

## Environmental Movement Power Brokers

TIMOTHY DOYLE

**This paper elucidates the power/elite structure of the Australian Environment Movement as it existed up until the 1987 Australian Federal Election. Since the elite structure of the movement varies from campaign to campaign, it is important to introduce a case study in order to provide this analysis with historical and actual structure. The case study under review is the Wet tropical Forests of North Queensland. This case is most important in connection to the movement's 1987 electoral efforts, as it dominated the mainstream conservation agenda. This investigation will reveal that the movement's electoral affiliation with the Australian Labour Party the political party then in Government was unrepresentative of the movement as a whole, but rather reflected the will of an elite network of powerful, professional activists who have seized power from what used to be known as the voluntary environment movement.**

The Wet Tropical Forests of North Queensland dominated the 1980's as the fore-most conservation issue in Australian politics. This particular environment was deemed unique and, as a consequence, the environment movement campaigned for its conservation. Its chief protagonists were, at different times, the Queensland Government a State Government forming part of the Federation—which preferred the area to be 'developed' for the sake of 'progress; and the Federal Government which did not want to become involved in a State versus Federal Government rights debate.

The campaign was waged by many different networks of environmentalists, in many different ways, over the decade. Each of these networks enjoyed the primacy of the political limelight at different stages. In 1983 and 1984, the Cape Tribulation blockaders dominated proceedings. These blockades formed to halt the development of a road through one part of the Wet Tropical Forests: Daintree. These blockades were characterised by spontaneous, non-violent direct actions. The main arguments for conservation of

the area revolved around aesthetics, wilderness, and survival. The key network mainly included local inhabitants of the area, although many other environmentalists travelled from afar to attend the blockades, particularly in the second blockade of early 1984.

In 1985 and the first part of 1986, Brisbane—the capital of the State of Queensland—was the epicentre of a more formal Wet Tropics environmental campaign. The Rainforest Conservation Society of Queensland, the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland and the Queensland Conservation Council were key organisations during this period. The Australian Conservation Foundation and The Wilderness Society—two national environmental organisations—recognised that Brisbane was the campaign hub and promptly set up branch offices there. Because the nexus of the campaign was now based in a northern state capital, the focus of politics levelled itself at the state level also. The movement argued interminably with the Queensland Government to list the Wet Tropics as a 'World Heritage Area'. The conservation arguments were now based on science and economics.

During the final eighteen months of the campaign the focus moved out of Queensland into the south-eastern cities. An informal elite network of up to a dozen professional environmental activists now dominated all Wet Tropics environmental initiatives. As a direct consequence of this dramatic shift in the movement's power base, the environment movement became totally immersed in the 1987 federal election. This was quite remarkable, due to the fact that, in the past, party endorsements by environmental groups had seldom occurred. Gone were the arguments about aesthetics and spirituality; gone were those of science and economics; the era of political expediency had arrived.

This paper will concentrate its analysis on these final eighteen months of the campaign.

The Australian environmental movement's involvement in the 1987 Australian federal election was a 'success' in the terms of the political game as defined by the dominant, mainstream agenda. The movement, or more correctly, parts of it, managed to prove their political clout in the electoral game. The swing in the voting in the eleven seats which were targeted by the movement was 0.89% to the Australian Labour Party (ALP) compared with a 1.31% swing away from the ALP on an Australia-wide basis. The movement claims, therefore, that their campaign contributed on average 2.20% of the ALP vote in this election. Even if this figure is somewhat exaggerated, even the most hard-headed political analyst does not deny the movement's electoral might.

Despite the widespread perception of the movement's 'success', little attention has been given to the internal politics of the movement itself. The Wet Tropics campaign has been fought throughout a decade. Why, in the twilight years of the 1980's did the movement finally achieve this 'success'.

Part of the answer lies with the ALP's willingness to accommodate the

movement's wishes, in a trade-off for electoral support. More importantly, various changes to the movement's structure, goal-seeking and power distribution have all contributed to recent events.

Before the main body of the text is introduced, I think it is important here to accurately define what it is which makes up the environmental movement.

### **The Australian Environmental Movement**

A vast array of networks, organisations, groups and individuals are involved in what is loosely termed 'the environment movement' in Australia. The movement's physical fragmentation is a reflection of a broad range of differing political ideals and means for achieving objectives.

It is not possible to ascertain the exact number of conservation groups operating at any one time. The movement is constantly changing. As issues appear on the political agenda, groups often form. As the issue in question disappears from public view, often the group may also become obsolete.

The movement's membership is a fluid one. It comprises many individuals who are not necessarily 'card-carrying' members of specific conservation organisations. The overall membership, when defined by different individuals or groups, varies accordingly. The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF)—one of Australia's largest umbrella environmental organisations—lists over 800 environmental groups in Australia and admits that there were a 'further 300-400 bodies for which we could not obtain sufficient information for entries to be made'.

Due to the movement's fragmented, ad hoc and informal nature, study of its structure is extremely complicated. There is no structure which strictly formalises relationship between groups as in the case of business corporations.

Much depends on history: the development of friendships, alliances and common enemies. Geography, also, plays an important role contributing to the present structure of the movement, in a country which is as vast and, on occasions, as politically isolated as Australia. Finally, the environmental movement is part of Australia's political culture. Attempts to establish hierarchical structures within the movement mirror, to an extent, this country's established political structures. Conversely, within the movement there are also strong pressures away from hierarchical structures and towards decentralised and participatory forms.

### **Elitism: A Definition**

The word 'elitism' and its derivations are popularly perceived as undesirable. In political science terminology, however, 'elitism' has quite a clear and precise definition pertaining to the characteristics of an elite society. It is in this academic sense that the term is used here. Dye and Ziegler in *The Irony of Democracy*, list four key attributes of elite theories of society [2]:

1. Power is held by the few; the majority of people have no input into the policymaking process.
2. The elites are not representative of the population, therefore, their policies are not designed to fulfil broad societal goals.
3. Non-elites can slowly move into elite circles (thereby maintaining stability i.e., a vision of upward mobility); but before being admitted they must accept the values, guidelines and practices of the elite regime.
4. Elites influence masses before masses influence elites.

The environmental movement involved with the Wet Tropical Forests of North Queensland has become 'elitist' in its operation since about 1986. Power is in the hands of the few; pressures 'exist' within the movement to 'toe the elite line'; and finally, the movement agenda is totally dictated by these powerful professionals. This scenario fulfils all of the four criteria as laid down by Dye and Ziegler.

This situation may not appear remarkable if we were talking about a business corporation or a government body. The environmental movement involved with the Wet Tropics, however, has traditionally operated in a way which values consensus and demands that the processes of democratic representation be fulfilled before any initiative can be implemented.

#### Who are these elites ?

Members of this elite network dominating environmental initiatives have three essential characteristics. First of all, they are professional activists. They are not volunteers; nor are the majority honorary elected officials. They are employed to do a job. Secondly, members of this exclusive network work for either the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) or The Wilderness Society (TWS). Some of these elites have ties with both formal organisations. Finally, the elite network has a geographic dimension. All members are strategically located in the four major capital cities: Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne and Hobart. The first three of these cities reflect the 'triangle of power' which is the nexus of mainstream politics in this country. The elite environmentalists, therefore, mirror the establishment's distribution of power. The addition of Hobart reflects the history of The Wilderness Society which originally was the Tasmanian Wilderness Society.

The de facto membership of this network was determined by asking several key individuals to nominate the network participants who dominated environmental proceedings in the election campaign. By cross-referencing these names, I was able to arrive at the following list of the most powerful individuals. (Of course, each person I talked to nominated a slightly different list, reflecting their different individual locations, biases and relationships.)

**Figure A****The Network of Professional Elites**

Name	Organisation	Position	City
Jonathon West	TWS	Director, TWS	Hobart
Karen Alexander	ACF, TWS	Councillor ACF Election Officer TWS	Melbourne
Michael Rae	TWS	Co-ordinator TWS	Melbourne
Phillip Toyne	ACF	Director	Melbourne
Bill Hare	ACF	Campaign Director	Melbourne
Jane Elix	ACF	New South Wales Campaign Director	Sydney
Margaret Robertson	TWS	Co-ordinator TWS	Sydney
Jane Lambert	TWS	Liaison Officer	Canberra
Joan Staples	ACF	Liaison Officer	Canberra

Despite the intense involvement of the Queensland groups over the past years, not one Queensland was included in this network. This is of particular importance when one considers that the Wet Tropical Forests are in Queensland.

These professionals totally devote their lives to the environment in this country. They accept wages which are far below a level commensurate with their level of expertise. They are, on the whole, not in the political game for the purposes of attaining individual power. Instead, they perform in a way which they believe benefits the movement as a whole. Their dominance of the movement is not necessarily the result of a conscious bid for power but a consequence of their attempts to play the political game as defined for them by the party political and government agendas.

It was this network of individuals who bargained with the Labor Government before and during the 1987 election campaign. The decision was theirs. It was not representative, in any way, of the environmental movement as a whole. But, due to the key positions of power held by this national elite, it was possible for this network to portray to the politicians, the media and to the general public its actions as representative.

It will now be shown how the decision to play electoral politics - and back the ALP - was in no way representative of the broader movement in either a direct or indirect sense. In short, consensus is no longer practised by the dominant groups involved in the campaign to save the Wet Tropics.

**Unrepresentatives**

The decision to play the electoral game and to back the Labor Party was first made by TWS and later endorsed by the ACF. In the past, the ACF has been the front runner in electoral involvement, In the 1987 election, TWS had the upper hand all the way.

TWS's decision to back Labor in the House of Representatives and the

Australian Democrats in the Senate was announced publicly on June 6. That decision had already been made by the TWS elite band sometime before the National Meeting of The Wilderness Society held in Brisbane on 28 to 29 March 1987.

The National Meeting of The Wilderness Society constituted an attempt by the organisational elite to gain ratification from the TWS membership for its electoral strategies. The voluntary membership was quite shocked at the extent of preparation which had been undertaken by the organisational professionals. Two extensive documents had been prepared by elite network members Michael Rae (TWS Melbourne) and Geoff Lambert (TWS Sydney) for discussion papers prior to the national meeting. In short, the elite had set the agenda. One TWS volunteer wrote of the decision at the National Meeting to play party politics as follows :

All those supporters of TWS, like myself, who believe that TWS should take no party political stance at all could very rightly feel angry, misrepresented and wonder just whose decision it was that they were abiding by and, by default, condoning .... that really wasn't consensus decision-making at all. I see TWS as losing what has always been its most attractive quality, that of grass roots involvement and decision-making. Power it seems is vested in those who are paid by TWS rather than the members.

Indeed, there were few volunteers admitted to the network; but this is not the full extent of the division between elites and non-elites. The organisational professionals operating in Brisbane, Cairns, Adelaide and Perth were equally surprised. Harry Abrahams, Co-ordinator of the Brisbane Branch of TWS writes of this situation :

I have enclosed two articles, one by M. Rae and one by G. Lambert. They are documents prepared as discussion papers for the National Meeting. They should give you some idea as to how people were thinking before the meeting. The Brisbane Branch was not thinking strongly about elections before the meeting, hence some members may have felt there was a bit of 'steamrolling' going on.

This strategy of not consulting organisational workers 'outside' the network continued right throughout the campaign. The Brisbane employees of both the ACF and TWS presented a brief report for the campaign post-mortem held in Melbourne the week after the election. They voiced their disappointment about being left out of the central nexus of power-broking and decision-making. They wrote :

We were not told who was working where and what numbers were to be used to contact whom when the branch offices were established. We found out by hook or by crook rather than being told. Somehow we felt that we were not aware of where and when decisions were being made in Melbourne. Did regular meetings exist between the ACF and TWS? We felt more that we were finding out the decisions

after the meeting rather than that a meeting was going to be discussing XXX (sic) this, what do you think ?

So, at some stage before the National Meeting of TWS, the professional elites had made two decisions: 1. To pay the electoral game, and 2. To back the Labor Party. Proof of the second point is easily found in Lambert's report to the National Meeting. He writes:

This morning's (23 March 1987) report that Howard (leader of the Liberal Party) would abolish everything including motherhood, if elected to office, opens up greater scope for differentiating between Liberal and Labor in the eyes of the conservation-minded voter. Perhaps Labor is a viable choice. Howard has turned rather dry on conservation, as evidenced by his promise to abolish support for the ACF (and us too?)

But the decision to back Labor goes even further back. One does not have to be a genius or a conspiratorialist to work out that a deal had been struck by Barry Cohen—Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Environment—and Jonathon West. Before November 1986, West worked for Cohen as his private secretary, (3) West's timely departure from under Cohen's wing to the directorate of an organisation which would take the lead in the environmental movement's election campaign is far from a coincidence. According to one Tasmanian TWS source, the decision to make West Director of TWS had been made some eighteen months before by the TWS elite. It was just a matter of timing.

West was the leader of the movement during the election campaign. Trade-offs and deals were achieved through his negotiation with both parties. It is irrelevant to ask which entity is more important to Jonathon West: the movement or the ALP. What remains crucial to this analysis is to recognise the key role he played in the movement's election campaign and the consequent endorsement of the Labor Party.

Although the environmental movement cannot be delineated on party political grounds, this elite group—particularly the TWS members—is intensely Labor Party oriented. The connection between these two entities will be later discussed.

Thus, The Wilderness Society's move to focus on the 1987 federal election, and the consequent support it gave to the Labor Party was in no way representative of its membership and, more importantly, of the movement as a whole: yet it portrayed itself so. TWS is not an organisation which operates around a tightly constructed constitution. If one does refer to its constitution, it soon becomes obvious that the document was not designed to restrict powers. Section 7, paragraph VIII of the constitution reads as follows:

Any four members of the committee shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of the business of the committee.

Four people can exercise all such powers and functions that are requi-

red by the Association'. The inbuilt flexibility of The Wilderness Society's constitution has been used in the past to act quickly in certain crisis situations. Unfortunately, without these constitutional controls its organisation has been seized by a small band of elites who do not seek to be representative; instead, they feel that they 'know what's best' for the rest of the Society.

The ACF played second fiddle to The Wilderness Society in the 1987 election campaign. This is unusual for, in the past, it has dictated the national environmental agenda. This time, the initiatives were all fundamentally dominated by the TWS elite.

The ACF voiced its support of the Labor Party officially on 15 June. The Adelaide *Advertiser* newspaper printed the following statement the next day.

The 20,000 strong Australian Conservation Foundation will endorse the Hawke Government and the Australian Democrats in the election campaign...The decision, based on a two-thirds majority vote in the ACF secret ballot of its members, is a big plus for Labor, which has made several pledges to woo the conservation vote...

The general public, on reading this story, would have been convinced, wrongly, that two-thirds of ACF's 20,000 members had voted to support Labor in the election. In both previous elections, the ACF membership was polled to ascertain whether or not the ACF should back a political party. In the case of the 1987 election, however, the ACF did adopt this policy. Instead, the broad decision to back the Labor Party was left up to the ACF Council, whilst the nuts and bolts of the campaign were formulated by the seven-member Executive.

The ACF argued that this latter process saved time and money. It also substantially disempowered its membership. The ACF Council decision was not representative of its membership. The response of the Western Australian Chapter of the ACF illustrates both the lack of representativeness demonstrated by the council's vote and reaffirms the point that the elite power nexus exists in the four south-eastern capital cities. Colin Hall, President of the Chapter, communicated the following statement to me:

We were notified of Council's decision three weeks before the election. We weren't consulted. We are sick and tired of not being consulted. We never see the ACF Councillors at any of the meetings. Some individuals within the chapter challenged the Council's decision. But they were heaved out of this stance by Labor Party sympathisers. The long term effects of the electoral campaign are now being felt; the whole affair has split the branch into disrepair. I believe it will fold.

The long-term effects of the elites' election strategy will be discussed at the conclusion of this paper. At this point, it is more important to note that the ACF Council's stance merely ratified the elite network's election strategy. One ACF Councillor made the following statement about his role in the



**Labor Party endorsement :**

We had been lobbied heavily before we cast our vote. It was a secret ballot; but in reality it was a foregone conclusion.

The ACF members of the elite network, unlike their TWS counterparts, did go through the formality of seeking some sort of ratification from its membership. But this was merely a formality. The decision to combine the electoral efforts of both organisations was made at a national meeting of elites on 22 May 1987. Eight members of this network decided 'that the organisations should co-operate as far as possible in formulating a common platform for the election in relation to the question of support or otherwise for any political party'.

The ex-Director of the ACF, Dr. J. G. Mosley, sees the changes in the ACF's election procedures as just one example among many of the increased elitism in the organisation and 'the continuing, progressive reduction of the powers of its general membership'. This unrepresentativeness is rarely a deliberate ploy of the professional elite. Some of the elites are equally concerned with this increasingly unrepresentative decision-making process. For example, Michael Rae, Co-ordinator of the Melbourne Branch of TWS—and elite network member—writes of his uneasiness:

.. that of the "executive decision making process", I do not deny that such a thing exists. I have my own concerns about this but I will have to take this issue up in a future letter. My apologies but I am not able to write about this at the moment due to the pressures of time and the fact that elections are screaming around my head.

The above quotation is a perfect example that this network is dictated to by the short-term time frame and the political agenda and the political parties. By playing the electoral game, the structure of decision-making and the scope of the movement's goals were dramatically affected. The long-term effects were that the term of reference fell out of the membership's hands.

**The ALP Connection**

At this point, it is essential to state that the Labor Party did have substantially better environmental policy than either the opposition Liberal and National Parties. The 'necessary and sufficient conditions' for movement support of the ALP Government were spelt out at the Sydney meeting of elites in late May :

1. Unilateral nomination of the Wet Tropical Forests and the commitment to use Commonwealth powers to stop the degradation of this area (logging, roads, real estate, etc.)
2. Injunction to stop illegal logging and forestry operations in Tasmania.

The Labor Government did promise to meet these two criteria, thus satisfying the movement elite that a substantial bargain had been struck, What helped the elites further in their endorsement of the ALP was the disa-

strous performance by the opposition parties in terms of the environment in the lead-up to the election.

Given stark differences between the political parties' environmental stance, it could be rationalised that the movement picked the lesser of two evils and, in the words of Jane Elix—ACF New South Wales Campaign Officer—'their (ACF, TWS) joint decision to advocate voting for the ALP in the House of Representatives and the Democrats in the Senate was made on the basis of past environmental record and existing policy statements on the environment'.

This statement by Elix simplifies and, in doing so, clouds the reasons lying behind the movement elites' endorsement of the ALP. Yes, the movement backed the ALP partly due to a comparison of policies. But if the policies and past performances were the only criteria, then the Australian Democrats should have received support in both houses. The issue of ALP endorsement by the movement elite is far more deeply entrenched.

There is no evidence which suggests that the ALP has deliberately infiltrated the movement. There is no evidence of conspiracy. Despite this fact, from 1985 to 1987 it attained increased access to movement politics. This phenomenon is explained by a number of factors.

First, it is necessary to re-emphasise the importance of the role one person: Jonathon West who has played 'the middle man'. West was influencing the movement's path directly, even whilst in Barry Cohen's employ. Working for Cohen, West has used ACF and TWS letterhead when expressing his views to the organisational elite. One such paper, entitled 'The Wet Tropics: What can we expect from the Labor Government in its second term', is an excellent example of the dual role and political world of West. This paper—written at the outset of 1985—begins with a brief paragraph which reads:

This paper aims to set out briefly some thoughts on how the re-elected Labor Government might react to the tropical rainforest issue in 1985 and how conservationists can orient in the new circumstances.

Apart from supplying advice to movement participants, West directly involved himself in the organisational elite power-plays of the environmental movement in this country. The following scenario is evidence of his input whilst working for the Labor Party.

The dismissal of Dr J. G. Mosley from the position of ACF Director in April 1986 has been popularly portrayed as a power-play within the movement between 'radicals' and 'conservatives', Mosley belonging to the latter. This line of thought proceeds along the following lines: Mosley, after twenty years of service to the Foundation, was overthrown in a bloodless coup, very reminiscent of the situation which saw the wholesale changes in the Foundation and his rise to power-back in 1973. Again, the reality is quite different.

Mosley was a sometimes abrasive and often idealistic character who

wouldn't kowtow to politicians and bureaucrats. The President of the ACF, Hal Wooten, expressed to ACF Council his foremost concern that Mosley was not creating sound relationships with government officials :

— the growing alienation of those with whom ACF must maintain relations — ministers, public servants, and the leaders of other conservation organisations.

The professional elite had put Mosley's dismissal on the agenda and, again, Council merely ratified its decision. In the words of John Sinclair—long time ACF Councillor—Council has become little more than a 'rubber stamp', 'that means that the major decisions are predetermined outside the Council'.

Mosley did not get on with the Minister, Barry Cohen. This situation was seen by the elite as being totally unsatisfactory. Cohen's secretary, Jonathon West, was at the informal centre of the move. One ACF employee summed up the dismissal of Mosley quite simply : West was on the phone for a week before the Council decision'.

West was, and remains, instrumental in the link between the ALP and the environmental movement. He has operated in the Federal party political forum, and his perceptual boundaries of environmental issues remain confined to this mainstream 'appeal to elites' agenda. [4] He has brought the ALP much closer to the movement. In the words of Michael Rae (TWS Convenor, Melbourne), West 'has provided us with far more access to the Labor Party political machine and the higher echelons of the bureaucracy'.

The relationship between the professional elites and the ALP during the election was far more closely linked than just a mutual back-scratching exercise. Some members of the elite network have ALP tickets. But this is not the crucial factor adding to the explanation of the extent of the ALP-movement link. Instead, more importantly, top Labor Party organisation officials became part of the movement elites' network during the election campaign. Bob McMullin (the Federal Secretary of the ALP), Peter Batchelor (Secretary of the New South Wales ALP) and Peter Beattie (Secretary of the Queensland ALP) were the key Labor members of this network, and were involved in discussions relating to movement strategies.

As evidence of this direct involvement of the ALP in the movement's affairs, one has to look no further than the selection of seven key seats—this number later swelled out to the eleven—for campaigning by the movement during the election. This election was not a movement decision. The Wilderness Society Election Evaluation report spells this out quite clearly : 'First decisions (about seat selection) were made at ACF/TWS "Sydney Meeting" on June 6 on advice from ALP Secretariat'.

Some professional members of the movement 'on the outside' were not at all amused by this procedure. Abrahams writes:

Our move into Fisher [an electorate] was done very quickly and we were upset that the decision was made without consultation with those of us closest to the scene, not good. We were happy with the

decision at the time but not the process. This is further evidence of unrepresentativeness and the reduction of the powers of the broader membership of the movement.

Not only did the movement endorse the ALP during the election, but their own campaign foci were initially defined for them by the ALP and, in certain electorates, the movement's campaign became almost inseparable from that of the ALP.

The case of the Denison electorate in Tasmania is a classic example. Nowhere else in Australia is the ALP-movement link stronger than in Tasmania. The swing of 4.69% away from the sitting member Michael Hodgman was more than enough to put his ALP opponent, Duncan Kerr, into the House of Representatives. In this electorate, TWS actually did a substantial amount of the ALP letter-boxing.

There remains another important reason explaining increased interplay between the ALP and the movement: the ALP is in government. Over twelve months directly prior to the 1987 election the professional elite concentrated its efforts more on direct lobbying techniques aimed at influencing the politics of powerful people in the mainstream political sphere. The days of mass mobilisation campaigns, for which TWS is renowned, are over. The power of the movement seems now to be in the hands of a small group of professional elites who, in turn, are far more interested in dealing with their counterparts in government than generating grassroots action. Thus, the movement has moved closer to government in recent times: the ALP just happens to be in government.

The professional elite speaks the language, utilises the same arguments, and is beginning to think in the same way as the governors of our society. No more arguments about wilderness; no more talk of scientific diversity; instead the game is mainstream politics: deals, bargaining, pragmatism and money.

The movement is now playing the political game as defined for them by the dominant powerbrokers. To play the game properly they need money: large quantities of it. The actual source of movement funding during the election campaign rates a mention here as it, more than anything else, illustrates the ultimate authority of the professional elites, who, on their rise to power, have brought with them an ideological package reflecting mainstream values. Means are not especially important to the elites. Ends-short-term ones are top priority.

The non-violent action, wilderness ideals and the grassroots processes belonging to the agenda-setting actions of earlier years have been well and truly superseded by this dominant group.

### **Corporate Sponsorship**

For the first time in the history of the Australian environmental move-

ment funds are coming from corporate sponsors. In the past, the movement has relied on individual donations, membership fees, government grants and its own pockets. In the case of the 1987 federal election vast sums of money came from corporate sponsors in a bid to influence the outcome of the election in favour of Labor.

This occurred for two major reasons. First of all, the largest and most powerful corporate bodies in Australia were backing a Labor Government; this must be one of the few times the ALP has enjoyed such support. Secondly, the movement- or those networks which dominate it- has witnessed a fundamental change in the structure of its power distribution. This transfiguration has been matched by dramatic ideological changes.

The largest donation came from Bond Corporation. This donation also spells out the fact that the movement has gained increased access and support from the media. In mid-June 1987, Bond Corporation made an approach to the Australian Conservation Foundation and offered quarter of a million dollars of free advertising on its eastern seaboard television network, Channel Nine.

Bond Corporation specified what type of advertisement it had in mind. Its advertising consultants drew the picture of two trees; one being knocked down—the result of the election of a coalition government—whilst another tree thrived under the beneficial regime of the Labor Party.

In the months leading up to the election, the seven member ACF executive council met several times. At one such meeting, after much debate, a decision not to accept the Bond offer was made. According to one member of the Executive, the decision was made on two grounds. First to accept funding from Bond Corporation would be ideologically unsound. On past occasions the Foundation had come into direct conflict with Bond Corporation. These actions ranged from a boycott on Bond bottled products in South Australia due to the Corporation's poor recycling record to a more direct conflict between the Western Chapter of the ACF and the Corporation over the high rise 'Observation City' development at Scarborough Beach in Perth. Secondly, in practical terms, the eventual disclosure of the source of funding would be politically damaging.

The Wilderness Society did not have such qualms. After Bond Corporation failed to get the ACF to act as its front person, it turned next to TWS. TWS accepted the offer. The television advertisement was screened in prime-time on Channel 9 and 10 in Sydney and Melbourne; Channel 9 and 10 in Brisbane; and Channel 6 in Hobart. The 'Conrleton Walsh Report' also screened the ad.

Again, only the informal executive of TWS knew of this deal. To this day most of of the membership of the Society remains ignorant to the existence of this trade-off. In the draft election evaluation document which TWS prepared for its members, there its no reference of this donation. In fact, under the heading of 'Donations', only \$11,000 is recorded, coming

from the generous pockets of the general public.

At the 1984 TWS National Meeting, Pam Waud—a prominent environmentalist—presented a discussion paper which demanded that certain ideological questions be resolved within the Society. At that stage in TWS's history, the organisation was caught in an ideological paradox personified by the conflict between its grass roots members and its professional bureaucrats. Three of these questions read as follows:

1. Do we regard TWS as an end in itself (as an organisation) or, is it a structure created by a changing group of dedicated individuals AS A CAMPAIGN TOOL.
2. What is the individual's place vis-a-vis the organisation, and the efficiency of the organisation ?
3. Should we seek and/or accept funding from environmentally unsound organisations/individuals ?

Waud's questions were not resolved at the 1984 meeting. They were, though, in the 1987 election campaign. The decision to accept corporate sponsorship epitomised this transition. TWS—the organisation most dominated by the professional elite—has finally resolved the ideological paradox which it has existed in since the fulfilment of its Franklin goals: the organisation has won.

Secrecy now exists between this elite network and the rest of the environmental movement. Files are off limits. All is done on the phone. The professional elites now have control of information flow. This suggests the increased distance between the elite and the membership.

### Conclusions

It is essential to address the effects of the recent dominance of professional elites on the whole environmental movement.

During the 1987 election campaign, a network of professional elites unilaterally acted as representatives of the environmental movement. This act, resulting from the dominance of this network, will change the membership—along with the ideology—of the environmental movement in Australia.

The organised environmental movement will become more narrow in its base and less ideologically diverse. The President of the ACF, Hal Wooten, supports this contention when he writes :

But actual party endorsement is divisive and may narrow our base.

It brings all the problems of single issue politics. Do we need it ?

Also, the organised movement is far more homogenised in its belief structures, as the dominant elites continue to demand more uniformity in environmental ideals.

Already, the demands of such homogeneity are being felt.

In a letter withdrawing her services from The Wilderness Society, Eleri Morgan-Thomas speaks of the lack of ideological tolerance within the organisation:

Brisbane Branch has been having some very real problems lately, not the least of them being communication. Many of us at the National Meeting felt that it was difficult to make a comment that disagreed with what was perceived to be the 'power base' ..

The demand to conform to the professional elites' ideology will alienate large sections of both the organisational membership and the movement participants who choose to operate outside the structures of formal, constitutionalised organisations. In turn, this alienation will lead to polarisation and conflict.

Most alienated will be the voluntary workers in the more formal groupings; those people who involve themselves in the 'grassroots', everyday, 'nuts and bolts' of any environmental campaign. Morgan-Thomas, for example, kept the books for the Brisbane Branch of TWS.

Apart from being tied to particular political parties, they have lost all of their power: a feeling of uselessness prevails. Craig Jones, another volunteer who resigned, wrote to the Director of the Society explaining his disappointment:

I regret to inform you that I can no longer remain a member of The Wilderness Society. I've delayed in writing this letter for several reasons, not the least of which is the remorse that I felt at having to withdraw my support for The Wilderness Society.

I believe that the "raison d'etre" of The Wilderness Society was that it provided a basis for a "grassroots" conservation movement...

With increasing executive power, which seems to be the direction in which the Society is heading, comes a limiting of the ORDINARY MEMBER'S ability to participate in any way but a superficial manner. Not all of us are involved in The Wilderness Society simply to ease our consciences. We need to be active, and we need to be able to participate in the decision making processes of the society.

Without this kind of participation, the Society will wither and die.

The letters of Morgan-Thomas and Jones are not unique. Since the election of West to the top TWS job, TWS has continually alienated its volunteer members located at its various branches. TWS is becoming increasingly centralised around its organisational base. According to Geoff Holloway, a long-time commentator on The Wilderness Society, TWS no longer operates from a 'grassroots' basis. Holloway says that from 1986 to 1987, TWS branches which are active diminished in number from approximately forty to twenty. This decreasing number is, arguably, a direct result of the branches no longer being involved in the decision-making process.

A similar event is occurring in the ACF. In a previous section Colin Hall (President of Western Chapter of ACF) told how his particular chapter has been torn as under. Similar events are occurring in all major capital cities: the organisational membership is changing. And who is replacing the volunteers who are leaving? Karen Alexander, a professional who has membership in

both the ACF and TWS, reports that the ACF attracted about 300 new members during the election campaign. She asks :

Are we just attracting ALP voters and Left-wing fanatical green anarchist guerillas?...We could have...

Her reference to anarchist guerillas is based on a misconception. Anarchists would not be at all thrilled about party alignment. But her reference to an increasing influx of Labor Party supporters is a most interesting point. Could it be that the movement, through continually aligning itself with the Labor Party, will be increasingly attractive to Labor Party members? If so, the movement's environmental agenda will also be increasingly dominated by party politics.

If these trends of elite dominance continue, with emphasis on electoral politics, then the politicians, the government bureaucracy and the developers will have complete control over the movement's political agenda and its terms of reference. The time dimension; the rules of the game; the extent of the trade-offs; the sources of money; the mutual personnel: all these factors will be defined by the dominant regime. □

#### REFERENCES

1. Large portions of this article are adapted from Timothy Doyle, 'Oligarchy in the Conservation Movement; Iron Law or Aluminium Tendency', in *Regional Journal of Social Issues*, Summer 1989, pp. 28-47. Unless otherwise cited, all references are found in this article.
2. Adapted from Thomas R. Dye and L. Harmon Ziegler, *The Irony of Democracy*, 1980.
3. Ruzicka, E., 'Meet Jonathon', *Wilderness News*, vol. 8, no. 1, February 1987, p.2.
4. The 'appeal to elites' strategy has been analysed in the context of the environmental movement in Australia by Brian Martin, 'Environmentalism and Electoralism', *The Ecologist*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1984, pp. 110-118.

SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM ANNUAL	India :	Foreign (airmail)	
	and Southasia	US/Canada/ Japan and Far East	Europe/Africa Latin America
Institutions :	Rs. 150.00	\$ 50 00	£. 30.00
Individuals :	Rs. 50.00	\$ 25.00	£. 20.00

Name..... Address.....

.....City.....

State..... Zip/Pin Code.....Country.....

Signature..... Date.....

(Enclosing Bankdraft/Cheque No..... Amount.....

Payable to:

**PHILOSOPHY & SOCIAL ACTION**

Please mail this Form with cheque to :

Managing Editor, PSA.,

M-120 Greater Kailash-I, New Delhi 110 048. (India):