

CHAPTER ELEVEN:

RAN's Strategies for Social Transformation

Introduction

Fully consistent with RAN's general cosmological and pragmatic stand within its broad whole system approach is its fluidity in formulating and implementing sophisticated strategies which appear to be constantly evaluated and re-focused over the years. This fluidity reflects, in my view, that RAN is able to function most effectively on a pioneering "cutting edge"--searching for practical approaches and solutions to truly monumental social tasks--rather than simply promoting an *ideological*, pre-set standard. This is precisely why I choose RAN for a more detailed presentation regarding *Taking Care of the Earth* as an essential aspect of planetary consciousness, and as a model for planetary organizing.

Information Clearinghouse

Promotion of awareness on a wide scale was the first short-term strategic phase of RAN. It was the basis for creating a community of the largest possible number of action-oriented people in the planet, a kind of consciousness and activism "infrastructure" which goes hand in hand with RAN's networking and grassroots work. In our first meeting in 1987, Randy stressed the need for popularizing global issues:

.... [we need] to popularize these global ecological issues like the greenhouse effect and its connection to deforestation and help bring that home to people in all sectors of society. Our main strategy is to essentially make the rainforests issue a household word the way that Coca Cola or Pepsi Cola is known in every household in the industrial sectors of society.

This was conceived as a wide-range strategy and quite short-term, to be accomplished within three to four years. Indeed, in 1990 this happened to be the case and as the years go by the rainforests issue was becoming a household term in increasing areas of the world.

The promotion of awareness among people and the creation of a community of like-minded people who coordinate their actions collectively are intrinsically related, supporting each other in an organic way. Such an insight stands as a central and vital aspect of planetary activism and not at all unique to the Rainforest Action Network. Deep ecologists like John Seed and Joanna Macy, eloquently articulate how important the mere existence of a supporting community is for the awareness of our contemporary planetary plight: the mere awareness of the frightening near catastrophic planetary situation, rather than stimulating people's moral will to change it, has a rather numbing effect, leading to widespread apathy and, in fact, denial. "The very enormity of the threat makes it harder to talk about it or confront it squarely."¹ To that effect, they designed support work (called "despairwork") for people to come together and share information as well as the strong emotions aroused by this information (such as despair, grief, and anger) within a safe environment of like-minded people with the same concerns and similar sensitivities.

A particular type of group work for this purpose that has been designed by John Seed, Joanna Macy and others is called "The Council of All Beings" which according to John Seed prepares and allows people to "hear within themselves the sounds of the earth crying", borrowing a phrase from Vietnamese Zen Master, Thich Nhat Hanh.² Several of the people I met and interviewed for this work (including Randy Hayes) mentioned that they participated in a *Council of All Beings*, at different times and places, and all claimed that it had been a very powerful positive experience. John Seed points out that

unblocking these feelings of despair opens people up to experiencing the interconnectedness of all of life, and that often after such experiences people come together to form ongoing support-groups or to join existing groups to take action on peace and/or environmental issues.³

This highlights the importance of *community building* in planetary activism which, as we have seen, is central for RAN--an indivisible part of its grassroots and networking strategies. RAN can also be seen as a community-- creating a safe and supportive environment where people can together recognize the quasi-catastrophic planetary situation, collectively experience it and direct such awareness into creative channels of effective planetary activism for the best of all of life. Yet,

... awareness will not get the job done. It's just a very important first step. In some respects it's the easiest step. Beyond awareness you have to really decrease the number of activities that cause the rainforests to be cut. We have to stop using rainforest wood, like teak and mahogany and ebony and rosewood, you have to stop buying beef from areas that were once tropical rainforests, you have to stop your tax dollars from funding hydroelectric dams that flood the Amazons. You have to stop those projects. Most people ask "what do we have to do to save the rainforests?". The key question is not "what do we do?", but-- "what do we *stop* doing?!" And that's a philosophical twist that we need to make in our mind. It's not an activity that we need to do. Doing is the problem of industrial society. Undoing, stop doing, is what we need to achieve. We need to stop the destructive activities and then let nature repair herself. Now, of course, nature is having a hard time repairing herself right now and we have to help because we've done that much damage. You know, if there's a hemorrhage of a major artery, you have to apply pressure and stop the flow of the blood to give the body a chance to heal itself. Now, we've already done enough damage to the ozone and to the atmosphere and to the underground water systems and to the... you know... the forests throughout the planet that we are going to have to use human intervention to help rectify some of the natural life supporting systems of the planet.

To be an *information clearinghouse* in terms of both the facts about the current state of rainforests as well as the many interrelated campaigns to save them is,

therefore, one of RAN's most important roles.⁴ In this capacity, RAN publishes a quarterly magazine, *World Rainforest Report*, which provides in-depth articles on particular rainforest issues as well as editorials, reviews of books and educational materials, and updates on upcoming rainforest conferences, events, legislation, etc. Each *World Rainforest Report* also contains a concise results-oriented monthly *Action Alert* to address the urgent issues of the current month. There are 12 action-alerts a year. All this is sent out to RAN's members, the RAGs, and 300 environmental organizations all around the world that are working on the rainforest issue. Occasionally RAN has special *Alerts*. Additionally, RAN has numerous other *Action Education Contacts* per year, such as three new member solicitations and five resolicitations to members per year.

RAN also initiated and facilitated the *World Rainforest Week*, a week of events organized by citizens, communities, and groups in different national and international locations to focus public attention on the rainforest issue. This started in 1987 and it is growing considerably since. In 1990, for example, there were over 450 events in the U.S., and in over 18 countries (this was 4 times more than in 1989). RAN writes and sends a *World Rainforest Week's* organizer's packet and brochure to anyone interested in organizing an event. RAN also provides materials for tabling and it compiles a calendar of events.

The *Rainforest Action Network* also prepares educational material, such as an education packet for teachers which lists rainforest curricular materials, and a student packet aimed at high school aged students with background information and ideas for how students can become involved in stopping tropical deforestation: a press kit, a range of fact sheets on various facets of the rainforest issue, and an organizer's packet.

RAN helped popularize the concept that various corporations, institutions, and countries are what it calls "*international ecological criminals*"--such as Burger King, for example, Dupont/Conoco, Scott Paper, Mitsubishi, institutions such as the World

Bank, and countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Brazil. All this is connected with RAN's function of research and education, focusing public attention, and "blowing the whistle" on targets for activism, and in this it is aided by its networking.

Our activities are based on kind of sounding the alarm on some problems and specific ways that people could contribute to solutions. 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 decisions, 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 being gunned down by timber barrens in Brazil, and we got the information out to hundreds of groups around the world and thousands of individuals in the U.S.A. so that they can contact their press, and get media stories about this. They can contact government officials to put pressure on and they can write directly to the people who are causing the trouble.

Strategic use of the media and its advertising campaigns is a central tool to aid in RAN's popularizing the rainforest crisis. To place educational advertisements on critical rainforest issues in major national newspapers and magazines such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* is very important, as Randy Hayes explains:

...well...you have to use a little of smoking mirrors and make yourself appear maybe bigger than you are... and then hopefully you become bigger... [laughs]... You do that through using the media effectively. We do full page adds in The New York Times. A full page add in *The Wall Street Journal* costs \$90,000; you know... to criticize and ... you know, countries like Costa Rica.were complaining that they didn't have money like RAN. to buy full page adds in the New York Times.regarding the cattle ranching and rainforests in Costa Rica. Well,... it's crazy if they think that we're a wealthy organization because we're absolutely not, but we are strategic with where we place our resources.... and so what we have done is organized a central clearing house of information to be able to make strategic decisions on where to focus our attention, you know, just like in shamanism how to focus your attention is extremely important, you have to have a crystal-clear message, then you have to have a target...ahah... then you have to have an avenue of action, you know, you have to create an opening if you're trying to stop a corporation

from cutting down a forest you have to... you almost have to give them an opening, a direction to retreat to. If they stop cutting down the forest then they can become the "good guy", right? At least on that particular issue at that particular time.

RAN's various publications are the catalysts for its wide variety of current campaigns, such as the Mitsubishi boycott (discussed earlier), campaigns on the Amazon, on tropical timber, on oil exploration and production which destroy and pollute massive tracts of rainforests while invading and displacing the native population, campaigns attempting to protect the remaining 15% of Hawaii's lowland rainforests, campaigns to save the rainforests in new Guinea--the "Amazon of Southeast Asia"--campaigns on the World Bank and more. It is evident, therefore, why this function as a clearinghouse of information is one of RAN's main international strategies.⁵

North: South Activism

This strategy is truly at the core of RAN's activism, as it is rooted in the recognition that the industrialized nations of the North such as Japan, Europe, and the United States "may be able to do as much to save the tropical rainforests as Bolivia, Brasil, Zaire of Papua New Guinea" and that the rainforests problem is not just "*down there*".⁶ In its *Annual Report 1992*, RAN approached its *North:South Activism* by three main short- and medium-range strategies: namely, to work in the United States to repair here the damage that our own people have caused regarding the rainforest crisis and what it represents, to establish an effective global network to coordinate campaigns and exchange information, and to follow guidance from local activists.

Work in the U.S. and industrial North

The first of these strategies, *to work in the US*, entails diverse activities from grassroots education to influencing domestic policy and international conventions to

changing consumption patterns and the like. Randy Hayes conceived of this not only as important but also as probably decisive, as his 1987 comment on the Brazilian Amazons illustrates:

We in the U.S. 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. I think there's more to be done to save the Amazon here in the US and in Europe and in Japan than there is in Brazil. That's not to say that the government of Brazil and the economic structure of Brazil would not continue to destroy the Amazon. Without our help, they would continue to destroy it, but at a slower pace. But, again, we can buy time if we can cut off the harmful activities of the North. And we can appeal to the average American, if there is such a thing, from a number of angles... A lot of people are generally concerned and if you make it convenient for them to do the right thing then they will.

RAN's action programs are designed precisely to make it convenient for people in the U.S. to act and "do the right thing." This will be illustrated in the following specific areas in which RAN suggests focusing on the local work, at the U.S. and in other industrialized countries of the North, to save the rainforests *of the world*.

First, Randy Hayes urges *cutting off the "bad monies"* that finance the destruction, focusing on the many corporations operating in rainforest countries but based in the United States.

Here I'm talking about the foreign aid policies of the industrial North and how the multilateral banking institutions like the World Bank, the Interamerican Bank, the Asian and African Development Bank, receive monies from governments and then consequently finance "development projects" in the third world. If you saw the movie the Emerald Forest, you saw a hydroelectric dam that was highly destructive to the habitat and the indigenous peoples in the Amazon. That's a real dam and was funded in part by U.S. tax dollars, by people like you and myself.

These "bad monies" finance not only hydroelectric dams that flood the forests, but most of the destructive activities. For example, they subsidize and build roads for the logging companies--the main damage to rainforests--artificially creating a pricing structure for the cattle ranching industry, that allows them to destroy the forest. RAN advocates redirecting these "bad monies" into *truly* constructive projects such as reparations of damaged watersheds, reforestation in the outside buffer zone around intact pristine tropical rainforests, fuel wood lots, providing sustainable forms of agriculture, providing land reform in already damaged areas, and the like. Grounded in necessity and urgency, this strategy was conceived as short-term and was based on RAN's belief that the world *could* rally together *to halt*, or slow down, the destruction of tropical rainforests within one generation--if the right things were done in order.

Part of the difficulty in carrying out this, as well as other of RAN's strategies, lies in the fact that they challenge contemporary institutional arrangements at their core. From the beginning of our conversations-- as we have seen--Randy addressed the very difficult and controversial issue among environmentalists of institutional reform vis a vis a change into new institutions. He accurately anticipated the future manipulation of the rhetorics of change by the dominant institutions themselves and even the creation of "environmental offices" to give false impressions about their intentions. This future projection can be seen in the example of U.S. President George Bush using environmental rhetoric in his campaign for a second presidential term even though his public record left no doubt about the pretense of such caring.

In 1987 Randy was relatively optimistic about the possibility of pressuring the World Bank and similar institutions to stop the "bad monies" for destructive projects, as RAN had manage to achieve some significant accomplishments.

We have a string of successes that show me that people will respond and that we can make progress. In 1986, three pieces of legislation were passed through the U.S. congress. One that instructed the World Bank to stop funding these destructive hydroelectric dams and roads into pristine rainforests, and to direct their money more towards sustainable forms of agriculture that truly do provide for the needs of the people of the third world. It will take a lot of work to get them to fulfill that legislation, but at least that's a start. We also have two bills passed through congress. One that instructed USAID to essentially do the same thing. Stop funding road building and subsidizing cattle ranching and start funding reforestation and repairing the damage to ecosystems. The other bill was to instruct USAID to spend a couple of million dollars every year in rainforest countries specifically for the protection of biological diversity.

I still try to go down several times a year and report to the elders on a regular basis what I'm finding out around the world. I can now bring them a bit of good news. It's very exciting that this global ecological rainforest movement is burgeoning and has the capacity to effectively confront some of these power structures and to have some success stories, like the Burger King situation or some of the legislation, or keeping the Malaysian government from wiping out a hunting and gathering tribe in Borneo. I continue to take direction from the indigenous people, I consider them advisors and also seek out advisors from the elders within my own culture. David Brower, one of the preeminent global environmental activists, has been very helpful in helping foster this tropical rainforest work

Randy's optimism dwindled considerably over the years, however, as he became increasingly aware that not enough is being done to stop the destruction and that the crisis was progressively expanding. In 1990 Randy said that

...what I would like to do is I would like to shut down the International Monetary Fund and I would like to shut down the World Bank. But we do not have enough clout to do that and so instead, I think, we need to put them on a diet, cut their funding dramatically, decrease their ability to do harm, and the U.S. Congress and the Parliaments in Europe and Japan control the fundings to these institutions.

For 5 years we've trying to get the World Bank to stop funding bad projects and to set up an environmental department that has authority and we don't believe we've achieved any serious success, and so we're changing our strategy. We're now launching a global movement to get

governments to stop fundings, to cut back fundings to the International Monetary Fund and to the World Bank.

We put a full page add in *The New York Times* calling for this, we put a full page on *The Wall Street Journal* calling for this, and I've speaking about it at conferences to international activists from all over the world, from South East Asia and Africa, in Latin America, Europe and Japan...So we need environmental activists in Germany to get the German parliament, you know, to decrease funds, we need people in Holland and Scandinavian countries, in England.

Acutely aware of how difficult even a minimal and partial social change can be and of the numerous failed revolutions and shattered lives and dreams which are recorded in human history as people have tried to challenge the dominant economic relationships among people and their institutions, I repeatedly questioned Randy when he made statements regarding radical transformation: *is it possible? , Do you see it happening?*

... No. I don't see it happening yet. I see the ability. I see that it has to happen because, you know, *greed for money* is so compelling among multinational corporations... and they are not governed by any institution. The U.N. does not govern multinational corporations. No single government could possibly govern them because they operate in too many countries. And so I think that we are gonna to have to create some new institutions in the planet. Like an Environmental Protection Agency for the planet.

And I see that happening. I think that that's an hidden agenda for the 1992 meeting in Brasil. We are going to see something like a new UN authority on environment and development come out of this meeting in Brasil in 1992. And if that's done properly, if it has teeth to really shut down companies that are doing bad things or support companies that are aggressively transforming the nature of their business then we stand a chance. (1990)

Indeed, when I met Randy again, in 1993, such a new institution had been created in the Rio Summitt!

Well, there are some changes. For instance, a new institution has been created , the *Council for Sustainable Development* of the UN. There's a clear choice, there are not calling it "sustainable growth' but "sustainable development". And "development" is a key word, you even develop

your personality and that's a good thing, develop your muscles and they are stronger; if you are developing a health issue is probably a hassle... so , the word is neutral, you can use it in a good way or in a bad way. It's often used in a bad way. Development around the world usually means destruction of Nature, destruction of cultures. It does not have to mean that. But is taking back the language. And this *Council for Sustainable Development* is the new institution that has been created on the *Earth Summit*, on the summer of '92, and though it is easy to be cynical that that summit did not accomplish much I think that it has a very important symbolic value, that it will go on history the way Earth Day 1970 went down in history as the symbolic beginning of the ecology movement, that the summer of 1992 will go into history as symbolic of the transformations of the sustainable society and the *Council for Sustainable Development* is like a new institution, they didn't take an existing institution like the UN Development Program or the UN Environmental Program... they created a new....

In this case, as in numerous other occasions, RAN.'s strategic vision and its accomplishment over the years is truly impressive and certainly reinforces my impression that it is a very effective planetary organization, keenly pragmatic and grounded in historical realities, and worthy of public attention. Such an activist record and its great actual or potential impact at the planetary level are, to me, both as a researcher/ observer and as a contemporary woman and mother, truly impressive and exciting. Witnessing its unfolding over time is one of the major rewards I have encountered in this study.

Randy Hayes, the pragmatist, does not place great hope on the U.N. as it is *today*. Consistently he expressed a preference for creating new institutions rather than successfully attempt to reform the old ones, and was willing to rather shut down the *UN Development Program* or the *UN Environmental Program*. Yet--with his pragmatic bent, he also recognized (in 1993) that

...it's probably better strategically that they didn't [shut them down] because all the old employees and the "old thinking " people would have run across the hall to get jobs in this new

institutions and that would just perpetuate the old order...so...so that's one significant development and gives some degree of hope. It's not that I put a lot of hope on the UN, I also believe that in the next 5 years the nature of the UN is going to change dramatically. Even George Bush utilized the UN in a new way for the Desert Storm. The U.S. didn't just unilaterally go in as the police of the world. They orchestrated—even though they were pulling the strings behind the scene—they orchestrated what the world's done in the name of the U.S. And I don't know if that sets a great precedent, what I'm saying is that it's an indication of a shift in a way Nation-States relate to global events. But what Bush did with Desert Storm can be used in a reverse way in many ways in the future and this Council for Sustainable Development would be an example of that. So- I don't see the World Bank getting shut down or disappearing in anytime soon but I will say that 1995 is the 50th year anniversary of the U.N. and the economic summit in 1945 where the I.M.F. was created and the World Bank was created. So in the 50th year anniversary probably the World Bank will come up with a public relations campaign, what a beautiful organization they are, and we'll come up with a big campaign saying that we need first systemic change and we need to move beyond the World Bank. The World was better off before the World Bank. The biosphere was better off before the World Bank. We need a Biosphere Bank, not a World Bank. There are some new plans that are being put forth by the corporations, for instance, that in our Mitsubishi campaign, our demands of Mitsubishi are that they leave the natural forests alone throughout the world and they go back to the land that's been degraded and they restore the commercial intent to provide wood fiber, wood products, to society. So- there's still a commercial profit for the corporation in that but the idea is one of transformation. See- we are not powerful enough to defeat the World Bank. The movement—I'm not talking about rainforests but the social change movement—is not powerful enough right now to beat superpowers, governments of Germany or Japan or the U.S. We're not powerful enough to defeat vital international institutions like the I.M.F. or the W.B.. We're not powerful enough to defeat the major multinational corporations, or the oil companies, or the timber companies, or a company like Mitsubishi. *But we may be clever enough to help transform some of their activities such that they transform from being the enemy of the Earth to the agent of building the sustainable society.*

This is precisely a major shift in RAN's focus—with an emphasis on an emerging *ecological economics* and *global trade* that respect human needs, the environment, and all of life.

Exonerating the Foreign Debt of the Southern Countries

A second main strategy that RAN proposes, at the medium term, as part of its work in the U.S. is to redefine and exonerate the enormous foreign debt that rainforest countries owe to institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, private banks, governments and multi-lateral development banks in the industrial North and, to educate consumers and engage them in influential activities and campaigns so that it would be possible to use the tremendous foreign debt that tropical countries owe to the rainforest activists' advantage. That was, in Randy's view in 1987, one of the major tools RAN could turn to its advantage--even though it was closely linked to the former strategy of institutional change *vis a vis* reform and never seemed easy to accomplish

The issue of conservation of pristine natural areas *vis a vis* development and other views had always been central. At that time there were some attempts by some conservationist and environmental organizations to foster a program called the *Debt for Nature Swap*. As an example of this, a country such as Bolivia would agree to conserve 3.7 million acres of land if half a million dollars of their debt would be forgiven, or the area would be bought by some conservation group as a way to help foster conservation in the tropical rainforests. That was not RAN's strategy and, even though Randy Hayes did not condemn it at the time, it did not endorse it. From other sources I knew that traditional elders in the Amazon were offended by such a strategy, as they were still being directed by people in the richer countries--to whom "they owed" massive debts--as to how to live on their own lands. I assumed that such a strategy would not be consistent with RAN's overall perspective. Indeed, in 1990, Randy Hayes said that RAN rejected that particular approach to the foreign debts and it was taking took a more radical perspective:

... the debt doesn't exist, what exist are the bad loans, so I don't... I'm not in favor of the debt-for-nature swaps. We take a more fundamental, more radical approach to the foreign debt... We need to forgive the Third World debt, virtually in its entirety. Because it's not really a debt, I don't remember if we covered this before but— again,... there's a perceptual problem. People talk about the foreign debt as forcing tropical countries to destroy their resources and enslave their people to repay the debt. But we don't have 1.3 trillion dollars worth of debt, what we have is 1/3 trillion dollars of bad loans and when you think of it as a "bad loan" the responsibility shifts of poor people in Brazil or Zair or Indonesia to the lender. And I believe that the lenders are going to have to eat those bad debts if the people from the Third World are gonna be able to eat.

So I think in the next 5 years the major activity that we need to see from like 1990 to 1995 is a decrease in the funding to these multilateral development banks, and then the creation of alternative World Banks that would may be not give loans but would give grants. You can't clean up... you can't make money of cleaning up the environment, not in the short term, and so if countries need money to help with environmental activities, we can't do that as a loan because it just puts them more into debt. So I foresee a new institution, an alternative World Bank, that gives grants not loans, and 50% of the money would be for the protection of critical ecosystems, like coral reefs, like mango swamps, like wetlands, like tropical rainforests that are part of the planet's ability to support life. And then 50% of the money would go for human needs, in the buffer zones around critical ecosystems and those human needs would be an economically sound agriculture, economic activities that do not force people to chop down a tree year after year after year. So a new alternative banking system is gonna be necessary to improve the equity of exchange of resources between and the North and the South. We need to pay reparations to the tropical countries, Japan and Europe and the USA and Canada need to pay reparations. We need to forgive the Third World debt, virtually in its entirety.

True to its social, ecological and economic perspective, RAN saw the issue of land tenure as crucial for the integrity of the indigenous people who inhabit the rainforests

The old criticism of "yankee imperialism and you're trying to save the rainforest when we need to be concerned about our needs here in the third world"... We're able to get beyond that criticism because we are concerned about the same thing they are concerned about, the long term viability of that land to provide for the basic needs for the people down there. That builds natural alliances between those movements in the Third World and what we're doing here in the U.S. There's a very clear understanding between Brazilian activists and Malaysian, African,

European, North American activists that we are working towards the common goals that are mutually beneficial. (1990)

In this spirit, late in 1991, RAN's *Protect an Acre Program* was founded- which supports indigenous people and leaders and their fight for land and resource rights as well as their land titles and their control over natural resources. It is based upon the belief that native peoples, who have lived in rainforests for thousands of years, are the forests' best caretakers.⁷ This is in clear contrast to many *Buy an Acre* programs where vast amounts of land are put under the supervision of private individuals or governments--which often alienate indigenous populations from their own environment. These programs, in the long term, are so much more vulnerable to lack of funding and corruption that the long-term protection of these lands can be easily undercut. The way *Protect an Acre Program* works is that people donate \$25 or more to it and it will go to protect rainforest by supporting Indian's efforts to attain land title. Donors get a certificate of recognition stating how much rainforests they helped save.

On April 23rd, 1992, RAN achieved its first major success with this campaign:

10,000 Pastaza Indians marched to Quito, the Ecuadorian capital, to demand their right to the largest remaining tract of Amazon rainforest. RAN's *Protect an Acre Program* provided \$20,000 in aid to the *Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza* (OPIP), including money to purchase much-needed food, clothing and shelter for this historic march.⁸

They were 10,000 strong men when they marched through the poverty-stricken neighborhoods of South Quito on April 23rd. Flowing through the city streets as the sun lit up the snow-capped volcanoes, Indian people from all over Ecuador became a human river led by 2,000 people from the Pastaza Province of the Ecuadorian Amazon. Wearing feathered plumes, toucan headdresses, carrying spears, they marched, followed by thousands of highland Indians in their characteristic ponchos. The early morning streets were lined with curious onlookers. Often, people pressed forward from the crowds to offer food, drink, money or just to shake the hands of the Amazonian marchers. The Indians poured into the cobble-stoned National Plaza in the Old City of Quito, creating a lake of brightly- colored feathers and ponchos.⁹

Two weeks later, President Rodrigo Borja responded to Indian demands and recognized 19 traditional territories and granted more than 2.5 million acres of land title. Also the Ecuatorian Congress convened a special session to discuss a constitutional amendment that would recognize indigenous rights. To study this program and the whole succession of events from RAN's reports, action alerts and fact sheets is truly impressive--another example of brilliant strategizing, focus, and a high level of effectiveness.

The next step suggested by RAN in this campaign was to produce funds to demarcate the land awarded to OPIP, without which the government's decision remains only a paper victory.

Consumer Actions

Last but not least, a third strategy, at a more medium-range, that RAN supports as part of its work in the U.S. (and in the industrial North) is within the area of consumer actions: informing costumers about how their use of products from the rainforest and the overconsumption, the lack of recycling and wasteful lifestyles of the industrial North, of Japan and Europe and the U.S. are contributing to the destruction. RAN's Mitsubishy campaign and boycott, the Burger King boycott, and all of its consumer campaigns, education, action alerts, and others are a clear example of this strategy.

Already in 1987, Randy Hayes identified three main areas of overconsumption and wastefulness in the industrial countries of the North that most directly affect the destruction of the world's rainforests.

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 U.S. 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 U.S. is not contributing to the destruction...

That first interview took place just a few months after the success of the Burger King campaign and boycott and Randy Hayes was quite enthusiastic at the time about the power of consumer education and campaigns and in his belief that if one makes it convenient for people to act for the right causes they will indeed do so. Over the years, his faith in the power of consumer education and actions is unshaken- but RAN's focus and strategical priorities are very dynamic and fluid. All my contacts with Randy Hayes have been characterized by a high degree of self-evaluation which, in my view, gives his search for an effective path for transformation a stamp of truth.

RAN's Tropical Timber Campaign

... is designed to halt the [tropical forest'] destruction by supporting economic alternatives and calling for a ban on all tropical hardwood products not harvested in an environmentally benign and socially beneficial manner.¹⁰

... for right now, most of the tropical hardwoods are not raised in any sustainable manner ... we have pretty much an across the board boycott or blanket opposition to the use of these projects. [and to boycott the corporations that are logging the tropics]

RAN did support tropical hardwoods being turned into products and used for foreign exchange and for the economic livelihood of the people in those areas where tropical hardwoods can be raised in a sustainable and ecologically sound manner. It also compiled a list of the names of the common tropical timber imports to avoid, and their origins--which it supplies upon request along with the names of the few wholesalers and retailers of tropical timber that is raised in a sustainable and ecologically sound manner.

According to R.A.N., at least one-quarter of all tropical deforestation is the result of commercial timber operations. Every year, according to the *World Bank* and the *United Nations Development Programme*, at least 12.5 million acres of rainforest are destroyed by commercial loggers. Mahogany, teak, ramin, lauan/meranti are some of the timbers extracted for trade. Southeast Asia and West Africa, currently and previously the main timber exporting regions, are particularly at risk. As these areas are becoming logged out, attention is rapidly turning to the remaining primary rainforests in Central Africa and Amazonia. Logging in these forests has increased significantly in the last few years.¹¹

The primary problem with tropical forestry is that once rainforests have been logged, they are often so drastically altered that the forests do not return to its original diversity. Though only a few tree species have commercial value, as much as 70% of the forest can be destroyed in the logging process. Up to one-third of the forest cover is removed just to make way for logging roads and tracks. And whole human cultures and animal and vegetal species are being destroyed with it.

In each interview Randy's emphasis on the importance of a drastic global reduction of timber consumption grew more compelling. In 1990 he urged that there be a complete moratorium of the timber industry, as the pace of destruction of *forests* was much faster than the one of the "rescue" work. When, somewhat anxious, I asked him whether we have a chance, he responded:

... we've already lost more than 50% of the world's tropical rain forests. Most of that we've lost since WWII. The rate is increasing, not decreasing. I can only hope that the "Berlin Wall factor" will come into play. What I mean is something that does not seem achievable right now will have to become achievable to save much of the world's rain forests. And that's quite possible. I mean, who would have thought 5 years ago that the Berlin Wall was gonna fall? Who would have thought that Gorbachev would be a better champion of democracy than Ronald Reagan and George Bush, the American presidents? Who would have thought that the Eastern block would see such a rapid change in economic structure? So, the possibility for rapid change,

you know, it's there and we're gonna need it because we're in trouble. We're not seeing enough change on the behavior of multinational corporations. Primarily the tropical timber industry. The world can no longer continue to use tropical hardwoods the way we are using them, you know, for ply wood and panelling and we have to have to radically decrease the amount of tropical timber that the world uses ... I mean we need a complete moratorium on the cutting of timber in any natural forest. Not just in the tropics but also in the tempered zones in the North, in Canada, in the USA and in Siberia. And I'm not hopeful that the timber industry will change. Therefore, the way that we'll make them change is by increasing our economic clout. See, another major tool we have is economic pressure....I mean ultimately one wants governments to exercise economic pressures the same way that in the Middle East crisis, you know, people are economically boycotting Iraq to try to get them to pull out of Kuwait. We are gonna need to utilize very strong economic incentives...mhmm... and disincentives

In 1993 Randy Hayes was talking about organizing a conference to create a *National Wood Conservation Act* to the USA in order to define the suggested reduction in wood fiber consumption:

... because in my mind it will take something on that scale of change to give us a fighting chance to save the world's forests whether we are talking about Syberian forests in Russia, or Canadian forests, or Oregon Washington the Amazon or South East Asia, that we need to set an example that the U.S. can be a culture that doesn't over consume or inappropriately consume wood fiber. 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 will provide the fiber that we need for paper, cardboard, or building materials and that we would leave the natural rainforests alone. So I want to help design that kind of legislation here in the USA as part of the "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.

A fundamental aspect of the profound lifestyle transformation necessary for the salvation of the world's rainforests, all forests, and truly all of life in our planet as part of conscious consumption is, of course, what Randy Hayes described in 1987 as *living lightly in the planet*. Many of my interviewees did indeed refer to such a concept as essential in a truly planetary society, most practiced it in their personal lives (some referred to it as "voluntary simplicity", others as "frugality", to name but a few). They all referred to the responsibility we have in the affluent countries of the industrialized North to voluntarily regulate our consumption and define our material and resource needs within a planetary context, with moderation and towards justice for all. Such a strategy on a planetary level is indeed quite *radical* in our times.

Global Network

As presented earlier in the section on networks R.A.N. places great emphasis on the necessity of *establishing an effective global network* which allows fluid and fast access to information, ongoing feedback among U.S. local and global activists. This strategy is organic to RAN's overall global perspective and its *North: South activism*.

Citizen watch-dog groups and people's movements in the rainforest countries need backing from the North, particularly in countries with repressive dictatorships and little democratic recourse.¹²

The most obvious expression of this strategy is the emergence of 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 corporation or a particular government to get them to stop causing destruction. An example of this is the case of Malaysia, which has constituted one of RAN's main campaigns for several years already. This is an excerpt from a related conversation with Randy Hayes in 1987:

One case example of that now is a hunting and gathering tribe in northern Borneo in the province of Sarawak, which is politically controlled by the country of Malaysia. The corrupt Malaysian politicians have traded logging leases off to each other and have gone into the tribal lands of the Penan tribe and are wiping out that forest. I have literature on this. So the Malaysian organizations organized to assist the Penan tribe. They got information about this campaign out to the world at large and the Penan tribe went through the political channels and were not able to get protection for their ancestral lands so they started a physical blockade of the logging roads in the rainforest. They put up barriers and stood there with their spears. I should say they are standing there now with their spears to stop the logging trucks. The Malaysian government sent in the military but they did not wipe the people out because they knew the eyes of the world were upon them. The eyes of the world were upon them because of an emerged global network that was able to get letter writing from all sectors of the planet into Malaysia and the government knew if they wiped them out it would be a much greater political liability than the problems with the logging industry right now. They've taken a step through and arrested 42 of the tribal people so now we've launched another more aggressive letter writing campaign. This last week there were demonstrations in five cities around the US and about seven other countries at Malaysian embassies and consulates insisting that Malaysia release these people and stop the destructive logging in that region. So we have put together this global network with regional contacts in the major rainforests regions.

The whole topic of *North: South activism* raises fundamental issues regarding the right type of collaboration among people in diverse power positions and contexts and, of course, leaves room for serious concerns about "yankee interventionism". As we have seen, even apparently well-meaning environmental attempts to stop the destruction of nature (such as in the case of the *Debt-for-Nature* swaps) were not immune to attempting to define the "solutions", the options, the life styles and choices for the people of the South. In 1993, when Randy Hayes was under attack by the Malaysian government and the press, he was also branded as a "yankee imperialist."

Follow Guidance from Local Activists

Lastly, the third crucial aspect of RAN's *North: South activism* is its relationship with the activists in the South and, as mentioned above, the *form* of such relationship-- following the guidance of local activists, supporting their allies in tropical rainforest countries.

... at RAN we take a lot of direction from activists in the third world countries. We try to respond to their needs. They feed us information and say CONOCO oil is developing, or doing oil exploration in Ecuador in a national park in an area where there are tribes that have never been contacted by the outside world. Would you put out an action alert. Of course, we do. And Conoco responds. Coca-Cola foods owns Minute Maid orange juice. They bought a bunch of land in Belize and were going to completely trash the tropical forest to plant orange groves. We put out action alerts and now Coca-cola has decided to contribute half of their lands to form a national park in Belize and are only going to do a very small amount of development in citrus groves and are going to do it on areas that are far more desirable and are not important habitats of the endangered species in that region. These companies are subject to pressure and if you have the right kind of info flow and network, like a circular network that includes the indigenous people in the rainforest who have contacts with some of the anthropology groups or environmental groups based in the cities. The Indians can get information to the cities who can get info to the environmental groups in the U.S. who can get Congress to put together hearings on a World Bank loan that would be destroying their lands and can get it stopped. That effectively has happened. Powerful conservation groups like the environmental defense fund, and the Environmental Policy Institute in DC are well equipped to lobby congress and to exert that kind of pressure on Congress to exert that kind of pressure on the world bank. The U.S. is the largest contributor to these multi-lateral banks. Therefore what we do in the U.S. is quite critical to the saving of rainforest.

At the time Randy Hayes still had faith in some conservation and environmental groups to bring about desired changes. This was radically changed in 1993, when Randy repeatedly said that the environmental movement has indeed failed and he was finding the need to declare his "official resignation" from it in some type of symbolic and public fashion.

For RAN, the crucial question as activists of the industrial North (or, earlier on, as white middle-class college youths coming to help poorer Hopi Indians) wanting to help local traditional peoples from the South is precisely how to help *without inappropriately interfering*

...a delicate art that's best described as *making* changes in the North and *supporting* changes in the South. ¹³

The first part of this definition, i.e., *making* changes in the North, was already presented in a previous section (work in the U.S. and the North). The latter aspect-- supporting changes in the South-- involves providing information to front-line activists, giving funding and technical help to concerned activists and organizations in the rainforest countries, and generating public praise or condemnation of governments and corporations that affect the future of the rainforest. ¹⁴

Examples of this strategy are the financial aid provided by the *Protect-An-Acre Program* to the members of the IPIP and RAN's *Small Grants program*, which provides Southern NGO's with grants between \$1,000 and \$5,000.

Well, we've set up a small grants program and we give away about 20% of the money we raise goes directly to groups in tropical countries, to organizations...some of them are tribal groups, indigenous groups, some of them are environmental groups in cities in, you know, in Brasil and in San Jose, Costa Rica, in Malaysia and in Africa and so because we don't have field projects in tropical countries the way we try to help them directly is just to support the organizations down there and then let them do whatever they need to, and that way we are not being colonialistic, that way we are not being sort of "yankee interventionists."

As part of the latter, for example, RAN provided seed money to *Accion Ecologica*, a Quito-based environmental activist group at the forefront of the defense of the Ecuadorian forest, comprised of 15 women and 3 men. In another project funded by

RAN, the *Organization of the Rubber Tappers of Rondonia* (OSR) in Brasil focuses on enabling rubber tapper communities to contract legal services in defense of their rights.¹⁵ (OSR is lobbying for the continued creation of extractive reserves in the state of Rondonia, while providing for social welfare of extractive communities and working to protect Rondonia's imperiled forest.)

In consistency with its respect for cultural diversity and self determination, RAN has *no field projects* in tropical countries,

... we have to support our allies in the tropical rainforest countries. The citizens groups down there who are working to work out solutions from their own perspective within their own cultures. So we need to be a support service to them to enable them to provide information and monies, to help strengthen them so they can orchestrate solutions from their own perspective.

A very interesting example of the depth of RAN.'s adherence to the principle of following the guidance of local activists is reflected in Randy's answer to my question as to the role of shamanism in planetary activism.

Most people who are from the industrial cosmology know very little about other cultures and they know very little about shamanistic practices. And because I work a lot with indigenous people I did, at least at a distance, learned about shamanistic practices, enough to respect the sort of profound impact that they have in the culture and in the society and probably on the natural world. And I take a lesson from nature herself, you know, a strong forest eco-system is a very diverse eco-system, it has not just one species of tree not just one species of grass, not just one species of insects but has thousands of trees and grasses and insects and millions ultimately. And that diversity creates strength in the ecological system. In a social change movement you need a diversity of approaches. We need cultural diversity also and so there are intensely shamanistic cultures utilizing their understanding of the principles of shamanism as their primary tool of activism. You know, I--as a contemporary American--I use other approaches... and yet, just like the principle of repetition-- repetition is a principle of shamanism-- when you beat that drum, when you create a sound pattern that reverberates through the universe [laughs]... the principle of repetition when you write letters, you know, letter writing, letter writing, letter writing, letter writing, letter writing... you know, to the

same corporate executive, the same thought form, the same powerful message and we try to make the message quite clear, we state what the problem is clearly and what action we need them to take. That, in my mind, is a principle of shamanism. So, in that sense we practice shamanism in our efforts for social change...

... Well, the cultures that are better schooled in shamanism, what we try to do is to support their efforts, to make it easier for them to continue to exist, to practice their practices, in other words, when the Hopi indians wanted to meet with president Carter... That was in 1979. My friends and I helped raise some plain tickets for three of the elders to fly to Washington DC to meet with the President. And they did not have an appointment, so you can imagine when they walked up to the White House's gates the guards just laughed in their face and said "well, you have to have an appointment". Ah... but the indians said then 'well, I'll wait, we'll wait', and they stood there and who knows what they were doing with the chants in their minds but pretty soon the guards started making phone calls and a few hours later the gates opened up and the indians walked in to the White House. Now they did not meet with President Carter but that was OK because they did a ceremony in the steps of the White House, and they wanted to do this before a certain time in the afternoon because the village priest had told them that this had to be done and that ceremony cleared the way for them to focus on the UN, you see?... so I don't even understand what it was that they did and I don't need to understand it but if they tell me they need to go to the White House and they need help with the plain ticket then I am gonna work day and night to try to help them raise that money to let them do their magic, right? And that's the approach that we take. We're like secretaries and chauffers for the elders. We just assist at a distance.

Conclusion

The above summary description of RAN.'s strategies may *unfortunately* give an impression that there is in this organization an emphasis on theory and vision, at some expense of action. But this is very far from the reality. For now, I want to emphasize the breadth of vision and the practical bent, even when so at the fringes of contemporary social change, which were evident in RAN's ability to set up diverse strategies, and their subsequent manifestation- and which I saw unfolding over the years. RAN's daily

activities, and most of its time, are involved in very practical matters, campaigns, policy enactments, networking, and so forth- and that is where its main commitment lies. In fact, the campaigns are so numerous, updated and complex that it is just impossible to render any accurate impression within the limits of this work. Just some examples of them are the following:¹⁶

Chronology of accomplishments (1985-1990).¹⁷

1985

RAN organizes a three day strategy conference with most major environmental groups in the U.S. and representatives from around the world to catalize a stepped up U.S. rainforest campaign and move toward a more coordinated world-wide movement.

1986

RAN and Marion Eddy hire an organizer to put in the first "Citizens Conference on World Bank, Tropical Forests, and Indigenous Peoples." This conference also held a rally and demonstration in the park across the street from the World Bank's headquarters.

RAN, with logistical help from Greenpeace USA's, hung the first banner off the side of the World Bank. The banner was two stories high and 40 feet long and read, "World Bank Destroys Tropical Rainforests" with the RAN logo at the bottom.

1987

RAN pressured Coca Cola Foods and Minute Maid Orange Juice to stop destroying Belize's rainforests. They gave land and money to a nature reserve instead of killing trees and ecosystems.

Burger King cancelled \$35 million of rainforest beef contracts from Costa Rica as a result of a consumer boycott. (RAN is now continuing to pressure Burger King to provide verification that its stated policy change was in fact implemented, and to support

positive efforts by Central American environmentalists to save the remaining forests of Central America.)

1989

Scott pulls out of Irian Jaya rainforest in Indonesia after RAN publishes a full page ad in *The New York Times*. (Nov. 1989)¹⁸

1990

Major Victory for the Amazon when Chico Mendes' murderers were convicted. Many groups in Brazil and around the world (including RAN) put international attention and pressure through letter writing to force the authorities to act. (Dec. 1990). (Nevertheless, years later the murderers were released or did escape, and the overall situation of Indians of the Amazon (such as the Yanomamis) is worsening. There are ongoing massacres and attempts by Pro mining politicians to reduce the Yanomami territory and revoke most of the indigenous rights guaranteed in the Constitution of 1988, including the mandate for demarcation of all indigenous territories. RAN is stepping up its Amazon campaign.)

Peru acts to Protect Amazon. (Nov. 1990)

Victory as state and local governments effect timber bans. Numerous stores change their policies and join RAN in tropical timber ban. (Oct. 1990)

Amazonian Indigenous Groups form coalition to defend themselves and the Amazon and RAN joins with their pact. (May 1990)

RAN founding member from Borneo (Harrison Ngau) wins highest environmental award on the planet. (April 1990)

In 1990 the famed "Acre Road" across the most remote section of the Amazon is stopped by RAN and many other groups capturing world- wide attention. Massive timber corridor to the Pacific has not been opened up and may never be opened up.

In 1990 RAN also began to get national and international attention to the need to protect one of Americas last lowland tropical rainforests- on the Big Island of Hawaii- thus helping put the Puna rainforest in Hawaii on the social change map (the same did RAN with Penan rainforests in Malaysia). RAN also helped organize the biggest demo in Hawaii's history protesting the destruction of American tropical rainforest.

1992

Also Ecuador acts to protect half of the indigenous territory in the Amazon (such as RAN's *Protect-An-Acre- Program*).

With an emphasis on networking, grassroots education and direct actions told to be following Gandhian principles of civil disobedience, RAN has strengthened the worldwide rainforest conservation movement by employing the following strategies:

- educating and organizing concerned individuals and environmental activists throughout the world;
- coordinating high- profile media campaigns;
- providing up to date information and RAN produced publications; to students of all ages throughout the world;
- mobilizing citizen action groups;
- organizing letter-writing campaigns aimed at governments and corporations involved in rainforest destruction;
- convening conferences that bring together environmentalists, researchers and scientists from around the world;
- calling for selective boycotts and demonstrations;
- supporting economic alternatives to rainforest destruction;
- providing resource support to activist groups working in the tropics.

In the most general terms, in its capacity as a clearing house of information, RAN engages in in- depth research to identify key strategic factors and agents in the planetary situation, it identifies vulnerable/ opportunity points, and it provides guidelines and suggestions for campaigns at the local and global levels.

RAN's original perspective, from its beginning, was that in order to save the rainforests a very profound transformation of institutions, consciousness and of wasteful and greedy lifestyles is necessary at a truly planetary level. And this is organic to RAN' s pragmatic activism, its strategies and campaigns.

The achievement of RAN's goals is not easy nor immediately gratifying, and work towards them can also be very dangerous-- as it was for the murdered Brazilian activist Chico Mendez, and so many others all over the world. It requires a fundamental commitment and a passion that reflects how fateful an issue this is, and the willingness to empathize and communicate with others in total honesty. Community building around all these issues can only empower people to feel, to care and to act according to our moral will. Yet, like Randy Hayes repeatedly said and it is a main suggestion of this work- *it simply needs to happen.*

¹ Seed, John; Macy, Joanna; Fleming, Pat; and, Naess, Arne. *Thinking Like A Mountain. Towards a Council of All Beings.* (Santa Cruz, CA, and Philadelphia, PA.: New Society Publishers, 1988).

² *Ibid.*, p.7

³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴ Rainforest Action Network. *1992 Annual Report*, p. 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Rainforest Action Network. *Fact Sheet.* No. 43.

⁸ *Ibid.*

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- 9 "Rainforest Action Network, 500 Kilometers of Resistance. Indian March Preserves Rainforest", p. 1. (loose pages).
- 10 Rainforest Action Network, *1992 Annual Report*, p. 5.
- 11 Rainforest Action Network, *Fact Sheet*, No. 20B.
- 12 Rainforest Action Network, *1992 Annual Report*, p. 2.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Rainforest Action Network, *World Rainforest Report: A Publication for the World Rainforest Movement*. October:December 1993, Volume X, No.4, p. 11.
- 16 Rainforest Action Network's and the Rainforest Movement's Accomplishments, op. cit., pp. 1-5.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Scott Paper Co, based on Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, wanted to cut down a major rainforest on the island of New Guinea in South East Asia, on the Indonesian side of the island, called Irinyaia, replant a eucaliptus grove and then use the eucaliptus trees to make toilet paper. This would have forcibly relocated 40,000 tribal people.