major contemporary climactic disruption: the "greenhouse effect."⁷ Twenty five percent of greenhouse gases come from burning the rainforest.⁸ This is projected to cause climactic regimes and vegetation zones to move outward from the equator. A possible consequence of this is that with warmer temperatures and less rain, the great U.S. "green belt" could disappear.

With the disappearance of rainforests from the face of the earth there will inevitably be a great loss of genetic diversity. There are somewhere between 5 million and 50 million species on Earth (no one is absolutely sure) of which at least half, possibly three-fourths, live in the rainforest and will disappear with it--a loss comparable only to the extinction of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago--except that this extinction would be induced by humankind.⁹

In contrast with other types of environmental degradation such as pollution and desertification that are intrinsically reversible--even if perhaps too costly--species loss is *irreversible*. Once a species is gone, it is gone forever. Also gone forever would be countless products that originate in various genetic materials from tropical forests.¹⁰ Rainforests contribute to life in many more ways that we are generally aware of. For example, 70% of the world's foods originate in the tropical rainforest and these forests also offer means for genetic improvements of several major crops, such as corn, rice, coffee¹¹ and bananas.

We continually have to go back into the rainforest to find hardy genetic strands of that crop that is resistant to new diseases, for instance, that are breaking out, or new super pests that have been bred from the use of pesticides. One example, some years ago a virus was attacking the rice crops of the planet. They did a worldwide search to try to find some seeds of rice that was resistant to this virus. They searched the entire world, they only found two seeds in the wild that were resistant to this virus. The virus was destroying 25% of the commercial crops. Had we not found those seeds, the world right now might be producing 25% less rice, and most of the world lives on rice. You can imagine the human tragedy from that. That is one way that humanity's future is tied to the tropical rainforest.

There is a similar example with corn crops. In 1970 about half the United States' corn crop in many areas was destroyed by a blight; the crisis was remedied through interbreeding an immune form of corn that originally derived from the ancestral home of corn, Mexico.¹² Even more significant is the area of pharmaceutical drugs: as much as 44% of the pharmaceutical medicines are developed from plants in the tropical rainforest. Some of those plants--such as the curare vine, a muscle relaxant used in heart surgery--cannot be chemically synthesized and it is necessary to continually go back into the rainforest to collect them in the wild to make medicines from there. Also a host of industrial products- from deodorants to the glue that holds together the thick soles of jogging shoes- originate in the rainforests.¹³

Rainforests also play a central role in regional and global climate control, in ensuring fresh water supplies and their destruction also contributes to the depletion of ozone layer.¹⁴ The overall implications of such a catastrophic perspective are quite unknown at this historic moment yet they are complex and of great significance for life on earth as we know it.

This apparently dry statistical data is truly overwhelming. Many of us may not realize its enormity, its implications for future generations and for all life on the planet. Of what significance are all these facts? Do we have any particular responsibility as the last generation that is witness to this man-made catastrophe? Do we have any real, practical, or feasible alternatives?

It is difficult to grasp the full meaning and impact of the fact that within one generation, at the present rate of rainforest destruction, *over half the plant and animal species on Earth as well as countless indigenous cultures* that have lived in them and sustained them for many centuries will likely be extinct.¹⁵

The destruction of our planet's most ancient and complex eco-system is triggering an ecological catastrophe that not only threatens civilization as we know it, but also the very survival of the human species. You can cut your finger off and you can live, but you can't cut out your lungs and carry on. We cannot lose the forests of the world and have the planet really survive. Life as we know it on the planet.

"Rainforest work" as a Symbol or Model

In a most fundamental way, Randy Hayes conceives of RAN salient focus on rainforests as a *symbol* or a *model* for effective activism towards a rather long-term, comprehensive planetary transformation:

...RAN's stated focus is the topic of tropical rainforests... but it's much broader...it's really orchestrating the transition from the polluting industrial paradigm to the post industrial

appropriate technology sustainable society. That's what the R.A.N is really about in the broader sense. And rainforests is our own hook, like a "media hook", because you're never really gonna save the rainforests until you accomplish that larger transformation to the post industrial sustainable society. That's the real work. We do it under the guise of saving tropical rainforests but we did make a policy decision at our funding conference in November '85 that we were also a human rights group as well as an ecology group with a particular focus on human rights of indigenous people. We thought that we needed to state that, that these two things were not separate.

The nature and characteristics of the "post-industrial sustainable society" are complex concepts with different names. We can perhaps best describe the "post-industrial society" as a *model* or a *vision* rather than a specific and detailed paradigm for social change--because it is still in its early formative stages and very much at the cutting edge. As such, we can but attempt to suggest its general direction and to identify some of the indications of its emergence in today's world as well as the activities, values, strategies and organizations that seem to support that trend. Such an effective support is, in my view, the key as to whether this will become another "passing fad" at the end of our millennium or the beginning of a true transformational planetary movement that will undoubtedly take generations to unfold and mature. This is why the main focus in this work is on emerging forms of effective planetary activism.

RAN view of a model for local and global change reflects the "whole-systems thinking" approach that is at the core of the planetary consciousness central to this work. Randy Hayes conceives that the transition to post-industrial sustainable society will happen by way of a complex set of global and local strategies, that will be developed over time. This seems no simple task--and to Randy it is indeed a long-term one. He conceptualizes it as a "500-year plan."

Well, in the short term you have to cut off the bad money that finances the destruction of the forests, that finances hydroelectric dams that flood the forests, that subsidizes and builds

roads for the logging companies, that artificially creates a pricing structure for the cattle ranching industry, that allows them to destroy the forest. You have to cut that out in the short term. But even if we solve those short term problems we would still lose the rainforests if we didn't stop the over consumption and wasteful society of the industrial North, of Japan and Europe and the USA. We'll never save the rainforests until we stop the destruction of the ozone, until we halt the global warming greenhouse effect, because those will also kill the rainforest. So in order to solve those problems *you have to transform the entirety of an inappropriate industrial society.* So, in that sense the rainforest is just a symbol of a comprehensive transformation.

There are many additional factors, of course, such as the so-called "population issue," in which poor people in over-populated areas of the world create an enormous direct strain on the immediate environment and the available local natural resources. Randy is well aware of this. Yet, in his view, population will be an issue itself in the near future. At this point, Randy rather suggests a recognition of the economic interests of multinational corporations and financial institutions of the planet that drive local people off good lands and into marginal areas in which it is extremely difficult to eke out a living. This is why RAN is first and foremost a social-justice, and human-rights organization.

See, the rain forest is still just a symbol for a comprehensive transformation of industrial society to post industrial society. You can't really call it East or West. It's not Western civilization anymore because in Singapore and Hong Kong, in Korea, they are better industrialists that we are in Europe and in the USA. In Japan they eat more resources per person than we do here in the USA. And the average Japanese citizen uses eight times more wood per person, per year, than the average American, and we use a lot. So we can't really talk about East or West, or even North or South anymore. What you have to talk about is inappropriate industrialism and then a post industrialism, however one envisions it.

At the same time, RAN is conceived as a model or symbol in terms of the impact and inspiration that effective organizational strategies may have on people all over the planet who are working on other contemporary global issues.

...I believe that the way the activists and the organizers and the movement people of the world treat this tropical rainforest issue is of critical importance to the solving of a lot of other problems. The world needs a moral uplift right now. We need to join hands across all sectors of society and solve some kind of problem together. Everybody wins if we save the tropical rainforest. From the industrial peoples of the north to the third world peoples in the cities in the south to the amazonian Indians to the species that live in the tropical rainforest. All the world wins. If we play this one right, if we can save it and if we see it as a broader based issue than just an ecological issue and the different movements begin working together in an organic, interlinked fashion, then we could provide a tremendous example to the world, that in fact the world can get together and organize and collaborate and solve a problem. That kind of moral uplift is very critical right now for the moral of the humans on this planet. We're going to either solve this problem or lose the rainforest before we achieve any kind of real peace on this planet because we only have 40,50,60 years to get the job done. If we do it right and are successful there then we can take those skills and strategies and lessons learned and transfer them to other kinds of problems.

...even when working on the documentary on the Four Corners I never thought of myself as a film maker. I saw myself as an activist film maker. I saw film as a tool for orchestrating social change and when I spend time trying to envision a sustainable society, a transformation away from the industrial paradigm to me is not a senseless utopian exercise. I am trying to be practical about really achieving it.

This same spirit is characteristic of his work in RAN, and possibly also in the more global-type of work upon which he is about to embark (as, for example, in the area of global trade). It is the same model, or example, that Randy initially observed among the Hopi--and was moved to emulate. In any case, Randy sees the contemporary state of environmental degradation as an opportunity for developing global consciousness:

Well, certainly you get a lot of different perspectives and world views who think that there is a major change afoot here on planet Earth. And some people have religious reasons for belief, or cultural, traditional reasons, or esoteric reasons, but even on the more mundane level, I do think also that there is a major change afoot, and that the possibility of global consciousness being achieved in the industrial sector of the planetary society, that's what I mostly want to address, exists now more than it has ever existed before. Part of the reasoning on that is that global ecological systems are collapsing, or going in spasms right now. Like the destruction of the tropical rainforest, the greenhouse effect, the ozone depletion in our atmosphere. Those are complex global ecological issues but whether a person lives in Iceland or California or in the Amazon, if they know about these conditions, they know that it personally affects them. So if you live in Kansas City, your life is threatened by the destruction of the ozone, or the greenhouse effect, so you are personally affected by that and drawn into consideration of issues of global ecological order. Even those mundane kinds of problems are bringing about the ability for people to think globally. *Then the question becomes, well, will they be able to effectively act locally to try to orchestrate some of the change around these global ecological issues.*

This underlying and guiding principle of being a model for other issues is fundamental to RAN philosophy and it manifests at every organizational level. It emphasizes a much broader perspective than simply the salvation of the rainforests themselves. In my later conversations with Randy in December 1993, he consistently referred to the world's *forests*, rather than the *tropical rainforests* and gave considerable priority to even more global contemporary challenges, particularly global trade.

A New Emerging Global Perspective:

Philosophical Base of the Rainforest Action Network

According to Randy Hayes, when considering the destruction of the rainforests only from an ecological-implications perspective, we are very well within the definition of an *androcentric* (or human centered) as well as *ethnocentric*, classist approach. To assess the value of the rainforests only in terms of the extent to which they sustain our

lifestyles, or the chosen lives of the *elite* people in the dominant *industrialized nations* implies a profound alienation from nature as well as people—the indigenous people who also live on this planet—and who, in fact regard themselves as *caretakers* of the planet. But this androcentric-ethnocentric approach is characteristic of industrial, materialistic societies and at this contemporary historical juncture it is jeopardizing *all life* on earth as we know it.

With the destruction of these forests, the physical and spiritual homes and the livelihood of countless communities of indigenous peoples are being destroyed thus resulting in, at best, their social dislocation and cultural extinction if not, as in many cases, sheer genocide. This is happening at an ever accelerating rate particularly over the last two decades. In Brazil, for example: in 1500, there were an estimated six to nine million people inhabiting the rainforests; by 1900 there were one million; today, there are less than 200,000. About a third of the original estimated 230 tribes have been wiped out.¹⁶ And the trend continues.

The "invisibility" of the contemporary indigenous peoples' plight is a reflection of the staunch ethnocentrism and imperialist patterns of economic and cultural dominance on the part of (mostly capitalist) industrial nations, their financial institutions and multinational corporations vis a vis the more rural areas of the world. Their approach to "development" is, according to Randy, motivated by greed and results in global deforestation, desertification, environmental degradation, loss of traditional livelihood sources for local populations, cultural dislocation, endemic poverty, and other life threatening social ills that threaten to approach the level of massive genocide as well as to lead to environmental collapse. Ethnocentrism is then not just an "ideological slant" but a dangerous institutional vehicle for the above described devastation.¹⁷

There is a well known aspect of ethnocentrism, by which indigenous people are seen as "inferior" and "primitive" in comparison to the population of the dominant industrial world. Yet, as Randy's own personal encounter with the Hopi elders and

traditionals illustrates, indigenous people who still live according to an ecological ethics rooted in ancient traditions and long experience have much very important, highly specialized knowledge. They have practical skills and know-how which are badly needed in our industrial societies which are extremely deficient in these areas. They know about the cycles of nature and climactic patterns; about a monumental variety of specific species of plants, insects and animals and their use in medicines, food and rituals; about the Earth's geological history recorded from ancient times in their oral traditions; and about supporting and sustaining the lives of future generations.

In fact, the expertise of traditional forest dwellers is becoming increasingly appreciated within the dominant institutions in the industrial North. An example of that is a recent development at the World Bank whereby they are attempting to devise some system of *intellectual property rights* for the knowledge that rainforest dwellers have regarding their habitat. This is a very complex and potentially problematic concept that could, in fact lead to even further exploitation of indigenous people; and it is, therefore, a prospect whose analysis is beyond the scope of this work. Here it is mentioned as an illustration of the substantial and potentially valuable contribution that traditional people could make towards our collective transition to a "sustainable post-industrial society."

RAN as a Human Rights and Ecological Organization.

The Rain Forest Action Network addresses directly these deep distortions in its basic philosophical underpinnings. RAN defines itself as a social justice and human rights organization, as well as an ecological or environmental one, and it is fully committed to preserving the *intrinsic* human rights of the inhabitants of the rainforest--where many of the indigenous people on the planet live. In fact, to explicitly articulate the interrelationship of these issues has been RAN's policy since its

founding conference in 1985. This perspective is grounded in Randy's experience and work in the Southwest as a friend to the Hopis as well as his subsequent efforts to create the People of the Earth Network.

In Randy's view we are not going to save the rainforests until we effectively solve all the related problems:

The industrial north has been taking economic advantage of the Third World, the tropics, and essentially pillaging those resources and the labor pools to enrich the lifestyle of the North.

This is, of course, nothing new. As a global socio political phenomenon, it is part of the modus operandi of the contemporary phase industrialization and also of the dynamics of dominant money-making institutions which compels them to constantly find, and exhaust, new sources of increasingly dwindling natural resources. They must cut more trees, mine more uranium, drill for more oil, clear more and larger areas of land to raise and graze more cattle for cheaper hamburger, and so forth. These exploitations are mostly in the homelands of indigenous, non industrialized, poor, Third-World people who have managed to survive, until this time, maintaining their organic interdependence with nature. The encounter between the agents of the industrial societies and traditional native people all over the world is intrinsically different from Randy Hayes' true crosscultural *meeting*. It is rather a literal paradigmatic clash, thus making the true interconnection between *ecology, social justice and indigenous people's rights* even more self evident today.

Well, the financial greed is so phenomenal, when there is so much money at stake you know the timber companies and the local politicians that are becoming rich off all of this. See, a person like me is a tremendous enemy and I think they succeed in deluding themselves that I do not have honorable motives and that I am just doing this for self-gratification or that I am a stupid Yankee imperialist. The criticism that is so common is "how can you tell us what to do? Look at what you've done in your own country and what's going on there." And two wrongs do

not make a right. Yes in many respects the U.S. is an evil place: look at what we've done to our native people, look at what we've done to our forests and are still doing, but I've worked on that and there is a global situation that has to be approached globally and now I am at a global level. I put in my due over a decade fighting domestic issues and I still work to fight issues in the U.S. And what's really going on when people in Brazil and Malaysia criticize me for interfering with their sovereign affairs—I think Martin Luther King said it best when he said, "*an injustice anywhere is an injustice everywhere*", so that the local tribal people who ask the people like me to help them or to get involved or support their struggles know that they can't get relief from their sovereign states and countries and cultures. So, it takes people outside the country as it takes people in Europe and in Brazil and in Malaysia to criticize the U.S. We in the U.S. can't solve our own problems by ourselves, you know, we need the eyes of the world upon us to stop us from sending the CIA to set up another puppet government somewhere, right? And the reverse is true. The Malaysian society needs the eyes of the world upon them to help find resolutions to these life and death problems. So I don't feel any moral dilemma for being involved in Malaysia, you know? It's a global issue, it's a global economy that they are milking, and there are such things as the International Declaration of Human Rights. We need an International Declaration of All Species Rights. We all need to be concerned with that.

RAN continues in its search for *radical* solutions. With its objective as a human rights organization, RAN works directly with indigenous peoples' groups and support groups for indigenous peoples and it takes a lot of direction from activists in the third world countries, trying to respond to their needs and to learn their own cultural perspective regarding the sustainable use of the forests. All of RAN social-change strategies reflect this basic approach (see section on strategies).

RAN furthers its research to identify various destructive projects in the tropics that are financed by U.S. tax dollars and investment capital and to identify corporations in which U.S. citizens own stock and from which they buy products that are responsible for forest clearing. Part of the problem are the industrial societies' basic patterns of consumption and wastefulness.

We are largely responsible for tropical deforestation and the danger that this poses to the biosphere--ourselves included.¹⁸

Randy recognizes that the forces of destruction are powerful, and to save the rainforests one must address the problems of war, hunger, over-population, and economic injustice, and how these things are being played by international corporate interests. World deforestation is a direct result of such global practices as rampant timber consumption for exports to the North and destroying rainforests to grow cattle for cheap, fast-food consumption, and not the direct result of over-population as is the explanation favored by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, etc.

Most of the analysis you get from the United Nations and the World Bank and World Resources Institute--these megalithic, well funded structures--is that the poor people of the Third World are destroying the rainforest and, yes, maybe they are the ones who are directly cutting down the trees, or burning them away, but you have to ask why. Why were they driven from the better lands to these marginal lands to try to eke out a living? Part of that reason has to do with the fact that multinational corporations have taken over the better lands. They use them for agri-business, for citrus crops or cotton or oil palms or whatever. That drives people to the marginal lands

RAN views land tenancy as crucial for indigenous people's rights and, as such, it supports indigenous peoples' struggle for land rights all over the world with the help of a global network. RAN considers caring for life--human life and of all of nature--central to its own work and central to self-awareness and responsibility in general.

Let's not kid ourselves, it's going to be no easy battle to save tropical rainforest and we absolutely are going to have to confront power structures, from multi-national corps to corrupt governments in the South and the North, people of different economic persuasions, from socialist to Marxist to capitalist, there are power structures that need to be confronted--and they will be or we will not get the job done. One is not going to save the rainforest without making enemies. It's not unlikely in the future that--and not just in countries like Malaysia--

that activists will be arrested around this issue. So it will be very important to have allies with groups like Amnesty International and the human rights community that can help monitor those situations and insure the fair treatment and democracy around this issue.

Randy Hayes himself has experienced how hard it is to stand up for what he believes in and supports. In 1993, for example, he was attacked by the Malaysian press. Six different articles, actually fabricating lies about Randy's personal integrity as a leader (such as that he falsified reports and pocketed project funds for personal use), appeared on front pages in local newspapers. Even the prime minister of Malaysia participated in this attempt. The timber industry took these articles and sent them around the world and tried to get the "wise-use" movement people to cover them, and this had repercussions even in the United States. Randy became aware that he was being followed by what is known as the "special branch" of the secret police in Malaysia.

And I know that they are vicious and they would try to set me up for, who knows... So there is a certain amount of fear that I have--which just means I need to be cautious.

...What I need to know is we need to get the industrial madness transformed into that kind of equitable and just society that is just to all species, but certainly just to humans so that we can stop the slaughter, because the slaughter is so terribly tragic and frightening. ...If you can clarify to people that increasing trade, growth for the sake of growth, is the key enemy that is killing the planet, and there is nobody to blame but ourselves--clarify to humans who want economic justice. There are no jobs in a dead planet, right? ...So, we have to address this industrial paradigm. This nightmare of "growth for the sake of growth" has got to be hit head on, and I am working now with people to form new coalition of groups world wide to attack this mentality of "growth for the sake of growth." And while we try to fight against that, we have to supplant it with alternatives. That's where ecological economics comes in.

Indeed, in the last two interviews with Randy (in 1993 and 1994) he was deepening his social justice approach into a more global, and apparently more sophisticated, socio-economical analysis that goes far beyond any reformist

environmentalist approach. He is more inclined now, in order to promote his vision, to "fight a bigger beast", namely global trade. He is very enthused now about the emerging field of ecological economics as formulated by Paul Hawken, as it represents an attempt to transform the planetary economic institutions and arrangements at a very fundamental level. This is a very new approach, and at the time of my last interview Randy was getting ready to study it.¹⁹

"Physician heal thyself"

An additional philosophical foundation of RAN--besides its social-justice and ecological focuses-- is to work among its own people to correct the wrongs inflicted upon "other" people in other countries and cultures. This reflects the advise given to Randy by the Hopi elder who told him that his only request was "Get your foot off our throat." This is what Randy calls the "physician heal thyself" approach which places emphasis on owning up to one's own personal responsibility, and to that of one's own society. It requires a voluntary personal and social transformation, and it is consistent with a "whole systems approach" as it does not exclusively externalize that which is perceived as the "enemy".²⁰

The "physician heal thyself" is different . It's also saying "I need to.... I need to realize how my life-style, my choices, my culture are related, are part of that injustice. If I live in a house where our wood was taken out of an ancient, primary old growth forest in California, that sets an example for other people to take wood out of an old growth forest to build houses for somebody." ...Somebody in the city, right? So, you know, how do you lead by example? How do you live...how do you show leadership through example? It is very potent to lead through example. It's what Mahatma Gandhi was all about and what Martin Luther King Jr. was all about. How can RAN lead through example? "Physician heal thyself" is to say that, you know, these things are interconnected, and part of the solution to save the rainforests down there in Brazil or over there in Malaysia is to make dramatic change in the USA--to create systemic change in our own agricultural systems, our own transportation systems, our own energy production systems, our consumption systems, absolutely.

...It is neither diplomatic nor effective to tell Brazil and Malaysia to stop cutting down their forests when American forests have been cut so many times. But we can educate ourselves, our local merchants, and our own government about doing things differently so as to save the rainforests.²¹

In this way RAN places high priority on promoting crisis awareness in the United States--on stopping wasteful consumer habits, promoting consumer boycotts, putting pressure to stop "development projects" that are greatly responsible for and accelerate the destruction of the world's rainforests.

... The action programs of RAN are to solve the problems in the U.S. We in the US have our foot on the throat of the Amazon. Our tax dollars are used to fund a lot of the destructive projects. Multinational corporations based here in the U.S. are not accountable to the public and not responsible in their activities. They're not vulnerable in the Amazon. They're much more vulnerable to public pressure here at home. We as consumers use a lot of products from the rain forest, from beef that's raised in areas that was once tropical rainforest, to the tropical hardwoods, the teaks and mahogany that is imported. The US is the second largest importer of tropical timber. So our main action programs are to address those three areas and to try to solve the problems here so the US is not contributing to the destruction of the rainforests.

In our last conversation (in 1994) Randy was looking at organizing a conference to create a National Wood Conservation Act in the U.S., with the goal of determining a 75% reduction in wood fiber consumption throughout the U.S. in six years or less. Something on that scale of change is necessary, in Randy's view, for fighting chance to save the world's forests--whether one is talking about Siberian forests in Russia, or Canadian forests, or Oregon, Washington, the Amazons or South East Asia. Randy's more recent (in 1994) shift in talking about the worlds *forests* rather than *rainforests* is significant as it highlights again the scope of the challenge. His view is that the US needs to set an example as a culture that does not over consume or inappropriately consume.

...in the future, in my sustainable society, virtually all wood fiber comes from ecologically and socially sound plantations in land that's already been degraded. So that it's a process that restores that land for productive civilization and over 100s of years that rebuilds its natural ecosystem, similar to what it once was and, in the process of doing that, we will provide the fiber that we need for paper, cardboard, or building materials and therefore we would leave the natural rainforests alone. So I want to help design that kind of legislation here in the US as part of this "physician heal thyself". We need, let's say, a 75% reduction, and I think that we can achieve that. I don't know exactly how. But there's no question that if we did achieve that or something close to that, that's a significant change.

From my perspective, it is very important that Randy's focus goes beyond macro and institutional change. Here I refer specifically to his advocating a *personal* change in consumption habits among the people of the richer countries in the industrial North as an essential thread in the weaving of a planetary society that is just for all.

Living lightly on the planet. Living lightly on the planet is definitely a part of the post industrial society and people will need to grow through quality as opposed to quantity. And quality of experience, quality of community, quality of life style in the sense of the interactions we have with the natural world, with other human beings, with other cultures, with other countries. That is, there is a tremendous amount of room for growth in those terms. It's just not a physical growth in terms of material possessions...So that solving problems of overconsumption in the North will help save tropical rainforests. So if we just address this as an environmental issue and did not look at the over consumption problems of the North, the lack of recycling, the wasteful lifestyles that we lead here in the North, then we're not going to save tropical rainforests.

"Physician heal thyself", in a nutshell, suggests that in order to change the world we also need to change ourselves.

Interconnectedness

A further philosophical basis of RAN as a planetary organization is the recognition of the basic interconnectedness of all of life. Simple or trivial as it may appear, this premiss is truly radical within the context of the prevailing paradigm or posture of our dominating industrial societies. The prevailing view rather emphasizes the divisibility and independence of practically every aspect of life and of experience.

A philosophy of interconnectedness complements our own cultural perspective as it brings us closer to our ancestral cultural roots, as it is characteristic of most traditional and enduring cultures. Essential to the concept of interconnectedness of all of life is the understanding that every action has a reaction; therefore this is an organically action-oriented philosophy. The interconnectedness of all of life is, Randy suggests, the core of any *deep* ecological ethic.

The following letter written and sent in 1835 to President Franklin Pierce by Chief Thealth (known as Seattle) of the Dumawish Tribe, Washington State, captures the essence of such a perspective:

The president in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. But how can you buy or sell the sky? The idea is strange to us. We do not own the freshness of the air, or the sparkle on the water. How can you buy them? Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every meadow, every humming insect; all are holy in the memory and experience of my people. The shining water that comes from the streams and the rivers is not just water, but the blood of our ancestors.

If we sell our land, you must remember that is sacred. The rivers are our brothers- they quench our thirst. They carry our canoes and feed our children. So you must give the rivers the kindness you would give any brother.

If we sell our land, remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breadth also receives his last sigh. The wind also gives our children the spirit

of life. So if we sell our land, you must keep it sacred, as a place man can go taste the wind, sweetened by meadow flowers.

Will you teach your children what we taught our children? That the Earth is our Mother? What befalls the Earth befalls all the sons of the Earth. This we know: The Earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the Earth. All things are connected, like the blood that unites us all. Men did not weave the thread of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself. One thing we know: Our God is also your God. The Earth is precious to Him,^a and to harm the Earth is to heap contempt on its creator.

Your destiny is a mystery to us. What will happen when all the buffalo are slaughtered and the horses tamed? What will happen when the secret corners of the forest are heavy with the scent of men? And the view of ripe hills is blotted by talking wires? Where will the ticket be? Gone! Where will the eagle be? Gone! When the last red man has vanished with his wilderness, and his memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, will these shores and forests still be here? Will there be any of the spirit of my people?

We love this Earth, as a newborn loves his mother's heartbeat. So if we sell you our land, love it, as we have loved it. Care for it, as we have cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land as it is when you receive it. Preserve the land for all children and love it as God loves us all. As we are part of the land you too are part of the land. The Earth is precious to us. It is also precious to you. One thing we know: there is only one God. No man, be he red or white, can be separate. We are all brothers.²²

Like among the Hopis, as described by Randy, the used of the term "sacred" in the above passage refers to that which is functional for all life and is a way of conveying respect and caring for all that supports it. This is precisely the perspective or understanding which Randy and many youth of his generation were searching in their cross-cultural adventures, their travels, their thirst for ancient rituals and ways to connect with this deep life honoring. A shift to such an ecological ethics is quite radical among people of the industrial world, as it represents a paradigmatic breakthrough or expansion. It challenges a central pillar of even the most advanced forms of humanism,

Marxist/secular or religious, namely- the essential, unspoken, implied, assumption of *anthropocentrism*-- which Randy referred to as *androcentrism*, namely, "humanity's overblown sense of self importance."

Such concept, also referred to as *homocentrism*, has been defined by Australian deep-ecologist activist John Seed, as

...the idea that humans are the crown of creation, the source of all value, the measure of all things.²³

Deeply embedded in our culture and consciousness, it can be traced in the West as far back as the book of Genesis. Charlene Spretnack, in her provocative book *The Spiritual Dimension of Green Politics* quotes Ehrenfeld's definition of "anthropocentrism" as

a philosophy which posits that humans have the ability to confront and solve the many problems we face by applying human reason and by rearranging the natural world and the interactions of men and women so that human life will prosper.²⁴

This view, that Spretnack (quoting biologist Lewis Thomas²⁵) calls "our anthropocentric self aggrandizement", is rooted in the dominant world view of technocratic industrial societies "which regards humans as isolated and fundamentally separate from the rest of Nature, as superior to, and in charge of, the rest of creation." (Devall & Sessions)²⁶-- the obsession of Western culture with dominance (humans over nonhuman Nature, men over women, wealthy over poor, industrial countries over more traditional ones).

The novel discipline of *Deep Ecology* addresses precisely this aspect, as one that

goes beyond a limited piecemeal shallow approach to environmental problems and attempts to articulate a comprehensive religious and philosophical world view." ²⁷

Its foundations, according to Devall and Sessions, are the "basic intuitions and experiencing of ourselves and Nature which comprise ecological consciousness." The cultivation of such a consciousness, and the promotion of appropriate action, is at the core of the contemporary deep ecology movement, in which Randy Hayes and RAN play a significant and important role. Such a movement involves what poet-philosopher-activist Gary Snyder calls the "real work." It is grounded in a vision of non-exploitive science and technology.²⁸ It is a movement based on *experience*, as a source of spontaneous caring, and it aims to cultivate the insight that

... there is no firm ontological divide in the field of existence, and that there is no bifurcation in reality between the human and non-human realms.²⁹

Cultivating ecological *consciousness* in this sense, therefore, is organic to the cultivation of *conscience*, an "ethical sensitivity at least tuned to a significant good, a significant evil." (Roszak, 1978)

At the core of this perspective is that human and *non-human* life on Earth have inherent value, and that humans have no right to reduce the richness and diversity of life on Earth except to satisfy *vital needs*.³⁰

One has to question, why is it we want to save the rainforest? Is it because we get our medicines from the rainforest? Is it because it's going to help keep my ass from going into extinction? Certainly that's part of it. But the real reason is simply because wilderness *is*. The flow of life and that process of evolution has every bit as much right to carry on as you and I do.

...They—other beings—also have a right to exist. What right does humanity have to destroy a Jaguar family, even more so—not just the killing of individuals, but the destruction of entire species. Projections are right now that humanity is causing the extinction of about 4 species a day. Probably higher. These are species of plants or animals or insects. In the case of the tropical rainforest, many of those are insect species. But the complex ecological web is such that everything is vital, and to destroy any one species increases the fragility of that

ecosystem or the collapse of that ecosystem. There are just simply the inalienable rights of all life of the planet to carry on its evolutionary journey.

...[and] the social justice issue ...[also]... shows the interconnectedness, so to speak, or the responsibility externally. ...If there's an injustice with the Penan tribe in Sarowak Malaysia then that's an injustice against me. I have a certain responsibility to do something about it if I can.

Randy's responses to my questioning him regarding his understanding or feelings about the Gaia concept are further indication of the profundity of his "deep ecology" insights:

...well, I think there's a lot about nature and science that the Western World does not understand, the industrial paradigm does not understand. And some of the tribal cultures around the planet have a more profound understanding of the ways in which nature works—the nature of reality. There's something to this issue about acupuncture points on the planet—about energy flows that maintain regional and global climactic patterns and keep the world in a homeostatic balance. And I just have an intuition, a hunch, that the indigenous people have a much more profound understanding of that, the same way that the Chinese culture had a more profound understanding of these energy points in the human body. And they tell me that many of them are located in areas that have these unique properties, these functional sacred properties. To the extent that we can work to help maintain the rights, the land rights, of indigenous people then, eventually, our society will also figure out some of the things that *they* know and there will be a better cultural exchange to teach us. I'm sure that there are things that they don't want to teach industrial society because they're afraid we'll abuse it or cause more damage. So there are secrets that are held. Yeah... there may be other minerals that have not been discovered on our table of—on our charts and tables—that there are more dangerous than uranium, who knows? But clearly they have a profound understanding of nature and the sacred sites on the planet and, you know, that all of those sites functioning together form the body of the planet as a whole, or what we call Gaia. And I know enough about natural systems to know that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. ...To me, it's not important to ask the question "is the planet a conscious living being?". There's consciousness on the planet. [laughs] It's *alive*. And it all functions as an integrated whole, you see? I mean, yes, the planet is alive, because everything is connected. We sit in this interview in two separate chairs but it doesn't mean we are disconnected. There's something on the level of

consciousness between us in our conversation and our parlaying back and forth. It's not just the words or the sounds of the words that achieve meaning, other things are going on, you know, and that's true for the planet as a whole. That interconnectedness is profound, is way more profound than we typically realize. So, in that sense, you know, Gaia is a living planet, a conscious being, a whole.

...It's a life and death situation, not just for human beings but for all kinds of plants and animals, you know, for other life forms of the entire organic ecosystem which, for all I know, has a consciousness of its own—and the Earth herself, you know, a consciousness of her own. I don't have a definitive answer to that. I sense that it might be so.

The next two chapters will present RAN as a working organization in terms of its structure, membership, strategies and accomplishments.

¹ Donald Perry, "Tropical Biology. A Science on the Sidelines" in S. Head and R. Heinzman, eds., *Lessons of the Rainforest*, (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990). p 26.

² R. Heinzman, "Introduction: Visions of the Rainforest" , in S. Head and R. Heinzman, *Ibid.*, p.7.

³ Randy Hayes, "Activism", in S. Head and R. Heinzman, *Ibid.*, p.230.

⁴ R. Tucker, "Five Hundred Years of Tropical Forest Exploitation", in S. Head and R. Heinzman, *Ibid.*, p.51.

⁵ My italics.

⁶ From *RAINFOREST ACTION GUIDE, An Introduction to rainforest activism*. (Rainforest Action Network). According to other RAN's data such date may even be 2030.

⁷ This term is used to refer to the climactic disruption that has begun to ensue through the buildup of carbon dioxide in the global atmosphere, buildup that is human propelled-by the burning of fossil fuels (about five billion tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere per year can be accounted by this) together with (around two billion tons of carbon from) the burning of tropical forests at the hands of large scale cattle ranchers and small-scale cultivators.

⁸ From brochure, op. cit.

⁹ R. Hayes, "Activism", in S. Head and R. Heinzman, op. cit., p.230.

¹⁰ N. Myers, "Tropical Forests and Life on Earth", in S. Head and R. Heinzman, *Ibid.*, p.1.

¹¹ Germ-plasm material to boost coffee productivity and to resist diseases.

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- 12 N. Myers, "Tropical Forests and Life on Earth", in S. Head and R. Heinzman, op. cit., p.16.
 - 13 Ibid.
 - 14 From brochure, op. cit.
 - 15 Ibid., my italics.
 - 16 Stoetzer, Nancy, "In Search of Refuge", *Buzzword: The Environmental Journal*, 3.3. (1991): 22-23, quoted in *Rainforest Action network*, Fact Sheet #31.
 - 17 The 1993 award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Mayan activist Rigoberta Menchu may suggest the beginning of the recognition, by the international community, of this issue.
 - 18 Randy Hayes, "Activism: You Make the Difference", in Head and Heinzman, op. cit., pp. 219-220.
 - 19 Sustainability was the topic of the last Earth Summit, in 1995.
 - 20 The following story about Mahatma Gandhi illustrates his own practice of the principle of "physician heal thyself": One day a mother of a young child is said to have approached Gandhi and requested him to tell her son to stop eating sugar. Gandhi told her to return within a week and in their second meeting he did indeed instruct the child to do so. When the mother asked Gandhi why did he ask her to return within a week, his answer was that he needed to stop eating sugar himself before he could instruct the child to do so. It is such deep personal commitment what Randy is searching in his quest for ways of leading and teaching by example.
 - 21 Randy Hayes, "Activism: You Make the Difference", op. cit., pp. 220.
 - 22 Distributed on Earth Day 1992, Festival Committee, Berkeley, California.
 - 23 John Seed, "Beyond Anthropocentrism", in *Thinking Like a Mountain. Towards a Council of All Beings*, J.Seed, J. Macy, P. Fleming, A. Naess. (Philadelphia, PA and Santa Cruz, Ca.: New Society Publishers, 1988). p.35.
 - 24 (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Bear & Co., 1986), p27. Here she is quoting David Ehrenfeld, *The Arrogance of Humanism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978). p.5.
 - 25 "Human Responsibility"; *Phenomenon of Change*. (New York: Cooper- Hewitt Museum, 1986). p1.
 - 26 B. Devall, G. Sessions, *Deep Ecology. Living as if Nature Mattered*. (Salt Lake City: Gibbs M. Smith, Inc., Peregrine Smith Books, 1985). p.65.
 - 27 Ibid. The term itself was coined by Arnie Naess ("The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements", *Inquiry* 16 Oslo, 1973, pp.95-100) when attempting to describe the deeper, more spiritual approach to Nature as exemplified in the writings of Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson.

28 *Ibid.*, pp.7,8.

29 W. Fox, "Deep Ecology: A New Philosophy of Our Time?"; *The Ecologist*, v. 14, 5-6, 1984, pp.194-200, quoted in Devall and. Sessions, *op. cit.*, p.66.

30 A. Naess and George Sessions, *Eco-philosophy*, (Sierra College, Rocklin, Ca., No.4, May 1984), pp. 5-7. Quoted in Charlene Spretnak, *The Spiritual Dimension of Green Politics*, (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Bear & Co., 1986). p. 23.