

CHAPTER TEN:

The Rainforest Action Network: The Organization

Introduction

The Rainforest Action Network (RAN) was originally formed as a non-profit, grassroots organization officially working to protect tropical rainforests and the human rights of those living in and around them.¹ Since its founding, RAN has been a pioneer in strengthening the worldwide conservation movement.

At the same time the Rainforest Action Network, was and is about creating a contemporary working *model* of planetary activism that promotes a future transition towards a planetary society that is best for all of life. Over the years I have seen unfold the progressive globalization of the strategies and scope of activities of this organization as they are being ever more thoroughly formulated into concrete actions and campaigns and being carefully evaluated as they are put to practice. During my last contacts with Randy Hayes, in late 1993 and early 1994, RAN was going through a major redefinition. "The strategies of the past may not necessarily be the strategies of the future", said Randy Hayes at that crucial juncture. As RAN's strategies were being reformulated and redefined, this organization seemed to be moving more directly to protect *all* forests, *all* people and *all* of Nature.

A new vision and goal was then beginning to emerge--one focusing on ecological economics and global trade and addressing a whole-systems approach. This concept was so new that, in my last interview of Randy Hayes, he mentioned that a kind of "brainstorming" conference on those topics was to take place on the following day. It was to be a major redefining and redirecting of conceptions and strategies.

In this section I will attempt to present a general sense of RAN as an activist organization and only briefly mention a few of its campaigns as illustrations of its more general strategical perspectives, painfully aware that such a general overview will not manage to convey RAN's truly impressive record in this area.

The Organization

Organizationally, RAN's rate and scope of growth is very impressive. As a *membership organization*, RAN had 9,000 members in 1987--just two years after its foundation. This figure increased to 43,000 in 1993. In 1987, among RAN's members there were many college students interested in these sorts of issues who found very little leadership on the campuses. These were members of the conservation movement, and members of other environmental groups who joined RAN because they liked its action orientation. The way RAN generated its members was by trying to recruit people willing to *work* for an issue--to write letters, make phone calls, send telegrams.

RAN's 43,000 members have generated hundreds of thousands of letters, calls and telegrams sent to corporations and governments over the years in an effort to halt project loans of the World Bank, the largest banking institution on the planet, and they have also helped to stop multi-million dollar transnational corporate projects (such as the consumer boycott of Burger King described earlier.)

RAN's increase in scope is reflected in its staff: In 1987 there were 3 full time and 2 part time professionals and 3 interns. Today RAN's staff consists of 20 committed activists, and hundreds of interns and volunteers.

RAN's budget is also quite impressive. Using 70% for the program and 30% for supporting services, RAN's budget increased from \$168,000 in 1986² to a little over \$2,000,000 in 1992³, of which almost \$850,000 came from revenue (such as \$371,000 from membership dues, \$340,00 from sale of merchandise) and about \$1,160,000 from public support (such as, for example, \$626,920 from grants and

almost 500,000 from public contributions). In general terms, in 1992 45% of the funds came from membership and 55% from grants and donations.

Activism

The most overt and evident aspect of RAN as a social-change organization is its emphasis on *social activism*--the same emphasis that characterized Randy Hayes' own approach and work over the years, beginning in his college days.

As suggested in the last chapter, the implications and impact of the destruction of the Earth's most ancient and complex eco-system, and the ecological and moral catastrophe it is producing are indeed complex and far-reaching and beyond the scope of this work. Nevertheless, there is one bit of purely statistical data that stands out in this complex situation that can be identified as the most crucial implication: *the little time left* to avoid a complete catastrophe. According to Randy Hayes, RAN, and other environmental sources, the projections are that virtually all of the rainforests will be gone around the year 2050, which is less than one person's life span. In Randy's words:

In effect, we're the *last generation that's going to have a chance to solve this problem*. We either stop the destruction, or we live with the consequences. We don't completely understand what the consequences are, but common sense tells you that in this case we should play it safe. The preponderance of scientific evidence tells us that there are going to be dire consequences from the destruction of the rainforests.

Thus the main implication from a practical activist's perspective is the need to act, and the *urgency of that action*. In Randy Hayes' view, there is a "window of opportunity" as an increasing number of people all over the planet are becoming personally aware of the global nature of these "local conditions" that affect their health and well being (such as the air they breathe, the quality of underground water, localized impacts of ozone depletion and of the "greenhouse effect", increasing overall deficiencies of the immune system, etc.).

Admittedly, the forces of destruction are powerful. To save the rainforests we must address the problems of war, hunger, overpopulation, and economic injustice, as well as global environmental degradation. But we can no longer claim ignorance. We have the knowledge, technology, and resources to set things right. The question remains whether we have the *moral will*.

...the question becomes will the world be able to effectively act locally to try to orchestrate some of changes around these global ecological issues?

The *principle of activism* modeled and advocated by RAN is *direct action*, and it draws major inspiration from major contemporary social activists such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. RAN's philosophy of direct action is quite specific, has taken years to work out, and has a lot to do with Randy's previous experience with the Hopi and Navajo Indians in the Southwest.

...The phrase "direct action" is itself interesting. "Direct" also means immediate, tangible, you can feel it, you are there, you are part of it. ..."direct action" means, as they say, "civil disobedience" where you are chaining yourself across a gate to prevent the finance ministers of the world going into a World Bank Meeting. That's an example of direct action that the RAN is doing; you form a human chain; you put your body on the line between the limousines and the finance ministers and the meetings where decisions will be made that destroy nature, destroy rainforests, destroy the planet.

... because, if one is serious about achieving social change, if you are really deadly deliberate about achieving social change and you have very little power, in terms of money and control over world politics... you know... I'm just an individual, I don't have much power but one of the tools we do have is the ability to blow the whistle, to sound the alarm, Right? And what civil disobedience does, on one level it shows a deep level of commitment. These people who sit down and blockade the doors of the World Bank are willing to go to jail. Now, probably for just a few hours, may be overnight, but in a repressive society it could mean years. I mean we saw what happened to Nelson Mandela in South Africa. In the U.S., we can do civil disobedience.

... It requires a commitment that can literally be a life and death commitment. You can get run over, you put yourself in front of a bulldozer and some irate operator can in purpose or accidentally run your ass over and kill you, right?. I mean these things happen.

It also requires a commitment to team work. Many of these direct actions are done with groups... so that's exciting too. It helps to share the burden of the responsibility, there's strength in numbers, you got a number of people doing the same thing in a very pointed way, there's a lot of precision, a lot of decision making when you do these direct actions. It's a personal choice, a commitment and responsibility, and sometimes it's comforting to know that like in the case of petitions there's literally thousands and millions that are doing this as well. Sometimes it's comforting to know that five or six other people are going to chain themselves to the gate of the World Bank. But it does require people taking personal responsibility and that's quite important. Like I said, there are two things, there's the personal choice and then your personal choices in conjunction with a community of people.

There's a phrase that Gary Snyder uses "if you are deadly serious about achieving social change, then mere theatrics is not enough". It is not a direct quote. So I mean it's not just theatrics to put your body on the line, you have to be prepared to really die in it, if you feel that strongly about what you are doing.

... for a lot of people if you go to the zoo and pay entrance fee and there's somebody from RAN with a petition not to buy Mitsubishi because they're killing the rainforests and they sign the petition... that's a political act. And for some people, that's a first and important step along the path of becoming more active. And you have to entice people, you have to make it convenient for them to take direct action. And even if it's as simple as signing a petition that's not as simple actually, you are putting your actual signature at a symbolic level, at an archetypical level, you're putting your signature down on a statement of belief. That's quite an act.

Networking

Besides being a highly effective membership organization, RAN is also, as its name implies, a *network*--at local, national, and international levels. In February 1987, RAN started a national network of branches or affiliate groups called *Rainforest Action Groups* (RAGs), which is indeed one of the keys to the RAN's effectiveness.

...We have an expanding decentralized network of activists groups, you know, in November 1990 we have about 150 RAGs (Rain Forest action groups) across the country who are like a volunteer army of letter writers and campaigners and demonstrators and consumer boycotters, and then we have 35,000 members who are extremely active in letter writing campaigns and participating in consumer boycotts. So we have the machinery, ah...we are strategic, in what we ask our...our people to do and they .. they realize that they have collective

punch. As individuals they may not feel very powerful but as a part of the RAN they know that they are powerful. Together we are powerful.

The RAGs are autonomous "lean grassroots organizations"⁴, such as college campus groups, that are informally affiliated with RAN, receiving support materials and information but no funding.⁵ In 1988 there were only about four or five concerned organizations in the United States; in 1990, there were from thirty five to forty RAGs around the country and four in other countries; and in 1993, there were over 150 community-based RAGs across the U.S., Canada, the United Kingdom, Holland, Germany, Japan, and Australia. These "have generated millions of individual conversations in classrooms, at the grocery store, or places of work, all of which adds to understanding, commitment and action."⁶

Originally the outreach to these groups, or networking, started on a very small scale--with a great deal of personal outreach, with Randy Hayes literally driving around town, and around the country, giving talks to different church groups or community groups, and in college campuses. As the organization has grown, there are now several staff members and many other people doing this work, freeing Randy from having to do all of it.

These groups also talk to each other directly and this furthers is a cross-fertilization between college campuses and between community groups. The RAGs are an informal-coalition structure of a decentralized network of autonomous organizations who work in association with RAN. Every a year they have an annual meeting where they gather and make collective decisions. RAN itself works within this loose coalition as a group with its own program and also as a "clearing house of information" for the other groups, providing them information on a monthly basis, organizing campaigns, and also organizing and coordinating 65 RAGs which act as a community grassroots network. RAN provides a RAG manual and communicates frequently with them through the "RAG RAG" newsletter.

The whole network of RAGS, according to Jim Randon (Randy Hayes Personal Assistant at the time),

... is not like a Sierra Club Chapter where there's bureaucracy. ...There's a policy that the RAGs can really pick up whatever issues they're interested in and go ahead with that and we try to encourage feedback back and forth. We have a full time staff person who coordinates the whole program so he gets feedback and knows what we are doing...we are giving them feedback and they are pretty much left to their own devices to do what works for them... you know, and there is... I think it's great because of this... it's autonomous... It allows people to follow whatever issues raises their interest and a lot of them are almost self supporting groups, where they have, you know, have staff people and they manage to create a funding basis and a membership base so they become really their own small environmental groups and so they move beyond just a couple of people doing a lot of writing or whatever... some are small, very informal, some are much more together and they have newsletters and things like that.

There is not any direct financial connection between the RAGs and RAN. The RAGs do some fund raising for organizations in the Southern hemisphere which goes through RAN. In turn, RAN's Board of Directors approves proposals and then sends them back to the RAGs. RAN does mailing every one or two months and then, if the RAGs want to do fundraising, they can take a proposal and see what the project is and try to come with creative ways for response in the community for organizations in the South- in Brazil and Latin America--or in Southeast Asia and Japan. They each select a rainforest group in the tropics and do fund raising or send money directly to those groups.

The affiliation is informal; and there is no contract binding the RAGs to work together with each other or with RAN. But, according to Randy, there is camaraderie and trust:

... they don't have to follow the dictates of Randy Hayes or RAN. We can make suggestions, we can provide some leadership, we provide a function as a clearing house because we have paid staff and a budget and we can get hold of information and we can synthesize that into digestible

units and make recommendations for action and if we're employing some degree of insight and intelligence and wisdom ... then they'll will want to collaborate with a lot of our suggestions. So the leadership comes out of comraderie as opposed to hierarchy and that's what I mean by *mimicking the Hopis*.

This form of organization was explicitly chosen because it was conceived as the most effective structure for the organization--grounded in a principle that Randy claims to have learned directly from Nature:

We try to take our lessons from nature on how to organize. Networking is the principle that all things are connected and a strong ecosystem is a diverse ecosystem that understands the paths of connection between the different components and so we have created a number of new community groups working on the rainforest issue to strengthen our ability to respond quickly and with lots of calls, lots of letters, telegrams.

This whole network is also modeled after the traditional organization of the Hopi villages, where every village is autonomous while at the same time they cooperate a great deal. According to Randy, this is where the strength of the Hopi tribe lies. It shall therefore not surprise us, as Randy Hayes had pointed out, that this organizational core is precisely the one which the U.S. government wanted to destroy and replace when it came into contact with the Hopi Nation.

When the U.S. government came to Hopi territory it wanted to sign contracts for enterprises such as coal or uranium mining and it therefore wanted a centrally-organized tribe--a chief--which did not exist. Instead, there were several autonomous villages, each one having its own leader which, according to Randy, was "the most leaderless leader." But by way of U.S. Governmental bribes and many coercive acts a *tribal council* was formed, with elected officials and one elected tribal chairman. This, in turn, resulted in two parallel governments.

...the traditional form of government which is decentralized and the hierarchical tribal council. So you get a split between the traditionals and the progressives. The progressives are part of the American...ah...you know...representative democracy, tribal chairman council system.

... we think that representative democracy is the highest order of democracy but many native peoples would disagree with that, they would think that's a lower order of democracy and that there are yet better forms of democracy because in a representative democracy if you get 51% of the votes you win, that means 49% can lose and if you have 49% losing that doesn't show a high degree of intelligence and wisdom from their perspective, that's a whole lot of losers, and one ought to be more clever than that. So therefore consensus is another form of democracy but it's a very sophisticated consensus and most of us really do not understand what they mean by consensus. Americans often take consensus to mean Veto power, unanimity, like everyone agrees. That's not what consensus is...you know...*it's a sense of the group spirit, it's a kind of sense of the majority.* There could be times when only one person out of 50 disagrees and all 50 will go along with the one. That can be consensus. More often it could be that if only 1 out of 50 or 10 or 5 disagree, the 5 would end up going along with the 50 or the rest, right? Or if they felt strongly enough they may have to separate of from the group. It's very sophisticated. Their utilization. They have thousands of years perfecting and understanding ways for the process of democratic consensus to work and I think that's an abomination the way your kind of major Northern California New Age group tries to practice consensus. It's often a real failure as an effort of moving ahead.

The concept of "network" is conceived by RAN not only as an organizational principle but also, consistent with their whole-systems perspective, a powerful *strategy* for effective social impact and change:

I have an Irish friend who tells a joke "Networking? ah... not working!" It's a flabby vague concept in the minds of people. Another term that's better sounding is, well, when I think of network, RAN is really a web, like a spider web; and the spider web has different nodal points but no one in particular is so terribly important, one can break and the web won't collapse, so it's a decentralized web, so RAN is meant to be that. It's meant to mimic, as I said before, it's meant to mimic native cultures like the Hopi, whom I believe were mimicking Nature. and like the spider's web--one can break part of the web and the web won't collapse. You'd have to break quite a few points for the whole net...and so I think that network is very powerful. One

thing you have to do when you are trying to build a movement is you have to plan for the long term.

... When you are building a movement for the long term you really need to be building a really resilient, strong, movement, that is not dependent on any one particular personality nor dependent on any one particular organization. I would not want the world's rainforest's effort to be dependent on Randy Hayes alone or the RAN and I know , already years into the organization, the case is that it's not completely dependent on us, that if we would totally disappear tomorrow the effort will keep going. So that's exciting , that's part of what I mean by "web", a powerful web of activities that is not dependent upon any particular part of the web to carry on the larger mission in the network. With me the mission of RAN is not simply to save the rainforests, the mission, as I said, is broader.

Also internationally RAN has constituted a network, the *World Rainforest Movement*, with regional contacts in the world's major rainforest regions.

The International Secretariat of this informal and regional coalition of groups around the world is in (the consumer association of) Penang, Malaysia. There are also key regional contacts in the areas of Asia-Pacific: Malaysia and Japan. In Africa there are also contacts and there is a regional network of citizens' groups (the African Environmental Network, Kenya) that works with RAN. In Australia there is the Rainforest Information Center with John Seed. There are also regional networks in Europe--in England and the Netherlands--in India, and in Spanish-speaking countries. In North America there is Probe International in Canada, RAN in San Francisco, California. and the Bank Information Center in Washington DC. In central America there is a regional coalition of environmental groups with which RAN works directly. In South America (including Brazil) there was an effective coalition "in the works" in the late 1980s:

...what has emerged is an *effective global network* that can launch coordinated campaigns at a strategic time and put an intense amount of pressure on a particular multi-national corp or a particular government to get them to stop causing destruction.

One of the ways we do networking is to let other organizations know about critical moments where they can help prod the government into making the correct decision, or put pressure on a corporation to stop importing beef, and to let literally hundreds of thousands of individuals around the country know so that the effort is concentrated. And we do this internationally. We get information about say amazonian indians were gunned by timber barrens in Brasil (this is unfortunately a true story a few weeks ago) and we got the information out to hundreds of groups around the world and thousands of individuals in the USA. So that they can contact their press, and get media stories about this, they can contact the government officials to put pressure on and they can write directly to the people who are causing the trouble.

The *World Rainforest Movement* has regional and global gatherings on a periodic basis several times a year, where different member groups from the whole world get together in a particular country to meet with local conservation groups and environmental and human (sometimes also animal) rights activists, and have the opportunity to learn more about that particular country. They also have meetings of leaders from the different regions who coordinate and collaborate on campaigns from around the planet to strategize, allowing RAN to launch global campaigns.

RAN held meetings such as this in Brazil, Japan, Europe, Malaysia, and South East Asia. The first strategy conference organized by RAN was in 1985. It lasted three days and included the participation of most major environmental groups in the U.S. as well as representatives from around the world. Its purpose was "to catalyze a stepped-up U.S. rainforest campaign and move toward a more coordinated world-wide movement."⁷

Also at the regional and national levels, RAN helps organize two or three conferences each year.

In 1992 alone RAN organized or participated in dozens of strategy sessions, seminars, and conferences from Rio de Janeiro to Malaysia to Washington, DC.⁸ In fact, Pat Adams, an economist with Probe International in Canada, says that *the single most*

important accomplishment of the Rainforest Action Network and many other organizations is the growth of an effective worldwide citizen's advocacy network.⁹

Randy Hayes places great emphasis in the importance of "face to face" encounters (rather than technological communication) with activists from all over the globe in order to sense their cultural perspective and to launch and coordinate global campaigns:

... it's more important that we have the face-to-face contact and we understand and we go visit the activists on their own turf and visit them whether that's in Japan, or Malaysia or Indonesia or in the Amazon with the indigenous people's groups in the Amazon... so that we understand things from their cultural perspective more. To that extent, we have launched a program of regional environmental conferences and global environmental conferences, where the key activists can get together on a regular basis, 2,3, 4 times a year and sit down face to face and update each other and with cross-fertilization of ideas and strategies and plans and perspectives and priorities--and develop the kind of consensus movement building that's necessary and the trust relationships necessary to go forth and solve this problem.

The following description of RAN's research and campaign against the Mitsubishi corporation to pressure it to phase out its unsustainable logging, road building, oil drilling, and mining activities that threaten the rainforests highlights the crucial role of national and international networking for RAN's effective activism.

The Mitsubishi Campaign

Mitsubishi is part owner of several logging operations and is one of the world's largest importers/ exporters of tropical wood.¹⁰ In the area of tropical timber trade alone, Mitsubishi Corporation and its subsidiaries are heavily involved in logging practices in the Philippines, Malaysia, Brazil, Chile, Canada, Siberia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Bolivia. In some of these areas, such as Sarawak and Sabah in Malaysian Borneo, where Mitsubishi and other Japanese corporations are logging, the estimated duration of productive logging is only eight years--or only three years in Borneo.¹¹

Mitsubishi Corporation/Meiwa Trading is Japan's top tropical plywood importer and is also involved in road building, oil drilling and mining in the rainforest and trading operations in all the countries mentioned above as well as in Ecuador, Venezuela, British Columbia, Alberta Canada (where, for example, it is building one of the largest bleached pulp mills which will pollute one of the nation's largest river systems) and the U.S. All of these industrial developments greatly impact tropical rainforests and the culture of rainforest dwellers. There is more to rainforest logging than just the cutting of trees. The destruction of the natural environment is extreme: the road building and the methods of extracting the logs are said to be extremely damaging, causing massive damage to forests and farms, pollution of waters and soil erosion. The indigenous peoples who live in these areas are particularly vulnerable to deforestation.¹² The Penan, for example, one indigenous group who inhabits the forest of Sarawak (Malaysia) is becoming increasingly ill with skin diseases and stomach problems. The destruction of habitats amounts to cultural genocide.

At this point in time RAN is spearheading a broad national and international coalition of organizations to boycott Mitsubishi Corporation by boycotting all Mitsubishi products. These include automobiles, electronic equipment such as TVs, VCRs, stereos, fax machines, Kirin Beer and Nikon camera equipment. RAN chose Mitsubishi from among many rainforest offenders because of its high visibility in the marketplace.¹³ The campaign consists of research into the activities and connections of this multinational giant, informing members of those facts, suggesting possible lines of action (signing petitions, sending protest letters or telegrams), coordinating protests internationally and also mobilizing the RAGs for the boycott. Internationally, there has been an ongoing correspondence between Mitsubishi companies and non-governmental organizations in Europe, the United States, Canada, South America, and South East Asia and an exchange of numerous letters and faxes from all factions, along with demonstrations and meetings. This campaign had been a constant source of annoyance to

Mitsubishi, and after several important events (including an advertisement in the New York Times on August 8, 1989) on March 22, 1990, they announced the creation of a 9 member (six full time and three part time) Environmental Affairs Department (EAD). Shortly afterwards, the EAD announced a reforestation project on 50 hectares of Malaysian barren rainforest land. Of course there are many problems with these proposed solutions. For example, Mitsubishi has not included indigenous inhabitants and their suffering and loss of seclusion in its rainforest "formula" and has not committed to reforest Sarawak but only to fund a local research project there. RAN sees this reforestation project as ill-conceived at best and as a public relations front to deflect criticism at worst. 14

Soon after that, in 1991, an organization associated with the Japanese Ministry of Education (Kagaku Gijutsu Kyoiku Kyokai- Science and Technology Educational Association) produced and distributed, free to Japanese school children, a comic book that depicts a fictitious character (Mr. Hino) as he travels to southeast Asia to investigate the validity of environmentalists' denunciations of Mitsubishi's logging practices--only to find out (of course) that there was little adverse effect. On March 18, 1992, the comic book was banned from distribution and remaining copies were recalled by Mr. Fukushima, a senior official of Japan's Ministry of Education, on the grounds that the book's content was found to be incorrect and misleading.

It appears then to RAN that environmentalists have been most effective when unified international action has resulted in the shaming of Mitsubishi. The sharing of information among involved activists has been critical. However, RAN sees Mitsubishi as basically intransigent and thus it sees the need to intensify the campaign. Around 1992 it became one of RAN's main campaigns and a full time campaigner was hired.

The following example, given to me in 1993 by Jim Randon also illustrates how the RAGs, those "lean grassroots organizations", provide an important method of quickly mobilizing public support when urgent campaigns require immediate results.

In 1993 RAN began investigating Mitsubishi Corporation's vulnerabilities and found them mostly through their consumer products. R.A.N.'s next step was then to target auto shows for demonstrations.

So we looked at automobiles and electronics and we decided that there are places like Good Guys or Circuit City who sell Mitsubishi electronics so that's a great target for a demo and there's auto shows... there's a lot of auto shows around the U.S. throughout the year in various seasons, it's a six month season or whatever, so we can sort of do a demo here, see how it goes, learn some lessons, put together some info for the RAGs about how to do a demo, you know, we have a schedule of where the auto shows are... and we can get the RAGs which are located all around the U.S. As the auto shows come to their towns they can get a demo and do public information and get the word out to the public and let Mitsubishi know that we're not just in San Francisco. We're in Texas, we're in Louisiana, we're in Chicago, in New York, you know... that this is a broad-based movement and that people all over the U.S. are aware of what's going on, so it gives an appearance of being larger than we are in this office because there are people in communities throughout the U.S. that are distributing info, that are picking up on issues, that are moving ahead on their own issues. They are really autonomous groups that do whatever they pick up on, they work on a lot of difficult issues, and they work on local as well as international issues or whatever.

Through the RAGs RAN can target 30 to 40 auto shows throughout the country, with community based support of local autonomous groups.

Technology

Modern technology is definitely a great aid to RAN's purposeful and effective activism, for it is an important key to the effective functioning of the network and its networks. Randy Hayes sees the positive side of technology as helping enormously today with the flow of information, and its democratization, all over the planet, furthering an increasingly inexpensive global communication that goes hand in hand with RAN's true planetary organization and network activism. The appropriate use of technology is

indeed an essential part of RAN's vision of the future society and is also rooted in what Randy learned from wise ancient Hopi understanding and prophecies.¹⁵

The technology per se is not destructive. It depends how you use it. My point on technology is that we have no choice but to use it to be able to compete with the multinational corporations who are using it to cause destruction to the earth. It can improve our effectiveness in certain areas but it is just not substitute for people...

... nothing is a substitute for people from different parts of the planet getting together physically, face to face, on each other's home territory to come to a better understanding...

...We can stay in touch in between better because of things like computer networks, but my experience is that if people have not actually met each other and met a friend that each of them has in common there is a distrust in communicating through technology. However if you know each other personally it is like when you communicate through a computer network from here to Japan; you know who it is on the other end: you've shaken hands with them, you've had dinner with them, you sat around and discussed strategies with them.

Modern technology also supports the personal cross-cultural meeting that facilitates planetary communication, caring and empathy. RAN is also linked with the computer-network system *Econet*, which started in San Francisco at about the same time that RAN did to connect people with ecological concerns. This computer network allows transmission of documents, fund raising proposals and action alerts among Australia and Japan and Europe and Central America, throughout Canada. Many of the RAGs communicate with each other through *Econet*.

... Literally the eyes of the world are on a given corporation or government in any given time. *It's important to use that technology to our advantage* and the computer networking is really helping with the information flow around the planet. What used to take us 2 weeks or 2 years to find out about, or 2 months or 2 years, now we find out about, you know, in 2 days or 2 hours. Several countries are now on Econet Net, in the Amazon, in Australia, in Japan, throughout Europe, Canada, U.S.A.

... The reason why big systems, big centralized systems eventually fail, like the USSR, the U.S., it's because it doesn't have effective *feedback loops*. And ecological systems and forests have 1,000s and 1,000,000s of feedback loops; it's self corrective, self regulated and that is

part of what we see with the computer and fax technology changing the very nature of the social movement, it becomes the feedback loops, self correcting and self educating and self motivating in new and different ways.

Technology is also essential in establishing and promoting communication with and within grassroots populations.

... "Grassroots" is meant to mean: multiple, decentralized, bottom up, literally emerges from below up to the surface, reaching up to the sky. And, technology does have defined social movements. If you take a fax machine in places like China, the centralized Chinese Government could not suppress the people's desire for a greater degree of democracy, they could not scratch information because people were faxing back and forth; they could control the radio stations, the newspapers and the TV, they could not control the fax machine. And likewise the computer network is quite capable of broadly sharing information in a decentralized fashion. So what you see is a transformation of social movements that's part of the historical context and some of that it is defined in part by technology. These technologies, computer technology and fax technology, you know, like many things there's two sides of the coin- positive and negative. The positive side is that it allows for upwelling and empowering of people and there are greater degrees of avenues of action directly back and forth.

I'll give you an example. A friend of mine is one of the publishers of Mother Jones Magazine and he says that any given article may get 4-5 letters to the editor; when they started putting the articles into the computer they started getting 200 letters to the editor per story. And not only just letters to the editor but the people there dialogue and read each other's letters, and they will be followed back and forth to each other, a conversation ensues.

That's a function of the technology. And there's a down side to a lot of these technologies but we have decided to utilize things like computer technology for its advantages. I mean there are multinational corporations that we have to stop in their tracks in some of these projects, they utilize these things and so we have to have plans commensurate to the scale of the problem and we have to utilize some of these technologies themselves.

Grassroots Activism

To develop and encourage a wide based grassroots activism, in order to *democratize who is in charge of the rainforests issue*, is part and parcel of RAN's networking, and is one of their key strategies to save the rainforests and serve the transition to what Randy calls the *post industrial society*: a sustainable society for all in which technology is in harmony with the cycles of nature, the indigenous people's rights, the rights of social equity between people in the "North" and in the "South", and the rights of *all* people and *all* the Earth.

It's going to take a mass grass roots movement, an uprising of people the way we saw in the U.S. around the Vietnam war. It's going to take thousands of people marching in the street to really raise the level of awareness and its going to take people whose personal growth and global consciousness is real and they know that if they don't get out there and fight for the salvation of the tropical rainforest that all life on this planet is threatened. In Vietnam, we saw people willing to get out in the streets and fight to get the U.S. out and stop that senseless and immoral war. Well, the destruction of the rainforest is every bit as senseless and immoral. ... we firmly believe that politicians and corporate leaders are not going to provide direction and leadership for solving this problem. Politicians are not leaders they are followers. If the people rise up around this issue, then they will follow in the right direction.

RAN's objective of refurbishing a true grassroots movement reflects a very pragmatic political approach-- the attempt to take the rainforest issue out of the hands of a few environmental groups that are seen by Randy as becoming less and less effective as the are increasingly professionalized. Randy Hayes' model is inspired by the "impassioned grassroots movement around an ecological ethic" of the 1960s and early 1970s in which he was active:

... and the amateur impassioned activists who went out, they weren't experts, professional environmentalists; they were people who cared about an issue and learned something about it and went out and fought for the solution to that problem. Then the environmental movement began to professionalize. It became a profession and people got their jobs and became somewhat bureaucratic and territorial, wanted to protect their turf, became somewhat small-

minded and turf-conscious. Not that the environmental movement isn't struggling to do good. Certainly they are, but *they are losing the battle* right now. ...It's quite frightening how much people these days in the industrial North are insulated from nature and don't know it first hand. Even amongst environmentalists. They're operating out of a concept and not first hand experience more and more.

During the 1980s RAN was supporting the combination of appropriate kinds of development (sustainable over the long-term) and "plain old conservation projects" of pristine areas as an effective short-term model for the protection of rainforests. At the time they were collaborating with the ten largest American (more mainstream) environmental groups--as an urgent short term way to "buy time"--which also supported such a strategy. But even then Randy was explicit that

... I wouldn't want to depend on them to build a movement. They do useful things but they are not inspiring, they are not really changing society the way I think it's gonna have to be changed. The debate in the environmental movement is, do we try to reform existing institutions like the World Bank, or do we try to cut off their monies and create new institutions from a new consciousness and understanding of the global ecological order. The answer is I suppose we have to do both at once.

But I do not believe we will ever effectively reform an institution. It's an old age institution that needs to die away and out of its ashes something new reborn. Institutional change is extremely important and we have to be frank and say that these large multi-million dollar global institutions are entrenched bureaucracies even more so entrenched than some of the U.S. government bureaucracies. The likelihood of being able to effectively change them in the time perspective that will help us save tropical rainforests is not particularly high. So I also believe that for the rainforest movement to be successful, we are going to have to be willing to challenge some of the global economic order.

In many ways, the whole trajectory of this organization can be seen as pivoting around this axis of what is truly necessary, what are the limits of the possible, and how can the latter be progressively expanded for the benefit of all of life- now and in future generations. This axis constantly stimulates RAN.'s growth and development, its

increasing scope and breadth vision. It also focuses RAN on its very pragmatic context as it is based upon the immediacy of the need for a transformation that will initially stop the destruction and eventually create the sustainable planetary society.

In our interview in 1987 Randy manifested a serious interest in the Green political perspective, and the potential of its "fringe" associated movements:

[The green political perspective] it's centered around an ecological perspective, the principles of ecology are interwoven into economic and political decisions, lifestyle decision, human rights decisions etc. So there's an important holistic analysis of the Green movement.

Part of the constituency that we're trying to educate now about the rainforest issue are the bio-regional movements and the green political movements because they are very much natural allies who are beginning to be the transition into the post-industrial society. They as movements have a long way to go, there is a tremendous lack of political savvy there and resources to facilitate the transformation. But you have to start somewhere and that's where we're at right now say in the U.S. with the green movement and committees of correspondence and bio-regional people. But they do have that holistic, whole systems approach to life and that's quite important. As do the indigenous peoples. .

Yet, even this tentatively optimistic assessment began to look increasingly grim over the following years, as we can see in the 1993 interview with Randy:

... and Greens in Europe even, where they were making history, have been largely defeated. It is not that there was not utility in the Greens movement, it forced the slightly more caring political parties to adopt some of the green agenda. So they have incorporated some of the Green Agenda. So it's improved the political landscape in Germany. In the USA it's not a viable political force... not compared, let's say,... to the Rainbow Coalition with Jessie Jackson. That's a viable political force. Jessie Jackson is the American Green Movement. Jessie Jackson has the intelligent holistic perspective the rainbow coalition is about. Is the rainbow. He has pushed the Democratic Party to become more Green, become more holistic and it is a very important power in the Democratic party that Clinton had to address his concerns and at times he had to make sure he declared himself an independent player, away from Jessie Jackson. Jessie Jackson has that power because he has a network, he has a web, and that's the

rainbow coalition. And that's really the Green movement in the US. So we've asked Jessie Jackson recently to consider going down to Ecuador to meet with the Indians who are being oppressed by the American oil companies and he did not decide to do that yet. It may or may not happen but I'm looking at those progressive sectors of the Democratic Party for systems Thinking.

In 1994, Randy Hayes' disenchantment with mainstream environmentalism was explicit and emphatic.

All along, the Rainforest Action Network had been explicit about its intent to reach out to people concerned about the environment but who are not typically members of environmental organizations. This was part of what Randy Hayes described in 1987 as RAN's strategy of reaching out to

... the broader range of social issues that interconnected the broad based coalition of human rights groups and social equity groups and human justice groups that need to work together around the symbol of tropical rainforests.

As RAN's own view broadened, so did the range of groups with which it wanted to network and collaborate, and to learn from, on a planetary scale.

But all along, RAN's main audience was the general public--the true *grassroots* base of the emerging movement. These are his words in 1990:

We need to reach out to regular people, you know, I want housewives and hell's angels involved in this movement, a far greater diversity than what you get at the National Wildlife Federation, the Autobond society or the Sierra Club. All of those groups are good groups doing important work but they're not gonna remake society. We need amateur and impassioned activists involved, we can't leave the environment in the hands of professional environmentalists who work in Washington D.C. for these environmental groups. If they were that inspired the world wouldn't be so screwed up ecologically and it is screwed up ecologically. So we need to go back to the late '60s and to the early '70s in a sense of involving all sectors of society. We want

Protestant ministers and their congregations involved. Now, we really want housewives who are raising their families next to toxic dumps, we want to figure out how to help them fight there and clean up the toxic dump while they help us fight to protect the amazon. So, I'm looking now at building coalitions with , particularly people who work on the issue of toxins, toxic dumps, because they feel on a very passionate level, on a very personal level, they feel the threat and that's a key motivating force. Intellectually it's not hard for people to understand that...ahah...that... you know, if the world's rainforests are destroyed it's gonna affect may be not this generation but the next generation. You know, housewives make that connection better than... ahh...you know... members of Congress...and certainly better than corporate executives, right? so, we're looking to really increase our constituency by working with regular folks throughout the country

...it will take a transformation of the lifestyles and the economic order on this planet to continue to assure the protection of something like tropical rainforests where it would not even be a question, one would not even consider cutting it down and destroying it.

In 1993 and 1994, after careful assessment of the close collaboration with environmental organizations, Randy Hayes' view seemed to be that contemporary environmental organizations lack one or more of the following dimensions: the whole systems perspective based upon the interconnectedness of all, a spontaneous caring as the main moving force, a broad and radical social vision, and political savvy.

I have a cynical definition of most environmental activists, you know, my definition being that environmental activists it's people who want to have an interesting life by being associated with important issues. ! [emphatically], you know, that I ..ah... of course I want to have an interesting life and I am associated with important issues but because I want to find real resolution to real problems, its a life and death situation, not just for human beings but for all kinds of plants and animals, you know, other life forms, of the entire organic ecosystem which for all I know had a consciousness of their own and the earth herself, you know... I don't have a definitive answer to that... I sense that it might be so and I don't need to go any further with that concept. 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, frightening. I mean, I came under press attack in the Malaysian press a few months ago and I think it was a

conscious attempt on their part to divert my attention from telling the world the truth about the tragic slaughter of the rainforests and the tribal people over there.

Randy Hayes was then very explicit about his impression that the environmental movement had failed, that it compromised the service of truth for political reasons. It failed to promote and protect all of life, and it was quite insensitive to people and human needs and suffering. A poignant example of that could be found in Randy's comment on Vice President Al Gore's endorsing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1993:

... What is free trade? Free from what? free from ecological limits, that's how people behave towards it and you and I know scientifically that's not a possibility. So 'free trade' is a dangerous phrase on a deep philosophical level. Nothing is free. One of the principles of ecology is that 'there's no free lunch'. ... To every action there is a reaction and so.... GATT (Global Agreement on Tariffs and Trades) is, you know, the "big sister" to NAFTA. And the world is reorganizing itself into these big trade blocks, the European Community, NAFTA, South East Asia [I may add: Mercosur] and I am finding that very dangerous because it is promoting a greater degree of non-sustainable economy. The main problem with NAFTA is that it further promotes an unsustainable economy. It does not at the very fundamental core level address the issue of ecological economics. Gore's book shows a degree of understanding of ecology. He has a chapter... and yet, the political reality is such that he virtually has no choice but to go along with NAFTA. In the political climate right now his boss, Mr. Clinton, believes in getting reelected and he made that choice. So he's going to have to compromise in major areas, you can't just shake up the political economy of the world and expect to get reelected, in this kind of times. So if you choose to want to survive and get reelected then you are going to have to choose to back things like NAFTA... and that is the political game. That is the way it is played. That is the difference between what the environmental movement should be and what political movements should be. Political movements are about compromising, balancing multiple interests; the environmental movement should be about telling the truth, truth telling. The environmental movement is not about telling the truth. We have major environmental groups- The Audubon Society, The National Wildlife Federation, World Wildlife US, Natural Resource Defense Council, Environmental Defense Fund, and environmental groups that follow after it and in my mind they were playing political politics instead of telling the ecological truth about what

the world needs. So they have lost their soul, they are no longer truth telling machines, they are political machines, the big environmental groups and that is part of why I want to resign from the environmental movement, and if you add economics, the ecological economics movement, then you are showing compassion for human needs in conjunction with the ecological reality of the biosphere of planet Earth. And that is tremendously exciting. that's the new direction. And Gore knows well enough to head us there and may be if Clinton is a two-term President and Gore became President during the third term may be the political context would change enough that his deeper understanding of ecological economics and systemic change will have a chance to come out. Now... I would not bet the future of the biosphere on it, but it is my hope.

Randy Hayes repeatedly reiterated (in 1993 and 1994) his intention to formally withdraw (together with some other environmental groups) from the environmental movement--and to publicly recognize its failure--in order to *maintain* its planetary work.

So, I would like to see the movement transformed from the old version of conservation or movement or environmental movement, let's call it environmental movement, it needs to transform from being the environmental movement to being a new movement. The ecological economics movement could be a whole systems thinking movement. The field of ecological economics is my new passion I'm looking into. I almost think that we need to get a bunch of environmentalists to formally resign from the environmental movement and admit that it was a failure. It did some good things, it was on track on many respects but it did not have the whole picture. So I think we shall consider resigning from the environmental movement and signing up for a new movement, the CPR (Conservation, Preservation, Restoration) movement, the ecological economics movement. Because right now... you know.... the right wing kind of says "oh, here are the damned environmentalists" and I hate to be pigeon holed and labeled so easily, but I set myself up for it... as do most environmental activists or leaders of environmental groups. So, I'm quite seriously thinking of some sort of formal resignation from the environmental movement.

Randy Hayes' perspective was undoubtedly becoming more expanded and global. His concern increasingly shifts from indigenous people to *all* people all over the world.

In fact, among the reasons he mentioned for wanting to "formally" or publicly resign from the environmental movement was its lack of concern for people. This was not new, however. Already in 1990 Randy Hayes mentioned that the economic insecurities of the American people shall also be taken into account in any policy making or strategizing, view that taking more roots in the following interviews. He was then talking about all *forests* of the world, and no longer simply rainforests, and turning towards global trade and ecological economics..

And RAN is a kind of community in the sense that a lot of people who will join the RAN across the country, in Kansas or Indiana, Vermont or Hawaii, are looking for a community of like-minded individuals who share values. . And so, part of the joining the RAN for many people is a quest for community... and we provide something that their physical community very well may not provide. And that's *to act, to be an important component on the bigger picture*. I mean, you can be active on the local community to set a recycling system but *that's not gonna save the Earth*, you know it's a good thing to do it, it's not gonna save the rainforests. But if you are a member of the RAN along with other 35,000 people who are members and they do support 15-20 paid staff people to work night and day on their behalf to provide you with information, letters that you can write, petitions that you can sign and send in...{???} that you can organize, educate your community, ideas for demonstrations that you can be a part of 600 other groups across the country demonstrating at the same time against the same corporation, that all adds up to a sense of community and commitment that ... where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

So, it's the issue of personal- I make a distinction between personal and individual, individual actions often times will not get the job done, but when a lot of individuals choose to act in the same direction at the same time the collective power can much more likely to achieve change. And what we are trying to do in our model is that we have 1,000s and tens of 1,000s of members who are individual people and we ask them to write the same kind of letter to the same government to thank them for setting up a new Indian reserve, or who are criticizing a particular corporation for destroying a particular rainforest.

..... I believe that particularly in the U.S. where virtually all is industrial cultures at this point there's a tremendous breakdown in community values and community relationships and environmental organizations like the RAN can provide a rebuilding , it's a restoration project, to restore community, to a lot of American people

This community building-- a fundamental function of the grassroots approach-- is necessary, according to Randy Hayes, in order to face the hard battles or challenges that lie ahead of us a species and as a planet to save all of life as we know it--all humans and non humans as well.

I mean we're international or global but for the most part our members are of the U.S. but I can't think of a culture more devoid or deprived of a sense of community. And so I also see the RAN as helping to restore a sense of community because without that it's really hard to rally the fighting force to win these battles. Particularly for the long term, because we're gonna lose a lot on for the short term until we kind of pick up the momentum for the quantum changes that are necessary, so that sense of community, we find in a legacy...

¹ The material in this section comes from brochures, personal interviews with Randy Hayes and numerous phone calls in 1993 with his personal assistant, Jim Randon.

² Rainforest Action Network, *Organizational Overview*. Fact Sheet, N. 80.

³ Rainforest Action Network, *1992 Annual Report*, p. 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁵ Rainforest Action Network, *Organizational Overview*. Fact Sheet, N. 80.

⁶ Rainforest Action Network's and the Rainforest Movement's Accomplishments, *Draft Discussion Paper*, 10/27/93 10/27/93, p.1.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Rainforest Action Network, *1992 Annual Report*, p. 3.

⁹ Rainforest Action Network's and the Rainforest's Movement's Accomplishments, *loc. cit.*

¹⁰ Rainforest Action Network, *Fact Sheet*, No. 23b.

¹¹ Rainforest Action Network, *Fact Sheet*, No. 23a.

¹² RAN. BACKGROUND; MITSUBISHI CASE STUDY.

¹³ *Ibid.*

14 Ibid., p.6.

15 The example of the Hopi prophecy about the Circle and the Cross that was presented in Randy Hayes' biographical section suggested the constructive potential of technology when in harmony with the cycles of nature and viceversa.